



Newcomer Youth Summer Academy 2021 IRC IN NEW YORK

NYSA 2021: H.E.R.O.

The International Rescue Committee's Newcomer Youth Summer Academy (NYSA) is a five-week program that prepares newly arrived refugee children and youth for success at their grade level in the New York City public school system.

The goals of NYSA are as follows:

- 1) to build students' classroom readiness skills through exposure to a rigorous academic curriculum,
- 2) to facilitate students' social and cultural adjustment to the academic environment by creating a culturally responsive, linguistically supportive, trauma informed community of learning, and
- 3) to empower caregivers and parents to be partners and advocates in their children's education.



Building positive support networks and self confidence in academic settings are important goals of the NYSA program. Photo: IRC/Emma Truscott

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all NYSA 2021 classes were conducted online via Google Classroom and Zoom to ensure the safety and well-being for our students and staff. Classes took place from Monday to Thursday between 8:30 AM and 2:30 PM with live



Field trips give students the opportunity to strengthen relationships with peers and teachers and get to know their new city. Photo: IRC/Emma Truscott

instruction of English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Social Studies in the morning, and Social Emotional Learning, Visual Art as well as Dance classes in the afternoon. Students received a learning kit full of supplies designed to support a combination of digital and hands-on activities to every student who participated in the NYSA. Students without learning devices or the Internet were also provided with the necessary resources for full participation.

On Fridays, students had the opportunity to attend field trips to locations around NYC including the New York Aquarium, Queens Hall of Science, Bronx Zoo, and Governors Island. The program concluded with both a virtual graduation ceremony and in person picnic in Central Park complete with face painting and field games.

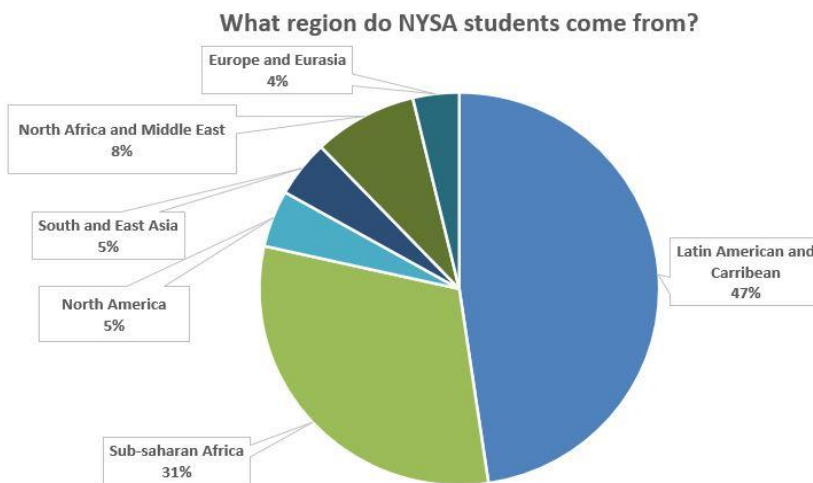


Our NYSA community rose to meet the challenges of this year to truly embody this year’s theme of “H.E.R.O.” Students and staff alike demonstrated the many ways that we can be heroes of our learning and community. This theme reflected the values of our community: **Health, Empathy, Respect and Originality.** Staff taught these values to students through daily Hero Huddles and integrated the language into classroom instruction, field trip and student recognition and rewards!

NYSA Community

The NYSA community was supported by a team of over 60 teachers, social workers, teaching artists, and peer mentors to ensure that every student had the support they needed. A total of 107 students enrolled in the NYSA 2021, and the age range was between 4 and 20. 61 female students (57 percent) and 46 male students (43 percent) made up the student body. NYSA 21 had students from 32 different countries, with the largest representation coming from Honduras (14 students), Guatemala (13 students), Ecuador (13 students), Senegal (8 students), and Afghanistan (6 students). The students represented 23 languages home languages with the most common shared language being Spanish (53 students). Some of the least common languages included: Hausa, Kiche, Kichwa, Haitian Creole, Kachiquel, Turkmen, Turkish, and Tamil. Through translation in the Zoom chat, the use of breakout rooms needed for smaller group discussions, sheltered instructional strategies, and continued encouragement from peers and teachers, students made tremendous progress on their ability and confidence to speak and write English.

40% of the student body arrived to the US less than 1 year ago, 25% of the students arrived between 1 and 2 years ago, and 35% of students arrived over two years ago. NYSA students represent a wide range of immigration statuses including asylee, asylum seeker, refugee and permanent resident.



NYSA uses a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSs) framework to create a safe community and learning environment for students, especially those who are impacted by trauma or toxic stress. The framework articulates three increasing levels of support to meet student needs based on their behavioral presentations. Tier 1 supports include the classroom norms, mindfulness activities and community building that is embedded into instruction and procedures for all students. Tier 2 supports include meeting with a social worker, using Peace Cards and participating in Restorative Justice circles. These supports are used when students demonstrate minor-risk behaviors for example, persistent disengagement during online classes or interpersonal conflict on field trips. Students with higher-risk behaviors such as repeated verbal disrespect and persistent physical aggression receive support through an individualized behavior plan that engages caregivers and includes targeted support from teachers and social workers. During NYSA 2021, only seven students received Tier 2 supports and zero students received Tier 3 supports.



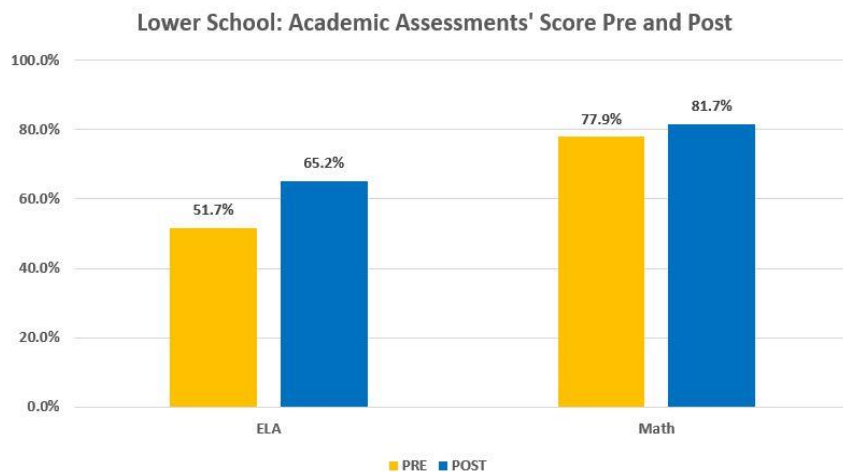
NYSA supports students affected by forced migration through instruction that is culturally responsive, trauma informed and linguistically supportive. Photo: IRC/Emma Truscott

Academic Assessments

NYSA supports students’ content knowledge and attainment of grade level standards in English, Math, and Social Studies. We assessed students’ prior knowledge in English, Math, and Social Studies with pre and post academic assessments. These assessments demonstrate meaningful progress over the five-week program, particularly for lower school students. 75 percent of the staff shared that they believe that NYSA did a good or excellent job at supporting students to develop skills in ELA, Math and Social Studies.

Academic Assessments for Lower School

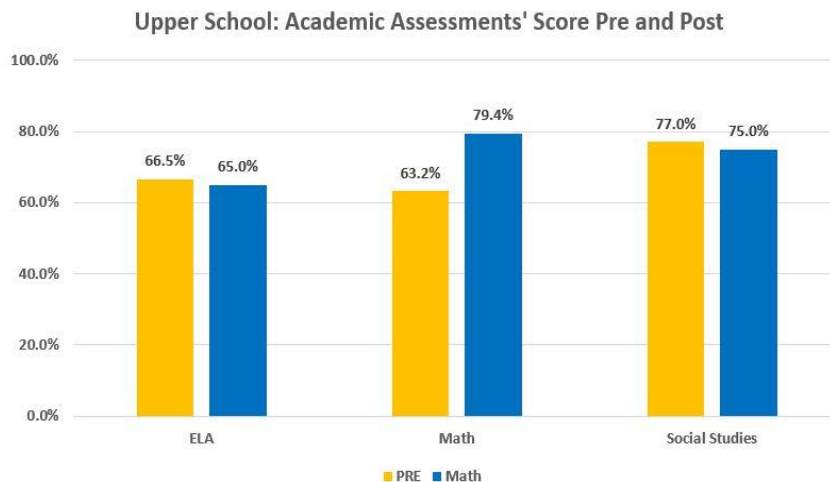
In Lower School, the mean score of Lower School students’ ELA academic assessment increased from 51.7 percent before the program to 65.2 percent after the program, and the mean score of Math academic assessment increased from 77.9 percent to 81.7 percent. Students showed significant improvement in



their academic performance in both ELA and Math with a 26.1 percent and 4.8 percent increase respectively.

Academic Assessments for Upper School

In Upper School, students showed significant improvement in their academic performance in Math. The mean score of Math increased from 63.2 percent at the beginning of the program to 79.4 percent at the end of the program. Unlike Math, both ELA and Social Studies, students' scores decreased. The mean score of ELA decreased from 66.5 percent at the beginning of the program to 65.3 percent at the end of the program, and the mean score of Social studies decreased from 77 percent to 75 percent.



School Readiness Assets

The goal of NYSA is not only to improve academic skills, but we also seek to build students' school readiness. We assessed students' School Readiness Assets (SRA) by collecting data through Students' Survey and Teacher Observation Rubric at the beginning of the program.



The six NYSA school readiness assets are: Internalization of U.S. School Culture; Self-Confidence in an Academic Setting; Understanding and Coping Skills; Motivation to Achieve; Positive Attitude towards School; and Positive Support Network. Additionally, upper school students were asked whether they feel nervous to go to school in person in the fall.

School readiness was measured through a student self-assessment and teacher evaluation completed at the beginning and end of the program. Overall, 72.6% percent of the staff believes that NYSA did a great deal in promoting school readiness among students.



School Readiness Assets are developed through classroom instruction, field trips and community events
Photo: IRC/Emma Truscott

School Readiness Assets for Lower School

According to the teachers' assessment, all assets were improved for Lower School students apart from Coping Skills (see Figure 4). This decrease in Coping Skills scores may be related to the fact that teachers got to know students better by the end of the program and had the opportunity to observe them in a variety of situations including community events, classroom activities online and in person on field trips.

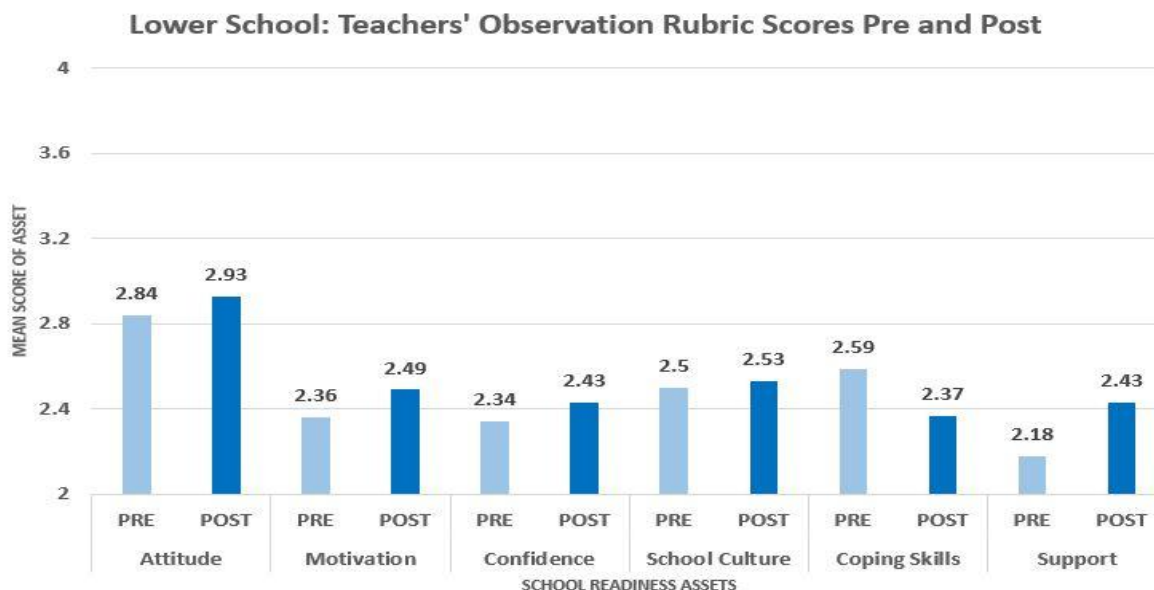
The most improved asset for Lower School students is Positive Network Support with 11.5 percent increase. The smallest increase was seen in US School Culture with 1.2 percent increase.

The most improved asset for Lower School students is Positive Network Support with

According to the Lower School students' self-assessment, after five weeks of the program, Motivation to Achieve, Self-confidence, Coping Skills, and Positive Support Network increased. The most improved asset, according to the students was Positive Support Network with a 6.03 percent increase, and the least increased asset is Coping Skills.

School Readiness Assets for Upper School

According to the teachers' assessment, Upper School students improved across all six school readiness assets by the end of the program (see Figure 6). The most increased asset of Upper



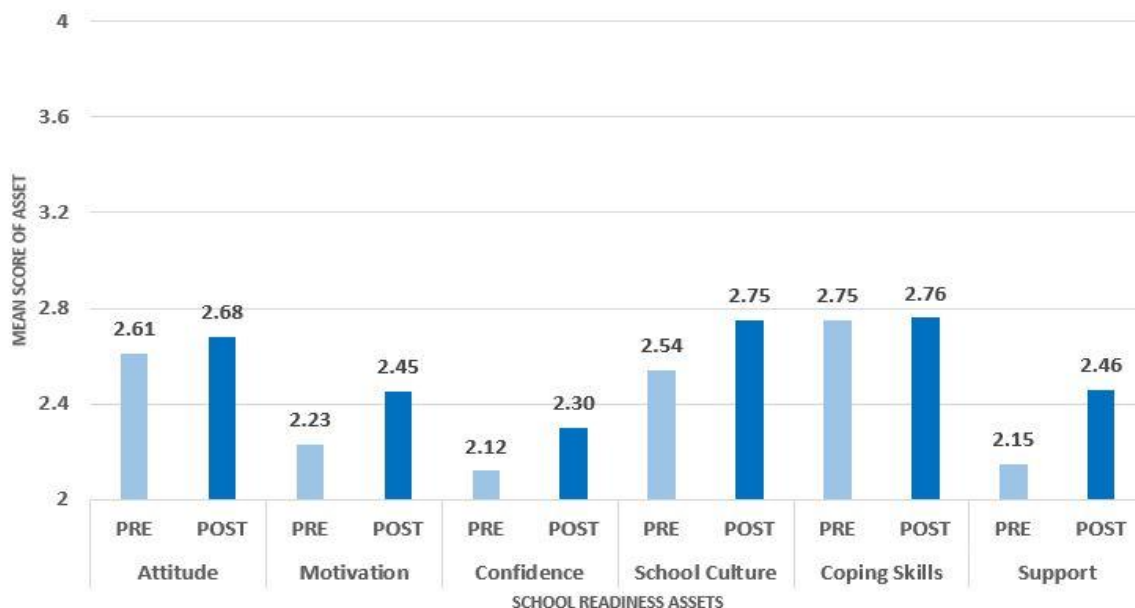
School students was Positive Support Network with 14.4 percent increase, and the least increased asset is Coping Skills with 0.4 percent increase.

According to the Upper School students' self-assessment, after five weeks of the program, Self-confidence, Coping Skills, and Positive Support Network were increased. They assessed themselves as more likely to control their emotions even when they are disappointed or frustrated and shared that they have adults in their life who believe they will succeed or help them if they have a big problem. The most increased asset according to students' self-assessment was Self-confidence with a 4.6 percent increase. The students felt more comfortable taking on leadership roles in the classroom when it is asked of them after the program.



Positive relationships with grown-ups help combat the impacts of toxic stress and trauma in children. NYSA supports students to build positive relationships with their teachers and mentors. Photo: IRC/Emma Truscott

Upper School: Teachers' Observation Rubric Scores Pre and Post



Across classes, it is clear that a major benefit of NYSA is the opportunity to build a positive support network. Every year, staff receive feedback that the friendships and bonds formed in the NYSA community between staff and students serve as powerful and meaningful supports for students as they start the new school year.

Caregiver Feedback

| School Readiness Asset | Observed Improvement |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Positive Attitude Towards School | 84% |
| Motivation to Achieve | 78% |
| Self-Confidence in Academic Settings | 80% |
| Coping Skills | 62% |
| Positive Support Network (Classmates) | 64% |
| Positive Support Network (Adults) | 86% |
| English Language Skills | 94% |

Caregiver engagement is a key feature of the NYSA program. Caregivers are invited to participate in NYSA activities through English classes, program orientations, “Know Your Rights” workshops, report cards, graduation and end of program picnic and celebration in the park.

Caregiver feedback informs our understanding of student growth and program quality overall. This year, 80% of caregivers were interviewed at the conclusion of the program. During these interviews, caregivers provided insight into their students’ growth, learning and experience of the program. Feedback from the caregivers was overwhelmingly positive. Caregivers were pleased with the improvements they saw in their children and highlighted growth in English language skills

and positive relationships with adults. Caregivers recognize that NYSA provides newly arrived students with the space to adapt and learn to the new education system in New York City. Once caregiver noted, “no one had to tell her to get up early; she would get up before everyone and go to class. She enjoyed it overall.” Another caregiver said, “the classes and the trips were all excellent. I used to listen in on the classes, and I liked the way the teachers explained things to him, and he loved the trips.” Another commented that she liked the program because she received a lot of support for her children. She saw the program as “a big support system.”

NYSA has a long history of supporting newcomer children and youth to prepare for success in New York public schools. In 2021, the IRC in NY continued its commitment to providing students with rigorous Math, Social Studies, ELA, SEL and Arts instruction in a linguistically supportive, culturally responsive and trauma informed five-week program. As a result, a group of students ready to take on anything this school year has in store for them with a nurturing community to rely on for continued growth and support throughout the academic year.



Graduation Picnic in partnership with Migrant Kitchen provided an opportunity to celebrate all the hard work of students this summer. Photo: IRC/Emma Truscott