

## *Welcome to Our Schools Curriculum*

The CCSD ELL Division is grateful for the generosity of The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for providing us the rights to share their *Welcome to Our Schools* curriculum with our teachers. This curriculum was developed for New York Teachers of Refugee students. With this in mind, there are a few lessons that we will be offering adaptation suggestions to address the needs of Newcomer students living in Clark County.

When deciding what modules to teach, keep in mind who your students are and what they need to learn about being in a U.S. school. As they state in their materials, “Instructors should review the Modules and select the materials that would be most relevant to the refugee students (CCSD Newcomers) enrolled in their school system, and most useful when designing lesson plans and classroom activities.” Also, you may have English-speaking students who do not qualify as ELLs who could benefit from the acculturation pieces of this curriculum. A student coming from England speaks a different English and can experience culture shock as they begin living in the U.S. Please use these materials, as they seem appropriate for these students as well.

Please review pages 4-8, Background for Instructors. As you read any of these materials, remember that the authors are in New York, and programs mentioned do not align to CCSD programs. Reading considerations are also attached for you to review before reading each module. We are providing these materials as a starting point for you to be able to develop lessons to meet the acculturation needs of your Newcomer students. Thank you for looking at these materials. The CCSD ELL Division welcomes your feedback on this curriculum as we are offering it to our schools for the first time this year. If you have any questions or need additional supports for your Newcomer students please reach out to our Division at (702) 799-2137. Also, please look at the materials and links specifically provided to address newcomer needs found on our website at [ell.ccsd.net](http://ell.ccsd.net). Most schools have an ELL Student Success Advocate. These staff members receive additional training from the ELL Division and can also act as a resource for you.

## CCSD CONSIDERATIONS

### Module 1: American Schools

#### In this reading...

When it says ...	Think...
refugee	newcomer
Refugee Academy	school site
academic coach	mentor

- Students will often be asked to write or journal, consider having a singular place for these reflections.
- Videos are not available at this time.

# WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOLS



**BUREAU OF REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT ASSISTANCE**

**NEW YORK STATE OFFICE  
OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE**

**REVISED 2011  
ANDREW M. CUOMO, GOVERNOR**

The Refugee School Impact Grant (RSIG) *Welcome to our Schools*, which includes Refugee Academy and Mini-Academy Curricula, Parent and Professional Development Programs, a Guide to Academic Coaches, a Guide to the Videos, and the videos *Refugee Student Interviews*, *Refugee Parent Interviews*, *A Day in Elementary School*, *A Day in Middle School* and *A Day in High School*, was developed by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (OTDA/BRIA).

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# **MODULE 1**

## **AMERICAN SCHOOLS**

# MODULE 1: American Schools

## PURPOSE

The purpose of Module 1 is to inform students about the structure, components, and benefits of American schools.

## OBJECTIVES

*Students will:*

- Share information about personal goals for education in America
- Become familiar with the elements of a school day
- Become aware of the multiple benefits of an American education



## SUPPLIES

**Handout 1 – 1:**  
***Please Visit Our School***

**Handouts 1 – 2**  
**1 – 3:**  
***School Supplies***

**Crayons**

**Video**

***A Day at School***  
(Elementary, Middle, or High School)

**Information about resources** for school supplies and winter clothing

Arrange for the **school bell** to ring (see Activity #1)

**Combination locks** for practice



## **MODULE 1: American Schools**

### **VOCABULARY**

#### **Elementary Vocabulary**

School  
Education  
Teacher  
Coach  
Translator  
Plan  
Fun  
Sports  
Learn

#### **Secondary Vocabulary**

School  
Education  
Learn  
Coach  
Translator  
College  
Teacher  
Counselor  
Sports  
Interests  
Talents  
Plans  
Goals  
Fun  
Jobs



## Key Points – American Schools



### **1. *Academic Coaches and Translators will be available throughout the Refugee Academy and the school year.***

The first day of the Refugee Academy should begin with introducing the Academic Coaches, Translators, and other personnel who will provide support to the students in the Refugee Academy. The purpose of the initial introductions is to inform students of the names that the instructors wish to be called, and to reassure the students that the instructors are at the Academy to personally meet and support the students. These concepts should be reinforced throughout the Academy.

Do not expect the students to grasp the names and titles of the adults, let alone their responsibilities. The title “Academic Coach” is confusing to any student, not just to a student who is new to the American system and unfamiliar with the English language.

The Activities in *Module 1: American Schools* focus on building the comfort level of students with instructors, the school setting, and peers. Make introductions a relaxed, friendly process. Keep repeating introductions throughout the first few days, until students demonstrate that they know the names of the instructors and comprehend the role that the adults will play in their school.



### **2. *Students need opportunities to talk about their personal experiences and goals.***

Although the primary goal of the Refugee Academy is to familiarize students with the American school system, it is also important to use the Academy to support students as they move forward in their lives. This does not mean that students should be asked to forget about their experiences prior to coming to America. They should not be expected to adjust quickly to their newcomer status and set aside any memories of their native country.



Regardless of past circumstances, coming to American schools will be confusing and disarming, perhaps frightening and depressing. The students will not only be overwhelmed by the school environment, rules, and procedures, but will be worried about making friends and fitting in. Their past experiences in their native countries, or their images of America, may drive their concerns about what will happen to them in their new schools.

The Activities in the Modules are designed so that students will have a chance to reflect on their past experiences, but focus on what is on the horizon. Emphasis should always be on the opportunities available to them in their new schools, and the



personnel who are there to guide and assist them. As students begin to compare their old schools (or lack of schooling) with what they expect to experience in their new schools, the instructors should dispel myths, provide facts about what to expect, and reassure the students that if they follow the basic rules they will have a variety of chances to learn and make new friends.

Students should be given the chance to express their ideas about what they would like to gain from their new education. Instructors can provide information about how the students can achieve these personal goals.



### **3. *American schools are designed to facilitate assistance and personal growth.***



At the very beginning of the Refugee Academy, it is important to explain to the students how the American school system is broken into three parts: elementary, middle school or junior high, and senior high school, and further divided into grade levels. Some schools combine the grade levels or include grades kindergarten-12 in one building, but the design is similar across the country.

Once this concept is shown to students, then they can find out where they fit in the spectrum. Are they elementary students? Will they be in grade 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5? They may not know their exact grade level until the school completes assessments, but it is important that the students in the Academy see the progression of grade levels as it exists in the American school system. (*Note: This will require knowing numbers.*)

The teachers and other personnel in schools are responsible for moving children through the levels until they graduate from high school. They do this not only by teaching academic knowledge and skills, but by providing students with individual guidance and personal support as students solve problems and make plans for the future.

This may be a new concept to the students in the Refugee Academy. They may not have experienced support from teachers in developing relationships, making decisions about future plans, and solving academic problems. The Academy instructors should keep reinforcing and demonstrating that teachers and other personnel are available to answer questions, intervene if they spot a problem, and work with families to ensure a smooth transition through the levels of education.

Students should also become aware that they have multiple opportunities to learn and grow: on the athletic field, in the classroom, on stage, in the music room, and so forth. They will be expected to achieve basic knowledge and skills in education, required of all students. But they will also have many experiences that will allow them to cultivate talents, try new skills and interests, and learn about citizenship and service to society.



#### **4. American education has multiple benefits.**

Throughout the Refugee Academy, one of the main themes is that attending American schools can have many benefits. It is, of course, not always a smooth path for students as school districts struggle with growing student populations, old buildings, staff shortages in crucial subject areas, challenging communities and school-family relationships.

But for so many refugee students, the schools are a safe haven, a place where the school offerings are a welcome change from their native countries. They welcome the routine, the teacher interest in subject matter and students, the numerous extracurricular activities, and the opportunities for a variety of friendships.



The students in the Refugee Academy may not realize that American schools have multiple benefits. Their own schools, if they existed, may have had a different focus and may have provided limited experiences. The purpose of Module 1 is to expose students to the school programs that they are about to experience. Later Modules give them a chance to learn more about their options and to make some choices about what they would like to pursue.

The ultimate goal of the American education system is to prepare students for their future as adults: pursue education at a postsecondary level; develop skills that can be utilized in the workplace; build strong social skills; develop the ability to think analytically to solve problems; and become contributing members of society.

The Refugee Academy will assist students in becoming aware of the many opportunities that are ahead of them. As the students participate in the Academy activities, remind them of the ultimate goal of education in America.



#### **5. Schools consist of several standard components, but the elements of a school day may vary.**

School buildings in America vary considerably in size, location, condition, and security. They differ in offerings, expectations, and academic success rates. But the schools in America have many similarities that students in the Academy should know about.



For the instructors of the Academy, the standardization of American schools is obvious. In America, it is common to refer to “middle school,” “recess,” “the principal,” and “study hall.” These are terms that are well established in the American school systems across the country.

Students in the Academy should be aware of the following similarities across the nation, with specific information provided about their own school system:

- ❖ Schools are generally located in neighborhoods or near a town center.
- ❖ Schools start early in the morning and end mid-afternoon, with staggered schedules for different age groups.
- ❖ Students can walk to school or take free school buses or city buses paid for by the school, or use subway transportation in large cities.
- ❖ In addition to classes in the basic subjects of Mathematics, Science, English Language Arts, and Social Studies, there are classes in Physical Education, Art, Music, Health, Career Development, Languages, Technology, and Family/Consumer Science
- ❖ Older students may be able to take more advanced or accelerated classes or classes in unique subjects such as Art History, Creative Writing, Journalism, and Marching Band.
- ❖ Students in grades kindergarten-5 usually have one teacher during the school day, with additional teachers for “special” classes such as Library, Music, or Art. They eat lunch at school and then usually go outside or to the gymnasium for “recess.”
- ❖ Students in grades 6-12 (or 7-12) rotate to classes with many different teachers.
- ❖ Schools usually have libraries, gymnasiums, athletic fields and/or playgrounds, and cafeterias.
- ❖ Some schools have computer labs, a swimming pool, science laboratories, and weight rooms.
- ❖ Schools have standard rules of conduct, with progressive disciplinary procedures, including detention and expulsion.
- ❖ Schools may have Study Hall, English as a Second Language, Math or Reading Lab, and other classes to assist students in achieving in academic subjects.
- ❖ Guidance counselors are available to assist students in designing their school schedules and creating plans for the future.
- ❖ Schools have a principal who is in charge of all of the activities in the school building, who is often assisted by other administrators.



# ACTIVITIES

## **ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCTIONS**

**Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12 (45 minutes)**

### **In this activity:**



The instructors of the Refugee Academy will introduce themselves to the students, engaging them in informal conversation that is short and relaxed.

Students will not be expected to interact unless they feel comfortable, but they will be encouraged to shake hands (an American custom) with the instructors.

Emphasis should be on learning names.

The process of translating should be explained to the students.

Vocabulary words can be introduced throughout the exercise.

- **One instructor should introduce the adults** in the room and shake their hands.
  - Explain the American custom of shaking hands when greeting someone. Demonstrate the correct way to shake hands, as well as the incorrect ways.
  - Explain that the instructors will be introducing themselves to each student.
- **Shake hands**, one at a time, with each student. Move around the room in no set order so that students do not become nervous about being next in line.
  - Ask the students their names and what countries they are from.
  - Follow up with a general question that is not too personal or potentially embarrassing. Do not ask about the Academy, family situations, or school. Examples of questions are:
    - Was it hard to get here this morning?
    - Have you been in this building before?

- Do you know anyone in this class? (Introduce the student to another student.)
- Are you comfortable in this desk?
- Would you rather be sleeping?
- Follow student responses with a reassuring comment. The message should be positive.
- Questions can be repeated, and the names of the adults should be repeated several times. The adults can pretend that they have forgotten each other's names and can ask to have them repeated.
- Keep refreshing the class about the names of the students.
- Point out new vocabulary words as they are used.
- After everyone has been introduced, **explain classroom behavior** that is required in every school.
  - Demonstrate each of the classroom behaviors listed below. One instructor can demonstrate poor classroom behavior and the other instructor can demonstrate the expected good behavior.
  - The purpose of the activity is to inform students how to act in the classroom so that they can be comfortable and not worry about doing the wrong thing. Emphasis should be on enjoying the Academy and becoming familiar with school procedures, not on obeying the rules.
  - Practice some of the classroom behaviors with the class:
    - ★ Raise hand to speak; wait to be called on by teacher
    - ★ One person speaks at a time
    - ★ Respond to teacher questions
    - ★ Listen when someone else is talking
    - ★ Face the teacher
    - ★ Do not move around the room without permission
    - ★ Ignore distractions (students talking, joking)
    - ★ Keep hands on the desk; keep feet near the desk
    - ★ Listen to announcements
    - ★ Wait for the bell to ring
    - ★ Line up quietly; show courtesy in the hall
    - ★ Address the teacher appropriately
    - ★ Talk quietly during group activities



## **ACTIVITY 2: SHARING OBSERVATIONS AND GOALS**

**Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12 (45 minutes)**

### **In this activity:**



The students will have the opportunity to express their observations and concerns about American schools. It is part of Module 1 so that any worries or misconceptions can be addressed immediately, before the Academy is underway.

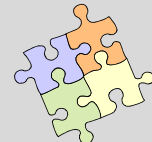
This activity will require a class discussion (with students raising hands not only for structuring the discussion but for practice of classroom behavior), and translation time may slow the conversation down a bit. However, since the tone of the discussion should be relaxed and informal, the time for translations will allow for attentive listening.

- **Invite student responses to the questions**, accepting all responses, reminding students about classroom behavior if they talk all at once. Students do not have to respond if they are uncomfortable, but instructors should try to rephrase questions if it appears that the student is unsure or confused.
- **Encourage talkers to listen to others; encourage listeners to comment but only if they are willing.** Do not comment on how a student may be “quiet” or “shy.” Go back to the silent students occasionally, to try to draw them into the discussion.
  - It may take awhile to get any responses from anyone in the room. If the students are not reacting, the adults can discuss the questions with each other, looking to the class to agree or disagree with the answers. This process usually draws in students who cannot resist commenting on what the adults are discussing.
  - Some students may provide information about experiences in their native country that are sensitive or graphic. These comments may provide insight into their feelings about school in America, particularly since they more than likely left situations that were frightening. Although they do need the opportunity to share their experiences, turn the discussion focus toward fears that students may have about going to school in America. Refute myths and provide information that will put them at ease.

- Be alert for emotional responses (or unemotional responses) to stories that may be dramatic. Thank the students, reassure them, and repeat the discussion question so that the class can focus on the question at hand. Let children share their memories, but do not dwell on negative images, and do not compare the experiences of students.
- Emphasis should be on looking toward the future and preparing to enter the American school system. Keep reminding students about the number of adults who are responsible for helping refugee students, some of whom have been introduced at the Refugee Academy.



## Discussion Questions



### **What do you think it will be like in American schools?**

- Refute myths and stereotypes
- Acknowledge fears, confusion
- Reassure
- Stress positive aspects of American schools
- Introduce staff available to help, if in the classroom. If not, stress the number of people responsible for assisting refugee students.

### **What have you noticed already that is different from schools in your native country?**

- Recognize range of educational opportunities in native countries (no education to daily formal education)
- Identify areas of adjustment
- Highlight enjoyment, fun
- Stress that schools are for learning

**What are you hoping you will learn in school?**

- Describe subjects offered, by topics (maps, lab experiments, dance, etc.)
- Describe available help, including peers

**What are you most curious about?**

- Address “burning questions”
- Explain standard systems in American schools (see Key Point 5)

**How will school help you?**

- American education has multiple benefits; elaborate on each benefit of education.
- Point out how American students benefit from the enrollment of refugee students; how refugee students will contribute to the school by expanding global education for other students; how students in the Refugee Academy will contribute ideas, talents, and observations that will enhance the education of others.



### **ACTIVITY 3: A DAY AT SCHOOL**

**Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12 (45 minutes)**

**Show the DVD *A Day at School*** (Elementary, Middle or High School)

- Use the ***Guide to the Videos*** for introducing the video and for follow-up discussion.
- Distribute *Handout 1-1: Please Visit Our School* and explain that the parents will see the same video.

**Instructors or students should fill in the date, time, and place in English and/or in a native language on *Handout 1-1*.**

## **ACTIVITY 4: SCHOOL SUPPLIES**

**Grades K-5 (15 minutes)**

Distribute *Handout 1-2: School Supplies* for coloring.

**Review the names of each item:**



- ✓ Backpack      ✓ Crayons      ✓ Pencils
- ✓ Sneakers / Gym Shoes      ✓ Gym Clothes
- ✓ Lunch (purchase or bring bag lunch)

- Explain that students will need these supplies for school. The school will provide some supplies, but teachers will also provide detailed lists of supplies that students have to purchase. Students will be expected to have all of their supplies by the first week of school.
- Inform students that they do not have to buy their textbooks.
- If supply lists are available from the teachers, distribute them and discuss what teachers require. Explain where students can purchase supplies in their neighborhoods, and mention that supplies might also be able to be purchased from a school store.
- Community agencies and the school nurse may have free school supplies for students. Provide students with the specific details.
- Explain that students will keep their supplies in a desk that is assigned to them in their classroom, and in a cupboard or “cubby.” They should write their name on all of their supplies.

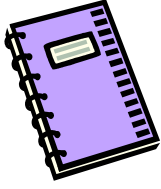
Distribute *Handout 1-3: School Supplies*.

Review the names of each item:



- ✓ Backpack      ✓ Pens      ✓ Pencils
- ✓ Notebooks    ✓ Assignment Notebook
- ✓ Lunch (purchase or bring bag lunch)
- ✓ Calculator    ✓ Sneakers / Gym Clothes

- Explain that students will need these supplies for school. The school will provide some supplies, but teachers will also provide detailed lists of supplies that the students have to purchase. Students will be expected to have all of their supplies by the first week of school.
- Inform students that they do not have to buy their textbooks.
- If supply lists are available from the teachers, distribute them and discuss what teachers require. Explain where students can purchase supplies in their neighborhoods, and mention that supplies might also be able to be purchased from a school store.
- Community agencies and the school nurse may have free school supplies for students. Provide students with the specific details.
- Explain that students will keep their supplies in a locker that is assigned to them. If possible, demonstrate the use of a locker and give students the opportunity to practice the combination lock.



## JOURNAL TOPIC

- Journals will be distributed in *Module 2: Making Friends*.



## SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Finish the day with a second viewing of the video ***A Day at School*** at the same level, or at another level (grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12).
- Introduce adults responsible for helping refugee students and repeat shaking hands.
- Tour school facilities, even if it is not the school that students will attend. Discuss the similarities in all schools.
- Invite local refugee students who live in the school community to talk about their adjustment to American schools.
- Shake hands or “high-five” as students leave at the end of the day.
- Visit school lockers and practice using the locker combination and storing supplies in the lockers.
- Visit local community organizations that provide free or inexpensive winter clothing.

# PLEASE VISIT OUR SCHOOL



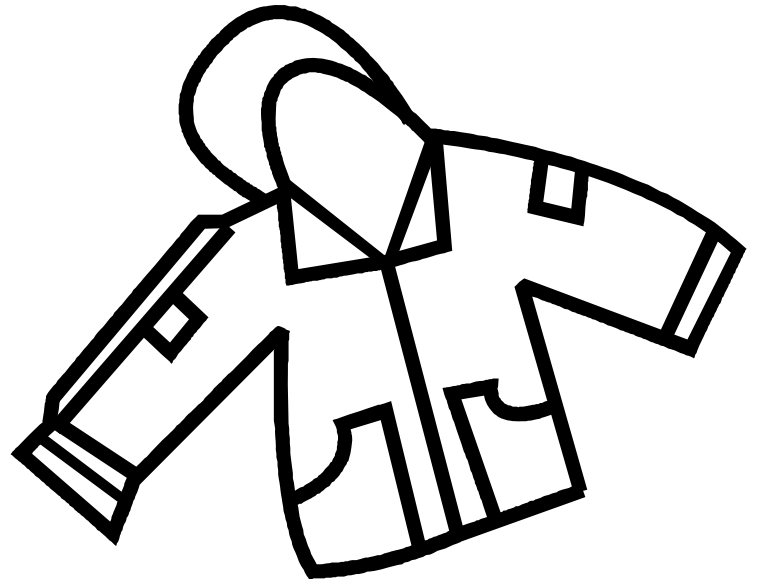
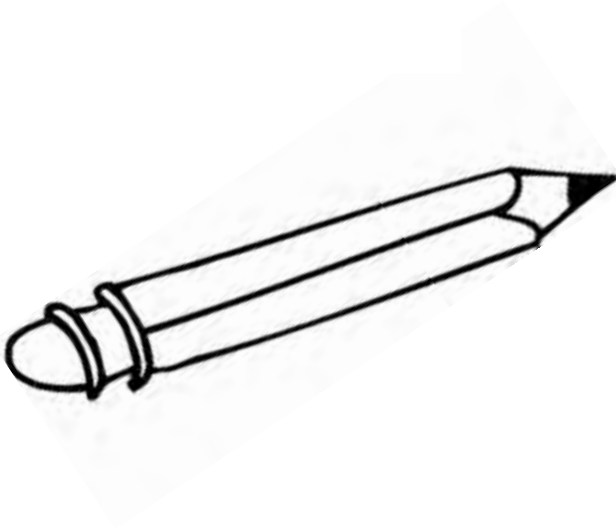
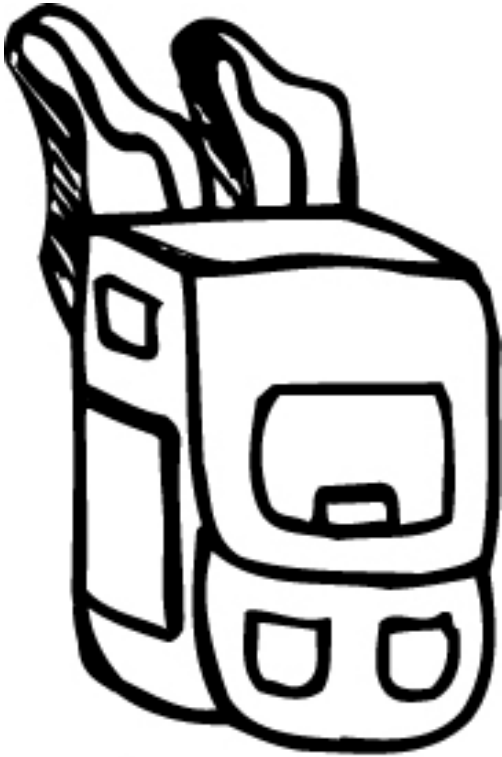
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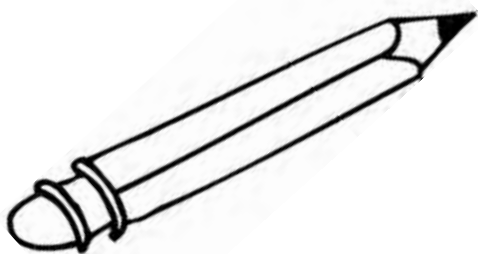
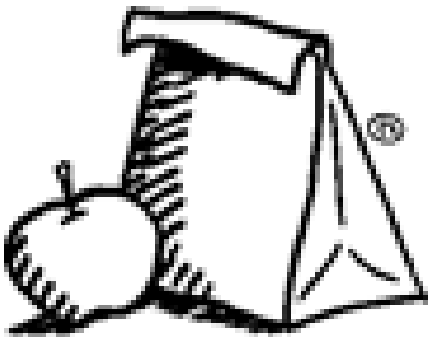
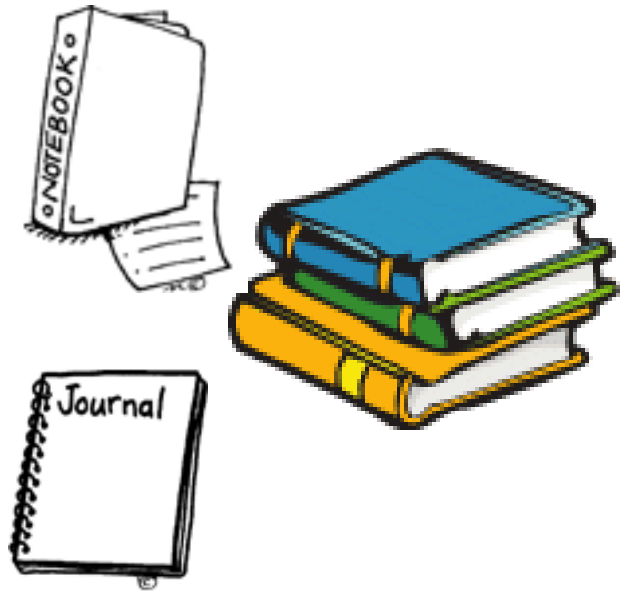
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HANDOUT 1 – 2: SCHOOL SUPPLIES (K-5)



HANDOUT 1 – 3: SCHOOL SUPPLIES (6-12)