

Gr. 10

~~Thursday, February 29, 2012~~

Oct 16

Task: School Issues

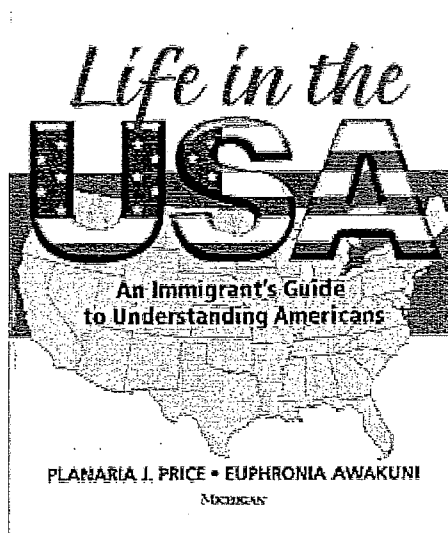
- Ice Breaker: Life Study Trivia Quiz
- Handout: "Adolescent Issues"
- Remind Students of ground rules for discussion.
- Read statements and do a round table discussion with student views and perceptions of these issues. Encourage both sides of the issue to be explored.
- Are these topics that should be discussed in future Advisories? (student perspective)
- Record general sentiment of the group.

Outcome: Students will express their views and realize how their views are similar or different from their peers. Post feedback for the coordinator.

## "LIFE STUDY" TRIVIA QUIZ ICEBREAKER

Break the group into two teams. Use these questions as an icebreaker game have a recorder from each team write the groups answers to each question. See who knows the most about life trivia! Answers are in CAPS.

1. Life and exercise: In terms of aerobics, weight loss, and endurance, which of these three is the best exercise?  
a. SWIMMING b. cycling c. running d. weight lifting
2. Life and work: Which state has the biggest ranch in the U.S.? The ranch is a quarter of a million acres.  
a. Texas b. HAWAII c. Arizona d. New Mexico
3. Life and TV: Which type of programming is the most violent, according to experts? This type of TV program shows 30 violent acts per hour.  
a. Western shows b. Cop shows c. CARTOON SHOWS d. Science fiction shows
4. Life and alcohol: Besides being involved in 42% of all fatal auto accidents, alcohol is in 46% of all homicides, 28% of all suicides and 35% of all  
a. robberies b. ACCIDENTAL FALLS c. break-ins



## Rules for Discussions

One person speaks at a time

Show respect of other people's ideas and opinions

All must agree to disagree in an atmosphere of mutual respect

Emphasize the positive points

Give each person the right to have and express his/her own view

All must listen; no put-downs or mocking

Allow time for everyone to speak; no one should be excluded for any reason

Teach and use "I statements" as a way of expressing views

Avoid talking about people in the group who are not present



## Activity: Boys in the Bathroom and Girls in Tank Tops: Adolescent Issues that Never Go Away

Format: Large-group dialogue  
Grouping: Whole advisory or cross-advisory GIRLS ONLY and BOYS ONLY groups  
Scheduling: As needed

### Directions:

There are times during every school year when adults need to engage students in "The Talk" about basic issues of public decorum, restraint, civility, and safety. Here are several issues that never seem to go away:

- The condition of the boys' bathrooms
- Provocative clothing, not enough clothing, clothing so oversized it's falling down, clothing with messages you shouldn't read in school, and clothing associated with gang or criminal behavior
- Profanity and disrespectful speech in classrooms and public spaces
- Graffiti, low-level vandalism, littering, and the state of the cafeteria at the end of lunch  
The classroom and cafeteria as beauty salon
- Public displays of affection and sexualized behavior and speech that has no place in public settings
- Boys touching girls and girls touching boys that looks an awful lot like harassment to adults, but for kids the behavior is "just fooling around"
- Male posturing and supersized physical gesturing (for example, "wind-milling" down hallways with arms flailing) that are overtly aggressive, hostile, and unsafe
- Play-fighting and verbal jousting among and between boys and girls that has the appearance of public brawling
- Post-sports event vandalism and public trash talk directed toward another school, an opposing team, or individuals on an opposing team

- “Player hating,” bullying, or hazing behaviors in which one group of students is being targeted, excluded, isolated, or ridiculed by another group of students
- E-mail harassment
- Prom night and graduation party rules and decorum
- Serious incidents of off-campus binge drinking, drug use, physical fighting, or criminal behavior that everyone knows about, but students won’t talk about or don’t know how to talk about

The worst place to have “The Talk” is in the auditorium—these are real-life issues that require more than a lecture about school rules and policies. Kids already know the rules and can tell you the rules verbatim. Repeating the rules in an assembly isn’t going to help students understand the rules any better or follow them more often. What’s needed here is genuine conversation that enriches, deepens, and complicates students’ thinking about critical issues or incidents that impact the safety and wellbeing of any, some, or all students or staff members.

These topics are “direct hits” on the DO NOT ENTER universe that adolescents create for themselves and want to protect at all costs. Adults’ efforts to tackle these topics can feel like a frontal attack on students’ personal identity, cultural affinity and affiliation, and peer-group norms.

Given the incendiary potential surrounding “The Talk,” the best place to have it is in advisory, where the size of the group and the invitation to speak openly and listen respectfully can help reduce the inevitable “us vs. them” tenor and tone of the conversation. It will, of course, go far more smoothly if constructive and respectful dialogue practices are already firmly established.

The principal, counselors, or student support staff may suggest specific guidelines for these discussions. Additionally, here are a few tips that can make various versions of “The Talk” feel more productive and less adversarial:

1. Acknowledge that this is not the easiest topic to discuss, and share why the whole school staff felt it was important to address.
2. Your capacity to remain low-key, curious, interested, and concerned; your patience to listen nonjudgmentally; your clearness about consequences; and your plainspoken explanations about what is unacceptable and why—are all tools you’ll need to communicate to students that this conversation is happening because everyone has the right to feel safe and respected, and everyone has a responsibility to maintain a civil culture and a safe, orderly, and clean learning environment.
3. Name the issue and invite students to discuss how they think adults see the issue; how students see the issue; whether all students see the issue the same way or differently; why they think adults might perceive this as a problem; how they think the issue impacts the whole school community or the school’s reputation; and/or what their parents and

other adults might have to say about the issue. The bottom line here is to let students talk about it. Listening to students does not mean that you agree with everything that's being said. Listening to students does mean that you're interested in what they have to say. Your job is to work with students to establish guidelines for respectful speech and productive conversation. Your advisees' job is to hold each other accountable to the guidelines you've created together.

4. Elicit evidence and data from the group that confirms that this is a problem for some people in the school, even if it doesn't impact some of your advisees directly.
5. Explore the messages that this particular behavior might communicate to others. How might different groups or individuals view a particular behavior or particular words? How might someone view a person who does \_\_\_\_\_ or says \_\_\_\_\_? How do you want to be thought of? What assumptions (however inaccurate) might be associated with this behavior? Does the action have unintended consequences? This is a version of the "What were you thinking?" conversation and becomes a teachable moment to clarify the differences between intention and impact.
6. These discussions offer yet another opportunity to explore the differences between what's private and what's public. Schools are public places where you live out your life in the public view of others. Students need to be reminded that public norms of conduct and civility are different from, not better or worse than, private codes of behavior, which are student's personal business or their family's business.
7. Some of these topics easily lead to questions of personal and social responsibility. What does it really mean to be accountable for one's actions? Accountable for what to whom? What makes one behavior socially responsible and another socially irresponsible? Are there situations where what feels like a private action has very public consequences? When and how does a personal choice impact the larger community? Ask students to consider the public consequences if everyone engaged in \_\_\_\_\_ behavior. How would you feel about school? What's the ripple effect if no one does anything about it?
8. In matters that involve personal safety, explore the differences between "narc-ing" and sharing information confidentially with an adult about an incident that has already happened or about a situation that is potentially dangerous or destructive. Talk about why this can feel like a betrayal and when it's the only right thing to do.
9. The issue may require a school-wide campaign, task force, or committee involving students, faculty, and parents. Solicit ideas and suggestions for how to tackle the problem, peer to peer, adult to student, and as a whole school community.
10. Finally, it's your job to communicate to your advisees, quietly and firmly, "Here's what I need you to know. If this continues, the consequence for \_\_\_\_\_ is ...; If we see this happening again, the faculty is committed to ...; Here's what we expect every student to do so that we can ..."