

Unit 4: Understanding the U.S. School System

Students' Guide

LESSON 1: Introducing the U.S. Public School System

Content Objectives

- Students discuss the particular challenges immigrant children face in U.S. schools.
- Students examine the difficulties involved in supporting school-aged immigrant learners in U.S. public schools.

Rights Objectives

- Students familiarize themselves with and discuss the universal right to education in the United States, regardless of perceived national origin, citizenship, or immigration status.

Language Objectives

- Students continue to build their language skills around rights
- Students practice reading, writing, and speaking in English.

KEY VOCABULARY:

Nouns	Verbs
Right	To educate
School	To understand
Access	To trust
Expectation	To inform
System	To need
Orientation	To hope

LESSON ACTIVITIES:

PART A) Rights of Access to U.S. Public Schools

“All children in the United States are entitled to **equal access** to a public elementary and secondary education, regardless of their or their parents’ actual or perceived **national origin, citizenship, or immigration status.**”

United States Department of Education, 2015

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/rights/guid/unaccompanied-children.pdf>

These lessons contain some basic information about U.S. law. This information is not legal advice and is not a replacement for legal advice from a trained attorney. All information is current as of the date it was produced (April 2016).

- Why do you think education is important for children?
- What are your hopes for your children, or children you know, at school?
- In the U.S., who do you believe has a right to attend primary and secondary school?
- What might some immigrant children or children of immigrants feel afraid or be unable to attend public school?

PART B) Talking about Schools and Immigrant and Refugee Families

Review the following quotes from a video about immigrant and refugee families in Canada, produced by the John Humphries Centre for Peace and Human Rights, a Canadian human rights organization. Family members describe what it was like to learn about another country's school system as an immigrant or refugee parent.



“Unfortunately... the schools really do not provide an orientation for parents to get to know the expectations of the school.”



“For many refugee and immigrant parents... going to the school means you don't trust the teachers enough to educate your children.”



“[Immigrants] need to be educated, because the system here is really not the same as the system back home.”

Get in small groups, and pretend that your group has been asked to make a video about your experience with U.S. schools. Take turns reading and responding to the following prompts. If you would like, take notes about your answers in the space provided.

- What do you know from your experience about U.S. schools? _____

- What do you want to learn about U.S. schools? _____

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- What do you want people who work at U.S. schools to know about immigrants?

PART C) Reflections

As a class, discuss your answers to the following questions, considering your experiences and those of people you know who are immigrants.

- What do you want people who work at U.S. schools to know about immigrants?
- What are some reasons that people who work in U.S. schools may not be informed about the experiences, interests, and needs of immigrant families?
- How could people who work in U.S. schools learn more about immigrant families?

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