



Micro-Workshop 6

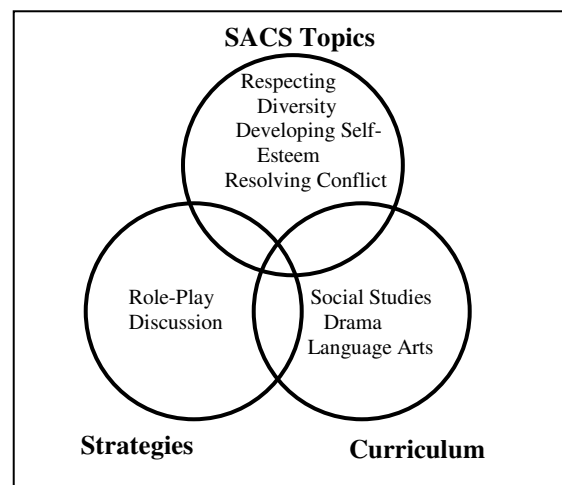
Newcomer Students' School Experiences: Examining Case Studies

For Sayeed, 14, the adjustment to school in Canada was very difficult:

"At first, when I saw the people, I thought this is the wrong kind of school for me. I didn't have anyone to talk to in class ... They don't want to know each other, not like the place where I grew up."

Newcomer¹ families come to Canada representing a broad spectrum of ethnicities, cultures and races. For the children of newcomer families, adjusting to life in Canada can be extremely challenging. Children must often learn a new language, make new friends, learn new cultural norms and sometimes deal with issues related to troubling or traumatic past experiences.

As the demographic face of Canada changes, it is important for teachers to be proactive in helping all students understand each other's worldviews, cultures, traditions and celebrations so that respect is fostered among all groups and conflict is significantly reduced.



This micro-workshop is designed to help teachers examine common experiences of newcomer students as they adjust to school. The workshop will engage participants in thinking about the issues and finding ways to respond. Always consider how this workshop experience could be translated into meaningful learning experiences for all students. The goal is to help everyone become more sensitive and empathetic to unique needs of newcomers so that they can be integrate into Canadian culture.

The case studies are based on actual experiences of newcomer students.² The case studies can be modified and used in a variety of subjects to help all students understand the impact of prejudice and discrimination.

¹ The term *newcomer* refers to people who are classed as immigrant or refugee according to Statistics Canada. Generally, the children of newcomer families are first generation in Canada.

² The case studies used in this micro-workshop originate with Yvonne Chiu and Linda Lam of the Multicultural Health Brokers Co-operative and Caridad Bernardino and Christina Nsaliwa of the Edmonton Immigrant Services Association. These case studies were collected and documented by the authors in their work with immigrant children. They conducted specific research studies, worked with children in focus-group encounters and gained insights that contributed to their collective experiential knowledge.

Prior to the Workshop

Select the case studies that are most likely to generate discussion or that relate to situations in your school. A variety of strategies can be used to examine the scenarios:

Role-Play: Ask several outgoing teachers to role-play one or more scenarios for the workshop. Tell them that they will be asked to improvise suggestions from participants. Urge the teachers to practise their scene(s) prior to the workshop. To allow for meaningful discussion, provide at least 20 minutes per case study during the workshop. Using staff suggestions, re-enact the scene to demonstrate what could happen to address the issue. Try several suggestions and discuss each one.

Discussion: Distribute different (or the same) scenario to small groups of participants. Ask them to use the discussion guide to examine the scenario that their group was given. If all groups examine the same scenario, share responses and compare discussion ideas. If groups were given different scenarios, share the scenario and ask one member from each group to explain the group's responses.

If time is limited, consider doing just one case study per meeting.

Activities for Extension

Modify these or similar scenarios to use with students. Ask questions that focus on students' rather than teachers' responses.

Read the booklet titled *Safe and Caring Schools for Newcomer Student: A Guide for Teachers* and other booklets in the Respecting Diversity series to learn more and to consider practical actions to help students from diverse backgrounds make successful transitions from their country of origin to our schools and classrooms. This booklet can be downloaded by going to www.sacsc.ca and click on Resources, Support a Safe and Caring School.

For Your Information³

- In Alberta, the instructor/student ratio for ESL support (regardless of whether the instructors are qualified ESL teachers, teacher assistants or school aides) is as high as one ESL instructor per 81 ESL students.
- The qualified ESL teacher/student ratio is one ESL teacher to 115 students, more than triple the acceptable teacher/student ratio in Alberta.
- ESL students have the highest dropout rates, ranging from 61 to 74 percent. The average provincial dropout rate is approximately 34 percent.
- ESL students in Grades 3, 6 and 9 are between 13.4 and 32.5 percentage points behind the general student population in language arts. ESL students are also 1.4 to 10.6 percent behind students with severe disabilities.

³ *The ATA News*, Volume 37, Number 11, February 11, 2003.

References

Safe and Caring Schools for Newcomer Students: A Guide for Teachers. Available online at www.sacsc.ca.

The ATA News, Volume 37, Number 11, February 11, 2003.

Resources for Teachers

Websites

Citizenship and Immigration Canada www.cic.gc.ca

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) was established in 1994 to link immigration services with citizenship registration, to promote the unique ideals all Canadians share and to help build a stronger Canada.

Cool Planet for Kids/Teachers www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/index.html

Provides high-quality educational packages including homework ideas, activities and educational resources for teaching world issues.

Map of the World's Refugees www.unhrc.ch/world/world.htm

A United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees site that illustrates where the world's refugees are located.

National Forum 2000 – War-Affected Children www.swill.ocdsb.edu.on.ca/warandchildren

A high school teacher's guide to teaching about war-affected children that includes activities to introduce the topic, test students' newly acquired knowledge and facilitate teaching new concepts and data, as well as a link to student projects.

UNHCR – For Teachers www.unhcr.ch/teach/teach.htm

A site that helps teachers introduce refugee-related issues and provides links to some of the major international and regional websites and databases in the field of child welfare and children's rights.

United Nations Cyber School Bus www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus

A global teaching and learning site, offering project, curriculum and resource material, information on events, activities and more.

Voices of Youth – The Teachers' Place www.unicef.org/voy/research/reshome.html

Provides resources, discussion forums and networking opportunities for those involved in education for development (EDEV).

Coalition for Equal Access to Education www.eslaction.com/concerns_cbe.htm

Formed in the 1990s, the coalition consists of individuals, community groups and organizations who share a collective vision of “an accountable, culturally competent public education system with quality, equitable education for all children regardless of cultural background, first language or color.”

Books and Tapes

“Support from the Heart” Video and discussion Guide (22 minutes) – Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op

Connections and Support in the Community

Edmonton

Catholic Social Services Community and
Immigration Service
Language Assessment
Referral and Counseling Centre
10709 105 Street
Edmonton, AB
T5H 2X3
Phone: (780) 424-0175

Catholic Social Services
8815 99 Street
Edmonton, AB
T6E 303
Phone: (780) 432-1137

Changing Together—A Centre for
Immigrant Women
103, 10010 107A Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5H 4H8
Phone: (780) 421-0175

Edmonton Immigrant Services Association
Cromdale School
11240 79 Street
Edmonton, AB
T5B 2K1
Phone: (780) 474-8445

Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
101, 10010 107A Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5H 4H8
Phone: (780) 424-7709

Millwoods Welcome Centre
for Immigrants
201, 8704 51 Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T6H 5E8
Phone: (780) 462-6924

Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op
10867 97 Street
Edmonton, AB
T5H 2M6
Phone: (780) 430-6253

Canadian Heritage Citizenship and Canadian
Identity, Multiculturalism Programs
1630 9700 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5J 4C4
Phone: (780) 495-6994

Centralized Interpreter Services
20, 9912 106 Street
Edmonton, AB
T5K 1C5
Phone: (780) 448-2627

Edmonton Viets Association
102, 10534 109 Street
Edmonton, AB
T5H 3B2

ASSIST Community Services Centre
9653 105A Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5H 0M3
Phone: (780) 429-3111

Jewish Family Services
502, 10339 124 Street
Edmonton, AB
T5N 3W1
Phone: (780) 454-1194

New Home Immigration and Settlement Centre
572 Hermitage Road
130 Avenue and 40th Street
Edmonton, AB
T5A 4N2
Phone: (780) 456-4663

Ukrainian Canadian Social Services
11717 97 Street
Edmonton, AB
T5G 1Y3
Phone: (780) 471-4477

Calgary

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
12th Floor, 910 7 Avenue SW
Calgary, AB
T2P 3N8
Phone: (403) 265-1120

Calgary Immigrant Women's Association
300, 750 11 Street SW
Calgary, AB
T2P 3N7
Phone: (403) 263-4414

Calgary Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
200, 3517 17 Avenue SE
Calgary, AB
T2A 0R5
Phone: (403) 569-0409

Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youths
4112 4 Street NW
Calgary AB
T2K 1A2
Phone: 403-230-7745

Calgary Chinese Community Service
Association (CCCSA)
108, 197 1 Street SW
Calgary, AB
T2P 4M4
Phone: (403) 265-8446

Calgary Vietnamese Canadian Association
Bay 317, 4909 17 Avenue SE
Calgary, AB
T2A 0V5
Phone: (403) 272-4668

Jewish Family Services
200, 4014 Macleod Trail South
Calgary, AB
T2G 2R7
Phone: (403) 287-3510

Red Deer

Catholic Social Services Immigration and
Settlement Programs
202, 5000 Gaetz Avenue
Red Deer, AB
T4N 6C2

Settlement Program
Phone: (403) 346-7055

Language and Employment Programs
Phone: (403) 347-8844

Central Alberta Refugee Effort (CARE)
Committee
202, 5000 Gaetz Avenue
Red Deer, AB
T4N 6C2
Phone: (403) 346-8818

Central Alberta Immigrant Women's Association
208, 4836 Ross Street
Red Deer, AB
T4N 1X4
Phone: (403) 341-3553

Grande Prairie

Immigrant Settlement Services
(The Reading Network)
Grande Prairie Regional College
9920 100 Avenue (Lower Level)
Grande Prairie, AB
T8V 0T9
Phone: (780) 538-4363

Fort McMurray

YMCA—Immigrant Settlement Office
200, 9913 Biggs Avenue
Fort McMurray, AB
T9H 1S2
Phone: (780) 743-2970

**Government of Canada—Canada Immigration Centres
Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)**

1-800-465-7735

Ask for phone numbers in your region
Re: Multiculturalism, Programming and
Heritage

Canadian Heritage

Citizenship and Canadian Identity,
Multiculturalism
1630, Canada Place, 9700 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB
T5J 4C3
Phone: (780) 495-5622

Canadian Heritage Calgary

520, Harry Hays Building
220 4 Avenue SE
Calgary, AB
T2G 4X3
Phone: (403) 292-4950

Edmonton

Phone: 1-888-242-2100
Fax: (780) 890-7899
Edmonton International Airport
Phone: (780) 890-4355

Calgary

Phone: 1-888-242-2100
Fax: (403) 292-6843
Calgary International Airport
Phone: (403)292-5724
Fax: (403) 292-6844

Lethbridge

Phone: 1-888-242-2100
Fax: (403) 382-3163

Discussion Guide

Use this guide to consider the scenario that was role-played or read. Record ideas that were generated by everyone.

Scenario # _____

1. What are the issue(s) portrayed in the scenario?
2. Identify the act(s) of discrimination and explain why it might have occurred.
3. How would you feel if this happened to you? Or was there a time in your life when something similar happened to you? How did you feel?
4. If you were at this scene, what could you do to make a positive difference? What suggestions would you give the actors to change the scene?
5. What should a teacher do in this case?

Case Study 1

“Go Take a Shower”

Miguel arrived in school after working the midnight shift cleaning the kitchen at a fast-food restaurant. He managed to catch three hours of sleep in the car. He didn't have a chance for a shower or a change of clothing before going to school. He was thinking about doing his half-finished assignment. He was also thinking about his paycheque and how glad he would be to pay back the family who sponsored him.

When he finally sat down at his group's table, the student next to him shouted, “You stink! What's wrong with you! Don't you take showers where you come from?”

Case Study 2

“Only English Is Allowed Here”

This is Kim’s fourth day in school, and she is so happy to find out that there are two other girls from her home country in another class. She is so relieved that there will be someone she can talk to in her own language. She has so many questions she wants to ask, mainly about what she should or shouldn’t do in school.

Kim ran into the two girls in the hallway at lunchtime, and the three of them spoke animatedly to each other in their first language. Kim thought that she hadn’t felt so safe and at ease for almost a week. Just as Kim was about to ask the girls about what teachers expect of students, Mr. Juno walked by and sternly reminded them, “You are now in Canada. Speak English or you’ll get into trouble here.”

Case Study 3

“Go Join The Other Group”

Ms. Cox liked to assign groups to work on projects in her science class. This was the third time this semester that the teacher had used this strategy. As soon as Ms. Cox asked the class to form teams of five, Azeb looked around the room. She felt other students avoiding eye contact with her as they scrambled to seek out classmates they wished to work with.

She took a deep breath and walked over to the team that was short one member and asked if she could join them. They looked at each other skeptically, and one student finally said, “We have enough people on this team. Why don’t you go join Quong? He doesn’t seem to be part of a team yet. Besides you two have the same level of English. You can work better together.” This was the third time Azeb and Quong had been together in a team of two.

Case Study 4

“I Feel So Sorry For You”

For the first time, Dawit was looking forward to his social studies class. The day before, Ms. McEwan said that the lesson would be about his home country.

Ms. McEwan began the class by providing facts about where the country is located and the size of its population. She proceeded to talk about the years of civil wars and famine there. Then, she looked directly at him and said “I am so sorry for you, Dawit. It’s sad that everyone is hungry and people have no education in your country. Aren’t you glad you’re in Canada now?” Dawit’s heart sank. He wanted to say that his country is full of resilient and courageous people and that famine only occurred in some parts of the country. Even then the people tried hard to contain the famine and manage the hunger. But somehow these words failed to come out of his mouth.

Case Study 5

“Go Back Where You Came From”

Tin and his friends were eating lunch outside the school when four boys who they didn't know began to call them names. When Tin just ignored them, one of the boys kicked away Tin's lunch and said, “What kind of food is this? Why don't you just go back where you came from?” Tin's friends held him back and whispered for him to just walk away. Tin and his friends got up and began to walk away when another boy grabbed his shirt and pushed him to the ground. Without thinking, Tin ran toward him and punched the boy in the face. Then he felt two other boys grabbing him and punching him. Tin's friends tried to come between him and his assailant. They yelled at them to leave Tin alone. Finally, they heard a teacher's voice commanding them to stop. Everyone dispersed.

After lunch, Tin and his friends were called to the principal's office. Tin wondered why the other boys didn't get called to the office, too. As the principal was questioning them, Tin blurted out that four other boys started the fight. The principal responded by saying that it didn't matter who started it—the school didn't welcome violence and gangs, and he and his friends would all be suspended. Tin was confused. He and his friends tried to tell the principal that they weren't part of any gang. The principal shook his head in disbelief. “Anyway,” he said, “you are all still suspended for fighting.” Tin sat in shock. What was he going to tell his parents? Surely they would disown him. What was he going to do about his schoolwork? It took him so long just to try to catch up. *Now, he thought, it will be impossible.*