Fostering Belonging and Civic Identity

Perspectives from Newcomer and Refugee Students in Arizona and New York

S. Garnett Russell
Amlata Persaud
Paula Mantilla-Blanco
Katrina Webster
Maya Elliott
Fostering Belonging and Civic Identity

Perspectives from Newcomer and Refugee Students in Arizona and New York

S. Garnett Russell, Amlata Persaud, Paula Mantilla-Blanco, Katrina Webster, Maya Elliott
# Table of Contents

List of Figures ................................................................. vi
List of Tables ................................................................. vi
Acronyms ........................................................................ vii

**Executive Summary** .................................................. 1

**Introduction** .......................................................... 5
  - Overview of Research Methods ........................................ 7
  - Organization of Report ..................................................... 8

**National and State Policy Background** .......... 9
  - Overview of Relevant Education Policies .............................. 15
  - Overview of State Political Context ....................................... 15

**Arizona** ................................................................. 14
  - Overview of State Political Context ..................................... 15
  - Overview of Relevant Education Policies .............................. 15
  - Banning MAS ............................................................. 15
  - Refugee Resettlement .................................................... 15
  - Undocumented Students ................................................ 15
  - Bilingual Education Ban ............................................... 16
  - Language Instruction Models .......................................... 16

**New York** ............................................................. 17
  - Overview of State Political Context .................................... 17
  - Overview of Relevant Education Policies .............................. 18
  - Refugee Resettlement .................................................... 18
  - Access to Higher Education .......................................... 18
  - Bilingual Education .................................................... 18
  - Language Instruction Models .......................................... 19

**Findings** ............................................................... 20
  - Part 1: Overview of the Study Participants and Schools ... 20
    - Students ................................................................. 20
    - Teachers ................................................................. 22
    - Schools ................................................................. 22
  - Part 2: Diversity and Inclusion .................................... 22
    - Balancing Diversity and Inclusion ................................. 23
    - Learning about Students’ Backgrounds ......................... 24
    - Academic Expectations and Opportunities .................... 25
  - Part 3: Student Belonging and Well-Being ...................... 26
    - School Belonging ................................................... 26
    - Bullying and Discrimination ....................................... 28
    - Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-Being ................... 30
  - Part 4: Civic Identity, Rights, and Civic Engagement ........ 31
    - Understanding Civic Identity and Citizenship ................ 31
    - Perception of Rights in the U.S. .................................. 33
    - Current and Future Civic Engagement ......................... 35
  - Part 5: School and Community Participation .................... 37
    - Clubs and Extracurricular Activities ............................. 37
    - Class Discussion .................................................... 39
    - Sensitive Topics and Teacher Positionality .................... 40
    - Family and Community Engagement ............................ 41

**Policy Recommendations** ...................................... 43
  1. Student Diversity .................................................... 44
  2. Support and Resources ............................................... 45
  3. Extracurricular Opportunities ...................................... 46
  4. Post-Graduation Pathways .......................................... 47
  5. Professional Development for Teachers .......................... 48
  6. Family and Community Engagement ............................ 49

**Conclusion** .......................................................... 51
  - Looking Forward ....................................................... 51

Endnotes ................................................................. 53
Bibliography ............................................................. 56
Acknowledgements ....................................................... 61
Appendix: Indices and Measures ................................. 62
List of Figures

Figure 1: Immigration and language policy timeline................................................................................................................................. 10
Figure 2: U.S. refugee admissions 2010-2020 ......................................................................................................................................................... 11
Figure 3: Arizona population demographics .................................................................................................................................................. 14
Figure 4: Arizona school population ............................................................................................................................................................... 14
Figure 5: New York population demographics .............................................................................................................................................. 17
Figure 6: New York school population .............................................................................................................................................................. 17
Figure 7: Students’ countries of birth ............................................................................................................................................................... 20
Figure 8: Students’ time in the U.S. ........................................................................................................................................................................ 21
Figure 9: Students’ race and ethnicity ................................................................................................................................................................. 21
Figure 10: Languages spoken at home ............................................................................................................................................................... 21
Figure 11: Student views on belonging (from interviews) ................................................................................................................................. 26
Figure 12: Students reporting a high sense of belonging ................................................................................................................................. 27
Figure 13: Student-reported experiences of bullying and discrimination by region .......................................................................................... 28
Figure 14: Student-reported experiences of discrimination by country of origin ............................................................................................... 29
Figure 15: Student-reported experiences of discrimination by gender ........................................................................................................ 29
Figure 16: Student perceptions of an ideal citizen ............................................................................................................................................. 32
Figure 17: Student ideas of an ideal citizen (from interviews) ............................................................................................................................ 32
Figure 18: Summary of average differences in students’ perception of rights in the U.S. .................................................................................. 33
Figure 19: Summary of average differences in students’ perception of immigrant rights .................................................................................. 34
Figure 20: Summary of average differences in students’ civic engagement .................................................................................................. 35
Figure 21: Summary of average differences in students’ future civic engagement ............................................................................................. 35
Figure 22: Important social and political issues (from interviews) ..................................................................................................................... 36
Figure 23: Student participation in clubs and organizations .......................................................................................................................... 37
Figure 24: Student participation in extracurricular activities ............................................................................................................................. 38
Figure 25: Summary of indices positively associated with participation in civic clubs .................................................................................. 39
Figure 26: Summary of indices positively associated with class discussion .................................................................................................. 39

List of Tables

Table 1: Concepts Explored in the Study ......................................................................................................................................................... 5
Table 2: Key Terms Used in the Study ......................................................................................................................................................... 6
Table 3: Research Statistics ............................................................................................................................................................................. 7
## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADE</td>
<td>Arizona Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Advanced Placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZELLA</td>
<td>Arizona English Language Learner Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEEP</td>
<td>Comprehensive ELL Education Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Commissioner’s Regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTLE</td>
<td>Continuing Teacher and Leader Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DACA</td>
<td>Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DASA</td>
<td>Dignity for All Students Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEOA</td>
<td>Elementary Education Opportunities Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELD</td>
<td>English Language Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL</td>
<td>English Language Learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENL</td>
<td>English as a New Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESEA</td>
<td>Elementary and Secondary Education Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSA</td>
<td>Every Student Succeeds Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAFSA</td>
<td>Free Application for Federal Student Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HB</td>
<td>House Bill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INPS</td>
<td>Internationals Network for Public Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB</td>
<td>Institutional Review Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDA</td>
<td>Language Development Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEP</td>
<td>Limited English Proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAS</td>
<td>Mexican-American Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLL</td>
<td>Multilingual Learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAEP</td>
<td>National Assessment of Educational Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLB</td>
<td>No Child Left Behind Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUSD</td>
<td>Nogales Unified School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYC</td>
<td>New York City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYPD</td>
<td>New York Police Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYSED</td>
<td>New York State Education Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYSESLAT</td>
<td>New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBEWLN</td>
<td>Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHLOTE</td>
<td>Primary Home Language Other Than English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBERN</td>
<td>Regional Bilingual Education Resourced Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRP</td>
<td>[Arizona] Refugee Resettlement Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>Refugee Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSI</td>
<td>Refugee School Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>Senate Bill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEI</td>
<td>Structured English Immersion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIFE</td>
<td>Students with Interrupted or Inconsistent Formal Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAP</td>
<td>Tuition Assistance Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td>Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

The United States (U.S.) has the highest number of immigrants in the world. Moreover, the U.S. has historically resettled more refugees than any other country, although that pattern has shifted dramatically in recent years. In order to build a strong democratic, diverse, and inclusive society, it is imperative that newcomer youth possess a sense of belonging and a civic identity. Schools play an important role in socializing and incorporating newcomer immigrant and resettled refugee students into society to foster a sense of belonging and civic engagement.

This report focuses on high-school-aged newcomer immigrant and resettled refugee students (hereinafter referred to as newcomer and refugee students) and explores their experiences within the public school system in the U.S. Specifically, the report examines the ways in which these students develop a sense of belonging and civic identity, and the role of schools in influencing student growth and development in these areas.

Our report opens with a broad policy level perspective and then turns to the school environment and lived experiences of the newcomer and refugee students whose sense of belonging and civic identities are shaped by an ecosystem of influences both within and outside of school. Given the limited research available in this area, the research team aimed to provide empirical data from the perspectives of students and teachers themselves. The report shares these perspectives, explores the challenges faced by students and teachers, and identifies and recommends good practices for fostering belonging and civic engagement among newcomer and refugee students in the U.S.

Research for this study was conducted during the 2018–2019 school year in four high schools across two states, Arizona and New York. Through this juxtaposition of policy contexts, the report explores how newcomer and refugee students have fared in the different environments and the extent to which the broader political setting can influence educational provisions and experiences at school and district levels. The report provides a background and analysis of both national and state political contexts, focusing on policies, legislation, and programs that are relevant to educational provision for immigrant students, particularly newcomers, resettled refugees, and English language learners (ELLs).

The research team used a combination of surveys, interviews, and classroom observations to generate insights into students’ perspectives on the concepts of belonging, rights, and civic identity. We administered surveys to 286 students, and of this number, conducted in-depth interviews with 112 students. We benefited from a very wide cross-section of students who represented 49 different countries of origin and 39 different languages. Additional interviewees included 19 teachers, 14 school administrators, and 4 staff members from school districts and supporting refugee resettlement organizations.

In the report, we present our findings in four related areas: diversity and inclusion; student belonging and well-being; civic identity, rights, and civic engagement; and school and community participation. Our key findings and messages are summarized below:

» Our study highlights the important role of schools not only in building a strong democratic society and promoting multiculturalism but also in fostering school belonging and a civic identity for newcomer and refugee students.

» We find that schools and districts recognized diversity among the student body and provided services for newcomer and refugee students. However, schools also struggled to address specific student needs. They faced the challenge of recognizing and celebrating student diversity while at the same time fostering a sense of inclusion.

» Our findings show that students had multiple needs and identities and that the intersectionality of their identity (gender, race/ethnicity, time in the U.S., etc.) influenced how they experienced civic engagement and belonging.

» Our findings highlight the gap between newcomer and refugee students’ goals and aspirations for higher education and future careers and the schools’ expectations and preparations for meeting students’ goals.

» We find a high sense of belonging within the four schools but also variation by students’ region of origin and time in
the U.S. Newcomer and refugee students reported a higher sense of school belonging; in contrast, students who were born in the U.S. (including second-generation immigrants) had a lower sense of school belonging.

» Similarly, newcomer and refugee students were more likely to have positive perceptions of rights in the U.S. (including the right to education, a job, and the protection of rights) compared to students who had been in the U.S. for longer or all of their lives.

» While most students felt that they belonged in their schools, they often faced discrimination in their communities outside of school. Students from the Middle East reported more discrimination and bullying compared to students from other regions.

» Some students faced challenges to their mental health and psychosocial well-being due to experiences of war, trauma, family separation, and gender-based violence. Teachers and staff did not always have the resources to support the needs of their students.

» We find that teachers had limited support in engaging with newcomer and refugee student populations due to a lack of information about students, limited professional development on teaching and supporting newcomer and refugee students, and difficulties in identifying mental health issues.

» Our findings point to the challenges that teachers faced in navigating sensitive classroom discussions around political and identity issues and the importance of these critical conversations for developing civic capacities.

» We find that students generally held a narrow view of citizenship related to legal status and procedural issues rather than a more participatory and engaged understanding involving social change and empowerment.

» Our findings demonstrate that participation in civics-related clubs and class discussion was linked to students’ current and future civic engagement. Participation in extracurricular activities and clubs was also related to a higher sense of school belonging.

» We find that although students expressed interest in political and social issues, they did not connect these interests with civic engagement and generally felt disengaged and disempowered to bring about change.

» Our findings point to the importance of the school and broader social context for both facilitating and inhibiting students’ belonging and civic engagement. Belonging and civic engagement were influenced by external societal and school factors, including relationships with teachers and peers, previous experiences, and the extent of family and community engagement in school life.

Based on our findings, the report makes recommendations in the following six key thematic areas: student diversity; support and resources; extracurricular opportunities; post-graduation pathways; professional development for teachers; and family and community engagement.

In the area of Student Diversity, we tackle the challenges we found of schools attempting to balance recognition of student diversity with a competing mandate of student integration into school and American culture.

» Recognize, celebrate, and explore student diversity. We recommend the development of more forums and opportunities for students to meaningfully explore their culture and experiences together, greater attention to issues around diversity and inclusion in classroom content and instruction, and the incorporation of school-based events to reflect and include the diverse school population.

» Understand diversity within diversity. Our study has highlighted the multiple, intersecting identities and needs of students. We find that students grappled not just with their immigration, cultural, and language backgrounds, but with vulnerabilities such as poverty and homelessness and other facets of their identities, such as religion and sexual orientation.
» **Adopt a strengths-based approach to diversity.** More broadly, this report calls for a reconceptualization of school approaches to student diversity away from a deficit notion of a condition to be accommodated towards a strengths-based approach that sees diversity as an attribute to be valued and utilized within the school environment.

In the area of **Support and Resources**, this report offers a wide range of recommendations from the top-level policy perspective down to the administrative, school-based setting.

» **Strengthen the policy making environment for newcomer and refugee students.** At the policy level, we recommend reiterating policy support for newcomer and refugee student populations and ensuring adequate and consistent funding for support services. We also recommend a more inclusive and collaborative approach to designing and implementing policies that affect newcomer and refugee students.

» **School-based recommendations.** We recommend the collection and protection of relevant information about newcomer and refugee students’ backgrounds and performance to be used to generate targeted, effective strategies for supporting these students. In response to the considerable mental health and psychosocial well-being needs of newcomer and refugee students, we recommend supporting teachers in identifying students’ distinct needs, ensuring adequate availability of trained professionals, including school counselors and social workers, and improving communication and referral processes within and outside the school.

In the area of **Extracurricular Opportunities**, this report advocates for greater recognition of the value of extracurricular activities in fostering belonging and well-being among newcomer and refugee students in schools.

» **Use extracurricular activities to enhance civics, rights, and belonging.** We recommend offering more opportunities for students to initiate and participate in clubs and activities inside and outside of school.

Under the theme of **Post-Graduation Pathways**, we respond to our findings about newcomer and refugee students’ academic aspirations and opportunities for college attendance after high school graduation.

» **Improve newcomer and refugee students’ college and life readiness.** Our report recommends greater resources towards preparing newcomer and refugee students for college, including SAT preparation and Advanced Placement (AP) classes, increasing the availability of life skills and practical training, and creating new programs and opportunities for alternative career pathways (e.g., through blended classes, specialized classes, or non-school-based programs).

» **Sensitize newcomer and refugee students and their families about opportunities and resources for college.** In addition to better preparing students academically for college, we recommend providing information and resources to both students and families to learn more about post-K-12 training and education opportunities and financial aid. We also recommend providing more guidance and informational opportunities for students and their families to learn about applying to and attending college.

In our section on **Professional Development for Teachers**, we present our recommendations on the multiple ways in which teachers can be better supported in their efforts to engage with and teach newcomer and refugee students, address sensitive topics in the classroom, and prepare students to understand their civic identities and civic engagement.

» **Boost teacher capability to engage with newcomer and refugee students.** We recommend that teachers be provided with professional development about the context and background of newcomer and refugee students, as well as on specific areas to help them navigate learning relationships with newcomer and refugee students (e.g., cultural sensitivity, the role of culture in student learning, supporting cultural diversity in curriculum and instruction, etc.).

» **Provide guidance to teachers on discussing sensitive topics, civic identity, and civic engagement.** We recommend that professional development should be provided to teachers on how to introduce, discuss, and develop sensitive topics in the classroom (e.g., politics, identity, belonging, race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and discrimination). We also urge the provision of supportive opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own biases and how these affect student learning and teacher-student relationships.
In the area of **Family and Community Engagement**, we recommend a number of strategies for bridging the disconnect between families and schools, with suggestions on how schools can better engage the families of newcomer and refugee students, as well as the wider community.

» **Encourage greater school, family, and community engagement.** We recommend strategizing flexible and creative ways of engaging parents and communities (e.g., through home visits or school-based services, such as offering English language classes for adults and hosting cultural events).

» **Create a more integrated and representative school life.** We recommend creating long-term plans to introduce more diversity into schools at the teaching, administrative, and support levels.

The findings from our mixed methods study highlight the perspective of students, teachers, and staff around students’ notions and experiences of belonging and civic identity. Our findings point to the importance of inculcating a sense of belonging and civic engagement among newcomer and refugee youth, particularly given the rise in xenophobia and nationalism in recent years. It is our hope that the report informs, offers space for reflection, and inspires positive action to foster belonging and civic identity among newcomer and refugee students in schools across the U.S.
Introduction

Both voluntary and forced migration have increased over the past several decades due to armed conflict, political crises, natural disasters, and economic insecurity. Globally, forced displacement is at the highest levels since the Second World War: more than 79.5 million people are forcibly displaced, including 26 million refugees who have crossed international borders.

The U.S. is a diverse society with the highest number of immigrants in the world: approximately 14 percent of the population was born in another country. Furthermore, one in four people in the U.S. population is either a first or second-generation immigrant. Historically, the U.S. has resettled more refugees than any other country in the world, but that pattern has shifted dramatically in recent years.

Newcomer immigrant and resettled refugee students (hereinafter referred to as newcomer and refugee students) in the U.S. come from diverse countries and represent a variety of religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. In spite of the diversity and population size of newcomer immigrants and refugees residing in the U.S. and attending public schools, the recent political environment has resulted in nationalistic discourse and a rise in anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiments by major national leaders. The polarized political climate has spread to schools, which have experienced increased incidents of discrimination and xenophobia. For example, in an online survey of nearly 2,000 educators after the election of Donald Trump in 2016, the Southern Poverty Law Center reported a negative impact on the school climate with a rise in verbal harassment, use of derogatory language, and bullying, as well as increased anxiety among marginalized students.

In a period of increased global migration, educating newcomer and refugee students from diverse backgrounds about their civic identity and rights is particularly important but also politically sensitive. How schools teach about citizenship and incorporate students from diverse backgrounds are crucial components of building a strong democratic state that values multiculturalism and inclusion. Such teaching can have a particularly powerful impact on newcomer and refugee students, because the formal education system may be one of their primary sources of contact with the state. Therefore, inclusion into the education system, or providing quality education for all students regardless of their gender, race/ethnicity, religion, legal status, or ability, is critical in shaping students’ understanding of rights and citizenship, and the extent to which they feel a sense of belonging, membership, and engagement in the broader political system.

In this report, we argue that schools play an important role in shaping how students conceive of themselves as civic actors. Schools also help to construct students’ understanding of belonging both in the school context and in the wider society. Previous research has identified the importance of school climate and students’ relationships with teachers, staff, and peers for facilitating a sense of school belonging among students. Several studies have also investigated the relationship between civic identity and belonging, highlighting schools as a primary institution through which immigrant youth encounter discourses around citizenship and school belonging. Using the definitions in Table 1, we examine civic engagement and belonging as components of citizenship.

Table 1: Concepts Explored in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belonging</th>
<th>An emotional attachment and feeling of inclusion and acceptance in a community across social locations, identity, and values.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Legal status, rights, participation, and sense of belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic/Citizenship Education</td>
<td>Education to provide skills and knowledge to equip youth as civic actors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Identity</td>
<td>Individual and collective ideas about social agency, responsibility, and political awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
<td>Participation in civic institutions through formal actions (e.g., voting) or informal actions (e.g., discussing current events and politics, protesting and demonstrating).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Belonging</td>
<td>How students feel accepted, included, respected, and supported by others in the school environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite the growing importance and relevance of this topic, there is a lack of research that focuses specifically on how secondary school students in the U.S., and particularly newcomer immigrant and resettled refugees, understand belonging, rights, and citizenship. In our study, we focus on a diverse group of students that includes newcomer immigrants, resettled refugees, as well as U.S.-born students (including second-generation immigrants). The purpose of this study is to better understand students’ perspectives on these concepts, explore the challenges students and teachers face, and highlight good practices for fostering belonging and civic engagement in schools. We provide empirical data from the perspective of students and teachers in high schools in Arizona and New York with large proportions of newcomer students.

This report has three primary aims:

1. To provide an overview of the relevant policies and practices that influence the experiences of newcomer and refugee students in U.S. high schools;
2. To share policy-relevant findings about belonging and citizenship from the perspective of students, teachers, and staff in high schools that serve newcomer and refugee students; and
3. To offer recommendations for educators, schools, districts, and policymakers on how to support newcomer and refugee students.
Overview of Research Methods

In this study, we used mixed research methods, including surveys, interviews, and classroom observations across schools in two states (Arizona and New York) to answer the following questions: How do students, particularly newcomer immigrants and resettled refugees, understand concepts of belonging, rights, and civic identity? To what extent does the social context of schools and communities shape the experience of these youth?

We selected two states, Arizona and New York, which accept a high number of refugee students (among the top six refugee-receiving states in the U.S.) and also have a high proportion of immigrants: 13.4% and 22.6% respectively. However, the political context differs in the two states: while New York is politically liberal and generally welcoming towards immigrants, the political establishment in Arizona has historically been more hostile toward immigrants. The differing political context in the two states was our driving reason for selection: we wanted to explore how newcomer and refugee students fared in different environments and to explore how the broader political environment within a state might influence educational provisions for newcomer and refugee students.

During the 2018-2019 academic school year, the research team collected data from students, teachers, and administrative staff in four public high schools serving newcomer and refugee students in Arizona and New York. Schools in each state were selected based on their high proportion of newcomer and refugee students, as well as their interest and availability in participating in the research. While one school in the study was part of the Internationals Network for Public Schools (INPS), a school exclusively for newcomer students, the other schools were comprehensive high schools that served a high proportion of newcomer students and offered English language classes (ELD/ENL), as well as sheltered instruction.

Across these four schools, we conducted an anonymous survey with 286 students about their views on social and political issues and their sense of belonging within the school space and in society. We recruited students in four to five classes across the four schools with participation ranging from 27% to 100% across the different classes. We focused on history, government, and English classes, as these are subjects where they are most likely to discuss issues relevant to our study. At the end of the survey, we asked students if they wanted to participate in an individual interview. We then conducted in-depth interviews with a sub-sample of 112 students who had taken the survey, as well as 19 teachers, 14 school administrators, and four staff from districts and organizations supporting refugee resettlement. In addition, the research team conducted more than 250 hours of classroom observations of the participating classes over the academic year (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Research Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High schools</th>
<th>4 high schools in 2 states</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students surveyed</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students interviewed</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers interviewed</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School administrators interviewed</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff from districts and refugee resettlement agencies interviewed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of classroom observations</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

i We obtained permission to conduct research in the four selected schools from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Teachers College, Columbia University, as well as from the respective school districts and schools. We also collected parental consent and student assent forms. We use pseudonyms to protect participants’ identities.

ii Comprehensive high schools are those that do not have specific criteria for admission.
Organization of Report

In the first section of the report, we provide an overview of relevant national and state education and immigration laws and policies that are important for understanding both access to public education and the experience of newcomer and refugee youth in U.S. schools. We then present findings and examples from the student surveys, interviews, and classroom observations.

In the last section, we present our main recommendations for key stakeholders including students, teachers, schools, districts, and families. We end with concluding thoughts and the relevance and implications of our study. Given the unprecedented global and national developments regarding the COVID-19 global health pandemic,iii Black Lives Matteriv and anti-racism protests, and the January 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol,v we provide our reflections on the potential impact of these evolving crises for current and future newcomer and refugee students’ schooling experience.

iii After the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020 nearly every state in the U.S. excluding Wyoming and Montana closed public schools for the remainder of the academic year.
iv Three Black activists (Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi) started the Black Lives Matter movement on social media in July of 2013 after the acquittal for the killing of Trayvon Martin in Florida. The movement has grown in size to one of the largest movements in U.S. history with the widespread protests in May 2020 following the killing of George Floyd in Minnesota.
v On January 6, 2021, following a speech by President Trump in which he alleged that the November 2020 presidential election was fraudulent, a mob of pro-Trump supporters violently attacked the U.S. Capitol building in an attempt to stop the counting of Electoral College votes. This riot resulted in the death of five individuals and the destruction and vandalism of property.
National and State Policy Background

This part of the report begins with an introduction to the different types of immigration status that individuals can have in the U.S. Understanding the differences in the immigration backgrounds of the different groups of students who participated in our study was important in analyzing and contextualizing their experiences. We did not ask students about their immigration status; however, based on their personal stories, we can ascertain that the majority of students participating in the study came from these general, and in some cases, overlapping groups, including immigrants (first- and second-generation), resettled refugees, asylum-seekers, unaccompanied minors, undocumented students, and ELLs.

We then provide an overview of the laws and policies regulating education for newcomer and refugee students. Several international treaties, national laws, and court rulings provide for access to education in the U.S. regardless of immigration status. We also share the status of civic education provision in the U.S. to contextualize the limited formal requirements for schools to engage with this content for students.

While federal policies and laws regulate access to education for students, there are also different state and district policies that influence students' experiences in their schools and communities. The two concluding sections in this part of the report explore the state-level contexts and policies that relate to ELLs in Arizona and New York. For both states, we share their background context including population demographics, the state political contexts, relevant education policies, and a description of their models for language instruction in schools. Figure 1 summarizes relevant policies and laws.
Figure 1: Immigration and language policy timeline

- **1974**: NYC becomes a "Sanctuary City" by executive order.
- **1974**: Aspria Consent Decree.
- **1989**: Flores v. State of Arizona filed due to violation of civil rights of ELLs.
- **1992**: Proposition 209: English only instruction in schools.
- **2000**: SB 1070: "Show Me Your Papers" Law.
- **2006**: HB 2064: 4-hour Structured English Immersion courses for ELLs.
- **2012**: Floyd v. City of New York challenges NYPD’s practice of "stop, question and frisk" and is ruled unconstitutional.
- **2013**: Dignity for All Students Act addresses discrimination.
- **2019**: Dream Act grants undocumented students access to state financial aid and scholarships for higher education.
- **2019**: No Child Left Behind Act (2001).

See Policy Background section of this report for more detailed information about these laws and policies.
Overview of Relevant Populations

Immigrants

Since 1970, the number of immigrants in the U.S. has increased three-fold from 4.7% to 13.6% of the population. Although the majority of immigrants residing in the U.S. have legal status, nearly a quarter are undocumented. The majority of immigrants in the U.S. speak languages other than English at home, including Spanish (43%), Chinese (6%), Hindi (5%), Filipino/Tagalog (4%), and French (3%). Both New York and Arizona have some of the highest immigrant populations in the country, with New York ranking third and Arizona eleventh in terms of total number of immigrants compared to other states.

Refugees

Since the start of the Refugee Resettlement Program in 1980, the U.S. has resettled more than 3 million refugees (see Figure 2). Between 2015 and 2017, 208,599 refugees were resettled in the U.S.; in 2019, only 30,000 refugees were resettled in the U.S. The largest numbers of refugees during this period came from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Myanmar, Bhutan, and Iraq. In general, the U.S. has admitted more Christian than Muslim refugees over the past decade; the proportion of Muslim refugees has declined since 2017 with increased vetting and restrictions under the Trump administration.

While the U.S. has historically resettled the highest number of refugees of any country in the world, the refugee quota was drastically reduced under the Trump administration from a ceiling of 110,000 set by the Obama administration in 2017 to a ceiling of 18,000 for 2020—the lowest number since the program was created. After the presidential election in 2020, the Biden administration announced they would raise the ceiling to 125,000 in 2021. Over the past several years, New York and Arizona have ranked in the top ten resettlement states in the U.S., with New York accounting for 6% and Arizona 4% of all refugees resettled in the U.S.

Asylum-seekers

In contrast to refugees who enter the U.S. through a formal resettlement process, asylum-seekers are individuals fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries and seeking humanitarian protection upon arrival in the U.S. In 2019, 84,000 people applied for affirmative asylum, a reduction from 139,777 in 2017, and 31% of applicants were approved. The majority of applicants over the past several years have been from Venezuela, China, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

---

vi Affirmative asylum-seekers have entered the U.S. on legal visas and applied for asylum once in the country, while defensive asylum-seekers apply at the port of entry or after they have entered illegally.

**Unaccompanied Minors**

There has been an increase in unaccompanied minors crossing the border without their parents in recent years due to conflicts and instability in Latin America. Approximately 76,000 unaccompanied children were apprehended at the Southern border in 2019, up from 50,000 in 2018. The children were primarily from Guatemala and Honduras.\(^42\)

**Undocumented Immigrants**

While the number of undocumented immigrants increased from 3.5 million to 12.2 million between 1990 and 2007, the numbers have declined in recent years due to decreased immigration from Mexico, as well as increased immigration enforcement.\(^43\) Approximately 5.1 million children lived with an undocumented parent between 2012 and 2016; of these, approximately 80% of the children were U.S. citizens, 3% were legal residents, and 16% were themselves undocumented.\(^44\)

**English Language Learners (ELLs)**

About one in ten students attending public schools in the U.S. is classified as an ELL, which includes both U.S.- and foreign-born students whose mother tongue is not English or those who have limited English proficiency when they enroll in school.\(^45\) A large proportion of students in the study, whether from a refugee or immigrant background, were also classified by the school districts as ELLs. In 2017, in New York State 9.2% of students were classified as ELLs, compared with 8.1% in Arizona.\(^46\) Due to marginalization in under-resourced schools, ELLs have a lower graduation rate of 67% nationally compared to 85% for non-ELLs.\(^47\) In 2018 in New York, the graduation rate for ELLs was 34% compared with 83% overall,\(^48\) while in Arizona, 47.2% of ELLs graduated, compared with 78.4% of students overall.\(^49\)

**Laws and Policies Regulating Education**

**International Treaties**

The U.S. is a state party to the 1967 Protocol of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which guarantees the right to public education for refugees (Article 22) but not to asylum-seekers or undocumented individuals. The U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (1952), which regulates immigration law, and the U.S. Refugee Act (1980) incorporate the obligations under the 1967 Protocol into national law.\(^50\)

**National Laws and Policies**

In addition to international treaties, U.S. case law has also afforded the right to education for all children regardless of their legal status. In Plyler v. Doe (1982), the Supreme Court argued that denying undocumented children the right to education constituted discrimination under the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. Essentially, this case upheld the right of children to attend public schools regardless of their immigration status. This case represented a watershed moment for immigration policy and for the protection of undocumented populations.\(^51\)

One of the primary implications of Plyler v. Doe is that it prohibits schools from asking about students’ immigration or legal status during the enrollment process or at any time while they are a student.\(^52\) This provision aims to encourage enrollment while protecting student confidentiality and minimizing the risk of discrimination. Consequently, many teachers and staff are unaware of their students’ immigration background. In many cases this issue does not arise until the end of high school when social security numbers are needed to support students’ financial aid applications for college. While the Plyler v. Doe decision applies to K-12 education, the provisions do not extend to higher education.\(^53\) However, several states, including New York, California, and Texas, allow for undocumented students to apply for state-funded financial aid for college. In addition, some districts have issued sanctuary or safe zone declarations to support immigrant families’ rights.\(^54\)

In addition, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was established in 2012 under the Obama administration to prevent the deportation of people brought to the U.S. as children. Under this program, eligible unauthorized young immigrants were granted a two-year work authorization and other benefits. In 2012, 825,439 people were granted DACA status; as of 2019, 650,880 had DACA status, and New York and Arizona each have 4% of DACA recipients.\(^55\) Although the Trump administration attempted to end the

---

\(^{42}\) Since states have different graduation requirements and standards for determining ELL status, these rates may not be directly comparable.

---
program, in June 2020, the Supreme Court ruled against the administration, allowing the program to continue.56

There are numerous policies and laws that regulate access to quality education specifically for ELLs. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbids discrimination on the basis of “race, color, or national origin” in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.57 Thus, school districts receiving federal funding are obligated to provide the same programs for minority students, including students who speak a language other than English at home. The Bilingual Education Act (1968) was the first federal legislation regulating ELLs and allowed for the provision of funding for bilingual programs.58

The Supreme Court case Lau v. Nichols in 1974 led to further amendments of the Bilingual Education Act.5 The Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the failure of the school district to provide English language instruction violated the 14th Amendment and the Civil Rights Act. The resulting Lau Remedies, which applied to all school districts, required districts to implement bilingual education programs for ELL students.51

In addition to federal laws and mandates, there are a number of education policies that directly affect the education of immigrant and refugee students. For example, Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA] of 2015) provides federal funding to state and local education agencies to support ELLs to obtain English proficiency. These policies have changed over the years as states have transitioned from meeting requirements under the national No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to meeting standards under ESSA.

Under NCLB of 2001 and the subsequent Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, there has been an increased emphasis on testing, standards, and accountability. ESSA requires states to report the number of ELLs achieving proficiency in English annually, as well as disaggregate performance on academic achievement tests and graduation rates for ELLs.54 While ESSA is a federal policy, it does allow states significant discretion in the types of instruction and standardized assessment adopted, meaning that there is considerable state variation regarding ELL policies and ELD program-leaving requirements. For instance, in Arizona, the Arizona English Language Learner Assessment (AZELLA) is used to determine entry into and exit from the ELD program, while in New York, the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) is administered to all ELLs.

### Civic Education in the U.S.

The importance of civic education has been a foundational principle of the U.S. public education system; however, a focus on teaching about democratic civic education has declined in the school curriculum since the 1950s.59 While scores on standardized tests in other subjects have improved since 1998, scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) civics exam have been stagnant over the same period.60 For instance, in 2014 less than a quarter of eighth grade students who took the exam passed with a “proficient” score.61 Due to the inconsistent and muted emphasis on civic education in the curriculum, scholars have identified a “civic empowerment gap,” or disparities in civic knowledge and skills between immigrant students and students of color compared to white, non-immigrant students.62

Moreover, there is little consistency in how civic education is delivered. Eighteen states do not have any civic education requirements, and among the remaining 32 states (plus the District of Columbia) that do, standards, time requirements, and curriculum vary widely.63 Among states with civics requirements, civic education is generally taught in U.S. government class and focuses on U.S. history, political systems, and the legal and procedural issues around civic participation.

However, in recent years this situation has started to change and there has been growing interest in clarifying and enhancing civics content and standards across all levels of the education system. One area of focus has been on teaching the content of the citizenship exam, which all naturalized Americans must take. A 2018 survey by the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation found that over two-thirds of American citizens cannot
pass the exam (with a passing score of 60%). In light of this, an increasing number of states are now incorporating content from the exam into their civics standards, while others are requiring students to pass the exam itself: 17 states now require students to pass the U.S. citizenship exam during high school. Arizona was the first state to pass such a law in 2015. Since then this approach is proving to be increasingly popular, as evidenced by the 2018 legislative session, where a majority of U.S. states considered bills to enhance civic education.

While there is growing interest in enhancing civic education, not all states have focused solely on the naturalization exam. In 2018, Arizona created the American Civics Education Pilot Program for Grades 9-12 students. In this program, students complete one semester of an American civics course. In 2020, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) founded the Civic Readiness Task Force to review and enhance state standards in the subject. The task force recommended that the civics curriculum be centered around four domains that students will engage with from pre-K through the end of their secondary education, including civic knowledge, civic actions and skills, civic mindsets, and civic experiences. The New York approach has focused on experiential learning for civics, and thus students in New York who choose to do so will be able to complete a Civics Capstone project to receive the newly approved Civic Readiness seal on their diploma. As many of these changes are very recent, it is too early to see the impact of these different approaches. However, this trend suggests a growing awareness among educators and policymakers of the importance of preparing students to be active citizens.

Arizona

The state of Arizona has a large Latinx and immigrant population, which is also reflected in its schools. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the racial, ethnic, and immigrant composition of the state and the percentage of ELLs and low-income students in Arizona public schools.

---

xii The percentages reflected above are based on 2019 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, “QuickFacts: Arizona” and data from the American Immigration Council, “Immigrants in Arizona.”

xiii The percentages reflected above are based on elementary and secondary school data for 2017-2018 from the National Center for Education Statistics, “English language learner (ELL) students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by state” and “Number and percentage of public school students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, by state.”
Overview of State Political Context

Arizona has been a largely Republican-controlled state since the 1950s, and immigration and education are two of the main controversial issues that have divided conservatives and liberals. However, Arizona’s political identity has shown signs of changing in recent years. Strong performances from the Democrats in the 2018 midterm elections prompted speculation about the state turning “purple.” Furthermore, President Biden’s victory in the state in the 2020 national elections represents the first time that Arizona has elected a Democrat since 1996.xiv

The Arizona-Mexico border is the site of many tensions regarding immigration and continues to be a political flash point, intensifying as a result of the Trump administration’s policies and efforts to build a wall between the two countries. An important illustration of the political division in Arizona regarding immigration is the passage of the controversial legislation targeting illegal immigration, Senate Bill (SB) 1070, the “Support our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act” in 2010.69 One of the most restrictive pieces of immigration legislation passed in the U.S., the law empowered police to ask persons they had stopped for any reason to produce their immigration papers. It also prohibited undocumented workers from seeking employment and made it a crime for legal immigrants not to carry their registration papers. SB 1070 also authorized the arrest—without a warrant—of persons suspected of committing a deportable offense. The U.S. Supreme Court subsequently struck down some of the bill’s provisions as being unconstitutional.70 xv

In 2015, Governor Doug Ducey was among leaders who advocated for a ban on federal resettlement of refugees in the state. However, in response to former President Trump’s 2019 executive order73 that cities and states must first provide written consent to accept refugees for resettlement, the Governor confirmed that Arizona will continue to resettle refugees. 74

Overview of Relevant Education Policies

Banning MAS

A Mexican-American Studies (MAS) program was introduced in Tucson in 1997 aiming to provide culturally relevant curriculumxvi for students; it was subsequently banned in 2010. Following an extended and highly political controversy surrounding the MAS program, House Bill HB 2281 was passed, prohibiting school districts from including in its program of instruction any courses or classes that promote a specific race, class of people, or ethnic group.75 However, in 2017, a federal judge found that the law violated the constitutional rights of students, and that the state acted with discriminatory intent in shutting down the MAS program.76 xvii

Refugee Resettlement

Under the Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP), the Refugee School Impact (RSI) program serves the educational needs of refugee children in Arizona public schools for up to three years after arrival in the U.S. The program provides culturally and linguistically relevant services to schools through two refugee school liaisons, one in Maricopa County and the other in Pima County. Some school districts also have a Refugee Services Office and track the enrollment of refugee students.

Undocumented Students

Schools in Arizona are not permitted to deny enrollment to undocumented students, or to ask them for information related to their immigration status. However,
these students are affected by broader immigration policies and actions that target them or their families. For example, in Tucson in May 2019, Border Patrol detained an undocumented high school senior during a traffic stop, and this incident sparked protests from his classmates.\footnote{77}

There are some efforts to reverse and soften the harsh laws that characterize Arizona’s immigration policies. One example is the recent relaxation of college tuition policy for undocumented students. Under \textit{Proposition 300}, passed in Arizona in 2006, undocumented students were denied in-state tuition rates and state financial assistance. In 2019, the Arizona Board of Regents voted to offer a lower tuition rate (but still 150\% of in-state tuition rates) to undocumented Arizona high school graduates.\footnote{78}

\textbf{Bilingual Education Ban}

The passage of \textit{Proposition 203} in 2000 repealed existing bilingual education laws and required schools to use English only.\footnote{79} Arizona remains the only state in the U.S. to have such an “English only” law.\footnote{80} Efforts to repeal the 2000 law have attracted support, including that of current State Superintendent Hoffman, but have not yet materialized.

In Arizona, providing adequate instruction for ELLs has a long legislative history. Following \textit{Lau v. Nichols} (1974), parents from the Nogales Unified School District (NUSD) contended in \textit{Flores v. Arizona} (1992) that the state was not providing sufficient language instruction for students who were classified as Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Under the Flores Consent Order (2000), the State Board and the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) were required to adopt policies that would rectify this situation for ELLs. \textit{HB 2064}, enacted in March 2006, provided guidance on identification, assessment, classification, and reporting for ELLs. It also provided for the establishment of the Arizona ELLs Task Force to research, develop, and adopt Structured English Immersion (SEI) programs.\footnote{81}

\textbf{Language Instruction Models}

Following recommendations from the Task Force, Arizona adopted the SEI approach to ELD in its public education system in 2008.\footnote{82} Under SEI, students received a minimum of four hours daily of ELD, referred to as the “four-hour block.” ELD is focused on English language acquisition for students, and entry and exit for the program are determined solely by scores on the AZELLA, which tests the English language proficiency of students in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Proficiency levels under AZELLA in ascending order of competence are: (1) Pre-emergent; (2) Emergent; (3) Basic; (4) Intermediate; and (5) Proficient. The assessment is given to all students who have a primary home language other than English (PHLOTE), which is determined by a home language survey and school enrollment forms.

While the SEI model has been supported by some, the model has also received critiques. For example, one study identified the benefits of the SEI model in Arizona as facilitating better English language acquisition skills, greater attention to students’ language needs, and higher reclassification rates of students reaching English language proficiency.\footnote{83} However, a number of critiques have emerged about the implementation of the SEI model, which is viewed by some as a flawed and ineffective way to provide quality education and language instruction for ELLs.\footnote{84} Scholars point to negative consequences of the model, including the de-emphasizing of grade level academic curriculum.\footnote{85} Given the large tracts of time dedicated to ELD, ELL students are effectively segregated from the rest of the school population both academically and socially and this negatively affects their development and performance.\footnote{86} ELLs, the majority of whom do not exit the program in one year, are also unable to take as many content classes needed to ensure that they are on track for on-time graduation.\footnote{87}

Following opposition to the four-hour block for ELL students, the Arizona legislature unanimously passed \textit{SB 1014 (SB1014)} in February 2019 (during data collection), introducing flexibility into the approaches used by schools and districts and reducing the time requirement of ELD in high schools to two hours a day.\footnote{88} In response to \textit{SB 1014}, in December 2019 the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) outlined a new Language Development Approach (LDA) for ELLs that recognizes the cultural and linguistic assets of the students, as well as their socio-emotional health and development needs, and calls for the integration of language and literacy development with content learning.\footnote{89} In 2020, the Arizona State Board of Education approved a plan that gives schools the flexibility to choose from among four different models proposed by ADE.
New York

The state of New York has a diverse population, comprised of a substantial Latinx, Black, Asian, and immigrant population, which is represented in its schools. Figures 5 and 6 illustrate the racial, ethnic, and immigrant composition of the state and the percentage of ELLs and low-income students in New York public schools.

Overview of State Political Context

New York’s political landscape presents tensions between acceptance and discrimination for minorities despite its liberal leanings. Since 2006, the state has elected only Democratic governors and other state-level officials.90 During the 1980s, New York City (NYC) became a sanctuary city, limiting the role of local law enforcement agencies and officers in the enforcement of federal immigration laws.91 At the same time, the city began adopting police practices such as “stop, question, and frisk,” a policy allowing a police officer to stop any person without making an arrest based on a reasonable suspicion that the person committed or was about to commit a crime. This practice aimed to prevent low-level crimes and disproportionately impacted minorities. In 2013, the “stop, question and frisk” policy was ruled unconstitutional because it violated the 14th Amendment’s promise of equal protection.92

The American Civil Liberties Union of New York estimates that police stopped New Yorkers over 5 million times since 2002 and the New York Police Department (NYPD) reports that of those individuals stopped between 2014 and 2017, 53% were Black and 28% were Latinx.93 Research shows there are unintended negative consequences of stop and frisk tactics for undocumented and minority students’ academic achievement. For example, studies have found negative effects on GPAs of undocumented students, increased student absenteeism, especially for Black students, and decreases in college enrollment.94 The New York State Liberty Act (2017) prohibits police from conducting stops or arrests based solely on perceived im-

---

xix The percentages reflected above are based on 2019 data from the U.S. Census Bureau, “QuickFacts: New York” and data from the American Immigration Council, “Immigrants in New York.”

xx The percentages reflected above are based on elementary and secondary school data for 2017-2018 from the National Center for Education Statistics, “English language learner (ELL) students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by state” and “Number and percentage of public school students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, by state.”
Migration status and prevents government agencies from inquiring about immigration status when an individual seeks aid or reports a crime.96

In 2018, New York enacted an expansion to the “standby guardian” state law, which allows parents and caregivers to designate a backup caregiver in certain circumstances, including detention or deportation by immigration authorities.96 In response to increased ICE arrests, the NYC Department of Education (DOE) in 2019 reiterated its commitment to protecting undocumented students and barring non-local law enforcement from accessing school facilities following the election of Trump in 2016 and again in 2019.97

New York has also passed laws to ensure the physical, social, and emotional well-being of all students, including immigrant students. The *Dignity for All Students Act* (DASA) 2010 aims to protect public school students from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property. It amended New York State Education Law to expand concepts of tolerance and respect for others, including awareness and sensitivity related to different races, weights, national origins, ethnic groups, religions, religious practices, mental or physical abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, and sexes. The *Dignity Act* holds schools responsible for collecting and reporting data on incidents related to discrimination, harassment, and bullying.98

**Overview of Relevant Education Policies**

**Refugee Resettlement**

The state's Refugee Services (RS), which is the sole agency responsible for providing services to refugees, is housed under the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.99 The New York State Education Department (NYSED) and the NYC DOE do not have an office devoted specifically to supporting refugees, nor do they provide disaggregated data about the school system’s refugee population. However, the RS does provide a *Welcome to Our Schools* curriculum for refugee children when they enter New York state schools, which is administered through the Refugee Academy100 and Mini-Academy programs. In addition to the content for elementary and secondary school students, the *Welcome to Our Schools* curriculum also includes content modules for teachers, school staff, administrators, peer mentors, and parents in five languages.97

**Access to Higher Education**

In contrast to federal immigration policies, the New York State Legislature approved the José Peralta DREAM Act in January 2019, enabling undocumented students to apply for state-based financial aid under the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) to support higher education. The bill is expected to impact 146,000 young immigrants who would not have otherwise been able to afford college.102

**Bilingual Education**

Between 1972 and 1980, bilingual education was institutionalized at the NYSED. In 1974, the *Aspira Consent Decree* made bilingual education a legal right for NYC’s non-English speaking students as a result of a lawsuit filed against the New York Board of Education by the Puerto Rican and Latinx community.103 After the Board of Education was forced to establish a new program to improve the education of non-English speaking students, districts across the state began expanding bilingual education. In 1981, the Board of Regents approved Commissioner’s Regulations (CR) Part 154, which further codified bilingual education requirements in New York. CR Part 154 defined ELL students and required all local educational agencies to develop and submit a Comprehensive ELL Education Plan (CEEP) to meet the educational needs of ELLs and Multilingual Learners (MLLS), as well as immigrant children and youth.104

The NYSED’s Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) supports eight Regional Bilingual Education Resourced Networks (RBERNs) in the state. As a network, the RBERNs work in partnership with OBEWL staff to provide technical assistance and professional development to districts and schools in order to improve instructional practices and educational outcomes of students who are ELLs. The goal of the RBERNs is to help each district and school create for ELLs an educational environment where they can benefit from their native language and heritage strengths while learning English.105 Beginning in 2016, the NYSED implemented a new regulation concerning Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) requiring professional teacher and leader certificate holders to dedicate a minimum of 15% of CTLE hours to address the needs of language acquisition for ELLs.106
**Language Instruction Models**

New York implements different program options for ELLs that fall under the broad categories of Bilingual Education and English as a New Language (ENL). Under Bilingual Education, there is the Transitional Bilingual Education Program, the Dual Language Program, the One-Way Dual Language Program, and the Two-Way Dual Language Program. These programs all include various amounts of instruction in students’ primary languages. ENL, previously known as English as a Second Language (ESL), emphasizes English language acquisition and is typical for classrooms where ELL students speak many different primary languages and English is the only common language.\(^{107}\) Students enrolled in these programs are identified when they take the New York State Identification Test for ELLs within their first 10 days of school in the state.\(^{108}\) In addition, there are 16 public schools in NYC that are part of the Internationals Network for Public Schools (INPS) and cater to newcomer immigrant students and ELLs who have been in the country for four years or less.\(^{109}\)

To test out of these programs, students must take the NYSESLAT, which is administered every year and tests K-12 students’ English proficiency. Students in grades 9-12 must score at the Expanding/Advanced level on the test and 65 points or more on the English portion of the Regents Exam in the same year.\(^{110}\) The NYSESLAT has been criticized for the amount of time teachers must devote to prepare students for the test and the burden students face in taking the test only one year after their arrival in the U.S.\(^{111}\)
Findings
In this part of the report, we present the main findings that emerged from surveys, interviews, and classroom observations. In Part 1, we provide an overview of the study participants and the four schools. In Part 2, we present our findings on diversity and inclusion in the schools. We then turn to Part 3 to discuss student belonging and well-being. In Part 4, we share our findings on civic identity, rights, and civic engagement. Finally, in Part 5, we present findings on school and community participation.

Part 1: Overview of the Study Participants and Schools

Students
The participants in this study included 286 students from four different public secondary schools, two in New York and two in Arizona. The sample was evenly distributed across gender (49.3% female and 50.7% male). Students were enrolled in grades 9 through 12, with the majority (77.3%) coming from grades 11 and 12. Students’ ages ranged from 14 to 21, with an average age of 17.

Students came from 49 different countries (see Figure 7), and their parents were from 60 different countries. The most widely represented regions of student origin were Latin America and the Caribbean (33.1%) and the U.S..xxii (31.7%). In addition, 14.8% of the students were born in Asia, 13% were born in Africa, 6% were born in the Middle East, and 1.4% of the students were born in Europe.

A great majority (92%) of the students had at least one foreign-born parent. About 23.8% of the students were second-generation Americansxxii and 68.5% were first-generation Americans.xxiii In addition, 14.3% of the students in the study did not live with either of their parents.

Figure 7: Students’ countries of birth

—

xxi For the purpose of analysis, we consider the U.S. separately given that a sizable number of students in our sample were born in the U.S.
xxii Meaning they were born in the U.S. but at least one of their parents was not.
xxiii Meaning they were born outside of the U.S.
Newcomers and Refugees. Students’ time in the U.S. varied across the sample. About half (49.3%) of the students were newcomers (meaning they had been in the U.S. for four years or less) and only one in four students reported being in the U.S. their whole life (see Figure 8). While we did not collect data on immigration status, 15.7% of the students came from refugee-sending countries, or countries from where refugees originate.xxiv

Figure 8: Students’ time in the U.S.

Race, ethnicity, and language. The group of students who participated in this study was very diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and language. Figure 9 shows students’ racial and ethnic identifications. The majority of students identified as Hispanic/Latinx (55.6%), while 18.9% identified as African-American/Black/African, 17.5% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, 11.5% identified as White, and 6.3% as other.

Figure 9: Students’ race and ethnicity

The 286 students in the sample spoke 39 different languages. Over a third of the sample (34%) spoke more than one language at home, with some students speaking up to 4 languages. Figure 10 shows the languages spoken by students. The most common language students spoke at home was Spanish (48.6%). Students also reported speaking English (45.1%), Arabic (6.6%), French (6.6%), Swahili (3.5%), and Bengali (3.9%), as well as numerous other languages.

Figure 10: Languages spoken at home

xxiv We use the variable refugee-sending country as a proxy for refugee status, since we did not directly ask about immigrant status in the survey. The following countries were identified as refugee-sending countries from the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration Office of Admissions and in consultation with local refugee resettlement agencies in New York and Arizona: Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Iraq, Nepal, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.
Teachers

A diverse sample of teachers participated in this study including both men (36.8%) and women (63.2%) across different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Teachers’ years of experience ranged from three to 40 years, with an average of 13 years. Of the 19 teachers we worked with, all but two held a master’s degree or higher and almost half (nine out of 19) had additional certifications in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) or Special Education. In our sample, nine teachers had lived abroad, 14 spoke two or more languages, and six were first- or second-generation Americans. The most common language other than English spoken by teachers was Spanish (52.6% of teachers spoke at least some Spanish and three teachers were fully bilingual). Teachers also spoke some French (26.3%) and languages from other regions in Asia and Africa (21.1%).

Our sample was more racially diverse than the population of teachers in the U.S. In 2017-2018, 79% of all teachers in U.S. elementary and secondary schools identified as white.¹¹² In contrast, 11 of the teachers (57.9%) in our sample were white and eight teachers (42.1%) identified as Black/African/African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or as more than one race/ethnicity.

We classified the subjects taught into four categories. Subjects such as government, citizenship, or related topics were classified as civics; subjects such as U.S. history and global history were classified as history; English language subjects targeting ELLs were classified as ELD/ENL; and other English language subjects were classified as English. Although some teachers taught classes in different subjects, we only observed one class per teacher. A plurality of observed classes were history classes (35%), followed by English (30%), ELD/ENL (20%), and civics classes (15%).

Schools

The four secondary public schools in our study included three comprehensive high schools and one international school for newcomers; they offered different types of classes and approaches for ELL students. The two schools in Arizona provided SEI or a 4-hour block (recently changed to a 2-hour block), which was focused on learning English. Once students achieved a higher level of proficiency, they could enroll in sheltered instruction classes (if available)—classes that focused on subjects such as history or science open to both ELL and non-ELL students. In New York, the schools offered ENL classes focused on English grammar, bilingual classes (in Spanish and other languages), and sheltered instruction. One school in New York was an international school, where they used English and students’ home languages to teach academic content and English.¹¹³ Some schools in this study designed bridge programs, summer programs, or sheltered instruction classes to help students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) learn literacy and math skills while being enrolled in ELD/ENL and mainstream classes.

The schools in our study had racially/ethnically diverse school populations. In New York, both schools had a majority Hispanic/Latinx population (51-61%), as well as high numbers of African American/Black (8-16%) and Asian students (4-25%), and a minority of white students (2-5%). In addition, the schools had substantial numbers of ELLs ranging from 24% in the comprehensive high school to 81% in the international school for newcomers. Both schools in New York served disadvantaged students with high economic needs (relying on free lunch, public housing, or living in poverty), ranging from 79% to 98% of the students.

Similarly, in Arizona, the two schools had diverse populations with a majority Hispanic/Latinx population (60-75%), along with white (17-22%), African American/Black (11-15%), and Asian (3-4%) students. Both schools in Arizona received Title 1 funding for economically disadvantaged students. In addition, both schools had a significant number of ELLs (10-19%) and a sizable proportion of resettled refugees.

Part 2: Diversity and Inclusion

In this section, we present our findings on how schools in our study approached their diverse student populations and the challenges they encountered in promoting an inclusive school environment. Overall, we find that schools grappled with achieving the right balance between diversity and inclusion. On the one hand, teachers and administrators felt the pressure to treat

xxv These programs support students with a literacy level below 4th grade in their native language. They are offered in the summer between grade levels and help ease the transition and support students in being prepared for their next academic level.
students in a similar manner while still acknowledging their diverse backgrounds and needs. On the other hand, students felt pressured to conform to American school life while retaining their cultural and linguistic heritage. These tensions are reflected in the lack of clarity at policy and practice levels about diversity and inclusion, the extent to which these should be promoted, and how to achieve these seemingly contradictory goals.

We explore these tensions and highlight the characteristics of newcomer and refugee students that require unique and differentiated support. We then discuss two relevant challenges that schools encountered in supporting newcomer and refugee students. First, the limited availability of information about the target population of students which affects understanding, decision-making, and the support provided for newcomer and refugee students. Second, the mismatch between newcomer and refugee students’ high academic goals and aspirations and schools’ lower levels of expectations for these students.

Balancing Diversity and Inclusion

Schools and districts recognized that newcomer and refugee students constituted a sizable part of the student population. Support for these students included ELD/ENL placement, after-school tutoring services, language translation, and in some schools, the provision of clothing, materials, and supplies. However, our study found a tendency for schools and districts to treat diverse newcomer and refugee student populations as homogeneous, failing to recognize differences in students’ backgrounds, experiences, and distinct needs.

The students who participated in this study came from very different parts of the world and had diverse life experiences. Some had lived in challenging contexts or had experienced severe trauma, including war, and others were dealing with significant family separations and reunifications. Many had transferred schools multiple times and had attended schools in several countries and in different languages of instruction. Other students had experienced interrupted education, difficult school environments, and some had limited exposure to formal schooling. In addition, some newcomer and refugee students had special needs, and a few older students were mismatched by age and grade, placing them at risk of aging out of the school system before graduation. Despite these important differences, soon after arrival at the school, newcomer and refugee populations often became subsumed into a broader group of students defined as ELLs based on the classification of the English language ability rather than their previous experiences.

The homogenization of students by schools and districts is rooted in the tension between inclusion and cultural recognition of newcomer and refugee students. Schools and districts would like to celebrate the diversity of their students but at the same time want the new students to adapt to the school environment and culture as seamlessly as possible. The tendency towards homogenization and assimilation is reinforced by the perception often voiced by schools that equity demands equal treatment of all students. The conflation of newcomer and refugee students with mainstream students may result in some efficiencies in service provision but can also serve to mask the differentiated needs of this sub-population.

We noted that schools tried to promote awareness of diversity through celebrating different themes and cultures in projects, displays, and cultural activities. Some schools had murals, arts, and flags representing different cultures and countries, in order to highlight the diversity of the student body. However, this approach to multiculturalism has received criticism more generally. Although many students and teachers saw these expressions in a positive light, some students were more critical. One student in Arizona mentioned a cultural event held at the school where students met and shared the traditional food and dance from their countries of origin; however, she expressed that this event was not widely attended by students in the mainstream education program.

Despite these efforts, students from different backgrounds felt that there was a lack of a space and opportunity to express their diversity and to share their experiences with fellow students. Students from minority groups sometimes felt isolated and as a result self-separated into groups with similar linguistic or cultural backgrounds. Students born in the U.S. also expressed their desire to learn more about the different cultures of newcomer students.

Although school policies generally placed all refugee and newcomer students under the broader umbrella of ELL students, we found that students themselves embraced multiple, overlapping dimensions of diversity. For example, students also differentiated themselves by the type of educational exposure in their countries of origin,
their length of time in the U.S., their living arrangements, family obligations and work requirements, socio-economic standing, race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, as well as their cultural and religious backgrounds.

Understanding the social and political intersectionality of students’ identities has important implications for their experiences in school and for fostering a sense of belonging. For example, several students in interviews talked about the lack of space and tolerance for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students. Madison, a student in Arizona who identified as non-binary, talked about how students were discriminated against based on their sexual orientation or gender identity: “Some people make fun of other people for being gay, or bi[sexual] or trans[gender].” Other students talked about the importance of having a safe space at the school, such as a club for LGBTQ students. A student in New York from the Dominican Republic, Mario, shared how having a Gay Straight Alliance created a safer and friendlier school environment. Several teachers also mentioned that sexual diversity was a difficult topic to discuss with students due to conservative beliefs among some families. This points to the salience of different aspects of student identity in the school context and the importance for creating a safe and inclusive school environment for all students, regardless of their immigrant background.

Of special note within the newcomer and refugee populations are students with special needs. The process for identifying newcomer and refugee students with learning disabilities was difficult, and referral procedures were unclear. There are also limited options for assisting these students when they are recognized. For example, Veronica, a special education teacher in Arizona, lamented that ELLs were sometimes placed in exceptional education [special education] due to their lack of English comprehension rather than a learning disability. Moreover, several staff and teachers shared that the assessments were generally done in English rather than in students’ mother tongue, rendering the assessments less accurate.

Learning about Students’ Backgrounds

One challenge for teachers in helping newcomer and refugee students was the general lack of information and knowledge about students’ backgrounds, previous schooling experiences, home languages, and special needs. Teachers generally noted that limited information about students’ backgrounds, challenges in communicating with school staff, and insufficient training on how to better support newcomer and refugee students, impeded their ability to understand their students and to effectively connect with and teach them. This problem was exacerbated when ELL students transitioned to mainstream classes, particularly large classes.

While some teachers made a concerted effort to get to know their students individually by asking them questions informally or via a questionnaire at the beginning of the school year, there was no institutionalized or systematic way for teachers to know if their students needed any special support. While recognizing the sensitive nature of students’ background information, teachers generally expressed a preference for better communication with the school administration. For instance, Brenda, a social studies teacher in New York pointed to the “poor communication” between the guidance counselors, the administration, and teachers about students. Some teachers in sheltered or mainstream classes did not necessarily know if their students were classified as ELLs or if they were newcomers or refugees. Instead, teachers often learned about their students’ backgrounds in an ad-hoc manner, usually as a result of their own requests to the school administration.

Teachers also noted the importance of having guidance and professional development on how to better support newcomer and refugee students, such as being able to respond to issues of diversity and cultural sensitivity, and to learning English. For example, Megan, a social studies teacher in Arizona, highlighted how her teaching experience helped her support ELL students: “In the beginning, when I first started teaching, I was not prepared...I didn’t really fully know what that was going to be like until I’m plucked into this room, and here’s all these kids who don’t speak English. And it’s been a lot of like, learning from my errors.” Megan also mentioned that having access to professional development helped her grow in her ability to support students.

In contrast, other teachers felt ill-prepared to deal with students from different cultures and linguistic backgrounds. For example, Brenda, a teacher in New York who taught mainstream classes, shared her frustration with the lack of support offered to newcomer
and refugee students and to the teachers who work with them: “I feel like there needs to be more support...Like if the kid is a refugee, there’s no trauma support. I never experienced anything like that, and yes, I’m very kind and caring and empathetic, but the reality is I haven’t been trained on what you need. I don’t know what you need. And if you’ve been through something that terrible, you might not wanna tell me what you need. You might not trust me. So that would be great, and...I guess like, more support in teaching English language learners. I haven’t had any...I’ve never even been sent on a PD [professional development].”

**Academic Expectations and Opportunities**

In addition to variations in past experiences, newcomer and refugee students also had a wide range of expectations for their futures. Most students expressed high aspirations for their academic life and progression to college. However, students perceived that school support for these aspirations was inconsistent. For instance, placement into the ELD/ENL program in some cases served to dampen their academic prospects and inclusion into mainstream school life both academically and socially. For example, Omar, a resettled refugee student from Iraq in Arizona talked about the differences in expectations for ELL students versus regular students, emphasizing that ELL students were not expected to achieve as much due to language barriers: “And they’re not expected to do as much as the regular kids in high school. And I don’t think that’s well [good] if they’re gonna come into a country and they’re gonna try to build something. They should be expected to do even more.”

Despite the low expectations they perceived from some teachers and schools, most students interviewed said they planned to attend college and expressed interest in diverse careers contributing to the betterment of society. Popular career choices included becoming a teacher, nurse, entrepreneur, or engineer.

This situation of unequal academic expectations for ELL students was exacerbated by students not being able to take the necessary content classes for graduation in a timely manner. This resulted from the language instruction course load over multiple years or not having access to advanced courses for college credit, either because the school did not offer them or because they did not have access as ELL students.

Students expressed the desire for schools to provide greater focus on college preparation for newcomer and refugee students. In addition to academic readiness, many student participants cited financial difficulties for college as a cause for concern in the future. Perhaps as a corollary to limits on the college pathway for these students, some students expressed a desire for more practical course offerings such as life skills, financial management, and entrepreneurship lessons that could better prepare them for post-high school life.

Students also expressed the need for more support with the college application and financial aid process in general. For example, some students expressed apprehension about the college application process due to limited support in navigating education after high school. For example, Salim, an eleventh grader in New York originally from Bangladesh said, “I dunno, picking a college is fear. Because I have no idea...I feel like no one is there to talk. You know, like, researching is one thing and then talking to someone about college is one thing.” There was only one college counselor in his school who was often too busy with twelfth graders to help younger students with college planning.

Some schools offered specific classes or programs to support students’ pathways after high school. In both New York and Arizona, schools required students to complete internships, provided students the opportunity to enroll in AP classes for college credit, and coordinated visits to college campuses. One student in Arizona, Mercy, participated in three college tours but complained that better planning was needed. Undocumented students face additional hurdles in applying to college since they do not qualify for federally funded student aid (FAFSA).
This section presents our findings on schools’ efforts to respond to the diversity of their school populations and the challenges associated with so doing. While school staff and administrators sought to introduce initiatives to celebrate and explore students’ identities and cultural backgrounds, limited knowledge and information sharing may hinder teachers’ abilities to provide effective instruction and support for refugee and newcomer students. The mismatch between students’ expectations and those of the school for the newcomer and refugee populations can dampen students’ motivation and preparation for college and threaten their sense of belonging. In the following section, we share our findings on how students experienced the school environment and explore their perceptions of belonging and well-being.

Part 3: Student Belonging and Well-Being

In this section, we discuss newcomer and refugee students’ sense of belonging and well-being in the school and wider community. We explore the factors that influence newcomer and refugee students’ perceptions of belonging and acceptance, including their regions of origin and the length of time that they have been in the U.S. We also examine communities and cliques within the school and the varied effects the dynamics of these groupings can have on student belonging. Next, we turn to a discussion on discrimination and bullying. Our study shows that while students were generally happy with their schools and reported a high sense of school belonging, they also experienced discrimination in their communities and daily lives. Student well-being was also compromised by the severe and pervasive nature of mental health issues and trauma experienced by some newcomer and refugee students and the lack of resources to respond to their distinct needs. Finally, we discuss teacher and staff relationships as a crucial component for fostering student belonging and well-being.

School Belonging

We defined school belonging using several questions on the survey that probed student satisfaction at school, as well as student perceptions about their safety, sense of acceptance, nature of teacher-student relationships, and other related questions. We also asked students to elaborate on their ideas of belonging during interviews. Students viewed belonging as feeling safe, accepted, and included in school. Figure 11 presents a sample of their responses.

We find that students’ sense of belonging was influenced by background characteristics, including languages spoken, country of birth, and time in the U.S. The following groups of students were more likely to report a high (above-average) sense of belonging than their peers (see Figure 12).

Findings, Part 3: Student Belonging and Well-being

xxvi All the findings reported in this section are statistically significant.

xxvii For a detailed definition of the belonging index, see the Appendix.
These findings show that newcomers and students from refugee-sending countries were more likely to feel like they belong than their peers. For example, Francine, a 16-year-old resettled refugee student from Tanzania in Arizona, shared her positive experience in school and how that helped her feel like she belongs in the U.S.: “Before I used to think... ‘How am I going to cope with America?’ And then here I feel like, it’s my home now... Although I’m not [a] citizen yet, but I feel like I’m home, I feel like I belong here. Because everyone treat[s] you with nothing but love.”

Schools serving newcomer students or that provide programs for ELLs may have more supportive environments for these students compared to the mainstream students. While ELL students were in some ways isolated from the broader school population in their self-contained classes, they also felt a sense of acceptance and belonging among other ELL students. This finding suggests that students might feel like they belong in specific places and groups within the school, while simultaneously feeling they do not belong to the broader school community. For instance, Tania, a resettled refugee student from the Democratic Republic of Congo in Arizona, explained how she felt more comfortable in her ELD classes compared to her regular classes: “Like everybody just knows me, I make noise in the class, I talk... just freely. But in the other classes I kind of feel awkward and... don’t feel much comfortable talking in those classes.” Amira, a Syrian student in Arizona who was part of the ELD program, shared her experience with different parts of the school community: “So, I don’t feel strongly I belong to the American student, as I belong to... the ELD student like me, they come from, like, different country.” This sentiment was echoed by other students who said they felt more comfortable in the ELD program. These findings point to the need to ensure that all students feel comfortable across different class contexts, whether ELD/ENL or mainstream classes.

As summarized in Figure 12, while newcomer and refugee students felt like they belonged in the school community, this sense of belonging seemed to dissipate for students who had been in the U.S. for a longer time. On average, students born in the U.S. (many of whom were second-generation immigrant students) were less likely to feel like they belonged as compared to foreign-born students.

These findings may be a result of newcomers’ high educational and professional aspirations and expectations or previous experiences prior to arrival in the U.S. For students who have been in the U.S. longer, these findings may be linked to their schooling experiences or awareness of systemic discrimination and exclusion of their communities outside of school. For instance, Giselda, a U.S.-born student in New York with Ecuadorian parents, discussed her awareness of discrimination and racism in the U.S.: “Because that’s happening way too much. About Donald Trump’s wall, about many Black people being discriminated [against] by their skin color.

xxviii This figure is based on the predicted probabilities of reporting a high sense of belonging. Predicted probabilities represent the likelihood that a student with a given characteristic, such as country of origin or language spoken at home, will report a high (above average) sense of belonging.
And I’m talking about African Americans and Latinos... I mean, because that happened to my family too.”

In general, students who spoke Spanish at home were less likely to report a high sense of belonging as compared to their peers who did not speak Spanish at home. This result contrasts with schools’ efforts to support the Spanish-speaking population. Spanish-speakers were the majority across the four schools, forming a community based on a common language. For example, in some of the schools, teachers and staff spoke Spanish, the school offered bilingual classes in Spanish, and provided translated resources for students. However, in some cases, the large groups of Spanish-speaking students resulted in discrimination from other students. In one interview, Miranda, a Spanish-speaking student from Mexico in Arizona described how cliques of Spanish-speaking students were viewed: “They call us here ‘the beaners.’ I don’t know, that’s kind of like racist.” Miranda refers to other students calling them “beaners” due to the stereotype of Mexicans eating lots of beans. Similarly, according to one teacher at a New York school, the floors for ENL classes were referred to by the other students as “Little Cuba.”

Some students also thought the concentration of Spanish-speaking students in schools hindered their efforts to learn English fluently, because they continued to speak Spanish at school. Sergio, a Spanish-speaking student in New York whose family is from Ecuador, shared that “when I arrived here and was in ninth grade, almost all of the students only spoke Spanish, which I thought was inappropriate because I wanted to learn English.” In addition, schools’ efforts to accommodate a large Spanish-speaking population sometimes created tension with other students. For example, Sadiq, a Bangladeshi student in New York, shared his discontent with a teacher who occasionally spoke Spanish in her lessons with large groups of Spanish speakers in the class: “Some classes, like science, I don’t feel like I belong there...’cause like, [the] teacher speaks Spanish.”

Bullying and Discrimination

To better understand students’ experiences at school and in their daily lives, we also asked about bullying and discrimination. We defined these constructs using several items from the survey. We measured bullying at school based on questions about the frequency with which students experienced feeling threatened, being called a derogatory name, having others make fun of their appearance or their accent, being physically attacked, or having others post offensive comments about them online. To measure discrimination, we asked students if they had experienced discrimination based on their race or ethnicity, gender, language, sexual orientation, religion, or country of origin in their daily life.

Figure 13: Student-reported experiences of bullying and discrimination by region

xxix The survey asked students which languages they spoke at home and instructed them to select all that applied. Findings about Spanish-speaking students reflect both students who only spoke Spanish at home and those who spoke Spanish and other languages.

xxx For a detailed definition of this index, see the Appendix.

xxxi For a detailed definition of this index, see the Appendix.
Students reported a high sense of belonging at school and low levels of bullying and discrimination in their daily lives. This indicates that students generally felt safe and included at school. However, as Figure 13 shows, there was some variation in students’ experiences of bullying and discrimination based on their region of origin.

Notably, students from the Middle East reported the highest levels of both discrimination and bullying across all regions. Interviews with students also pointed to high levels of discrimination against Middle Eastern students, often resulting from wearing a hijab at school or speaking in Arabic in public places. For example, Wafa, a refugee from Syria shared how students made discriminatory remarks to her for wearing a hijab at school. Omar, an Iraqi student in Arizona, also shared his bullying experiences in U.S. schools: “In middle school I was called a terrorist because I was from Arabic [an Arab country]. And it was in the locker room. The school did something about it but the student eventually got other students to say it. I just had to let it go.”

Moreover, as indicated in Figure 14, students from refugee-sending countries reported higher levels of discrimination in their daily lives than their peers. However, they did not necessarily face more bullying than their peers at school.

Nonetheless, a few participants related incidents of teachers discriminating against students. For instance, one staff member shared an incident in which a teacher told refugee students that they “stink” and embarrassed them in front of the class.

Our findings also suggest that students experienced gender-based discrimination. On average, students’ reported discrimination index was slightly higher for females as compared to males (see Figure 15). In interviews, some female students stated that they felt discriminated against in their communities or at school. For example, in one interview, Linh, a female student from Vietnam in Arizona, shared how male students’ attitudes towards females made her feel uncomfortable in class: “In my art class, I love it. But the group of the boys laugh [at] me, sit next [to me], laugh [at] me. Yeah, they always say the bad word...they talk about the girls.”

When asked what they would change in the world if they could, several students identified sexual assault and the unfair or unequal treatment towards women.
Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-Being

Students in our study came from diverse backgrounds and immigration experiences, both positive and negative. In some instances, they were exposed to different types of adversity, ranging from family separation, to loss of people close to them, to uncertainty about their legal situation, to gender-based violence, all of which can have lasting mental health implications. Some students also experienced both indirect and direct forms of trauma and had varying mental health conditions, such as anxiety or depression.

Students’ school experiences and sense of belonging were impacted by their struggles with trauma, anxiety, and protracted stress. Only 41.6% of students surveyed lived with both parents, indicating that family separation was a common life experience among those who participated in the study. For example, some students were left behind in their countries of origin with their grandparents and reunited later with their parents but found it difficult to adjust. Leah, a teacher in New York, explained that providing emotional support was one of the main challenges she faced in supporting newcomer students: “There’s also the emotional piece, where a lot of them, they may not be living with their whole family, they may have left people behind or maybe they lived with their mother back home and now they’re living with their father here, so they’re getting used to a new environment, but also like a new parent.” Ndeye, a student in New York originally from Togo, explained the difficulties of coping without her parents for 13 years: “Where is your home and you don’t have your family, it doesn’t feel like home. Because you kinda need your family to support you and guide you. Which I didn’t have.”

Other students faced challenges as unaccompanied minors. In Arizona, one student, Ricardo, was sent to live in a group home for unaccompanied minors after his father was deported to Mexico. Other students had lost their parents, such as one student in Arizona, Sakira, whose father was killed by the Taliban in Afghanistan. Awa, a student in New York from Senegal and a survivor of sexual assault, said she was afraid to discuss her trauma with her school counselor.

While some students were able to overcome these challenges, many expressed difficulties in dealing with their trauma. This in turn negatively affected their ability to learn, engage, and belong in their new schools. As Wafa explained, “Coming to America is a big challenge for me. Not only to [this school]. To America. Because just feel it. A small girl who left her country because of the war, went to Jordan and then come here. It’s really hard.” Teachers faced the challenge of trying to help students overcome these difficulties but often lacked the skills and training needed to provide the support required. Moreover, the process of referral for these students was difficult and in need of streamlining to ensure that students could quickly and easily access these services.

The schools in the study did not have enough counselors or social workers to adequately support all of their students, with the number of guidance counselors ranging from two to six in the schools. The scarcity of counselors who could address mental health in schools was especially dire for students dealing with unique situations and sources of emotional distress. Jerome, a social studies teacher in New York, stated: “With [the student], I couldn’t — there [were] no resources. There were just — the counselors were busy. There’s just one. And the social worker.” Despite the shortage of counselors and social workers, teachers and administrators found ways to support students. Chris, an English teacher in New York, explained his intersectional role as a teacher, counselor, therapist, and mentor: “New York City as a whole is moving towards this anyway about just being more socially-emotional aware... [but] some teachers still see their role as like, ‘I’m just here for the academics,’ and ‘I don’t know how to deal with that,’ you know?” This points to the importance of providing support for teachers to take on an expanded role.

In addition to past trauma, students also faced financial hardship and stress in their daily lives. Many students reported working while attending school to support themselves or their families. Several students shared that working long hours in restaurants or local stores impeded their ability to focus on schoolwork or be involved in extracurricular activities. For instance, Antonio, a student from Mexico in Arizona, recounted that he could not get involved in extracurricular activities and had to leave school early, because he worked 40 hours per week at a local restaurant.
Relationships with Teachers and School Leadership

Teachers’ relationships with students, both inside and outside the classroom, also played an important role in fostering positive feelings of belonging and support among students. Many students in the study highlighted the encouragement they received from teachers in transitioning to the new school and fostering a sense of inclusion. Dolma, a student from Bhutan in New York, stated: “Teachers are really supportive, they help students get what they want, like, their education.” Ahmed, a refugee student from Syria in Arizona, expressed that the best thing about starting at his school was that “the teacher[s] keep encouraging us to learn.” Students explained that building trust with teachers and administrators outside of the classroom helped them feel accepted. Ibrahim, a student in New York from the Gambia said: “When I kind of [gave] up...I was at home, I decided not to come, but the principal called me, so to...encourage me not to give up on school.”

Overall, our findings in this section suggest that students were generally happy with their schools, and that newcomer and refugee students had positive relationships with their teachers and successful experiences at school. However, we find the prevalence of mental health issues and their negative impacts on student performance and well-being to be a recurring theme throughout interviews with students and teachers. In the following section, we probe the level of understanding that students revealed about their civic identity, rights in the U.S., and current and future civic engagement.

Part 4: Civic Identity, Rights, and Civic Engagement

In this section, we share our findings on how students in this study understood the concept of citizenship. Students broadly shared a similar understanding of what constituted a good citizen but tended to have a more legal understanding of citizenship as opposed to a participatory notion. We analyze their perceptions of rights and opportunities in the U.S. and find that these differed across groups of students. Next, we assess their proclivity for future civic engagement and find that to be low overall. Students expressed apathy and disengagement with the current political system. This was rooted in feelings of disempowerment and a lack of appreciation for how social and political issues could affect them on an individual or community basis.

Understanding Civic Identity and Citizenship

To understand students’ notions about citizenship, our survey asked them to share their perceptions of how an ideal citizen should act. Figure 16 summarizes their responses. Students generally agreed or strongly agreed that an ideal citizen should engage in voting (85.3%), learn the history of the country (92.0%), respect officials (87.5%), respect opinions (96.8%), and obey the law (85.3%). There was more disagreement around other items. In particular, 19.6% of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed that protesting was a characteristic of an ideal citizen, and 31.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed that an ideal citizen should pay taxes. We also found that regardless of background characteristics, students tended to share the same views of ideal citizenship.

In addition to the survey data presented in Figure 16, we asked students to elaborate on their perceptions of the ideal citizen during the interviews. Many responded that an ideal citizen behaves the laws, votes, acts responsibly, and engages with the community. Other common responses included not discriminating or judging others, going to college, and working hard (see Figure 17).

For example, Wilson, a student from Honduras in New York, suggested that citizens “should follow the rules, always. If they don’t do it, then they shouldn’t be in the country.” When asked to describe an ideal citizen, Lila, a student from El Salvador in New York, said it was “someone that votes.” A few students understood ideal citizenship in terms of belonging to a diverse community. For instance, Carina, a student in Arizona, argued that citizenship means “that we’re all [part of the] same community but from different parts of the world.”

Overall, students generally understood citizenship through a more traditional or personally responsible lens rather than a participatory or justice-oriented perspective. The idea of citizenship as related to legal protection and freedom also emerged from other interviews. In the words of Ibrahim, a newcomer student from Guinea in New York, “For me, citizenship is like when you have the documents of the country you live in, and you are safe, you feel safe. You don’t have any immigration issues.”
### Figure 16: Student perceptions of an ideal citizen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voting</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining a party</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning history</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>59.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following news</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respecting officials</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protesting</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping the community</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting human rights</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting the environment</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obeying the law</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respecting opinions</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying taxes</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

### Figure 17: Student ideas of an ideal citizen (from interviews)

- defend country
- help community
- part of society
- don't be racist
- give opinion
- ethical values
- born here
- respect
- exam
- help people
- don't speak bad
- developed community
- passport
For another student in New York, Dolma: “Citizenship is like, you get to be here legally, not like, illegally. You don’t have to fear about nothing, you don’t have to fear... getting kicked out of the country, you get to focus on the things you want to do...citizen[ship], is like a way of hope, of freedom.”

Perception of Rights in the U.S. xxxiii

To understand how students perceived rights and opportunities in the U.S., the survey asked about their views on people’s chances to get a good education, a good job, and whether they believed everyone’s rights were protected in the U.S.xxxiv Figure 18 summarizes average differences in students’ perceptions of rights in the U.S. In general, newcomer students and those from refugee-sending countries reported more positive perceptions of rights in the U.S. The results indicated significant differences by region of origin: U.S.-born students reported the most negative perceptions of rights in the U.S.

Newcomer and refugee students generally had a more positive outlook, perhaps since they were comparing their rights in the U.S. to rights they may have lacked in the countries that they left. To Samira, a resettled refugee from Somalia in Arizona, being an American “means good to me. Because everyone, almost everyone, should be a citizen in this country. Everyone should have freedom to be here. And to let the kids learn. They can graduate from high school, go to college, do all kinds of jobs they want, learn.”

Figure 18: Summary of average differences in students’ perception of rights in the U.S.xxxv

xxxiii All the findings reported in this section are statistically significant.
xxxiv For a detailed definition of the perception of rights in the U.S. index, see the Appendix.
xxxv This figure is based on the results of t-tests analyzing differences in students’ perception of rights in the U.S. index by relevant characteristics, such as country of origin or time in the U.S. In each case, the results mean that on average, students from a given group reported more positive perceptions of rights in the U.S. than their peers.
In contrast, students who had been in the U.S. for a longer time (or all of their lives), as well as Spanish-speakers, tended to report more pessimistic views on the U.S. context. Some students shared their disillusionment with people’s rights and opportunities. For example, Carlos, a second-generation student in Arizona who identified as Mexican-American, expressed that he did not relate to the characteristics he saw as being American – pick-up trucks, beer, and shotguns – because “those are American-Americans.” Instead, he saw his American identity as “just being born in the United States and having the right to vote.”

Other students expressed their frustration with how some communities are treated. Antonio, a student from Mexico in Arizona who had been in the U.S. for 10 years, expressed that “I feel like immigrants, Mexicans, Latinos, Blacks, you know, all those people who are not white, are categorized as inferior.” The fact that students who had been in the U.S. longer expressed more pessimistic views on rights and opportunities may be linked to the declining optimism of immigrant students over time, which has been noted in the academic literature. In addition, it is important to recognize that most of the U.S.-born students who participated in our study belonged to marginalized communities, such as traditionally excluded racial and ethnic groups and low-income or homeless families.

Students were also aware of the growing anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment in the U.S. Many commented on how immigrants were portrayed in the media or expressed concern about policies affecting immigrant communities. Sam, a second-generation American student of Central American origin in Arizona, reflected on the discourse surrounding the 2016 presidential election: “I still remember because, we were scared and all that stuff…Like, [a] majority of people who came from South America were scared and all that, ‘cause Donald Trump [was] talking about the immigration rule. I was scared in a way, ‘cause I’m not sure if any of our family was like that [undocumented]. Or if any of my friends might have their own families get taken away.”

When asked specifically about the rights and opportunities that immigrants should have in the U.S., students generally responded positively. Overall, students agreed with the idea that immigrants should be able to continue speaking their own language, have the same educational opportunities as U.S.-born children, have the opportunity to vote after spending several years in the country, and be able to continue having their own lifestyle. However, there were significant differences by state, gender, and classroom discussion (see Figure 19).

In particular, these findings suggest that students living in Arizona had more positive perceptions of the rights that immigrants should have in the U.S. This might be explained by the greater anti-immigrant sentiment in Arizona as compared to New York (see Policy Background Section), which may have heightened these students’ appreciation of the importance of immigrant rights.

Figure 19: Summary of average differences in students’ perception of immigrant rights

- More positive perceptions of immigrant rights
  - Students living in Arizona
  - Female students
  - Students who reported higher class discussion

- As compared to
  - Students living in New York
  - Male students
  - Students who reported lower class discussion

xxxvi For a detailed definition of the perception of immigrant rights index, see the Appendix.
xxxvii This figure is based on the results of t-tests analyzing differences in students’ perception of immigrant rights index by relevant characteristics, such as country of origin or time in the U.S. In each case, the results mean that on average, students from a given group reported more positive perceptions the rights that immigrants should have than their peers.
Current and Future Civic Engagement

Students were also asked about their current and future civic engagement. In contrast to students’ perceptions of the ideal citizen, we find significant differences in their engagement in civics and their expected involvement in social and political causes in the future. On average, students’ civic engagement index and future civic engagement index were higher for students who participated in civic clubs and reported higher levels of classroom discussion (see Figures 20 and 21).

These findings illustrate the importance of students’ engagement in school activities for both current and future civic engagement, which aligns with previous research on the connection between extracurricular activities and civic engagement (see Part 5 of the findings).

We also find significant differences by school and by state, with higher levels of civic engagement reported by students in New York. Hence, the school and broader social context matter when considering students’ actual and future civic participation. For example, student participation is influenced by schools’ provision of opportunities for engagement in civic activities in class and extracurricular activities or the extent to which students feel involved in their local communities.

---

xxxviii All the findings reported in this section are statistically significant.

xxxix The civic engagement index was constructed using four items that asked students about the frequency with which they talk with others about political or societal issues, watch television to keep informed about current events, read the news, or post a comment or image online about a political or societal issue. For a detailed definition, see the Appendix.

xl The future civic engagement index was constructed using 10 items that asked students how likely they would be to partake in certain activities in the future. Activities included voting, contacting elected officials, collecting signatures, running as candidates in local elections, taking part in peaceful protests or building occupations, among other forms of engagement. For a detailed definition of this index, see the Appendix.

xli This figure is based on the results of t-tests analyzing differences in students’ civic engagement index by relevant characteristics, such as country of origin or time in the U.S. In each case, the results mean that on average, students from a given group reported higher civic engagement than their peers.

xlii This figure is based on the results of t-tests analyzing differences in students’ future civic engagement index by relevant characteristics, such as country of origin or time in the U.S. In each case, the results mean that on average, students from a given group reported higher expectations for future civic engagement than their peers.
Teachers tended to view civic engagement as related to voting and community service. Some teachers explained that their students might not share these views or might not value civic engagement. Brenda, a social studies teacher in New York, stressed the importance of voting and taking care of the community. She perceived her students as being mostly disengaged and not interested in civics: “I think it’s just like, they’re very indifferent to it. They don’t see a benefit.” Megan, a teacher in Arizona elaborated: “I think they probably value it [civic engagement], but they don’t participate in it. I mean, they see that it’s important, but I don’t feel like it pertains to them.”

To some teachers, the reason behind students’ apparent apathy towards civic matters was that students did not feel like they could make a difference. Peter, a teacher in Arizona, expressed that the reason why students did not value civic engagement was that “a lot of them see, it seems...so far out of their reach to actually change that.” Teachers generally attributed this sense of powerlessness to students’ age and legal status. Sam, a social studies teacher in Arizona explained: “You know, if you’re not able to vote, either because you’re not a citizen or because you’re not old enough...it’s hard to make you think voting is important.”

Students also generally felt disempowered in terms of their ability to bring about concrete change. For example, when asked if he and his friends were interested in political events, John, a U.S.-born student in Arizona, said: “We mainly don’t really care about it, ‘cause it kind of affects us, but we can’t really do anything about it, ‘cause we’re not old enough to do anything yet.” Another student from Senegal in New York, Fatou, said “I can do nothing because people, whenever they believe something, there’s no way you can change that.”

In general, students did not see themselves as political actors, even when they expressed interest in political issues or were involved in social causes. Apathy around civic engagement was linked to students’ lack of awareness about what they could do as youth to change a situation, as well as to their age, limited experience and exposure, and other challenges in their lives. Many saw politics as related to government and shared they felt disempowered and unable to participate within the political system.

At the same time, students expressed interest and concern about political and social issues such as immigration, climate change, police brutality, and gun violence (see Figure 22). However, they did not necessarily see these issues as political or related to civic engagement. For example, Awa, a student from Senegal in New York, said that she was “not interested in politics” but shared her concerns about bullying, discrimination, and sexual violence. Nadia, a student from Iraq in Arizona, similarly said she had no interest in politics but mentioned her interest in environmental issues and gun control. This supports research that advocates for “new civics” or an approach to civic education that is directly related to the daily experience of youth and their social contexts.119

Figure 22: Important social and political issues (from interviews)

Several students also expressed interest in social or political issues in their countries of origin. For example, Sara, a Bangladeshi student in New York, compared access to free education in Bangladesh and the U.S. and shared that she was concerned with the cost of education in Bangladesh. Other students expressed wanting to end political corruption and violence in their home countries such as the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, repression of political opposition in Burundi, and the treatment of the Yazidis in Iraq.

In this section, we demonstrate that students generally viewed citizenship and civic identity in terms of legal ideas and abiding by rules and were less likely to associate these concepts with a more justice-oriented or community-minded participatory ideal of citizenship. Our findings on students’ perceptions of rights in the U.S. point to a dissipating effect over time: the longer they lived in the U.S., the more pessimistic students felt about their rights. We link this to our findings in previous sections regarding students’ negative experiences in the wider community, for example, bullying and discrimination. Next, we turn to our findings on school and community participation for newcomer and refugee students.
Part 5: School and Community Participation

In this section, we discuss students’ participation in classes, activities, and school clubs. We explore how these forms of engagement are linked to their perception and practice of civics and belonging. Overall, we find that student participation in extracurricular activities and class discussion was associated with positive outcomes in their involvement and engagement in civics and belonging. We also consider the role of teachers in fostering class discussion, particularly around sensitive issues. In addition, we discuss the importance of family involvement and community engagement for belonging and greater participation in school.

Clubs and Extracurricular Activities

Outside of the classroom environment, extracurricular activities can provide important spaces for student interactions, teamwork, and school-spirit building. An important finding is that students’ participation in school-related or extracurricular activities was positively associated with a higher sense of belonging and higher current and future civic engagement. Previous studies have also highlighted the link between students’ engagement and their participation in civics-related extracurricular activities.

To learn about students’ extracurricular activities, the survey asked about student involvement in youth groups, sports teams, or any kind of voluntary organization either in or outside school. The majority of students in our study (approximately 70%) reported participating in one or more clubs (see Figure 23).

Students who participated in clubs or organizations, regardless of whether these were school-based or not, were more likely to report a high sense of belonging at school than their peers who did not participate in clubs.

This finding highlights the importance of participating in clubs or activities to foster a sense of belonging and inclusion at school. For Ali, a resettled refugee student from Uganda in Arizona, the greatest positive thing about school was being part of the soccer team, which helped him build relationships with other students from different backgrounds: “Playing with people that I know, like soccer. I had more friends here...I hang out with a lot of people, just like Mexican [students], white people.”

Figure 23: Student participation in clubs and organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of clubs</th>
<th>Percentage of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

xliii All the findings reported in this section are statistically significant.
xliv We calculated the predicted probability that a student who participates/does not participate in clubs would report a high (above average) sense of belonging. Predicted probabilities represent the likelihood that a student with a given characteristic, such as country of origin or participation in extracurricular activities, will report a high sense of belonging.
Students generally emphasized the relevance of existing clubs and the desire for more opportunities for interaction. For example, Miranda, a student originally from Mexico in Arizona, viewed clubs as an opportunity to share diverse cultures and foster belonging: “I think we should do like clubs or something like that...maybe a club where we can all get together and talk about how our culture is, or our religion or sort of things that others don’t know, I think that would be really cool because it would make us feel like we belong here.” Teachers also valued the potential of clubs for encouraging belonging. Veronica, a teacher in Arizona who taught English and worked with students with special needs, viewed inclusion as a by-product of extracurricular activities.

However, many participants in the study expressed that the extracurricular activities offered by schools tended to be limited to sports. Donna, an English teacher in Arizona, lamented the emphasis placed on sports over other extracurricular activities: “[Students] will tell you themselves that if it is not student council or sports then they’re not really supported.” Other students mentioned they would like the schools to offer more school clubs and sports. School administrators and teachers were also interested in supporting this initiative but expressed that there was limited time and funding available.

The types of extracurricular activities in which students participated were also relevant. The most common were sports teams, with over a third of the students being part of a team. In addition, students participated in drama, music, and community organizations (see Figure 24).

A total of 91 students (33.2%) reported participating in civic-related clubs, such as organizations affiliated with political parties, groups that help the community, collect money, or campaign for social or political issues, or school-based clubs like student government, school newspaper, or debate club. On average, compared to students who did not participate in civic clubs, students who did partake in civic-related organizations reported having higher civic engagement and higher expectations of future civic engagement (see Figure 25).

**Figure 24: Student participation in extracurricular activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization helping the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama or music group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other clubs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious organization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community youth group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate club</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group campaigning for an issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group collecting money for a cause</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School newspaper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth organization for political party</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Extracurricular activities can also function as a mechanism to increase students’ understanding and exercise of civic rights. Mariana, a student in New York originally from the Dominican Republic, explained that she was part of a girls leadership program where she engaged in activities to counter racism, protect the environment, and address homelessness. When we asked if she felt empowered to make a change in the social and political issues she cared about, she highlighted the value of this leadership program: “Sometimes. ‘Cause I think I don’t have, like, enough power to do changes. But in this program, they are teaching...they let us know that we have a voice and that voice matter[s].” As this quote illustrates, participation in civic clubs is an important part of fostering current and future civic engagement among students.

Class Discussion

Another measure of student participation and exposure to civics is the extent to which students engage in class discussion. We asked students whether they raised current political events in class, felt free to express their opinions, and how teachers engaged in conversations about political or social issues in their classes. Students generally reported participating in class discussions. Students who reported above-average levels of class discussion also reported positive outcomes related to belonging and civic engagement (see Figure 26).xlvi

Class discussion offered an opportunity for students and teachers to engage in difficult conversations about belonging and diversity in the U.S. For instance, in an observation of an English class in New York, the students discussed a text from W.E.B. Du Bois and talked about the first time he realized he was different. The teacher, Maria, shared her own experience as a newcomer and asked students to share the moment when they too realized they were “different.” In an English class observed in Arizona, the teacher, Donna, led a discussion about discrimination and racism. She asked students their opinions on whether everyone is given equal opportunities in the U.S. and then invited them to reflect on their own biases. However, despite the teacher’s attempt at discussing sensitive issues, most students in the class did not feel comfortable sharing their views.

Classes that fostered student confidence, participation, respect, and tolerance created learning environments conducive to discussion, debate, and dialogue. For example, Yusef, a social studies teacher in New York asked students to lead a daily affirmation: “I was born to be great...” Students often cheered after this refrain and the classroom maintained a high level of energy and robust participation throughout the period. Because of the positive, discussion-based environment this teacher fostered, students were comfortable expressing their diverse opinions. As expressed by Isabela, one of his students from the Dominican Republic, “I feel like in Mr. Yusef’s classroom we can just give our opinion and everybody will respect it. Even though...I mean, you’re
not wrong; it’s your opinion, your point of view.” As this quote illustrates, by learning to respectfully disagree and discuss their differences, students could counter bullying and discrimination.

Sensitive Topics and Teacher Positionality

Despite the importance of classroom discussion, teachers in the study were generally uncomfortable discussing controversial and sensitive topics in class and in some cases sought to avoid discussion around these topics, consistent with findings from other studies. Over the course of the study, teachers mentioned several sensitive or controversial topics that included identity, racism and discrimination, politics (e.g., Trump, political polarization, etc.), immigration (e.g., building the border wall, unaccompanied minors, deportation, etc.), LGBTQ issues, abortion, religion, and Israel-Palestine relations. Even if teachers wanted to engage in discussions around these topics, they did not necessarily feel comfortable approaching controversial issues or recognize the value of debating complex issues in class. Some teachers suggested their role in these polarized discussions was to be a mediator, to be neutral, and not to take sides or disclose their personal opinions. Strategies included discussing multiple sides or perspectives of the issues, playing devil’s advocate, and encouraging respect for all opinions and arguments.

Some teachers in both New York and Arizona said they avoided these sensitive topics altogether or did not share their personal opinions with their students for fear of repercussions. For example, Megan, a social studies teacher in Arizona explained, “I don’t think it’s a teacher’s job to express my beliefs.” However, despite the regulations and unwritten rules, some teachers said that they shared their political opinions openly with students. For instance, Brenda, a social studies teacher in New York said “You’re not allowed to push your political agenda or your political opinions on students... However, I do share.” Other teachers mentioned the lack of time or flexibility in the curriculum due to state testing requirements that limited their ability to talk about more sensitive issues around identity and politics.

Students had discussions about political and social issues in government classes more often than in other classes.

In other courses, such as history, teachers occasionally missed opportunities or chose not to connect class material with broader ideas, for instance, not linking historical events with similar current issues. For example, in one observation of a U.S. history class in Arizona, Peter presented information on the Japanese internment camps but did not make any connection to instances of forced removals in the present day.

Teacher identity and positionality were also linked to how teachers addressed sensitive topics in the classroom and built relationships with students. In particular, teachers mentioned their racial/ethnic identity, personal immigration experience, time living abroad, and knowledge of other languages as either facilitators or barriers to connecting with students. For example, several teachers spoke about their own experiences or their families’ experiences immigrating to the U.S. and how this enabled them to connect with their students. Jerome, a history teacher in New York, explained that he grew up in the U.S. but did not become a citizen until his 30s. This experience helped him engage with issues of citizenship and civic engagement from a non-legal standpoint: “I just focus on making them [the students] feel like they’re a part just as much as anybody else. I mean, you’re here one day, you live here; I don’t care if you’re here a day, [or if] you’re here twenty years, you’re- this is your home now, and let’s make it our home, and what’s, you know, what can we do to make it, make you feel welcome and, and at home.” Some of the teachers also shared being ELLs themselves and struggling to learn the language when they first arrived. For example, Maria, an English teacher in New York said in an interview: “Listen, I’m an ELL myself. It’s okay. I make mistakes!”

Several teachers also discussed their identity as white and privileged as a challenge in terms of connecting with their students. Brenda, a teacher in New York, referred to her “blind white privilege,” while others in both New York and Arizona talked about their identities as white males working with newcomers and students of color. Sam, a social studies teacher in Arizona who taught culturally relevant curriculum primarily to students of color said: “I’m a white guy. It’s just the fact of... I personally struggle

xlviii While the U.S. Supreme Court case Pickering v. Board of Education (1968) protects teachers’ constitutional rights to speak about public issues, other state legal regulations have limited teachers’ ability to advocate for specific political candidates at school. For instance, state regulations in both New York and Arizona prohibit advocacy for political candidates or parties in the classroom. Furthermore, the Arizona state legislature has attempted to limit teachers’ discussion of political issues in class through House Bills 2015 and 2002, which ultimately did not pass. HB 2015 sought to prevent teachers from expressing their political ideology or religious beliefs in the classroom, while HB 2002 contained a provision to ban the teaching of “controversial topics.”
with whether I’m the right person to teach these classes.” These teachers were aware of their identity and privileges and thoughtful about the impact this might have on their students.

**Family and Community Engagement**

Our findings show that greater engagement with family and community members helps support students’ sense of belonging and civic engagement and strengthens the relationship between schools and their surrounding diverse communities. Schools in this study attempted a variety of ways to include families as well as local community organizations in school life, but many noted they would like to be doing more to foster family and community engagement.

Teachers faced the challenge of communicating and forging relationships with the parents, families, or caregivers of newcomer and refugee students. These students came from families where cultural and linguistic barriers in some instances prevented effective engagement. Interpreters were often needed for teachers to speak with students’ parents, and this was difficult given the limited availability of interpreters, particularly for uncommon languages. Further, there was often a lag between teachers requesting contact with a parent and contact being realized. Districts sought to support teachers with contracted translators and phone translation services; however, awareness and usage of these services were low. Schools and districts experimented with onsite translators versus telephone-based interpreters, with the latter being more expensive but offering more immediate and a wider range of translation capabilities. Staff, such as Jill, a social worker in Arizona, reported feeling pressure not to use the phone translation services because of the cost and effort involved. One staff member, Claudia, in Arizona explained, “It is very hard to talk to the parents. To find, you know, to get an interpreter to call the parents...the process is cumbersome.” As a result, many times students themselves took on formal or informal translation roles for their parents, siblings, and peers.

Despite these communication barriers, school and community events that bring parents to school can help build trust and rapport with families and help teachers learn more about student backgrounds and home life. Many teachers noted that events held in the evenings were often poorly attended due to conflicts with work schedules and lack of childcare. Claudia shared, “I had the parent-teacher night here last semester and...not even one parent showed up. And we sent notes home, we talked to the kids, and so...I think some of them work at night...they’re exhausted and they have to get dinner for their kids, some of them don’t have a car to come over.”

Lack of information about events was cited as another barrier to participation, particularly when communication was in English. In several cases, schools translated the information to several languages and relied on word-of-mouth for information about school events to be shared. However, even when parents did know about events, they did not attend school events because they did not speak English well or felt uncomfortable in the school environment. Hosting school events at flexible times was one strategy schools used to enhance parent engagement. For example, one school in New York held monthly Saturday meetings for families during the day instead of evening events. A school in Arizona provided language-learning classes for parents and caregivers in the evenings using school facilities.

### Community Partnerships

Community partnerships with schools provided assistance to students and families and also helped build relationships in the community. For example, one school in the study worked with community partners, including faith organizations, to do fresh food drives for school families on the weekends. Another school used a greenhouse club and the local community gardens as a way to provide a special extracurricular activity for newcomer students and create opportunities for interaction with the wider local community. At another school, a local organization collaborated with students on community projects on a weekly basis. Students designed and developed research projects on community issues, including minimum wage laws, immigrant rights, and prison reform. These types of community projects also created opportunities for teachers to build relationships with students’ families.

Hosting honor roll dinners and diversity celebrations at night or on weekends was another strategy used by some schools to involve families. These events created opportunities for schools to invite families to more formal, celebratory events that helped families and students build a positive association with the school. These events also allowed students to build bridges between their school and home lives by introducing their parents to their new teachers and friends outside of school hours. School and family events that involved sharing food were identified as popular and effective ways for families, students, and school staff to learn about each other and connect in a genuine, informal way.
Schools also proactively reached out to communities and parents by hiring community engagement specialists. At one school in New York, the full-time community engagement specialist helped provide translation and communication services in real time, supported staff, students and parents in learning about cultural norms and school expectations, and facilitated weekend and evening events for families. In addition to receiving information about the school, these events were an opportunity for community organizations to offer workshops and resources for parents.

All of these examples demonstrate different ways the schools in this study reached out to parents and communities. As noted by many staff members, engagement levels varied, and there was a general feeling that schools could be doing more to build connections between students’ home lives and school lives. Family engagement and community outreach initiatives were seen as important both because they play a role in fostering belonging and connections between students’ families and their schools, and because they provide opportunities for students to learn about and directly participate in civic activities, for example by engaging with the community through a community garden project.

In this part of the report, we show that student participation in the school context—in activities, clubs and discussions in class—plays an important role in developing a sense of belonging among newcomer and refugee students. Having a strong sense of belonging, acceptance, and well-being in the school community is important for fostering participation and engagement in school and community life. Relatedly, participating in activities and clubs at schools can lead to a greater sense of belonging among students.

We find that students welcomed class discussions and class environments where they felt safe and valued and appreciated the spaces and opportunities to explore topics. However, teachers were generally reluctant to engage in political or sensitive discussions outside the formal curriculum for a number of reasons. This can create and reinforce significant gaps in students’ understanding of important civic concepts and their ability to connect school content to practical applications in the community and society at large. It may also influence their current and future civic identities and actions. This is especially true for newcomer and refugee students who may have limited alternative options for such exposure. Our study also highlights the importance of family and community engagement for supporting students’ sense of belonging and civic engagement in the school and broader community.
Policy Recommendations

Throughout the study, students, teachers, and administrators shared their experiences, thoughts, and suggestions about initiatives that worked well in their schools and what could be done to improve how their schools provided support for newcomer and refugee students. Following our analysis of the schools studied, this section of the policy report offers recommendations for fostering a school environment that nurtures a sense of belonging and civic identity for newcomer and refugee students. This section also shares some positive examples of what schools in our study were already doing to promote inclusion and belonging among newcomer and refugee students.

In our study, we find many stakeholders working at various levels and in different ways to support newcomer and refugee students. Many experienced similar challenges in serving this population but were not always connected or aware of each other’s efforts. Our report recommends that the main stakeholders involved in the provision of high-quality and inclusive educational opportunities for newcomer and refugee students jointly consider the recommendations offered here and work together to strengthen the environment for these students. These stakeholders include the students themselves, parents, families and community members, teachers, school administrators, school district officials, state departments of education, and other supporting organizations, such as refugee resettlement agencies, non-profit bodies, faith-based entities, and community-based groups.

The report makes recommendations in the following six key thematic areas:

1. Student Diversity
2. Support and Resources
3. Extracurricular Opportunities
4. Post-Graduation Pathways
5. Professional Development for Teachers
6. Family and Community Engagement

Image 5: Student posters
(Russell, 2019)
1. Student Diversity

We find that there was great appreciation among both students and teachers of students’ different cultural backgrounds and the potential benefits this brought to the school environment. There were many examples of the schools’ willingness to engage through projects, displays, and cultural activities. However, it was sometimes challenging for schools to achieve the right balance between recognition of student diversity and achieving student inclusion. The great diversity among the student population can also be challenging to represent in ways that do not reduce a differentiated population to a single perception of its culture. We also noted that cultural displays or events, while well-intentioned, can in some instances inadvertently perpetuate a superficial view of student cultures and identities. In this vein, students expressed a desire to have a deeper exploration of their identities and cultures, and to share their experiences with their peers.

It is also important to consider that students have multiple, intersecting identities and needs. For example, in the schools we studied, vulnerabilities such as poverty and homelessness were pervasive. For many students in the study, experiences of poverty often overlapped with their immigrant status. This type of intersectionality represents both a challenge and an opportunity to provide an integrated set of services to comprehensively support students’ needs and benefit the broader school population. Our study also captured a desire for a shift in perspective from a deficit notion of diversity as something to be accommodated, to an understanding of diversity as something that can be valued and utilized within the school environment. The following recommendations are made on the basis of our study:

Recognize, celebrate, and explore student diversity

1.1 Develop more forums where students can meaningfully select and share ways to explore their culture and experiences together.

1.2 Explore issues around diversity and inclusion in classroom content/curriculum and instruction.

1.3 Incorporate elements to reflect and include diverse school population (e.g., books in the library, food offered in the cafeteria, language courses, events, etc.).

Understand diversity within diversity

1.4 Identify and support the multiple, intersecting identities and needs of students.

Adopt a strengths-based approach to diversity

1.5 Utilize students’ multilingual and life experiences into actionable support for the school and to support new students.

---

### Showcasing Diversity

Some schools hosted multicultural days where students were encouraged to share and display their diverse cultures through clothing, food, dances and other media. Special assemblies to celebrate diversity were held in some schools, and in others, there were designated days and months to collectively explore different dimensions of diversity. For example, one school hosted an international poetry day and reading of books from different cultures. Another school celebrated a different theme each month through artwork displays, including Black History month, Day of the Dead, etc.; another school showcased student diversity through flags from different countries of the world represented in the student body.

### Promoting Diversity through Books

Some schools in our study had designated areas in their libraries where students could find books written in different languages, including their own. Other schools used digital libraries with online access to expand their holdings to include multicultural literature. Some teachers also deliberately used literature and texts from students’ parts of the world as a way for them to identify with the themes and feel connected to the curriculum.

### An Asset-Based Approach

Schools that have high degrees of student diversity can benefit from the wide range of skills and experiences that newcomer and refugee students possess. For example, existing students can serve as translators and cultural ambassadors to help new arrivals. Being able to use their language skills in a positive way contributes to students’ sense of self-efficacy. At one school, older students acted as translators for younger students; at another school, students were part of a club that offered translation services for schools in the area. In one school, a teacher invited French-speaking students to come converse with the students in her French class.
2. Support and Resources

This set of recommendations focuses on how educators can build support around newcomer and refugee students as they begin their schooling experience in the U.S., and as they move through the system and progress into mainstream classes. In the study, we found that while schools and districts recognized that newcomer and refugee students constituted a special part of the student population, there was a tendency to homogenize this group and to subsume them under the broader ELL classification. Newcomer and refugee students have vastly different backgrounds and experiences that impact their schooling and require specialized support. While collecting and using data about these students is an important strategy for improving schools’ approaches to newcomer and refugee students, access to data is subject to regulations for the protection of student confidentiality. As such, great care needs to be taken when designing data collection strategies to ensure that they are sensitive, appropriate, and protected.

We also find that there was great need to address the mental health and psychosocial well-being of newcomer and refugee students. Many had lived through very challenging circumstances, experiencing severe trauma and family separations. Students and teachers both appealed for more support and help in identifying the need for providing psychosocial support for students, including specialized support and referrals for those who experienced severe trauma and adversity.

We make a recommendation for reiterating policy support for newcomer and refugee students. This will help to foster an atmosphere of recognition and inclusion for these students and underscore the need for adequate funding for support services in this area. This is particularly relevant given the prevailing national discourse on immigration which is at best, uncertain and at worst, hostile towards newcomer and refugee populations in the U.S. While there are many different actors involved in providing support and resources to students, greater collaboration among these stakeholders can improve outcomes by avoiding duplication in efforts, closing gaps in provision, sharing information and materials, and providing a set of services to jointly support students. Schools and districts that are responding to similar populations and circumstances could learn from each other in how they provide opportunities and meet the challenges of supporting newcomer and refugee students. The following recommendations are made on the basis of our study:

Improve newcomer and refugee student introduction to the school community

2.1 Offer orientation sessions to familiarize new students and families with school culture, practices, and expectations.

Enhance data collection, sharing, and use

2.2 Collect and protect relevant information on students’ countries of origin and cultures, educational backgrounds, length of schooling in the US, language proficiency, challenges, etc. Use this data to better understand and address students’ support needs.

2.3 Standardize a system for tracking and sharing data on student backgrounds and performance. Use these data to help plan and strategize for this group of students. As these data may be sensitive in nature, ensure there are proper systems in place to protect and safeguard this information.

Prioritize the mental health and psychosocial well-being of newcomer and refugee students

2.4 Support teachers in identifying students in need of mental health and psychosocial support.

2.5 Ensure adequate availability of trained professionals, including school counselors and social workers to support students in need.
2.6 Provide professional development to school counselors to better understand refugee and newcomer contexts.

2.7 Improve communication between staff (counselors and social workers) and teachers, including the streamlining of referral processes within the school and for services outside of the school.

Support the transition of ELLs to mainstream classes

2.8 Offer additional sheltered classes to expose ELLs to content areas, such as history and science, while receiving English language support.

2.9 ELD/ENL teachers and subject-area teachers should collaborate to create smoother transitions for ELL students (e.g., introducing subject matter vocabulary into ELD/ENL classes).

2.10 Encourage newcomer and refugee student and mainstream student interactions through student pairings, group exercises, or ice-breaker activities.

Strengthen the policy making environment for newcomer and refugee students

2.11 Reiterate policy support for newcomer and refugee student populations and recognize the importance of the cultural identities and assets of newcomer and refugee students.

2.12 Ensure adequate and consistent funding for support services for newcomer and refugee students (e.g., counseling, extracurricular activities, etc.).

2.13 Consult with teachers, students, and families in making policy and curricular changes regarding newcomers, refugees, and ELLs.

2.14 Foster more collaboration among service providers for newcomer and refugee students inside and outside the school (e.g., teachers, counselors, social workers, and NGOs).

2.15 Create communities of practice across schools and districts to facilitate sharing of information, resources, and good practices in supporting newcomers and refugees.

3. Extracurricular Opportunities

This set of recommendations proposes extracurricular activities as important spaces for student interactions and for teamwork and school-spirit building. These activities can help to foster friendships, as well as a sense of pride and belonging in schools. They can also function as a mechanism for increasing students’ understanding and exercise of civic engagement. Participants in our study were keen to have extracurricular opportunities but expressed that those currently offered tended to be limited to traditional school sports. School administrators and teachers were also interested in supporting a greater availability and range of school clubs and sports but found it challenging given limited time and funding. Providing incentives, rewards, and institutional support to foster the growth and interest in forming and sustaining extracurricular activities and opportunities are some strategies that can boost this area. The following recommendations are made on the basis of our study:

Use extracurricular activities to enhance civics, rights, and belonging

3.1 Offer more clubs, activities, and opportunities for students, providing support and incentives to teachers to facilitate or sponsor these. Protect existing extracurricular activity time.
3.2 Encourage students to form and participate in clubs, especially with a focus on belonging and civic engagement.

3.3 Plan extracurricular activities to explore topics outside of classroom time and support teachers’ efforts to organize these (e.g., taking students on field trips).

3.4 Provide more opportunities for civic engagement, for example, through mentoring and other programs, clubs or school/district-wide campaigns and activities in which students can have a greater say and participate on issues of interest.

4. Post-Graduation Pathways

This set of recommendations focuses on how schools can better prepare newcomer and refugee students for post-graduation pathways, including college, career, and life opportunities after school. First, it is important to counter a negative stereotype held by some that ELL students are not academically strong. Conflating language and academic ability can create a negative environment for ELL students and efforts should be made to recognize their current and future potential for college attendance. Our study finds that newcomer and refugee students’ academic aspirations were sometimes overlooked or dampened by their placement in ELD/ENL programs. We noted a disjuncture between students’ expectations and schools’ expectations regarding post-high school opportunities. Participants also expressed the desire for schools to provide greater focus on actual college preparation classes that can help newcomer and refugee students to attain the necessary knowledge as well as course credits to graduate in a timely manner. In addition to academic readiness, our findings point to the need to provide newcomer and refugee students with early and continuing information about post-high school opportunities and resources that will help them along the way. The following recommendations are made on the basis of our study:

**Recognize and promote newcomer and refugee student achievement and potential**

4.1 Recognize students’ different educational, language, and life backgrounds and encourage high academic aspirations.

**Improve newcomer and refugee students’ college and life readiness**

4.2 Devote more resources to newcomer and refugee students’ college readiness (e.g., SAT classes, AP classes, College Now classes, etc.).

4.3 Increase availability and participation in life skills and practical training (e.g., through internships with community organizations, mentoring opportunities, apprenticeship models, courses, etc.).

4.4 Introduce flexibility in school-leaving age for older newcomer and refugee students. Advocate for policy changes at the district and state level.

4.5 Create new programs and opportunities for alternative career pathways (e.g., blended classes, specialized classes, non-school based programs, etc.).

**Sensitize newcomer and refugee students and their families about opportunities and resources for college**

4.6 Provide information and resources to help students and parents access post-K-12 training and education, including financial aid (e.g., participating in the national College Application Campaign program; organizing school conferences for seniors focusing on post-graduation plans; teaching students and their families about the American system of high

---

**College Visits**

During our study, one school organized a fieldtrip for ELLs, including newcomer and refugee students, to the local university. Visiting the university was a new experience for the majority of students who were able to learn more about the university, its campus, student life and opportunities offered by the college. Some students were inspired by seeing a member of their school alumni on campus. Being able to see the university first-hand and spend a day interacting with chaperones that included teachers and other volunteers provided a space for students to explore and reflect on their future goals and aspirations.
5. Professional Development for Teachers

This set of recommendations is teacher-centric, focusing on how we can better support teachers in their efforts to engage with and teach newcomer and refugee students, as well as tackle sensitive and difficult topics in the classroom. Teachers who have students in their classroom from vastly different regions of the world need information about their backgrounds, cultures, and languages, and how these can influence their approaches to teaching these students. Our report recommends greater professional development (PD) materials and workshops to provide all teachers—ELL and mainstream—with the requisite information to better prepare them for engaging with a diverse set of students. We recommend the provision of ongoing support for teachers so there is a sustained effort to engage as opposed to one-off measures that may not meaningfully change practices. Further, we draw attention to the need for PD sessions to be crafted and delivered by professionals who have the requisite experience in the area of newcomer and refugee student education.

Our study examined how well teachers were able to introduce and discuss sensitive topics in the classroom, such as politics, race, and religion. We also looked at teacher engagement on complex but important concepts such as identity and belonging. Teachers expressed varying levels of discomfort in approaching these types of topics in the classroom. Their reservations included lack of awareness of the concepts themselves, how to introduce them, whether it was permissible to do so, the time it would take away from test preparation, and the type of reception they might receive. This study therefore recommends greater guidance and PD for teachers on how to discuss sensitive topics and connect them with the curriculum content in innovative ways.

It should be noted that teachers are the frontline workers in engaging with newcomer and refugee students and best know their needs and capabilities in the school environment. Teachers are often the strongest advocates for their students and are committed to realizing the best opportunities for them. Teachers who are involved in making decisions that relate to their students will enhance the policy making process and will have greater buy-in and commitment to implemented changes. We therefore recommended that teachers be included in making policy, program, and curricular changes regarding newcomer and refugee students and ELLs. The following recommendations are made on the basis of our study:

Boost teacher capability to engage with newcomer students, refugee students, and ELLs

5.1 Provide all teachers with PD about context and background for newcomer and refugee students, including information about specific countries and experiences represented by students in schools, without stereotyping cultural backgrounds and experiences.

5.2 Provide all teachers with PD on specific areas to help them navigate learning relationships with newcomer and refugee students (e.g., cultural sensitivity, role of culture in student learning, managing relationships, previous learning experiences prior to entering U.S. schools, supporting cultural diversity in curriculum and instruction, trauma

Resources for Teachers

Schools in our study were keen to provide additional resources and training to teachers to help them to better understand the refugee contexts, as well as how their teaching styles could be adapted and enhanced to better cater to this population. Some schools benefited from workshops arranged at the district-level; in some schools, the Department of Education provided newcomer toolkits with information and resources to help guide teachers in interacting with students.
5.3 Review and revise teaching certification requirements for teachers working with ELLs to ensure adequate preparation for working with diverse groups and teaching English as a second language.

Provide guidance to teachers on discussing sensitive topics

5.4 Provide supportive opportunities for teachers to reflect on their own biases and how they affect student learning and teacher-student relationships.

5.5 Provide teachers with PD on how to introduce and discuss sensitive topics in the classroom (e.g., politics, identity, belonging, race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, and discrimination). Provide more resources and lesson plans to help teachers impart lessons on sensitive topics.

Provide guidance to teachers on civic identity and engagement

5.6 Explore the value of civic education for all students, including newcomer and refugee students, and include this in state, district, and school curricular goals.

5.7 Provide teachers with resources and PD on how to introduce and develop concepts such as civic identity and civic engagement, including experiential-based approaches, particularly for a diverse group of students. Support teachers in having more time and flexibility to teach about issues related to identity and civic engagement.

6. Family and Community Engagement

This set of recommendations is centered on how schools can better engage the families of newcomer and refugee students, as well as the wider community. Our study shows that teachers faced many challenges in contacting and forming relationships with students’ families due to cultural, linguistic, and availability barriers. Teachers who are able to reach out to and connect with families have a greater understanding of the cultural and familial context of the student and have better relationships with students. Similarly, students benefit from relationships between their families and schools. We therefore recommend a number of strategies, some successfully employed by the schools we studied, to bridge the disconnect between families and schools. We also endorse schools creating and sustaining community partnerships. It is particularly important for newcomer and refugee students and families to learn more about their new communities and find ways to contribute and make connections. These activities help students to develop a sense of belonging to the community and to understand and exercise civic engagement. They can also help to counter some of the stigma and negative stereotypes around newcomer and refugee youth. Some schools in the study were proactive in reaching out to groups and organizations in the community to strengthen ties to newcomer and refugee students. We recommend that schools and districts strategize both short-term and long-term approaches to engaging with newcomer and refugee communities. In addition to the recommendations that encourage greater parent and family engagement through events and activities, we propose the creation of a more long-term strategy to achieve a more integrated and representative school life through, for example, a staff recruitment effort that will narrow the demographic gaps between staff and students over time. The following recommendations are made on the basis of our study:
Encourage greater school and family engagement

6.1 Help teachers to contact and form relationships with the families of newcomer and refugee students.

6.2 Include families in events for the whole school and engage with parents and the school community to counter stigma and negative stereotypes around newcomer and refugee youth.

6.3 Adopt phone-based language translation services as a complement to in-person translation.

6.4 Strategize flexible and creative ways to engage parents and communities (e.g., home visits, school-based services such as English language classes and financial literacy classes, and hosting cultural events similar to those in students’ countries of origin).

Create a more integrated and representative school life

6.5 Recruit members of the newcomer and refugee communities in staff and volunteer positions at schools and districts to bring them into school life in a meaningful and sustained way (e.g., front office staff, attendance clerks, and coaching positions). This will also help to bring first-hand information about these communities directly into the school and provide approachable points of contact within the school environment for newcomer and refugee students.

6.6 Identify and support newcomer and refugee students who are interested and can be incentivized to return to school settings post-high school graduation and college.

Create and sustain community partnerships

6.7 Create partnerships with community organizations to help support newcomer and refugee students (e.g., through the establishment and operation of clubs, groups, and activities).

6.8 Strengthen connections with refugee resettlement agencies to collaborate on ways to engage families.
Conclusion

We conducted this study to investigate how students in the U.S.—particularly newcomer immigrants and resettled refugees, a growing subset of the U.S. population—understand civic identity and belonging. Our research explored the extent to which the social context of schools and communities shaped the civic experiences of these youth. We wanted to give voice to the students themselves and the actors within their school communities who co-create their understanding, experiences, and engagement with the concepts of citizenship, rights, and belonging.

Through our study of four high schools in Arizona and New York, we find that schools played an important role in creating a sense of belonging among newcomer and refugee students and cultivating civic identity and engagement in the school and broader community. Our findings shared in this report highlight key school and societal contextual factors that influence belonging and engagement, including students’ multiple identities, relationships with teachers and peers, and educational, family, and life experiences.

Our study points to the importance of balancing diversity and inclusion within a school context. Overall, while we find that most students felt that they belonged in their diverse schools, they also experienced discrimination or marginalization in their broader communities. This reinforces our findings and associated recommendations on fostering open discussion of sensitive topics around discrimination and diversity. Moreover, schools should engage communities to counter negative narratives and mitigate discrimination against newcomer and refugee youth. Our findings point to the need not only to highlight and celebrate diversity but also to educate students about issues related to social justice, systemic exclusion, and the drivers of inequality in the U.S. and globally.

Students’ potential exposure to negative experiences in the wider community underscores the value of schools in providing a safe environment and raising students’ awareness about discrimination. It also reinforces the need for civic education and youth empowerment through formal and informal structures at school to equip students with the tools to critically assess, analyze, and influence the norms and institutions that shape the societies in which they live.

Our findings also demonstrate the importance of supporting students academically through in-school support services and post-high school pathways, as well as supporting the social and emotional aspects of students’ development. The latter is especially important given newcomer and refugee students’ past experiences with trauma and mobility. Increased support from schools to all students who have mental health and psychosocial well-being needs would positively impact their overall academic success and well-being.

In addition, our study highlights an important disconnect between students’ strong interests in social and political issues, such as immigration and gun control, and their lack of engagement and sense of political efficacy. The high levels of student apathy and disempowerment regarding their current or future civic engagement point to a space for schools and wider community actors to help students develop competencies in this area. Our findings show that students were concerned about many important political and social issues but did not recognize their own political agency and often felt apathetic and disempowered. This report sheds light on the potential for schools to support the development of students’ civic capabilities and their future civic engagement.

Finally, our study finds that family and community engagement are important in building strong, connected, and resilient school environments for students. This helps to foster students’ senses of identity and belonging and shapes their understanding of civic life and contributions towards society. Creating a strong school community among students, teachers, staff, and families is important for welcoming newcomer and refugee students, ensuring their inclusion into their new environments, and fostering their belonging and civic capacities over time. Students in our study appreciated schools’ efforts in this regard, and the value of this approach is particularly apparent considering current uncertain and turbulent times.

Looking Forward

In light of the continued high levels of forced migration, the current global health pandemic brought about by COVID-19, political and economic instability, and unrest, including the Black Lives Matter and anti-racist protests, the results of this study underscore the importance of
promoting policies and practices that foster a sense of identity, civic engagement, and school belonging among all students. School closures and the shift to remote and online instruction due to the COVID-19 global health pandemic particularly impact vulnerable groups of students, which include newcomer and refugee students. For example, recent studies have found that students in disadvantaged and marginalized schools are more likely to face challenges in accessing online courses due to lack of internet or technology, financial and personal hardships, mental health issues, as well as language barriers. Moreover, the transition to remote learning can also have potentially negative consequences for students’ sense of belonging and inclusion. In addition, students who are vulnerable (due to their status as newcomers, refugees, ELLs, or those with interrupted education, special education needs, and those living in high poverty or who are homeless) have been negatively impacted by the transition to online learning, exacerbating the existing achievement gap and racial and economic educational inequalities.

While the crisis has adversely impacted some students and made learning more challenging, other students have benefited from the shift to online instruction. Some unexpected benefits and innovations have emerged in the responses to the global health pandemic. For example, the shift to online learning has provided additional flexibility for students to complete assignments given other demands in their lives (e.g., work or caring for family members), more flexibility in the curriculum (e.g., to include guest speakers), and more ability to accommodate parents to participate in virtual events. Some schools have sent home laptops, tablets, or workbook packets for students without access to reliable internet. Nonetheless, the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures have adversely impacted immigrant communities and communities of color in the U.S., further augmenting educational, economic, and health inequalities.

Future research should examine how belonging and civic identities can change over the course of students’ time in school and also after leaving school. Future studies could also investigate ways to civically engage students in school and beyond the school setting. Given our findings and recent political events, such as the January 6, 2021 attacks and riot at the U.S. Capitol, future research should explore how newcomer students’ sense of belonging and future civic engagement are shaped by landmark political events. Recent political events underscore the importance of discussions and debate regarding the nature of citizenship and patriotism in schools. More research is also needed to explore teachers’ experiences in managing sensitive discussions. When events are not discussed and contextualized, the message that students implicitly receive is that political or current events do not matter, and their potential for future civic engagement is diminished. We also urge more research on the role of mainstream and social media in shaping students’ sense of belonging and civic identity, and how schools and teachers can support students in acquiring what will be increasingly critical skills of weighing the integrity of media sources and information before reaching conclusions about issues.

Maintaining or losing a sense of belonging may have significant implications for students’ future civic participation and engagement. The extent to which these students see themselves as civic actors will impact the country’s political and economic future. It is a matter of great priority that we more deeply consider how students’ sense of inclusion, belonging, and civic identity fostered during their formative years at schools and in their communities have important implications for them as individuals and as members of society.
Endnotes

Executive Summary
1. Banks, Suárez-Orozco, and Ben-Peretz, Global Migration, Diversity, and Civic Education.
2. Batalova and Blizzard, “Refugees and Asylees in the United States.”

Introduction
5. Banks, Suárez-Orozco, and Ben-Peretz, Global Migration, Diversity, and Civic Education.
6. Waters and Gerstein Pineau, The Integration of Immigrants into American Society.
7. Batalova and Blizzard, “Refugees and Asylees in the United States.”
17. Youniss, McLellan, and Yates, “What We Know About Engendering Civic Identity.”
18. Rubin, “‘There’s Still Not Justice’: Youth Civic Identity Development Amid Distinct School and Community Contexts.”
20. US DHS, “Refugees and Asylees.”
25. US Census Bureau, “FAQs.”
26. Markos and Himmel, “Using Sheltered Instruction to Support English Learners.”
27. DeCapua and Marshall, “Reaching ELLs at Risk: Instruction for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education.”
29. Batalova and Blizzard, “Refugees and Asylees in the United States.”

National and State Policy Background
32. Radford.
33. Radford.
34. Budiman, “Key Findings about U.S. Immigrants.”
35. Refugee Processing Center, “Admissions and Arrivals.”
39. Amos, “Biden Plans To Reopen America To Refugees After Trump Slashed Admissions.”
40. Batalova and Blizzard, “Refugees and Asylees in the United States.”
42 Batalova, Blizzard, and Bolter.
43 Radford, “Key Findings about U.S. Immigrants.”
44 Batalova, Blizzard, and Bolter, “Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigration in the United States.”
45 National Center for Education Statistics, “English Language Learners in Public Schools.”
46 National Center for Education Statistics.
47 Arizona Department of Education, Accountability and Research - Cohort 2019 Four Year Graduation Rate Data.
48 NY State Education Department, “2018 | NY STATE - Graduation Rate Data | NYSED Data Site.”
49 Arizona Department of Education, Accountability and Research - Cohort 2019 Four Year Graduation Rate Data.
50 8 U.S. Code § 1157 - Annual admission of refugees and admission of emergency situation refugees.
51 Olivas, No Undocumented Child Left Behind: Plyler v. Doe and the Education of Undocumented Schoolchildren.
53 Olivas, No Undocumented Child Left Behind: Plyler v. Doe and the Education of Undocumented Schoolchildren.
54 NYC DoE, “Immigrant Families.”
55 Batalova, Blizzard, and Bolter, “Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants and Immigration in the United States.”
56 Liptak and Shear, “Trump Can't Immediately End DACA, Supreme Court Rules.”
57 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
58 Sugarman, “Which English Learners Count When? Understanding State EL Subgroup Definitions in ESSA Reporting.”
62 Levinson, No Citizen Left Behind; Rubin, “There’s Still Not Justice’: Youth Civic Identity Development Amid Distinct School and Community Contexts”; Quinn and Nguyen, “Immigrant Youth Organizing as Civic Preparation.”
63 Shapiro and Brown, “The State of Civic education.”
65 Shapiro and Brown, “The State of Civic education.”
66 “Civics Education.”
68 “Civic Readiness Initiative.”

Arizona
69 AZ State Senate Bill 1070.
70 Arizona v. United States.
71 Trump, Executive Order on Enhancing State and Local Involvement in Refugee Resettlement.
72 Gonzalez, “Arizona Will Continue to Resettle Refugees, Gov. Doug Ducey Says.”
73 Donohue, “Pro-Refugee Resolution Passes Arizona Senate after Push from Local Activists.”
74 Associated Press, “Banning of Sanctuary Cities Introduced in Arizona Legislature.”
75 AZ House Bill 2281.
77 Hauser, “Arizona Students Protest Border Patrol Detention of Classmate.”
78 Leingang, “Arizona Undocumented High School Students Will Get College Tuition Break.”
80 Mitchell, “‘English-Only’ Laws in Education on Verge of Extinction - Education Week.”
81 AZ House Bill 2064.
82 Arizona Revised Statute § 15-756.01.
85 Martínez Wenzl, Perez, and Gandara, “Is Arizona’s Approach to Educating It’s ELs Superior to Other Forms of Instruction?”
86 Gándara and Orfield, “A Return to the ‘Mexican Room’: The Segregation of Arizona’s English Learners — The Civil Rights Project at UCLA.”
87 Lillie et al., “Separate and Not Equal: The Implementation of Structured English Immersion in Arizona’s Classrooms.”
88 Arizona SB1014 | 2019 | Fifty-fourth Legislature 1st Regular.

New York
90 Brachfeld, “How ‘blue’ Is New York?”
Findings
113 Sylvan, “Newcomer High School Students as an Asset.”
116 Westheimer and Kahne, “What Kind of Citizen?”
117 Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco, and Dedios-Sanguineti, “No Place to Belong: Contextualizing Concepts of Mental Health Among Undocumented Immigrant Youth in the United States.”
118 Kahne and Sporte, “Developing Citizens: The Impact of Civic Learning Opportunities on Students’ Commitment to Civic Participation”; McFarland and Thomas, “Bowling Young”; Zaff, Malanchuk, and Eccles, “Predicting Positive Citizenship from Adolescence to Young Adulthood.”
119 Carretero, Haste, and Bermudez, “Civic Education”; Levinson, No Citizen Left Behind.
120 McFarland and Thomas, “Bowling Young”; Zaff, Malanchuk, and Eccles, “Predicting Positive Citizenship from Adolescence to Young Adulthood.”
122 Weiss et al., “Reframing Family Involvement in Education: Supporting Families to Support Educational Equity.”

Conclusion
124 Rani, “Imagine Online School in a Language You Don’t Understand.”
Bibliography


Arizona Revised Statute § 15-756.01, § 15-756.01 (2020).


Carretero, Mario, Helen Haste, and Angela Bermudez. “Civic Education.” In Handbook of Educational Psychology, 3rd ed. Routledge/
Taylor & Francis Group, 2016.


D’Agati, John. “New Law and Regulation Pertaining to Registration, Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) and Approval of Providers of CTLE,” June 1, 2016.


Hagelund, Anniken. “But They Are Norwegians! Talking about Culture at School.” Ethnography and Education 2, no. 1 (March 1,


Martinez Wenzl, Mary, Karla Perez, and Patricia Gandara. “Is Arizona’s Approach to Educating It’s ELs Superior to Other Forms of Instruction?” The Civil Rights Project, 2010.


Mendenhall, Mary, Lesley Bartlett, and Ameena Ghaffar-Kucher. “‘If You Need Help, They Are Always There for Us’: Education for Refugees in an International High School in NYC.” The Urban Review 49, no. 1 (March 1, 2017): 1–25.


Sugarman, Julie, and Courtney Geary. “English Learners in Arizona: Demographics, Outcomes and State Accountability Policies.” Migration Policy Institute, August 2018.


60
Acknowledgements

I am immensely grateful to everyone who supported this project at different stages from finding schools to participate in the study, to designing the research protocols, to collecting and analyzing the data, and to writing and finalizing the report.

First and foremost, I had a phenomenal research team of doctoral students, Amlata Persaud, Paula Mantilla-Blanco, and Katrina Webster, who helped me to design and test the research instruments, carry out the survey and interviews with students, teachers, and staff, observe countless hours of classes across the four schools, analyze the data, and draft the final report. Maya Elliot was instrumental in the transcribing of interviews, conducting research for the policy section, and the drafting of the report. Thank you for all of your dedication and passion for the project from start to finish.

We were supported by an amazing team of masters’ students at Teachers College who helped us with the transcription of the many interviews, including Jane Lee, Charlotte Wright, Parbat Chapagai, Lauren Gonzalez, Charlotte Wright, Ho-Hsuan (Kyra) Lai, and Jacquelyn Sieck. Claire Stiglmeier, Cristabel Farronay, Afaf Al-Khosman, Bwiza Mpango, Tobore Egborge, and Erina Iwasaki helped with translations.

My colleagues and students, as well as several teachers and staff who participated in the study, kindly read an earlier version of this report and provided detailed comments and instrumental feedback that helped us strengthen our findings and recommendation sections. Special thanks to Mary Mendenhall, Julie Kasper, Danielle Falk, Celia Reddick, Vidur Chopra, Chandler Miranda, Yianella Blanco, Parbat Chapagai, Lauren Gonzalez, Jacquelyn Sieck, and Sarah Lewinger for your input.

Numerous colleagues and students also provided invaluable advice and contacts that facilitated the research at various stages, including Julie Kasper and Jill Koyama in Arizona; Celia Reddick, Yianella Blanco, Hanadi Shatara, Daria Witt, and Julia Sommer in New York; Marguerite Lukes at the Internationals Network for Public Schools (INPS); and Sarah Rowbottom, Caitlyn Griffith-Heritage, and Patrick Curran at the International Rescue Committee (IRC).

Thank you to the students, teachers, and staff for graciously and openly sharing your thoughts and perspectives with us.

I am grateful to the Spencer Foundation for providing funding for the project through a New Civics Small Grant (#201900058) and to the Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) at Columbia University for providing a Human Rights Research Fellowship to support data analysis.
# Appendix: Indices and Measures

For each of the following measures, the survey presented students with a question and a list of relevant items measured on a 4-point Likert scale. In each case, the mean of students’ responses was calculated to determine the index.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Individual items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Civic Identity index**       | How much do you agree or disagree that these behaviors are important for being a good adult citizen? | 1. Voting in every national election  
2. Joining a political party  
3. Learning about the country’s history  
4. Following political issues in the newspaper, on the radio, TV, or the Internet  
5. Showing respect for government officials  
6. Participating in peaceful protests against laws believed to be unjust  
7. Participating in activities to benefit people in the local community  
8. Taking part in activities promoting human rights  
9. Taking part in activities to protect the environment  
10. Always obeying the law  
11. Respecting the rights of others to have their own opinions  
12. Trying to avoid paying taxes (Reversed) |
| **Civic Engagement index**     | How often are you involved in each of the following activities?       | 1. Talking with others about political/societal issues  
2. Watching television to inform yourself about current events  
3. Reading the news to inform yourself about current events  
4. Posting a comment or image online about a political/societal issue |
| **Future Civic Engagement index** | How likely are you to take part in any of the following activities in the future? | 1. Convince others to get involved in a political/societal issue  
2. Contact an elected official  
3. Take part in a peaceful protest  
4. Collect signatures for a petition  
5. Spray-paint protest graffiti on walls  
6. Occupy public buildings as a sign of protest  
7. Vote in an election  
8. Join an organization for a political cause  
9. Help a political party during an election campaign  
10. Run as a candidate in local elections |
| **Bullying index**             | How often have you experienced the following situations at your school? | 1. A student called you by an offensive nickname  
2. A student made fun of your physical appearance (e.g., hair, clothing)  
3. A student made fun of your accent or the way you talk  
4. You felt threatened by another student  
5. You were physically attacked by another student  
6. A student posted offensive pictures or text about you on the Internet |
| **Belonging index**            | How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school? | 1. I like being in school  
2. I feel safe when I am at school  
3. I feel like I belong at this school  
4. Teachers at my school are fair to me  
5. Students get along well with most teachers  
6. Most students at my school get along well with each other  
7. I am proud to go to this school |
| **Discrimination index**       | How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experience in your daily life? | 1. I have experienced discrimination based on my race/ethnicity  
2. I have experienced discrimination based on my gender  
3. I have experienced discrimination based on the language I speak  
4. I have experienced discrimination based on my sexual orientation  
5. I have experienced discrimination based on my religious beliefs  
6. I have experienced discrimination based on my country of origin |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Discussion index</th>
<th>When discussing political/societal issues during class, how often do the following things happen?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Teachers encourage students to make up their own minds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Teachers encourage students to express their opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Students bring up current political events for discussion in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Students express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from most of the other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Teachers present several sides of the issues when explaining them in class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Rights in the U.S. index</th>
<th>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Everyone in the U.S. has an equal chance to get a good education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Everyone in the U.S. has an equal chance to get a good job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Everyone’s rights are protected in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception of Immigrant Rights index</th>
<th>How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Immigrants in the U.S. should have the opportunity to continue speaking their own language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Immigrant children in the U.S. should have the same opportunities for education that other children in the country have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Immigrants in the U.S. who live in a country for several years should have the opportunity to vote in elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Immigrants in the U.S. should have the opportunity to continue their own customs and lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Immigrants in the U.S. should not have the same rights as U.S. citizens (Reversed)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>