



# CULTURAL ORIENTATION GUIDANCE FOR EDUCATORS

## BASIC INFORMATION

Cultural Orientation (CO) provides newcomers (e.g., refugees, Special Immigrant Visa holders, and humanitarian parolees) with the vital knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to adapt to their new lives and achieve self-sufficiency. CO generally begins overseas and continues in the U.S. within the community, usually with a local Resettlement Agency. Some topics covered during CO include education in the U.S. and cultural adjustment. Receiving communities, including educators, also play an important role in delivering key CO messages.

## TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY



### BE TRAUMA-INFORMED

Consider the events that led to the newcomer's displacement, such as the trauma of unwillingly fleeing their country of origin and the cultural adjustment experienced from resettling in a new country. Asking students to openly share information with their peers about where they come from may be triggering. Instead, try learning about their families or focus on their future. For example, you may ask them to share what they have found most interesting about their new community.



### PRACTICE CULTURAL AWARENESS

American culture is still new for newcomers. Both students and their parents need support to successfully navigate U.S. systems. English language teachers may consider incorporating key Cultural Orientation messages into their lesson plans. For parents, administrators may use CORE's supplemental lesson plan to teach them ways they can support their children in school. Also, introduce parents to CORE's translated Settle In resources, such as CORE's video on education in the U.S.

## RESOURCES

CORE's multilingual resources include the Settle In website and Settle In app. Resources are available in Arabic, Burmese, Dari, English, Kinyarwanda, Spanish, Swahili, Pashto, Russian and Ukrainian.

The following are additional resources that may assist educators in delivering CO.

- [CORE: Education Activity Bank](#)
- [Settle In: Education in the U.S. video](#)
- [CORE: Cultural Backgrounders](#)
- [Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services \(BRYCS\): Raising Children in a New Country](#)



Settle In App  
[desktop.settlein.app](https://desktop.settlein.app)



Settle In Website  
[settlein.us.org](https://settlein.us.org)



## KEY CULTURAL ORIENTATION MESSAGES ABOUT EDUCATION

- 1 Schooling is compulsory until at least the age of 16 for all children and is free in public schools.
- 2 There are costs associated with free public education, such as school supplies.
- 3 U.S. schools generally have a very participatory and interactive classroom environment, as opposed to the lecture and recitation teaching methods used in some other countries.
- 4 Even with limited English, there are many ways that parents can help and support their child's education, including attending parent-teacher conferences and working with their child on homework.


# DELIVERING KEY CULTURAL ORIENTATION MESSAGES

When delivering key CO messages, apply adult learning strategies, such as asking open-ended questions and engaging in a two-way conversation. The following activity provides an example of how to deliver key CO messages to parents that review different ways they may help and support their child's education.




## INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 **Ask parents: What was school like in your country of origin (or protection)? Was education available for adults and children?**


 **Key Messages:** Free public school is available and required for all children (boys and girls). There are four levels of education in the United States for children: preschool, elementary school, middle school, and high school. After receiving a high school diploma (or GED), children and adults may pursue higher education. Higher education is not free, and adults may need to work while attending school. Not all overseas degrees are recognized in the U.S., and adults may need to enroll in higher education classes to recertify their overseas degrees. You can learn more about credential evaluations through World Education Services.

- 2 **Share the following scenarios one at a time. Ask parents: What would you do in each scenario?**


**Scenario 1: It is the first day of school and your child has returned from school with a lot of documents you do not understand.**

 **Key Messages:** Contact or go to the school and ask them about the documents. You can ask the school to provide an interpreter, as needed. You can also ask if the school has any of the documents translated.

**Scenario 2: You child has stopped doing homework in the evenings.**

 **Key Messages:** Sometimes schools have online portals for parents and students to review assignments and student grades. You may also request a meeting with the teacher to better understand your child's assignments.

**Scenario 3: You received your child's report card, they are doing well except for in the subject of English.**

 **Key Messages:** Request a parent-teacher conference to discuss your child's progress. This may help you learn ways to help your child do better, including identifying possible tutoring options.

- 3 **Assist parents in navigating the Settle In website. Under "Life in the U.S.," select the topic: Education. Explain this lesson will review information about education in the United States. Play the video "Education in the U.S."**

Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange

For more information, visit CORE at [coresourceexchange.org](http://coresourceexchange.org).



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