

Supporting Immigrant Students

AROUND THE COUNTRY, many of our immigrant students and their families are fearful. Understandably so: they were subjected to exclusionary, hostile, and divisive political rhetoric during the presidential campaign. And under the Trump administration, many of our students (whether they are legal residents, eligible for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, refugees, newcomers, unaccompanied minors, or even second- and third-generation children of immigrants) do not know what to expect. Many have been the targets of bullying or hateful acts based on their status and background as immigrants. Their fear can lead to school absences or withdrawal, increased anxiety, decreased focus on academic schoolwork, behavioral issues, and a host of other challenges.

Colorín Colorado, a national website for educators and families of English language learners, houses a collection of resources that outlines what educators should know about serving students who are immigrants or children of immigrants (www.colorincolorado.org). These resources provide information on helping your students and their families learn their rights, and offer suggestions that schools and classrooms can use to create more welcoming environments.

The following are some frequently asked questions and abbreviated answers from

Colorín Colorado. For the full list of questions and answers, as well as additional information and resources, go to www.colorinColorado.org/immigration.

Does immigration status affect whether students can enroll in U.S. public schools?

No. Every child has a constitutional right to a free public education, regardless of his or her immigration status or parents' immigration status.

Can schools ask about a student's immigration status during enrollment?

No. Public school districts have an obligation to enroll students regardless of their immigration status and without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

Can immigration enforcement take place in schools?

At this time, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) limits immigration enforcement at "sensitive locations." These include schools, licensed daycares, school bus stops, colleges and universities, educational programs, medical treatment facilities, and places of worship. For up-to-date information, consult the DHS sensitive locations FAQ (www.ice.gov/ero/enforcement/sensitive-loc) or the National Immigration Law Center (www.nilc.org).

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Do schools report student information to immigration authorities?

No. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) does not allow schools to turn over a student's file to federal immigration agents. School officials are not required to report undocumented immigrants to federal agents.

For more information on English language learners, strategies to help these students and their families, and research on what works, go to www.colorinColorado.org.

—AFT EDUCATIONAL ISSUES DEPARTMENT



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