



From Day One: Building Connections for Newcomer Families

Newcomer Center at Thornton High School, Adams 12 Five Star Schools

Submitted by A'ndra Warren, andra.n.warren@adams12.org

NEWCOMER CENTER at Thornton High School

The goal of the Personalized Intake Process at the Newcomer Center at Thornton High School was to create an immediate sense of belonging and connection for newly arrived students and their families. Recognizing the importance of a warm welcome, the process aimed to ensure each family has a meaningful introduction to the school community while addressing unique needs and backgrounds. This initiative aligned with the school's commitment to inclusivity and fostering a supportive environment, especially for immigrant and refugee families.

The planning and implementation of the practice involved the Student Support Team and other staff members. The team collaboratively developed a process that personalized the experience for each family, ensuring they felt seen, heard, and valued from day one.

The intake process began with a personalized meeting where families connected directly with a staff member or interpreter who spoke their language. This one-on-one interaction helped build trust and provided a space for families to share important information about the student, such as interests, preferred names, and unique stories. Immediately following the intake, the students' teachers received a welcome email, sharing these details to help staff build relationships and support each student more effectively. Importantly, using students' preferred names rather than legal names acknowledges cultural practices outside the U.S. and is inclusive to LGBTQ+ students, eliminating the need for them to explain or change their identity upon arrival. Communication was primarily conducted through text and phone calls, recognizing that these methods were more accessible for many families than email.

The practice was evaluated through ongoing feedback from families and teachers, as well as observing the students' integration into the school community. One challenge was ensuring timely communication across all involved parties, particularly with varying schedules and language barriers.

For those looking to replicate this practice, the team advises prioritizing relationship-building and responsiveness to families' preferred communication methods. As one team member shared, "A genuine connection from the first day makes a lasting impact on a student's sense of belonging and their family's trust in the school." Consistency and personalization are key to creating an authentic welcome.