

Welcome

Celebrating Immigrant Cultures: Building Belonging Through Community, Culture, and Collective Care

A training for parents, educators, and caregivers



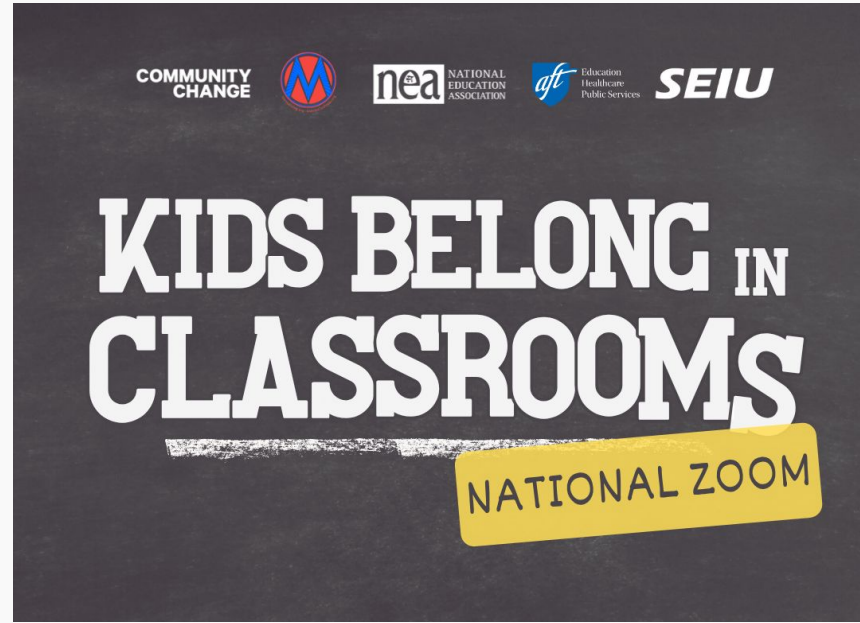
Community Change Action

National organization that **builds power from the ground up**. We believe that effective and enduring social movements must be **led by those most impacted by injustice** and **voting is one essential lever of change**. The work we are building together now is another.

*Community Change, was founded in 1968 by leaders of the civil rights, labor, and anti-poverty movements following the deaths of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, as a living legacy to the senator. Its founders' vision and their charge—to **build power through grassroots leadership, to challenge the government to be a force for good, to focus on poor people, especially poor people of color**—are just as relevant today as they were then.*



This Kids Belong in Classrooms Training is brought to you by:



Together We Can

- Create a welcoming environment for all families & school employees that keeps our kids, parents, educators, and school workers safe!
- Stand up against anybody trying to separate children from their families!
- Foster joy, pride, and mental wellness through community-building & support!

Who is today's training for?

- Parents and caregivers
- Teachers & school workers
- School administrators
- Community allies

Share in the chat: If you're already organizing efforts to celebrate immigrant cultures, share a win!

Agenda

- 1 What is Immigrant Heritage Month?
- 2 Why Celebrate?
- 3 Art, Music, Food, Storytelling
- 4 Language as Heritage
- 5 Tips for Educators and Caregivers
- 6 Q&A, Resources, next steps

Why Celebrate? The Stakes Are High Right Now

Celebrating immigrant heritage is not just a feel-good gesture — it is a direct response to a crisis in school attendance and student safety.

22%

increase in student absences after ICE raids in California's Central Valley

— largest among youngest students

Source: [Stanford/PNAS, 2025](#)

1 in 10

adults from immigrant families reported keeping their child home due to immigration enforcement fears

— 81,000+ school days lost in one study

Source: [Urban Institute / The 74, 2025](#)

64%

of high school principals reported students missing school due to immigration-related fear

— nationwide survey of 600+ principals

Source: [UCLA IDEA, 2025](#)

When schools visibly celebrate immigrant heritage, they send a powerful message: you belong here, and we will protect that belonging.



What is Immigrant Heritage Month?

Background

June is Immigrant Heritage Month — established in 2014 by the I Stand With Immigrants / I Am An Immigrant Initiative, powered by the FWD.us Education Fund.

The goal: to encourage immigrants to share their stories and demonstrate how immigration enriches our communities, economy, and culture every day.

Key Facts

- 1 in 4 children in U.S. schools has at least one immigrant parent (18.4 million children)
- Over 350 languages are spoken in U.S. homes
- 10% of adults from immigrant families kept children home from school due to enforcement fears
- 44 million+ immigrants call the U.S. home — 13% of the population, 18% of the workforce
- Approx. 40% of Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants or their children



Why Celebrate? Belonging Drives Learning & Wellbeing

Belonging predicts achievement

School belonging is a statistically significant predictor of academic achievement — especially for second-generation immigrant students. Students who feel welcome exhibit higher academic performance than those who feel excluded.

Cultural affirmation improves mental health

Schools that embed culturally affirming practices help immigrant students gain mental health literacy, pride in their identities, and a sense of agency — while reducing trauma responses that make it hard to learn.

Visible celebration signals safety

Peer belonging and a supportive school climate are powerful protective factors for immigrant students' emotional health. When schools celebrate immigrant culture visibly, families are more likely to trust the school as a safe space and send their children.

The whole community benefits

Research from Florida shows the presence of immigrant students has a positive effect on the academic achievement of U.S.-born students — especially from disadvantaged backgrounds. Celebrating immigrants benefits everyone.

*Cultural celebration isn't separate from school safety — it IS school safety.
It is how we keep families connected and kids in school.*



ART: Community Heritage Mural — Why & What

What is a Heritage Mural?

A collaborative mural is a large artwork created by many hands — students, families, and community members — each contributing a piece that represents their heritage. The result is a permanent, visible celebration of your school's diversity.

Why it works:

- Creates a permanent, visible signal that immigrant heritage is honored here
- Involves families as creators, not just audiences
- Students feel pride every time they pass it in the hallway
- Can anchor other heritage activities (unveiling ceremony, artist talks)

Source: [Early Learning Alliance](#)

Mural Variations for Any Budget

- **Puzzle Piece Mural:** Each child or family decorates one puzzle piece with a symbol from their heritage. Assemble pieces into one unified display. Low cost, high participation.
- **Wall Mural (Painted):** A local muralist or art teacher designs a large wall piece with imagery from student-submitted symbols. Students help paint sections under guidance.
- **Digital + Printed Mural:** Students create digital art pieces representing their heritage. Print and assemble into a giant banner for hallways or entrances.
- **Fabric Heritage Quilt:** Each family decorates a fabric square. Sew or display squares together. Easy to add new squares as new families join.

ART: How to Plan Your Heritage Mural — Step by Step

1: Form your team (4–6 wks out)

Recruit an art teacher, a parent volunteer, and a school administrator. If doing a wall mural, identify a local muralist willing to work with students.

2: Set the theme & gather ideas

Ask students: 'What image or symbol represents where your family is from?' Brainstorm as a class. Community voting can select final design elements.

3: Get permissions & plan the space

For wall murals: get written approval from principal/facilities. Choose a visible, permanent location (entryway, hallway, gymnasium).
For puzzle/quilt murals: pick a display wall or frame.

4: Send home materials & invitations

For puzzle/quilt style: send each family a pre-cut piece with simple instructions. For wall murals: invite family members to a community painting day. Make participation voluntary and joyful.

5: Community painting day

Host 1–2 sessions where students and families paint or assemble. Play multilingual music, serve snacks, make it festive. 4–5 days total for large wall murals; 1–2 sessions for panel-style.

6: Unveil & celebrate!

Host an official unveiling event — invite families, local media, and community leaders. Have students explain the elements they contributed. Post photos on school social media.

MUSIC: Multicultural Talent Showcase — Overview

A multicultural talent showcase celebrates the music, dance, and performance traditions of immigrant families — giving students a joyful stage for pride and belonging.

What to include:

- ★ Traditional songs or dances from students' home countries
- ★ Instrumental performances (world instruments welcome!)
- ★ Poetry or spoken word in any language
- ★ Cultural storytelling, proverbs, or folk tales performed live
- ★ Student-led demonstrations of traditional arts or crafts
- ★ DJ set featuring music from represented cultures

Key principles:

- ★ Showcase (not competition) — everyone who participates is honored
- ★ Never require participation — always make it a joyful invitation
- ★ Frame acts with context: brief intro about each culture's tradition
- ★ Allow performances in home languages — provide translations or summaries
- ★ Recruit student emcees who can bridge cultural contexts with pride
- ★ Partner with local cultural organizations for additional performances

MUSIC: How to Plan Your Talent Showcase — Step by Step

1: Plan committee & set a date (6–8 wks out)

Form a committee: teachers, parent volunteers, one admin. Set a date avoiding exams and major school events. Reserve auditorium/gymnasium. Set a budget.

2: Invite performers (4–6 wks out)

Send multilingual invitations home. Be clear it's a showcase not a competition. Include a simple sign-up form: act name, type (song/dance/story), home culture, time needed, language.

3: Recruit community performers

Contact local cultural organizations, dance studios, and community centers. Many will perform for free. Reach out to families who may not sign their children up but would love to perform themselves.

4: Rehearsal & run-through

Host one optional rehearsal for acts who want it. Prepare a simple program with one-sentence cultural context for each act. Brief all emcees and student hosts on pronunciation of names.

5: Day-of logistics

Decorate with flags and student artwork. Provide programs in multiple languages. Have a quiet area for nervous performers.

6: Celebrate all participants

Every performer receives a participation certificate. Take and share photos (with permission). Thank each act with culturally specific appreciation. Consider a community reception after.

Art, Music, and Dance: Books for Young Children

A screenshot of the website colorincolorado.org/booklist/art-music-and-dance-books-children. The page features a search bar with the word "ART" entered. The main heading is "Art, Music, and Dance: Books for Young Children". Below this, there is a paragraph: "These books celebrate diverse expressions and forms of art, music, and dance from across the country and around the world. It won't take long for little ones to tap their toes and create new masterpieces after reading these gems!". A small book cover titled "Justa Books" is shown. To the right, there are logos for "aft" (Association for Education and Healthcare Public Services) and "nea" (National Education Association). At the bottom, there is a "Related resources" section with a list of links and a "Related tip sheets" section with a link to "Parent Reading Tip Sheets for Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers in 13 Languages". On the right side of the page, there is a vertical navigation menu with buttons for "Kindergarten", "1st Grade", "2nd Grade", "3rd Grade", "4th Grade", "5th Grade", "6th Grade", "7th Grade", "8th Grade", "Algebra 1&2", and "Precalculus".

Find more at: Colorín Colorado



FOOD: Heritage Potluck & Cultural Tasting Fair

Food is a universal language. A heritage potluck invites families to share a dish — and the story behind it — creating community and belonging in the most delicious way possible.

The Potluck Model

- Each family brings a dish that represents their heritage, with a card explaining its name, origin, and significance
- Provide store-donated items for families who cannot cook — no one is left out
- Partner with local immigrant-owned restaurants to donate dishes
- Have students create flags and maps from their families' countries as table decorations

The Tasting Fair Model

- Set up stations around a gym or cafeteria, each featuring a culture
- Students and families visit stations with a 'passport' to collect stamps
- Each station includes food, music from that culture, and a fact card
- Great for larger schools — reduces coordination burden on individual families

Making It Inclusive

- Collect allergy info in advance; label all dishes with ingredients
- Offer halal, kosher, vegan, and gluten-free options (partner with restaurants)
- Include a supervised play area so parents can connect with each other
- Never require participation — frame as a joyful, optional community gathering

FOOD: How to Plan Your Heritage Potluck — Step by Step

1: Form committee & set date (6–8 wks out)

Recruit 6–10 parent and teacher volunteers. Choose an evening event for maximum family attendance. Reserve the gymnasium, cafeteria, or community room.

2: Send multilingual invitations home

Send flyers in all home languages: 'Bring a dish that represents your family! Sign up here.' Include a simple signup with dish name, ingredients, and dietary notes. Make participation optional.

3: Seek community donations (4+ wks out)

Contact local immigrant-owned restaurants and grocery stores with a letter on school letterhead. Many will donate food, paper goods, or funds. This reduces family burden and cost significantly.

4: Prepare the space & recipe cards

Set up tables by region or culture. Prepare recipe card templates: dish name, home country, ingredient list, what it means to the family. Have students make flags/maps for table décor in class beforehand.

5: Plan inclusive logistics

Collect allergy info from RSVP forms. Label all dishes clearly. Set up a supervised play corner for younger siblings. Plan for both families who can cook and those who cannot — have backup store-donated items.

6: Host the event!

Play a multilingual heritage playlist. Invite families to introduce their dish with a sentence about its significance. Compile submitted recipes into a printed community recipe book to distribute afterward.

STORYTELLING: Heritage Storytelling Circles & Book Drive

Stories are how cultures survive. When we invite immigrant families to share their stories — and stock shelves with books that reflect those stories — we tell every child: your history belongs in this school.

Heritage Storytelling Circles

- **Invite staff, families, or community members** to share a personal story, folk tale, or historical narrative
- **Set up a cozy, safe space** with soft lighting and optional soft background music from the storyteller's culture
- **Storytelling is always voluntary** — frame it as a gift to the community, never an obligation
- **Invite grandparents or elders** to read a traditional story in their home language (with English summary)

Diverse Book Drive: Key Steps

- **Audit first:** assess your library's current immigrant/diverse representation.
- **Set a theme:** Focus on 'Books by immigrant authors' or 'Stories of families from our school community!' Announce the drive school-wide.
- **Partner up:** Reach out to your local bookstore for donations.
- **Invite community:** Ask families to donate a book that reflects their culture. Pair with a sticker: 'This book was gifted by the [Family Name] family from [Country].'
- **Display prominently:** Create a 'Heritage Reads' section. Feature books face-out.

ColorinColorado: 12 Strategies for Creating Inclusive Literacy Celebrations for ELLs

- Step back and look at the big picture
- Listen to kids' voices when planning literacy celebrations
- Plan an event that has multiple activities, stations, or project options
- Give students a chance to share their talents and experiences
- Include ELL families in the planning process

- Engage community partners, volunteers, guests, and resources
- Review book selections that will be included in activities
- Review book selections for sale, browsing, distribution and swaps
- Help students with book selections
- Look for reading "role models."
- Don't force it
- Reflect, review, and revise



Read more at [Colorín Colorado](#)



LANGUAGE: Honoring Language as Living Heritage

Over 350 languages are spoken in U.S. homes. Teaching even simple greetings in families' home languages says: your language has value here. It is not a barrier — it is a gift.

Hola

Spanish

Bonjour

French

你好

Mandarin

مرحبا

Arabic

Привет

Russian

こんにちは

Japanese

Olá

Portuguese

Namaste

Hindi

Tips for Educators: Making It Meaningful

✓ DO

- Invite families as cultural experts — not just helpers
- Celebrate immigrant heritage year-round, not only in June
- Use students' home languages as assets in lessons
- Provide context for cultural activities — depth over tourism
- Ensure materials represent your actual school community
- Create a trauma-informed space: never require sharing
- Display 'Welcome' signs in all home languages

✗ AVOID

- Touristy portrayals — food and costumes without cultural depth
- Putting immigrant students on the spot to 'represent' their culture
- Assuming all students want to share their immigration story
- Materials that center hardship without showing joy and agency
- Ignoring the political context families are living in right now
- Treating heritage month as a one-time event rather than a practice
- Cultural attire as costumes — only authentic expression, never mockery

Creating Welcoming Classrooms

Getting to Know Your Immigrant Students



Learn more about the factors that can impact immigrant students' experiences in U.S. classrooms, including prior education and literacy levels, hidden skills or talents, responsibilities at home, or previous traumatic experiences.

Special Populations: Immigrants and ELLs



Students may have unique social, emotional, and academic needs based on their prior experiences. Resources for working with special populations such as refugees, migrants, students with interrupted education, newcomer immigrants, unaccompanied children, children in mixed-status or undocumented families, and internationally adopted students are included in this section.

Creating a Welcoming Classroom

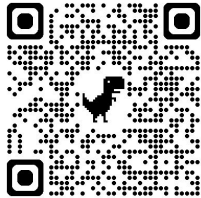


An important step in helping English language learners succeed is building their confidence and comfort level by making them feel welcome in the classroom and developing positive relationships with students. Learn more in this resource section.

ELL Family Outreach



Welcoming families at their child's school is an important way to start building a partnership. This resource section includes ideas that all members of the school community can try!



See more at: [Colorín Colorado](#)



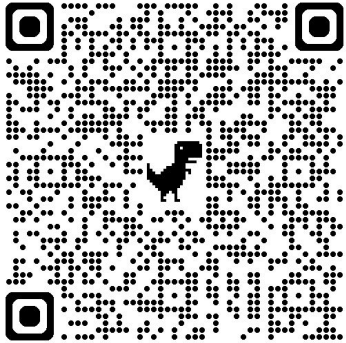
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs



See more at:
[Colorín Colorado](https://www.colorincolorado.org)

A screenshot of the Colorín Colorado website. The page features a navigation bar with categories like 'ELL Basics', 'School Support', and 'Audience'. The main content area displays an article titled 'How to Provide Social-Emotional Support for Immigrant Students' by Colorín Colorado (2018). The article includes a photo of a young girl and text describing strategies for educators. A sidebar on the right lists related resources under the heading 'On this page'. The website's header includes social media icons, a search bar, and a 'Donate' button. The bottom of the screenshot shows a Windows taskbar with various application icons and system tray information.

Share My Lesson: How Schools and Communities Can Support Immigrant Students and Families



See more at:
[Share My Lesson](#)

A screenshot of a web browser displaying the Share My Lesson website. The browser's address bar shows the URL: sharemylesson.com/teaching-resource/how-schools-and-communities-can-support-immigrant-students-and-famili... The page header includes the Share My Lesson logo, navigation links like 'Browse +', 'AI and Education', 'Summer of Learning', 'AFT Book Club', 'Vital Lessons: Dr. Vin Gupta', and 'EdBrAlnIt'. A search bar and 'Log In'/'Sign Up' buttons are also present. The main content area features the lesson title 'How Schools and Communities Can Support Immigrant Students and Families' in large blue text. Below the title is a photograph of a family of four (two adults and two children) standing on a dirt path, looking towards a large white tent structure in the background. To the right of the photo, there are metadata details: 'SUBJECT: Health and Wellness – Mental, Emotional and Social Health • Social Studies – Current Events, Immigration'; 'GRADE LEVEL: Grades K-12, Professional Development'; 'RESOURCE TYPE: Presentation'; and 'ATTRIBUTES: English-Language Learners (ELL)'. The page also shows '31 DOWNLOADS' and 'EdBrAlnIt' branding.

ColorinColorado: Must-Have Resources for Administrators



See more at:
[Colorin Colorado](https://www.colorincolorado.org)

A screenshot of a web browser displaying an article on the ColorinColorado.org website. The browser's address bar shows the URL: colorincolorado.org/blog/must-have-resources-administrators-about-supporting-immigrant-families. The website header includes social media icons, a search bar with the word "immigrant" entered, and navigation links for "En español", "About Us", "Newsletters", "WETA", and "Donate". The main navigation bar lists categories like "ELL Basics", "School Support", "Teaching ELLs", "For Families", "Books & Authors", "Videos", "Audience", and "Resource Library". The article title is "Must-Have Resources for Administrators about Supporting Immigrant Families" by Lydia Breiseth. A small photo shows two women talking. The text explains that school leaders can support English language learners (ELL) and immigrant students and families. A red star icon is placed below the text. Below the article is a section titled "Welcoming and Supporting Immigrant Families" with a sub-heading "Engaging ELL Families: 20 Strategies for School Leaders". It mentions a guide offering 20 big ideas for family engagement. A list of two bullet points follows: "Strengthen home-school partnerships on behalf of ELL students" and "Recognize and build upon ELL families' strengths". On the right side of the page, there are two sponsored logos: "Education Healthcare Public Services" (eHPS) and "National Education Association" (NEA). At the bottom right, there is a featured image of a young girl writing at a desk, with the caption "Montessori of Cedar Park" and a link to their website.

10 Strategies for How Schools Should Help Respond to Help Children Impact by iCE

1. Provide trauma-informed care
2. Provide counseling support
3. Provide waiting space
4. Identify bilingual liaison
5. Connect with community
6. Obstruct the school-to-deportation pipeline
7. Affirm safe spaces
8. Help students who become homeless
9. Provide public resources
10. Equip school staff

Source:
[IDRA.org](https://www.idra.org)

Downloadable
posters in
multiple
languages
available



How Families & Caregivers Can Participate

Share Your Story

Bring a family photo, object, or recipe to class. Connect with teachers about sharing your story if you feel comfortable. Even small contributions matter deeply.

Bring Culture Home

Cook traditional meals, listen to music from your home country, and tell stories across generations. Children feel proud when their home culture is alive and celebrated.

Advocate in School

Ask the PTO or principal to host a Heritage Month event. Request that the library stock books representing your family's culture and language.

Support Your Child

Affirm your child's identity — both their heritage AND their American identity. Create a family heritage scrapbook or 'Where We're From' book together.

Connect with Community

Find local cultural organizations, festivals, and community centers. Connection to others who share your heritage is a powerful protective factor for children's wellbeing.

Know Your Rights

You have the right to be involved in your child's education regardless of immigration status. Schools cannot ask about immigration status and cannot grant ICE access to students.

You are the most important keeper of your family's heritage. Here are meaningful ways to share it — entirely on your own terms.



References

[Colorín Colorado](#)



[ShareMyLesson.com](#)



Every Child Deserves to See Their Story Reflected in School.

Celebrating immigrant heritage is not a gesture — it is a commitment to the dignity, belonging, and full humanity of every child and family in our schools.

Thank you for being part of building welcoming schools.

The Kids Belong in Classrooms Toolkit Includes Tips for:

- Pass out know your rights materials to your school community.
- Create a school emergency preparedness plan.
- Building Morning Arrival and Dismissal Support Teams.
- Fostering joy & culture pride in your school community.
- Advocating for local policy change.
- Deepening the connection with your local community around your school.



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