Discourse Matters

\*\*\*This lesson plan is modified and adapted from the website, *Teaching Tolerance*

***Bell-Ringer***: Start a class discussion about what the students already know about immigration. Depending on how much you have covered in class, this discussion will look different from classroom to classroom. Depending on how much you have discussed immigration, this will be a review of information or an initial discussion of these concepts. What is immigration? What is the process for immigrating to a new country? Where do many immigrants come from? Where do many immigrants settle? Why might someone immigrate to the United States?

At the close of the discussion, highlight for the students that this is the **context** of the immigration debate in the United States.

***Pair-Share***: Divide the class into pairs and have each complete the worksheet, “Key terms in immigration debate” (worksheet is from *Teaching Tolerance).*

***Direct Instruction***: Denotation is the exact meaning of a word. Connotation, on the other hand, is more than just the dictionary definition of a word. Connotation is the suggested, or implied, meaning of a word. For example, the denotations of the words “cute” and “gorgeous” may be similar, but their connotations are different. (Note: Encourage students to list the connotations of the words “cute” and “gorgeous.”)

***Pair-Share***: Write the words illegal and unauthorized on the board. Have the students reunite with their individual partner. With your partner write down the connotation of these words. Have the pairs discuss some of the following questions. Have you ever done anything “unauthorized”? What were the consequences? Did you break a school rule or a household rule? Is doing something that is unauthorized the same as doing something that is illegal? Why or why not? (Note: An example might be that entry into the cafeteria after lunchtime is unauthorized. If a student enters, what should the punishment be? Can you think of instances when a student might make the decision to enter even though it’s not authorized? What if entry into the cafeteria after lunchtime were illegal? How does this change the situation?) Have the pairs report back to the larger class for a discussion.

***Article Reading*:** Have students read “What part of ‘illegal’ do you not understand?” from *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/28/opinion/28sun4.html> . As the students read, have them underline each word/phrase that has a positive connotation. Have them circle any word/phrase that has a negative connotation.

***Reflection***: The author in *The New York Times* article believes that language is an important part of the issue of immigration. Do you agree? Have students write a 1-2 paragraph response to the article in which they EITHER (a) agree that terminology is important and that undocumented immigrant or unauthorized immigrant are better terms than illegal or alien

OR (b) disagree that terminology is important and argue that any terms are fine to use.



TERMS IN THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE

Read each word and its definition. Identify where you have heard the terms before - give details about the context, even if the context is not specific to immigration

**alien** [ay-lee-uhn] (noun) person coming from another place; foreign

**citizen** [sit-uh-zuhn] (noun) person belonging to a certain country

**illegal** [il-lee-gull] (adjective) going against the law

**immigrant** [im-uh-grint] (noun) person from another place who moves to a new country to live

**immigration** [im-uh-gray-shun] (noun) the act of moving from one place to another to live

**unauthorized** [un-aw-thur-ized] (adjective) something that is not permitted

**undocumented** [un-dock-uy-ment-ed] (adjective) not having the required paperwork