

Name of organisation:

The Advocates for Human Rights

BEST PRACTICES IN CREATING A WELCOMING CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT



The Advocates for Human Rights has collected "best practice" ideas that teachers working with immigrant and refugee students. Listed below are success strategies from Minnesota educators.

Before the Immigrant or Refugee Student Arrives: Creating a Welcoming School Climate

- Teach staff and students how to say "hello" in the new students' native languages.
- Ask a member of the immigrant community to work with the school in preparation of the arrival of new students. Learn from their experiences as an immigrant or refugee.
- Teach mainstream students about refugees and forced migration issues. Role-play how they would feel as refugees.
- Find resources, interpreters, and materials on cultural diversity and have a seminar for staff on incoming students' home countries, explaining the land, history and culture. Emphasize the importance of learning about the world, linking to existing learning material.
- Prepare school staff for arrival of new immigrant and refugee students, change cafeteria food menu for a day as a welcome.
- Clarify meaning of special clothes for girls (i.e. shador or head covering) for Physical Education and other classes.
- Display pictures, maps, and information about immigrant students' home countries in a central location of the school in order to educate the student body about newcomers.

Immigrant and Refugee Students in the Classroom: Strengthening One-on-One Interaction

- Teach lessons about the home countries of immigrant students. Even if the new student doesn't understand everything, s/he should be comforted to see students learning about things that s/he recognizes. Parents could also be involved in the planning and presentation.
- Ask new students to draw maps of their home countries, adding pictures and cities. Have them show the class (or rotate partners if a large group is too intimidating), and ask them to bring in items that represent their cultures to explain and share with the class.
- Use visual aids.
- Use good nonverbal communication skills. Be patient with new students' development and use of new language.
- Be genuine, sincere and friendly with immigrant and refugee students. Help them to feel secure in the school environment.
- Slowly introduce new students into the school mainstream.
- Develop a buddy system, matching new students with current students to show them around for the first week.

Involving Immigrant Families and Communities in School Life

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