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Literacy development for children of immigrants in schools: A case study of refugees in New Hampshire

Global migration has brought significant change to schools worldwide, requiring rapid planning for literacy support of children of migrants. The historically homogenous state of New Hampshire in the United States has a burgeoning population of immigrants, as well as communities of refugees from Africa and the Middle East. Many schools have scrambled to provide the language, literacy, and cultural supports needed to keep pace with the new students. This paper will describe the plan implemented in one middle school for literacy and language instruction for adolescent children of immigrants and refugees. Over the course of several months of school and class observations, teacher and administrator interviews, and document analysis, we have learned a great deal about the challenges, successes, and limitations of the school's plan for new learner literacy. Preliminary findings include the importance of a well-conceived incoming student language and literacy assessment tool; the insufficiencies of pull-out instruction for language and literacy, the need for support, particularly in writing, in the subjects, the impact of technology-based tools for literacy, and the need to build an outreach learning program for parents.