



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

TRANSFER SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR RECENTLY ARRIVED IMMIGRANT ELLS, AGES 16–21

English Language Learners (ELLs) who arrived in the U.S. as teenagers have some of the greatest needs of any of the City's student populations. In addition to having to learn a new language and meet graduation requirements before they turn 21, many of these students also have gaps in their education and require academic remediation in order to access the curriculum; are juggling jobs and family obligations in addition to their schoolwork; and have complex social-emotional needs in part due to traumatic migration experiences. Unfortunately, there are few DOE schools able to provide the support recently arrived, older immigrant ELLs need to be successful. According to a recent data analysis conducted by the Migration Policy Institute, **New York City is home to over 4,200 high school-age immigrant youth who do not have a high school diploma but are not enrolled in school.**

- » **One in four ELLs in New York City drops out of high school**—the highest rate of any student subgroup—while just 41% graduate in four years. This is particularly devastating given that **ELLs have the potential to outperform their native-English-speaking peers when given the right supports**: in 2019, 91% of former ELLs (those declassified in the prior two school years) earned a diploma, a graduation rate 14 percentage points higher than that for the City as a whole.
- » The DOE's "ELL transfer schools" provide a supportive learning environment for older immigrant students, including intensive English as a New Language (ENL) instruction, bilingual social workers, and partnerships with community-based organizations to help address immigration, housing, and other needs. However, **there are only five such schools, four of which are located in Manhattan**, making it difficult for students in other boroughs to attend. The City is home to 27 non-ELL transfer schools, which are located across the five boroughs and serve over-age and under-credited youth, but they do not offer the intensive ENL classes and robust social-emotional supports that recently arrived immigrant students typically need.

To curb the ELL dropout crisis and put immigrant youth on the path to success, **the City needs to provide quality school options for newly arrived, immigrant ELLs, ages 16–21, in their home neighborhoods.**

BUDGET RECOMMENDATION:

Pilot programs for recently arrived immigrant ELLs, ages 16–21, at existing transfer schools (\$1.6M for FY 2021 and \$2.2M in FY 2022 & 2023, adding up to \$6M total for three years).

To address the geographic limitations of the City's ELL transfer schools and increase existing non-ELL transfer schools' capacity to serve recently arrived immigrant youth, the City should allocate funding to pilot programs to support ELLs, ages 16–21, at existing transfer schools in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. This funding would enable four schools in FY 21—increasing to six schools in FY 22—to hire ENL teachers and bilingual social workers, offer culturally responsive wrap-around supports and services, and provide professional development so that all educators are prepared to support newcomer immigrant youth. It would also add two central DOE staff to coordinate and administer the programs.