

**Growing New Roots: The Voices of Immigrant
Teenagers in Canada**

And

**Growing New Roots: Reflections of Immigrant
Teenagers in Canada**

Resource Book for Educators and Newcomers

**OISE
University of Toronto**

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ESL INFUSION INITIATIVE AND OISE/UT PRESENTS
"GROWING NEW ROOTS:
The Voices of Immigrant of Immigrant Teenagers in Canada"

&
"GROWING NEW ROOTS:
Reflections of Immigrant Teenagers in Canada"

This project was a collaborative effort of many people who shared both their time and expertise.

THANK YOU!

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Growing New Roots: The voices of immigrant teenagers in Canada

Who? English Language Learners from
William Lyon Mackenzie Collegiate
Institute in Toronto

A focus on:

- challenges faced,
- strategies adopted and
- suggestions for teachers

Growing New Roots: Reflections of immigrant teenagers in Canada

Who? English Language Learners from
William Lyon Mackenzie Collegiate
Institute in Toronto

A focus on:

- Relationships with family and friends
- Aspects of school life including alienation and racism
- The importance of active involvement at school

Background

Introduction:

Immigration Statistics

The Greater Toronto Area has more foreign-born residents than has any other city in Canada, with immigrants in the city coming from approximately 170 countries and speaking more than 100 languages (Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, 2005). The Ontario Public School Boards' Association states that immigration will likely increase, and with recent federal commitments to higher levels of immigration, the numbers will definitely go up. Immigration is thus hugely important to Canada's cultural and economic prosperity (Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, 2005).

In the 2001 census, 13 per cent of Canadians identified themselves as belonging to a visible minority; however by 2017, if Statistics Canada projections hold true, that number could climb to between 19 and 23 per cent. Statistics Canada set up five different scenarios for future immigration rates and population growth. These scenarios predict that Canada's immigrant population could reach between seven million and 9.3 million in 2017, an increase of between 24 per cent and 65 per cent from 2001.

Educators need to...

- **use** the experiences of the English language learner (**Cultural Knowledge**)

to...

- **foster** language knowledge and identity formation and development for the English language learner to support. (**Supportive Learning Environment**)

Cultural Knowledge

- *“...most teachers do not have the same cultural frames of reference and points of views as their students...the importance of connecting new learning to **prior experiences**... suggests that teachers will need knowledge to understand students' backgrounds and experiences in order to **structure meaningful learning experiences** for all of them” (Darling-Hammond and Bransford , 2005, p. 237).*

Who is the English Language Learner?

English language learners are students who are learning English as an additional language. Many of these students speak several other languages. According to the

2002 Immigration and Protection Act, newcomers to Canada can be divided into two categories: refugees and immigrants (Canadian Immigration and Citizenship, 2003). This distinction recognizes that newcomers move to host countries for a variety of reasons. Some newcomers come to enhance their economic situation or education by choice, while others can be political and/or religious refugees (Trueba, Cheng & Ima, 1993). Regardless of the reasons for immigration, the process of adjustment is challenging for all: a study in Toronto showed that English language learners were dealing with far more than simply learning a language.

For example, a study of high school ESL students in Calgary found that the term ‘ESL’ embodied a stigma within the larger school. Students were perceived as lazy, unintelligent, and awkward (Derwing, Decorby, Ichikawa & Jamieson, 1999). In addition, English language learners are sometimes presented and perceived as inferior members by the dominant culture (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981, cited by Spener, 1988). This labelling and sense of inferiority can shape how students feel about themselves when in school and in the community. Students’ language proficiency seems to depend on their acceptance into the host culture (Kanno & Applebaum, 1995). As agents of socialization, teachers may be a student’s first contact with their new culture (Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

Supportive Learning Environment

- *When teachers convey **a genuine respect for their students’ experiences** and treat their problems, **interests, opinions, and views as important**, they are helping their students see themselves as valuable contributors to school and society (Katz, 1993). This supports language knowledge and identity formation and development.*

How do educators create environments that cultivate language knowledge and support identity formation and development?

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

- *One key premise of second language socialization research is that educators need to provide learning environments that create **opportunities for newcomers to...***
 - ***have participatory roles which build on their prior knowledge,***
 - ***provide an approximation of full participation, and***
 - ***make newcomers feel legitimized as members of the community of practice.***
- *This is “**legitimate peripheral participation**” (Lave & Wenger, 1991):*
 - ***newcomers are given exposure to actual practice through such means as lessened risk or intensity, special assistance, close supervision and lessened production pressure;***

- *newcomers' see themselves as **valued members in and beyond the classroom because their experiences are validated by other members.***

These opportunities for “**legitimate peripheral participation**” cultivate language knowledge and support identity formation and development in their additional language (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Moreover, Wenger (1998) stresses that **educational settings should have a “learning architecture”** that generates opportunities for legitimate peripheral participation or entry into three “modes of belonging” in a community of practice:

- **Engagement**
- **Imagination**
- **Alignment**

Engagement

Definition:

This mode of belonging requires educators to provide newcomers with activities that foster **authentic** access to and interaction with other participants, authentic opportunities to contribute their ideas, and **authentic** conditions in which newcomers can negotiate meaning (Wenger, 1998). Mantero (2007) also calls for this type of authentic educational activity to support identity or “voice,” suggesting that we must provide opportunities for students to engage in interaction that will help language emerge as activity **realized through semiotic activity not linguistic construction in artificial environments**. Similarly, drawing on Rogoff (1995), Mantero (2007, p. 9) states, “our identities come to life as ‘language learners’ when we participate in **meaning-driven** discourse in authentic contexts.”

Example:

In a drama class, English language learners can be participants in an educational video for supporting other newcomers. This activity requires students to reflect on their own immigration, and bring their reflections to class, where they share their experiences with other English language learners. Students then bring these authentic experiences to life through filmed performance; the film is shared with the public.

Imagination

Definition:

This mode of belonging requires educators to encourage students to disconnect from the immediate situation or activity and to **look for how what they are doing in the activity could be extended to other contexts; students see the potential of the activity in another light**. For example, Wenger suggests that it is like looking at

an apple seed and seeing a tree (p. 176). Norton (2001) highlights the role of “imagination” as a tool which **can help sustain students’ motivation**; students’ abilities to imagine themselves in other roles, which they view as positive, can help them to continue in a learning environment that did not support their learning.

Example:

If English language learners are participants in an educational video for supporting newcomers, the students have engaged in a reflection on their immigrant journey; during this engagement, educators need to encourage the English language learners to see the connections between this experience and other ways to support newcomers. For instance, the English language learners could see the link between this video and their participation in another activity which supports newcomers, such as an orientation program that welcomes newcomers into the school or the community. Therefore, one’s identity can be extended from that of a participant in the video to that of a potential leader in an Ambassadors’ Club that serves to support newcomers in the school or the community.

Alignment

Definition:

This mode of belonging requires a learning environment to provide opportunities for students to see how their **involvement in an activity can contribute to a bigger cause or goal** that is shared by others.

Example:

By creating a context where immigrant students can participate in the newcomer video activity, students can see themselves as helping with a larger goal of the school and the school board: create “learning environments that are safe, nurturing, positive, and respectful” (Mission Statement, Toronto District School Board).

How are engagement, imagination, and alignment connected to identity formation and development?

Identity

In summary, Wenger (1998) purports that all three modes of belonging are essential for access to legitimate peripheral participation and for the formation of a learning community. This learning community will not just deliver curriculum, but rather, it will be instrumental in supporting newcomers’ abilities to form identities in their new context. The different modes of belonging that constitute the learning community bring about change in who we are and in what we are capable of doing and therefore the three modes of belonging are an “experience of identity.” Cummins raises parallel points on how to empower newcomer students, which complement Lave and Wenger’s legitimate

peripheral participation theory, saying, “Students whose schooling experiences reflect collaborative relations of power participate confidently in instruction as a result of the fact that their sense of identity is being **affirmed** and **extended** in their interactions with educators” (Cummins, 2000. p. 44).

- ***Hence, the degree to which educators create opportunities for English language learners to have legitimate peripheral participation in all three modes of belonging will ultimately shape their identities in their new context.***

Annotated Bibliography

Citizenship and Immigration in Canada (2003), <http://www.cic.gc.ca>

This web site offers information about the department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, coming to Canada, living in Canada, applying for citizenship, and additional resources for immigration.

Community Social Planning Council of Toronto. (2005). *Renewing Toronto's ESL Programs...charting a course towards more effective ESL program delivery: Executive summary*. Retrieved June 20, 2006, from Community Social Planning Council of Toronto web site: <http://www.socialplanningtoronto.org>

This web site gives information about diversity, social and economic justice, and citizen participation in order to improve the quality of life for Torontonians.

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

This book presents information about power relations in society and their reflection in the classroom, assumptions about language proficiency, and instructional practices needed for “transformative pedagogy” for second language achievement.

Darling-Hammond, L., Hammerness, K., Grossman, P., Rust, F. & Shulman, L. (2005). The design of teacher education programs. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (pp. 390-441). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

This book outlines key concepts and strategies for teacher preparation in traditional and non-traditional settings and is intended for all educators. It is visionary in its ideas and suggestions on educational policy, classroom practice and staff development.

Derwing, T., Decorby, E., Ichikawa, J., & Jamieson, K. (1999). Some factors that affect the success of ESL high school students. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 55(4), 532-547.

This study examines the academic achievement of ESL high school students in one urban school board through record research, and student and teacher interviews. Issues around English language learner drop-out rate, integration, and orientation are discussed.

Kanno, Y., & Applebaum, S. (1995). ESL students speak up: Their stories of how we are doing? *TESL Canada*, 12(2), 32-49.

This paper gives voice to three Japanese secondary students' experiences in ESL courses. Areas of focus include: learner, subject matter, milieu, teacher, and identity.

Katz, L. (1993). All about me: Are we developing our children's self-esteem or their narcissism? *American Educator*, 17(2), 18-23.

This article explores the increase of narcissistic tendencies in American school children due to educators' practices in raising students' self-esteem.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

This book focuses on learning theory as social participation: learning is a process of participation in communities of practices where students are provided with modified forms of participation or legitimate peripheral participation; this enables students to move from cultural outsiders to cultural insiders.

Mantero, M. (2007). *Identity and second language learning: Culture, inquiry, and dialogic activity in educational contexts*. Charlotte, North Carolina: Information Age.

This book is a collection of research that links the concept of identity in relation to second language studies which have several different focal points: community, classroom, immersion, pop culture and music, religion, code switching, and media.

Norton, B. (2001). Non-participation, imagined communities and the language classroom. In M. Breen (Ed.), *Learner contributions to language learning: New directions in research*. (pp. 159-171). Harlow, England: Longman.

This chapter examines research on two immigrant women's non-participation in an adult second language class where curriculum goals of the class did not incorporate the "imagined community" goals of the students.

Ontario Public School Boards' Association. (no date). *Position Paper on Second Language Learning: President's speaking notes*. Retrieved June 22, 2006 from the ESL/ELD Resource Group of Ontario Web site: www.ergo-on.ca

This web site which represents "an organization of ESL/ELD co-ordinators, consultants, and designated representatives of boards of education, colleges and universities across Ontario dedicated to the improvement of educational opportunities and practices for ESL/ELD students." It provides information about professional development opportunities, curriculum documents, resources, and provincial network for communication and liaison.

Rogoff, B. (1995). Observing sociocultural activity on three planes: Participatory appropriation, guided participation, and apprenticeship. In J. Wertsch, P. Del

Rio, & A. Alvarez (Eds.), *Sociocultural studies of the mind* (pp. 139-164).
Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

This chapter considers how individuals are transformed as they move from focusing on their individual selves, to the interpersonal, and to the community planes. It raises the questions about what efforts people make, their companions make, and institutions make in supporting the participation of individuals within a context.

Spener, D. (1988). Transitional bilingual education and the socialization of immigrants. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(2), 133-153.

This paper examines educational policies reflecting economic needs which lead to newcomer and minorities assuming “undesirable, low-status jobs.” Issues around bilingual education programs impacting first language and English are also addressed.

Statistics Canada. (2007). *Immigration in Canada: Predicting the future*. Retrieved January 31, 2007 from the Vancouver English Centre web site:
<http://secure.vec.bc.ca/immigration-projections.cfm>

This web site offers statistics from Statistics Canada on future immigration trends: sustained immigration, and distribution of immigrants in Canada.

Trueba, H.T., Cheng, L., & Ima, K. (1993). *Myth or reality: Adaptive strategies of Asian Americans in California*. Washington, DC: Falmer Press.

This book examines issues around the integration of Asian American language minority students into the U.S. mainstream culture.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

This book presents a learning theory that focuses on engagement in social practice in communities of practice as being key to learning and identity; it offers concrete suggestions for forming a “learning architecture” based the theory.

Wong-Fillmore, L., & Snow, C. (2000). What teachers need to know about language. *Eric Special Report*. EDO-99-CO-0008. Washington, DC: Eric Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics [Electronic Version]. Retrieved August 1, 2003 from
<http://www.cal.org/ericcl/teachers/teachers.pdf>

This report summarizes some basic aspects of oral and written language about which elementary teachers need expertise in order to promote literacy.

Summary of DVD And summary of Growing New Roots: Reflections of Immigrant Teenagers in Canada

Growing New Roots: The Voices of Immigrant Teenagers in Canada paints a compassionate picture of the thoughts of some ESL secondary school students as they travel on their immigrant journey. Based on the collaborative work of an ESL Drama club and an ESL Drama class that seeks to create an on-going public awareness of the immigrant experience and to empower immigrant students, this video presents the students' answers to **five main questions**:

- Before coming to Canada, what did you imagine that Canada would be like?
- When you left your country, what did you feel?
- What has your experience been like since you have been here?
- What has made you happy? What has been difficult?
- For each “Negative” experience, what can **you** do to help yourself? What can **your teachers or the school** do to help you?

In their answers to these five questions, we see common themes emerge.

- Prior to their arrival, many immigrant students imagined Canada to be a cold country, but a place with friendly, just, and peaceful people.
- Challenges Faced:
 - However, regardless of this positive image, their departure from their countries of origin, as they said farewell to friends and family, has still caused them severe pain: “I felt devastated.”
 - Upon arrival, one positive key message is clear: students overwhelmingly value their teachers and the education system; nevertheless, the immigrant teenagers are still faced with many challenges such as
 - finding a support network of friends,
 - coping with isolation,
 - handling language barriers,
 - living in a multicultural society,
 - managing a faster pace of life,
 - balancing employment and school, and
 - dealing with climate change.
- Strategies Adopted:
 - To help them endure these challenges, they highlight the strong need for students to
 - communicate with their teachers and guidance counsellors,

- get involved in the school community, and
 - take responsibility for their own language learning by engaging in communicative activities.
- Suggestions for Teachers:
 - Finally, they underscore that their schools and teachers can play a key role in helping them to adjust to their new home through a variety of ways:
 - establish an ambassadors' club that welcomes newcomers;
 - know the students' lives "inside and outside of the classroom;"
 - create clubs which support their first language culture;
 - provide learning strategies for group work and oral presentations;
 - design assignments which can use their prior knowledge from the first language culture;
 - give samples and structural frameworks to ease adjustment to new writing genres;
 - show flexibility with deadlines;
 - provide extra time;
 - give one-on-one attention;
 - use assessment and evaluation strategies that do not have a language focus;
 - offer a wide selection of ESL courses;
 - overall, be patient and understanding because "they are trying their best."

Questions to consider before viewing:

1. What contexts are conducive to language learning and supporting students' individual voices?
2. What do you understand about...
 - the experiences of immigrant teenagers?
 - the achievements?
 - the challenges?

Questions to consider after viewing:

1. How can educators create a learning environment that...
 - offers authentic language experiences?
 - allows students to see themselves beyond the classroom in different roles?

- helps students to feel that they are part of bigger goal or cause?
2. What do newcomer students celebrate about their immigration?
 3. How can educators empower newcomer adolescent students to meet their academic and social challenges?
 4. What resources are available for educators to help support newcomer adolescents?

Activity 1

Title: Helping Hands?

Time: 75 minutes

Materials:

- Pen
- Handout

Procedure:

- In groups of 1-4, create a secret handshake consisting of eight features. Do not reveal your handshake to the other groups.
- Present your secret handshake to four different groups in four different ways.
- Presentation techniques:
 - **Show** your secret handshake **without using words**. Through non-verbal communication, indicate that you want the groups to repeat your handshake. Do not provide any guidance. Walk away when the group members are confused. Ignore them. Find another group.
 - **Teach** your secret handshake **using gibberish and some English**. Provide some guidance to the other group by repeating the handshake. Stay with the group until they **almost** have mastered it. Give praise for the efforts. Find another group.
 - **Teach** your secret handshake in **English** to another group by **breaking it down, repeating it, modeling it**, etc. Repeat the handshake with guidance. Stay with the group until they have mastered it. Celebrate their success. Find another group.
 - **Teach** your secret handshake in **gibberish** to another group by **breaking it down, repeating it, modeling it**, etc. Repeat the handshake with guidance. Stay with the group until they have mastered it. Celebrate their success.
- When the groups have finished the 4 presentations, each group member fills out the Personal Reflection sheet which asks the following questions:
 - how did you feel when you were ignored and not guided?
 - how did you feel when you were taught in gibberish with English and encouraged for your efforts even though you did not master the task?
 - how did you feel when you were taught in English, guided through the handshake, and complimented for your successes?
 - how did you feel when you were taught in gibberish, guided through the handshake, and complimented for your successes?

Discussion:

- After the personal reflection sheets are completed, all group members share
 - their personal reflections

- their ideas about how the presentation skills of the handshakes could be applied to teaching strategies with newcomer students.
 - What strategies encourage a supportive environment?
 - What strategies detract from a supportive learning environment?

Activity 2

Title: Sensory Journey

Time to complete: one-two hours

Materials:

- Items from other countries to stimulate the senses of sound, smell, taste, and touch. Some items could include voices, music, food, drink, fragrances, spices, textiles, crafts
- Pen
- Handouts

Procedures:

- In groups of 5, prepare a 4-5 minute **nonverbal** experience for a blindfolded individual from another group of 5. Therefore, there is no speaking while participants are being led through the journey.
- The experiences will include sounds, smells, tastes, and touch of materials that could be from different cultures.
- The “participant” is wheeled or walked into a room blindfolded.
- Each member of the group is responsible for one or more sensory elements.
- Together, the group works to create a believable sensory environment.
- As each “participant” has completed the experience, he or she stays in the room and records his or her feelings about his or her own experience. **(My Reaction Chart)**
- Then, each “participant” also observes and records some of the reactions (verbal and nonverbal communication) of the other members of their group or a member of another group who is going through the sensory journey. **(Group Members’ Reactions Chart)**
- After, the process is repeated with the performing group becoming the “participants.”

Discussion:

- In the group of 5, each group member shares how he or she felt experiencing unexpected sounds, smells, tastes, and touch. **(My Reaction Chart)**
- In the group of 5, each group member shares his or her notes about the reactions of the other group members. **(Group Members’ Reactions Chart)**
- After the discussion in groups of 5, each group member now reflects on how he or she felt leading “participants” **(Personal Reflection)**
 - What did you do to support the “participants” during the sensory experience so that they felt at ease?
 - What could you do to improve the sensory experience so that participants feel more comfortable?
- When finished the personal reflections, all group members come together to discuss their overall feelings about this activity and its possible relationship to newcomer students.

- What was your overall impression of your sensory experience?
- How did you feel supported?
- How did you feel threatened?
- How can you relate this activity to what newcomer students may feel when they encounter unexpected sensory experiences in their new country?
- How could educators support newcomer students with these types of experiences?

My Reaction Chart

Name:

<p><u>Supportive Factors of Presentation</u> What helped you to feel comfortable?</p>
<p><u>Non-supportive Factors of Presentation</u> What caused you to feel uncomfortable?</p>
<p><u>Feelings about Taste</u></p>
<p><u>Feelings about Touch</u></p>
<p><u>Feelings about Smell</u></p>
<p><u>Feelings about Sound</u></p>

Group Members' Reactions Chart

<u>Name</u>	<u>Verbal Communication</u>	<u>Nonverbal Communication</u>	<u>Other Points of Interest</u>

Personal Reflection

What did you do to support the “participants” as you lead them through the sensory experience so that they felt at ease?

What could you do to improve the sensory experience so that “participants” feel more comfortable?

In-School Activities

Activity 1 (English Language Learner Activity)

Title: Are you listening?

Time to complete: one week

Materials: pencil, questionnaire

Procedures:

- In groups of 2 or 3, English language learners will visit ESL classes to question other students about their immigration stories.
- They will use the questionnaire provided.
- Findings are recorded, and presented to the Student Council and Teachers/Principals in order to raise awareness about immigration and increase ESL support in the school.
- Students will volunteer to assist Student Council and teachers/Principals with organizing the support. (This activity also helps English language learners to improve their language skills and develop their leadership skills in their new country.)
- English language learners reflect on the leadership experience.
- Example:
 - What were the benefits of this assignment?
 - What were the challenges of this work?

Questionnaire

Your immigration story...

Name:



PART A:

For each point in PART A, write at least 1 sentence. Provide as much description as possible.

**Before coming to Canada, what did you imagine that Canada would be?
What did you picture in your mind?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

When you left your country, what did you feel and why?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What has your experience been like since you have been here?

Positive: What has made you happy?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Negative: What has been difficult?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

PART B:

Be very specific... 3 sentences per answer.

For each “Negative” experience, what can **you** do to help yourself?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

5.

For each “Negative” experience, what can **your teachers or the school** do to help you?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



Activity 2 (Student Activity)

Title: Do you understand?

Time to complete: one week

Materials: pencil, questionnaire, paper

Procedures:

- Students assume the role of English language learners and fill out the questionnaire (**see the questionnaire from the English language learner activity**)
- Students visit ESL classes or attend an ESL Ambassador Club meeting (a group of students who welcome newcomers to the school) to ask ELL students for their responses to the questionnaire.
- Students compare and contrast their answers with the ELL students' answers.
- Students discover trends and report the findings to the Student Council and teachers/Principal in order to advocate for ELL students in their school.

Activity 3 (Teacher Candidate)

Title: How much support is there for ELL students?

Time: two weeks

Materials: pen, paper

Procedure:

- Action Research Question:
- Visit several ESL classes to inquire if ELL students are aware of the supports for them in the school and to inquire what other supports could be added for ELL students.
 - What resources are available to support newcomers in the school?
 - What other resources are needed to support newcomers in the school?
- Report on the findings to the associate teacher/Principal in order to advocate for ELL students in their school.
- Develop resources to address some issue that was raised by the ELL students and offer to help implement it into the school.
- Report on your Action Research. Include the following components:
 - title page and table of contents
 - introduction laying out the plan for your report
 - research question(s) or statement of concern
 - rationale
 - personal interest
 - summary of relevant literature (optional)
 - description of the process
 - what you did and with whom
 - how you analysed the data or made sense of your experience
 - summary of findings or description of what you learned (connect this to the relevant literature)(optional)
 - limitations of study/development project and directions for future research/work
 - a discussion of the implications
 - a reference list
 - appendices including letters of information and consent for participants as appropriate, resources developed and materials used if appropriate

Activity 4 (Teachers, Principals, Settlement Workers)

Title: We are listening

Time: On-going

Material: a box

Procedure:

- Visit ELL students' classes to request their feedback for school improvement.
- Place suggestion boxes in the ESL classes.
- On a bimonthly basis, have ESL teachers ask students to submit anonymously
 - Challenging experiences;
 - Positive experiences;
 - Items for improvement.
- On a monthly basis, collect comments, and analyze results.
- Meet students to discuss results and ask for feedback on ideas for improvement.
- Implement the results.