

Welcome to Our Schools Curriculum

The CCSD ELL Division is grateful for the generosity of The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for providing us the rights to share their *Welcome to Our Schools* curriculum with our teachers. This curriculum was developed for New York Teachers of Refugee students. With this in mind, there are a few lessons that we will be offering adaptation suggestions to address the needs of Newcomer students living in Clark County.

When deciding what modules to teach, keep in mind who your students are and what they need to learn about being in a U.S. school. As they state in their materials, “Instructors should review the Modules and select the materials that would be most relevant to the refugee students (CCSD Newcomers) enrolled in their school system, and most useful when designing lesson plans and classroom activities.” Also, you may have English-speaking students who do not qualify as ELLs who could benefit from the acculturation pieces of this curriculum. A student coming from England speaks a different English and can experience culture shock as they begin living in the U.S. Please use these materials, as they seem appropriate for these students as well.

Please review pages 4-8, Background for Instructors. As you read any of these materials, remember that the authors are in New York, and programs mentioned do not align to CCSD programs. Reading considerations are also attached for you to review before reading each module. We are providing these materials as a starting point for you to be able to develop lessons to meet the acculturation needs of your Newcomer students. Thank you for looking at these materials. The CCSD ELL Division welcomes your feedback on this curriculum as we are offering it to our schools for the first time this year. If you have any questions or need additional supports for your Newcomer students please reach out to our Division at (702) 799-2137. Also, please look at the materials and links specifically provided to address newcomer needs found on our website at ell.ccsd.net. Most schools have an ELL Student Success Advocate. These staff members receive additional training from the ELL Division and can also act as a resource for you.

CCSD CONSIDERATIONS

Module 8: Getting Academic Help

In this reading...

When it says ...	Think...
refugee	newcomer
Refugee Academy	school site
academic coach	mentor

- Module focus is on academic assistance; consider having all academic assistance programs information at the school site readily available.
- Videos are not available at this time.
- Links to Peer Mentor Guides are available for secondary and elementary. These links can be found on the CCSD ELL website, Newcomer Page, Instructional Supports.

WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOLS



BUREAU OF REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT ASSISTANCE

**NEW YORK STATE OFFICE
OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE**

**REVISED 2011
ANDREW M. CUOMO, GOVERNOR**

The Refugee School Impact Grant (RSIG) *Welcome to our Schools*, which includes Refugee Academy and Mini-Academy Curricula, Parent and Professional Development Programs, a Guide to Academic Coaches, a Guide to the Videos, and the videos *Refugee Student Interviews*, *Refugee Parent Interviews*, *A Day in Elementary School*, *A Day in Middle School* and *A Day in High School*, was developed by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (OTDA/BRIA).

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MODULE 8

GETTING HELP

MODULE 8: Getting Help

PURPOSE

The purpose of Module 8 is to encourage students to recognize school personnel and peers as a source of information and support.



OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Understand the role of teachers as a source of information and support
- Understand the role of the Academic Coach as a source of personal support
- Understand the role of communication between parents and schools
- Understand the role of peers as a resource for information and support



SUPPLIES

***Handout 8 – 1:
Teachers***

***Handout 8 – 2:
Academic Coach***

***Handout 8 – 3:
Parent Note***

Guest students
(see Activity #3)

Videos:
***Refugee Student
Interviews and
A Day in School***
(Elementary, Middle
or High School)



MODULE 8: Getting Help

VOCABULARY

Elementary Vocabulary

Aide
Questions
Problems
Succeed
Newcomer
Nice
Name
Home
Family
Parent
Mr., Mrs., Ms.

Secondary Vocabulary

Aide
Guidance
Interpreter
Problems
Succeed
Report Card
Assignment
Grades
Study
Nice
Schedule
Name
Mr., Mrs., Ms.
Family
Parent
Home
Trouble
Communication



Key Points – Getting Help



1. Teachers are resources and want students to succeed.

Some refugees may not have attended school in their native countries, and may not know the role of a teacher. They may have misconceptions about teachers and they may be afraid of them.



Other students may have had teachers they remember fondly and find it difficult to adjust to teachers in American schools. Still others have experienced teachers who were primarily disciplinarians and they may assume that all teachers in American schools will behave the same way.

The purpose of Module 8 is to explain to students that all teachers are different in their styles and expectations, but they ultimately do want students to succeed. There are, of course, a few exceptions, but primarily teachers will not only dispense knowledge, they will provide guidance and support to students who make the effort to achieve.



Many teachers will reach out to students who are struggling in school, or who are having difficulty behaving in class, concentrating on their work, or getting along with other students. They want students to succeed, and will provide information and guidance when students need assistance. Even when most teachers discipline students it is for the purpose of reining in negative behavior so that students can focus on succeeding in school.

Refugee students should know that if they follow school rules and treat teachers with respect, they will build good relationships with teachers. If they work hard in class and alert teachers when they need help, they will find that teachers will respond positively and provide assistance.



2. The Academic Coach provides individual guidance, information, and support.

During the first session of the Refugee Academy, the Academic Coaches introduced themselves and explained their role during the school year. However, the students were more than likely overwhelmed with information during the first session as they attempted to adjust to their new environment.

In Module 8 the instructors should remind the students again about how the coaches will help the students during the Academy and throughout the school year. They should provide students with *Handout 8-2: Academic Coach* which has the name of the

coach and contact information. The students are to show the handout to their parents and post the information for reference for the entire family.

The instructors should give the students a copy of *Handout 8-2: Academic Coach* (or a business card) for the students to keep in their wallet or notebook. The students should know that any time during the school day they can ask for a meeting to be arranged with their personal Academic Coach.

 **3. Schools communicate with parents to encourage student success.**

In *Module 13: Keeping Families Informed*, the students have the opportunity to learn about a number of different ways that schools facilitate communication between the teachers and the parents. But before they learn about the specifics of school-to-home communication, the students may need to be introduced to the notion that the schools will communicate with the parents on a routine basis. This may be a new concept for many students.




The refugee students may not realize that parents will be told that they can call the teacher at any time, and that teachers may contact the parents if they have any concerns about a student’s achievement or behavior.

Module 8 provides information on how schools communicate with parents. The students should know that teachers will not only send home report cards, they will also invite parents in for conferences, call home if necessary, and send home handouts that describe their classroom rules and assignments. They may send home interim reports that describe the progress of students or problems in class.

Students should be reassured that the main reason teachers contact parents is to identify and implement strategies that will lead to student success.

Scheduled events such as Open House (when parents visit the school in the evening), parent-teacher conferences, Education Week (when many schools invite parents into the classrooms during the school day), and concerts, science fairs, and school plays all allow parents to see what their children are learning in school.



 **4. Peers are a natural source of information and support.**

A valuable source of support for students is peers. It is important that the Academic Coaches work with teachers and administrators to provide peer support for refugee students.



Many teachers do assign a classmate to help a new student during the first few days of school, or they may have a “buddy” or “mentoring” system to help new students learn about the school environment and procedures. However, the

system is often informal and dependent upon the ability of the students to communicate with each other. Some students feel uncomfortable or embarrassed if they are forced to accompany a refugee newcomer to classes. Others may try to be helpful but find it frustrating if they do not know the language or customs of the refugee student.

In some circumstances the teacher will assume that a child from one part of the world will automatically be helpful to another refugee student from the same country or a country nearby. For example, a student from Vietnam who is already enrolled in the school may be enlisted to help a new student from Korea. Although the students may have some similarities, it cannot be assumed that they will instantly bond or will have shared the exact same background. It may be frustrating for both students to be linked together, thus reinforcing the stereotypical notion that the culture and language of the countries are the same.

New students can certainly benefit from learning from their refugee peers who have been in the school for a while and can share helpful information. But new students need the opportunity to connect with American students, not only to “learn the ropes,” but to possibly form new friendships.

Younger students seem to adjust more readily to the newcomers and generally make efforts to make friends and help out, especially with teacher encouragement. Secondary students may be uncomfortable or even wary about being assigned to a new student. They may be well intentioned in their efforts to help, but if the refugee student cannot communicate or is shy or afraid, then students often do not know how to handle the situation. They may prefer to be with their own friends and do not want to be associated with someone who is different from them. Instructors should consult with teachers and guidance counselors about students in the school who would comfortably assist a new student, and would introduce them to others, show them how to function in the school environment, and appreciate the culture of the new student.

Peer support should start right away. Begin by making connections between students in the Refugee Academy. The students who are enrolled in the Academy can share information, keep an eye out for each other, and support each other during difficult adjustments. Encourage the class members to form support partnerships and groups, meeting with the Academic Coach during the school year. They should branch out beyond their peers in the Academy, but if systems are set up so that they can remain in contact, it can be reassuring to know that peers have something in common that they can share. Coaches may want to establish a regular meeting time for the students to have a reunion and follow-up meetings.

Then invite peers who will be in their classes to visit the Refugee Academy and meet with the refugee students. Explain to the classmates of the refugee students how difficult it is to adjust to a new school, especially if the student has difficulty speaking the English language. Show the visitors how to be of assistance in a way that is respectful and helpful. Encourage them to help the students out when school begins. Talk to teachers and guidance counselors to determine who would be the best students to invite. Include peers who will demonstrate an interest in the Academy students and will follow through in helping them when school begins.



It is important to point out to the refugee students that, unfortunately, not all of their future classmates will be helpful. They may deliberately confuse or embarrass the new students. Some students will tease or supply false information. For example, common misinformation provided to new students includes inappropriate slang words, behaviors that are against the rules, and offers to sell the students items that are either non-existent or off limits for students.

Explain to students that they should first trust their judgment about whether they think they are being told the truth. If the situation feels uncomfortable and embarrassing, then they are probably not being given reliable information. Suggest that they observe other students carefully to see their reaction, watch to see if others engage in the activity being promoted, and politely listen until they are certain that they are getting good advice from a classmate. In time they will know who to trust.

ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY #1: KNOW YOUR TEACHERS AND ACADEMIC COACHES

Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12 (60 minutes)

In this activity:

Students will learn about the many roles that teachers play in educating students. For some students, the information about teachers will be completely new. Others may have preconceived notions about the expectations of teachers and their impressions may not be positive.



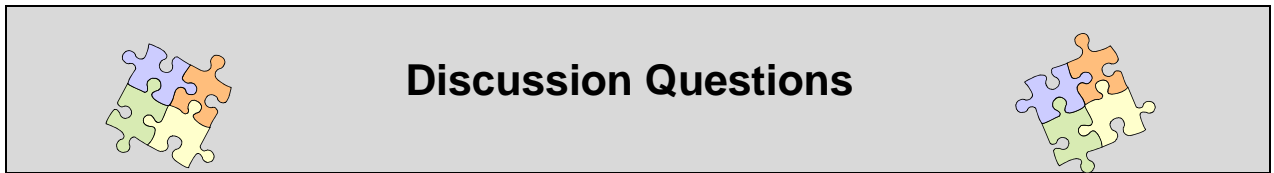
Keep reminding students that teachers are in their classrooms to provide information and assistance so that the students can learn and achieve.

Explain that some teachers are in “self-contained” classrooms (primarily in elementary classrooms where most academic subjects are covered in one classroom) and will be the student’s teacher all day, with the exception of classes in Art, Physical Education, Library, and Music. Some students may leave the classroom for a short time to meet with a speech teacher, or music lesson teacher, or to participate in an English as a Second Language class.

At the secondary level the students will have different teachers for different subjects and the students will rotate from class to class. Again, this may be a new concept for students and they may find it confusing. Reassure them that it does not take long to know the teachers and to get used to their different styles. Provide examples of how teachers approach their instruction in different ways. For example, some teachers lecture, others promote class discussions, and others demonstrate with drama and flair, engaging their students in activities and projects. The style may be determined by the content and academic level of the course, but the personality of the teacher will also influence what the class is like.

Some classrooms will have preservice or “student” teachers, substitute teachers, or classroom aides. The sudden arrival of a substitute teacher can be disarming to a new student. Explain that substitutes are temporary, but they are qualified and should be treated with respect. Explain how *all* teachers are to be treated and addressed.

Distribute *Handout 8-1: Teachers* and discuss the information on the handout.



When you went to school before America, what did your teachers do?

- Some students may not have had teachers or will describe their teachers in a negative manner.
- Students may miss their old teachers and feel a sense of loss as the topic is being discussed. Encourage them to talk about what they liked about their past teachers.
- Stress the role of the American teacher as someone who will provide knowledge and directions, but will also guide students.
- Most teachers are friendly and helpful.
- Students should seek out teachers when they need help.

If you have to ask a teacher a question, what can you do?

If you do not understand what the teacher is saying, what can you do?

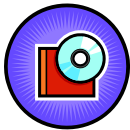
- Review classroom rules about raising hands, and when to approach the teacher's desk.
- Teachers can be approached after class, during recess or study hall, and after school, or a parent can write a note asking the teacher to meet with the student.
- The Academic Coach, ESL teachers, and translators are also resources for the students.
- Do not be afraid to ask teachers for help.

Distribute two copies of *Handout 8-2: Academic Coach*

- Assist students individually or as a group in completing the handout. Students should also write the information in their journals.
- They are to take home *Handout 8-2: Academic Coach* home, show it to their parents, and post it in the house where it is visible.
- They are then to get the parent's signature or mark on *Handout 8-3: Parent Note* and bring it back to the Academy the next day.

ACTIVITY #2: VIDEOS

Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12 (30 minutes)



Show the videos ***Refugee Student Interviews*** and ***A Day in School*** (Elementary, Middle or High School) to reassure students that school personnel are available for information and support.

Use the ***Guide to the Videos*** for introducing the video and for the follow-up discussion.

ACTIVITY #3: PEERS AS SUPPORT

Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12 (45 minutes)

In this activity:

Students from the school district are invited to participate in the Refugee Academy. They can provide information to the new students and become a familiar face to the refugee students.



The instructors can observe the class interaction to see possibilities for emerging friendships. The activities can further facilitate the development of new relationships.

If mentors or “buddies” have been established, they should meet with their assigned students.

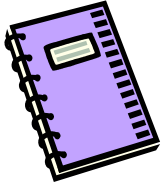
Ask guest students, **one at a time**, to:

- Give their first name only.
 - Discuss the interpretation process.
 - All students will find the names of other students unusual and hard to pronounce. Point out that it works both ways. American students may have difficulty saying names of the refugee students, and vice versa.
- Name one activity in school that they enjoy.
- Name a favorite teacher and tell why.
- Divide students into pairs or small groups, depending upon the availability of interpreters and instructors as facilitators.
- Ask students to discuss the following questions, presenting one question at a time to the entire group. After each question is discussed, summarize the answers, stressing peers as positive resources.

- How will students who speak English help students who are learning English?
- Will American students laugh at students who do not speak English very well? If they do, what can be done?
- What if a new student does not understand what is happening in class?
- Are teachers nice?
- What is the best thing about school?
- How can you know if an American student will help a new student?
- What if a student is mean to a new student?

Although racism, teasing, and bullying are sensitive topics, it is necessary to forewarn refugee students about the possibility that they will be treated badly by some students. Supportive peers can be extremely helpful when this topic is discussed. Ask them to describe treatment that should not be tolerated, how to handle it without making it worse, and who to turn to if the treatment is uncomfortable or becomes intolerable.

- What if a new student knows that another new student needs help?
- What is the most fun in school?
- As a large group, ask the guest students to fill in the blanks:
 - In school, always remember _____.
 - In school, be alert for _____.
 - You will like American schools because _____.



JOURNAL TOPIC

Grades K-5

Draw or write about who can help you in school.

Grades 6-8

Draw or write about questions that you have about American schools, and how you will find the answers.

Grades 9-12

Draw or write about people in the school who can help you, including students.



SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Visit the office of the guidance counselor and other school personnel.
- Organize games with guest students that involve informal communication, teams, or projects. For example, cleaning up a playground, playing baseball, or participating in Project Adventure can help to connect students in the Academy with their new classmates. (Project Adventure Inc. is an outdoor trust-building physical education program. See www.PA.org).
- Invite adults from the community who demonstrate support for refugee students. Connect students with organizations and civic leaders who have been refugees themselves, or who are involved in programs that provide a safe haven for newcomers.
- Introduce students to crossing guards, local shop owners, librarians, and other adults in the nearby

community who can be a resource for the students. Take a walk around the neighborhood if students will be walking to school, and introduce the students to people who can help them if they need assistance.

- If possible, invite classroom teachers to come to the Academy and introduce themselves. A familiar face can help immensely when a refugee student enters school for the first time.

TEACHERS



Help you to
learn



Tell you what
to study

Answer your
questions

Help you with
problems



WANT YOU TO SUCCEED!!

Academic Coach



Name:

School:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

How I can find my Coach?



Name of Student :

MY CHILD SHOWED ME THE NAME OF THE COACH.

I WILL CALL THE SCHOOL IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.



NAME OF PARENT: