Chapter 13

Supporting Immigrant Children in College and Career Readiness:
Implications for Teachers and School Counselors

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ABSTRACT

The number of immigrant students have been on the rise in the last decades in many American classrooms. Both public schools and institutions of higher learning have increasing numbers of racially and ethnically diverse students than in the past. Immigrants from around the world come to America for different reasons but with one dream, and that is to create better lives for themselves and their children. Many leave their countries of origin seeking economic opportunities, while others leave their countries fleeing political, religious, and ethnic persecution. A number of refugees fleeing wars and turmoil from their home countries come to America with psychological, physical, and emotional trauma. Adelman and Taylor suggested that refugee students are among the most vulnerable for school failure and its consequences. This chapter discusses the role of teachers and school counselors in facilitating a smooth transition of all immigrant children in college and career readiness.

INTRODUCTION

Nearly 43.6 million immigrants lived in United States by the year 2016, accounting for 13.5% of the total population according to the American Community Survey (ASC) Data (Zong, Batalova & Hallock, 2018). Between 2015-2016, the foreign-born population increased by about 449,000 (1%) slower than the 2.1 percent growth experienced between 2014-2015. Immigrants and their U.S. born children are now approximately 86.4 million people accounting for 27 percent of the total U.S. population according to the 2017 Current Population Survey (Zong et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the Migration Institute Policy (MPI) Data (2016), suggests that the number of immigrants and refugees settling in United States has increased tremendously in recent decades. The overwhelming majority of children in immigrant families (88 percent in 2016) are U.S born. The term "children of immigrants "refers to children in immigrant families under the age of 18 years with at least one immigrant parent (MPI, 2016). The term "immigrants" refers to people residing in the United States who were not U.S. citizens at birth. This population includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents (LPR), certain legal non-immigrants (i.e., persons on student visa, work visa), those admitted under refugee or asylum status, and persons residing illegally in the United States (MPI, 2016).

In 2016 approximately 18 million children under the age of 18 lived with at least one immigrant parent. This accounted for 26 percent of the 70 million children under the age of 18 living in United States (MPI, 2018). Consequently, the number of immigrant children in American schools is on the rise according to a report by the Center of Immigration Studies (as reported in the Washington Times, March 15, 2017). According to this report, across the country, 23 percent of the students in public schools come from immigrant households. The number seem to have doubled in the past 25 years, from just 11 percent in 1990. Furthermore, a large number of these students seem to be concentrated in large cities (The Washington Times, 2017).

The challenge experienced by schools with such high numbers of immigrant students are profound. First, a large number of these immigrant students are English Language Learners (ELL) thereby requiring ESL classes. Additionally, most of these children come from low income families compared to native born children; the tax base does not grow relative to the increasing number of immigrant students. Immigrant students are a highly diverse population, with most originating from Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean, but also from other countries including Sub-Saharan Africa (Brown & Pattern, 2014; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Furthermore, the current wave of immigration has brought a bimodal distribution of social class among immigrants, with highly educated immigrants with high social economic status on one end, and the working poor immigrants with low education on the other end. Social class sometimes determines how well immigrants and their children adjust to the country (Jafee-Walter & Lee, 2011).

Given the foregoing statistics, it becomes a moral responsibility for the schools to pay attention to the increasing number of immigrant students attending American schools. One of the new education law (Every Student Succeeds Act, ESSA, 2015) provision states that; "all students in America be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers" (U.S Department of Education, n.d. para. 9), Furthermore, the previous administration put an emphasis on the need for students to graduate from high school well prepared for college and a career (U.S. Department of Education, n.d). If this mandate will become a reality, then it is imperative that every school district and school

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