

# **Increasing Refugee Civic Participation in Schools**

## **A Guide for Community Organizations**

**Created by Mosaica: The Center for Nonprofit Development & Pluralism in partnership with Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. under a project funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, “*Technical Assistance to Promote Refugee Citizenship & Civic Participation*”**

### **Introduction**

This guide uses the term *civic participation* to refer to the full range of activities through which individuals, groups, and organizations can work together to improve their common, civic life. Our previous guide, *Increasing Refugee Civic Participation: A Guide for Getting Started*<sup>1</sup> describes a variety of approaches that organizations representing, serving, and advocating for refugees<sup>2</sup> can use to increase civic participation among refugees.

One area of civic life that is very important to refugee communities is *public education*. Like other parents, refugee parents care deeply about their children’s well being and success in school. However, for a variety of reasons that are likely quite familiar to you, refugee parents are often disconnected from the school system, and thus their children’s education. At the same time, school systems often know little about refugee communities and struggle to effectively serve refugee students. By getting more involved in the school system, refugee parents and students can contribute to creating an environment where refugee students can succeed. At the same time, they can take an important step towards, and learn critical skills for, civic participation in other aspects of community life.

Ethnic community-based organizations (ECBOs) are well-positioned to play an important role in encouraging and supporting this form of civic participation. In their role representing, serving, and advocating for refugees, many ECBOs already interact with the school system and serve as a bridge between individual parents, students, and schools. ECBOs can build on these informal activities to develop more structured efforts.

### **Purpose of this guide**

The purpose of this guide is to provide ECBOs with tips and tools for developing their own efforts to increase refugee civic participation in the school system and around education issues. It explores the benefits and challenges to increasing civic participation in the school system and

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<sup>1</sup> Available online at

[http://www.cliniclegal.org/Refugee/Docs/MosaicaCivicParticipationToolKit\\_final.pdf](http://www.cliniclegal.org/Refugee/Docs/MosaicaCivicParticipationToolKit_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Although this toolkit focuses on *refugee* civic participation specifically, it would also be useful for organizations seeking to increase civic participation among the broader immigrant community.

around education issues. It then looks at different models and approaches – from parent involvement to parent and youth organizing – to civic participation in the schools. Lastly, it helps ECBOs think about “where to start” in building a more structured effort.

## **Why focus on increasing refugee civic participation in the school system and around education issues?**

Increasing the involvement of refugee parents and students in the school system and on education issues is a good place to start for many reasons, including the following:

- ✓ **Education is something your community cares about.** If you want to increase civic participation, a focus on the school system is a good place to start because all families care about their children’s education. The schools are one system that nearly all families have a connection to, even if they have not had the time, resources, or skills to be actively involved.
- ✓ **Education is an important issue for refugee communities.** Data show that too many refugee and immigrant students are being left behind, and there is a large gap in achievement. There is both a need and an opportunity to bring the voices, resources, ideas, experiences, time, and energy of *all* members of the community to find solutions to this issue. (*See the Appendix. The Campaign for High School Equity website has national-level data and links to other resources. [www.highschool equity.org](http://www.highschool equity.org).*)
- ✓ **Public schools generally welcome involvement and participation.** Public schools in the United States generally welcome the involvement of parents and many seek active partnerships between schools and communities. Educating children is seen as a shared responsibility of teachers, parents, children, and the school system. One formal vehicle for this relationship is Parent Teacher Associations or Organizations.

However, public schools in communities with relatively new refugee and immigrant communities – and even some of those with more established ones – often struggle with how best to reach and engage refugee and immigrant parents. Too often, schools might want to reach refugee and immigrant families, but not know how. They might lack the cultural and language capacity, as well as the resources for effective outreach to refugee parents. As a result, refugee parents do not gain access to the information and “entry points” needed for involvement, and are

### **What is a Parent Teacher Association or Organization (PTA or PTO)?**

PTAs and PTOs are organizations made up of parent and teacher volunteers working together to address issues concerning students and the schools, and to increase parental involvement within the school. Although both PTOs and PTAs do similar work, only PTA chapters are members of the National PTA – a national nonprofit organization. However, over 75% of volunteer parent/teacher groups in the U.S. are not affiliated with the National PTA.

less likely to be involved. As a result of this gap in contact and communication, schools often lack an understanding of the difficulties that refugee and immigrant students face and insights around how to address them.

- ✓ **Participation makes a difference for education outcomes.** There is a growing body of research that suggests that children whose parents are involved in their education do better in school than children whose parents are not involved. Parents' direct involvement in their children's learning, through helping them with their homework, regular meetings with teachings, or volunteering in the classroom, frequently improves their outcomes. At the same time, parents' involvement in decision-making – in setting the policies and practices that guide how the school system serves refugee students – can ensure that schools are responsive to the needs of refugee communities. (*See the text box on page 6 and the Appendix for more information.*)
- ✓ **Participation in the school system can lead to other forms of civic involvement.** By starting with helping refugee parents become more involved with the school system, you can help open doors for more opportunities for refugees to become involved with other forms of civic participation. Through involvement in the schools, parents can learn the basics of how the system works and can build their skills and confidence. For example, a community organization in the Washington, D.C. area brought together a group of Latino parents to support them in becoming advocates for needed changes to how the local middle school addressed the needs of their children. As a result of their advocacy efforts, the school created an in-school suspension program so children who are suspended will not be on the streets. The parents then became involved in other forms of civic participation, including volunteering for community organizations and participating in rallies or marches on other issues.
- ✓ **The voices of refugee communities need to be "at the table."** As with other service systems, in the school system, the voices of low-income and refugee/immigrant parents and students have been under-represented within the decision-making structures and governance of the school system. If schools are going to adopt policies and practices that meet the needs of refugee and immigrant communities, then the members of those communities need to be part of making those decisions.
- ✓ **ECBOs are well-positioned to serve as "brokers" between refugee parents and the school system.** As an ECBO, you hold a unique position in the community that allows you to be an effective "bridge" between the refugee community and different mainstream systems and institutions. For refugees, you are seen as a "safe place" to come for information and assistance. For mainstream institutions, you are seen as a place that has knowledge about the community, cultural expertise, and language capacity. With this trust of the community, knowledge of the system, and respect of mainstream institutions, you can build a strong bridge between parents and schools.

## What are the challenges to increasing refugee civic participation in the school system and around education issues?

*Increasing Refugee Civic Participation: A Guide for Getting Started* describes a variety of barriers that refugee communities face to engaging in civic participation in their new homeland. These include everything from fear of speaking out to not knowing how the system works, along with limited-English proficiency and lack of time. Participation in the school system presents the same barriers. Some of the barriers and challenges relate to parents, such as the lack of knowledge, skills, and confidence to get involved. Other barriers and challenges relate to the school system, such as the lack of language capacity to reach out to refugee parents. These barriers and challenges include:

- ✓ **Experiences from home countries that discourage participation.** Many refugees and immigrants come from cultures and education systems that discourage any form of parent participation in the school system – whether that’s as volunteers in the classroom or as decision-makers. Some parents may have been taught that the schools are always right, and that their parental duties and rights stop at the entrance to the school house. Other parents may come from rural communities where there was no formal education system at all. Thus for many refugee and immigrant parents, the idea of getting involved in the schools or making your voice heard on education issues is a completely new one.
- ✓ **Lack of understanding of the U.S. school system.** Even when parents want to get involved, not knowing how the school system works – how schools are structured, who the key players are, and what the accepted channels of communication are – in the U.S. can be another significant barrier. Even for parents who grew up in the U.S. and went through the school system, that system can be confusing to understand and difficult to navigate. For refugee and immigrant parents, not knowing where or how to start, or what rights they have as parents, are significant barriers.
- ✓ **Language barriers.** Limited English proficiency hinders the ability of some parents to communicate with school personnel and, at the same time, school systems often lack personnel with language capacity to communicate with parents. These kinds of language barriers are often cited as a barrier to many different forms of civic participation. But they don’t have to be. Even parents with limited English proficiency can get involved. Refugee parents can still help their children with their homework, and although refugees may not be able to understand conversations without an interpreter, their opinions are still very valuable and needed in the decision-making process.
- ✓ **Time constraints.** For refugee and immigrant parents in particular, who frequently work more than one job to make ends meet, finding the time to get involved with their children’s education and the school system is a challenge. The little “spare time” that remains for refugee parents is spent learning English and adjusting to a new culture.

By working with both parents and the school system, ECBOs can help overcome these challenges and break down the barriers. Below, we present a variety of approaches ECBOs can use to promote refugee parent involvement. Remember that these efforts will take time to bear fruit. Above all, your ECBO needs to be ready to make a long-term commitment to this effort.

## **How can ECBOs promote and support refugee participation in the schools and around education issues?**

ECBOs can do many things to promote and support refugee civic participation in the schools and around education issues. As an ECBO, you are well positioned to serve as “brokers” between the refugee community and the school system. You can work with the schools, either informally or through formal partnerships, to help them better understand, reach out to, and involve refugee parents and students. And, you can work with refugee parents and students, either informally or by creating a structured program, to build the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to get involved.

Below are a few examples of the kinds of things your ECBO can do.

- ✓ **Educate parents about how the system works.** One place your ECBO can start is by providing educational workshops and trainings to refugee parents about how the school system works. These workshops could cover such topics as:
  - How the U.S. school system is structured and who the key players are.
  - The rights and responsibilities of both students and parents in the school system.
  - How parents can communicate with the school and how they can get involved.
  - The resources that are available to parents.

### **Public Schools in the U.S.**

Public schools in the U.S. are controlled at the local level. Individual school districts have a great deal of authority in setting the policies and practices of the schools within their district, as long as they comply with state and federal laws. There are also a number of important federally-funded education programs you should know about.

As an advocate for parents and a bridge between parents and schools, you should understand how the system works, who the key players are, and what resources are available to help refugee students and their families.

Sometimes, refugee parents might want to get involved but have no idea where to start or what their rights are as parents. Organizing a workshop for parents might be a good place for you to start.

- ✓ **Educate the school system about refugee communities.** As ECBOs, you are well-positioned to educate school administrators and teachers about refugee parents and students and their needs. You can begin by meeting with school administrators to introduce your organization and provide them with important information about the

refugee community, including why people are here, their experience getting here, their strengths and needs, and cultural issues. When you meet with the school system, ask about opportunities for parent involvement.

✓ **Assist and support parents in getting involved.** Your ECBO could work with refugee parents to encourage and support their involvement in their children’s education and the school system. For example, you could:

- Develop a program that assists parents with parenting skills and supports parents in reading with their children and helping their children with homework assignments.
- Accompany parents to parent-teacher meetings and other school activities and events until they develop the confidence to go on their own.
- Help parents figure out ways to volunteer and support them in volunteering. One approach might be to bring together a group of parents to volunteer together – since it can be less intimidating to do things as a group.
- Support parents in getting involved in the PTO/PTA, and thus bring refugee parent voices to PTO/PTAs.

### **Resources for Supporting Parent Involvement**

“Parent involvement” is an umbrella term that encompasses many different forms of participation in the school system, including:

- Becoming actively involved in helping children improve their school work.
- Attending school meetings and functions.
- Volunteering in the classroom or to help with school activities.
- Getting involved in school governance and decision making, planning.
- Becoming an education advocate.

Bridging Refugee Youth and Children’s Services (BRYCS) is a national technical assistance project that provides information and builds collaboration among service providers to strengthen services to refugee youth, children and their families. (*See Appendix for more information.*)

Above all, you can be a cheerleader for parents, encouraging them to build their skills and confidence.

✓ **Hold community meetings.** In addition to talking to individual parents about their experiences, hopes, and concerns with the school system, ECBOs can host a meeting to provide community members with a place for them to voice their opinions and concerns. You can also use a community meeting to begin to create a community-wide plan for parent involvement and a common agenda for advocating with the schools for needed changes. And, by creating the space for parents to speak up, you can reinforce the idea that parents have the right to have a say. It also gives them a safe environment to practice speaking in public so when they do eventually bring their concerns to school boards or PTOs, they may be less afraid about speaking in a formal setting.

- ✓ **Bring parents and schools together.** ECBOs are well-positioned to serve as “brokers” and “bridges” between refugees and mainstream organizations and institutions. In this role as a “broker,” your ECBO can:
  - Host events such as a holiday dinners or other cultural celebrations that bring the community and representatives from the school system together to get to know each other.
  - Hold a “town forum” that brings together parents and school officials for a facilitated dialogue around issues and concerns, including what’s working and what could work better.
  - Help match the needs of the school system with the interests and skills of community members. You could work with the schools to help them identify ways for parents to be involved that will meet the needs of refugee parents and ensure they can be successful.
  
- ✓ **Develop parent leadership for advocacy.** While parent involvement might begin with individual parents getting more involved in their own child’s education, it can evolve into a group of parents working together to advocate for changes in schools policies and practices. Your ECBO can play an important role in building the leadership skills of parents to speak up and advocate, and this bring the voices of refugee parents to the decision-making process that sets policies and practices.
  
- ✓ **Participate in or help to build local coalitions.** Advocacy is always more effective when carried out by coalitions of organizations that serve and represent all community members affected by an issue. As your ECBO gets more involved in advocacy – *and as you build the skills and confidence of parents and youth to be advocates* – make sure you research what other organizations are involved in advocacy around education issues in your community.

## **Examples of Parent Involvement in Schools**

### **Vietnamese Youth Organization in New Orleans Serves as a Bridge Between Schools and Families**

In New Orleans, the Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association (VAYLA) of New Orleans understands how difficult it can be for Vietnamese American students in the school system. VAYLA was started by and is led by Vietnamese youth. Now young adult leaders, VAYLA staff and volunteers play an important role as advocates for students and a link between teachers and the students' parents and grandparents. VAYLA staff and volunteers bring important information about what is happening at school to the families and meet with families to review students' report cards. Their long-term goal is to get parents comfortable going to the schools and meeting with teachers themselves. But the barriers are many, including the fact that many families run their own businesses and find it hard to take the time off, and that the schools need to address issues of language access.

### **Hmong ECBO Brings Key Stakeholders Together in Appleton, Wisconsin**

In Appleton, Wisconsin, a Hmong community organization is working to address the lack of involvement by Hmong parents in the school system. The ECBO observed that the schools were not accessible to Hmong parents and that the parents lacked the tools to advocate for their children. In response, the ECBO has organized a series of community roundtables that are bringing together school administrators, the Director of Diversity from the Mayor's Office, the Boys and Girls Club, and Hmong community leaders. In addition, a school representative also appears monthly on a Hmong radio show and circulates a newsletter to parents, written in Hmong. The success of the roundtables has also led to an annual conference that hosts Hmong educators from across the country to discuss parent's roles in education and gaps in academic achievement, paid for by the City of Appleton.

### **Vietnamese ECBO in Maryland Builds Skills and Confidence of Parents**

The Maryland Vietnamese Mutual Association (MVMA) in Montgomery County Maryland started the Vietnamese Parenting Enrichment Project (VPEP) to ensure that parents are equipped with the resources and knowledge to enhance their parenting skills and improve their relationship with their children and the schools. The program provides home visits through which MVMA staff supports parents in creating a learning environment for their children, matches mentors with families, and organizes educational workshops that help parents understand how the school system works and how to navigate it. MVMA invites representatives of the school system to speak at the workshops and then accompanies VPEP parents to follow-up meetings with the school.

### **African Women's ECBO in Oregon Forms a Partnership with the Schools**

The African Women's Coalition (AWC) in Portland, Oregon was approached by several middle schools for "help" reaching out to African immigrant parents. At the same time, the AWC was finding that many African immigrant women have no connection to their children's schools. To bridge this gap, the AWC has started a new program that uses a variety of activities to connect schools and the African immigrant community and also to build the leadership skills of African parents, including social events that bring the community and school personnel together to get to know each other and a parent leadership academy. The AWC has also arranged for a meeting between the PTA and African parents to talk about how the PTA can be accessible to them.

## Examples of Organizations that Bring Together Parents from Diverse Ethnicities and Cultures

### IMPACT Silver Spring's "IMPACT in the Schools" Program

IMPACT Silver Spring's "IMPACT in the Schools" program works with parents, schools and communities to build successful multicultural schools and to lower the achievement gap for minority and immigrant students in public schools. The program has three components:

- **Parent Training Institute:** A 6-week course which teaches multi-cultural parents of elementary school children the skills needed to support their child's education and to pursue change in the public school system aimed at closing the achievement gap.
- **Parent Leadership Team:** Parent graduates of the Institute can spend a year on the Parent Leadership Team, which supports the continued learning of parents and provides them with a supportive peer group. The Team meets regularly for leadership training and to pursue specific action projects in neighborhoods and in schools.
- **Community-School Partnerships:** Works closely with parents, administrators, teachers, school systems and other partners in the community to help them support families as they educate their children.

IMPACT in the Schools affects children, their learning and schools at many different levels - parent, child, teacher, PTA, parent group and school system. The program is seeing early signs of improved educational performance in children whose parents have participated. And parents say the program is spurring them to be more involved with their children's education and to create more economic security for themselves and their families.

### "Tellin' Stories"

"Tellin' Stories," a program of Teaching for Change, works with parents in Washington, DC to create and implement action plans to improve academic achievement and the environment of neighborhood schools. To do this, Tellin' Stories first brings parents together across race, class, language and cultural boundaries to connect to each other and to their school - often for the first time - using "Story Quilting." In the Story Quilting series, each participant shares a story from his/her history and culture on a felt square. As the squares are sewn together, the parents see how their stories and experiences connect and they begin to build a shared vision.

Then, through weekly meetings, workshops, and trainings, parents gain the tools they need to analyze the school climate, the facilities, and the quality of teaching and learning at their school and develop action plans. Tellin' Stories then supports parents in voicing their concerns at teacher meetings, school board and city council hearings, and in sessions with district-wide officials. For example, a group of parents organized a rally outside of their district police station to demand crossing guards at a busy intersection near their school. As a result, a police officer has been assigned to the post. Tellin' Stories paves the way for those who are traditionally excluded from the decision-making process to become a central part of it.

## Where can you start?

Many ECBOs are already playing important roles in connecting refugee communities and schools. You may be meeting with teachers and principals when there is a problem, helping parents understand information sent by the school when you visit parents at home, or attending parent-teacher meetings to help translate. The question is: How can you develop a more structured effort to build the skills and confidence of parents to get involved and at the same time hold the school system accountable for effectively serving refugee communities?

If your ECBO wants to support refugee communities in getting more involved in the school system, where do you start?

**1st. Talk to refugee parents and students.** Find out about the needs and concerns of parents: What are their hopes and fears about the schools and their children's education? How do they see their role? If they've tried to get involved, what barriers have they faced? You can do this through informal conversations, or through a more structured approach, such as focus groups, a survey, or a community meeting. When you talk to parents, make sure to explore not just their needs but also their assets:

What skills, interests, and experiences do they have? For example, in public speaking, teaching, community organizing, athletic skills, acting skills, etc. Maybe you'll find parents who are themselves teachers from their home county or who worked/volunteered with schools in their home country.

Likewise, talk to refugee students about their hopes and fears. What is important to them about their school? What would they like to change?

### Talking to Students

The Southeast Asian Resource Action Center (SEARAC) is part of a coalition of organizations working on policy issues at a national level to close the achievement gap. SEARAC is partnering with ECBOS in several communities to help them work on these issues locally.

With their work in local communities, where do they start? They start by listening to students and holding focus groups with youth to hear their views on what's needed and how they would like to be involved. (*See Appendix for more information about SEARAC's efforts.*)

**2nd. Do your homework!** If you are going to support parents in getting involved in the school system, you'll want to "do your homework." You should understand as much as you can about your local community, including:

- Existing data on how refugee students are doing in public schools.
- The resources and structures that already exists in your community, both within your school system and within other organizations, to support parental involvement.

- Who the key players are in your school system, including other groups in the community working on education issues.
- Other organizations that are working to increase parent involvement and build partnerships between schools and communities.

You should also become familiar with education issues and resources in your state and nationally. There are many organizations working at the

national level to address education issues for immigrant communities, and to promote parent involvement and school-community partnerships. As you work at the local level to connect refugee parents and schools, you should also connect to these national organizations. They can be a great resource for you. Some national organizations can also provide you with data, such as data on refugee/immigrant student achievement and on the impact of parent involvement, as well as information about best practices. This information will be very useful to you as you develop and seek to raise funds to support your efforts. *(See Appendix for more information.)*

### Parent Information Resource Centers

The federal Department of Education funds Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) in every state to help groups carry out successful parental involvement policies, programs, and activities that “can lead to improvements in student academic achievement and strengthen partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and other school personnel in meeting the education needs of children.” *(See Appendix for more information.)*

**3rd. Meet with the school administrators.** One of the most important things your ECBO can do is to begin to build a relationship with the school system. Identify the schools where refugee students are enrolled and set up a meeting with school administrators.

**4th. Have discussions within your organization about what role your ECBO could and should play.** Ask yourselves:

- Given what you learn when you do your homework, what role can your ECBO play? Do you want to play an informal broker role? Do you want to work toward starting a more formal and structured parent leadership program?
- How does work in this area align with your ECBO’s mission?

### The First Meeting with School Administrators

At a first meeting with school administrators to begin to build a relationship, you can ask questions such as the following:

- What are the needs/trends they are seeing with refugee students and parents?
- How would they like refugee parents to be involved?
- How could refugee parents get involved? What structures exist?
- What can the schools do to support refugee parent involvement?
- Where could refugee parents volunteer?

- What resources – especially staff and volunteers - does your ECBO already have it can use? What are the additional resources that will be needed? What staffing will be required?
- Think about your existing relationships with the community and with the school system. What role would they welcome? What relationships would you need to build?

**5th. Decide how to move forward and make a plan.** Do you want to start with some parent workshops? A community meeting? A celebration that brings schools officials and parents together to get to know each other? You may want to start with small steps and assess how it goes before you decide to invest in a more structured effort, such as a parent leadership program and parent-led advocacy campaign.

If you decide you want to undertake a more structured effort or program, you'll need to develop a plan to raise the funds and other resources to support it. You may be able to get support from your local school district.

By starting with helping refugee parents and students become more involved with the school system, you can help open doors for refugees to become more involved with other systems and activities in the community, such as city councils, police, healthcare, housing and urban development, voter engagement, and various boards and councils.

### **Researching Local School Foundations**

Many communities have local school foundations that raise money and provide grants to public schools. Many foundations also provide grants to nonprofit community organizations for programs that work to build partnerships between community stakeholders and schools.

To find a list of school foundations in your state, visit the website of the National School Foundation Association ([www.schoolfoundations.org](http://www.schoolfoundations.org)), and click on "List of Foundations by State" at the left.

### **There is No "One Size Fits All"**

Different people – parents, students/youth, and even other community members who care about the issue – will want to participate in different ways. Over time, some parents might want to take on a leadership position in a PTO and meet with school administrators. Others might be more comfortable getting involved in different ways, such as helping coach a sports team, or providing cultural competency training to students and staff, or even being chaperones at school events and field trips. Likewise, some students might want to take on a leadership position in a student group or with an outside youth organization to advocate for change, while others might feel more comfortable behind the scenes.

Everyone has different skills, and those skills can be applied in many ways. As an ECBO working to increase civic participation, part of your job is to encourage people to participate in the civic life of their community and then help them identify a way to get involved that works for them!

## Appendix – A Preliminary List of Resources

### Parent Involvement and Education Issues for Refugee and Immigrant Communities

#### *Organizations:*

- ✓ Bridging Refugee Youth and Children’s Services (BRYCS). BRYCS is a national technical assistance project that provides information and builds collaboration among service providers to strengthen services to refugee youth, children, and their families. BRYCS’ website has links to many different articles on refugee parent involvement in schools. Got to BRYCS home page and then search with the keywords: “parent involvement.” [www.brycs.org](http://www.brycs.org)
- ✓ Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC). SEARAC is a national organization advancing the interests of Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans through leadership development, capacity building, and community empowerment. SEARAC has published a number of reports related to educational issues and Southeast Asian communities. [www.searac.org](http://www.searac.org)
- ✓ The Campaign for High School Equity is a coalition of national organizations representing different racial and ethnic communities that believe high schools should have the capacity and motivation to prepare every student for graduation, college, work, and life. Its mission is “to raise every U.S. high school to the high level of excellence that all of the country’s youth deserve and upon which the nation’s future depends.” The Campaign’s website has national-level data and links to other resources. [www.highschoolequity.org](http://www.highschoolequity.org)

#### *Publications:*

- ✓ “Involving Immigrant and Refugee Families in Their Children’s Schools: Barriers, Challenges, and Successful Strategies.” Illinois State Board of Education, <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/> Keywords: “Involving immigrant refugee families.”

### General Parent Involvement, Parent Organizing, and School-Community Partnerships

#### *Organizations:*

- ✓ Teaching for Change. Teaching for Change provides teachers and parents with the tools to transform schools into centers of justice where students learn to read, write, and acquire the tools to build a more equitable, multicultural society, and to become active global citizens. [www.teachingforchange.org](http://www.teachingforchange.org)

- ✓ Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). NWREL is a private nonprofit working closely with schools, districts, and other agencies to develop creative and practical solutions to important educational challenges. [www.nwrel.org/](http://www.nwrel.org/) Keywords: “Kathleen Cotton, Parental Involvement.”
- ✓ National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), Johns Hopkins University. NNPS provides schools, educators, organizations, and community members with technical assistance on how to use research-based approaches to organize and sustain family and community involvement programs to increase student success. [www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000/](http://www.csos.jhu.edu/P2000/)
- ✓ U.S. Department of Education, National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA). NCELA collects, analyzes, and disseminates information about language instruction educational programs for English language learners and related programs. For data on English language learner students, go to the NCELA’s homepage, then click on numbers and statistics. [www.ncele.gwu.edu/](http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/)
- ✓ U.S. Department of Education (DOE), Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs). PIRC help groups implement successful parental involvement policies, programs, and activities. They help parents, community members, and educators work together to increase family involvement and improve student achievement. To find the PIRC in your state, go to the PIRC page on the DOE website, then click on “resources,” then “PIRC grantees.” [www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html)

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