



A Guide for Multilingual and Immigrant Families in *New York City Public Schools*







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What is this guide?

This guide will help you to understand the NYC school system. Starting with the enrollment process, you can use this guide to understand your rights as a NYC public school parent; the language programs and services available in schools to support both your child's learning and your engagement with your child's education; some postsecondary options for your child; where to voice your concerns; and resources available in the city to ease your transition into New York City.

Dear Families,

Welcome to the New York City Public Schools community! Our city is a beautiful blend of cultures, languages, and traditions from all over the world. In our schools, we celebrate this diversity and strive to create an environment where every student feels valued and affirmed in their race, language, and immigration status. We believe that each culture adds a unique thread to our community tapestry, and we encourage all students to embrace and share their heritage.

As parents and guardians, your role in your children's education is vital. We encourage you to continue nurturing your culture at home and sharing it with your children. These cultural elements, whether they are language, food, music, arts, or traditions, can greatly enrich your children's learning experience and help them appreciate their roots.

In our schools, your children will learn alongside peers from diverse backgrounds, gaining a valuable understanding of the world's diversity. We look forward to partnering with you in this educational journey, providing a rich, diverse, and inclusive learning experience that prepares them for a bright future.

What are my child's rights as an immigrant student?

- In New York City, all children, regardless of immigration status, have the right to a public school education. DOE employees will neither inquire about your immigration status nor require proof of citizenship, and if they do come to know about someone's immigration status, they are required to keep it confidential.
- Schools and districts are prohibited from providing student and family information to anyone, including Immigration Customs Enforcement, except when required by law or with parental consent.
- To help you learn important information, schools offer free translation services in many languages. You may request language assistance services at the student's school at any time! Ask the parent coordinator, principal, or complete the [Translation and Interpretation Services Request Form](#).
- If you want to know more about your rights as parents of English Language/Multilingual Learners, please go to the DOE website and search for "[Bill of Rights](#)."



How and where do I enroll my child in school?

Are you now wondering: where do I start? How can I enroll my child in NYC public schools?

The first step to enroll your child is to visit a Family Welcome Center near you.

Remember, you do not have to reveal your immigrant status or show your ID. Staff at the Family Welcome Center will tell you what paperwork is needed for registration. In most cases, you will be asked for:

- **proof of your child's age,**
- **immunization records** (if available),
- latest report card (if available), and
- any two documents as **proof of address.**



If you are living in a temporary residence, please go to the [Family Welcome Center](#) of your choice. Staff there will be able to help you.



Who will I interact with in the school?

As a new immigrant family, the school system may be difficult to understand. Please be assured that everyone in the school is there to help you.

There are several types of people you will interact with regularly. They are principal or assistant principal, parent coordinator, and school safety officer.

Each of them have different roles in the school.

A **principal/AP** is someone who oversees the school's operations, including staff management, academic standards, and student behavior. The principal is in charge of most things in the school building.



A **teacher** is someone who delivers classroom instruction, teaching all subjects in elementary school and specific subjects in middle school and high school.



A **school safety officer** belongs to the NYPD and ensures school safety, manages emergencies, reports serious incidents to the school administration and School Safety Division, educates about safety, and fosters a conducive learning environment.



A **parent coordinator** helps parents and other family members understand and participate in school activities, resolves parent-school issues, and ensures parental voices are heard for their children's success.



A **school counselor** helps students identify and schedule relevant classes, creates an individual college and career plan, supports the completion of college and job applications, and helps students stay on track towards graduation.



How can I be my child’s advocate at school?

Parents like you are the child’s best advocate! Also, as a parent of an immigrant student, you possess a unique opportunity to be a powerful voice at the table, advocating for the needs of English Language Learners and immigrant groups as a whole. There are several ways you can get involved in the school community. You do not have to join a team to participate in your child’s education, but if you choose to be an active member of a team, below are **three school groups** led by parents. All meetings are subject to the open-meeting law, which means that anyone can attend the meeting.

School Level	District Level	Central Level
PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) is a group of volunteer parents of children in a local school who meet monthly to discuss the concerns and level of support for the school community. Anyone can attend the meeting, but only the board is elected to take lead during the meetings.	The Presidents' Council is a group of parents supported by an assigned superintendent. Voting members are presidents of the Parent Association or Parent-Teacher Association within a specific district.	Citywide councils are composed of parents, students, and representatives of public officials. Monthly meetings are led by parents to discuss concerns, provide learning opportunities, and discuss official business. If you are interested in representing other parents of English Language Learners like you, please consider joining CCELL.
SLT (School Leadership Team) is composed of an equal number of parents and school staff who meet together regularly to discuss school data, curriculum, after-school opportunities and programming. Parents and staff must be voted into the team.	The District Leadership Council is a group of various stakeholders, including parents, who provide input and make recommendations on district policies and initiatives.	
Parent Teacher Conference is a meeting between parents and teachers to discuss students’ academic and social-emotional progress.	Community Education Councils are education policy advisory bodies responsible for, among other things, reviewing and evaluating their district’s educational programs, approving zoning lines, and holding public hearings on certain matters. See the Roles and Responsibilities page for a fuller description of what members do.	

Program for English Language Learners

NYC public schools offer families of English Language Learners three programs that help their children learn English. These programs strengthen students’ home language development and content knowledge while they build their social and academic English skills.

- **English as a New Language (ENL):** All ELLs receive English as a New Language (ENL). Your child will be taught to read, write, and speak in English with support in your child’s home language.
- **Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE):** The goal of this program is for your child to read, write, and speak in both languages. After your child is no longer an English Language Learner (ELL), your child will stay in the program to learn and improve both languages.
- **Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE):** In these programs, as your child gets better in English, they will spend more time learning in English and spend less time learning in the home language. When your child is no longer an English Language Learner (ELL), they leave the program.

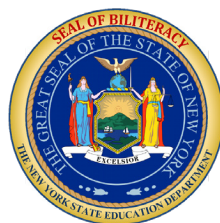
	DUAL LANGUAGE	TRANSITIONAL BILINGUAL	ENGLISH AS NEW LANGUAGE
Goals for the program	Use of both languages to promote bilingualism/ bi-literacy	Use of home language to support English Proficiency	Use of home language as a scaffold to support English Instruction
Instruction in home language	✓	✓	✓
Classmates with same home languages	✓	✓	
Equal instruction in both languages	✓		

Benefits of Bilingualism

Research shows that knowing more than one language is really good for kids. Being able to speak different languages can help people at all ages. For kids, it can help them do better in school. When they grow up, it can help them get better jobs. Also, when they get older, it can help keep their minds sharp and might even protect them from a brain disease called Alzheimer's.



By choosing one of the bilingual programs (Dual Language Bilingual Education), your child is better prepared for obtaining a **Seal of Biliteracy**. The New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB) is an award given to high school graduates who have demonstrated proficiency in English and at least one other language. The NYSSB encourages language study, affirms diversity, and provides universities and employers with additional information about a student's language skills. Eligible students receive an official seal on their diploma, a medallion, and a certificate from the New York State Education Department. The NYSSB benefits students by acknowledging the importance of bilingualism, highlighting their achievements, and providing a statement of accomplishment for future opportunities.



What if my school does not offer bilingual programs?



If your school does not currently offer bilingual programs, explore which Bilingual Programs are available in schools near you. You may request a transfer if your preferred program is not offered at your current school, and the school can help guide and support the transfer process. There are also different types of schools that cater to the needs of multilingual and new immigrant students, such as schools within the international network.

However please be aware that regardless of what types of school they are, you can always request to be placed in a bilingual program.

My child has special needs and/or a disability. What should I do?



If your child comes with an individualized education plan (IEP), placements in a bilingual special education (BSE) program in districts 1–32 are prioritized for the student. You can contact BSEprograms@schools.nyc.gov with BSE program placement requests.



What if I have more questions?

If you have concerns or questions regarding the process of either enrolling into a bilingual program or participating in one of the parent groups, please reach out to the Parent Coordinators, Assistant Principal, and/or Principal at your school. You can also reach out to your district's Family Support Coordinator, Superintendent, and Family and Community Empowerment (FACE) office.

What are some of my child’s postsecondary options?

Postsecondary options are the opportunities students identify upon graduating high school such as entering college, the workforce, a vocational program, and military. This includes access to two- and four-year colleges or universities, vocational schools and entering the workforce. All students, regardless of immigration status, can pursue post-secondary options.

In the State of New York, undocumented students are able to access in-state tuition and state financial assistance for two and four year universities. Below are key resources to support access to postsecondary opportunities for undocumented students and mixed-status families, regardless of immigration status.

Framework for Postsecondary Readiness

Explore	is about facilitating conversations and activities that allow students to discover more about their racial, cultural, and linguistic identities, understand their rights, and their interests/aversions.
Prepare	is about ensuring students have what they need for a meaningful and fulfilling high school experience, creating a plan to connect where they are today with where they want to be tomorrow, and having the opportunity to engage in college and career preparatory courses and experiences.
Apply	is about taking the steps required for admittance to college, a program, or acceptance to a job. This can feel like the most high stakes period of a student's life in high school, but with adequate preparation and support, students can successfully transition to the postsecondary pathway of their choosing.



The illustration shows three diverse students climbing a staircase that represents the postsecondary readiness framework. The steps are labeled from bottom to top: 'explore' (blue), 'prepare' (orange), and 'apply' (green). The top step features a globe icon. The students are positioned on the steps: one on the 'explore' step, one on the 'prepare' step, and one on the 'apply' step. The student on the 'apply' step is standing on a black platform that also holds the globe icon.

Postsecondary Resources

Resources	Category	Description
NYS Higher Education Services	In-State Tuition & Financial Assistance for College	All students regardless of immigration status can attend a 2 or 4 year university. The New York State Dream Act provides state financial assistance to immigrant students with various types of immigration status that have attended a NY state high school for at least 2 years and meet other requirements.
Save for College	A scholarship and savings program for younger NYC kids. Free regardless of income or immigration status.	The Save for College Program is a universal scholarship and savings program designed to make college and career training more accessible and achievable for all NYC public school students, starting in kindergarten—regardless of their family’s income or immigration status.
Informed Immigrant	Options for undocumented high schooler	Regardless of immigration status, undocumented high schoolers in NYC public schools have options after graduating from high schools. You can choose to apply for colleges or universities, go to vocational & technical schools, or enter the workforce directly.
Road to College Checklist	Road to College Checklist	A checklist created for undocumented students in New York to anticipate and complete recommended steps on their journey to college and more. Students can access resources and links to answer questions.
Identifying Immigrant Friendly Colleges	College finding	A one-pager describes some ways to find out what colleges are immigrant friendly.
CUNY’s Office of Undocumented and Immigrant Student Programs	The City University of New York (CUNY) supports undocumented and immigrant students	CUNY currently has four immigrant student success centers. These centers have dedicated and informed staff members who understand the nuances of the immigrant and undocumented student experience. Centers provide financial, legal, mental health and social support in an effort to holistically advocate and empower immigrant students. We are working to open more centers across CUNY in an effort to provide equitable access and resources for all students regardless of immigration status.

New York City Resources

New York City offers a variety of resources that can be useful to immigrant families and students. These resources provide you with comprehensive support and opportunities to thrive in the educational and social integration journeys. Below are some examples of the resources.

Resources Description
New York City Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) is a city agency for work with immigrants. It is a great resource for you to start with.
If you ever need a place to stay and/or food to feed you and your family, you can find shelters and food banks around the city.
There are also many Community Based Organizations (CBO) that can help you with different things. For example, if you need something specifically catered for African communities, African Community Together (AFC) organization can help you with immigrant legal services, small business assistance, job development and general social services referrals.
Low cost health plans for immigrant families including Medicaid (undocumented immigrants can apply for emergency health issues only) and Child Health Plus are available through Office of Citywide Health Insurance Access (OCHIA) .

Contact

If you have concern or questions regarding any of the process of either enrolling into a bilingual program or participating in one of the parent groups, please reach out to the Parent Coordinators, Assistant Principal and/or Principal at your school. You can also reach out to your district’s Family Support Coordinator and Superintendent. Or email the Office of Multilingual Learners at multilinguallearners@schools.nyc.gov.

Appendix of QR Codes & URLs

Page 6  bit.ly/RightsELL	Page 6  http://tinyurl.com/3avjw5cy
Page 9  ccell.org	Page 14  bit.ly/cunyundoc
Page 14  bit.ly/saveforcollege	Page 14  http://tinyurl.com/3djh7f22
Page 14  http://tinyurl.com/4fbhwasr	Page 14  bit.ly/3NSGfHe

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Page 14 Informed Immigrant  tinyurl.com/mrxca3yp	Page 15 Office of Citywide Health Insurance  on.nyc.gov/46B9it0
Page 15 NY Shelter List  bit.ly/3JHim5G	Page 15 NYC Food Bank  bit.ly/3JHim5G
Page 15 Community Based Organizations  http://bit.ly/OMLCB0s	

