

The Indian River School District is made up of 16 schools; eight elementary schools, three middle schools and 2 high schools. IRSD also houses three other schools; G.W. Carver Academy, Southern Delaware School of the Arts, and the Howard T. Ennis School. Three other education programs that are funded under the IRSD and occupy real estate in the district are the kindergarten center, TOTS program and the APELL program. The population in Sussex County has grown and continues to grow; IRSD is proving to be pro-active by addressing the growth in a recent IRSD newsletter publication, October 2015:

IRSD: Planning for Future Growth

The Indian River School District reached a historic milestone this fall when its total enrollment in Grades PreK-12 exceeded 10,000 students for the first time ever in 2015.

The district's current official enrollment for the 2017-2018 school year is 10,753 students. This represents an increase of 1,967 since 2010. The district's total enrollment has grown by an average of 4 percent per year during the past decade. With a total growth rate of 22 percent since 2005, Indian River is now the fifth-largest public school district in the State of Delaware.

Total District Enrollment

2005 - 7,885 **2010** - 8,786 **2015** - 10,171 **2020** - 11,826 (*projected*)

The demographic of Sussex County is changing and recently has become more diverse as the population has grown. This is a similar reflection in the demographic growth in the community; families moving to Sussex County settle and then enroll their children in schools within their

attendance area. The following chart will depict the ethnic groups enrolled within the Indian River School District:

Current Building	Am. Ind/AK (Total)	African Amer (Total)	Caucasian (Total)	Asian (Total)	Native Hawaiian/Pac. Islander (Total)	Hispanic Ethnicity (Total)	Multi- Race (Total)	GRAND TOTAL
Report Totals:	77	1,369	5,163	127	8	3,080	340	10,164
	0.76%	13.47%	50.80%	1.25%	0.08%	30.30%	3.35%	

IRSD Federal Codes 2015

The break down of ethnic groups can be found in the IRSD balanced score card; this information is located on the district website; irsd.net. Specific school ethnic group data can be found in the specific school balanced scorecard extracted from the Endsight tool in e-school.

A unique population of students exists within the Indian River School District, IRSD. The unaccompanied youth ages 14-20 years of age are enrolling with the Indian River School District at a very rapid pace. The District houses two high schools, Sussex Central High School in Georgetown, Delaware and Indian River High School in Frankford, Delaware. The unaccompanied youth is also referred to as a “newcomer” to indicate that they are enrolling from out of country to a US school for the first time. Because so many unaccompanied youth resettle in Georgetown, Delaware, SCHS has seen a majority of growth in the newcomer student demographic. This school year SCHS has enrolled 91 unaccompanied youth and I registered 10 new students in the last 4 days. We will continue to enroll students until the end of the year even though they will not be able earn any credit at this time. The benefit is that we ensure that we are

exposing them to the educational environment, the expectations, the target English language and that we are connected them to services that the need to be successful academically. The negative side to enrolling at various times of the year is the lack of instruction to be successful or the lack of time enrolled to earn credit. Latino Youth make up approximately 38 percent of the total student population and a sub group of 15 percent are ELL students with the newcomer status. We have approximately 267 ELL students.

An unaccompanied youth student registering at SCHS has a distinct profile that makes the registration process complicated for the student to navigate alone. Many of the newcomer/unaccompanied youth are arriving to Delaware from border States via previous detention with paperwork indicating that they have been detained, vaccinated, supervised, educated, processed and release by the Office of Refugee and Resettlement, ORR. Paperwork from ORR indicates the name, DOB, photo and arrest of the student with a release form to an identified and willing sponsor who provides the name, relationship, address and phone number and it is documented on the student ORR release document. Once the document is signed, the sponsor agrees to support the student by providing shelter, relocation and care and to register them in school to avoid the human and labor trafficking of unaccompanied youth. The Office of Refugee and Resettlement does not contact the school or any other government agency that the student has been released to the identified sponsor. Once the verification of release form is signed and approved by ORR, the unaccompanied youth is released to the sponsor. If a sponsor moves or if the youth is then given to another unidentified sponsor to care for, the ORR should be contacted prior to moving or change of sponsorship, however, I am not sure how often sponsors or students comply with this policy/best practice. It is my opinion that the lack of

accountability in this area puts our unaccompanied youth at risk for human trafficking, labor trafficking or worse.

Other profile characteristics of an unaccompanied youth student at SCHS include:

- Male and Female students ages 14-20 years of age
- The average age of the student is enrolling to a US public school for the first time is 17 years old +
- Latino heritage
- A large cross section of students are born in Guatemala
- Speak one of 21 dialects from various regions of Guatemala; also, the dialects are not a written language but only spoken. Indigenous and tribal students are illiterate in their native language; students with some formal education still present with very low literacy and math skills
- Are registered as English Language Learners and qualify for ELL services
- Economically disadvantaged
- Little to no exposure to formal education and educational environment and expectations
- Long and short term gaps in education from home country and arriving to Delaware
- Students with formal education from Guatemala are exposed to Substandard curriculum and academic preparedness in comparison to other Central American countries and significantly lower in comparison to more socioeconomically developed countries like China and Japan
- Documentation of formal education may be current or have gaps of time indicating the last year of instruction

- The student may or may not know the sponsor. The sponsor can be biologically related with degrees of separation from biological parents, siblings, uncles/aunts, cousins of various degrees of separation and friend of the family.
- The sponsor is often not educated, also illiterate, also undocumented, also economically disadvantaged, also not able to successfully navigate the resources to model for the student
- Lack of verification of student identify, authentication of birth certificates are sometimes suspect
- The address of the sponsor is not verified by ORR as a safe and suitable home with adequate room/space/privacy for the student and there is no employment verification of the sponsor to identify that the sponsor can financially support the student in their care

When unaccompanied youth register with Sussex Central High School they are asked to complete the standard enrollment papers. Almost Always the student and the sponsor also provide all documents provided from ORR to aid in the registration process. As standard protocol, we make a copy of the verification of release form from ORR to help us identify identity of the student and to match the sponsor's name and address for registration. A copy of any medical/vaccinations and educational notes are also copied and kept in the student cumulative folder if the documents are provided at the time of registration.

Students and their sponsor then meet with the ELL School Counselor to be interviewed with a short questionnaire to verify the living arrangements and to learn more about the dynamics of the relationship. The student is then SLIFE, Student with Limited and or Interrupted Formal Education interview tool. This tool gives a chronological time line of formal education and

family background, family academic history and literacy. The student is then administered a language screener on a digital platform using the WIDA Screener test to determine English literacy and fluency. If the student scores less than a 1.5 out of a total of 6 points and data from SLIFE indicates two or more years of a gap in education services, they are enrolled and tracked to participate in the Accelerated Pre Literate English Language Learner Program. The APELL program provide curriculum designed to accelerate the acquisition of the basic literacy and math skills to prepare the SLIFE student for high school content level curriculum. Student enrolled in the APELL program spend 60 percent of their day receiving ELL services while also enrolled in integrated CTE or Elective class.

Full time ELL students are scheduled for content level courses required to graduate and are scheduled for one the following levels of language courses based on their annual ACCESS score: Beginner, Novice, Intermediate, Advanced and Academic Reading and Writing. The language acquisition courses that follow the TSOL standards and the content level courses are taught by content level teachers trained in Sheltered Instructional Strategies or team-taught with a certified ELL teacher in the classroom. The ELL department works to close the literacy gap, improve language acquisition and cross collaborate with the content level teachers. I have observed that the students who are self-motivated and have been educated in their native language have been able to acquire literacy and fluency in English quickly. Higher literacy skills and learned self advocacy skills help our students develop higher order thinking skills and help to develop confidence to ask higher order questions when they are put in difficult or complicated scenarios. Higher oral fluency allows students to understand and be able to speak in English to ask for the help that they need. Higher literacy allows our students the ability to read and write on the documents they need to navigate resources for their future.

Once a newcomer is registered and enrolled at Sussex Central High School there are a list of obstacles that come up as barriers for the student:

- Students enrolled at the age of 17 + are challenged to complete a 4 year course of study to successfully graduate with the DE graduation requirements before aging out at age 21. It is mathematically impossible for a 17+ year old student to graduate with all required graduation requirement and language acquisition classes offered in 3 years.
- Students reveal in the interview that they have completed high school in their country but told by their case manager in the detention center and the judge at time of release by ORR that they have to go to a US high school even though job training or post-secondary or ESL opportunities may be more appropriate
- A 17 + year old who enrolls in a US public school for the first time is enrolled as a 9th grader with true 14 year old native born students. I have had the scenario where a 19 year old date a student who is 14 and has been arrested because of age of consent law but we created that environment for the relationship to happen.
- If the student is weeks away from turning 18 years old they may be eligible for the Adult Education model to learn English. There are only two registration windows for these classes; Summer and January. It is not the rolling admissions model like the comprehensive public school model, thus they enroll in the public high school to show compliance to ORR.
- Immigration lawyers representing the students have consulted them and indicated that the Adult ed model is not considered full time and encourage them to register with a comprehensive public school.

- Unaccompanied youth and their sponsors are not enrolling the kids at Sussex Tech or SAAS; they are registering at Sussex Central high because of the high volume and saturation of Guatemalen resettlement in Georgetown, DE.
- Lack of language to navigate resources in the school, on the bus, in the community
- May complete paper work incorrectly and not be eligible for free or reduced lunch. No Universal document or program in place in State to indicate free and reduced lunch.
- Many students work full time jobs with papers obtained with an alternate identity that the student assumes. Often these jobs are labor intensive in the agriculture industry.
- Working second or third shift does not allow for a healthy balance of sleep and self-care needed to then attend school full time.
- Students who work have attendance issues that affect their alertness and ability to learn while at school or they miss school to provide self-care or attend court/legal appointments. District attendance policy (16 UAC) is violated and their credits are denied for the year, thus putting the student at greater risk for dropping out by withdrawing from the program or to no longer show up without notifying the school.
- There is a lack of consistent follow up, support from the sponsor to prioritize education and school because basic needs for student survival are not met; money is needed for room rent, legal fees, debt at home country or family debt
- Medical compliance...students test positive for TB are required to take medication. If they drop out before completing medication they are at risk. They can test positive for TB at work, but if they work under a different alias...they may be treated at work and at school and taking a dangerous dose of meds.

- Lack of health care and treatment before arriving to the US or being detained. Medical review will indicate need for dental and vision care.
- Lack of mental health and counseling for trauma from migration, trauma while in detention, trauma in new home
- Duplicating and re-establishing corruption, crime and social systems in the schools and community that keep the student stuck in the loop of victimization and exploitation
- Cultural predators and predatorial systems exists amongst their sponsors, peers and employers that teach them short cuts for employment and survival that
- Transient living arrangements. ORR requires the sponsor to notify them if they move or change sponsorship. The school is only required to have the sponsor show new proof of residence with a lease or a notarized document. I can only remind them to register with ORR, but there is no compliance
- Unaccompanied youth who cannot navigate the immigration/legal system. It is convoluted and inconsistent. Some legal representation is in Baltimore or Philadelphia and students have to pay someone to take them to the hearing but are typically independently navigating the court and the process alone.
- Unaccompanied youth are ineligible for Driver's license without permanent residency or work permit to document. If a sponsor does not claim the unaccompanied youth for 2 years, they also cannot be eligible for a driving privilege card. Students who are working cannot claim taxes as the alias to establish two years of taxes to qualify for a driving privilege card.
- Survival by employment or victimization puts the unaccompanied youth at high risk of drop out.

- Illiterate students have significant literacy challenges with no formal education they are eligible for the pre-literae program for one year. Students demonstrate gains in oral language however are not successful and lack academic endurance, literacy skills and background knowledge to be able to pass 9th grade content level course work and be promoted to the next grade level.
- Certificate level job training programs require documentation because they are federally funded and our students are not eligible
- Lack of employment training or opportunities force students to work in the poultry industry, in the fields and be subjected to criminal activity because they do not have work permits, ITIN numbers or social security numbers for upward mobility
- Significant withdraw rate from programs due to employment or moving
- Significant withdraw rate after the student turns 18 years old which signifies to the sponsor and the student that they are technically of adult age and do not have to attend high school which in return affects graduation rate
- Significant attendance rate and violation of the attendance policy resulting in denial of credit and no shows
- Significant number of students enroll the first year and then after the summer do not notify the school that they have moved and sponsor or family does not contact the school to withdraw resulting in Unexcused Absence to Class, UAC, eventually creating a case

for dismissal from student cohort. This school year there were approximately 40 ELL student no shows.

- If a student withdraws before the end of the school year they do not earn the credits for the course work, therefore, if they do not register in another school or they re enroll the following year they will repeat the same grade and course work
- Students withdrawing to move out of the attendance area can withdraw and if there is not request for records from the other school, that student file is archived with us and there is no follow up for the school to know or identify where the student is
- Students will turn 18 and declare independence of the sponsor using school policy documentation, McKinney Vinto Act and paper work is filed within the school but nothing is filed with ORR or family court or consent from parents out of country to verify and validate the declaration of independence.
- Lack of affordable and safe housing for students
- Lack of public transportation for legal and medical follow up
- Lack of personal advocacy and understanding of self-care and navigation of resources to ensure safety and follow through
- Agencies and schools are over loaded with the case load numbers of unaccompanied youth
- Lack over incentives for students and families/sponsors doing the right thing.

- Lack of government follow through on the quality of life and care the students have after release from detention
- Lack of universal “hub” for information and support for the sponsor who is doing the right thing and wants the student to thrive and succeed
- Duplication of services through agencies across the State to provide assistance in areas of literacy, advocacy, prevention and legal services. Compartmentalization within each of the agencies vs. cross pollination of resources to assist the community
- Lack of follow through protocol for the sponsor or the unaccompanied youth to complete once registered in school. Lack of literacy level and skill by sponsor. Lack of exposure to high frequency word and expanded word bank in heritage and target language to allow for higher order questioning
- Lack of bilingual and documented sponsors registering students
- Lack of bilingual mental health therapist to deal with trauma associated with migration, detention
- High rate of teen pregnancy
- Sponsors registering multiple students throughout the school year. ORR has even released unaccompanied youth to current students enrolled at SCHS that are 18 or older
- Racial discrimination from native born bilingual students

- Disproportionate number of male students enrolling vs. female students at various times of the school year
- High rate of domestic abuse witnessed or endured by unaccompanied youth
- High rate of sexual abuse, chemical dependence and high risk behavior of unaccompanied youth
- Lack of accountability for education, health, immigration and basic needs by the student if the sponsor does not prioritize the welfare of the student
- Ignorance of resources and agency support in the community. Lack of utilization of agency support due to fear of being reported resulting in deportation. Lack of awareness to systems of education and assistance in the US/Delaware is due to a lack of the systems from the home country and not being familiar with how to access systems or personnel for help
- Lack of community awareness, there is misinformation that sponsors are provided a stipend to sponsor an unaccompanied youth like a foster child/foster parent model
- This age group is at high risk of being taken advantage of because lack of advocacy, the lack of mobility to earn money legally and can be easily coerced to work with fake documents or be enticed by predators to work underground and be exposed to criminal activity.

- High risk of being abused and then repeating the abuse to other victims; Victim becomes the predator because of personal experience

It is important to mention that many of the unaccompanied youth students suffer from mental emotional trauma from the migration and border experience and are forced to acculturate in the US with members of their family or unknown sponsors that make the transition to the US and their journey more complex. The stories of survival from to detention center to current living and working arrangements have forced me to build off of the resources from the community and to try to replicate them in the school for the ELL population at SCHS. By building and improving resources in house and with the cross collaboration with outside agency networking we have designed an infrastructure for programs to support the ELL needs. However, when basic needs are not being met, or fulfilled by the sponsor/family member the academic endurance required by an unaccompanied youth is not sustained and the need to survive financially takes precedent.

It is important to understand why migration is happening in Delaware and not ignore that the employment from the agriculture business can benefit from migrant labor. Halina Saphead's (2014) study reveals "three main factors immigrants flow into certain areas of the country and they are (1) economics integration and employment factors (2) social integration factors, family connections and (3) human capital factors, such as education and language and overall immigrant satisfaction with their settlement experience" (p. 891). When interviewing students during the registration process, every student reveals they were seeking employment opportunities a reconnection with family or education or a combination of all three as the top reasons for moving to Delaware. The agriculture industry is sustainable in Sussex County if we have the labor to sustain the industry and migrant work. The missing piece is the documentation that gives

immigrant students the ability to be employed legally. In many cases, it is easier to obtain fake documents to work rather than wait for an employment authorization document or social security number to allow them to work legally. The students have shared stories that they are often recruited by “coyotes” in their own communities in Guatemala that promise them work and a new life if they are willing to migrate to the US by following their instructions and usually paying a debt as a result of agreeing to migrate. The migration pattern has directly affected the population and education for the Indian River School District. “Most illegal immigrants come to the United States to get better-paying jobs. Like most Americans, they pursue the American dream of a better life than they left behind. Education is the key to fulfilling this dream” (Drachmann, 2006, p. 91). However, the hands of an unaccompanied youth are tied without the proper documents and permission to work which forces them to find work through illegal channels.

In San Antonio Texas, Representative Henry Cuellar (2014) stated, “Every night, there are about 300 to 400 kids that come in without parents. This is just in the lower Rio Grande Valley. About 1,100 are being housed temporarily at a facility at Lackland Air Force Base.” Elizabeth Kennedy (2014) also contributes that “half of them are fleeing for their lives. Their decision is, ‘Do I face possible death in migrating or sure death in staying?’” The number of kids caught by the ICE at the border is expected to triple as drafted by reviews made by Homeland Security. As many as 90,000 kids from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras have been relocated after capture and detainment by US border control agents. The surge of unaccompanied youth is a result of fleeing from drugs, violence and poverty from their home countries. Upon capture at the border many of the children have endured health problems because of the dangerous journey and many of them contract health problems while in the

detention centers because of the crowded close quarters. The migration experience the unaccompanied students experience has a direct impact on their social emotional health and is an indirect contribution to the success of the learning process for the students as they manage the travel, the process of acculturation, anxiety and self-esteem during the school day. Perez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes (2009) “for immigrant children, migration is one of the most radical transitions and life changes an individual or family can endure. The migration experience to a new country fundamentally reshapes their lives as familiar patterns and ways of relating to other people dramatically change.” (p. 2)

The teachers at SCHS are aware of the myriad of issues surrounding the unaccompanied youth demographic and do work to promote learning by adapting their instruction and by being sensitive and relating to the sociocultural factors of the students; like knowing each of their background stories, knowing their names and monitoring academic and background progress. SCHS is invested in the background stories of the unaccompanied youth to try to connect background knowledge and content knowledge to promote language acquisition and relationships that promote trust and oral and written literacy to help them graduate with diplomas and without limiting beliefs. SCHS follows through with students to ensure they are educated, safe and supported.

As the ELL school counselor and coordinator at Sussex Central High School, I have been appointed to address the academic, personal and social/emotional areas of all of the ELL/ESL students enrolled at SCHS and am identifying the deficiency of those outreach services within the school and the community. As their school counselor, I would like to protect, preserve and even enhance the unaccompanied youth’s culture, heritage and language while giving them access to education through language acquisition, literacy and fluency. By providing a

customized program of studies that is developmentally and age appropriate SCHS we are creating a pathway for students to have a free and equitable education. I am proud to say that the graduation cohort for the unaccompanied youth demographic has increased year to year since SCHS had the vision to create a position for an ELL counselor/coordinator in the fall of the 2015 school year. In 2016 we graduate 12 students. In 2017, we graduated 34 students. This school year we have 53 students eligible to graduate with diplomas but more importantly, they have shown growth in language acquisition and literacy and have been exposed to the education system that teaches them about democracy, diplomacy and gives them an identity and a sanctuary to feel safe and experience success. Even with the success we have experienced at SCHS, there is a lot of work to be done in education and the Delaware Department of Education must explore how to address the academic needs and rights to education. Policy and funding for ELL students must be revised and updated to meet the unique needs of the growing ELL student population.

References and data shared can be available upon request

