

# New Report Reveals Significant Barriers In Equal Access To Education For New York City Haitian Immigrant Students

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A newly-released [report](#) finds that New York City is failing new Haitian immigrant high school students. The survey, conducted by The Flanbwayan Literacy Project, in partnership with the Community Development Project, finds that Haitian immigrants enrolled in high schools through New York City Family Welcome Centers do not receive the information or support they need to be successful.

“We are calling on the New York City Department of Education to implement reforms that will allow immigrant youths to thrive in New York City high schools,” said Darnell Benoit, executive director of the [Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project](#). “Students should be engaged in the process of selecting schools that will meet their academic needs.”

Recently immigrated youth are required to enroll in high school through one of the New York City Family Welcome Centers and are often faced with significant barriers that are difficult for young people and their families to navigate. The survey revealed:

- Many youth were not asked about their interests or preferences during the school enrollment process, despite the fact that internal guidance documents from the Department of Education instruct that family input and youth preferences and needs should be taken into account.
- Family Welcome Centers do not provide young people the information they need to make informed choices about which schools to attend. In fact, at least half of those surveyed did not get a choice about which school to attend.
- Youth are not placed in schools that support them. Few students feel that their school is a good fit for them or that they are making progress toward their educational goals.
- Family Welcome Centers do not provide adequate language access, in the form of both translation and interpretation.

“When I went to the Family Welcome Center, nobody spoke my language, none of the paperwork was in my language,” said Jean Kerbensky Altesse, who emigrated to New York from Haiti when he was 15-years-old. “My family and I couldn’t participate in my school selection. Ultimately, I left that school because I couldn’t learn there, even though I studied hard.”

Jean struggled in his school because of insufficient English language instructions. He ultimately left that school and now, at the age of 20, he is enrolled in a high school program.

“If I had been placed in a school that was prepared to teach me English, I believe I would have my high diploma by now,” said Altesse. “The City can and should do better.”

Barriers in the New York City education system for immigrant students are not exclusive to Family Welcome Centers. Many students were turned away by New York high schools due to space limitations and extremely limited resources for appropriate programs for immigrant students.

“The survey results highlight serious problems that set up immigrant students to fail,” said Erin Markman, director of Research and Policy at the Community Development Project. “The Department of Education should partner with Flanbwayan and other community groups to develop strategies and programs to fix these problems.”