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STRIVING TOWARD BEST PRACTICE

Addressing Educational Needs & Challenges

Newcomers often arrive with myriad educational issues such as lack of formal study experience in addition to challenges involved learning a new language. Whether it is advocating for special needs children, or supporting low literacy adult newcomers, or assisting adults to gain a high school diploma or equivalency, sponsors have a responsibility to help each family member find the right educational path. Sponsors must address barriers, and newcomer personal needs to ensure a successful experience. There are a number of factors involved in addressing educational needs such as self-doubt, lack of focus, lack of learning experience, course format or style, failure to understand how more education might help them get that dream job, or even lack of digital experience around online learning. Addressing tiredness and fatigue is also critical to successful learning. For newcomer parents, there may be a need to advocate on behalf of their children who have physical, intellectual, emotional or social needs. As sponsors we need to better understand the needs and challenges.

Key guidelines:

Advocating for Special Needs Children

- Multilanguage learners are eligible to receive both special education supports and ESL supports in tandem
- Where possible, a copy of the medical diagnosis document (translated into English) is important to have on hand
- If there is no medical diagnosis, initial assessors will share concerns with teachers, student support personnel and administrators to create a transition plan
- Sponsors should ensure an interpreter is available during discussions so that the family can engage in decision-making
- Children should be given intervention as soon as the need for support is evident
- Ensure student progress is monitored to confirm that they are making progress over time.

Supporting Low Level Literacy Adult Newcomers

- Newcomers with little or no formal education or study skills might benefit from an empowering literacy program offered through COSTI or other ESL programs in other Ontario cities or communities
- Newcomers with low literacy learn how to decode text in reading and writing
- An effective method of teaching learners with low literacy is by linking what is already known to new words and concepts
- Sponsors can learn decoding tools to support newcomer learning
- Ways to help newcomers work toward achievement – build skills, provide tools, create relevant opportunities to consolidate knowledge; boost confidence, foster peer support
- Help students develop self-study skills, i.e. looking up new words or keeping a study log
- Sponsors can support literacy development and help build confidence in learning new words

Assisting Adults to Gain a High School Diploma

- Consider TVO online learning; accredited as an Ontario secondary school
- TVO provides an opportunity for mature learners to earn a Canadian Adult Education Credential (CAEC) equivalency diploma
- More than 140 online courses; flexible, easy access, teacher supported with student guidance
- Fee for each course required

Connections

- Adelson, Geva and Fraser (2014) **Identification, Assessment and Instruction of English Language Learners with Learning Difficulties in the Elementary and Intermediate Grades** *Applied Psychology & Human Development*, 1-32, www.utoronto.ca/gevalab
- **COSTI Empowering Literacy Program** <https://www.costi.org/programs/language/php>
- **TVOntario online learning** – <https://www.ilc.org>

Reference

- PRSN website on demand training – www.refugeesponsornet.ca, click on Educational Needs & Challenges, September 21, 2024