Immigration Policy and Citizenship Preparation
Primary Content Area: US History

Introduction
The United States has over the course of its history received immigrants from all over the world. Immigrants have historically helped to form and shape a land that was initially populated by Native Americans. African slaves, transported against their will to the developing country, also contributed significantly to the shaping of America. Each successive group of immigrants has struggled to gain recognition and status in the country and, as they establish themselves in the country, have contributed mightily to the political, economic, social, and cultural development of the country. The transition period from immigrants to full citizen has not been an easy one. New immigrants struggle with language acquisition, adapting to the style and customs of American life, and finding meaningful work, good educational opportunities for them and their children, and even food and shelter. Sometimes policy and laws have supported this critical transition period. Other times it has not. The United States is in the throes of a nation-wide debate about how to address the issue of immigration to this country. This service-learning project will enable students to gain a better understanding of the history of immigration to this country along with contemporary immigration issues and policies and make a contribution to those who are seeking to gain citizenship status in this country. This project should complement/extend a teacher’s unit/exploration of immigration in US History.

Project Goals
- Students will gain a historical perspective of immigration to the United States and understand the push and pull factors of immigration and how those factors operate in a specific country.
- Students will become familiar with the current immigration debate in the United States and the components of the debate.
- Students will identify contemporary proposals to address immigration to this country and develop their own compromise proposals.
- Students will assist immigrants as they work toward achieving citizenship.
- Students will share their ideas about immigration with decision makers in their community and city.
- Students will reflect on their experience.

Procedure/Project Sequence
1. This project can easily be built into a unit on migration/immigration in a World Studies or US History course. To prepare students for participation in an immigration service-learning project ask them to interview family members, friends, or other adults about where they came from before settling in Chicago. If family members were born Chicago, ask them to think about their parents or grandparents.
2. Students should complete a US or world map tracing the migration patterns of individuals interviewed. What does the map tell us about internal migration and immigration? Brainstorm with your students both the push and pull factors of migration and immigration.
3. Assign small groups of students a country that sends immigrants and refugees to the United States. What are the conditions that lead to an exodus of some people from their home country? Ask each group to make a presentation about their country and identify the nature of immigration to the United States. Why are they leaving? Why are they coming to the U.S.?
How do they arrive here? What are their initial experiences in this country? Lead a discussion with your students about the difference between documented and undocumented immigrants.

4. Immigrants often have a hard time adjusting to life in the new country. Assign each student group immigrants from specific countries to research. What was the immigrant experience like for the first generation of immigrants? How were they received in this country? Students should analyze some of the following immigrant groups: Italians, Irish, Jews, Chinese, Polish, Mexican, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Japanese, German, etc. Students should be able to tell when the immigrants arrived, why they came to the United States, how they were regarded by the public, how immigrants found support, etc.

5. Examine the current issues in the immigration debate with your students: Border control, deportation of undocumented immigrants, guest worker status, pathways to citizenship, amnesty. Have each student or student group choose or assign one of these issues for research. Students (groups) should be prepared to come back to class and make a presentation on the issue.

6. After hearing each presentation, work with your class to develop a reasonable immigration reform proposal. Remember, there is a broad set of contentious issues in the immigration debate. Students should take this into consideration.

7. With the knowledge that the process of immigration is a challenging and even gut-wrenching experience, challenge your students to support immigrants in one of following ways:
   a. Meet with local decision makers to share the class’ ideas and thoughts about immigration reform legislation or participate in a community education project to help inform other citizens about the immigration process and the current immigration debate.
   b. Work with a community partner to provide support services to prospective citizens which might include helping immigrants prepare for the citizenship exam or develop language skills.
   c. Gather stories of immigrants and write them up for presentation or download them to a suitable website for publication, i.e., www.myimmigrationstory.com.
   d. Volunteer with the New Americans Initiative to support the work of community organizations that are helping immigrants achieve citizenship status.

8. Following the service-learning project, gather your students for reflection. Lead a discussion about the contentious nature of immigration in the United States and why is it so difficult to find a solution?

Community Partners/Resources

- Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights - www.icirr.org
- New Americans Initiative – a project of ICIRR to support immigrants as they work toward citizenship status - http://www.icirr.org/content/about-new-americans-initiative
- Read or upload stories of the immigrant experience and learn about how immigrants have contributed to and/or experience the United States - http://myimmigrationstory.com/
• Forty Cent Tip – an excellent collection of brief immigrant biographies that describe the immigrant experience in the United States -
  http://www.nextgenerationpress.org/titles/fortycenttip.html

Addendum
This project addresses the following Common Core Standards
SL1.11-12: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues.
RH1.11-12: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

Duration
Preparation: Issue Research and Analysis – 4-5 hours
Action: Participation in the action project – 5-10 hours
Reflection: Discussion/Education of Others – 2-3 hours

Cross-Curricular Connections
Connections with World Studies, World Languages, and English could be made during this project.