

Suggested Ways to Help Other Class Members Integrate a New Student

Creating an accepting environment where anxiety will be low for the newcomer is essential. One of the first ways to achieve this is by creating empathy amongst your students for the newcomer.

1. Talk with your students about moving to a new place. Start with some questions such as:

- Who has ever moved and changed schools?
- Who has moved more than once?
- Where did you move from?
- How did you feel the first days? Why?
- Were things different in your new school?
- What was different in the new neighbourhood?
- Did you like it right away, or did you dislike it at first?
- How did you make friends?
- What did you learn by moving? (highlight the very common feeling of being left out of the group)
- How did you deal with these feelings? (stay at home with family, take care of a pet, finding younger friends, waiting, reading, withdrawing, trying to make new friends etc.)
- Who has always lived here? How do you feel about that? Would you like to move? Why or why not? Where? What do you think it would be like?

Moving is difficult for children. It may take them a long time to adjust to their new environment. Students will probably express negative feelings throughout the discussion. Acknowledge these feelings and then ask, "What would have made it better for you? How could teachers and other kids have helped you?"

Conversely if students express a positive feeling, ask them what made them feel comfortable and adjust.

2. Have your students write a real or imagined story about moving to a new home or school.

3. It is so important to validate and families' ethnicity and language background. If you have students in your class who are bilingual, have them teach the class simple expressions in these other languages.

Ask questions such as:

- Who came here from another country?
- What country?
- When did you come?
- Could you speak English?
- How did you feel?
- How did you make friends?
- What helped you learn English?
- How long did it take?
- What mistakes did you make?
- What is good about speaking more than one language?

Students could record questions like these into a survey and travel around the school interviewing other students. They could use the results to create a large school-wide graph "Where do we come from?" to display in a prominent location.

4. It is important for our students to identify with the newcomer. Consider starting another class meeting or discussion with the following prompts:

- Imagine that your parents took you to another country where you did not speak the language. Would you want to go?
- What would you want to take with you? Do you think you could take these things?
- Do you think you would have trouble learning another language?
- Who would you be able to talk to if no one in school spoke English?
- How would you feel during reading when you needed to start with Grade One level books in that language?
- How would it feel if someone teased you about it?

5. There are approximately 3,000 languages spoken around the world. Students could do some exploration on the internet to find answers to the following questions:

- How long does it take to learn another language?
- When do you think it's a good time to study another language?
- What are the best ways to learn a new language?

6. Ask your library technician to help you find stories that explore feelings and the experience of entering a new culture. Some examples include:

- *Migrant* by Maxine Trottier
- *Marianthes Story : Painted Words and Spoken Memories* by Alike
- *On the Zwieback Trail* by Weaver, Kauffman and Rempel Smucker
- *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi
- *David's Trip to Paraguay: The Land of Amazing Colours* by Miriam Rudolph
- *Where is Taro?* by Elizabeth Claire
- *I Hate English!* by Ellen Levine
- *Angel Child, Dragon Child* by Michelle Surat
- *Children of the River* by Linda Crew

Consider having your students write a real or imagined story about moving to a new country.

7. Contributing to the newcomers' education will provide a real purpose for improving their own reading, writing, spelling, speaking, listening, patience and other life skills. (*Remember that having your students teach something really demonstrates what they themselves have learned*).

Brainstorm with students what they can do to make newcomers feel welcome.

- What are things that will be fun to do together?

- What are things that will help new students get schoolwork done?; that help you get schoolwork done?

Add to the students' list things such as;

- Take turns being buddies
- Sit with them at lunch time
- Help them with their homework
- Talk to them, listen to them
- Read to them
- Walk home with them or sit next to them on the bus
- Teach them things like the alphabet, numbers, rhymes
- Include them in games
- Learn things from them

8. Label things in the room. Use index cards to label items in the classroom. Leave space for the newcomers to add words in their language for other students to learn.

9. In Art, have students create posters of common vocabulary. Have students create large posters of common vocabulary categories and label them, such as: family groups, food, clothing, body parts etc.

10. Make concentration card games or board games to teach vocabulary and expressions. Use these at free times or nutrition breaks to practice vocabulary.

- Each set should have 11 to 17 pairs
- Sets may consist of categories such as numbers, colours, animals, fruit, vegetables, clothing, toys, body parts, transportation.
- Students choose items that are easy to draw or use the computer to create them
- Choose a category and list words. Check spelling of the words
- On one set of cards print the words, the other draw the picture

- Have them test their pictures on classmates to make sure they are clear
- When playing the game the English speaker should read the word and name the picture out loud to help the ESL learner acquire the vocabulary

11. Prepare audio tapes. Students can record a number of messages in English that the newcomer can use for learning.

SOME IDEAS TO RECORD ON TAPES

- O Canada - Have a group sing it on tape and then speak it.
- The Alphabet Song/Body Parts
- Numbers in order to 20, by tens to one hundred, by hundreds to one thousand
- Words in a picture dictionary
- Segments of chapters from school textbooks
- Items that are labeled around the room (number the labels so that the number of the item can be referred to on the tape)

TIPS WHEN MAKING AUDIO TAPES

- Use short tapes (15 minutes per side as these are easier to rewind, locate information, repeat etc.)
- Write the title on the label

Remember to reward the entire class for achievements of the ESL Learner. Rewards could include offering an evening without homework, a special game time or a classroom party.