

Bridges to Belonging Collaborative (B2B)

Supporting the USD 259 Newcomer Program

Helping Wichita's Newest Neighbors Move from Arrival to Belonging

July 2026

Bridges to Belonging (B2B) is a collaborative initiative between USD 259 Multilingual Services, USD 259 Newcomer educators, the Wichita Public Schools (WPS) Foundation, and Ambassadors of Dignity (AOD). Together, we connect schools, families, volunteers, churches, businesses, and community organizations to help Newcomer students and their families *move from arrival to belonging*.

A New Beginning

Imagine arriving in Wichita at age ten after leaving everything familiar behind. You do not speak English. You do not understand the school system. You miss your friends, your extended family, the food, the smells ... everything about the place you once called home. On your first day of school, every sign, every lesson, and every conversation feels unfamiliar.

For hundreds of Newcomer students each year, this is their reality.

Many have experienced disruptive migration, interrupted education, economic hardship, trauma, and the challenge of adapting to a new culture. Their first months in an American school often shape the trajectory of their academic success, community integration, and future opportunities.

The USD 259 Newcomer Program exists to help these students navigate that transition successfully.

The Growing Need

USD 259 serves a rapidly growing multilingual student population representing more than 100 languages and countries of origin. Within the district's Multilingual Services Department, the Newcomer Program provides specialized instruction for students who have recently arrived in the United States and are beginning to learn English.

The program currently operates at fifteen schools across Wichita, including nine elementary schools, three middle schools, and three high schools. Together, these sites served approximately 900 students during the 2025-2026 school year. Most students participate in the program for one to two years before transitioning into traditional classrooms.

When newcomer students gain language skills, confidence, and a sense of belonging early, their opportunities for long-term success increase dramatically.

Our Mission: From Arrival to Belonging

Belonging is more than feeling welcomed. It is the foundation upon which students gain confidence, families build stability, educators experience support, and communities flourish.

The Newcomer Program provides exceptional educational leadership. Yet many newcomer families face challenges that naturally extend beyond the classroom. Teachers and

paraprofessionals frequently encounter needs related to transportation, clothing, healthcare, school supplies, community connections, family support, and navigating unfamiliar systems.

These realities create an extraordinary opportunity for the broader community to come alongside schools in meaningful ways.

How Bridges to Belonging (B2B) Works

B2B serves as the community engagement framework supporting the Newcomer Program. While USD 259 provides educational leadership and instructional expertise, B2B mobilizes volunteers, relationships, financial resources, churches, businesses, and community organizations to strengthen the support surrounding Newcomer students and families.

Beginning with a pilot partnership at Colvin Elementary, B2B is exploring opportunities to expand to additional Newcomer Program sites throughout Wichita.

Examples of support include:

- Recruiting and coordinating volunteers
- Supporting school initiatives through targeted fundraising
- Connecting families with community resources
- Assisting with practical needs when appropriate
- Encouraging teachers and paraprofessionals
- Building relationships that foster belonging

Our goal is not to replace the work currently being done in the Newcomer Program. Our goal is to strengthen and reinforce it by mobilizing the broader community to invest in Wichita's newest neighbors.

How You Can Help

Everyone has a role to play.

Individuals, churches, businesses, civic organizations, and community partners can volunteer, provide financial support, donate resources, encourage educators, assist Newcomer families with practical needs, and build relationships that help students and families thrive.

Our Vision: Mutual Flourishing

When Newcomer students thrive, everyone benefits.

Students gain confidence. Families build stability. Teachers and paraprofessionals receive encouragement. Volunteers discover meaningful relationships. Schools become stronger. Communities become more connected.

Our vision is *mutual flourishing*, where students and their families, educators, volunteers, churches, and community partners all grow together. As relationships deepen, Wichita becomes a more welcoming place for all.