

Supporting Secondary Newcomers  
Academically,  
Socially, and  
Emotionally

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Mary Schmida

Haiwen Chu

## Exploring Longitudinal Outcomes and Trajectories of English Language Learners (ELOTE)

### Steering Committee

Michael Sorum

Deputy Superintendent of Leadership, Learning, & Student Support, Fort Worth  
Independent School District

Mariagrazia Sheffield

Assistant Superintendent of Special Programs, Fort Worth Independent School District

Suann Claunch

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Aida Walqui

Director, Teacher Professional Development Program, WestEd

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Newcomer students who arrive in the secondary grades face daunting challenges in order to achieve desired academic outcomes such as high school graduation and college access. Besides simultaneously developing conceptual understandings analytical and linguistic practices, newcomers also need to adapt to a new country, a new schooling system, and a new language. While a few newcomers come with English proficiency, most newcomers are English language learners (ELLs). The Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) has a dedicated program at the International Newcomer Academy (INA) for students in their first year in the district. Nonetheless, graduation outcomes remain low, with less than three-fifths of ninth grade newcomers graduating in four years (Chu & Fong, 2015).

FWISD partnered with WestEd in the Exploring Longitudinal Outcomes and Trajectories of ELLs (ELOTE) Researcher-Practitioner Partnership funded by the Institute of Education Sciences<sup>1</sup>. Phase One of ELOTE analyzed a historical cohort to calculate graduation rates in FWISD and identify district programs with higher newcomer graduation rates. Phase Two selected two promising sites and studied them more in depth.

This study of two programs, located at two different campuses, is guided by the notion that newcomer academic success is supported by their emotional well-being and social development. The overarching research question was:

*What are promising programs and practices for secondary newcomers?*

The emphasis on social-emotional supports derives from the Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation Study, which found that social-emotional engagement was a key factor in immigrant student academic progress (Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009).

The focus of this study is on programs and practices. Here, programs encompass all activities that are formally scheduled and structured, including academic programs, classes, clubs, and college fairs. In addition to formal programs, we focus on informal school interactions as well, because the extent to which newcomers engage in informal social interactions in English predicts higher English language proficiency (Carhill, Suárez-Orozco, & Paez, 2008).

This report summarizes and illustrates findings, integrating classroom observations with the voices of students, teachers, and administrators. This report briefly introduces the two schools and then presents findings organized according to two categories:

- formal and informal
- academic and social-emotional.

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Figure 1 organizes brief findings by these two categories. Within formal academic supports, there are two subcategories. Some formal academic supports are programmatic, while others are pedagogical. That is, some formal supports take place in classroom instruction, while others are features that are part services that schools provide more generally. In Figure 1, the pedagogical, classroom-based supports are italicized.

	Academic	Social-Emotional
Formal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on graduation</li> <li>• Emphasis on college access</li> <li>• Aligned programs</li> <li>• <i>Graphic and textual organizers*</i></li> <li>• <i>Opportunities to interact and collaborate</i></li> <li>• <i>Encouragement to speak English</i></li> <li>• <i>Attention to disciplinary uses of language</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracurricular programs</li> <li>• Connecting with parents</li> </ul>
Informal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High challenge, high support</li> <li>• Contingent instructional supports</li> <li>• Peer support in classes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring relationships</li> <li>• Student trust</li> <li>• Diverse peers and interactions</li> </ul>

\*Note: Italicized formal academic supports are related to classroom pedagogy

**Figure 1. Brief findings organized by category**

### SUCCESS HIGH SCHOOL

Success High School (henceforth "Success") is a program for students who are older than 16 in the ninth grade. Success includes both a Day and Night program, with newcomers primarily enrolled in the Day program. In the 2014-15 school year, the total enrollment was 241 students, of whom approximately one half (124 students) were ELLs (Texas Education Agency, 2015a). Housed on the campus of Trimble Technical High School, Success had an enrollment of 129 ELLs in the 2015-2016 school year. Out of the class of newcomers who entered INA in the ninth grade in 2009-10, 71% of those enrolled at Success graduated by 2013.

### ARLINGTON HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL

Arlington Heights High School (henceforth "Heights") enrolls approximately 1800 students. Of these, about five percent (83 students) were ELLs in the 2014-2015 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2015b). Housed within Heights, the Language Center program focused on serving recent immigrant students as they grow in English proficiency while simultaneously enrolled in grade-level academic coursework. In the 2015-16 school year, the Language Center enrolled a total of 39 ELLs. Out of the class of newcomers who entered INA in the ninth grade in 2009-10, 71% of those enrolled at Heights graduated by 2013.

### DATA COLLECTION OVERVIEW

This report draws upon two-day visits to the campuses conducted by two researchers. The first day consisted of classroom observations, following the schedule of two anonymous students. The second day included interviews and focus groups. Principals, guidance counselors, parent coordinators, and other key school staff participated in interviews. At each campus, approximately twelve students participated in two focus groups and approximately six teachers in a single focus group.

## Formal Academic Supports

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### Programs and classes focus on high school graduation

Both schools focus on high school graduation as an intermediate objective on the way to college enrollment. The emphasis at the two sites varies somewhat. At Success, students are placed on an accelerated path to graduation. Their daily schedule typically consists of four classes within a 90-minute block schedule. This intensity enables them to complete up to four credits each quarter, or sixteen credits per year, which is approximately 1/3 faster than the regular schedule. The scheduling

**“I have their graduation plan. And all students graduate Recommended. So, I’m writing down their grades and what they need; I have [a graduation plan] for every student.”**

**—Heights teacher**

of these courses is carefully coordinated to pair support classes with subject area classes associated with the five State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) tests required for graduation. At Heights, an additional emphasis is invested on transitioning students out of the Language Center into mainstream classes. At both schools, teachers closely monitor student progress toward graduation and make progress transparent to students and ultimately, enhance student autonomy.

Teachers and students alike at Heights recognize the importance of the STAAR tests, both for students to graduate from high school, as well as for students to transition into mainstream classes. Students mentioned the STAAR packets which they review in class as being helpful in preparing them for the test, and many teachers select a STAAR question as a warm up in class. Similarly, at

**“We learn a lot! That class makes me learn a lot. [The teacher] makes us speak, read, write...all at the same time. And I learn a lot! I appreciate being at this school.”**

**—Success student**

Success, students were aware of the importance of the STAAR tests, and what they each needed to know in order to pass each test. One student explained the role of a classroom focus on writing, “helping us with the writing part of the STAAR test, and with the sentences, with editing.” Teachers also integrate the test into classroom instruction. One teacher described the process of assisting students, “I analyze the questions that were asked on previous STAAR tests,” and explained how these questions were connected to everyday instruction.

Although this focus on STAAR tests is necessary for graduation, students at both schools expressed their appreciation that classes were academically engaging in many ways.

## Programs emphasize college readiness and application

Both schools have programs to support newcomers beyond high school graduation toward college readiness and access. These programs draw upon district-based college access resources. Support events begin in September and extend throughout the school year, including college fairs, college visits, and application assistance.

**“Then we have students come back, that enrolled in TCC that finished and they come back and talk to our senior classes, so they can hear firsthand from someone who was here last year.”**

—Counselor

For newcomers especially, there is a lot to learn about the United States postsecondary systems.

**“Many of them thought they needed the money for college before they can even apply. You apply and let's see what we can get.”**

—Counselor

At Heights, college staff and students work part-time on campus in a variety of positions, including University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) mentors, a Texas Christian University (TCU) advisor, and regular visits from Tarrant Community College (TCC). The TCU advisor is a full-time employee at the school, and s/he is located in the library.

Tarleton State University has a mobile "Go" center which visits Success frequently. This "Go" Center has college staff who provide juniors and seniors with group and individual assistance with application, scholarships, and financial aid.

Counselors at both schools are familiar with the many local options for newcomers. They are able to guide students as they navigate the wide array of public, private, two-year, and four-year institutions.

**“They start at TCC, then move on. But they do feel very comfortable at the UTA campus, just because they have a huge international population.”**

—Counselor

## Teachers and counselors coordinate regularly to ensure aligned programs

The teachers at both schools stated that students' needs drive school structures and expectations. For example, at Heights, counselors readily work with the Language Center teachers to set student schedules, and to adjust student schedules based on teacher recommendation. When it comes to staffing, one teacher commented that the administration, “knows the expectations for this Language Center.” Administrators also acknowledged a willingness and desire to staff the Language Center with appropriate teachers, saying that newcomers “need a knowledgeable, supportive teacher.” One administrator continued that a Language Center teacher needs to have an awareness of what learning a second language entails, as well as “the knowledge to assist the kids... our teachers have the ability to understand where that problem is and have a plan, and then to move the kids forward.” One teacher reflected that sometimes, programs for English language learners are staffed with what she calls, “castoff teachers”—teachers who are not effective in any

**“English language learners need good teachers. Language Center teachers have to be the best in the building,”**

—Heights teacher

other program on campus and are placed with EL students as a last resort; this is not a practice at Heights. Rather, both the administration as well as the teachers recognize the need to place excellent teachers in the Language Center program.

In addition, teachers in the Language Center at Heights plan together during a set planning time that is built into their schedule, and collaborate on how to meet the needs of their students. Once students leave the Language Center, they are “transitioned” into the mainstream classes.

At Success, the teachers also work together closely to monitor the academic progress of students. Because of the accelerated rate at which students accumulate credits, students take fewer courses at any given time. Course selections and programming, which are based upon progress on the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). The team meetings also allow for sharing of instructional strategies and materials that teachers find helpful for their newcomers. The team of teachers works to coordinate course offerings that supplement newcomer understanding through humanities and public speaking.

### Teachers offer graphic organizers and note takers to support learning

At both schools, teachers were observed providing students with a variety of graphic organizers and other textual supports to aid students’ understanding of disciplinary concepts and texts. Some of these supports facilitated students’ understanding of class lectures or other disciplinary content.

**Graphic Organizer** In many classes, students were observed using a graphic organizer to categorize or synthesize information. In a math class, for example, a teacher modeled how to use a Frayer Model graphic organizer, which contained four quadrants labeled, *Definition*, *Characteristics*, *Examples*, and *Non-Examples*; to do so, the teacher wrote the word *Chicken* in the middle, and then completed each of the four quadrants. After modeling with the word *Chicken*, the teacher then invited students to collaboratively create a class version of the graphic organizer with the term “variable”. The teacher invited two students to come to the board and add information to any of the four quadrants, as their classmates called out possible responses. For example, students called out that a variable can be a letter, can be upper or lower case, can be positive or negative, and so on. Finally, the teacher asked students to continue on their own, and create four additional Frayer Models for the terms *Coefficient (or Constant)*, *Exponent*, *Term*, and *Expression*, all relating to the Laws of Exponents. As students worked, the teacher continued to write on the overhead examples of what might be included in each quadrant, for each term. As students were completing their graphic organizers, the teacher commented, “if you can write examples and non-examples, then you’ve got it.”

**Note Takers** In several science classes, students were provided with note-takers to use during teacher lectures or to summarize texts students had read. These note takers fall into two categories: A summary or abbreviated form of the lecture with key terms or names deleted, or copies of the slides that accompanied the lecture, also with key terms and names deleted. In each example, students fill in a blank with a single word that has been deleted within a sentence. For example, in



one science class, students listened to a PowerPoint presentation, and were to copy the deleted word on their note-taker from the corresponding slide that contained the complete sentence, verbatim. One set of sentences were:

Cancer cells have abnormal \_\_\_\_\_  
Cancer cells form \_\_\_\_\_  
Cancer cells undergo \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

In a different science class, students filled in deleted names and facts on a handout to summarize their understanding of a lecture. Similar to the example above, students were asked to fill complete the sentences by adding the correct name or term:

\_\_\_\_\_ created the first periodic table by arranging elements according to increasing \_\_\_\_\_.

In both examples above, teachers created graphic organizers that they believed would support students as they engaged in difficult texts or concepts at grade-level.

### Teachers offer opportunities for student interaction and collaboration

In focus groups and interviews, teachers and staff discussed the importance of students participating in collaborative activities, using English to communicate, form relationships, and engage in academic content. In classroom observations, there were multiple examples of situations in which teachers had created tasks that required students to leave their desks, find partners, interact in small groups, and so on. Teachers clearly believe that their newcomer students benefit from well-constructed, supported opportunities to interact with peer in ways that allow them to use and practice disciplinary language. When employed effectively, these interactions help students develop higher order thinking skills, and help them apprentice into ways of thinking, reading, speaking, and writing.

In some classes, teachers included a single task that required students to engage with a partner; in other classes, teachers included multiple opportunities for students to work with partners and small groups, move desks, walk around the room, and collaborate with one or more peers. In a humanities class, for example, students engaged in an Anticipatory Guide. At the beginning of the classroom observation, students worked with a partner, using sentence frames, to read and respond to the statements in an Anticipatory Guide, which pertained to the U.S. constitution and government.

Similarly, in a science class, students were instructed to first respond to six prompts involving the steps of various cell phases, and then circulate the room to find a partner to share their response

with; each student needed six student signatures, one for each prompt. Thus, students were expected to speak to six different students in order to fully complete this classroom assignment.

Teachers engaged small groups of students to work together collaboratively in order to negotiate meaning and sort texts and ideas in the service of broader goals. Examples included those that focused on features of texts and genres as well as the meanings of broader concepts.

In an English class, students were observed engaging in an activity designed to synthesize their knowledge of a specific genre. Students sat in groups of three and were asked by the teacher to collaboratively reconstruct in their small groups a persuasive essay that had been cut into multiple sentence strips and placed in an envelope. The teacher instructed the students to read each sentence strip aloud in their small groups, taking turns, and to work collaboratively to reach a consensus as to where in the essay as a whole each sentence strip belonged. The academic purpose of a task such as this is to help students reflect on their understanding of the different parts of a specific genre; for example, to identify the introduction, the thesis statement, the transition statements, the evidence, etc., and place them in the correct order to reconstruct the text as a whole. During this particular observation, the teacher circulated the room as students worked, reminding them to pay attention to punctuation and structural expectations of the genre in order to reconstruct the text correctly. When the students completed the activity, the teacher concluded by reminding the students of the upcoming state assessment, and that they will be asked to edit and at times re-organize texts on the editing portion of the test.

In another English class, small groups of students were given various adjectives which they were to sort based upon the target concept of the lesson, tone. Students worked in small groups using the provided structure, which involved taking turns and justifying their reasoning. The teacher then led a discussion in which individual groups reported out the adjectives with the most positive and negative connotations. The teacher then facilitated a whole-class discussion.

### **Teachers encourage students to speak and interact in English**

During classroom observations, there were many instances of teachers either directly encouraging students to speak English, or encouraging students to use English in other ways, as a part of an activity or assignment. For example, in a math class, the teacher invited individual students to work on problems on the smart board at the front of the class. After students finished, the teacher asked them to articulate how they solved the problem, and then paraphrased for the class what the thinking or process was for each problem the students presented. When a boy was hesitant to tell the teacher how he solved the problem in English, and offered a response in Spanish instead, the teacher responded, “Just practice your English. I know you can speak Spanish; you’ve been speaking Spanish for 18 years! Your math is good, and your English is getting there. Practice your English.” In this way, while encouraging students to use their languages outside of class, teachers remind them that class time is to be invested in the development of their English

## Teachers support students to attend to disciplinary uses of language

At the same time, teachers provide supports for students to develop shared understandings of English. In one English class, students were completing test preparation activities. The teacher amplified some communications by elaborating explanations of terms, such a "retrieval" (of information) in which she refers to Labrador retrievers, and "clementines" by naming familiar brands such as Halos and Cuties.

In several other classes, students were asked to work with a partner or in a small group utilizing formulaic expressions to support or expand their discussion. For example, in a humanities class, students were given strips of paper with phrases to use when engaging with a partner regarding their responses to several statements about the U.S. constitution:

Person 1: I am going to respond to statement number \_\_\_\_\_. It says \_\_\_\_\_ . I agree/disagree with this statement because \_\_\_\_\_. What do you think?

Person 2: I agree/disagree with you because \_\_\_\_\_. Now I am going to read statement number \_\_\_\_\_. It says \_\_\_\_\_. I agree/disagree with the statement because \_\_\_\_\_. What do you think?

In another class, the teacher alerted students to formulaic expressions to use with each other in their small groups during their discussion about a text they were reading:

What do you mean by...  
I'd like to add ...  
This is important because...  
Tell me more about ...  
I still have some questions about...  
I disagree because...  
I agree because...

In both of these examples, teachers provided students with generative language frames—not fill-in-the-blank sentences that require a single word response—to help them express their ideas in sustained ways. And it is through these opportunities to participate in interactions with peers, working with ideas and concepts in structures learning activities, that allow students to apprentice into the way “experts” in the field use language to think, reason, and interact with each other. In addition to using formulaic expressions, students were also provided with mnemonic devices to help them make meaning. For example, in most classes that were observed, students were

repeatedly encouraged and directed to use the mnemonic device STING while reading, which offers five reading strategies to utilize before, during, and after reading. In this context, the S, for example, reminds students to *Scan and number every paragraph before reading*; the I reminds students to read for *Information, key facts, and claims*.

## Formal Social-Emotional Supports

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### Clubs, electives, and sports engage students and broaden participation

**“If you’re just in this little world, and only [with other Language Center students], you’re not going to know people or think this school is interesting. If you have friends, it’s exciting.**

**—Heights student**

At Heights, students identified several clubs that they either belong to or would like to belong to if their schedule allowed. Several students mentioned planning to join the Engineering Club, as well as Dance Club. Others mentioned that they participated in sports, primarily soccer, but some were also interested in track, boxing, swimming, and golf. One student added that she ran track last year, but could not do so this year because of her schedule, “but I can still stay after school and work with them and practice with them.” Another student takes

French. The students emphasized that it was in these elective classes, clubs, and sports where they encounter the “regular” students, as they call them, the native English speakers. And while some of the students said they did not like speaking in front of native speakers because they were unsure of their accent or English in general, others asserted that it was the electives and clubs that gave them the opportunity to learn more about both the language and the culture of school.

At Success, the students understand that the primary goal of the school is to provide classes they need to graduate from high school. While the shared campus and tight schedule at Success make extracurricular activities difficult to implement, students identified these as both desired and necessary. Because the program at Success replaces electives with academic support classes, students have fewer opportunities with the school day to expand their school experiences beyond academics.

**“We feel kind of sad. It’s sad to see other people doing things. Fun things. But we understand. We are old.”**

**—Success student**

Still, they believe that they, too, would benefit from clubs and activities outside of their academics. Students talked animatedly about their desire to have things that the other high school students have, naming sports, parties, and prom as examples. The students commented that they understand the decision on the part of the administration, “We are focused on graduating from high school. So we don’t have time to play. And I understand.”

Still, they unanimously agreed, they would like to see some of the privileges afforded students at other schools.

## Specific staff members offer dedicated parent outreach to support students

At Success, the parent liaison coordinates both parent outreach as well as student support. As a speaker of Spanish, this parent liaison is the primary point of contact with many students' families, and also draws upon district-based resources for other languages such as Nepali and Burmese. In addition to these regular duties, the parent liaison at Success schedules weekly sessions of targeted support for social-emotional learning with students identified in cooperation with teachers. The parent liaison also coordinates with the attendance teacher to conduct home visits with students who have missed consecutive days of school. This designated position in the school—that of parent liaison—facilitates not only the building of relationships with parents, guardians, and families, but also serves to monitor students' progress on an emotional level.

## Informal Academic Supports

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### Students believe teachers both challenge and support them academically

Students at Heights identified several informal supports that serve to promote their academic success. Most notable is how the students believe that teachers support them and want to see them succeed. One student elaborated, and others agreed, that teachers explain things to students if they don't understand, and if they still don't understand, they keep explaining, "until you get it. They try their best for you." Another student added that one of his teachers in particular, "explains in a way we can understand and he helps us a lot." One student stated, "Here, they want you to learn. Something that is sure and complete."

**"She keeps us on track. She checks on all of us. Our grades. Everything. So we can keep going. So we can pass the class and learn."**

**—Heights student**

Students also agreed that teachers monitor their academic progress and intervene if they are off track. Students connected this ongoing support to the goal of graduation.

At Success, students provided a number of examples of how teachers "push students to go up and not back" and pursue their long-term dreams, such as becoming a lawyer. Another student asserted that he wants to go to major in math in college, and that his teachers help him not only with math, but also English, "He is very nice with me. He practices English with me and other students, and he helps me write."

**The teachers tell me, "Don't give up. I think you can go up. I think you can do it." And I feel, "Oh! I can do it!" and I just keep going.**

**—Success student**

## Teachers and counselors supplement formal programs contingently

Both schools provide the informal support of drop-in tutoring. Students reported that they could find specific teachers during the lunch period for additional academic help as needed. At Success, students commented that “you can ask the teachers for tutoring. They will know whether you understand.” Another student commented that the teachers are readily available to them, and they can seek help “At lunch time, or before school, or after school.” This kind of availability, not mandated by the school or formally scheduled, provides students with contingent academic support as they need it.

**“We help those who have graduated and come back. Because you know, they have a relationship and rapport with us, guide them even in the college ranks.”**

**—Success administrator**

**“...If they’re transitioning out to other classes, those teachers are always there. They know that [the teachers] are going to be there if they need help with anything.”**

**—Heights administrator**

Another support at Success is bringing back Success graduates to speak to current students about navigating college demands.

In addition to inviting graduates back to talk with and support current students, teachers and administration at Success invite graduates back to the school for continued support and guidance. One administrator explained that they feel a continued responsibility for their students, even after they’ve graduated and moved on. This continued sense of responsibility speaks to the expanded ways in which teachers and administrators view their roles in the lives of their students.

At Heights, the students made similar comments about the access and availability of tutoring or academic support when needed. One student explained that if they don’t finish their work in class, “we can come at lunch time to do it.” Another added, “We can come to any teacher; if we have questions, we can come.” Several other students echoed these sentiments, explaining that feel that any teacher will help them if they ask. One student articulated this through his comment that, “[she] always stays in her room for half

of lunch, and only then does she go and eat her lunch. She always stays for a long time in her classroom, and we can go there.”

In addition to informal tutoring and availability of teachers to help students as needed, there is a focused effort at Heights to make sure that transitioned students get the support and guidance they need once they leave the Language Center. Teachers stated that they are aware of who the transition students are, and everyone—Language Center teachers as well as mainstream teachers—keep an eye on them to make sure they continue to thrive.

## Students support each other informally to make sense of disciplinary ideas

Although we observed instances where teachers had carefully planned supports to assist students in interacting with each other, on other occasions the interactions between peers were more spontaneous.

In one Algebra class, students were investigating relationships between products of exponents. Working in small groups, student formulated summary statements such as:

- "the base never going to change, however, .. add the powers"
- "we need to sum the exponents"

As students continued to work on different and increasingly complex cases, two students had the following exchange.

Student 1: What happens if the base is different? Keep the bases together?

Student 2: If we do this is finish, you're going to write  $5 \text{ times } 2 = 10$ .

Student 1: But we're just simplifying, right?

This interaction illustrates students clarifying the task at hand while referring to the components with appropriate technical terminology.

In another Algebra class, students were solving and graphing linear inequalities. As part of the procedure, it is necessary to test which parts of the number line to shade by using specific points. One pair of students had the following exchange.

Student 1: Do you necessarily have to use zero?

Student 2: It's not necessary, but you can pick zero. It's easier.

Student 1: What did you get for the test point?

This interaction demonstrates that students were not merely carrying out a mathematical procedure, but were attending to meaning and issues of efficiency.

## Informal Social-Emotional Supports

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### Teachers demonstrate caring for students' social and emotional well-being

While both schools provide students with formal social-emotional support, they also provide students informally in multiple ways. At Heights, A significant informal social-emotional support that we identified is the sense of belonging and comfort that the Language Center students feel, which has been fostered by their teachers. There was an overwhelming positive commentary on the part of the students with respect to their teachers. For example, when students were asked to describe the teachers at the school, they spoke over each other, excitedly calling out such adjectives as *great, fantastic, excellent, helpful, and awesome.*

**“Those teachers are always there. It’s just—family is a little cliché, but it is like a big family of support for those kids.”**

**—Heights administrator**

Similarly, students as well as administration recognize the effort made on the part of the teachers in the Language Center to create that sense of community. For example, students in the focus group have a feeling that “all of the teachers” support them, and one student added, “It’s not a specific one. All of them support you a lot.” Administrators and teachers alike referenced the importance of fostering relationships as a key component of what makes the

Language Center successful. One administrator explained that the Language Center teachers make an effort to go beyond teaching in order to reach the students, stating “they build those relationships with the kids. Our teachers are really, really good at that.” A teacher added that the students bring, “an awareness of the world and a joy to be in this country. And they thank the teachers all the time. Sweet, sweet kids.”

**“We have a good support system. We build relationships. We’re here to talk to them before school, during lunch. They may prefer to talk to me about an academic point, and to a different teacher about a personal point.”**

**—Success teacher**

Success students also asserted that their teachers continually support them. For example, a student commented, “The teachers push me. ‘Don’t give up. Don’t give up’. And some give advice. Good advice.” Another added that the teachers, “make me successful, and make me strong. They make me able to speak, to listen, to learn more English. It’s a great school.” Teachers also stated that they empathize with the students’ as language learners, and understand how difficult it can be to learn a language as an adolescent. One teacher added, “Many of us were ESL students ourselves. I think that gives [us] an insight. And we’re all from different places. We’ve all had adjusting to do [in our own lives].”



## Students identify specific adults who they can trust

At both schools it is apparent that there is one key adult who supports both students as well, at times, other teachers. At Heights, students identified one teacher in particular as someone who both students and adults acknowledge as being a key person for emotional support and guidance. One student reflected on how this teacher in the Language Center greeted her on her first day of class, “She welcomed me with a warm feeling. And then, I knew that I belonged and I’m going to like it here.” Several students added that if they ever have a problem, it’s this particular teacher who they know will support them. When asked what they do if they have a problem at school, all of the students agreed on a single teacher.

“She’s terrific. She looks out for you. She’s like another mother.”

—Heights student

Similar to Heights, where one key teacher assumes responsibility for students’ emotional well being, a key adult was also identified at Success as someone who has an expanded role that includes supporting students’ emotional well-being. One student commented that this administrator, “Always has time for the students. Always.” Another added, “She is always helping.” A third student identified this person as the one to go to, “if you have a problem.”

In addition to this key adult at the school, Success students also identified a particular teacher who they consider to be a key person in their lives emotionally. The students agree that this teacher cares for them, looks out for them, and has made herself available to them if they need her, adding “she has her own phone. She gave us her number to call her if we have problems.” The students also acknowledged that this teacher, “has our mother or father’s number” as well, and will reach out to their parents if she feels the need.

## Students value diverse peers and opportunities to interact

**“You don’t only learn when you’re in class. You also learn outside of the school, at lunch. I talk to a lot of people, not only Language Center students. I get to know more people; it’s fun for me.”**

**—Heights student**

Students at Heights expressed a belief that learning for them takes place beyond the Language Center, and included the entire school student body. One student explained that although the Language Center is located on the third floor of the school, their experiences in school are not isolated.

Many of the Heights students commented that they have friends outside of the Language Center, and those friends help them both emotionally and academically.

**“It helps to talk to native language speakers, because when you see them speak, you see how they speak and how they pronounce words and you can remember the words so you can pronounce them.”**

**—Heights student**

Similarly, while the students at Success do not interact with any other student group due to the structure of the program, they also expressed the belief that they learn a great deal from each other, beyond their own ethnic or linguistic groups. For example, a student commented that the school is an “international” school, and that during lunch, students “sit together. They don’t care where you’re from.” Another student commented that he is motivated to continue learning English, because other students do not speak his language, “I have to learn more and more, to make friends and understand what they are saying.”

## Summary

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This report identified the formal/informal category along which to characterize the academic and social-emotional supports that schools provide newcomers. The specific findings in each of these four areas are listed below:

### Formal Academic

- Programs and classes focus on high school graduation
- Programs emphasize college readiness and application
- Teachers and counselors coordinate regularly to ensure aligned programs
- Teachers offer graphic organizers and note takers to support learning
- Teachers offer opportunities for student interaction and collaboration
- Teachers encourage students to speak and interact in English
- Teacher support students to attend to disciplinary uses of language

### Formal Social-Emotional

- Clubs, electives, and sports engage students and broader participation
- Specific staff members offer dedicated parent outreach to support students

### Informal Academic

- Students believe teachers both challenge and support them academically
- Teachers and counselors supplement formal program contingently
- Students support each other informally to make sense of disciplinary ideas

### Informal Social-Emotional

- Teachers demonstrate caring for students' social and emotional well-being
- Students identify specific adults who they can trust
- Students value diverse peers and opportunities to interact

Schools can use these categories to self-assess where they are supporting newcomers well, and areas where they could target for improvement.

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