

# CREATING WELCOMING CLASSROOMS IN A TURBULENT ELECTION YEAR

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“Under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people in them.”

– James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds*

Because let's face it...

**America needs to curb immigration flows**



**Obama, Daring Congress Acts to Overhaul Immigration**

By MICHAEL D. SHEAR NOV. 20, 2014

**Judge rejects Texas request to bar Syrian refugees**

SCOTUS to Hear Case on Obama's Immigration Executive Actions in April  
JULIE GERSTEIN | 12/09/15 06:55 PM EST | Updated 12/10/15 12:36 AM EST



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#tea



# Objective

To empower you with knowledge, strategies, and ideas to create welcoming classrooms that support a more complete and empathetic understanding of immigrants and immigration.

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# Agenda

1. Define Inclusive Classrooms
2. Helpful Dos and Don'ts for Building Relationships
3. Practical Strategies and Lesson Ideas
4. Sharing and Q&A

# Group Chat Room

- **What's something that you do now that creates a welcoming classroom?**

Please enter your response in your designated chat room.  
You can write more than one thing that you do!

**K-5:** [Click here](#) to go to your chatroom.

**6-12:** [Click here](#) to go to your chatroom.

**Adult ESL:** [Click here](#) to go to your chatroom.

**Adult/Other:** [Click here](#) to go to your chatroom.

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# Inclusive Classrooms are “Identity Safe”

- **“Identity safe classrooms** *are those in which teachers strive to ensure that students feel that their social identity is an asset rather than a barrier to success in the classroom, and that they are welcomed, supported, and valued whatever their background.”*

– Dorothy M. Steele, Ed.D. and Becki Con Vargas, Ed.D. *Identity Safe Classrooms: Places to Belong and Learn*

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# Identity-Safe Components

- **Child-centered teaching:** promotes autonomy, cooperation, and student voice.
- **Cultivating diversity as a resource:** teachers provide challenging curriculum and high expectations for all students in the context of the regular and authentic use of diverse materials, ideas, and teaching activities.
- **Classroom relationships:** relationships are based on trusting, positive interactions with the teacher and among the students.
- **Caring classroom environments:** social skills are taught and practiced to help students care for one another in an emotionally and physically safe classroom.

**How do these components apply when working with immigrant students and teaching about immigration?**

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# DO put out the welcome mat

- Send a message that all students, regardless of immigration status, have a right to attend your school and are welcomed.

*Feel free to chime in with ideas in the AnyMeeting chat box to any of these Dos and Don'ts!*

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# DON'T ask for documentation or status

- It benefits no one when a lack of documentation (birth certificate, immigration status, social security number, etc.) prevents an undocumented student from enrolling at a public school. They may also have legitimate fears about disclosing this information even when enrolled so don't require this information for field trips, class projects, etc.

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**DO** seek support from mental health professionals and community groups.

- Especially if you feel overwhelmed. It may also be a good idea to have a school counselor check in with all recently immigrant students not only to help students adjust to a different culture, but also to process any trauma, if encountered. Some students may need support for how to deal with difficult situations in non-violent ways.

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# DO reach out to parents, guardians, and/or sponsors.

- As teachers, we hear this often: calling home and saying a few positive words about a student can go a long way toward establishing a good relationship with the student and his or her family. If language is an issue, ask a friend, teacher, or student to translate a letter or email home into the native language. Even if it's not entirely correct, the effort will be appreciated.

# **DON'T** think that lack of response means lack of caring.

- A parent, guardian, or sponsor may work long hours, or they may be afraid to talk with you because of a language barrier, their own immigration status, etc. Continue reaching out in a friendly, inviting way.

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# DO hold immigrant students to high expectations

- In some cases, your immigrant students are your highest achieving students. In other cases, you may have to scaffold materials depending on a student's language proficiency, but the level of challenge should be equitable.

# DO check in with your (recently) immigrated students.

- Ask them how they feel about their school work, what they miss about their home country, what they like and don't like about America, and what questions they have. Give them daily or weekly opportunities to write and/or talk about their immigration experience with you and fellow students.

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# DO encourage learning and dialogue about immigration issues

- Empower yourself with knowledge about immigration issues. This election year, this topic is going to be in the news a lot.
  - *Give the Fact a Fighting Chance* – a guide to some of the commonly-held but often untrue beliefs about immigration
  - Strive for a fuller understanding of the issue.

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# Teach Immigration

You want it to be:

- ✓ Safe
- ✓ Welcoming
- ✓ Intellectually Challenging



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# 1. Images and Games

- Decorate your classroom or school walls with photos of diverse role models, including those of immigrants.
- Use visuals like the political cartoon activity we used as a pre-activity to make connections between our immigrant past and present.
- Games:
  - Famous Immigrant Contributions
  - Immigrant Experience "Jeopardy-Like" Game
  - Immigrant Timeline Scavenger Hunt

The Immigrant Experience			
History	Policy	Status	Greeting
\$100	\$100	\$100	\$100
\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200
\$300	\$300	\$300	\$300
\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400
\$500	\$500	\$500	\$500

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## 2. Friendly Conversation



- Create diverse small groups for collaboration.
- Ask students to share from their lives and backgrounds throughout the year.
- Have students reflect on personal connections to immigration.

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# 3. Similarities and Differences

- Identify shared values and differences in the classroom. Plan for opportunities where students can voice their personal values and beliefs to create a sense of belonging when it comes to immigration.



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# 4. The Power of Story

- Make room for storytelling, one of the most powerful ways to create empathy.
- Integrate immigration stories through literature you read as a class.
- Create a family history and/or digital storytelling project where students can see that we are a nation of immigrants.



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## 5. Civic Engagement & Student Voice



- Create opportunities for positive civic engagement and discussion.
- Even students who are not strong readers or writers have important ideas that need to be shared and cultivated, so they can develop their understanding of immigration and find their place and say in context.

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# What steps are you planning to ensure that your students feel welcomed, safe and intellectually challenged?

Strategies Recap:

1. Images and Games
2. Friendly Conversation
3. Similarities and Differences
4. The Power of Story
5. Civic Engagement & Student Voice

Please write your answers in the padlet provided.

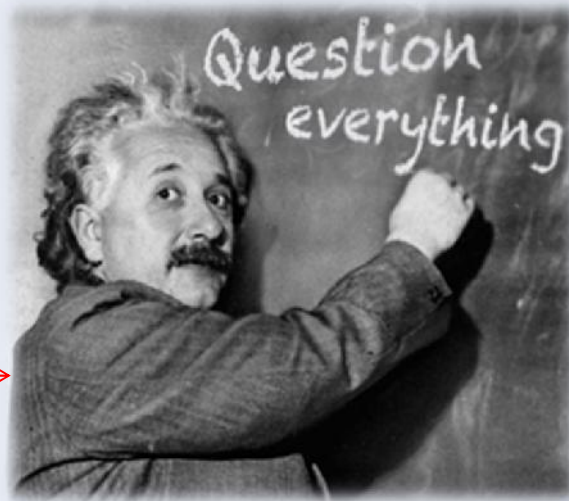
[Click here](#) to go to the padlet.  
Use the strategies to jumpstart your thinking.

*(This is certainly not an exhaustive list of strategies to integrate immigrant students into the school community. Please add more as desired).*



# Share Back and Questions

*Famous immigrant*



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**Blog:** [www.teachimmigration.blogspot.com](http://www.teachimmigration.blogspot.com)

**Lessons and Resources:**

[www.ShareMyLesson.org](http://www.ShareMyLesson.org)  
“Teach Immigration”

**Website:**

[www.americanimmigrationcouncil.com](http://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.com)

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