

New American Scholar Program



Program Overview

Vision:

Newly arrived immigrant students in Chicago Public Schools have access to transformative learning environments that empower them as scholars, citizens, and leaders.

History and Context:

Over 36,000 immigrant refugees have arrived in Chicago since August 2022. Local and national efforts have focused on providing basic needs such as shelter, food, and job services for adults. However, there has been limited response to the need for education enrichment opportunities for the estimated 12,000 immigrant students who need experiences to learn and heal.

Research has shown that newly arrived immigrant students require academic support systems that help them acquire English language proficiency while simultaneously developing social and emotional competencies, cross-cultural navigation skills, and native language development. Furthermore, anecdotal data from CPS educators have emphasized the need for a culturally relevant curriculum that engages immigrant children through an asset-based framework. The need for innovative learning environments for immigrants is accentuated by the Pew Research Center's projection that, by 2050, more than one-third of the nation's school children "younger than 17 will either be immigrants themselves or the children of at least one parent who is an immigrant."

In partnership with local nonprofits and Chicago educators, The Oso Initiative has designed the **New American Scholars Program [NAS]**, which offers summer enrichment and after-school programming for newly arrived immigrants.

Program Purpose and Pedagogy:

NAS leverages the core elements of community-based design, trauma-informed interventions, mindfulness, and enrichment. **Starting with a five-day kick-off conference in the summer of 2024 (June 24-28), mixed-gender cohorts of 20-30 students from CPS partner schools will engage in immersive learning modules that target:**

- *Mental Health & Emotional Modulation Techniques*
- *Cultural Straddling & Bicultural Confidence*
- *Global citizenship & Self-Discovery*
- *English Language Development & Self-Advocacy*
- *Asset-based Mindset & Native Language Development*

Program Objective / NAS Participants will:

1. **Reflect** on their journeys to create an asset-based story of self that identifies the strengths and challenges of a bicultural and bilingual identity.
2. **Understand** the history and influence of immigration on both individuals and communities through the lens of an immigrant's contributions to the economy, culture, and political discourse.
3. **Explore** global issues, personal interests, and passions to develop native language proficiency and a global citizenship mindset.
4. **Learn** to develop and nourish systems of support that promote mental health, bilingualism, and cultural straddling.

WHEN	WHAT	DETAILS
Spring 2024	Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Two+ in-person recruitment sessions ● Staff Liaison(s) does student outreach and promotes the program
June 24-28, 2024	Summer Conference & Program Kickoff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Session 1: Personal Story, Finding My Tribe, and Mindfulness ● Session 2: Immigration at a Glance, Healing through Enrichment ● Session 3: Language as a tool for advocacy and success ● Session 4: Asset-based mindset & Global Citizenship ● Session 5: Final Reflections, Goal Setting, and Safety Plan
September - October, 2024	Module #1: Immigrant Voices and Crafting an Asset-Based Personal Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scholars will learn to use the art of storytelling as a tool for self-discovery. The module will expose participants to narratives of new and established Americans and understand the power of a growth mindset, self-care, and community.
November - December, 2024	Module #2: Bicultural Navigation and Activating Systems of Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scholars will understand biculturalism as a framework to understand their new reality. Building from enduring understandings from the summer conference, scholars will hear from other immigrants about the importance of self-advocacy to map out resources within their reach.
January - February, 2025	Module #3: The Power of Language Acquisition & Creating a Bilingual Identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scholars will assess their achievements as English language learners and reflect on their journey in the American school system. This module will help students understand the benefits of bilingualism through native language development that explores Latin American scholarship.
March - April, 2025	Module #4: Balancing Priorities & Creating Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scholars will explore the effect of immigration on family dynamics and learn communication tools to engage with their families. The module will help participants identify frameworks to create and maintain healthy relationships.
	Unity and Fellowship Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scholars from all participating schools will gather to engage in a day to foster belonging, joy, and love.
May - June, 2025	Module #5: End of Program Symposium Capstone Day of Action/Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New American Scholars program participants and families will gather to share a meal and listen from participants about new understandings, visions for the future, and general affirmations.

About our Work:

Comprised of **educators, activists, parents, and local leaders**, The Oso Initiative aims to support Chicago schools by *empowering* and *developing* the human assets and resources surrounding educational institutions.

About our Team:

Born and raised on the southern coast of Mexico, we were welcomed into American society by an outdated, conveyor belt model of education that failed to promote the cultural competencies and social-emotional mindsets required to operate in our highly racialized society. Similar to the experience of newly arrived immigrants, we were forced to withstand and overcome the limitations set by poverty, racism, apathetic social structures, and the myopia of systems struggling to provide basic literacy and numeracy instruction. It is often difficult to analyze and quantify the paralyzing fear and internalized trauma caused by our immigration story. More maddening still is the understanding that the system of support for newly arrived immigrants continues to be as archaic as it was two decades ago.

Armed with an intimate understanding of the immigrant experience and a combined 40 years of experience designing data-informed environments for transformational learning, our team is committed to developing learning ecosystems that equip scholars to engage with the world with a heightened sense of **happiness, urgency, passion, self-awareness, and cultural competency**.

For more information please visit our website:



www.theosoinitiative.org

Or contact us @

jcolo@theosoinitiative.org // ccolo@theosoinitiative.org

469-724-3101 // 469-964-9350