How Adult Educators Can Foster Immigrant Integration: ESOL and Beyond

VAACE conference
October 21, 2015
Our Vision

We seek an America that grows its economy by investing in its people, so that every worker and every industry has the skills to compete and prosper.
Our Mission

• We **organize** broad-based coalitions seeking to raise the skills of America’s workers across a range of industries.

• We **advocate** for public policies that invest in what works, as informed by our members’ real-world expertise.

• And we **communicate** these goals to an American public seeking a vision for a strong U.S. economy that allows everyone to be part of its success.
Today’s Workshop

• What is immigrant integration?
• Where does adult education fit in?
• The policy landscape
• What does this mean for you?
Setting the Stage: Immigration Context

- US is home to 41 million immigrants; 11 million are undocumented
- Virginia has 950,000 immigrants; 246,000 are undocumented

Sources: US Census Bureau; Migration Policy Institute. Photo credit: Wikipedia.
What is Immigrant Integration?

- A dynamic, **two-way process** in which newcomers and the receiving society work together to build secure, vibrant and cohesive communities. As an intentional effort, integration engages and transforms all community members, reaping shared benefits and creating a new whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. -- *Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees*

- There are **three pillars** of immigrant integration: linguistic, civic, and economic. -- *White House Interagency Task Force*
A Federal Lens: White House Task Force on New Americans

• Created by Nov. 2014 executive order

• Strategic plan (at right) released April 2015

• Outlines federal activities on immigrant integration, including adult education and naturalization

http://tinyurl.com/WHNewAmericans
Adult Ed Plays a Central Role in Fostering Immigrant Integration

- **Networks for Integrating New Americans** is a 3-year federal technical assistance initiative from OCTAE

- Five sites (RI, PA, WA, CA, ID)

- Each site includes an AEFLA-funded organization as a core member of the local network

Read the Theoretical Framework: http://tinyurl.com/NetworkNewAmer

www.nationalskillscoalition.org
Policy Tracks That Can Facilitate Integration

- Skills Policy
- Immigration Policy

Immigrant Integration
At Present....
On the Immigration Front, Four Federal Approaches

Solving the Undocumented Puzzle:

• DREAM Act – *not passed by Congress*; will likely be reintroduced this session

• Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (original 2012 DACA) – *currently in effect*

• Expanded 2014 DACA – *on hold due to court case*

• New Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) – *on hold due to court case*
A Refresher: Who Are the Dreamers?

- Arrived in US as children or young teens
- May have had interrupted schooling
- May speak English as a primary language, or may be English Language Learners
- May be in school, in college, and/or working

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Original DACA: Still in Effect!

Eligibility requirements cover these areas:

• Age now & age at arrival in US
• Continuous residence in the US
• Physical presence in the US
• Immigration status (i.e., currently undocumented)
• In school, have a GED or high school diploma, or honorable discharge from military
• Lack of criminal convictions

Find official instructions & a clear, simple video overview at: www.uscis.gov/ChildhoodArrivals
What DACA Means for Individuals

• Protection from deportation

• Ability to obtain a Social Security card and temporary work permit

• Ability to apply for a driver’s license

Image credit: US Citizenship and Immigration Services
DACA in Your Classroom

- Students may ask for a letter to verify their enrollment in your class
- Students should be encouraged to persist in classes even after obtaining DACA status

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Expanded DACA: Not in Effect

- Would remove age cap
- Would allow for some newer arrivals
- Other requirements are similar to original DACA, including the educational requirement

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DAPA: Who Would be Affected?
This Program is Not Yet in Effect

DAPA = Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents

• In other words: undocumented immigrant parents of US citizen children or green-card-holder children
• Includes temporary work permit and protection from deportation
• Eligibility requirements do not include education component

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DREAM Act: Will Congress Move?

- Only Congress can provide a path to *permanent* status
- Would include strict education requirements
- **Advocacy opportunity**: Add industry-recognized credentials?
Learn More

MISSING IN ACTION
JOB-DRIVEN EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS FOR UNAUTHORIZED YOUTH AND ADULTS
RACHEL UNRUH AND AMANDA BERGSON-SHILCOCK

www.nationalskillscoalition.org/federal-policy/immigration
On the Skills Front…
What Congress Did Pass

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), July 2014

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How Do Immigrants Fit into WIOA?

• **Title I - Workforce** *(for work-authorized individuals)*

• **Title II - Adult Education**
  – English Language/Civics
  – Integrated basic education and occupational training (“I-BEST” type models)
  – ABE/HSE
  – ESOL
Using WIOA to Drive Integration

• How do tools such as Integrated Education and Training and career pathways help inform immigrant integration efforts?

• Where are the roadblocks in using WIOA’s tools? Where are new opportunities?
A Classroom Resource on Integration

- **An Instructors’ Toolkit for Building Bridges Across Communities** consists of mid-level, adaptable ESOL and ABE classroom activities that aim to foster dialogue across cultures and build lasting connections, especially among immigrants and US-born residents.

- It draws on resources developed by Welcoming America and *The Change Agent* magazine from World Education. Published in 2015.

http://tinyurl.com/ESOLtoolkit
Discussion

- Does your organization serve immigrant learners?
- Is *immigrant integration* part of your lexicon?
- What challenges do you see in implementing integration activities in your classroom or program?
- What areas of opportunity do you see?
Weighing In on Policy: The Adult Educator’s Perspective

- Share success stories
- Sign on in support
- Educate policymakers

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Weighing In on Policy: The Learner’s Perspective

- Letter-writing
- Inviting a policymaker to visit
- Peer storytelling
- Testimony

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