



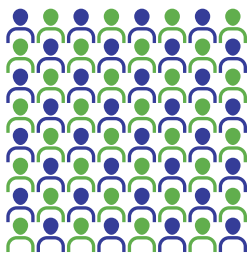
Supporting Transition Resilience Of Newcomer Groups (STRONG)

Examining effectiveness and acceptability in urban public schools

Randomized Control Trial Data Collection: 2021-2023 / *Santiago et al., 2025*

STRONG is a school-based, trauma-informed mental health intervention for students in Kindergarten through 12th grade designed to support newcomer students' positive adjustment during resettlement. STRONG includes 10 weekly small group sessions and an individual session where students create and process their journey narratives. Group sessions focus on recognizing internal strengths, identifying social supports, practicing relaxation and mindfulness, developing cognitive coping and problem-solving skills, and fostering social belonging and cultural pride.

STRONG Participants



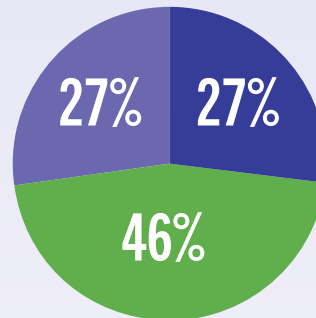
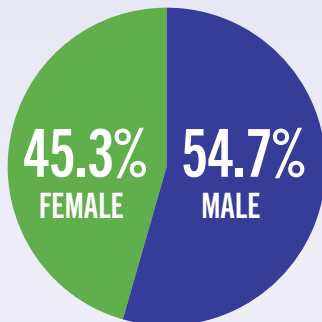
64
Newcomer Students
Participated



**Average
age 14**



Grades ranged from 3rd-12th grade



● <1 year ● 1-2 years ● >2 years

19 countries
represented



Afghanistan (29%)

TOP 3



Mexico (16%)



Ecuador (9%)

23%



demonstrated symptoms indicative of
borderline or clinical depression/anxiety.

77%



exhibited good mental health functioning,
underscoring mental health resilience
among newcomer students.

STRONG Outcomes

After completing STRONG, data showed:

21%
reduction

Anxiety/Depression
(student-report)



8%
reduction

**Externalizing
(Behavior) Problems**
(student-report)



12%
reduction

**Externalizing
(Behavior) Problems**
(teacher-report)

Interview and focus groups with STRONG group facilitators and school staff revealed:



Positive impacts on students' relationships with others, such as development of friendships among participating students.



"All of our students talked about feeling this comfort in knowing that they aren't alone, that they didn't know other kids were dealing with the same challenges and that it was really helpful to them to hear that." - STRONG group facilitator



Increased confidence in students



"...just in general, I think that I've noticed a couple of the kids seeming a little bit more confident about things and a little bit more willing to ask questions or speak up when they don't understand." - Teacher



Students applying STRONG skills to real-life contexts



"The kids really utilize those during testing, during just regular classroom activities. One student had mentioned that they had to present in front of the class, so prior to that he did some breathing to relax himself and then be able to present." - STRONG group facilitator

As more communities welcome newcomer students, this research shows that expanding STRONG to more schools can foster positive integration and mental health.

To learn more, please visit www.strongforschools.com and **explore our full publication.**