

# Chapter 11

## Understanding and Facing Migration Through Stories for Influence

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Preparing students to face migration depends on how schools are responding to the needs of the children and their families. The authors introduce *Stories for Influence* to help teachers scaffold children's understanding of migration so they can gain perspective, create, and share their own stories. Research shows how stories make us humans by exposing the humanity in both our own and others' migration stories. The authors use Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, neuroscience, and socio-emotional aspects of storytelling to support the effectiveness of *Stories for Influence*. They also provide venues, such as the *Out of Eden Learn* framework, children's literature, and thinking routines and global thinking routines strategies to cognitively and emotionally engage children in constructing meaning and making sense of human events as igniters of their stories. Migration is approached from the *Reimagining Migration (RM)* educational framework that sees the presence of migrant-origin children as an asset.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The world is facing unprecedented challenges, and this time has underscored the importance of preparing children not only to understand what human beings are experiencing in a world on the move but also to develop empathy. An educator's mission is to be prepared to facilitate this. Using *stories for influence*, educators can engage children in understanding migration and take perspective to promote acceptance and connectivity from both humanity and kindness.

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Migration is a shared condition of our past, present, and future. The term migration comes from the Latin verb *migratus*, meaning “to move from place to place, change position or abode.” Humans have been moving from one place to another throughout our history for different reasons and circumstances. Today, the common causes that force people to emigrate are natural disasters, climate change, sociopolitical and socio-economic threats associated with poverty, violence and safety, among others. One quarter of all children under age eighteen across the developing nations have an immigrant parent (Reimagining Migration, 2020, para. 1).

Preparing students for a complex world depends on how schools are responding to children’s needs. Emigrant families and their children arrive in their new lands with a cultural and linguistic heritage that should be considered assets (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2018). Unfortunately, migration is commonly seen as a problem rather than an opportunity to celebrate diversity and learn from each other. Schools should break any type of stigma by providing students with appropriate and inclusive learning experiences for immigrant-origin children, their peers, and their families. It is critical for educators, when facing these challenges, to cognitively and emotionally engage students to understand the complexity of migration, promote empathy, and find the humanity in both our own and others’ migration stories.

Stories make us human. The authors have learned from their experience working with young children that storytelling is a powerful venue to engage children in conversations that can be extended to actions. Children learn to take perspective and share their own experiences at the same time by connecting with elements of other people’s stories. These types of experiences transmit the message that they are not alone.

This chapter aims to spark empathy, humanity, and altruism by showing how to use *stories for influence*. The authors define *stories for influence* as children’s cognitive and emotional engagement in tailoring the telling of a story to a specific audience. Their work is founded on theoretical foundations such as Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) ecological model about the power of stories to influence others because children are affected by their physical and social environments. Children’s stories carry emotions and thinking. For Immordino-Yang (2016) emotional and social competencies impact learning. Both locals and newcomers face readjustment and tolerance challenges. Thus, it is important to connect the science of human development with recent neuroscientific insights into the fundamental social context. According to Immordino-Yang (2016), the nature of human biology informs us of the importance of a whole-child approach to education.

Furthermore, they implemented pedagogical frameworks, such as the Out of Eden Learn, at <https://learn.outofedenwalk.com> and Visible Thinking, at <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/projects/visible-thinking> to engage children in a powerful learning experience to understand migration and by using developmentally age and culturally appropriate approaches. The authors also used strategies such as thinking routines and global thinking routines, dialogue toolkit, and slow looking to engage children in *stories for influence*. Using these frameworks and tools, the authors seek to engage children in what are called *stories for influence* that are geared to understanding migration.

The authors used the Re-imagining Migration (RM) framework, at <https://reimaginingmigration.org/a-framework-of-opportunity/> and its Learning Arc, at <https://reimaginingmigration.org/learning-arc> to approach the topic of migration pedagogically and to engage children in the topic of migration. Some key principles of the RM framework are seeing immigration as an opportunity and recognizing that good teaching is always developed in relationship to the students being taught, their community, and their schools’ cultures. The Learning Arc provides educators with a set of questions that target different aspects of migration.

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