

Reading Partners

An Opportunity for English Language Learners and Receiving Communities to Engage in Dialogue about Work, Health, Schooling, and Parenting

Lesson Packet #5 – Summer 2015

The Change Agent <changeagent.nelrc.org>

Description: In this activity, language learners and members of receiving communities read one or two selected articles from *The Change Agent* magazine and then use the writing prompts to engage in an exchange of ideas, experiences, and perspectives about the article topic. There are eight articles to choose from – articles about moving to a new community, work, health, schooling and parenting.

Purpose: The aim of this activity is to use text as a way to get people from different communities talking (through writing) about topics of common interest. Programs that have partnerships with local organizations can use the activities to bring students into conversation with these partners (health care providers who want to connect with immigrants about health, employers who are interested in hiring immigrants, etc.). However, there are many opportunities to communicate across communities right in our own programs: this activity could be carried out by ABE and ESL classes that partner to read and correspond about the same articles, by program volunteers that partner with students, or by diverse student pairs in one classroom.

Logistics: The partners are being asked to write twice: first in response to the article and its related writing prompt, and then a second time in response to their reading partner's letter.

Time: 2 hours to read, discuss articles in class, and write to community partners; 2 hours to read and discuss in class what the partners have written and then respond.

Materials: Selected articles from *The Change Agent* magazine.

Classroom Steps:

1. Based on student reading level and the partner you are working with, select the one or two articles that you'll be using as shared reading. Send or give these, along with their related writing prompts, to the reading partners.
2. If the article you want to use is too difficult for your students, consider using selected paragraphs or pulling out an evocative excerpt that students would be motivated to work through, even though it's challenging (excerpt recommendations are noted below; a teacher of lower level readers could pick out just one key sentence to focus on). Using text

that is compelling but challenging for students addresses the College and Career Readiness Standards' emphasis on using increasingly complex non-fiction text.

3. Do all the reading support activities that you always do so that your students understand the text. Identify which aspects of text complexity will be challenging for your students: consider vocabulary, language structure, text structure and supports (subheads, graphics, etc.), and background knowledge. Do some explicit instruction in the areas that students need support. Work with the text until students understand the author's perspective and main points.
4. Then have students use the text-based writing prompts to write letters (via email or on paper) to their reading partners about the text and their own experiences and opinions. The reading partners will be doing the same.
5. When the letters from the partners have been received and read, spend time in class discussing what the reading partners have said about the articles, and how it compares to students' own thoughts or experiences. Give students time and support in drafting their responses. For example, have them brainstorm three things they would like to say or ask in their responses and then elaborate, or have them free write a draft response and then conference with a partner to review their drafts for clarity, tone, and grammar.
6. This second letter ends the correspondence unless there is some interest on both sides to build on the groundwork that has been laid.

Articles and Writing Prompts

Immigration in My Community by Carl Barnes

Reading level: 6/7 (to shorten, use paragraphs 1 and 2, the last sentence of paragraph 3, and paragraph 5)

Prompts:

- In this article, Carl Barnes explains how he thinks immigrants strengthen his community. He said, "I have seen this with my own eyes." What do you see in your community?
- Carl writes that he has, "worked with immigrants, played with immigrants, and gone to church with immigrants." Where do immigrants and other residents mix in your community? Where do they not mix? Where would you like to see more mixing?

Advice to New Immigrants by Immigrants at Leon County Schools in Florida

Reading level: 4/5 (to shorten, select a subset of the 6 quotes)

Prompts:

- From your perspective, which is the best advice?
- What advice to new immigrants would you add?
- What advice would you give to a community that is receiving new immigrants?

Junk Food Easy to Find: Healthy Food, Not So Much by Gabby Martinez

Reading level: 6/7 (to shorten, use paragraphs 1, 3, and 4)

Prompts:

- In this article, Gabby Martinez says that her family doesn't have easy access to healthy food. Her neighborhood has convenience stores but no supermarket or farm stand. Where is the healthy food in your community?
- How has your diet changed over the past five years (or since you came to the United States)? Do you think the diet in the U.S. is healthier or less healthy than your home country?

Stay Healthy by Working Hard by Hawo Mhando

Reading level: 5/6 (to shorten, use paragraphs 1, 2, and the last sentence of paragraph 3)

Prompts:

- In this article, Hawo Mhando describes how the physical work she did in her home country made her healthy and strong. In the United States, she does not carry wood and water or walk long distances. She does not feel as healthy. How has your physical activity changed since you came to this country?
- What do you think of Hawo's advice? What are some other low-cost ways that people get exercise in this country?

Technology Connects and Disconnects by Marleny Salguero

Reading level: 4 (to shorten, use paragraph 1, the first half of paragraph 2, and paragraphs 3 and 5)

Prompt:

- In this article, Marleny Salguero says that she doesn't like the way "technology disconnects me from my family." She describes some good ideas for limiting her children's use of technology, but it is still a struggle. What else do you think parents can do to keep their families connected?

Uniforms? Dress Codes? Or Free Choice? by Adult Students from Massachusetts, Arkansas, and Missouri

Reading level: 7 (to shorten, select a subset of the 7 quotes)

Prompts:

- In your country, do children in public schools wear uniforms? Do you think this is a good idea? Explain your opinion.
- From the opinions of the authors, quote the one sentence you most agree with, and explain why.
- In this country, who makes decisions about whether school children will wear uniforms? How can parents talk to these decision-makers?

What Inspires Me to Become an Architect by David Colon

Reading level: 6/7

Prompts:

- David Colon writes, "Once they saw that I was a good laborer, they started to teach me other things . . . ". How are good workers given opportunities to learn where you work?
- What opportunities would you like there to be?

How Times Have Changed by Robert Berroa

Reading level: 8/9 (to shorten, drop the first and last paragraphs)

Prompt:

- In this article, Robert Berroa writes, “I have witnessed first hand how manufacturing has changed, and I know I must continue to adapt to this change.” What kinds of changes are happening where you work? What education and training is available to help workers adapt to these changes?

Note: The student-written articles in *The Change Agent* are a valuable way to support community-building year-round because they allow adult education students to hear from people that they might, initially, think are quite different from themselves but discover, by reading about people’s experiences and perspectives, share much in common. Twice a year, the website (changeagent.nelrc.org) announces a call for articles from adult education students on whatever is the next issue’s topic. Students who are published receive a \$50 stipend, and many report that the experience transforms their sense of themselves as writers and as people with something to say that’s worth hearing. Go to the website for many free resources, and see how your students can participate.

Find more *Change Agent* lesson packets at <changeagent.nelrc.org>, as well as PDFs of magazines on a wide variety of themes, articles in audio, CCR-aligned activities, and more. All of that is available for the price of an online subscription: \$20 per teacher per year.

Immigration in My Community

Carl Barnes

I am a 71-year old African American male, and I have been in Caldwell County, North Carolina, for some 60 years. I have seen this county change a lot with the Hispanics arriving in our community. And in my opinion, it's all for the better.

Immigrants contribute to our community by being good, hard-working people. They get jobs as landscapers, furniture workers, and construction workers. They help to make our community great by bringing good food, good

ideas, and different languages and cultures. They are also good for the community because they pay taxes.

Immigrants are good neighbors. They are interesting and wonderful people. They bring new forms of entertainment like

soccer and cricket. They offer so much to the community. I have seen this with my own eyes. I have worked with immigrants, played with immigrants, and gone to church with immigrants since the 1960s.

It is a pleasure to see my nieces and nephews and grandchildren grow up with immigrants. I think Congress should pass a bill that would give immigrants the same opportunities that the rest of us enjoy.



Immigrants are good neighbors.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. got the ball rolling by bringing all of us together, black and white, to end segregation and fight for equality.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., got the ball rolling by bringing all of us together, black and white, to end segregation and fight for equality. Now, whites and blacks understand each other better. I hope that we try to do our best to finish his work. We are all in this together. Together we stand, and divided we fall.

Carl Barnes attends the Caldwell County Family Literacy Program in Hudson, NC. Carl is made aware daily of the new opportunities that getting his GED credential will bring to his life.

Advice to New Immigrants

From Immigrants at Leon County Schools in Florida

Follow the Law!

Make sure your brake lights work! If your brake lights don't work, you could cause an accident or get a ticket. I got a ticket because my brake lights did not work. I went to court. The judge said that I had to choose to either do 10 hours of community service or pay \$150. I chose to do the community service. I picked up trash along the roads in Tallahassee from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm. This experience also helped me understand that it is important not to throw trash on the roads!

— Anayeli Santiago



Do Not Offer Bribes!

It is important for new immigrants to understand that they should not bribe police officers. In some countries, if the police stop you for speeding, they will ask you for money and then let you go. But in the U.S., you could get in trouble for offering a bribe.

— Priscila Leon

Learn English!

It can help you in many ways, including keeping you safe. Can you read this?

“CAUTION: Harmful if absorbed through the skin. Avoid contact with skin, eyes, or clothing. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling and before eating and drinking.”

If you cannot read the above, you could be in danger because you do not understand that the product is toxic.

— Ana Carolina Espitia

Find People You Can Trust!

Be careful about who advises you on legal matters. I found a “notary public” who said she could help me get political asylum. But instead I got a deportation letter. When I tried to find her, she had disappeared. Find someone you trust to help you with all of your applications.

—Julia Ruiz



Enroll in English Classes Sooner Rather than Later!

Register for an English class as soon as you arrive in this country. For seven years, I let my children translate for me. I got comfortable with that, and I did not put pressure on myself to learn English. However, I felt like a child when they had to help me at the grocery store or at the mall. It was not a pleasant feeling. Now I am enrolled in English classes!

—Maria Luisa Olvera

Apply for Student Aid for College!

My advice to immigrant parents and their high school children is to learn about the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). It is part of the U.S. Department of Education. It helps students pay for college with grants or loans. It took us two weeks to complete the application. My son had to submit copies of documents, such as proof that he has been living in the U.S. for one year. We scanned the documents and sent them via email. My son received grants, which is money he doesn't have to pay back. He also received loans, which is money he does have to pay back after he graduates.

—Josefina Caraballo



Junk Food Easy to Find Healthy Food, Not So Much

Gabby Martinez

My family has more access to junk food than to healthy food! At this moment we have two convenience stores and one pizza place and a pharmacy near our home. A convenience store sells a lot of junk food and processed food. These foods are not nourishing for our bodies.

Another important problem is the price. It is cheaper to buy a cheeseburger than to buy an apple. We buy fast food because it is easy and

We are sitting in fast food restaurants ordering unhealthy meals, and the healthy meals are out of reach of our hands!

cheap rather than buy a fruit cocktail. We are sitting in fast food restaurants ordering unhealthy meals, and the healthy meals are out of reach of our hands!

The closest supermarket is five miles away from our home. I shop there once a week, and I look for special sales on fruits and vegetables. Also, I buy seasonal fruit at the nearest farm outside the city or at the closet community garden. There are some gardens in Fresno, like Al Radka



Fresno is in the middle of the Central Valley in California, one of the highest-producing agricultural regions in the country. Yet many people here lack access to healthy food. The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture calls Fresno a “food desert.”



Park, but there are not enough. Our community needs a mobile fruit and vegetable stand that can sell healthy food in all parts of our neighborhoods.

We need healthy food in our neighborhood because it helps us teach our children about how to have a good diet. The best way for children to learn is to grow up with access to lots of fruits and vegetables. In Mexico, my family worked and lived near fresh produce. There was limited access to fast food. Children and their families ate fresh crops as they became ready. I remember my mother growing fresh papayas and selling them right near our family home.

In Fresno, we should have fresh produce within a safe walking distance of our neighborhoods. Then our families would have the chance to buy nutritious food, and parents could buy in quantities and at good prices.

Gabby Martinez is a GED student at Fresno Adult School in Fresno, CA. In 2014, she organized with her community and persuaded a local school to open its gates on the weekends so that children would have a safe place to play and get exercise.



This interactive “soundscape map” allows you to listen to the sounds of food being prepared and eaten in Fresno, CA. Go to berkeley.news21.com/theration/soundscapes and click on the various dots to listen.

Stay Healthy by Working Hard

Hawo Mhando

I remember when I was back home in Africa, in a refugee camp in Kenya. I used to work so hard. For example, I used to cook using firewood. I had to go to the forest to fetch firewood. I also walked a very long distance to fetch water because we did not have running water in our home. I carried the water and the firewood on my head. I walked home without using a car. I also chopped wood. That was hard work, but I got used to it because it was a daily job.

When I came to America, I was very happy because I did not have to travel by foot. I did not have to cook using firewood. And I did not have to fetch water from outside. I got everything in my house by pressing a button or turning on the tap. I really appreciated the American government because it saved me from a difficult situation. But after three months, I became very fat and I was unable to walk for a long distance.

Therefore, when I compare my health in Africa and my health in America, I prefer how I felt in Africa. In Africa, I was stronger than I am here. I plan to start doing some activities like I did in Africa very soon; for example, walking long distances and carrying heavy things on my head. My advice is: if you want to be healthy, make sure you work hard, drive less, and walk more.



Hawo Mhando is studying English with Vermont Adult Learning in conjunction with the Community College of Vermont in Burlington. She lives in Winooski, VT, with her husband and two children.

Step Out! Here's where it will take you...



Brisk walking burns about 150 calories in 30 minutes.



Exercise helps you sleep better.



Exercise stimulates brain chemicals, which may leave you feeling happier and more relaxed.



You'll look better and feel better when you exercise regularly.

Technology Connects & Disconnects

Marleny Salguero

For me, technology can make our lives easier by bringing us closer to each other. And it also can become a weapon that hurts our family life.

Face Time with My Mom

For example, Skype helps connect people. Let me tell you, I love Skype because it allows me to talk with my relatives in Guatemala. I can even get “face time” with them. Every Sunday night I use this program to see my family. It is amazing! It makes me feel closer to them. The first time my mom and I saw each other on Skype, we couldn’t stop crying. It was the first time we had seen each other in 10 years! I am so happy I can see other family members too. I have two nieces in Guatemala, ages 11 and 8. I get to see them grow up.

No Time with My Own Kids

Yet, technology also disconnects me from my family. I have constant debates with my children and husband about how much they use their tablets and the new Xbox. My husband is paying every month for Xbox Live. When he’s not working, all he does is play. I call it “The Plague.”

What can I say about my children? They are

either using the tablet or the Xbox. I spend all day yelling, “Please stop playing.” My children don’t get fresh air or play outside. They don’t play with friends very much. I used to play games with them, but now they don’t want to play with me.



Strategies for My Family

To get my sons to put down their technology, I make sure they sign up for sports and other activities. One of my sons plays soccer. My other son is a member of the Boy Scouts. We go to church every Sunday morning. I do not allow them to bring their technology to the dinner table. That means we get a chance to talk as a family. But they eat very fast, and then they run back to Xbox.

Marleny Salguero is an ABE student at Bristol Community College in Fall River, MA. Originally from Guatemala, she has been living in the U.S. for 12 years. She has two sons, ages 12 and 8. She plans to get her GED and go to college.

Strategies for Connecting

What does Marleny do to counteract the disconnecting effects of technology?

Interview your classmates. Find out what strategies they use to keep family members connected and to limit children’s use of technology. Find out what works and what doesn’t work. Write down some of the ideas here. Make a powerpoint and present it to the class.

Uniforms? Dress Codes? Or Free Choice?



Yes! Uniforms Stop Bullying

From my experience in life I do think children should wear uniforms to school. When I was growing up, I felt embarrassed at school because I didn't wear what other kids wore. I wasn't fashionable. I was mistreated and called names on a daily basis. My self esteem got to a low point because I didn't fit in with the crowd. I felt I wasn't learning in school. I let the criticism bother me when it never should have.

Lisa DeLeon, Project Hope, Boston, MA

Yes! Uniforms Stop Peer Pressure

There is every indication that wearing uniforms might reduce peer pressure and put the emphasis back on learning. Imagine for a moment the possibility of learning without all the distraction of fashion commercialism.

Maria Norried, Fort Smith, AR

Yes! Uniforms Stop Discrimination

Parents will save money if students wear uniforms because uniforms are not as expensive as regular clothing. Many students insist on wearing expensive clothing with brand names while other students must wear cheap clothing. This discriminates between poor and rich students.

Nhi Thu Tran, Fort Smith, AR



Yes! Dress Codes Support Safety, Respect, and Freedom

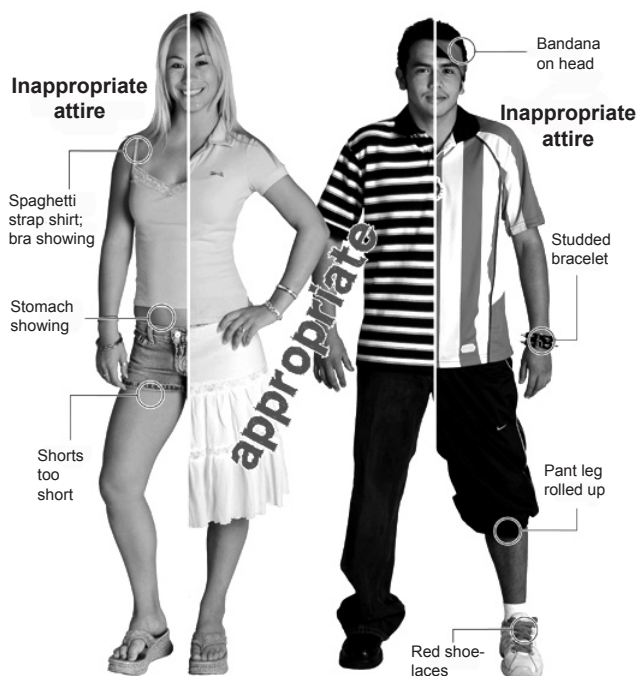
With the growing violence among young people, it is essential that schools have a dress code. Gang dress, such as bandanas and baggy clothing, spreads fear instead of focusing on learning. Oversized pants can easily conceal weapons or drugs. A dress code does not take away anyone’s individuality nor their free spirit or freedom. What it does support is self confidence and self respect.

Mike Fiorino, North Kansas City Public Schools, Kansas City, MO

Yes! Dress Codes Teach Our Children

Kids need to have a dress code in schools. Dressing in belly shirts or wearing short shorts is a distraction to other students. Dress codes can teach our kids how to dress professionally.

Amelia Hasten, N. Kansas City Public Schools, Kansas City, MO



Dress code poster from Washoe County in Reno, NV.

Yes! Free Choice for the “Land of the Free”

The United States is the land of freedom, not the land of uniforms and dress codes. It is hard to be an individual when you look just like everyone else. You should be able to show your personality through your clothing. To stand out and shine seems impossible if you cannot express yourself through your clothing. The U.S. is the land of free choice; to have clothing mandated is wrong.

Shawn Zack, North Kansas City Public Schools, Kansas City, MO

Yes to Free Choice! Diverse Clothing for Diverse People

No one should dictate what we wear. One of the greatest opportunities about living in the U.S. is to have freedom of expression. Our country has many people from different places. People have different beliefs, religions, and backgrounds, and all that diversity is reflected in their clothing. If institutions and society begin to dictate our clothing there would be great chaos and rebellion.

Zokie Simien, North Kansas City Public Schools, Kansas City, MO



What Inspires Me to Become an Architect

David Colon

When I was 19 years old, I went to work in construction with my older brother. At first it seemed hard and exhausting, but when I got used to it and learned the basics, it became easy and exciting. When you are building something, it's hard to imagine what the finished product will look like. But once I started to see how beautiful the buildings turned out, I knew I wanted to become an architect.

At the beginning I was a laborer. I had to clean up behind more skilled workers, such as carpenters, welders, and painters. I carried steel doors and equipment up flights of stairs. Once they saw that I was a good laborer, they started to teach me other things, such as how to build cabinets, put

up sheet rock, paint professionally, and weld. As I learned more skills, I saw how beautifully my work came out. I said to myself, "I want to be an architect." Today I am working hard to reach that goal.

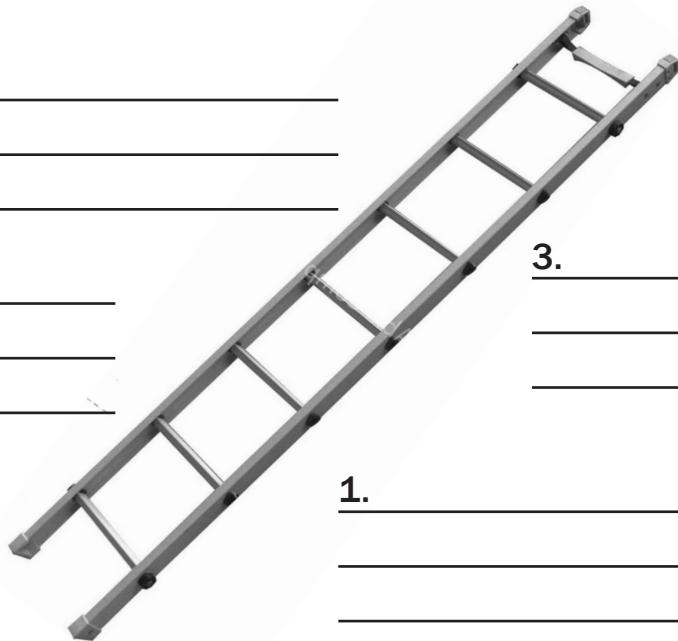


David Colon is a student at the Mid-Manhattan Adult Learning Center #5 in New York City. He is from the Upper West Side of Manhattan and is the proud father of a 16 year old daughter. He is a supervisor for a major clothing chain in New York City.

4. _____

2. _____

Career Ladder



3. _____

1. _____

What are the steps David Colon has taken, is taking, and probably will need to take if he wants to become an architect? Use information from the article, his biography, and what you know. Describe the steps on your own career ladder. See Resources on p. 33 for more direction.

How Times Have Changed

Robert Berroa

I was born in the Dominican Republic and came to the United States at a young age. The only technology I was brought up with was a wall phone, a phonograph that had to be cranked, and a black and white television that had three channels. Oh, how times have changed! Now I have a smart phone, a CD player, and a flat screen TV that offers over 75 channels. Technology has made my life more pleasant.

Technology Tracks Inventory

One of the earliest jobs I had was working in a grocery store. At that time we had to write all orders by hand. This was difficult and time-consuming for me due to my limited knowledge of English. Now, you merely scan a product's bar code, and you will immediately know if it needs to be re-ordered. This technology has made it easier for stores to keep track of their inventory.

Computers Speed Manufacturing

Another job that I had was being in charge of a machine that twisted thread. This machine used an antiquated and time-consuming process. While

I was fortunate to witness this change in production, and I was trained to work on a computer program that operated different machines.

to work on a computer program that operated different machines. The time it took to finish this product went from four hours to half an hour, resulting in a better and more durable product.

I was at this job, it was sold to another company. This new company brought in new machinists along with new technology. I was fortunate to witness this change in production, and I was trained

I have witnessed first hand how manufacturing has changed, and I know I must continue to adapt to this change.

Education Helps Me Keep Pace with Changes

At this stage in my life, I am working towards my GED. I am also enrolled in a pre-manufacturing course at a local community college. This course has given me an opportunity to read blueprints, take accurate measurements, learn computer applications in manufacturing, safety in the workplace, math skills, and new concepts in the field of manufacturing.

By training workers in the science of new manufacturing technology, the United States will be better able to compete with European and Asian countries which at the present are ahead of the United States. It is about time for our country to make more goods that are stamped MADE IN AMERICA.

Robert Berroa is a student at Northwestern Connecticut Community College in Winsted, CT, in the Project Crossroads Program, and he is working towards a certificate in the pre-manufacturing course offered through the initiative of the Connecticut Manufacturing, Energy, and Transportation Grant.



More about Work

Read on! The articles on pp. 37-39 focus on similar themes: technology and work.

Looking for a good job? Check out the "Good Jobs..." issue (#36) of *The Change Agent* on our website.