

How is migration impacting the lives of our students, and what should we know to ensure they can thrive?

They come with radically diverse experiences

There is no single story of school-aged youth. For example, immigrant-origin youth are 27% of the school-age population in the US. Not all are English Learners, many are multilingual. Some have had years of formal education, others haven't. Some carry trauma. They come from a range of countries and cultures that are internally diverse as well. While their experiences are diverse, scholars make clear that immigrant youth want to succeed, belong, and fit in. Don't rely on assumptions. Get to know your students as people.

Identities are formed in context

All of us develop our identities within a social and cultural context. In times of increased migration, our communities change. Change and fear of the unknown can lead to xenophobia and intolerance. Moreover, our social context influences the opportunities we have in life and our ability to express ourselves as we wish. Young people who may be confident in some spaces are less confident in others. Get to know how the environments your students navigate shapes their lives.

All young people bring indispensable assets to our communities

All young people have strengths that may or may not be visible and that may or may not be valued or rewarded in academic settings. That's too bad because research reveals that non-immigrant youth benefit academically from being in class with immigrants. Too often, immigrant youth are viewed through a "deficit lens," which can lead to false assumptions. Just because someone is not yet fluent in English does not mean they are not smart, curious, or academically engaged. Find out what their strengths are.

All young people have a right to an equal education

All young people, regardless of their identities, academic and migration histories, and experiences, have the right to education. For young people who migrate as asylum seekers on their own, the State has a special obligation to protect, provide, and ensure the welfare of each child. As educators, we have a responsibility, backed up by the force of law, to ensure that all our students receive equal education suited to their needs. What can you do to make sure that students' right to equal education is realized?

Young people thrive when they feel like they belong

Demographic change can be uncomfortable and impact students' feelings of belonging. Look out for the way in and out groups form in your school. That doesn't mean preventing students from similar backgrounds from gathering together in groups. At the same time, ensure students get to know their peers who have different backgrounds. As educators, we should be intentional about creating opportunities to bring students from different backgrounds together.