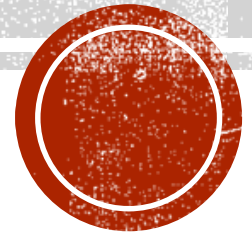


UNSEEN STRUGGLES OF IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE STUDENTS — HOW TO HELP!

DR. ELINA NEWMAN, CPHT



DISCLAIMERS

- *This presentation contains information local to my residence (Lincoln/Lancaster County, Nebraska). Some of the information may be **my** personal experience with input from others like me. This may **not** necessarily contain information word-for-word from books and research as many immigrants do not participate or fear participating in research for a variety of reasons.*



OBJECTIVES

- Foster understanding of immigrant/refugee situation that you may not read about in literature
- Offer ways to help immigrants/refugee students succeed





WHO AM I?

- Immigrant/refugee, genocide survivor
 - Came to US when I was 10 (no English)
- Went to school, graduated as salutatorian in 2002
- Went to college, finishing my PhD in 2020
 - Shameless plug for my dissertation
- Work in a few service professions (education, healthcare, business owner, plus involved in a few volunteer efforts)
 - Involved with various local immigrant/refugee resettlement efforts



TYPES OF IMMIGRANTS

■ Newman (2020)

- Naturalized citizens
- Conditional permanent residents
- Violence against women act immigrants
- Family reunification immigrants
- Special immigrant juveniles (unaccompanied and accompanied)
- Refugee immigrants

■ Newman (2020)

- Asylum seeking immigrants
- Non-immigrant temporary visa immigrants
- Victims of human trafficking immigrants
- Economic immigrants
- Academic (teacher and student) immigrants
- Illegal immigrants



MAIN TASKS

- **Acculturate**

- Process of starting over
- “multidimensional process consisting of the confluence among heritage-cultural and receiving-cultural practices, values, and identifications...[and involves looking at] changes that take place as a result of contact with culturally dissimilar people, groups, and social influences” (Newman, 2020, p. 21-22)

- **Enculturate**

- “taking parts of the new culture and incorporating it into one’s life” (Newman, 2020, p. 27)



STATISTICS

- Bright side foundation (2021)
 - 44.9+ million immigrants lived in the us in 2019
 - Guessing the number is higher today
 - 32% naturalized citizens speak English “not well”
 - 28% of immigrants live in linguistic isolation



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STATISTICS

- Lincoln/Lancaster country welcoming & belonging strategic plan (2022)
 - Lincoln, Nebraska (Lancaster County)
 - Immigration hub
 - In 2016, Nebraska resettled more refugees per capita than any other state
 - Home to 30,000 immigrants and refugees from around 150 different countries
 - County population increased by 6.5% **overall** in last 5 years
 - Immigrant population increased 16.2%



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STATISTICS

Lincoln/Lancaster County Welcoming & Belonging Strategic Plan (2022)

Top five countries of origin for immigrants living in Lancaster County:



MEXICO

15.9%



VIETNAM

13.5%



CHINA

9.4%



IRAQ

8.4%



SUDAN

4.0%

Top countries of origin for the refugee population in Lancaster County:



VIETNAM

28.8%



IRAQ

28.1%



SUDAN

14.0%



STATISTICS

- Lincoln/Lancaster country welcoming & belonging strategic plan (2022)
 - Lincoln, Nebraska
 - Top languages spoken at home
 - Spanish – 33.4%
 - Vietnamese – 21.9%
 - Chinese – 10.4%
 - 23.3% of immigrants in Lancaster county are recent arrivals, no more than 5 years of residency
 - 29.7% more likely to be of working age than us counterparts so they are active in the work force and contribute to the economy



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KINDS OF SUPPORT

- “Organizational versus personalized welcome of immigrant families and its effects on acculturation” (Newman, 2020)
 - Organizational
 - Medicaid, Medicare, food stamps; tied to financial support
 - Personalized
 - Social connections, social support
 - This is where we struggle * ... monetary support is not enough



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ORGANIZATIONS AND QUICK GUIDE RESOURCES

- Catholic Social Services
 - <https://www.cssisus.org/>
- Lutheran Family Services
 - <https://www.lfsneb.org/>
- MyLink via apple and google stores
- Various cultural support groups (i.e., Yazidi, Ukraine)
- Lincoln/Lancaster Country Welcoming & Belonging Strategic Plan
 - Steering Team Member *
 - ELL Welcome Center through LPS
 - 25 Bilingual Liaisons
 - Cultural centers of Lincoln
 - Asian Community and Cultural Center, El Centro de las Américas, Good Neighbor Community Center, Indian Center, Malone Center, and Ponca Tribe of Nebraska (Lincoln/Lancaster county welcoming & Belonging plan, 2022)



ORGANIZATIONS AND QUICK GUIDE RESOURCES

- Cultural Centers of Lincoln
 - Asian Community and Cultural Center, El Centro de las Américas, Good Neighbor Community Center, Indian Center, Malone Center, and Ponca Tribe of Nebraska (Lincoln/Lancaster county welcoming & Belonging plan, 2022)
- The New Americans Task Force
 - Careerladder
 - The connectors' program – “Professional mentorship and networking opportunity for eligible, foreign trained professionals seeking career advancement services through the CareerLadder Program” (Lincoln/Lancaster county welcoming & Belonging plan, 2022)
- MyCity Academy
 - empowers New American community members in Lincoln to strengthen their ability to advocate, navigate and impact local government services (Lincoln/Lancaster county welcoming & Belonging plan, 2022)



WHAT'S IMPORTANT 101

- Cunningham & Shagoury (2021)
 - “Silent period”
 - Unwilling or unable to communicate orally even though they understand what is happening around them
 - Why?
 - Difficult to express their thoughts clearly
 - Fear of being misunderstood, made fun of
 - How long?
 - Varies



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WHAT'S IMPORTANT 101

- Cunningham & Shagoury (2021)
 - Don't force to speak
 - Need time to listen to others talk, interpret and make sense of what was said, and observe how others interact with one another
 - Students – ELL classes (formerly ESL classes)
 - Ask “yes” or “no” questions
 - Pay attention to nonverbal communication
 - read facial expressions (i.e., smiles)
 - mime – use their bodies to communicate
 - pictures



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WHAT'S IMPORTANT 101

- Cunningham & Shagoury (2021)
 - When they're comfortable, shared experiences
 - Share a word in the students' home language
 - Ask a person to teach word in his or her own language
 - Use drawings to further communication (i.e., mother, father, etc)
 - Watch child play on playground

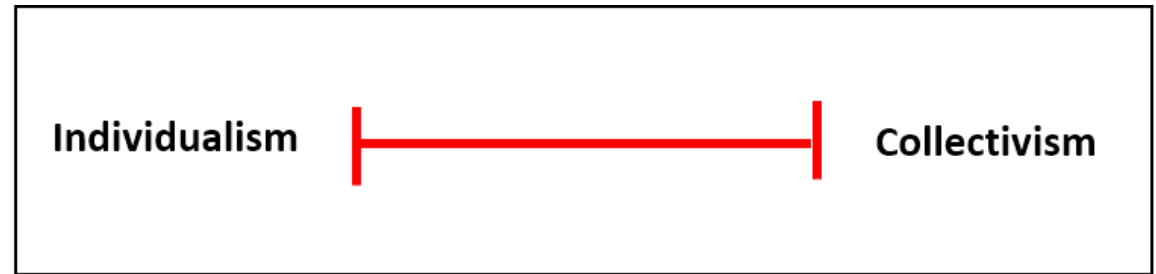


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WHAT'S IMPORTANT 101

- Unique Challenges
 - Stress from cultural changes (Birman, 2002)
 - Individualistic versus collectivistic
 - Used to being part of a bigger group
 - US focused on individualism, so many feel alienated (Ladson-Billings, 1995)



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WHAT'S IMPORTANT 101

- Unique Challenges
 - Stress from cultural changes (Birman, 2002)
 - New norms/expectations (Birman, 2002)



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WHAT'S IMPORTANT 101

- Unique Challenges
 - Stress from cultural changes (Birman, 2002)
 - New norms/expectations (Birman, 2002)
 - Language

calories

(noun)

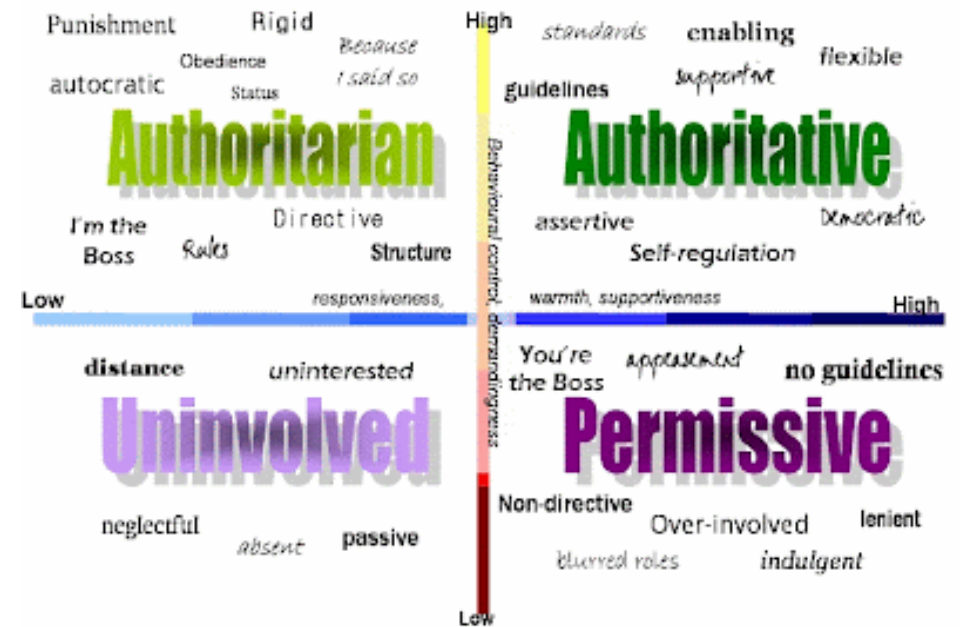
Tiny creatures that live in
your closet and sew your
clothes a little bit tighter
every night

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WHAT'S IMPORTANT 101

- Unique Challenges
 - Stress from cultural changes (Birman, 2002)
 - New norms/expectations (Birman, 2002)
 - Language
 - Behavior in men/women, parents/children, school, work



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WHAT'S IMPORTANT 101

- Unique Challenges

- Stress from cultural changes (Birman, 2002)
- New norms/expectations (Birman, 2002)
 - Language
 - Behavior in men/women, parents/children, school, work
 - **Feel like must choose between home/new culture (Suárez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn. 2009)**
 - **Children struggle the most**



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WHAT'S IMPORTANT 101

- Unique challenges
 - Stress from cultural changes (Birman, 2002)
 - New norms/expectations (Birman, 2002)
 - Language
 - Behavior in men/women, parents/children, school, work
 - Feel like must choose between home/new culture (Suárez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn. 2009)
 - Discrimination, bullying, racial slurs, hate crimes
 - 9/11
 - COVID – mandates created many struggles, specifically for immigrant/refugee students



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WHAT'S IMPORTANT 101



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- Foster an environment of welcome (Colorado, 2018)
- Connected to support groups/community groups (Colorado, 2018)
 - Feeds the collectivistic desire to belong
 - This is not therapy
- Help them establish permanent residency/citizenship for protection (Colorado, 2018)
 - Policy needs to be worked out to make this more attainable
 - Pass naturalization test (Chanda, 2017)



WHAT'S IMPORTANT 101

- Learning English (Chanda, 2017)
 - There is no expectation to learn their language but huge appreciation when people try
 - Difficult language
 - Fluffy rules with no explanation
 - Semantics matter
 - People talk fast (i.e., don't yell)
- Transportation (how to get from point A to B)
- Staying connected (how to obtain a cell phone)



WHAT'S IMPORTANT 101

- Housing
 - Lincoln's horrible housing situation right now
- Work/employment
 - Remove licensing barriers (Chanda, 2017)
 - i.e., residency barrier – many come with incomplete paperwork; can't get a job until paperwork comes through
- Money
 - Many come with little to no money
 - Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps for temporary help until the family can get on its feet and obtain basic needs (i.e., shelter, food, clothes)
 - Ultimate goal for many of these families is to get off government resources – they want independence



WHAT'S IMPORTANT 101

- Education
 - K-12 – vastly different; how taught and what is taught
 - College
- Healthcare
 - Caution about mental health



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OTHER SKILLS

- Bills
- Banking
 - Most come from “cash” societies
 - banks
 - checking accounts
 - credit cards
 - loans



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OTHER SKILLS

- Insurance
 - car
 - home
 - life
 - health/vision/dental



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OTHER ISSUES

- Withdrawal from social situations
- Distrust
 - Government
 - Other people
- Children
 - Grow up fast
 - Translators – resentment from parents
 - School is the only place they are kids



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OTHER ISSUES

- Sympathy versus empathy
 - Do not treat as victims
 - Do not coddle
 - Do not belittle
 - Do not “help” ... assist
 - Do it with you rather than for you



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INTEGRATING INTO ACADEMICS

- Many will come into your classrooms or offices with not only school issues but also social issues, like low social and economic status, few social support systems, and threat of family separation



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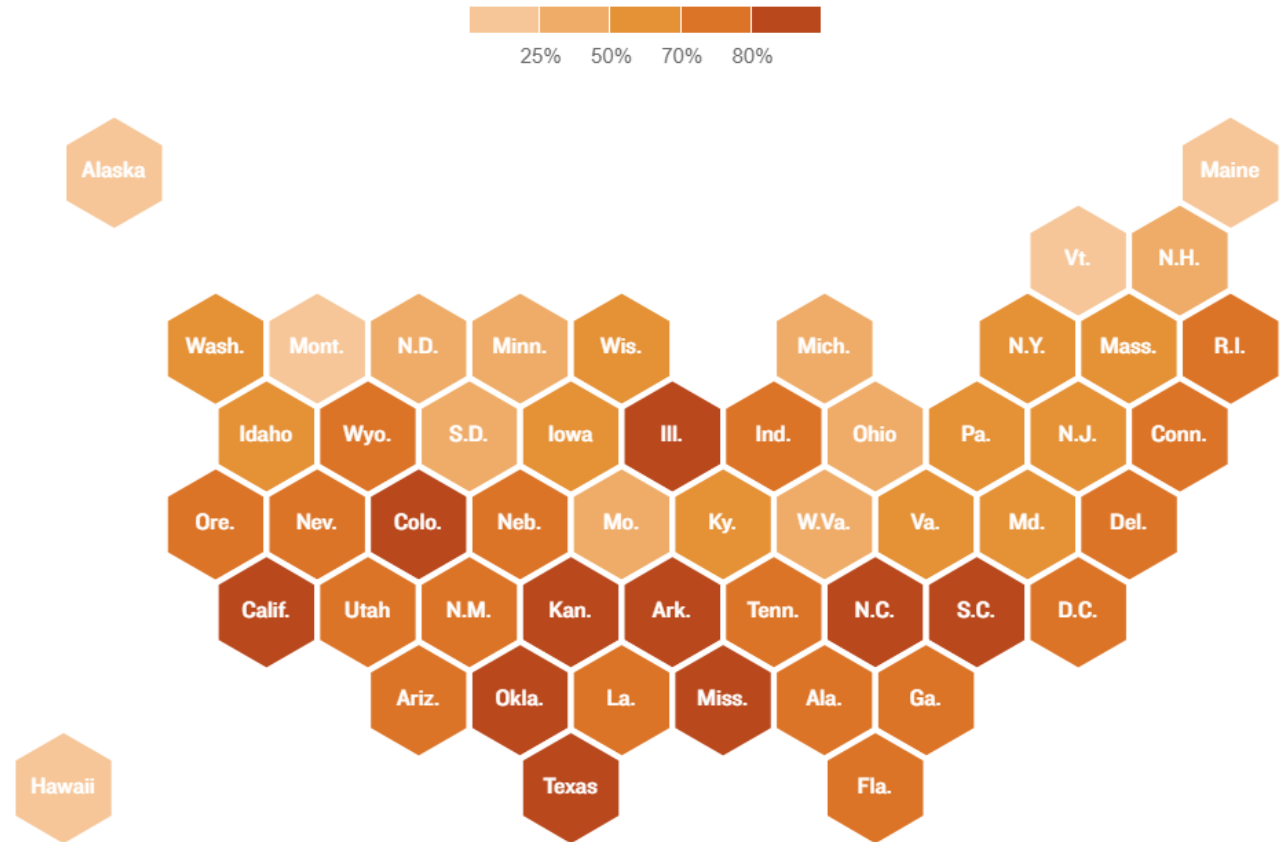


INTEGRATING INTO ACADEMICS

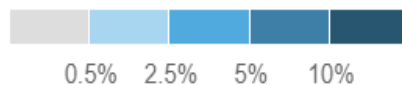
- Sanchez (2017)
 - Language barrier - ELL
 - 1 in 10 students in public school
 - Vast majority speak Spanish
 - BUT...other languages prevalent as well

Spanish Is The Primary Language For Most ELL Students

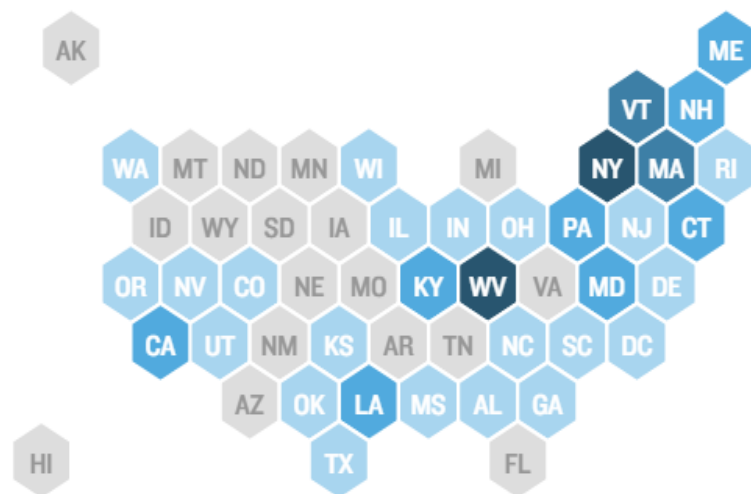
Of the top five most common foreign languages spoken among ELLs, Spanish ranks No. 1 by a large margin.



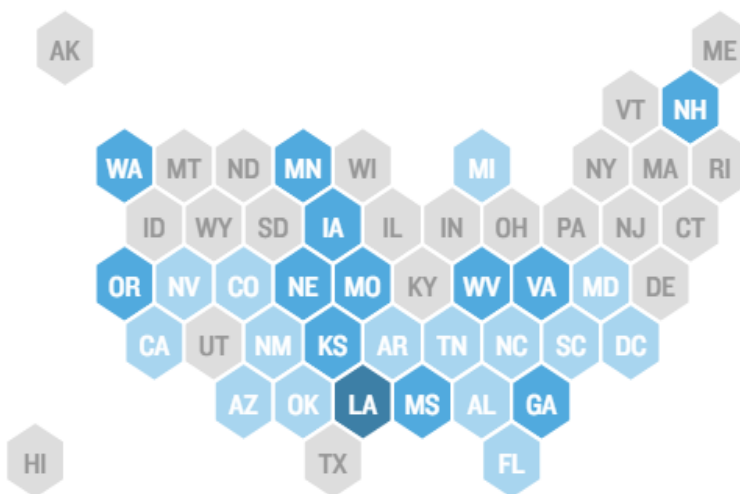
Other Languages Are Prevalent In Certain Parts Of The Country, Including ...



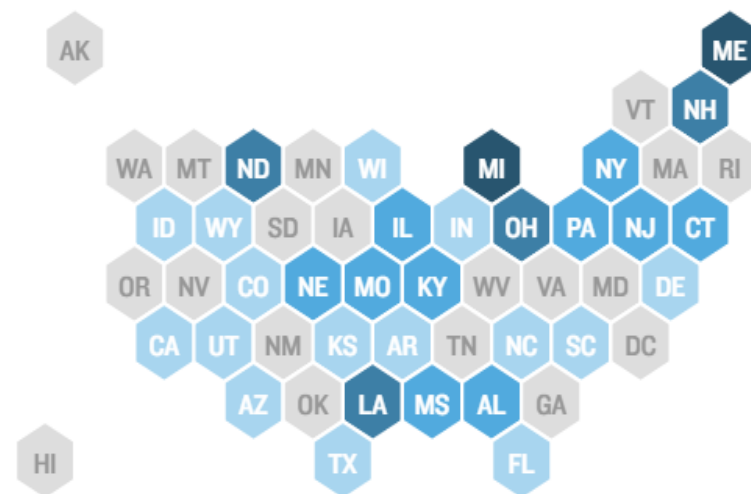
CHINESE



VIETNAMESE



ARABIC

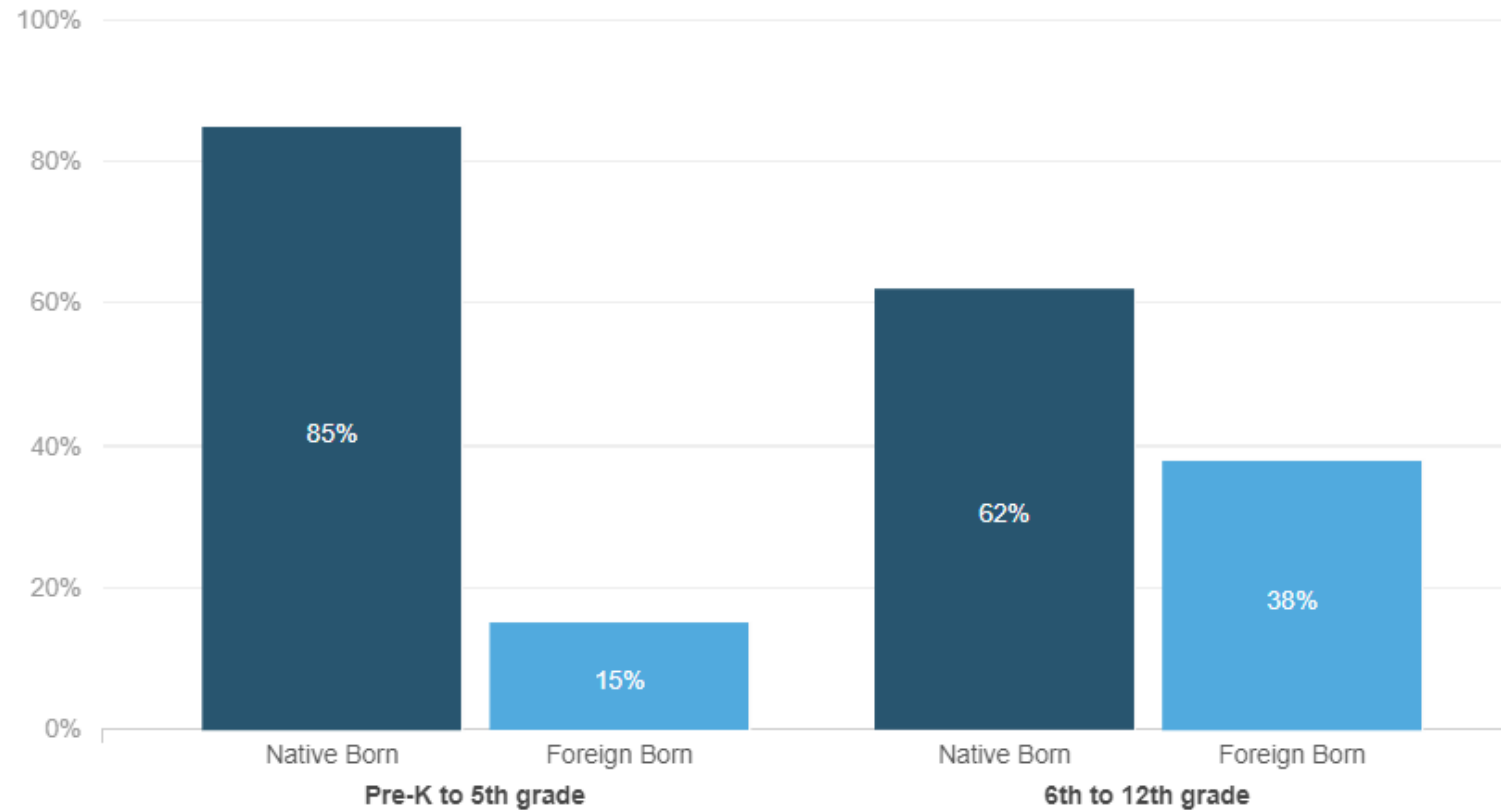


Source: [Migration Policy Institute](#)

Credit: [Brittany Mayes/NPR](#)



Most English Language Learners Were Born In The United States



Source: [Migration Policy Institute](#)

Credit: Eunice Esomonu/NPR

INTEGRATING INTO ACADEMICS

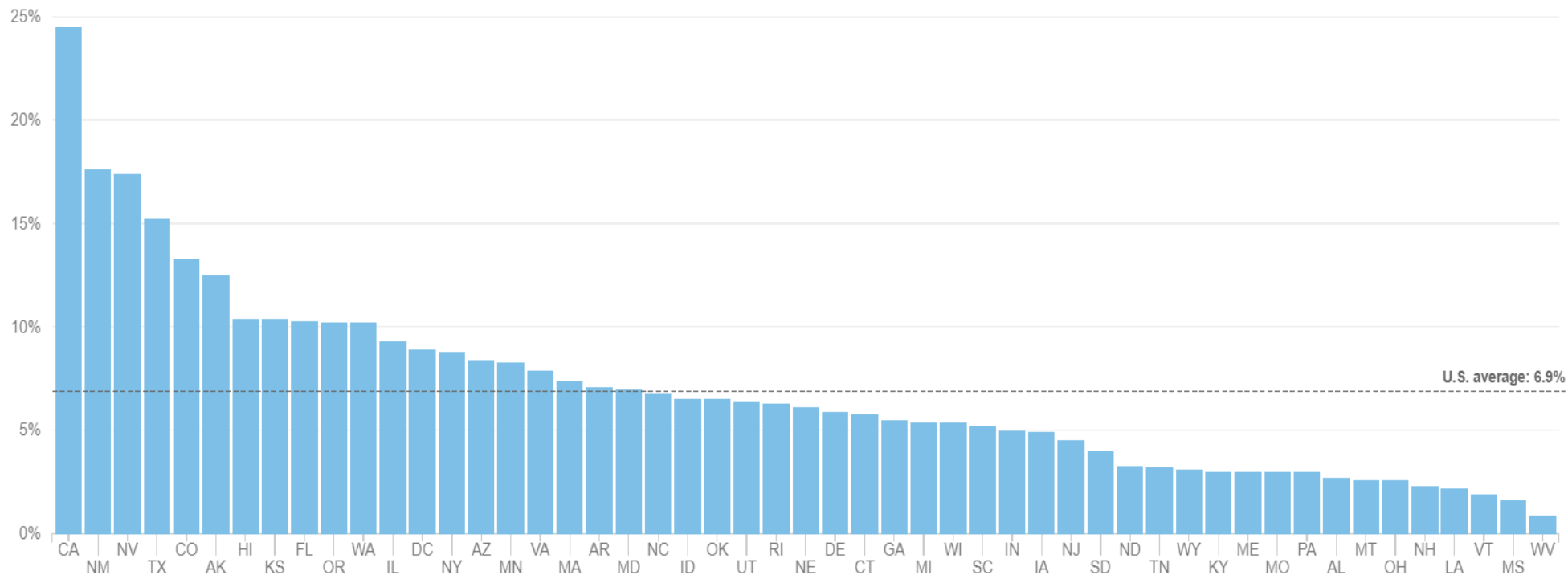
- Sanchez (2017)
 - Most born in US



INTEGRATING INTO ACADEMICS

Share Of English Language Learners Per State

Share of students in each state (plus the District of Columbia) who are English language learners (SY 2013-14).



Source: [Migration Policy Institute](#)

Credit: Brittany Mayes/NPR

- Sanchez (2017)
 - California (29%)
 - Texas (18%)
 - Florida (5%)
 - New York (4%)
 - 2000-2014 – growth highest in Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina



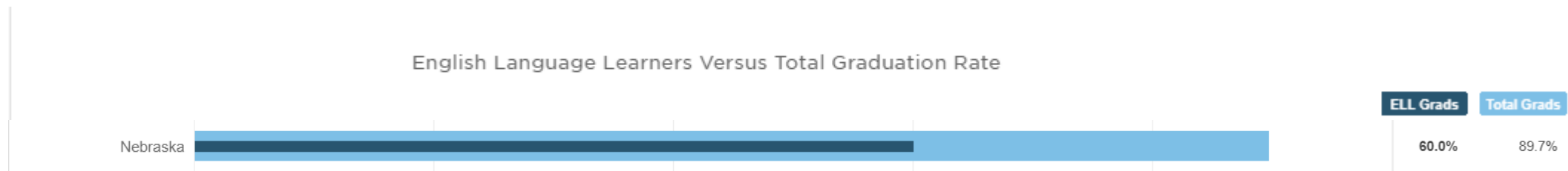
INTEGRATING INTO ACADEMICS

- Sanchez (2017)
 - Struggle with little to no access to education that is tailored to them (many times, excel in math but behind in English)
 - 90% enrolled in ELL but quality of programs is questionable



INTEGRATING INTO ACADEMICS

- Sanchez (2017)
 - Identifying ELL students
 - Can be tricky but usually done through a survey
 - Achievement
 - Lag behind



INTEGRATING INTO ACADEMICS

- Sanchez (2017)
 - Many are not transitioning to English fast enough
 - Academically segregated and fall behind basic subjects
 - Only 63% graduate from high school compared with 82% average
 - Of those, 1.4% take college entrance exams
 - Gifted ELL
 - 2% enrolled in gifted programs versus 7.3% of non-ELL students
 - Most know material on first day of school but are overlooked – considered “not as smart”
 - Tend to be kept out of accelerated programs



INTEGRATING INTO ACADEMICS

- Learning English is pertinent (Carter, 2019)
 - Not doing work because they don't understand
 - Mistakenly placed into special education classes
 - Lower academic success rates
 - Feeds into low self-esteem due to social isolation



IDENTIFYING STUDENTS

- What I have seen
 - First sign of struggle is class attendance
 - Then, course work issues
- Reasons
 - Culture/background
 - view of self
 - home commitment
 - Lack of support on campus (social connections)



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IDENTIFYING STUDENTS

- My hope (dream)
 - Spread the word (locally and nationally)
 - Be involved in as many activities as possible so that students know I'm here
 - Create opportunities for students to interact with each other
 - Fall 2022, low risk, round table discussions, get my name out on campus
 - Possible creation of a group on campus, leading to “buddy” system
 - Anything formal until trust is established is out of the question
 - Eventual community involvement



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WHAT/WHO HELPED ME?

- ESL/ELL Class
 - definitely had a silent period
 - teachers were my friends
 - my age group, I felt, didn't understand ... I have seen too much
- Supportive Network Of People
 - Church, other Armenian families although had to distance eventually
- Actual discrimination made me stronger, resilient
 - "Alien"
 - Bullied
- Intrinsic motivation
 - functional introvert
- Finding opportunity of blending two cultures
 - dance
 - being involved through community efforts
 - being a voice for those who can't speak
 - dating/marriage
 - parenting - authoritarian vs. authoritative; balanced
 - overnight stays
- Non-victim mentality
 - A victim label is disrespectful, demeaning
 - Empathy important (not always possible), not sympathy
 - Emphasis on control of one's destiny, no one else ... responsibility for one's own actions
 - MY choices/decisions – not government or other people; my authentic, determined self



WHAT/WHO HELPED ME?

- Had to make conscious choices of what I embraced/let go of
 - Found my voice after I graduated high school
 - From a young age, valued accountability...which takes care of honesty, loyalty, values, morals...things that have guided my life in its entirety

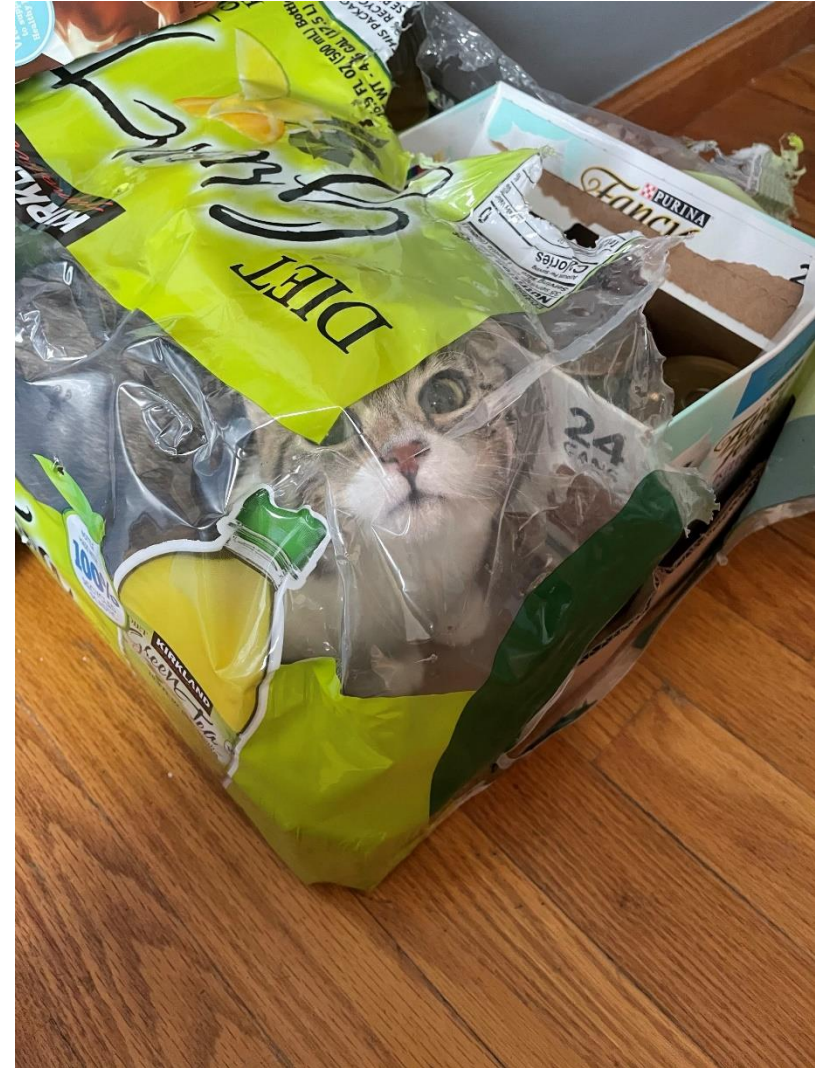


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QUESTIONS

PHOTO OF MY CAT, OLLIE, PLAYING HIDE AND SEEK 😊



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