

Welcoming the World: Preparing for newcomers in New Brunswick

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Abstract: The New Brunswick education system is facing many changes with the growth in population because of much-needed immigration. Like many other Canadian provinces, New Brunswick must settle newcomer families for future stability. New Brunswick educators are responding to cultural diversity, language differences and differing educational backgrounds of newcomer students. The needs of newcomers are addressed by looking at academics, language development and emotional well-being within an inclusive school system. Initial steps for policymakers and educators to support are more global view of education to lay a better foundation for newcomer students and families.

Résumé : Le système d'éducation du Nouveau-Brunswick fait face à de nombreux changements avec une population croissante en raison de l'immigration dont ils ont grandement besoin. Comme beaucoup d'autres provinces canadiennes, le Nouveau-Brunswick doit mettre en place des systèmes pour soutenir les familles de nouveaux arrivants pour assurer une stabilité future. Les éducateurs du Nouveau-Brunswick tiennent compte de la diversité culturelle, des différences linguistiques et des antécédents scolaires différents des élèves qui viennent d'arriver. Les besoins des nouveaux arrivants sont pris en compte en examinant les recherches, le développement du langage et le bien-être émotionnel au sein d'un système scolaire inclusif. Les premières mesures que les responsables financiers et les éducateurs doivent prendre sont une vision plus globale de l'éducation afin de mettre en place de meilleures bases pour les élèves et les familles des nouveaux arrivants.

Journal of Educational Thought
Vol. 56, No 1, 2023, 47 - 66.

Welcoming the World

New Brunswick (N.B.) is a small Canadian province nestled between Nova Scotia, Quebec, and the Atlantic Ocean. In 2019, the N.B. provincial government published a Population Growth Strategy document aiming to increase its population. For years, people have been leaving the province to find employment elsewhere. Lam (2021) calls this the outmigration phenomenon and “can leave local communities with shrinking populations and the need for local labor” (p. 263). A recent bump in the population is bringing hope. However, the province will continue to require more residents, and the government says it needs to attract, welcome, and settle newcomers into its communities for economic prosperity (New Brunswick Government, 2019). This is not only a provincial dilemma but also an urgent national strategy, as Guo-Brennan and Guo-Brennan (2021) explain,

Accelerated global migration and geopolitical crisis have had a profound impact on Canadian society and educational systems. International migrants account for more than 80% of the population growth in Canada, and have a significant impact on the social, cultural, political, and economic development of the Canadian society and communities. Canada’s immigrant and refugee populations come from almost 200 countries with distinctive ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic traditions and characteristics. This diversity is not only reflected in Canadian society and communities, but also in its provincial education systems and schools. (p. 57)

Newcomer students arriving in Canada have different educational experiences, varying from no formal education to having robust schooling. Many newcomer families lack economic security and must build a new life, changing the nation’s communities. Increasing ethnocultural, linguistic, and religious diversity is becoming more common nationally.

From a humanitarian perspective, there is also a need to support victims of global upheaval. Many areas of global conflict need support (Hamm et al., 2021b). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2022) released a report that stated:

At the end of 2021, the total number of people worldwide who were forced to flee their homes due to conflicts,

violence, fear of persecution and human rights violations was **89.3 million**. This is more than double the 42.7 million people who remained forcibly displaced a decade ago and the most since World War II. (<https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends.html>)

When newcomers arrive in a foreign country, demographic changes directly impact the education system in many ways (Ozmen, 2020; Peguero, 2011). These conflicts force individuals out of their countries due to hostile situations and a lack of resources. Therefore, an intentional, formal welcoming process must be in place for newcomer students, led by staff and students at the school. This strategy enables newcomer students to integrate into their new learning environment faster.

Some factors make New Brunswick a unique educational setting. New Brunswick is the only province with two official languages, and the school system is nationally recognized as the first to be fully inclusive (Porter, 2004). At the heart of the issue are the newcomer students and families hoping for a better life (Costigan et al., 2022). This contemporary reality in New Brunswick and across Canada raises two critical questions for this paper. What steps must be taken for newcomer student well-being in New Brunswick? Further, how committed and prepared are school leaders, educators, and supporting personnel (i.e., teaching assistants, guidance counsellors, librarians, bus drivers) to welcome, enroll, and create safe and inclusive learning spaces for newcomer students? As Stewart (2012) wrote,

Children and adolescents, who have been exposed to war are now attending schools in Canada, represent a particularly vulnerable group of students. Their experiences have been diverse, and many have suffered from severe personal trauma, violence, and loss. It is argued that the current system is not meeting the unique social and psychological needs of these students, and they are not provided with an appropriate education.
(p. 173)

Settlement then perpetuates a responsibility to support these families within our school systems. Educators need to care for the whole person. The responsible action is providing newcomer students with language, community, and help for their social and

emotional needs. Traumatic experiences, such as surviving war, leaving their country and arriving elsewhere, have long-term effects on newcomers that must be addressed. Teachers want to know how to support students from unstable and fragmented educational backgrounds due to war and other conflicts and ensure they are emotionally supported. Stewart (2017) and Stewart and Martin (2018) urge educators to understand how to care for these new students. In the following sections, I will explore ways to help newcomer students coming to New Brunswick.

The Canadian Context

Canada plans to welcome between 400,000 and 500,000 newcomers (Permanent Resident, Temporary Foreign Work, Refugee, and International students) each year due to its focus on economic development and population growth (Hornstein, 2022; Government of Canada, 2022). “A movement underway called the Century Initiative promotes the idea of strategically targeting achieving a population [in Canada] of 100 million by 2100, and urges the federal government to ramp up annual immigration targets further” (MacLeod, 2022, p.1).

Across Canada, researchers have been studying the effects of global migration for the past two decades. Guo-Brennan (2013) describes demographic changes in Prince Edward Island as,

The unprecedented diversity in Canadian classrooms demands that teachers identify meaningful ways to make connections with students of diverse needs and backgrounds to adopt innovative ways to motivate students to learn and to prepare them to participate in the global community in a responsible and ethical manner. (p. 8)

Canadian classrooms are becoming multicultural. Educators must recognize and respond to ensure that all students are represented in their schools, classes, and lessons. An Atlantic research team in Newfoundland wants educators to note, “as an important member of the United Nations humanitarian resettlement efforts, Canada has received an unprecedented number of refugees, many of whom are under the age of 18” (Li & Que, 2020, p. 6). Ontario has experienced rapid growth in diversity compared to other Canadian regions, but researchers are still stating a need for change to meet the growing demands. “Clearly our educational institutions are in need of serious

change to meet the needs of diverse groups and tackle individual and systemic racism, discrimination and exclusion in general” (Wyper, 2014, p. 4). The rationale is that “there is a pressing need to advocate for refugee children’s education and sharing of international expertise to help implement quality learning opportunities for the displaced and the uprooted children” (Guo et al., 2019, p. 90). The three areas of importance are global education, academics, and emotional health.

Global Education

Cultural awareness and acceptance are essential for schools to support newcomers (Lorri et al., 2017). Guo-Brennan (2013) has a more profound definition of global education, stating the importance of “...introducing and understanding five equally relevant global concepts: interdependence; images and perceptions; social justice; conflict and conflict resolution; and sustainable action” (p. 8). These concepts are built into the fabric of “existing school cultures, unless constructed specifically with the understanding of and respect for the importance of diversity and multiculturalism, [and] are likely to continue to reflect the dominant group values” (Cherkowski, 2010, p. 23). School cultures take time to build. Leaders and educators in schools need to understand diverse cultures to promote understanding. Administrators and teacher leaders must show acceptance of diversity through their actions and language. Such undertakings could include educators inviting multicultural organizations in for presentations and the intercultural art that is hung on the walls. All parents are intentionally welcomed into the school, with notices and welcoming language represented in multiple languages. These small acts woven into the school’s fabric can genuinely make the culture a reflection of its population.

When schools shift to a global representation, a leader intentionally makes steps to be inclusive. It is school administrators and teachers who “need to be responsive to unfamiliar behaviour, and open to learning and embracing difference and diverse cultural values and worldviews. The essence also calls upon leaders to be cultural advocates, and to respond appropriately to the dominance-minority dynamic that exists in interactions with culturally and linguistically diverse newcomers” (Okoko, 2019, p. 223). Administrators are at the helm to ensure what is acceptable in their institutions. School leaders need to model for teachers’ and students’ cultural awareness.

Academics

Cultural awareness, academics and emotional health go hand in hand with education. To tease them apart is complex. Firstly, newcomer youth need to be able to communicate, which can be challenging for them. Educational leaders and policymakers must know that “inadequate language education support programmes and inadequate preparedness of school staff” (Salam et al., 2022, p. 6) will place newcomer students at a learning disadvantage in their schools. The problem arises when educators serve five or more students with various educational and language backgrounds. Teaching can no longer be a traditional lecture-style “banking” approach (Freire, 1970). Not all students come with a detailed history of education or language. Scaffolding learning cannot happen when it is assumed that all the students have the same prior knowledge.

Newcomer students want to learn from the point of their arrival. If a student arrives in the ninth grade and the expectation is that they understand the geometry that a Canadian student understands, the gap widens. At the same time, the Canadian-born student had eight years of mathematics education to build on. The newcomer may have spent the previous eight years surviving. MacNevin (2012) added, “All children and youth have the right to an education. It is important, therefore, to support educators so that they may, in turn, help students maximize their educational experiences” (p. 60). To maximize newcomer education, the leaders must creatively analyze how to provide language and appropriate curricular adjustments without disenfranchising the student. Newcomer students in Canada are constantly learning new information. Teachers are responsible for presenting material differently as newcomer students learn a language, cultural expectations, emotional support, and community values.

Emotional Health

Teachers and school staff know the realities of newcomers students. They have been working with students who have experienced atrocities like war, hunger, violence, displacement, and loss. Taking the time to listen to these students’ experiences is essential. When a child or youth wants to share their story, what educators hear is emotional and very real. When the newcomer students speak, we all are responsible for listening and prioritizing their experiences. They need permission to let someone in. They also want their educators to understand their truth when they open up to someone who cares. As Stewart (2007) explains, student mental health is not area educators,

and caregivers can ignore. The relationships the newcomer students develop with teachers make the school the first avenue where they may confide previous traumatic experiences they have survived.

A key piece has school staff who know how to respond appropriately. As educators, we must be informed about where our students have come from and what they have endured. Disclosing that information with the classroom teacher needs to become a part of the practice of supporting newcomer education. Teachers can make accommodations for students when they know that a child is arriving without parents or if a child fears loud noises. This information can only support the teacher if they know it. Bilgili (2017) explains that educators need to understand the student's strengths as protective factors for their mental health, and "without the assessment of environmental conditions, a full understanding of the function protective factors cannot be reached" (p. 12). Pre-teaching and further explanation need to happen in advance.

An example would be to show awareness that emergency procedures could trigger new students who do not understand what is happening. Other solutions include connecting students to Canadian-born peers to support emotional well-being. Community and parental involvement are also crucial, and currently, connections with the community through religious and cultural workers are a better avenue for support for newcomer families.

Inclusivity in New Brunswick

Outmigration is studied closely by the New Brunswick (N.B.) government (2019). In recent times, New Brunswick has lost immigrants to larger urban areas, where they have established support communities (New Brunswick Government, 2014). An education system that is robust and challenging and can educate, advocate, and nourish newcomer children and youth would support families and help with the retention of newcomers in New Brunswick. A recent study conducted in N.B. on the education system and its readiness for newcomers found that educators "had not effectively responded to immigration and demographic change given the longstanding public call for increased immigration to the province" (Hamm et al., 2021b, p. 12). The researchers advocated for additional support from district and government leaders to make the necessary changes to help educators prepare to care for incoming newcomer students.

The inclusive system is vital when investigating the educational landscape. Education in New Brunswick has been

inclusive since 1986. The definition of inclusive education can be found in N.B. Policy 322 (2013), stating:

The pairing of philosophy and pedagogical practices that allows each student to feel respected, confident and safe so he or she can participate with peers in the common learning environment and learn and develop to his or her full potential. It is based on a system of values and beliefs centered on the best interest of the student, which promotes social cohesion, belonging, active participation in learning, a complete school experience, and positive interactions with peers and others in the school community. (p. 2)

The current understanding of an inclusive school system must be reviewed and reinvented when looking at the educational environment and supporting newcomers. The praxis of inclusion has been evolving and will have to continue to grow to meet the needs of students.

Inclusive education in policy addresses the academics and the whole school experience. Aucoin et al. (2020) explain that “Bill 85 required that students with disabilities and other special needs be educated in community schools, in regular classes with their non-disabled peers” (p. 314). Public schools in N.B. support every child within their catchment area, regardless of their educational needs. The focus has been primarily on helping students with exceptionalities, and not necessarily newcomer students from outside Canada. Porter (2004) described the vision of inclusion while first asking, “What do we mean by “inclusive education?” It is simple: children go to their community or neighbourhood school and receive instruction in a regular class setting with non-disabled peers who are the same age” (p. 2).

The province of New Brunswick has worked to improve support for students with exceptionalities. There are teachers, resource teachers and other professionals qualified to support students with varying exceptionalities. Teachers receive professional learning opportunities within their school, through their district, and provincially on how to meet the needs of students with exceptional learning needs. But given that the Porter report was published in 2004, and with recent waves of new immigrants arriving in N.B. since then, there is a gap in how Policy 322 addresses newcomer students’ needs, and perhaps the most vulnerable newcomers.

However, there is a minimal description written in provincial documents on how to meet the unique needs of newcomers or immigrants who have limited or no English or French, interrupted schooling, or how teachers support their learners in a culturally respectful manner and global lens. The MacKay Report (2007) on inclusive education stated that “Enhancing the inclusive education system could draw immigrants into the province” (p. 3) The education system in New Brunswick should provide equal amounts of resources to newcomer education. The moral imperative is that “Schools, of necessity, must meet the needs of the communities they serve. Diverse communities require schools that can accommodate diversity” (Porter, 2004, p. 2).

As more newcomers arrive in N.B., who may have different cultural norms and are non-English and French speakers, teachers and educational leaders are sinking deeper into pedagogical challenges. Educators will continue to require professional education and support from the government, the Department of Education, their School District, their school leaders, and their communities long into the future. In an inclusive system, everyone on board is responsible for meeting all students’ needs. Inclusion must move from theory to practice. Inclusive education must address the multiple layers of support needed to provide an equitable education for newcomer students. Just as the province implemented teams to aid and care for students with exceptional needs, there must be trained support personnel who can assist the newcomer students entering the education system daily. If educators do not continue to adapt and improve, they will gradually be embedded in an integrated education system - not an inclusive one.

Educational Changes in New Brunswick

Increasing professional learning for teachers. The research in New Brunswick has shown that with increasing immigration, the school system and its professional body of teachers, education assistants, and educational leaders are adapting to numerous changes they are confronting (Kristmanson et al., 2017; Maston, 2018; Wilson-Forsberg, 2012, 2016). But school teams need to advance their professional development on topics related to demographic changes. “If people continue to keep arriving from all over the world, professional development about immigration, demographic change, and increasing diversity in New Brunswick schools must extend beyond one-off sessions or workshops on general topics about

increasing intercultural competencies” (Hamm et al., 2021a, p. 194). A commitment to dedicated professional learning will have to take place. Having new students in schools and classrooms worldwide is a gift, but it still presents significant changes and challenges for teachers. Knowledgeable educators who understand intercultural differences and ethnocultural diversity are paramount to alleviating some of these challenges. In enabling new experiences in a safe environment with colleagues, teachers could learn additional strategies to welcome and care for their newcomer students. Professional learning that only superficially addresses the needs of educators and school leaders in diverse contexts is often counter-productive.

Educators should not be stumbling to keep up with the occurring changes. Teachers should feel confident in educating all their students. If students are struggling, there needs to be an avenue of support to access. New Brunswick educators will continue to drown in the sea of changes if nothing is implemented to support them. The answers to these problems will take time and resources. The lifeboat the provincial government needs to send should be equipped with professional learning and curricular changes that allow teachers to support newcomer students. Implementing positive interventions will ensure educators are prepared to weather the storms ahead. Continuing the current trajectory will ensure that N.B. is always a step behind. Preparedness is one solution to facing the changes in education.

Professional Development

For years, educators have been asking for more professional learning opportunities on challenges and issues related to diversity and demographic change that will help them support their students more effectively (Devine, 2013; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). In New Brunswick, Massfeller and Hamm (2019) emphasized that school leaders in New Brunswick need to support their staff through professional development in immigration trends and practices, global awareness, and culturally responsive teaching pedagogies. The leaders also should understand the changing demographics of their school and with a vision to respond appropriately. Leaders aware of what teachers face can advocate and empathize with their staff. “It is critically important that school leaders and educators continue to advocate for more professional learning on diversity and topics related to war and immigration that will help them understand the experiences of many

refugee students” (Massfeller & Hamm., 2019, p. 47). Changes in the educational landscape are making teachers feel ineffective. Hamm et al. (2016) suggested multiple areas where school leaders and teachers can begin. For instance, “educators in diverse schools in many regions across Canada could begin professionally engaging the diversity issues and discussing demographic changes in their schools through open and ongoing online conversations with professional peers teaching elsewhere” (p. 220). Topics can be delivered “during staff meetings and professional seminars, [and] topics should include White privilege, racism, social justice, and cultural awareness. In diverse schools and communities, the topic of racism needs to become part of a perpetual conversation that teachers learn to be comfortable with” (Hamm & Cormier, 2015, p. 42). Other scholars suggest educators and leaders engage deeply in topics about equity and social justice (Lund, 2003; Shields, 2004, 2018; Theoharis, 2007).

It is also imperative for educators to grow their understanding of trauma-informed teaching and peace-building skills. Teachers are not comfortable teaching newcomers who have had traumatic backgrounds. In a New Brunswick comparative study, the authors found that “several educators in both studies indicated their trepidation teaching students from all over the world who had experienced war. Some educators noted that students in their classrooms were on different sides of a war in their home country” (Hamm et al., 2021a, p. 187). In situations like this, teachers may have the best intentions when placing students together to forge positive relationships and learn but may accidentally trigger incidents between them. Teachers would potentially be more effective and understanding had they had the global knowledge that is out there on countries at war. Therefore, professional learning is paramount with all the topics identified as needs for educators.

Intercultural Leadership During Intake

Educators in N.B. require strong and supportive leadership teams. These teams must value diversity in increasingly ethnocultural and linguistically diverse schools. If the leader is unaware, they receive newcomers; teachers are also ignorant and ill-prepared. At times, administrators do not have prior notice that new students will be arriving to enrol, and this reality causes disruptions. Situations like these demonstrate a lack of preparedness on the part of the school. They can create an unpleasant feeling for the student if they arrive and notice that the adults are scrambling to get them set up in their educational program. The situation becomes potent if the newcomer

children and youth come from explosive, violent or traumatic circumstances. When students are not correctly received, their feelings towards school become adverse, heightened by cultural differences and language barriers. Therefore, educators do not foster belonging by not being prepared to welcome students effectively inside a gentle and warm structure. The newcomer student may ultimately reject education.

Walker and Riordan (2010) have noted that our understanding of newcomer students needs to continue to evolve where “productive inter-cultural communication in schools can only develop within an understanding of the cultures which comprise the staff and the school. Given that these are in continuous flux, this is an ongoing process” (p. 60). Newcomer students are responding to the environment where they are feeling rejected by becoming disengaged. They have been displaced from their homeland. Schools need to be primed to accept these newcomers. Taking the time to prepare would benefit educators, which will help everyone in the system and move the educational body of professionals from simply reacting (or not reacting) to being better prepared.

Intercultural Communication

Communication is a crucial aspect of leadership training that school leaders must continually develop throughout their careers (Knight, 2007). Communication is complex between Canadian educators and newcomers. When newcomer families are not connecting with schools, it has been shown that it can be unsettling for their children in school. When there is a breakdown in interactions with parents, problems tend to surface. “The situation becomes more complex for them when parents are less involved in their child’s school life and do not speak English well” (Hamm et al., 2017, p. 58). The connections between newcomer families and school personnel take time, human resources, translators, interpreters, and patience, as “many teachers, administrators, newcomer students and their parents struggle communicating effectively with each other” (Cormier et al., 2016, p.47). When the parents feel welcome and understand how their children are supported in their school, they can become more active partners in helping their children. Parents who feel welcome in their children’s schools will be more open to supporting their children and connecting with their community.

Needs of Newcomer New Brunswick Students

Language Development

Educators are learning that with an influx of newcomers, many students cannot communicate effectively in the dominant languages of French and English. School personnel rely heavily on translators and interpreters from settlement agencies to bridge language barriers between school staff and newcomer families. Cellphones are frequently used as translation tools for educators with students initially. Translation apps, for example, google translate, often do not have native languages spoken by some newcomers. Communicating is slow and frustrating for all parties. This lack of communication is not only oral language. The communication breakdown encompasses culturally relevant information, non-verbal communication, written language, and societal norms.

Language is the key to their future life in Canada. It is extremely challenging to exchange ideas when students and teachers cannot convey their thoughts effectively to each other. Language acquisition must be a priority, and newcomer students require time. Students will be able to navigate their community with confidence, knowing they can communicate their needs. Suppose students are given time to learn the new language. In that case, they will be empowered to engage other academic areas of interest, and they will have the ability to fulfil their chosen path. For newcomers to become part of the community, they need to be able to join and participate. The first step for newcomers to become New Brunswickers is connecting with others to ensure they build a life where their needs are met.

Safety

Many newcomer students have come from unstable areas of the world and endured unimaginable experiences (Guterras, 2015; Llewellyn, 2015; Stewart, 2007). “People experience and suffer from trauma before and during the war while escaping the war on route to a new destination, and finally, while settling into and adjusting to their new country” (Massfeller & Hamm, 2019, p. 41). If a student is in a constant loop of fear and apprehension, that child will not be engaged in the learning that is taking place. When these children feel safe, they will begin to express the emotions that they are processing. All the educators and support staff in schools should be allies and advocates for these newcomer students.

Educators' first responsibility is to ensure that their students are safe. Feeling safe encompasses many facets of life, and the school community must understand the areas that may make a student feel unsafe. Without a safe learning culture, student learning cannot occur, and schools may ultimately lose students. Students who have experienced trauma should have avenues to seek aid via teachers, a school counsellor, or other support personnel in their school.

Belonging

Human beings are social beings, and connections are essential. While living in refugee camps or a country where they are being forced out, people do not have a sense of belonging. Despite their displacement and inability to communicate, newcomer students want to befriend Canadian-born students. Having friends in the community creates a sense of belonging; those friends are the soil where newcomers can grow roots. Students yearn to belong, and there are many ways that educators can facilitate action to assist students, but the steps must be deliberate. Massfeller and Hamm (2019) reported that "newcomer students wanted more social classroom engagement from their Canadian peers but did not know exactly how to go about intentionally inviting interaction" (p. 59).

Connecting with Canadians is vital to creating mutual respect, engagement in diverse cultures and forming a community. Educators must create an environment where communication is respected and differing opinions are accepted because friendships must be intentionally nurtured in the classroom (Cummins, 1986; Rodriguez & Alanís, 2011). Further, newcomer students can be hesitant to take risks to engage with Canadian-born students. In such times, the adults must act as an intermediary modelling acceptance.

It is beneficial to become better prepared for continued global migration. Having an influx of immigrants is not only an opportunity for the newcomers but also an opportunity for educators to evaluate their current practices and learn how to support different students—enabling a better future for them through creating a "welcoming school environment for every new student" (Hamm & Cormier, 2015, p. 41). A welcoming environment means acceptance from all participants, including school leaders, teachers and students; it can also mean representation throughout the school.

Conclusion

Suggestions for New Brunswick Educators and School Leaders

The subject of global migration is highly complex. Educational leadership needs to be supported in policy and knowledge. Administrators need a realistic view of the pressures on teachers and newcomer students. Educational leaders must listen to the voices in the buildings that make up their school community. The leaders in the school are the constants in the storm that teachers are weathering. Teachers will support leadership that is caring, sympathetic to their needs and accessible when situations become difficult.

When administrators act, monitor, and support teachers, changes will take place. Transparency and clarity are essential; teachers must understand the expectations for welcoming and teaching newcomer students. The ability to communicate expectations comes from having school leaders with a clear vision of global education. Norberg and Gross (2019) were specific when saying that leaders can guide their schools if they understand the people who make up their educational community.

Educators will require time to learn better practices that support language learners. Leaders must lean into this challenge and support their staff, students, and families. A classroom transformation is needed to support teachers to become global educators with culturally relevant material. The movement towards better practices for all learners must be considered an investment in curricular documents and professional learning. If these actions are taken, teachers can implement specific interventions to support newcomer students who are learning the language.

Policies and curricular changes have got to be implemented and updated regularly to protect newcomer students. Expectations are the same for all students, but prior knowledge is not. Newcomers should be able to access language first. Educators know “language is present in every classroom. But language and content goals play out differently if you are the Language Arts teacher vs. the Content Area teacher” (Salva, 2017, p. 58). Students need to be able to engage and learn. Educators must understand who is in their classes and how to meet their students’ needs. An inclusive system cannot be the reason for letting newcomer students fall through the cracks in the system. Teaching to the mean does not work with the diverse needs of the newcomer population. Training on differentiation, universal design,

and trauma-responsive strategies must occur yearly for educators and school leaders to ensure all teachers have the skills to support the students they are teaching. A cry for policy changes, including curriculum documents written and adapted to reflect the needs of newcomers arriving in the system, should come from all educators. Class size and composition should be taken into consideration. Funding for surplus teachers and educational assistants to front-load support would be ideal.

Collaboration with community agencies such as multicultural and intercultural organizations will also provide support and needs to be strengthened and sustained. External agencies would be more successful if they worked together, rather than in isolation, to support their small part of the puzzle. New Brunswickers must be mindful that immigration will continue across Canada; therefore, conversations need to happen provincially and nationally about immigration and education. We can offer a welcoming hand to newcomers, and to do this well, we should change the system to support newcomer children sustainably.

Finally, newcomers' voices need to be heard. These humans have faced many obstacles in their short lives, and education should not be an insurmountable challenge. With more newcomer students entering the New Brunswick education system, educators and school leaders must move from reactive to proactive strategies and actions. When schools become culturally responsive, all positive changes need to be sustainable. Newcomer students need ample aid to be successful in school and integrate into their community. Educators should be cognisant that these students have educational goals past learning English. Parents and families have dreams for their children and need support in guiding their children and navigating the system.

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