

*Public Schools Unwelcoming Immigrant Students*

Presenter Angie Lee-Montante, Political Science major

Mentored by Dr. Kathleen Barrett

There has been an influx of immigrant children in the United States enrolling in public schools but unable to speak English. Migrant caravans of Central Americans coming from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala bring children who are forced by law to attend schools in the United States without knowing the language. What resources do public schools offer non-English speaking students to help them succeed? How are public schools helping immigrant students feel safe and welcomed in a new community after suffering trauma from their home countries or their journeys into the United States? As a volunteer at a local high school, I became aware of the issues that most students face such as large gaps in schooling and being placed in grades based on age not ability. Therefore, students are placed in special education classes despite not having a learning disability. For many of these students going to school in their countries was extremely dangerous where they experienced trauma from gangs, or their families could not afford their education. Once in the U.S, they are in a different school system but not offered the resources to understand what is being taught. Education is a right that should not be deprived because of language barriers. Students should not consider dropping out or be isolated by these obstacles. As the population of immigrant students continues to grow public schools need to accommodate to their needs and education.