

Critical Incidents in Immigrant Education Activity Sheet

Part I

In small groups, read the following critical incidents and craft a response to each. Each of these incidents has been chosen because they can or did really happen.

1. You have planned an immigration unit that has been received really well by students. As part of this unit, students are writing about the immigrant stories of their families. One of your highest achievers announces to the class that his mom came here from Mexico led by a man named “Coyote,” and that she had to hide in the back of a van. **What might be happening here? What are your reasons for thinking this? What are some other possible interpretations? How might you respond? Why would you respond this way?**

2. After a new state law was passed, your district is now collecting information on the citizenship status of your students. Your immigrant students have stopped coming to school for fear of being deported. **What might be happening here? What are your reasons for thinking this? What are some other possible interpretations? How might you respond? Why would you respond this way?**

3. One of your Hmong students asks to go to the nurse after lunch every Thursday (which happens to be pizza day) and occasionally other days of the week, too. She seems to be not feeling well often enough to cause you concern. **What might be happening here? What are your reasons for thinking this? What are some other possible interpretations? How might you respond? Why would you respond this way?**

4. You are in the cafeteria and you hear one of the staff say, “I don’t know why all those people had to come here.” Before you get a chance to answer, another staff responds with, “It’s because we give out social services here like candy. The legislature has made it so anyone can get handouts. It’s ridiculous.” **What might be happening here? What are your reasons for thinking this? What are some other possible interpretations? How might you respond? Why would you respond this way?**

5. Your Somali high school student is sweating profusely and looks very dizzy. She tells you she has her period. **What might be happening here? What are your reasons for thinking this? What are some other possible interpretations? How might you respond? Why would you respond this way?**

6. When teaching a health unit, you ask students to list five of their favorite foods as young children and then list their favorite foods now. A group of Cambodian students in the class does not complete the task and is very upset. **What might be happening here? What are your reasons for thinking this? What are some other possible interpretations? How might you respond? Why would you respond this way?**

7. You notice that a group of Latino students consistently wears L.A. Dodgers jerseys and hats to school. When you ask them about the team, they don't appear to know anything about the Dodgers or baseball. **What might be happening here? What are your reasons for thinking this? What are some other possible interpretations? How might you respond? Why would you respond this way?**

8. The parent of one of your Somali female students asks you to call home if you see the student without her hijab. **How might you respond? Why would you respond this way?**

9. You have students from countries at war such as Iraq and Afghanistan. The Fourth of July is approaching and you know that there will be a fireworks display in your town. **How might you respond? Why would you respond this way?**

10. Your class is completing a standardized test. They are working on a section about where things belong at home. One question asks:

Where is the most logical place to keep your toothbrush?

- a) In the refrigerator
- b) Near the sink
- c) In the garage
- d) Under the bed

A large number of your ELs choose answer A. **What might be happening here? What are your reasons for thinking this? What are some other possible interpretations? How might you respond? Why would you respond this way?**

Part II

Write three critical incidents that you have experienced. A critical incident should be a time in which your own blind spots prevented you from understanding your students' experience. Leave the final questions (What is happening here? How do you respond?) blank. Your colleagues will be tasked with answering them.

1.

What is happening here? How do you respond?

2.

What is happening here? How do you respond?

3.

What is happening here? How do you respond?