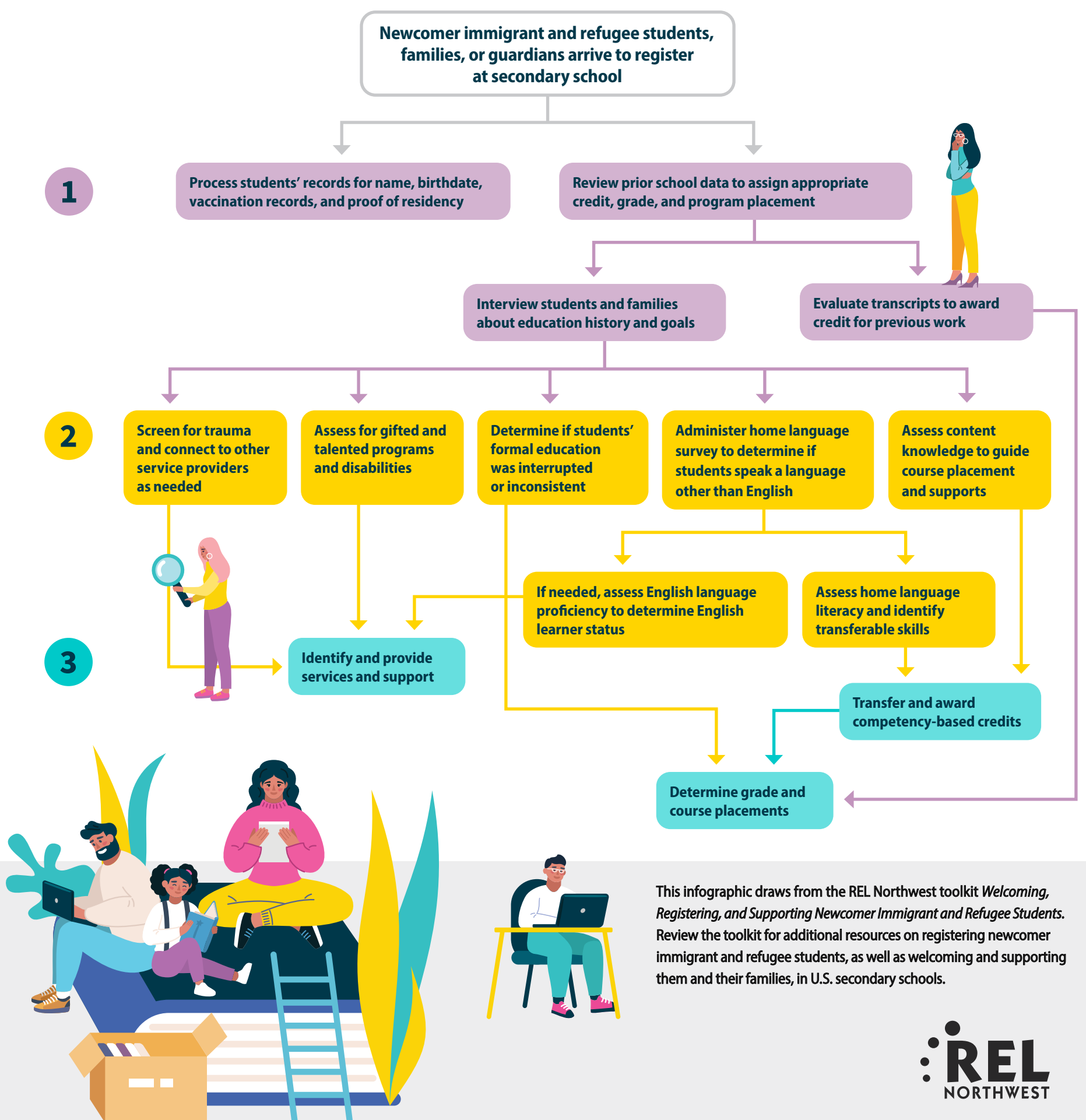# Helping Newcomer Immigrant and Refugee Students Register for Secondary School

A clear, comprehensive secondary school registration process can ensure that newcomer immigrant and refugee students receive appropriate supports, credits, and course placements. Newcomer immigrant and refugee students bring assets, such as emerging bilingualism,[1] that can benefit themselves and their U.S.-born peers,[2] but they may also face systemic barriers depending on their unique history with formal education, English proficiency, and potentially traumatic home country experiences. Schools can uplift these strengths and reduce barriers by implementing a registration process that is thorough, culturally sensitive, and grounded in an asset-based approach. The registration process outlined below is based on peer-reviewed research.

Secondary School Registration Process for Newcomer Immigrant and Refugee Students

STEPS

1 COLLECT AND ANALYZE records and transcripts

2 SCREEN AND ASSESS students to identify needs and meet federal and local legal requirements

3 DETERMINE PLACEMENT and services

Newcomer immigrant and refugee students, families, or guardians arrive to register at secondary school

1

Process students' records for name, birthdate, vaccination records, and proof of residency

Review prior school data to assign appropriate credit, grade, and program placement

Interview students and families about education history and goals

Evaluate transcripts to award credit for previous work

2

Screen for trauma and connect to other service providers as needed

Assess for gifted and talented programs and disabilities

Determine if students' formal education was interrupted or inconsistent

Administer home language survey to determine if students speak a language other than English

Assess content knowledge to guide course placement and supports

If needed, assess English language proficiency to determine English learner status

Assess home language literacy and identify transferable skills

3

Identify and provide services and support

Transfer and award competency-based credits

Determine grade and course placements

This infographic draws from the REL Northwest toolkit *Welcoming, Registering, and Supporting Newcomer Immigrant and Refugee Students.* Review the toolkit for additional resources on registering newcomer immigrant and refugee students, as well as welcoming and supporting them and their families, in U.S. secondary schools.

:REL NORTHWEST

Resources to Support the Registration Process

Identifying each newcomer immigrant or refugee student's unique strengths and needs can ensure that they receive the right credits, placement, and supports. The resources below can contribute to a thorough and equitable registration process for all newcomer immigrant and refugee students and families. These resources were selected from the REL Northwest toolkit *Welcoming, Registering, and Supporting Newcomer Students.*
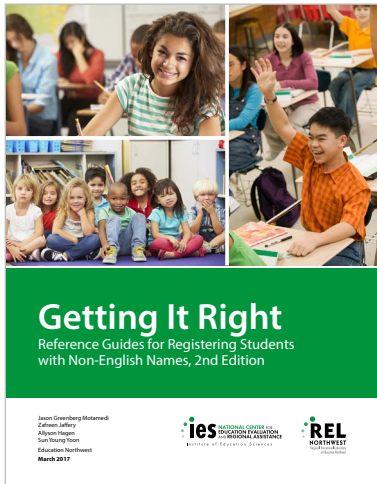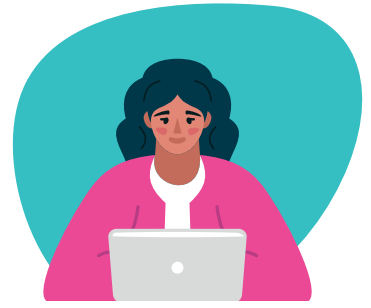

Getting It Right: Reference Guides for Registering Students with Non-English Names | REL Northwest[3]

Correctly record students' names in all school files and databases with this guide featuring details on naming conventions in 11 languages.
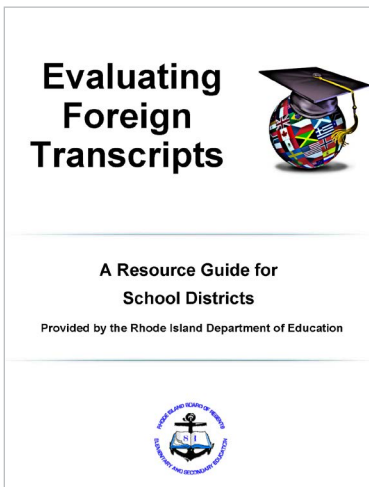

Evaluating Foreign Transcripts: A Resource Guide for School Districts | Rhode Island Department of Education[4]

Understand country-specific transcript conventions to award students accurate credit for academic work completed in their home country.
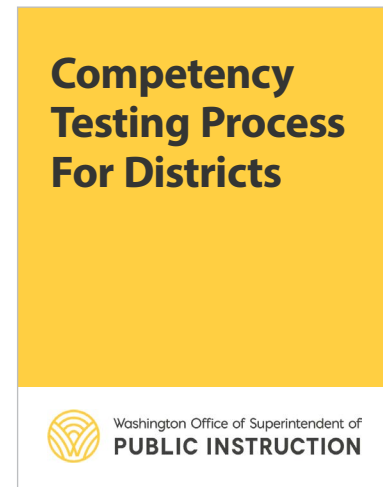

Competency Testing Process for Districts | Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction[5]

Award competency-based credit for knowledge of world languages by using a testing process like this one from Washington state.
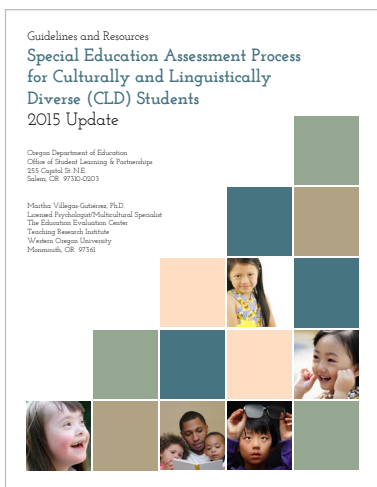
Special Education Assessment Process for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Students | Oregon Department of Education[6]

Assess culturally and linguistically diverse students for special education services, taking care to follow special considerations outlined in this guide.
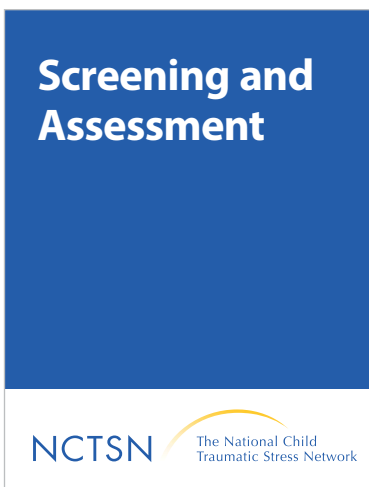
Screening and Assessment | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network[7]

Screen for trauma and mental health symptoms with this assessment tool and mental health measures translated by various refugee groups.

Review the REL Northwest *Welcoming, Registering, and Supporting Newcomer Immigrant and Refugee Students* toolkit for more resources on welcoming, engaging, registering, and supporting newcomer immigrant and refugee students and families, as well as resources to support educators and school staff in this process.

References

[1] Bialystok, E. (2011). Reshaping the mind: The benefits of bilingualism. *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology, 65*(4), 229–235. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4341987/

[2] Wells, A. S., Fox, L., & Cordova-Cobo, D. (2016). *How racially diverse schools and classrooms can benefit all students.* New York, NY: The Century Foundation. Retrieved October 1, 2020, from https://tcf.org/content/report/how-racially-diverse-schools-and-classrooms-can-benefit-all-students/

[3] Greenberg Motamedi, J., Jaffery, Z., Hagen, A., & Yoon, S. Y. (2017). *Getting it right: Reference guides for registering students with non-English names* (2nd ed.) (REL 2016-158 v2). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED572938

[4] Rhode Island Department of Education. (2012). *Evaluating foreign transcripts: A resource guide for school districts provided by the Rhode Island Department of Education.* Providence, RI. Retrieved March 10, 2020, from https://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Instruction-and-Assessment-World-Class-Standards/Instructional-Resources/Foreign-Transcript-Review/Foreign-Transcripts-Review-Resource-Guide-2-27-2012.pdf

[5] Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (n.d.) *Competency testing process for districts.* Retrieved December 3, 2020, from https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/resources-subject-area/world-languages/competency-testing-process-districts

[6] Villegas-Gutiérrez, M. (2015). *Special education assessment process for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students.* Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education. Retrieved March 11, 2020, from http://5c2cabd466efc6790a0a-6728e7c952118b70f16620a9fc754159.r37.cf1.rackcdn.com/cms/Special_Education_Assessment_Process_for_Culturally_and_Liguistically_Diverse_(CLD)_Students_with_logos_and_links_1489.pdf

[7] National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (n.d.) *Screening and assessment.* Retrieved December 3, 2020, from https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/refugee-trauma/screening-and-assessment