

The Newcomer Academy

JANUARY 12, 2022, 4 PM EST | [Register Here](#)

The Nystrand Center of Excellence in Education supports and facilitates education reform through its outstanding special programs and initiatives. Strong community partnerships are the heart of our success and serve as an inspiration for those who work so diligently to provide a better education for our children. It is our mission to continue with transformation through collaboration by leading the discussion on education reform, policy, research, and practice.



MODERATOR:
Dr. Geneva Stark
*Director of the
Nystrand Center of
Excellence in
Education*

FEATURING:



Gwen Snow
Principal



Irina McGrath
Assistant Principal



Rebecca Merkel
Assistant Principal



Felicia Hankins
High School Counselor



Rita Robinson-Seccession
High School Counselor



Alethea Victor
Middle School Counselor

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MODERATOR:



Dr. Geneva Stark is the current director of the Nystrand Center of Excellence in Education and Clinical Professor. Prior to joining UofL, She served as a Diversity Equity and Poverty Administrator for Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS). Dr. Stark served in JCPS as a District Coordinator in Human Resources, principal, and assistant principal. She was also 1 of 4 individuals selected as a KDE Superintendent Fellow for Bullitt and Shelby Counties.

Dr. Stark serves on the board of directors for the National Alliance of Black School Educators, is a former president of GLABSE, and is a member of NAACP, League of Women Voters and NCNW. She has served as a mentor to students, teachers and administrators at the local, state and national level.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF FEATURED PRESENTERS:



Gwen Snow

Before coming to Newcomer Academy in 2008, Gwen Snow was a teacher and resource teacher in JCPS since 1998. She currently serves as the school's principal and has guided its development over the past fifteen years.



Irina McGrath

Irina McGrath is one of Newcomer Academy's two Assistant Principals. She began with us last Spring and was previously an Educational Reform Specialist with KDE and an ESL Resource Teacher for JCPS.



Rebecca Merkel

Rebecca Merkel started with Newcomer Academy in 2014 and has been an Assistant Principal with us for four years. She is passionate about helping students and staff grow in their leadership.



Felicia Hankins

Felicia Hankins is a High School Guidance Counselor with Newcomer Academy. She has been with Newcomer since 2013 as a guidance counselor. Before coming to Newcomer, she was a Family Resource Center Coordinator with JCPS for several years.



Rita Robinson-Seccession

Rita Robinson-Seccession is a high school counselor with Newcomer Academy. Before coming to Newcomer in 2016, she was a teacher and resource teacher in JCPS since 1998. Rita has experience both in comprehensive and alternative programs.



Alethea Victor

Alethea Victor has been Newcomer's Middle School Guidance Counselor since 2017 and began as a Youth Services Center Coordinator for JCPS in 2006. Being the daughter of a Jamaican immigrant and growing up in a French bilingual immersion school in Canada brings a wealth of experience to our schools.

ABOUT NEWCOMER ACADEMY:

The goal of the English as a Second Language (ESL) Newcomer Academy is to provide a welcoming and respectful environment that meets the unique linguistic, academic, and social/emotional needs of sixth- through tenth-grade English Language Learners (ELLs) in the JCPS District. These students typically are in their first year of instruction in a U.S. school. They are usually at the beginning levels of English proficiency and may have had limited, or interrupted, educational experiences in their native countries.

As a community, by using an intensive curriculum and research-based instructional strategies, we collaborate to promote the language and academic skills needed for participation in other JCPS classrooms. ESL Newcomer Academy students transition to another middle or high school with an ESL Program after one to three semesters.