

**Bridging Cultures, Building Attendance: Understanding Needs and Supports for
Immigrant and Refugee K-12 Students**

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Abstract

School absenteeism is a growing concern in Canada, yet remains underexplored, particularly among immigrant and refugee students who face elevated risk due to intersecting systemic and contextual challenges (Carman & Wesley, 2024; Kearney et al., 2022). This study examined the needs of immigrant and refugee K–12 students as identified through the Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) program in Ottawa, Ontario. Guided by the Kids and Teens at School (KiTeS) ecological framework (Lee et al., 2023), a qualitative document analysis was conducted using 367 referral records and monthly narrative reports from January to June 2025. Findings indicated that student needs extend beyond academic concerns and are distributed across multiple domains. Referral data emphasized professional assessments (36%) and educational programming (35%), while narrative reports highlighted essential family-level needs, particularly employment and financial support (48%). Language barriers, school transitions, and challenges navigating the education system emerged as central areas of needs. Teachers were identified as key referral agents, highlighting their role in early identification and support pathways. Overall, results suggest that immigrant and refugee students' needs are embedded within interconnected family, school, and socioeconomic systems. The MLO program plays a critical role in bridging these contexts through culturally and linguistically responsive support. This study contributes to the limited Canadian literature by highlighting the importance of systemic approaches to supporting newcomer student engagement and well-being

Background and Rationale

Despite mandatory school attendance legislation, there is an increasing rate of school absenteeism in Canada, with between 30% and 70% of students classified as chronically absent (Carman & Wesley, 2024; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2023). This issue has been well-documented in international contexts such as the United States and the United Kingdom, where chronic absenteeism is treated as a national crisis, but it remains underexplored in Canadian research due to limited nationwide data and a lack of focus on systemic contributing factors (Attendance Works, 2024; Carman & Wesley, 2024; Whitley et al 2025). Nonetheless, there is some evidence conveying the stark contrast of school attendance rates following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to data from the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education, nearly two-thirds of high school students were chronically absent (missing at least 10% of the school year) during the 2022–23 school year, a significant increase from just under half in 2018–19 (Carman & Wesley, 2024). School absenteeism among K-12 students is linked to a range of negative outcomes, including lower academic achievement, higher risk of mental health challenges and reduced long-term economic opportunities (Ansari & Gottfried, 2021; Gottfried, 2014).

Research demonstrates that immigrant and refugee students are at particular risk of school absenteeism, such as school dropout, refusal, and truancy (Kearney et al., 2022; Martin et al., 2020; Yang & Ham, 2017). A Statistics Canada (2017) report projects that by 2036, immigrant children under the age of 15 will make up between 39.3% and 49.1% of the population. Despite this anticipated growth and the unique challenges faced by this group, there is a notable lack of Canadian research examining SAPs among immigrant and refugee students in the K–12 system. Moreover, there is limited research examining the range of needs experienced

by immigrant and refugee students and their families in relation to school engagement and attendance. Understanding these needs is critical, as attendance-related concerns may reflect broader challenges related to family context, health, communication, and system navigation. Identifying and examining these needs can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the contexts shaping school engagement and attendance among immigrant and refugee students. Recognizing barriers early is vital in informing support and policies for the successful integration of immigrant and refugee students.

The aim of this study was to understand the school engagement and attendance-related needs of immigrant and refugee K-12 youth within the context of the Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) program run by the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization. This goal was achieved by conducting a qualitative research study using document analysis. The findings of this research contributes significantly to the current gap in the literature on school attendance and engagement behaviours among immigrant and refugee students in Canada and understanding their needs. By exploring the needs of this population and understanding their school engagement and attendance behaviours, this research can inform policy, resource allocation, and improving interventions to increase support services for immigrant and refugee K-12 students.

Theoretical Framework

The Kids and Teens at School (KiTeS) framework (Figure 1) is a comprehensive ecological systems approach tailored to focus on school absenteeism (Lee et al., 2023) and will be used to guide this study (Figure 1). This framework is an extension of Bronfenbrenner's (1993) bioecological systems model that classifies variables influencing human development into micro-, meso-, macro, exo-, and chrono-systems. While Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework

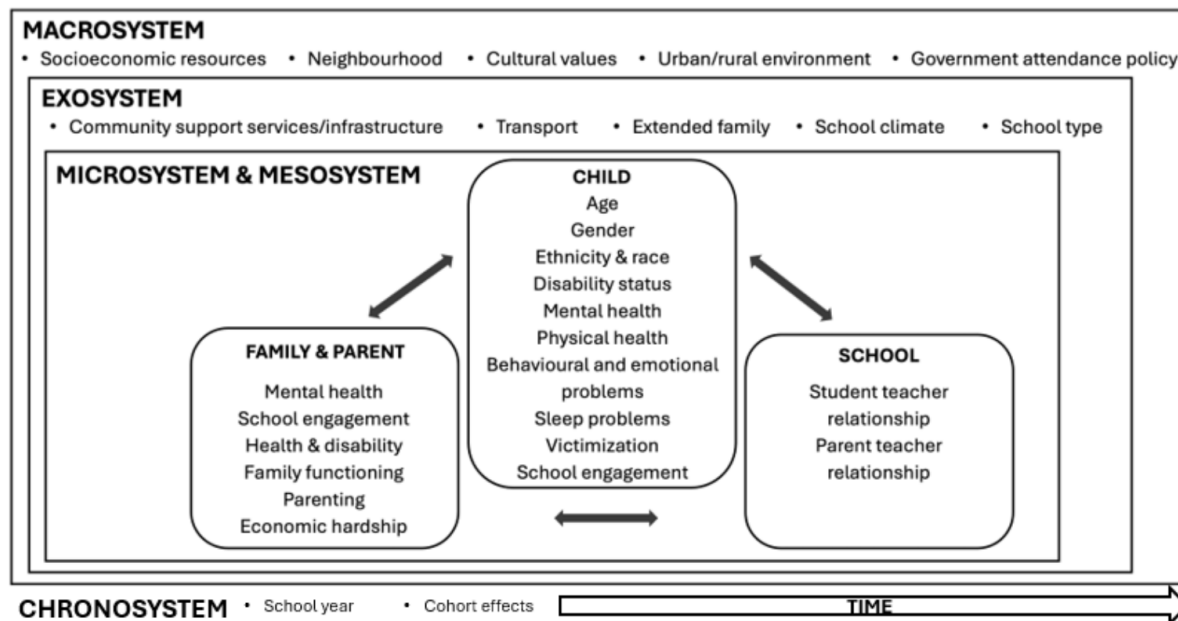
is utilized in several broader human developmental research contexts, the KiTeS framework addresses the need to acknowledge the distinct pathways to absenteeism that exist across diverse student populations (Melvin et al., 2019). The model views students as embedded in layers within a hierarchy of systems that interact to shape behaviour, specifically school attendance behaviours. The microsystem is the first layer that immediately surrounds the child and situates proximal processes such as the family, school and community, where direct cultural interactions occur. Surrounding like an outer layer to the microsystem, is the mesosystem which encompasses connections between these microsystem elements, such as relationships between parents and teachers (Melvin et al., 2019). Next, the exosystem contains the settings that influence parts of the microsystem that are not directly experienced by the child (i.e., a parent's work setting, sibling social networks) (Melvin et al., 2019). Then, part of the macrosystem are the broader cultural norms and societal attitudes. For example, cultural beliefs about education, family roles, and community values can influence parental decisions on school attendance. Lastly, the chronosystem captures the influence of time on development (i.e., changes in systems over time, timing of significant events) which emerges through multiple domains including cultural values (Melvin et al., 2019) and across generations which can affect school participation.

This model facilitates a holistic understanding of SAPs by recognizing that attendance is not solely an individual issue, but often an indicator of challenges across multiple domains. Domains can include family stress, cultural transition, systemic barriers, and school-community dynamics. Because immigrant and refugee students face unique forms of adversity, KiTeS provides a framework for explaining how these risk factors operate within and across ecological levels. For example, the microsystem can help examine how language difficulties or family responsibilities influence school attendance, while the mesosystem supports analysis of

interactions between home, school, and MLO services. By mapping both barriers and supports within this model, this framework is particularly useful for interpreting the range of needs identified through the MLO program by situating them within interconnected ecological systems. Rather than viewing attendance-related concerns as isolated school-based issues, KiTeS supports an understanding of how student and family needs related to school engagement and attendance may reflect broader contextual factors across the family, school, community, and systemic levels.

Figure 1

KiTeS Framework



Literature Review

Conceptualization of School Absenteeism

In the Ontario context, school absenteeism has emerged as a growing concern, with only 40% of high school students and 55.5% of elementary students meeting the regular attendance standard during the 2024–2025 school year (CBC News, 2026). Regular attendance is defined as attending at least 90% of school days, with chronic absenteeism typically defined as being absent

from school for more than 10% of the school year (Whitley et al., 2025). Patterns of absenteeism vary by age; Allison and Attisha (2019) found that while attendance rates tend to be highest in the elementary years, they decline significantly beginning in high school. On the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA; OECD, 2025), which includes questions about school context as well as academic assessments, approximately 30% of 15-year old students reported skipping an entire school day at least once in the two weeks preceding the assessment, while 30% also reported skipping one or more classes during that same period (OECD, 2023). Moreover, in the 2022-2023 school year, 33% of elementary school children and 35% of secondary school youth were chronically absent in the Toronto Catholic District School Board; other school boards across the country reported similar or higher rates (Carman & Wesley, 2024). Although increasing school absenteeism is recognized as a national crisis in both the United States and the United Kingdom, the issue remains relatively overlooked in Canada—largely due to a lack of comprehensive, nationwide data on chronic absenteeism (Carman & Wesley, 2024). Specifically, there is a lack of detailed information regarding both the prevalence of chronic absenteeism and the contributing factors within the Canadian context.

School absenteeism has been conceptualized in various ways but is broadly defined as excused or unexcused absences from elementary or secondary school (Kearney, 2008). Excused absences are often related to medical illness or injury (Kearney, 2008), are endorsed by families/caregivers, and are considered legitimate by school administrators. Excused absences in schools are approved by parents and can include vacations or sports tournaments. On the other hand, unexcused absences may be caused by school withdrawal or school refusal behavior, where the absence from school is not approved by the parent. School absenteeism can be further distinguished as problematic or non-problematic. Problematic absenteeism refers to school

attendance patterns that go beyond occasional or excused absences, involving recurring or concerning levels of absence that may signal underlying issues (Kearney & Childs, 2023). On the other hand, non-problematic absenteeism refers to “any formal school absence agreed on by parents and school officials as legitimate in nature and not involving detriment to the child” (Kearney, 2003). Examples would include natural disasters, illness, religious holidays or the absence being compensated for, such as through home-schooling or credit by examination (Heyne et al., 2019). The key distinction in nonproblematic absenteeism is the agreement of the legitimacy of the absence by both parents and school officials which is typically associated with limited detriment to the child’s learning.

Problematic absenteeism has been further differentiated in an analysis by Heyne et al. (2019) into four different types: school refusal, truancy, school withdrawal, and school exclusion. School refusal was first referred to as school phobia due to the believed presence of neuroticism associated with the reluctance of attending school (Heyne et al., 2019; Johnson et al., 1941). The conceptualization of school refusal later shifted as the term "school phobia" is now considered outdated and problematic, as it places the issue either entirely on the individual or solely within the school setting, overlooking broader systemic or contextual influences (Rae, 2020). The more recent term "Emotionally Based School Avoidance" (EBSA) has been introduced as a broad umbrella concept used to describe children and adolescents who struggle significantly to attend school because of emotional reasons, often leading to extended periods of absence (Tamlyn, 2022).

Berg (2002) conveyed the defining criteria of school refusal in this way: “(1) The child remains at home with the knowledge of the parents ...; (2) There is an absence of severe antisocial behavior ...; (3) Parents make reasonable attempts to secure their child’s attendance at

school ...; (4) There is emotional upset at the prospect of having to go to school ...” (p. 1260). Understood in this way, students refusing to attend school have a desire to attend but experience negative emotions prior to or while at school. Furthermore, internalizing and mental health difficulties are usually present and include anxiety, depression, or psychosomatic complaints (Havik & Ingul, 2021). As such, school refusal behaviour is described as a function to avoid stimuli provoking the general negative affectivity or to escape aversive social and/or evaluative situations which cause anxiety (Havik & Ingul, 2021). Alternatively, school refusal behaviour might also function as a means of gaining attention from significant others, such as parents (e.g., somatic complaints to parents), or to obtain reinforcement outside of school, such as spending time with friends (Havik & Ingul, 2021).

Truancy is the second type of school absenteeism which refers to a consistent pattern of unexcused absences from school which exceeds the maximum set by law (Mallett, 2016). These absences occur without permission from school officials and are typically concealed from the student’s parents’ knowledge (Heyne et al., 2019). Conversely, school withdrawal is often initiated by parents to keep their child away from school for varying reasons. Reasons for withdrawing their child from school could be due to the parents’ mental or somatic illnesses, parents needing their child to help the family with income, or that parents may not value education or for religious reasons (Havik & Ingul, 2021). School withdrawal is also prevalent in students with disabilities due to parents’ perceptions of a lack of available school supports (Whitley, Pegg & Ozturk, 2026). Thus, school withdrawal occurs both based on the choice of parents and due to the school system’s inability to provide adequate support and resources for students with disabilities.

Finally, school exclusion is absence from school at times as a disciplinary action taken by school authorities in response to student misconduct, typically involving infractions of school regulations or laws (Valenbenito et al., 2019). Exclusion involves temporarily removing a student from their usual educational environment, either by prohibiting their presence in the classroom (in-school exclusion) or entirely from school grounds (out-of-school exclusion) (Valenbenito et al., 2019). However, reasons for deciding school exclusion does not always reflect student misconduct. Notably, school exclusion may be due to the schooling system's inability to meet the needs of the pupil, or can be formal, non-disciplinary exclusion (Whitley et al., 2026). For instance, a survey by the National Autistic Society found that nearly 20% of parents reported their autistic child has faced at least one fixed-term exclusion, 5% has been permanently excluded, and a concerning one-third said their child had experienced informal exclusions not officially recorded by the school (Brede et al., 2017). Furthermore, Autism Advocacy Ontario conducted a special education needs survey for the Ontario Ministry of Education and found that parents reported that 70% of excluded students are not properly supported by a professional (i.e., educational assistant) and 28% of these students do not have access to a support worker (Autism Advocacy Ontario, 2019). As a result, lack of special needs resources and supports play a part in school exclusion for students with diverse learning needs.

School absenteeism can be viewed from systemic and analytic approaches. Systemic approaches utilize a dimensional orientation, viewing attendance issues along a continuum, ranging from low to severe chronic absence. Systemic approaches commonly address chronic absenteeism and emphasize broad-spectrum contributors such as student mental health, school climate, social inequities, and community-level barriers contributing to SAPs (Kearney, 2021).

In contrast, analytic approaches carry a categorical view, emphasizing the need to differentiate between types of SAPs. For instance, a particular absence may be identified by categories of illness, emotional distress, school exclusion, school refusal behaviour, or a parent/family issue (Kearney, 2021). As such, emphasis is placed on understanding the specific reasoning for school absences. In this way, this approach focuses on acute absenteeism within the context of “immediate, point-in-time analyses” (González et al. 2018). While systemic approaches highlight broad patterns and contextual factors across populations, analytic approaches aim to differentiate SAPs based on underlying psychological and behavioural mechanisms (Kearney, 2021). As illustrated above, the term school attendance problem encompasses a diverse array of forms, causes, and frameworks—including emotional, behavioural, familial, institutional, and systemic factors. This highlights the complexity of defining and addressing school absenteeism, emphasizing the need for multidimensional approaches in both research and practice.

Consequences of School Absenteeism

Evidence of the negative outcomes of school absenteeism in the K-12 years has been well documented in research. School absenteeism can impact children and youth in academic, psychological, sociological, and financial domains. In terms of academic consequences, several studies have illustrated associations between school absences and school dropout and less than one in ten chances of graduating (Ansari & Gottfried, 2021). These outcomes may be due to the declines in students’ mathematics and literacy performance during both primary and secondary education associated with absence from school (Ansari & Gottfried, 2021). Moreover, research has shown that children with higher rates of absenteeism in early kindergarten tend to demonstrate lower working memory and cognitive flexibility in early childhood (Ansari & Gottfried, 2021; Gottfried, 2014), as well as reduced literacy skills and lower grade point

averages by the age of 15 (Klein et al., 2022). On the whole, students who are frequently absent from school miss valuable opportunities for teacher-led instruction, social interaction with peers, and other experiences that support learning and development (Klein et al., 2022). As a result, academic achievement is curtailed in comparison to students who are present in school.

Due to the long-standing evidence of school attendance's impact on social development and mental health, it is considered a public health issue for mental health professionals, physicians, as well as educators (Kearney, 2008). Accordingly, research shows that children with internalizing mental health challenges (such as anxiety, depression, or trauma-related disorders) and/or externalizing conditions (such as ADHD, oppositional defiant disorder, or conduct disorder) are at an elevated risk of developing SAPs (Klan et al., 2024; Krause et al., 2025). Using U.S. nationally representative data, Gottfried (2014) determined that kindergarten students who were more frequently absent demonstrated lagging social skills and greater internalizing behaviour problems, with small standardized regression effects (β s ranging from .10 to .20). It is argued that the shortened time of instruction, fewer opportunities to interact with teachers and classmates impede children's social development (Ansari & Gottfried, 2021). Similarly, Galle-Tessonneau et al. (2019), documented worsened mental health conditions, such as heightened depression and anxiety, among chronically absent students. In a community study, analyses by Egger and colleagues (2003) revealed that truancy was associated with depression, oppositional defiant disorder, and conduct disorder. In turn, additional studies indicate that students with higher rates of absenteeism in later school years are more prone to engaging in risky behaviours, such as alcohol consumption, smoking, physical altercations, and sexual activity (Ansari & Pianta, 2019). Indeed, school absenteeism can impact socioemotional development, heightening the risk of developing psychiatric disorders and engaging in risky behaviour.

School absenteeism has also shown to have long-term financial consequences. Notably, Gottfried (2014) found that chronic absenteeism can contribute to future financial hardship, including increased risks of unemployment and poverty. This is largely attributed to the loss of opportunities to develop essential skills and obtain academic credentials necessary for workforce entry and long-term economic stability. Similarly, Rahman et al. (2023) highlighted the potential for chronic absenteeism to lead to non-participation in the labour market, which may result in persistent poverty over time.

Risk Factors and School Absenteeism as an Indicator of Adversity

Chronic absenteeism among K–12 students is rarely an isolated issue; rather, it often functions as a symptom or signal of broader underlying challenges. Various individual, familial, school-related, and contextual risk factors may contribute to SAPs, and understanding these interrelated factors is critical for effective intervention. SAPs are historically found to act as an early indicator of unhealthy states of functioning for students, their families, schools and communities (Kearney et al., 2023). These risk factors have immediate and long-term consequences, signifying their importance in understanding the effects and possible associations of these risk factors. Domains of individual risk factors include individual variables, such as academic, physical, and psychological aspects. However, these risk factors often do not operate independently, but frequently interact in complex ways. For example, a student with chronic illness may also experience school anxiety, compounding the likelihood of prolonged absences. As such, chronic illness and school anxiety might heighten the risk of SAPs while SAPs act as a signal of chronic illness and school anxiety.

Academic risk factors can involve having a low IQ, experiencing learning difficulties or having a negative school attitude (Gubbels et al., 2019). A lower grade point average has been

linked to different levels of absenteeism severity, and course failure related to absenteeism is frequently a central component of early warning systems used to predict future school dropout (Kearney et al., 2023). An association has also been found between higher levels of absenteeism and chronic illness, frequent health complaints, physical pain, and sleep disturbances (Lomholt et al., 2022), suggesting that physical health factors may impinge on school attendance. Research also highlights that youth with anxiety disorders, affective disorders, disruptive disorders or substance abuse problems tend to have higher incidences of problematic school absenteeism (Ingul et al., 2012). In fact, among mental health disorders, anxiety most often plays a role in SAPs (Whitley, 2024). It is important to note that while the literature conveys an accumulation of psychological challenges in adolescents with problematic school absenteeism, many do not meet full criteria for a psychiatric diagnosis (Ingul et al., 2012). Thus, school absenteeism is a complex problem and is not necessarily the result of any specific psychiatric diagnosis. This further reinforces the notion that absenteeism is not simply an outcome of diagnosable mental health conditions, but rather a multifaceted behavioural phenomenon with multiple potential functions, including but not limited to expressions of distress, requiring a broader ecological and systemic lens (Kearney, 2008).

Other important areas involve family, school, and community factors which contribute to SAPs. These domains are rarely isolated, as challenges within the family context often intersect with school and community-level stressors, reinforcing cycles of disengagement and non-attendance. Family related risk factors may be present in elementary school-age children, but problematic absenteeism, such as dropout, may not occur until later (Kearney, 2008). This suggests that school absenteeism can reflect accumulated vulnerabilities over time, where early warning signs like irregular attendance signal deeper structural or familial stress.

Low family income is found to be associated with poor academic achievement among youth, whereby heightened rates of absence and tardiness may be a mechanism through which low family income influences youth's academic performance (Morrissey et al., 2014).

Theoretical considerations explaining the link between low socioeconomic status and school absenteeism point to structural barriers which contribute to their developmental and educational outcomes. For instance, Bronfenbrenner's (1993) bioecological model explains that children's development is shaped by their interactions with their environment. Within this framework, socioeconomic status influences school absenteeism by shaping both children's immediate and more distal environments, such as their neighbourhoods, as well as the ways they engage with these contexts (Sosu et al., 2021). Accordingly, Garcia and colleagues (2018) found that 23% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch missed three or more days of school a month in comparison to students who are not eligible. Other family factors that are shown to increase the likelihood of problematic school absenteeism are lowered family involvement, parents' education level, parenting style, parenting skills and family's attitude toward education (McConnell & Kubina, 2014; Balkis et al., 2016; Marlow & Rehman, 2021). Other family circumstances such as parents' psychiatric conditions (Gubbels et al., 2019), frequent relocation, and weak parent-child relationships are risk factors for school absenteeism (Rasasingham, 2015). Framed differently, school absenteeism may be an indicator of these adverse circumstances.

School risk factors include school climate and students' relationships with their peers and teachers. Specifically, whether a student is exposed to a negative school environment, such as bullying or having a lowered sense of belonging, can heighten their risk for problematic school absenteeism (Gubbels et al., 2019). Exposure to a negative school environment can cause students to feel unaccepted, unsafe, and not respected or valued at school (Ingul et al., 2012).

Therefore, students are more likely to be absent or drop out of school. Contextual factors such as those of the community have direct and indirect influences on school absenteeism. To exemplify, living in poorer neighborhoods bears the risk of exposure to acts of violence, poor schools and maltreatment in comparison to more affluent neighborhoods, thereby influencing school absenteeism (Ingul et al., 2012). In addition, issues such as housing, lack of transportation and limited parental employment opportunities are a part of the political and economic system which the family reside in, all influencing SAPs (Sugrue et al., 2016). Taken together, these risk factors underscore the importance of viewing school absenteeism not simply as an end result, but as a potential indicator of underlying adversity.

Immigrant and Refugee K-12 Students in Canada

The population of foreign-born children (first-generation) and those with foreign-born parents (second-generation) is growing in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2017). In 2016, 37.5% of children under 15 had an immigrant background, and this figure is projected to increase to between 39.3% and 49.1% by 2036 (Statistics Canada, 2017). Immigration is a complex and multifaceted process involving cultural adaptation and adjustment, which shapes how youth and their families navigate educational systems and social environments. Entering a new country as a student involves adapting to the norms and expectations of its teaching, learning, and student cultures (Gunderson et al., 2012). As such, first- and second-generation immigrant children are impacted by how their school and surrounding communities support their daily challenges. The growing number of immigrant children highlights the importance of understanding their school and out-of-school experiences during the process of acculturation.

In exploring these experiences, it is important to understand the terminology used in the area. An immigrant is a non-national individual who has moved to and established a (semi-)

permanent residence in a country or locality other than their place of habitual residence, often for the purpose of long-term settlement (Gimeno-Feliu et al., 2019). The term is frequently used interchangeably with foreigner or foreign-born (Gimeno-Feliu et al., 2019). According to the International Organization of Migration, a refugee is someone who has fled their country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, and who cannot or is unwilling to return or seek protection from their home country because of that fear (International Organization for Migration, n.d.). Both immigrants and refugees can be considered newcomers, as newcomers are referred to as an individual with official permanent resident status in Canada, regardless of their immigration pathway (Caldararu et al., 2021). For the purposes of this study, the terms newcomer, immigrant, and refugee are used collectively to reflect how the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO) and the Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) program typically group these populations in practice. However, distinctions between these categories are maintained throughout the literature review, where studies specify particular subgroups.

Immigrant and refugee children experience a period where they adjust to the culture of their new country. Redfield and colleagues (1936) defines acculturation as “phenomena which results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups” (p. 149). Broesch and Hadley (2012) later adapted this definition to convey acculturation as “the process through which an individual's cultural models become increasingly divergent from the shared cultural models of their previous social group, and become increasingly similar to the cultural models held by members of the social group to which they have immigrated, through

direct contact with members of this social group” (p. 376). An important conceptual distinction, however, was made by Berry (1997) who posits the necessity of maintaining one’s ethnic culture while adopting the mainstream culture.

During the process of acculturation, there is a risk for immigrants and refugees to experience acculturation stress. This stress may occur when one has to negotiate the social and cultural norms between two or more cultures of their country of origin and host cultures (Sirin et al., 2013). This phenomenon is important to consider when understanding the factors which play a role in immigrant children’s school attendance. It is catalyzed by the challenges experienced during the process of acculturation and is found to be inversely associated with psychological and physical wellbeing (Kosic, 2004). Furthermore, immigrant youth who experience acculturation stress are found to be at elevated risk of internalizing and externalizing symptoms of mental health difficulties (Sirin et al., 2013). For instance, externalizing symptoms in immigrant adolescents might manifest as aggression and delinquent behaviour, while internalizing symptoms might include experiencing anxiety, depression, and somatic symptoms (Sirin et al., 2013). Thus, immigrant youth experiencing acculturation stress may be at heightened risk for physical and mental health difficulties.

Immigrant and refugee youth face unique challenges and barriers. Upon arrival, immigrants may face significant stressors, including frequent relocations, economic hardship, complex legal processes, and the challenge of adapting to new languages, customs, and systems (Simich et al., 2005). Prolonged separation from loved ones adds emotional strain, and for undocumented families, the threat of raids, arrests, and deportation further intensifies their stress (Simich et al., 2005). Despite these complicated challenges, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development conveys that how well immigrants integrate is dependent on how

well their children are doing (Motti-Stefanidi & Salmela-Aro, 2018). Current positive adaptation of immigrant and refugee youth is found to be a determinant of their future adaptation, while challenges in adapting early during development may lead to negative impacts. Therefore, supporting the positive adjustment of immigrant youth is essential to the long-term well-being and success of both the individuals and the broader society (Motti-Stefanidi & Salmela-Aro, 2018).

Recent Canadian immigrants have been found to have lower socioeconomic status than non-immigrants (Burton & Phipps, 2010; Raphael 2025), which is associated with several facets of well-being. Accordingly, families living with low socioeconomic status are found to be more likely to develop mental health challenges (Beiser et al., 2002). As mentioned earlier, poverty is understood as one of the best documented predictors of lower academic attainment, where children from lower income families achieve lower grades, participate in less school activities, and complete fewer years of school in general (Crosnoe & Ansari, 2016). Students in low-income families experience greater barriers to education, such as longer distances to school with lack of adequate transportation, and food and housing insecurity (Kearney et al., 2022). Indeed, immigrant and refugee families living with lower income may experience more SAPs due to their lack of access to necessary resources.

The change of environments can lead to physical health challenges in immigrant and refugee youth. For instance, changes in climate, lifestyle, and diet following migration can increase the risk of conditions such as asthma and vitamin D deficiency among some immigrant children (Vatanparast et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2008). Despite the Canada Health Act, providing free healthcare in the country, the use of healthcare services among Canadian-born and immigrant and refugees diverge (Newbold, 2005). Some variables associated with this difference

include unseen barriers such as level of social support, or variables reflecting cultural makeup of the population, including gender roles and trust in Western medicine, and income (Newbold, 2015). Other barriers to receiving health care involve limited coverage for dental and mental health care and systemic barriers such as language barriers and prolonged wait times.

Furthermore, acculturation stress can stem from various dimensions of adapting to a new culture, including the challenge of understanding unfamiliar cultural norms and expectations, facing discrimination and prejudice, and navigating the tension between preserving aspects of one's original culture while integrating elements of the new one (Berry, 1997; Sirin et al., 2013). Additionally, such stress may be intensified by negative stereotypes and biased attitudes held by the host society toward immigrants (Sirin et al., 2013). These layered stressors contribute to a complex and often overwhelming adjustment process for immigrant and refugee youth within the host society.

School absenteeism among immigrant and refugee students

K-12 immigrant and refugee students have been found to be at significantly elevated risk of SAPs. For example, Anisef et al. (2010) conducted analyses of data from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) which have shown significant variation in school persistence among various immigrant groups. For newcomer youth, early school leaving was found to be heavily influenced by socioeconomic status, along with factors such as their country of origin, age of arrival, generational status, family composition, and academic achievement. Neighbourhood-level factors were also found to significantly influence dropout rates, with 13% of the variation in early school leaving attributed to neighborhood characteristics (Anisef et al., 2010).

Neighbourhood characteristics can refer to safety and the degree of accessibility to resources and supports. Moreover, youth living in areas with higher poverty rates were more likely to drop out,

even after controlling individual and cultural background variables. It is believed that this is due to lower income neighborhoods lacking adequate access to resources and support for immigrant and refugee families.

Newcomer youth may also face additional challenges and responsibilities in relation to migration which can impede school engagement and attendance behaviours. A key finding in Shakya and colleagues' (2010) study examining the aspirations and experiences of newcomer youth demonstrates that refugee youth often take on significant family responsibilities after migrating to Canada. This is largely due to their parents' limited education, language barriers, and health challenges, where they frequently act as interpreters, caregivers, and navigators of services for their families (Shakya et al., 2010). In several of these cases, newcomer youth detailed their parents' difficulties in gaining employment, urging youth to enter the labour market to help support their families. As a result, some newcomer youth must divide their time and energy into supporting their families which risks infringing on their academic engagement and pursuits.

Systematic barriers and cultural differences also impact SAPs. According to Kearney et al. (2022), systematic barriers involve language barriers, social exclusion, financial disadvantages, legal status, family separation, and oppressive school environments which complicate attendance for these students. In a study exploring school personnel's perspectives of SAPs among immigrant and refugee students, Martin et al. (2020) highlighted the ambivalence and discomfort experienced by school personnel when confronted with cultural values different than their own. In fact, there is a risk for school staff to hold a negative bias towards how they perceive immigrant families: they often meet the student's family for official appointments as disciplinary measures, where the accumulation of these negative, punitive experiences often

form inaccurate representations of immigrant students and their families (Martin et al., 2020). Consequently, attendance of immigrant students may often be misunderstood. Therefore, the lack of cultural awareness within the schooling system plays a role in the heightened rates of SAPs among immigrant and refugee students.

School refusal, now increasingly termed as emotionally based school avoidance, involves a student's inability to attend or remain in school due to emotional distress (Halligan & Cryer, 2022; Ulaş et al., 2024). Brault et al. (2022) revealed that for immigrant students, school refusal often reflects deeper struggles tied to identity, cultural displacement, and intergenerational pressure. Brault et al. (2022) illustrated that immigrant youth may experience a shift in how they relate to school, where prior to immigration it was once viewed as a place of ambition, but school became a source of distress, as academic success turns into a burden linked to the immigrant narrative of success. Meanwhile, parents often feel overwhelmed and disappointed by the school system they initially idealized, particularly in the face of rejection or racism (Rosenthal et al., 2020). Misunderstandings between immigrant families and school staff can further complicate matters; educators may misinterpret school refusal as truancy, especially when parental efforts are overlooked or dismissed due to cultural biases (Martin et al., 2020). These findings capture the need for understanding the challenges and barriers experienced by immigrant and refugee youth navigating the schooling system to inform cultural sensitivity and competence in schools.

For immigrant and refugee students in particular, concerns related to school engagement and attendance are often embedded within a broader constellation of needs that extend beyond the classroom, reflecting the influence of interconnected systemic and bioecological factors. Many cases of immigrant child welfare involvement, for instance, stem from economic

constraints, such as limited financial resources that may result in overcrowded housing or situations in which children are left unsupervised while caregivers work (Critelli, 2015). Similarly, in a study examining immigrant and refugee students' needs within school-linked mental health services, McNeely and colleagues (2020) found that economic hardship was the most prevalent concern. Their findings further emphasized that effective supports must extend beyond academic interventions to include family engagement, assistance with basic needs, support with cultural adaptation, and emotional and behavioral services. Indeed, it is uncommon for immigrant and refugee students' concerns to be independent from the ecological contexts surrounding them.

Health-related challenges also play a significant role in shaping students' capacity to engage consistently in school. Research has shown that migrants are especially vulnerable to both preventable and chronic health conditions, with common issues such as diabetes, obesity, and hypertension often going untreated due to limited access to healthcare (Zimmerman & Beam, 2020). In addition, psychological conditions including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are prevalent among refugees seeking asylum in the United States (Zimmerman & Beam, 2020). Taken together, these findings suggest that absenteeism and disengagement should not be understood solely as individual or school-based issues, but rather as reflections of broader systemic inequities and cumulative adversity.

The families of K-12 students play a vital role in their child's school engagement and attendance. In fact, family-based attendance interventions typically center on designing a point of contact for parents with whom to discuss attendance or other issues to facilitate two-way communication with a member of the school faculty (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). For immigrant and refugee families, language barriers pose a major reason for being less engaged in their

children's schooling (Cureton, 2020). In particular, refugee parents' limited proficiency in English can hinder their ability to engage in school-related activities and communicate effectively with school staff (Cureton, 2020). Beyond language, cultural factors also shape patterns of parental involvement. For example, Moosa et al. found that while Arab mothers from Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon highly valued direct communication with schools (i.e., evidenced by their high attendance rates at parent-teacher conferences), many reported experiencing anxiety in more formal or parent-led settings and were less inclined to engage in additional educational programming. Immigrant and refugee parents also express a need for practical information about starting and navigating the new school system (De Goia, 2017), however may experience difficulties in connecting meaningfully to the right school supports (New et al., 2015). These barriers within the interaction between families and schools may limit parents' capacity to engage, which in turn can influence children's school engagement and attendance outcomes. Addressing school engagement and attendance concerns, therefore, necessitates a multi-layered approach that acknowledges and responds to these intersecting challenges across students' ecological contexts.

Context: The Multicultural Liaison Officers (MLO) Program

The Multicultural Liaison Officers (MLO) program is a school-based initiative designed to support immigrant and refugee students and their families as they navigate the Ontario school system and broader community life. The program is administered by the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO), a settlement agency that has provided services to newcomers in Ottawa, Ontario since 1978. Within this initiative, Multicultural Liaison Officers (MLOs) are agency staff with specialized knowledge of settlement services and educational support available to newcomers. They are embedded or affiliated with English-language schools

across Ottawa (Public and Catholic) and collaborate with students, families, and school staff to facilitate successful integration and culturally responsive services. Support from MLOs can be initiated through student or parent requests, or through referrals made by educators or other school personnel. As such, school and school-related personnel (i.e., learning support teachers, principals, guidance counselors) play an important role in working with and connecting students to the MLO program. The perceptions of school and school-related personnel provide an important and valuable perspective in understanding the needs of immigrant and refugee students.

MLOs provide a range of culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate services to address the diverse needs of newcomer families. These include orientation sessions, individual support, outreach, translation, and information sharing. MLOs also work closely with families and school staff to support newcomer students and families with a wide range of support: navigating the school system, filling out forms, settlement services, conflict resolution, becoming more involved at school, and accessing supports that meet their needs within the school or community (Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, n.d.), employment assistance, housing assistance, access to food banks, language and cultural interpretation, ensuring access to mental health counselling. In addition to directly supporting students and families, MLOs assist educators and school staff in creating welcoming and culturally responsive learning environments for all students.

The Current Study

Research Objective

As previously discussed, school attendance problems (SAPs) are an increasing concern in K–12 education and can have lasting impacts on children and adolescents. These concerns are

often shaped by challenges occurring across multiple developmental and ecological contexts. For immigrant and refugee students, school engagement and attendance may be influenced by a range of intersecting factors, including acculturation stress, language barriers, family responsibilities, financial strain, health concerns, and difficulties navigating unfamiliar educational and social systems. As such, attendance-related concerns may reflect broader patterns of need rather than isolated school-based issues. In the context of a community-based partnership with the Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) program, this study sought to better understand the experiences of immigrant and refugee K–12 students and their families through existing program documentation. Although the study was initially motivated by an interest in school engagement and attendance, the available data more consistently reflected the broader range of needs identified through MLO involvement with students and families. For example, a need might be described in relation to a learning assessment for a student based on academic difficulties or housing supports for a family. School attendance is not mentioned in these examples, and yet these are issues that can create barriers to school engagement, attendance, and general school success for immigrant and refugee students. As a result, the analytic focus of the study was refined to identifying and describing these needs as documented through the MLO program. Therefore, the objective of this study was to answer the following research question: What are the specific needs of immigrant and refugee K–12 students as identified through the Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) program?

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative design using document analysis to examine administrative and program-related data generated within the Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) program. Document analysis was selected as an appropriate methodological approach, as

the data sources consist of organizational records that were produced independently of the research process and reflect routine program practices (Silverman, 2024). Such documents are understood as socially constructed texts that are produced, shared, and used within specific institutional contexts (Silverman, 2024). Accordingly, the focus of this study was to examine how student needs are represented and constructed through these records.

Two sources of qualitative data were analyzed: the Master Referral Sheet and the Monthly Narrative Reports. While both sources consist of textual data and were analyzed using content analysis, they were treated as separate methods because they were produced by different groups within the system and for different purposes. The Master Referral Sheet was completed by school-based staff to document student needs and initiate referrals for support from the MLO program, whereas the Monthly Narrative Reports were written by MLOs to reflect on service delivery and inform program planning. The aim was to examine how needs are identified and described from different perspectives within the system. Each data source was therefore analyzed independently, allowing the perspectives of school personnel and MLOs to be understood on their own terms, before being discussed as a whole.

Data Sources

This research utilized two data sources that are collected and maintained by OCISO. The first data source that was utilized in this project is the Master Referral Sheet maintained by OCISO and completed by several school staff. This study included referrals made between January 1, 2025 to June 24, 2025, totaling 367 referrals. School-related figures who made referrals include principals, learning support teachers, social workers, and guidance counselors (Appendix A). This Excel sheet, which automatically captures responses to a brief form completed by school or school board personnel, documents reasons for referring a student to the

MLO program. Each referral entry includes details such as the role of the referring school staff member (e.g., teacher, vice principal), the reason for the referral (i.e. the identified need), and the student's name, gender, and grade. Additional information includes parent contact details, scheduled meeting dates, expected attendees (e.g., MLO, parent), preferred language for the meeting, and contextual notes (e.g., student diagnoses or anticipated issues), which provide further insight into the nature of the student-related need and the support being requested.

The second data source is Monthly Narrative Reports written by MLOs in the same time period of January to June, 2025 (Appendix B). These narrative summaries describe the types of support provided to students and families and are a more in-depth, qualitative account of the MLOs' work across different schools. Reports include anonymized case descriptions that illustrate the barriers faced by immigrant and refugee students, such as language challenges, academic difficulties, and navigating educational or social service systems. In addition to describing student needs, the monthly narrative reports outline the strategies and actions taken by MLOs to respond to these challenges, providing insight into how the program supports students and families at both individual and systemic levels. The present study specifically examined the "Needs" section within the monthly narrative reports, where MLOs documented the needs of the students and families they worked with throughout each month. Each report was written by an MLO and reflected the needs they identified and addressed during that reporting period. As such, the reported needs represent the experiences and needs of multiple students and families rather than a single case.

In addition to describing student needs, the reports outline the strategies and actions taken by MLOs to respond to these challenges, providing insight into how the program supports students and families at both individual and systemic levels. The scope of this study examined

the “Needs” section of the reports where MLOs report on all the needs of the students and families they have worked with throughout the month. Each monthly report was written by an MLO, reflecting students’ needs they have noticed and worked to address throughout the month. As such, the reported needs represent the needs of multiple students.

Data Analyses

The goal of the analyses was to identify and characterize the needs underlying student referrals to the MLO program by applying content analysis to categorize needs and conducting descriptive analyses to examine their frequency, in order to address the study’s focus on the specific needs of immigrant and refugee K–12 students identified through the Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) program. While all data included in this study are qualitative and textual in nature, quantitative analyses were conducted with the MLO program’s master referral sheet (see Appendix A), including descriptive statistics and categorization of reasons for students’ referrals to the MLO program during January through June of the 2024-2025 school year. The variables included in the descriptive analyses are a) the reason for requesting MLO services, b) the grade of the student (K-12), c) the position of the person making the referral (i.e., principal, psychologist, teacher), d) the language requested for services to be in, and e) additional notes which provide further details regarding the student’s situation.

Qualitative analyses in this study involved content analysis to capture reasons for students’ referrals to the MLO program (master referral sheet), and patterns of needs in monthly narrative reports completed by MLOs (see Appendix B). Content analysis refers to a set of techniques used to systematically examine different types of texts, focusing not only on the explicit content but also on the underlying themes and central ideas they convey (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). While qualitative content analysis may involve some interpretation of latent

meaning, it is generally considered a more descriptive and category-oriented approach than highly interpretive qualitative methodologies. In the current study, content analysis was used to identify, organize, and describe recurring categories and patterns within the data (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). Qualitative content analysis emphasizes systematic coding procedures and the identification of patterns or regularities within textual data, with greater emphasis on validity and reliability than more interpretive forms of qualitative analysis (Drisko & Maschi, 2015).

Content analysis was first conducted on a subset of referrals from the Master Referral Sheet that included open-ended comments describing reasons for referral (247; 67%). Two reviewers independently double-coded 34 (13%) referral comments. Coding patterns were then compared and discussed, and a final coding framework was established. This refined set of codes was subsequently applied by one researcher to the remaining referral data, while remaining open to the development of new codes. For the monthly reports, content analysis was conducted by two reviewers to enhance the credibility and consistency of coding and interpretation (Elo et al., 2014). A subset of the data (1 out of 6 months; 16%) was independently double-coded by both researchers, consistent with recommendations that approximately 10–20% of the dataset be coded by multiple reviewers to assess reliability (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Following this initial phase, coding patterns were compared and discussed, and a final coding framework was established. This became a refined list of codes that were then applied by one researcher to code the remaining months of reports, again while staying open to the development of new codes.

Results

Descriptive Characteristics

As shown in Table 1, the largest proportion of referrals were made by learning support teachers ($n = 110$, 30.05%), followed by teachers ($n = 58$, 15.85%), then principals and vice

principals (n= 38, 10.38%). Referrals were less frequently initiated by mental health professionals, including behavior analysts, psychology staff and psychologist associates (n=1, 0.27%), each accounting for smaller proportions of the total referrals.

Students represented in referral records spanned from kindergarten to grade 12 (Table 1). The largest proportion of referrals involved students in kindergarten to grade six, with fewer referrals observed at the upper secondary level. Students in Grade 6 accounted for the largest proportion of referrals (n = 54, 14.84%), followed by Kindergarten (n = 41, 11.26%). Grade 9 (n=13, 3.57%) and grade 12 (n=14, 3.85%) were among the least frequent grades of students in the referrals. -There were only 2 (0.55%) referrals made for students in a specialized class for students in a mix of grades requiring special education services. A greater proportion of referrals involved students recorded as male (n = 206, 60.23%) compared to those recorded as female (n = 135, 39.47%; see Table 1). One referral included other gender designation (n = 1, 0.29%).

As shown in Table 1, referrals reflected a wide range of languages requested (N = 366), with substantial variability in frequency across languages. A small number of languages accounted for a large proportion of referrals, while many others were requested infrequently. Arabic was the most frequently requested language, appearing in over one-third of all referrals (n = 144, 39%). This was followed by Somali (n = 41, 11%), Mandarin (n = 29, 8%), Vietnamese (n = 24, 7%), and Pashto (n = 22, 6%). Together, these five languages accounted for the majority of the languages requested in referrals. Several additional languages appeared at lower but notable frequencies, including Farsi (n = 10, 3%), Turkish (n = 9, 2%), Russian (n = 7, 2%), Swahili (n = 7, 2%), French (n = 6, 2%), and Portuguese (n = 6, 2%). The remaining languages were requested infrequently, often appearing only once or a small number of times in the referral

records (e.g., Burmese, Creole, Hindi, Khmer, Kirundi, Punjabi, Sinhala, Tamil). These low-frequency languages were grouped into an “other languages” category for reporting purposes.

Table 1

Referral Characteristics

Characteristic	n	%
Referrer position/profession		
Learning Support Teacher	110	30.0
Teacher	58	15.8
Vice Principal	38	10.3
Principal	38	10.3
ESL Lead Teacher	20	5.4
Social Worker	18	4.9
Speech Language Pathologist	17	4.6
ESL Teacher	17	4.6
Guidance Counsellor	14	3.8
Psychologist	10	2.7
Psychoeducational Consultant	6	1.6
Other	20	5.5
Grade		
Kindergarten	41	11.3
Grades 1-3	101	27.8
Grades 4-6	115	31.6
Grades 7-9	59	16.2
Grades 10-12	46	12.6
Gender		
Male	206	60.2
Female	135	39.4
Other	1	0.3
Language requested		
Arabic	144	39.0
Somali	41	11.0
Mandarin	29	8.0
Vietnamese	24	7.0
Pashto	22	6.0
Farsi	10	3.0
Turkish	9	2.0
Russian	7	2.0
Swahili	7	2.0
French	6	2.0
Portuguese	6	2.0

Other	61	16.7
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Reasons for referrals

As all referrals involved a need for translation support from a Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO), translation was treated as a baseline characteristic of the referral process and was not included as a distinct referral code. Referral reasons documented in the OCISO referral data were first coded using 18 distinct codes. Following initial coding, conceptually related codes were grouped inductively into three broader categories: *Student Needs and Well-Being*, *Professional Assessments*, and *Educational Programming and Planning*. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each category based on the total number of referral reasons recorded.

As shown in Table 2, *Professional Assessments* were the most frequently represented category, accounting for 36% of referrals (n = 89). This category included referrals related to assessment and follow-up needs, such as psychological assessments, speech and language assessments, occupational therapy assessments, and educational assessments. Assessments (unspecified) refer to assessments without a specification for the type of assessment. The most frequent assessment and follow-up referred was for psychological assessments (n= 27, 11%), while the least frequent were occupational assessments (n=3, 1%). *Professional assessments* also included obtaining informed consent to participate in the assessment, namely psychological assessments.

Referrals related to *Educational Programming and Planning* comprised 35.2% of the total (n = 87). This category captured referral reasons associated with educational planning and progress, special education services, transportation planning, and support for new students.

Educational planning and progress was the most frequently coded reason for referral (n=46, 19%), while Transportation was the least frequent (n=5, 2%).

The *Student Needs and Well-Being* category represented 28.7% of referrals (n = 71). This category encompasses a range of concerns, including attendance needs, behavioural and learning needs, mental and physical health concerns, involvement with child protection services (CAS), experiences of bullying, student and family well-being, and cultural discrimination of the student at school. Both Behavior Need and Learning Need were the most frequent reason for request under this category (n=16, 6%), and the least frequent was one referral for cultural discrimination.

In addition to the referral reasons categorized under the three broader domains, the referral data included codes related to services requested from the MLO program as part of reasons for referral (n=48, 19%). Due to the relatively small number of service-related codes and their conceptual distinctiveness, these codes were not collapsed into broader categories. Instead, frequencies and percentages were calculated and reported at the individual code level. Informed consent for assessments was the most frequently identified service-related reason for referral, accounting for 60% of service requests (n = 29). Other service-related referrals included cultural awareness (n = 9, 19%) and help with forms (n = 6, 13%). Less frequently reported service requests included information sharing (n = 2, 4%) and presentations (n = 2, 4%).

Table 2

Reason for referral

Reason for Referral	n	%
Professional Assessments	89	36
Assessment (unspecified) & follow-up	22	9
Psychological assessment & follow-up	27	1
Speech language assessment & follow-up	25	10
Occupational assessment & follow-up	3	1

Educational assessment	12	5
Educational Programming & Planning	87	35
Educational planning & progress	46	19
New student	8	3
Special education	28	11
Transportation planning	5	2
Student Needs & Wellbeing	71	29
Attendance need	12	5
Behavior need	16	6
Learning need	16	6
Mental health need	11	4
Physical health need	4	2
CAS involvement	3	1
Bullying	2	1
Student/family well-being	6	2
Cultural discrimination	1	0

Narrative Reports

This study drew on monthly narrative reports completed by Multicultural Liaison Officers (MLOs) between January 1, 2025 and June 24, 2025. These narrative reports documented client needs encountered by MLOs throughout each month. Each report reflected the experiences of multiple students and families rather than a single individual case. In total, 260 distinct needs were extracted from the reports. Initially, needs were coded using 22 distinct codes identified by the research team. Following initial coding, these codes were reviewed and grouped based on conceptual similarity into three broader categories: Essential Needs, School Integration and System Navigation, and Student Well-Being and Functioning. These categories were developed inductively through iterative comparison of codes and patterns within the data. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each category based on the total number of identified needs (N = 260) (Table 3).

Essential needs represented the most frequently reported category (n = 125, 48%). Within this category, the most frequently coded needs were Family–Employment (n = 38, 15%) and

Family–Financial Support (n = 29, 11%). Codes prefixed with “Family–” represent needs affecting both the student and their family context. The second most frequently reported category was Student well-being and functioning. Within this category, the most common needs were Physical Health Needs (n = 28, 11%) and Mental Health Needs (n = 14, 5%). Physical health needs often reflected the need for connection to medical services, such as access to a family physician or other healthcare providers. Mental health needs commonly reflected the need for counselling or other psychological supports. Finally, *School integration and system navigation* was the third most frequently reported category of needs (n = 59, 22%). Within this category, Educational Planning and Progress was the most frequently coded need (n = 24, 9%). This code captured situations involving educational decision-making and planning (e.g., course selection) as well as concerns related to students’ academic progress and performance.

Overall, findings from both data sources indicate that the needs of immigrant and refugee students span multiple domains. Referral data primarily reflected school-identified needs, most commonly related to professional assessments and educational programming, while the narrative reports captured a broader range of needs, including essential supports, student well-being, and challenges related to school integration and system navigation. Across both datasets, needs were not limited to academic concerns and often reflected interconnected factors within students’ family and social contexts. These results provide a descriptive foundation for the discussion that follows.

Table 3

Needs Identified from Narrative Reports

Category / Need	n	%
Essential Needs	125	48
Clothing	3	1

Category / Need	n	%
Family- Employment	38	15
Family- Financial Support	29	11
Family- Food	16	6
Family- Housing	23	9
Family- Language Classes	13	5
Family- Legal	3	1
Student Wellbeing & Functioning	76	29
Assessment & follow-up	1	0
Attendance Need	6	2
Behavior Need	7	3
Bullying	1	0
Learning Need	5	2
Mental Health Need	14	5
New Student	7	3
Physical Health Need	28	11
Special Education	7	3
School Integration & System Navigation	59	2
Community Resource	7	3
Education Information	9	3
Educational Planning & Progress	24	9
Extracurricular	7	3
Home-School Communication	7	3
Transportation Planning	5	2

Discussion

The discussion that follows is organized around several key findings, including the role of teachers as primary referral sources, the prevalence of language-related barriers, grade-level patterns in referrals, the prominence of assessment and educational planning needs, and the broader socioeconomic conditions shaping family-level experiences. Taken together, the findings of the current study suggest that the needs of immigrant and refugee students are not only embedded within broader systems, but are also actively identified and made visible within the school context itself. In this study, student needs were documented by school staff based on their day-to-day observations of students' school experiences, highlighting schooling as a key site where broader social, linguistic, and economic challenges become observable. While these needs reflect influences from the family system, school system, and broader macrosystem, they are

primarily articulated through students' interactions within the school environment. Across findings, patterns highlight the critical role of communication, access, and coordination between home and school contexts. Language barriers and socioeconomic constraints emerged as central factors shaping families' ability to engage with schools and access appropriate supports. As such, the school setting functions not only as an educational environment but also as an important point of identification and potential intervention for unmet needs among immigrant and refugee students. Given this, attendance becomes particularly significant, as students must be present in school for these needs to be observed, documented, and connected to support services.

Teacher-Initiated Referrals as Early Identification Pathways

Learning support teachers and classroom teachers were the most frequent sources of referrals to the MLO program. Given their sustained proximity to students in daily school contexts, it is not surprising that these professionals are well positioned to observe changes in students' academic engagement and overall well-being. Their roles inherently involve attending not only to students' academic development but also to their social and emotional needs. As such, teachers are considered a part of a student's microsystem and are among the first to recognize when students may be experiencing challenges that extend beyond the classroom. This finding is well established in current literature. For example, in a qualitative study investigating perceptions of school staff regarding their roles in supporting students with mental health concerns, teacher participants described their need to be acutely aware of their students and the host of issues that may not be readily apparent (Dimitropoulos, 2022). In a second study, teachers perceived that they are considered the frontline of assisting immigrant and refugee families in their transition to school (De Gioia, 2017). In addition to the perception that it is within their role, school staff in other research recognized that a key aspect of supporting

students involved encouraging help-seeking, offering resources, and guiding students toward individuals or organizations that can provide support (Dimitropoulos, 2022). This same study found that classroom teachers noted the limitations of the support they were able to provide and identified their primary role as connecting students with appropriate resources. This may be especially apparent for the cultural incongruities between home and school life that have increased in the classroom environment and act as a greater challenge to teachers (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000). In general, these findings are consistent with previous literature, suggesting that learning support teachers and classroom teachers play a critical gatekeeping role in identifying student needs and initiating pathways to support. Within the context of the present study, this extends to the fundamental role teachers play in immigrant and refugee students' microsystem by recognizing when students may be experiencing forms of adversity that require culturally responsive support.

Language and Cultural Barriers

A key finding in this study was the extensive need for language-specific support. Arabic was the most commonly identified language spoken and understood by students and their families, while Somali and Mandarin were also frequently listed. The range of languages reflects the linguistic diversity present among newcomer students and their families in the dataset. Language barriers represent a challenge across multiple bioecological systems, shaping school attendance and engagement behaviors.

Firstly, a student's teachers and peers are proximal processes embedded within a child's microsystems, where having positive relationships with teachers and peers play a fundamental role in academic achievement and feelings of belonging in school (Dexter et al., 2016). Because newcomer students may feel an urgency to adapt to and become familiar with the norms, values,

and educational system of a new culture, the support from teachers and peers becomes paramount in facilitating this adaptation (Flint et al., 2019). However, language and cultural differences can act as barriers for rapport-building, where several teachers and peers do not share the same language abilities or lived experiences as a newcomer. Furthermore, previous literature conveys that immigrant and refugee students may experience cultural discrimination from teachers and peers, leading to feelings of alienation and rejection (Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2025; Martin et al., 2020). Thus, it becomes clear that language and cultural differences impact students' interactions with their microsystems, ultimately shaping their school experiences.

For families supporting the integration of their children into a new school system, parents' linguistic barriers pose significant challenges in the child's proximal processes (Kearney et al., 2022; Martin et al., 2020; Moosa et al., 2001). In particular, these challenges were evident in the narrative reports not only in terms of day-to-day communication, but also in relation to understanding school processes, accessing supports, and engaging with school staff. The interactions between a child's family and school represent interactions occurring at the mesosystem level. Research consistently shows that the quality of mesosystem interactions between home and school is highly influential in shaping children's development, school adjustment, and academic outcomes. When children experience strong, coordinated support from both parents and teachers, they demonstrate better academic achievement, stronger engagement, and improved socio-emotional functioning, including a greater sense of belonging and self-confidence (Izzo et al., 1999; Gutman & Midgley, 2000; Sanders & Herting, 2000, as cited in Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Childs and Scanlon (2022) highlight that mesosystem coordination is critical for supporting student attendance and engagement because children's school participation

is shaped by interconnected supports across home, school, and community contexts. For example, their Be There Campaign shows how organizations directly improved attendance by coordinating across systems through practices such as cross-agency data sharing to identify chronically absent students and embedding school-based and community staff within coordinated intervention efforts to respond to attendance concerns. These aligned mesosystem interactions enabled more consistent, timely, and targeted supports for students, reinforcing the importance of strong home–school–community connections for promoting engagement and reducing absenteeism. However, such coordination also depends on families’ ability to effectively engage with school systems, which may be more difficult for immigrant and refugee families facing linguistic barriers.

In this sense, language differences shaped how families were able to participate in their children’s education, particularly when navigating unfamiliar institutional expectations. These findings are consistent with those of Cureton (2020) and Critelli (2015), who found that refugee parents’ limited proficiency in English minimized their involvement with their child’s schooling and effective communication with school staff. Indeed, linguistic barriers play a major role in immigrant and refugee students’ and their families’ integration into the Canadian schooling system. Strong associations exist between parent involvement, particularly home-school communication, and student engagement and attendance (Islam & Shapla, 2021). It is clear that there is a need for linguistic supports for parents and schools to communicate, which in turn may facilitate school engagement and attendance for students.

Across these systems, the challenges identified in this study are further shaped by cultural differences operating at the exo- and macrosystem levels. Immigrant and refugee students and their families often navigate the culture of a host country that differs from their country of origin

and may hold values that do not fully align with those of the host context (Sirin et al., 2013). Within the exosystem, school-based factors such as classroom environment, school type, and broader organizational structures have been linked to patterns of school absenteeism. For instance, Lenhoff and Pogodzinski (2018) found that the effectiveness of school organization shaped how demographic and individual factors, including race/ethnicity, special education status, economic disadvantage, and notably English language learner (ELL) status, were related to absenteeism. This is particularly important in relation to the present findings, as many immigrant and refugee students are English language learners and may also experience economic disadvantage, suggesting that the way schools are organized at the exosystem level can either support or compound these challenges.

At the macrosystem level, cultural differences in beliefs about education also shape patterns of school attendance. For example, cross-cultural research has shown that Chinese and Japanese mothers tend to hold higher expectations for their children's academic achievement than American mothers and place greater emphasis on the value of academic effort (Stevenson & Lee, 1990). These broader cultural and linguistic differences operate across multiple bioecological levels and help explain why needs related to language support emerged so prominently among immigrant and refugee students and their families in this study.

Grade-Level Patterns in Referrals

Another notable finding of this study is that students in grade six and kindergarten were the most frequently referred to the MLO program. A possible explanation for this finding is the transitional nature of this period, prompting a greater need for the program's support. Namely, grade six often marks the final year before students are expected to transition into middle or secondary school. Similarly, kindergarten signifies a child's entry into formal schooling, where

they are coming from either pre-school or a home environment, followed by the transition into grade one. These periods are characterized by significant adjustment demands, where students and families may require additional support during these times, including those offered by the MLO program. This finding is consistent with that of the UNHCR Education report (2021), conveying that the primary–secondary school transition appears to be substantially more challenging for migrant and refugee students, where global enrollment rates for refugees are approximately 68% at the elementary level and 34% at the secondary level (Roca et al., 2024). While the transition may be difficult for students in general, these findings suggest that immigrant and refugee students may encounter additional barriers during this period, prompting their impetus to seek support during this time.

From the children’s perspective, transition is a highly complex, multi-layered process shaped by interacting influences across the child’s internal attributes, family context, peers, school systems, professionals, and broader community environments (Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008). Even six months following transition, approximately one-third of children continue to experience adjustment difficulties, highlighting that for many students, transition challenges persist over time (Jindal-Snape & Foggie, 2008). In particular, peer relationships are frequently disrupted during school transitions, as friendships may be altered or severed and peer status reconfigured, often resulting in heightened anxiety and stress (Toppings, 2011). Students commonly report difficulties related to making new friends, losing established social networks, bullying, and navigating changing peer hierarchies, all of which can contribute to feelings of isolation and uncertainty (Toppings, 2011). At the same time, peer and family support can act as important protective factors that buffer against transition stress and facilitate more positive adjustment outcomes (Beatson et al., 2023). Importantly, structured peer-based interventions and

supportive relationships have been shown to improve confidence, school adjustment, and socio-emotional wellbeing during transition periods (Beatson et al., 2023). Collectively, this literature highlights that the quality of mesosystem interactions play a central role in shaping children's adaptation, with weakened or disrupted connections posing significant challenges for student adjustment and school engagement.

The prevalence of grade six and kindergarten students seeking MLO services suggests a greater need for these groups to have collaborative support from both the school system and home system. As mentioned above, a large part of MLOs' role is to bridge families of students within the school. According to the KiTeS framework, this would be conceptualized as the interaction between the child's microsystems, particularly where the integration of the child's mesosystem (home-school collaboration) appears to be of particular relevance during grade six and kindergarten. These findings echo those of the current literature emphasizing the importance of relational and contextual factors supporting children during this transitional period. For instance, De Gioia (2017) demonstrated that immigrant and refugee mothers often expressed a need for practical information about starting school, as well as opportunities for broader community connections that facilitate engagement with the school system. Moreover, students transitioning from grade six to middle school are found to be more likely to expect and experience a positive transition when they feel connected by their school, peers, and family (Waters et al., 2014). As evidenced in the current literature, grade six and kindergarten pose as milestones for all students, but may particularly affect those requiring additional supports, such as immigrant and refugee students, indicating an increased need for support in connecting the student and their families to the school's support.

Assessment Practices and Educational Planning Needs

Professional assessments, educational planning and progress, and special education emerged as the most frequently identified needs and reasons for referral, with educational planning and progress appearing consistently across both datasets. This pattern reflects the central role that assessments play within school systems as a main method for identifying and responding to students displaying challenges or difficulties. Moreover, they are used for directing educational planning and programming, which helps explain why both processes appeared so prominently in the data. A closely related finding was that informed consent was the most frequently requested service. This is not unexpected, given that conducting professional assessments (i.e., psychological or speech-language assessments) with minors requires informed consent from parents or legal guardians. Upon completion of the assessment, the results need to be communicated to parents and students and may be used for the purposes of determining potential diagnoses and eligibility determination for relevant services or interventions (Cadime & Mendes, 2024). As such, these processes rely heavily on clear, accessible communication between school personnel and the student's family. The prominence of informed consent emphasizes not only a procedural requirement, but also a broader need for effective interaction across the child's microsystems (i.e., school and home) to adequately address their educational and mental health needs.

For immigrant and refugee families, however, engaging in these processes may be more complex. Language barriers can limit understanding of assessment procedures, hindering parents' ability to provide fully informed consent or to participate meaningfully in their child's educational planning and programming. In addition, cultural differences may shape how disability, assessment, and inclusion are understood, sometimes resulting in differing perceptions

or hesitations toward formal supports (Jørgensen et al., 2021; Hurley et al., 2013). As such, special education may be particularly challenging to navigate. These challenges are often enhanced by the fact that the Canadian education system is often unfamiliar to newly arrived families, necessitating advocacy from MLOs to play a key role in ensuring these students are getting the assessments and support they require. Some studies have found that immigrant and refugee students are overrepresented in special education, in part due to the varied expectations and biases at play among school staff (Pit-ten Cate & Glock, 2018). Others have also found that these students may be underserved within respect to school supports (Cooc & Kiru, 2018).

Another possible explanation for the prominent need for MLO support in areas such as assessments, educational planning, and special education relates to cultural differences in how disability and special education are understood. Research suggests that in some multicultural contexts, cultural groups differ in their acceptance of individuals with disabilities, and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may experience higher rates of school absence due, in part, to differing beliefs about the value and cultural relevance of mainstream education (Melvin et al., 2019). This explanation is further supported by Hurley and colleagues (2013), who found that there can be a cultural divide between families and professionals, where immigrant and refugee families may not view special education services or assessments as necessary. In some cases, this can make it difficult for families to engage in the assessment process or participate in the meetings and procedures required to access these supports, as they may not see their relevance or value. Within the KITES framework, these challenges reflect macrosystem differences in cultural beliefs about disability and education, as well as exosystem barriers related to how school processes are structured and communicated to families (Melvin et al., 2019).

The findings suggest that the MLO program plays a key role in addressing the critical need for immigrant and refugee parents to be effectively bridged into involvement of their child's potential learning challenges, mental health, and educational planning. This support extends beyond language translation to include fostering cultural understanding between families and schools. Without these forms of support, families may experience a disconnect in their interactions with the education system, where communication barriers can limit their confidence and comfort in engaging with school staff. This can, in turn, affect their ability to advocate for and support their child's learning, while also contributing to feelings of exclusion from the school community (Adams & Santos, 2022). As Adams and Santos (2022) note, limited communication can strain relationships with educators and make complex processes, such as special education, feel even more inaccessible and intimidating. Thus, there is a need for immigrant and refugee families to be meaningfully involved in this way, and these findings point to the critical role of culturally and linguistically responsive supports in facilitating that involvement.

Socioeconomic Contexts and Family-Level Needs

From the narrative reports, *essential needs* emerged as the most prevalent category, with family-level needs related to employment and financial support being particularly prominent. This finding recognizes the extent to which students' school engagement and well-being are embedded within broader socioeconomic conditions (i.e., the macro-system). For many newcomer families, securing stable employment and adequate income is a central priority upon arrival, which may in turn shape the resources and capacity available to support children's schooling. Consistent with this, recent Canadian immigrants have been found to experience lower socioeconomic status compared to non-immigrant populations (Burton & Phipps, 2010).

Furthermore, English language proficiency has been identified as a key predictor of both income poverty and multidimensional poverty among refugees (Naseh et al., 2024), highlighting how structural barriers such as language intersect with economic integration. The current study's findings align with those of previous research, highlighting that immigrant and refugee families may experience a greater need for socioeconomic supports.

The prevalent need for financial and employment support for families of immigrant and refugee students aligns with broader socioeconomic conditions in Canada (i.e., the macrosystem). Recent immigration reforms in Canada have cut international student and temporary resident numbers, restricting work permits for them and their spouses. While there have been rising unemployment rates for the general population, newcomers' unemployment rate has hit 11%, which is more than double the 5.6% rate for Canadian-born workers (Akbar & Triandafyllidou, 2025). Moreover, according to the Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics Canada (2025a), 34.7% of recent immigrants and 21.6% of established immigrants report being overqualified for their current role. Being employed in roles for which one is overqualified often results in earning a salary that does not reflect one's level of expertise and experience. In this context, immigrants and refugees frequently encounter additional barriers to securing appropriate employment, further exacerbating these mismatches. The finding that employment and financial support needs were most frequent is consistent with prior research conveying lower income in immigrant and refugees, as well as reflective of the current rise in unemployment rates in Canada. These broader conditions of the geographical context represent distal factors that indirectly influence students' school engagement and general well-being.

Evidently, a lack of employment often goes hand-in-hand with insufficient financial resources to meet basic living needs (i.e., food, housing). When these fundamental needs are

unmet, effects can cascade across multiple domains, influencing children's well-being and school engagement. Within the KiTes framework, such economic strain represents broader contextual pressure that shapes the environments in which children develop and learn. This is well documented in current research. For instance, through conducting mediation analyses, Godwin (2007) found that food insecurity showed a significant indirect effect on emotional well-being through its influence on health status, and a significant indirect effect on school engagement through its effect on both health status and emotional well-being. Many studies confirm a significant association between a family's socioeconomic status and absenteeism, via mediators such as poor health and lessened access to healthcare, and exposure to lower income neighbourhoods (Sosu et al., 2021; Anisef et al., 2010). Indeed, macro-system factors like socioeconomic status are distal factors that contribute to school absenteeism.

Given that economic hardship is a common concern among immigrant and refugee populations and is often interconnected with other challenges related to essential needs, effective support must extend beyond academic interventions to include family engagement, assistance with basic needs, support for cultural adaptation, and emotional and behavioural services (McNeely et al., 2020). These findings suggest that material deprivation does not operate in isolation, but instead through interconnected pathways that link physical health, emotional functioning, educational engagement, and school absenteeism. This aligns with existing literature indicating that immigrant and refugee families may experience significant barriers in meeting basic needs. As such, there is a clear need to support immigrant and refugee students and their families in accessing adequate financial supports. Within the KITES framework, these findings highlight how exo-system-level socioeconomic conditions and macrosystem-level structural inequities shape students' lived experiences, shedding light on the importance of addressing

financial and material needs as part of a holistic approach to improving engagement and attendance.

Limitations

There are several limitations of the present study that warrant consideration. First, the data may overrepresent students with more visible needs, as the sample consists of students who were referred to the MLO program by school staff. As such, students whose challenges are less observable or not identified within the school context may be underrepresented, suggesting that some needs may go unnoticed and unaddressed. Furthermore, the use of secondary administrative data brought certain constraints. The depth and consistency of the data were limited by variability in documentation, with some entries being brief and lacking detail, while others were more comprehensive or used differing terminology. This variability may have influenced the interpretation and categorization of student needs. A final limitation to note is that some depth of the experiences of MLOs and of school staff may be limited since school staff's perspectives were recognized through the reasons for referral only while MLOs spoke only on behalf of students' needs. It is recognized that some depth of these crucial advocates' voices for students may have been limited in this way.

Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to examine the specific needs of immigrant and refugee K-12 students, as reflected through referrals to and narrative reports from the Multicultural Liaison Officer (MLO) program. Grounded in the Kids and Teens at School (KiTeS) framework, the findings highlight that students' needs are multifaceted and extend beyond the classroom, reinforcing the importance of interactions between students' family and school systems. Teachers were identified as key figures to facilitate support pathways, while language barriers, cultural

differences, transitional periods, assessment-related processes, and educational planning highlighted where challenges in access and understanding are most likely to occur. Furthermore, the frequent need for financial and employment support from families of students reflects challenges experienced in the macrosystem.

Taken together, these findings emphasize that student needs are best understood as embedded within interconnected systems rather than isolated individual concerns. Patterns across the data consistently pointed to the importance of communication between home and school, particularly for families navigating unfamiliar educational systems. Language emerged as a central mechanism shaping communication and access, not only influencing day-to-day interactions, but also affecting families' ability to engage in key processes such as assessments and educational planning. In this context, the MLO program appears to play a significant role in bridging these systems by facilitating communication and supporting navigation of school processes. This suggests that culturally and linguistically responsive supports are foundational to equitable access within the education system for immigrant and refugee students and their families. As such, strengthening these forms of support may be essential for improving both engagement and other educational outcomes for immigrant and refugee students.

The study's findings convey several implications for practice within school settings. Given that teachers are often the first to recognize concerns, there is a need to ensure that they are equipped with the knowledge and resources to respond effectively to the diverse needs of immigrant and refugee students. Additionally, the concentration of referrals at key transition points, particularly kindergarten and grade six, suggests that schools may benefit from more proactive and structured supports during these periods. Early outreach to families, clear communication of expectations, and opportunities for forming connections with school staff and

community members may help manage challenges associated with these transitions. Ensuring that families are meaningfully included in processes such as assessment and educational planning is also critical, particularly in contexts where language and cultural differences might limit participation.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the ever-growing body of literature on exploring the needs and effective supports for immigrant and refugee K-12 students. As well, this research helps to fill the current gap in the literature on this topic in the Canadian context. Ultimately, this research provides researchers, educators, and all school-related figures the opportunity to learn more about the specific needs experienced by immigrant and refugee students in order to support early identification. In doing so, it also has implications for informing interventions, policies, and practices that better support immigrant and refugee students and their families within the education system.

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Appendix A

1	Positio	Reason	School	Phone	Email2	Student	Student	Grade	Parent	Parent	Parent	Date o	Alternative Date and Time of the Meeting	Preferred mo	Who sl	Was th	If Yes, t	Type o	Language	Additio
1459	Teacher	To speak v				F		1					***** Either Wednesday (June 19 Online (Virtual)	Parent/G/ Yes				Susan Rag	MLO to se Arabic	
1460	Teacher	To speak v				F		1					***** Either June 19, 20, 21 (or th Online (Virtual)	Parent/G/ No				Requestin	MLO to se Arabic	
1461	LST	IPRC meet						JK					***** none	Online (Virtual)	Parent/G/ Yes			Kendra Br	No need t Mandarin - Yueming	
1462	Learning S	Hoping th				Male		3					***** June 20th	Telephone	Parent/G/ Yes			Christine I	MLO to cc Arabic	
1463	Learning S	Psycholog				M		1					***** 6/26/2024 from 1-3pm	Online (Virtual)	Parent/G/ No			Majdwlee	MLO to cc Arabic	
1464	Father	Register ir				Female		10					***** Any time possible	In-person	Student;P No				MLO to cc Arabic	Family fro
1465	LST	communic				M		4					***** Any day/time	Telephone	MLO;Pare Yes				MLO to cc Arabic	
1466	Social Wo	Family ha				Male		3					***** 6/26/2024 is also available	In-person	Parent/G/ No			I am not a	MLO to cc Farsi	
1467	Principal	New studi				Female		Grade 4					***** 6/27/2024	Telephone	Parent/G/ No				MLO to at Not sure as we are ge	
1468	Guidance	Communi				F		9					***** Any time of day on June 24	Telephone	Parent/G/ No				MLO to cc Arabic	I have not
1469	Principal	to suppor				male		grade 8 - I					***** The meeting happened tod.	Telephone	Parent/G/ Yes				MLO to cc Somali	Abdirizak I
1470	Learning S	to suppor				Male		5 (Autism					***** original date/ time: August	In-person	Student;P Yes			Gabriella I	MLO to cc Portuguese	
1471	LST	Help with				m		2					***** 27 august or Thursday 22	In-person	Parent/G/ Yes			cannot rei	MLO to cc arabic	Once I kno
1472	ESL Lead	Translatio				M		5					***** First choice - Friday, August	In-person	Student;P No			Once I kn	Arabic	This is a ne
1473	Learning S	-discuss p				Male		Grade 1					***** September 3rd, 2024 at 10	Online (Virtual)	Parent/G/ No			N/A	MLO to cc Farsi	N/A
1474	Parent	Help with				Female		9					***** Anytime	Telephone	Parent/G/ No				MLO to cc English	My OW wc
1475	Learning S	We would				Male		1					***** Thursday or Friday this wee	In-person	Student;P Yes			Roshan (b	MLO to cc Nepali	
1476	ESL lead	parent-tee				male		5					9/9/2024 8:30 or 4:00 please contac	In-person	Student;P No				MLO to se Arabic	
1477	Assistant (	Student tr				Male		11					9/6/2024 Our guidance counselor is a	Online (Virtual)	Student;P Yes			I am not s	MLO to se Mandarin	
1478	LST	We have z				Female		5					9/9/2024 We are flexible. Whenever I	In-person	Student;P No				MLO to se Mandarin	Family nev
1479	Speech-La	To do conc				Female		5					***** I can make any time on Sep	Telephone	Parent/G/ Yes			I think Bis	If MLO coi Arabic - from Chad	
1480	Speech-La	To do info				Male		6					***** I can make any time on Sep	Telephone	Parent/G/ Yes			I think Bis	MLO to se Arabic - fr This is my	
1481	Speech-La	To do info				Male		6					***** I can make any time from T.	Telephone	Parent/G/ No				MLO to se Karen - not sure if thi	
1482	ESL Lead	to suppor				female		6					3/9/2024 the parents have requested	In-person	Student;P Yes			sacide091	MLO to cc Turkish	Due to the

Appendix B

Clients' Needs

NEEDS OF CLIENTS IDENTIFIED THIS MONTH (E.G. EDUCATION SYSTEM, HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT, FOOD BANK)	
-Supporting parents in communicating with school teams to foster parent engagement in their children's education	- Continue working with school teams in supporting students with their mental health and over all wellbeing
- Updating families of students' failures and next steps	-