

Newcomer Wellness Initiative Program Overview

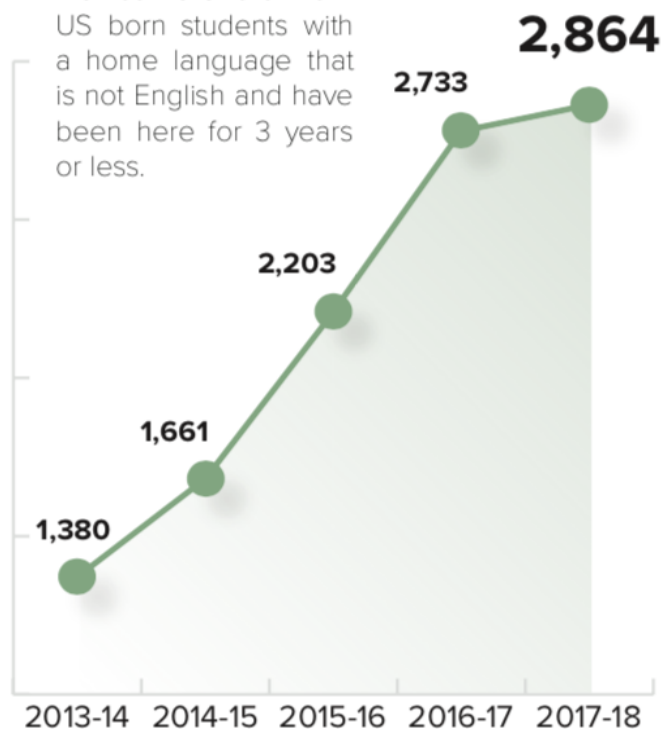
What is the need?

As of the end of the 2017-18 school year, there were 2,864 identified newcomer students in Oakland Unified School District across our TK-12th grade programs, of whom approximately 650 are unaccompanied youth. Approximately 65% of these young people are in our middle and high schools. **1 in 8 high school students in OUSD is a newcomer.**

These young people bring tremendous linguistic and cultural assets to our schools, as well as tremendous resilience and resourcefulness. They and their families also often arrive with significant traumas, lack of legal representation and unmet basic needs. Our newcomers must figure out how to navigate complicated systems in a country where they usually do not speak the dominant language.

The Newcomer Wellness Initiative was put in place in an effort to support these students and to respond to their need for supports and services that they might not otherwise be aware of or be able to access.

Newcomers are non-US born students with a home language that is not English and have been here for 3 years or less.

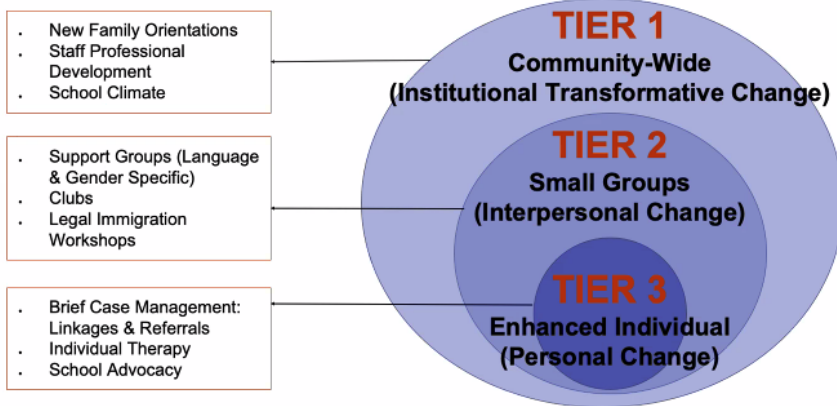


Theory of Action

The Newcomer Wellness Initiative targets its supports at the middle and high school level because we know that the older a person is when they arrive in a new country, the less time they have to learn the language, catch up academically and acculturate. We also know that many of our newcomers within this age group arrive unaccompanied with little or no family supports and with debts that need to be repaid. The array of issues that these students arrive with often make it difficult for them to stay engaged in school, therefore the retention and graduation rates among this group are lower than those of their US-born peers.

The Newcomer Wellness Initiative places bilingual Clinical Social Workers and School Counselors, at designated middle and high school newcomer sites to support the non-academic needs of these students, their families and caregivers. The Newcomer Wellness Team targets their work to address all levels of student need within the school setting, using the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) framework to guide their interventions.

Response to Intervention



TIER 1: Universal Practices

At the tier one level, Wellness team work to support the integration of newcomers into the school setting by carrying out projects and initiatives to encourage integration of newcomers and mainstream students to break down stereotypes and increase empathy. Activities may also be designed to improve overall school culture and climate, for example by creating celebrations, lunchtime events, restorative justice circles and workshops.

TIER 2: Group Supports

At the tier two level Wellness team provide group

support to newcomer students targeted to address specific needs and themes arising in the population, including grief and loss, acculturation, empowerment and leadership. The team member also offer group case management often during advisory periods.

TIER 3: Addressing Urgent Individual Needs

At the tier three level, the Wellness Team focuses on the individual needs of students by providing or referring them to individual mental health services, intensive clinical case management and targeted attendance interventions, which may include home visits and family supports.

Team members work closely with the school site leadership and newcomer teachers to advocate for the needs of newcomers and to collaborate around service delivery and supports. They also collaborate with district level partners including the Unaccompanied Immigrant Youth Specialist, Refugee and Asylee Specialist, translators, alternative education, linked learning specialists and the Central Family Resource Center to further advocate for the needs of newcomers across the district.

Results

The Newcomer Wellness Initiative seeks to impact the wellbeing of the whole child and improving the overall school experience for newcomer youth. As the initiative takes shape, the program will be evaluated on a number of aggregate measures:

- We aim to positively impact the attendance rates of newcomer students by clearing obstacles to attendance.
- We aim to improve retention rates of non-graduating newcomers within our programs by enabling continued school attendance and promoting connectedness.
- We aim to demonstrate improved newcomer student connections to adults at school and knowledge of how to access health and other supportive services as measured by student surveys.

We also seek to connect more students to critical services such as employment, therapy, legal support, child care and housing. We know from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs that until basic needs are addressed, people cannot access learning. It is our goal to address those needs to the degree possible to stabilize these young people and their families so that they may be successful in our schools and in the US.

Please contact [Stephanie Noriega](#) for more information.