



This is the newsletter of the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program, a partnership of the Settlement Sector, School Boards and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. There are nine SWIS programs in Ontario: SEPWR –Waterloo Region, SWISH - Hamilton, MSEP – Peel Region, SEPT- Toronto English, PIDEF-Toronto French, SEPYPYR-York Region, ALM –Ottawa French, MLO- Ottawa English and SWISEW-Windsor. For previous SWIS Newsletters, follow the links at www.Settlement.org/edguide

Independent Evaluation:

“Newcomer Orientation Week Concept and Model are Highly Effective”



The independent evaluation of the eight Newcomer Orientation Week pilot programs has reported that the NOW concept and model are highly effective. The report by Kappel Ramji and Associates was released in early December and is posted at www.settlement.org/sys/library_detail.asp?doc_id=1004284

In August 2007, the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program sponsored a pilot project to prepare newly arrived youth for starting high school in Ontario. Called Newcomer Orientation Week, or NOW, this intensive orientation initiative was piloted in six (6) high schools in Toronto, one (1) in Peel Region and one (1) in Hamilton.

The NOW program is a partnership between teachers, Settlement Workers and peer leaders (trained former newcomer students). Over a four (4) day period, one week before the beginning of the school year, Peer Leaders (PLs) provide a range of information and experiences for newly arrived youth with the support of the settlement workers and teachers.

From the executive summary:

The NOW concept and model are highly effective. It prepares newcomer youth for smooth entry to school, reduces their stress and anxiety about the transition and prepares them for earlier participation in the life of their new school.

Not only does NOW prepare newcomer youth for entry to school,

TDSB School Community Safety Panel Calls for NOW

The TDSB School Community Safety panel, which was convened to report on various aspects of school safety as a result of the shooting of a student, has recommended *that the TDSB should implement the Newcomer Orientation Week (NOW) program in all Toronto schools with high levels of newcomers in order to reduce the vulnerabilities of newcomer students. (recommendation #10)*

it also unleashes and enhances the leadership skills of the Peer Leaders, an important secondary benefit of NOW.

Finally, the success of NOW reaches beyond newcomer youth to impact on the sponsoring school's life and culture itself. There are many examples of Peer Leaders taking continuing leadership roles both with newcomer youth and beyond, beginning to alter the ways that school life is perceived/conducted.

The NOW concept is an exciting and creative initiative. The peer led model with the support of key school and settlement adults is key to its success as is the high quality of the intensive leadership training for peer leaders.



NOW Program Participants at Lincoln Alexander SS in Mississauga

The evaluation recommended that NOW be rolled-out to other sites in a measured fashion, expanding from eight to thirty schools in Year II (summer 08) and then more broadly in Year III. It also identified a number of challenges including the school registration process, the timing of the opening of school board reception/assessment centres, orienting students who arrive during the school year, and coordination within school boards and schools.

Next Steps

The process for establishing a NOW program will be discussed by each SWIS steering committee at its upcoming meeting. It is hoped that schools will be identified early in the spring so that planning can begin as soon as possible.

The NOW evaluation, the NOW activities, and the Peer Leader training plan are posted on www.settlement.org/edguide. Click on the NOW icon on the lower right. See SWIS Newsletter 49 for more information about NOW.

Previous SWIS Newsletters in English and French can be accessed through the link at : www.settlement.org/edguide