

**"I FEEL Like I'M SAFE AGAIN": THE MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPERIENCES  
OF IMMIGRANTS IN A MULTILINGUAL/MULTICULTURAL SETTING**

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Abstract

As the number of immigrants and refugees grows in the US, the linguistic and cultural diversity that comprises the middle grades classroom continues to increase. Given the need for resources and specific attention to linguistic and cultural strategies for these populations, this three year ethnographic study examined the schooling experiences of young adolescent immigrant and refugee students in a small town located in a rural state. Historically a homogeneous area, this community recently became a multilingual/multicultural setting. I documented the schooling experiences of my participants utilizing ethnographic methods including participant observation, interviews, and document analysis. My data describe how immigrant and refugee students internalized middle grades organizational structures such as teaming and multiage grouping. The findings suggest much variability among the students' experiences, ranging from little or no academic, emotional, and/or social support to such high levels of support that students felt ostracized and disempowered. The implications for researchers center on expanding the current research in middle grades best practice to include a new set of voices, while practical implications focus on creating a safe environment where immigrants can express themselves and feel comfortable asking for the level of support they need.