

Community Resources: Making Them Real to Students

Created by Lisa Gimbel, The Welcome Project, Somerville, MA

Intention of Lesson: To introduce students to agencies and local resource providers in the community so they may go there independently when needed.

Intended Population: Intermediate level class

Materials:

- Review handout of local agencies, a list containing address, description, contact people, services provided, phone and web sites.
- Student-generated list of questions for each of the sites

Preparation:

- Engage students in preparing questions for the various service providers.
- As they generate questions, write them on the board or newsprint.
- Preparation with each site:
 - Make sure the agency understands it is an ESOL group; ask agency representative to speak slowly and clearly using accessible vocabulary.
 - Teacher will ask comprehension checking questions during presentation to make sure students understand and can engage.
 - Ask agency to have written materials available in multiple languages.
 - Conduct a short tour of the site

Implementation:

1. Ask students to think about what questions are important for you to ask at each agency. (For example, what services are available for people without documentation, how much does this service cost, etc?)
2. Have students practice the questions in pairs.
3. When the pair work is done, ask students what makes it difficult to understand an English speaker, because they will be listening to a lot of information on their visits.
4. Generate a list of challenges to understanding English.
5. Ask if anyone has suggestions to help comprehension.
6. Write the suggestions down.
 - a. For example: If someone is speaking too quickly, how can you ask them to slow down?
 - b. If you missed something and want the speaker to repeat it, how can you ask?
7. Have students ask the questions in pairs again, but this time have them practice some of the strategies for aiding in comprehension.

Debrief on Community Resources Class:

Students will be able to explain the resources available locally in the community.

1. Small group retell the story of the trip
 - a. Groups race to put pictures from community resources trip in chronological order.
 - b. Practice retelling the story in small groups
 - c. Each small group retells it for the full group. Where is it a picture of? What happened there? They judge if it is accurate and what parts have been forgotten.
2. Concentric circles
 - a. Divide students who were on the trip into one circle and the students who were not are in the other circle. They are partnered and switch partners regularly.
 - b. Students explain where they went, what resource was the most helpful, what they think others should know about.
3. Students go over and correct homework in pairs – exercise 6, using infinitives of purpose to say why people go to each community resource.
4. Dictation

Classroom Snapshot:

We visited Open Space Acupuncture, which has sliding scale fees. The students received a certificate for a free treatment. We also visited Somerville Community Corporation, the local CDC which provides affordable housing; Community Action Agency of Somerville, the local anti-poverty agency; LIFT, an organization which provides various kinds of 1:1 assistance using labor of college students who are volunteering; The Family Center – provides family therapy; and Be in Union Yoga studio.

We learned NOT to overbook! Fifteen minutes is not enough time for each location. Taking pictures is key to remembering each resource. A picture, combined with the print material we created for students, is an important piece. Prepare students as best as possible that some resources will not be available to people who are undocumented.