

Newcomers - Class Activities

Here are some suggested class activities that you can use to increase student awareness of newcomers and the issues they face, and to help newcomer students connect more with their new school community.

How I Got Here

Ask students to write a short story (1-2 pages) that tells “How I Got Here”.

- For newcomer students, they will write their own story.
- For students who were born in Canada, they will write the story from the perspective of one of their ancestors who came to Canada from another country. This may require talking to parents or grandparents about these ancestors.
- For students who do not know their birth parents, have them write the story about themselves, but with as much information as they have, or are willing to share, about their situation. (Use your best judgement as to how to handle this for your own class situation.)

The stories should answer the following questions:

- Where did you come from - what country? What were the conditions like where you came from?
- Why did you decide to come to Canada?
- What were the challenges you faced in getting here? How about once you arrived?
- How is life different here compared to where you came from?

After the stories are written, have the class share the stories with each other. Suggestions:

- Create a section of the class bulletin board titled “How I Got Here”. Post the stories, along with pictures of the authors and other relevant photos.
- Ask for volunteers to read the stories aloud to the class, either their own or someone else’s.
- Present the stories “in character”, perhaps dressing in a way typical of the country of origin.
- Publish the stories in the school newspaper.
- Record the stories on video or audio, and present these recordings to the rest of the school, or post them on the school website. (When posting students’ stories online, it may be necessary to disguise names or other specific details.)

How Do I Get Here?

Have students research answers for the following questions, and then share the research with the class.

- In Canadian law, there are three different categories a person might fall into who comes here from another country with the intention to live here permanently. For each of these categories, find out what is required for each category.
 - **Family Class Category:** Immigrants in this class have been sponsored by close family members already living in Canada.
 - **Independent Category:** Immigrants who qualify for certain types of jobs or have other important assets to bring to Canada can be approved to apply on their own.
 - **Business Category:** Immigrants can apply to come to Canada to invest in approved projects or establish businesses in Canada.
- Do an online search in Google News for possible changes to immigration legislation - bills before Parliament, etc. What changes to these requirements might happen if this legislation is passed?

For any newcomer students who are willing, have them present to the class what procedures they had to go through for their families to come to Canada, such as forms to fill out, waiting periods, and so on.

Write a Phrasebook

Have the class make up a short list of the most common words or phrases in the English language. One suggested list can be found at:

<http://www.world-english.org/english500.htm>

You can also do an Internet search for “most commonly used English words” or “most commonly used English phrases”. You can either have the entire class write the words down as you go, or one student can type them up on a computer and print them for the entire class.

Make sure the words are listed in a column on one side of the page, with room for writing beside each word.

Divide the class up into groups, making sure at least one newcomer student is in each group. For each student in the group that knows another language, have them say the equivalent word or phrase in their language for each one on the list, and then everyone writes the word down on their list. (For languages that do not use the English alphabet, have students write the word phonetically for English readers, and then the newcomer student can write the word.)

Once the groups have gone through all their words and phrases, have each group read out the lists. Have students who don't speak the language try saying them. Once all the lists have been read aloud,

post the lists on a class bulletin board, or have students put all the lists together into a phrasebook, and make copies for everyone in the class.

Why Today Is Special For Me

Use a large calendar posted in the classroom to track important holidays or other significant dates for the country or culture of origin of each of your newcomer students. When the day arrives, organize a class project around it, with the newcomer student as advisor.

Suggested activities:

- Have the newcomer student do a brief presentation about “Why Today Is Special For Me”.
- Have students research information about the day, find pictures, flags, national anthems, etc. and either print the information for posting on the class bulletin board, or on the school website. (Make sure there is no violation of copyright on images or text - proper attributions should be included.)

Multicultural Food Fair

Suggested activities:

- Find out if the school’s cafeteria would be willing to offer one or two dishes or entrees from a newcomer student’s country of origin. Have the students bring in a recipe and ingredient list for the cafeteria staff, if necessary.
- Have each student in your class bring in some food from their country of origin. Some students may bring in food from the country from which their ancestors came.
- For a home economics/family studies class, plan to prepare foods from the countries of origin of your newcomer students.



COPYRIGHT INFORMATION AND CREDITS

- This document is released under a Creative Commons license, which can be viewed online at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/ca/>
- Some images included in this document are used under a Creative Commons license; all are credited in context where applicable.
- The John Howard Society of Alberta gratefully acknowledges the [Edmonton John Howard Society](#) for creating the original version of this module.
- For more information on this module, and other available modules, visit the John Howard Society of Alberta website: www.johnhoward.ab.ca