

Addressing Controversy in the Classroom: Teaching about Immigrant Rights in Chicago Schools

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Abstract

This article examines the issue of teachers' decisions to address controversial issues as teaching opportunities in the classroom, using the recent immigrant rights mobilizations of 2006. As public reports of planned deportations of the undocumented were heard, especially in communities in urban areas with high proportions of these populations, many families were gripped with fear about their status. This research involved exploring the classroom-based activities of Chicago teachers to engage their students in inquiry on these issues, and the participation and perspectives of children that resulted from these activities.

Immigrant rights' mobilizations

On March 10, 2006 more than 100,000 people marched through downtown Chicago to oppose HR 4437, the Sensenbrenner bill, an anti-immigrant bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, and other pending federal anti-immigrant legislation. This unprecedented act of immigrant mobilization surpassed the expectations of immigrant rights' organizers by its large size and was the first large-scale demonstration of this order in the nation. As the United States Senate met to consider a bill that would consider the legalization of many of the estimated 11 to 12 million undocumented people living in this country, the immigrant rights mobilization momentum continued. On May 1st, more than 400,000 people marched from Union Park to Grant Park in Chicago in support of undocumented immigrants and fair immigration reform legislation. Although more conservative estimates set participation from 400,000 to 600,000, march leaders estimate that over 700,000 people participated, making May 1st the largest demonstration in Chicago's history. A smaller march with 10,000 participants took place on July 19th to support a moratorium on deportations of undocumented immigrants.

While most participants of these marches were Latinos, there was also significant representation of European, Asian, and African immigrant groups. The marches were also intergenerational as participation included large numbers of youth, elderly persons and families with young children. Chicago schools located in communities with large numbers of immigrants reported low attendance as many elementary and high school students attended the march. Many teachers also participated in these marches, some with their own students.

Teaching about Controversial Issues: Immigration as a Case Study

This article examines the issue of teaching about controversial issues in the classroom using these recent immigrant rights mobilizations as an example of teacher decision-making.

The issue of immigration reform became especially charged after the passage of HR 4437, with

its criminalization of those who provided any assistance to undocumented immigrants. As public reports of planned deportations of the undocumented were heard, especially in communities in urban areas with high proportions of these populations, many families were gripped with fear about their status. This research involved exploring the classroom-based activities of teachers to engage their students in inquiry on the issues, and the participation and perspectives of children as a result of these activities. In addition to exploring the activities of the teachers, the research project was undertaken to engage our own university students in conducting research in the community of the City of Chicago and its neighborhood constituents. This broader research carried out by many faculty at UIC included surveys of participants on the May 1st and July 19th marches and more detailed interviews with march leaders, educators, families, youth, and others.

Immigration, Teacher Education, and Curriculum

There are several trends in teacher education that encourage teachers to address controversy in classrooms and to explore ways of making the curriculum relevant for their students. Those of us engaged in teacher education examine with teachers how these challenges can be met. Our efforts are informed by research on teacher education, especially more recent research that focuses on the preparation of teachers for urban schools characterized by significant cultural, linguistic, racial, and ethnic diversity. One important body of literature addresses the value of curriculum orientations that seek to connect children's home and community lives with the academic content of the school as explored through the funds of knowledge of families (Gonzalez, et al., 2005; Moll, et al., 1992). The concept "funds of knowledge" comes from anthropologically based research that seeks to identify the accumulated knowledge base of families resulting from their experiences in everyday living and surviving, a kind of cultural capital that educators may ignore or not be aware of until they

become knowledgeable about the life experiences of their students (Velez-Ibanez, 1992). With this anthropological orientation to families, teachers are encouraged to find out what knowledge children bring to the classroom from their home and communities, and then use this knowledge as a building block for curriculum development and for connecting the life of the home and community with the life of the school. This anthropological orientation affirms that children are not blank slates or empty vessels to be filled with new knowledge, but rather, the task of teaching is to recognize that children know many things and the task of the teacher is to build connections between what children already know and new knowledge.

Other important sources for this research come from literature on immigrants and immigration, on curriculum and social justice, and on the teaching of social studies content. There is an extensive body of literature that addresses immigration into the United States, some of which highlights educational dimensions of immigration (Ream, 2005; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2002; Trueba, 2000). This literature addresses the challenges posed to immigrant families, children, and schools, given the growth of immigration and the need for educational policies and curricula that address the special needs of these populations of students. The growth of immigration and the continued presence of diverse groups of students in American classrooms have also motivated some educators to explore the value of curriculum for social justice. In fact, in some urban areas, including Chicago, teachers have formed organizations of Teachers for Social Justice, and hold regular curriculum fairs to disseminate teaching units that they have developed for their classrooms, with a particular focus on addressing controversial issues. In this and similar organizations, teachers have worked collaboratively to question traditional curricula of schools so as to address issues of racism and economic injustice, and engage in critical pedagogy that challenges the power structures of schooling and that limit opportunities for the most disadvantaged students (Bigelow, 2006).

The social studies curriculum can be an important area for engaging in critical pedagogy. This is because the content area includes the study of history and issues of contemporary society, including considerations of race, ethnicity, social class, and relationships among nations and groups. New approaches to the teaching of social studies content highlight the sociocultural goals of history teaching: its focus on enduring human dilemmas and human agency, the interpretive nature of history with concerns as to which voices are being heard and which have been ignored or omitted from the historical record, the value of connecting the micro to the macro levels, and the recognition that history is dynamic and controversial (Levstik & Barton, 2005). Unfortunately, social studies content teaching has been deemphasized in schools in the last few years given the focus on reading and math as a result of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) with its orientation towards high-stakes testing. Promising directions are nevertheless available through new orientations to teaching social studies content so as to address multiple perspectives, controversial issues, engage students in inquiry based learning, and employ constructivist orientations to classroom teaching (Lanman & Wendling, 2006; Levstik & Barton, 2005; Takaki, 1993; Bigelow, 2006; Seixas, 1993). New teachers are often exposed to these ideas as part of their teacher education programs and social studies methods courses.

Schubert (1996) has written extensively about curriculum theory and different conceptions that have characterized writing in the field. He identifies four recurrent positions on curriculum thought that he labeled as “intellectual traditionalist, social behaviorist, experientialist and critical reconstructionist.” In theorizing about curriculum and pedagogy, it is important to explore the way educators explain what it is that they do in their classrooms and their motivation for teaching particular topics in specific ways. Research and writing in the curriculum field confirm the value of inquiring into teachers’ classroom approaches as a way of understanding the educational processes of schools and the ideological positions that frames teachers’

thinking. This research also affirms the value of examining teaching philosophy through the rationales that teachers articulate and through the ways they organize their classrooms and their instruction. Curriculum is therefore not seen as a static document, but rather as resources and processes that can be enhanced by thinking professionals who plan, make decisions, reflect on their goals and objectives, and consider the needs of their students and the broader community from which they come.

Interviewing Teachers about their Lessons

The data for this article were compiled as part of a larger project studying the immigrant mobilizations in Chicago of March 10th and May 1st, 2006. There were several components to the larger project, some of which explored: (1) how children and youth are affected by immigration policy, (2) how children and youth become social activists, (3) how schools have addressed the immigrant mobilizations, and (4) how teachers have availed themselves of the opportunity to teach about the issues or develop projects to engage their students in inquiry and action. The latter was the focus on my own component of the research and which is reported on in this article.

This project involved interviews with teachers, mostly from Chicago Public Schools, to explore what classroom projects, lessons, or activities they undertook in light of the controversies over immigration and immigrant rights. Initially, letters were sent out to school administrators, teachers, and college students, to identify teachers willing to be interviewed about any classroom based activities that they engaged in surrounding the immigrant rights mobilizations and immigration controversies. A list of teachers in a number of schools was compiled. From those teachers who responded that they had taught lessons or conducted activities and projects about immigration and were willing to be interviewed, a total of 27

teachers were interviewed. These teachers represented five Chicago elementary schools, one

high school, one Catholic School, and one suburban school. With the exception of the one suburban school, all of the schools had a large percentage of English language learners, mostly of Mexican background, with some also having Puerto Rican and Central American students. These schools had large bilingual education programs to serve the student populations of English language learners. They were also located in neighborhoods with large Latino populations, including communities with large numbers of undocumented immigrants.

The interview guide included an open-ended six question protocol which asked about the classroom based projects that the teachers engaged in relative to the immigrant rights mobilizations, the objectives of these projects, what the teachers wanted students to learn, what they thought the students actually learned through these projects, and how the teachers would revise the lessons or activities if they had more time for planning them. My interest was to explore the kinds of projects that elementary school teachers developed to address immigration and immigrant rights, how these teachers legitimated these activities as part of their curriculum, and how they integrated these projects into the overall educational mission of the school. The teachers' philosophy of their role as urban educators is revealed through the ways that they addressed the topic of immigration and the mobilizations in these class projects.

In addition to the interviews, samples of student work were also analyzed to examine the nature of student learning from the projects. Qualitative analysis of the teacher interviews forms the basis of the results reported here.

Teachers' Rationales for Teaching about Immigration

The findings reported here are based on interviews with 27 teachers, predominantly elementary school teachers, from eight schools in the Chicago area. There were several themes that emerged from the interviews with the teachers. The projects or lessons themselves ranged from those that focused on traditional learning about immigration to the United States,

including issues of citizenship and voting rights, to more activist oriented projects such as students writing to Congressmen to express their views on legislation, and students organizing to participate in the marches, such as developing posters to carry on the marches. The teachers supported their lessons with a variety of rationales: Many argued that it was important to teach about the immigration controversies because the children and their families were being or would be affected by whatever decisions the government made. This concern for teaching about issues that had an important impact on their students was an overriding one in most of the responses. Some used the fact that parents and even some of the children were undocumented as a stimulus for engaging children in conducting oral history interviews with parents and/or other relatives, to learn about their experiences and motivation for coming across the border.

In reviewing the themes that emerged from the interviews, several different conceptions of teacher identities emerge. These identities (or roles) can be derived from the rationales that the teachers provided for teaching about immigration and the types of activities that they organized for their students. I would describe these identities as follows:

- a. Teacher as curriculum developer
- b. Teacher as anthropologist/ethnographer
- c. Teacher as citizenship educator
- d. Teacher as psychologist
- e. Teacher as socio/political activist

These five identities will be described based on content analyses of the responses that the teachers gave in their interviews.

A. Teacher as Curriculum Developer

Occasionally teachers used curricular rationales for their lessons, reasoning that discussing the mobilizations gave them an opportunity to integrate language arts and other content areas such as social studies, mathematics, and art content in a thematic approach to their teaching. In these responses, the teachers showed concern for covering the content areas of the curriculum and with meeting the state and district teaching standards. As Emilia argued, “I integrate it to the class... I met the goals they want us to meet, they want us to meet writing goals, they want us to meet reading goals, they want us to meet basic expression, research and so forth. It’s all part of the curriculum.” Carmen taught a lesson in which children were asked to develop math problems using the march as a theme for the problems and shared the example of a problem developed by one of the children: ie., “Cristian went to the immigrant march on Friday. He walked two miles during the four hours. How many miles does Cristian walk in one hour?”

Some of the teachers who focused on their role as curriculum developer conceptualized the study of these mobilizations as a part of social studies content area of the curriculum. The social studies content area has been downsized in many elementary school classrooms as a result of the pressure to prepare students for testing required by NCLB, testing which thus far has been limited to reading and mathematics. Given this pressure, teachers have been encouraged to focus their classroom time on reading, writing, and mathematics. Teachers who organized lessons on immigration as part of the social studies content area, though adhering to a somewhat traditional rationale for discussing immigration as part of curriculum, nevertheless defined the content area in a rather progressive way—not the heroes and holidays approach that too often characterizes social studies in many elementary schools (Banks, 1997). They argued that children needed to learn about the “pull/push” factors in immigration; comparisons between previous immigrants, such as Irish, and contemporary immigrants; understanding of

multiple perspectives, such as why some people support and others oppose immigration; views of the “minutemen vs. immigrant advocates”. Joseph, a fifth-grade special education teacher, taught a whole unit on the U.S. Mexican Border. “We started with the Mexican Revolution and the battle of Texas, then the Mexican-American war, the creation of the border patrol, the Braceros program where a lot of immigrants came.” This was a rather ambitious agenda for a fifth grade teacher whose students were classified as special education.

Teachers using the curriculum as their rationale also included the development of “media literacy” as an important component of the curriculum. These teachers argued that children needed to develop media literacy to understand what they read in newspapers, what they saw on television, and what they could access from internet sources. As Norma explained when asked what she thought her students had learned, “I think they learned how to gather information, how to research, how to question, not just to assume just because it is written down, printed out in a newspaper or... the internet, to just assume that it is right, to critically look at the media in general.” Because of this concern to develop media literacy, these teachers availed themselves and their students of articles in local newspapers and news magazines, had students watch news programs on television, and made use of internet resources for news coverage that students could examine and critique.

B. Teacher as Anthropologist or Ethnographer

All teachers expressed the desire to give priority to the topic of immigration and the mobilizations because the issues affected the students and their families. Some saw themselves as learners in the community and the children and members of their families as people from whom they could learn. In some ways these teachers saw the students as the ones with the knowledge that could be brought into the school to enrich the learning experience for all, including the teachers themselves. They believed in a “funds of knowledge” approach to

families, recognizing that families have a lot of knowledge that comes from their lived experiences, and that such knowledge could be used as a base for curriculum development and classroom instruction (Moll et al., 1992). They argued that many of the children and the families knew what it was like to be undocumented in the United States, to cross the border with all its dangers, and to continue to live in the shadows of urban communities. As Joseph argued, “Many of them have crossed the border, you know, illegally and legally, so that they really understand that and why people would want to cross.” Given that role and interest, these teachers tried to engage their students in carrying out oral history interviews with members of their families, to get children to learn from them what their experiences were like. These teachers recognized the value of oral history approaches with their Latino students, especially because many of the children’s families and neighbors had first hand experiences of the topics to be explored in the curriculum (Olmedo, 2006). As Angela explained, “We asked them to go home and ask their parents about it and they brought a lot of rich material from home and that is what we used for the writing process.” They encouraged students to write letters and poems based on their families’ experiences.

C. Teacher as Citizenship Educator

Some of the teachers went a little further to connect standard curricular learning with the objective for children to understand the importance of being active citizens in a democratic society. Using this orientation, these teachers focused on having children learn how laws are made and how individual citizens can affect government policy. They wanted students to be well-informed about current events, to be able to see varying perspectives and take a stance and defend it. Mindy explained the connection between the unit on immigration and her ongoing curriculum for citizenship: “As the issue of the march came up, we were in the middle of talking about the Constitution. I put a lot of emphasis on First Amendment Rights and the Bill of

Rights in general.” Later in the interview she returned to that theme: “We also emphasized the right of assembly, which is one of the five freedoms, such as freedom of speech, the right to petition, the right of free press and so on.” The study of the Constitution is traditionally part of the eighth grade curriculum and Mindy was able to connect that topic to the mobilizations. Diana used a similar rationale, “they learned a lot about government stuff through doing this, cause we had to talk about how does a bill become a law.”

In addition to learning about the laws, some teachers found ways to engage children at a higher level. As Barbara, a sixth grade teacher explained, “they wrote a letter to the President, you know, talking about the law and how they felt about it, and then what I had them do was exchange with someone else, and that someone else had to be the President responding to them.” This role-playing activity was used to help students articulate their own position and understand varying perspectives. Some of the teachers, such as Carmen, had children draft “persuasive” letters to their congressmen, including Sensenbrenner, the sponsor of HR 4437, expressing their opinion of the bill and the reasons for their stance. Some of the letters were quite moving as children addressed the fact that their parents were undocumented and they didn’t want their parents to be deported because they would become orphans. One child questioned the category “illegal” to refer to the undocumented, arguing that they hadn’t robbed or killed anyone, but were only here to work. “Immigrants produce any supplies we need, like food, clothes and other important stuff.”

Understanding how our government works, how laws are made, and how citizens can be involved in the process, was a critical goal of the teachers whose orientation was that of citizen educator. Some of these teachers organized classroom debates, as did Barbara, in which students would consider varying perspectives, such as the point of view of minutemen versus that of immigrant rights activists.

D. Teacher as Psychologist

In 2006, the news media reported on the suicide of an eighth grade student, Anthony Sotero, of California, whose suicide was triggered when the Principal of his school threatened to suspend him from school for attending one of the immigrant mobilization marches. Some educators may underestimate the fear and emotional turmoil that children experience when they or members of their family are threatened or when they perceive such threats. The teachers whose orientation I would characterize as that of psychologist were concerned that classrooms be a safe environment where students could express themselves freely, learn, and feel good about themselves. As George, an eighth grade teacher, explained, “children should be made to feel safe discussing this topic in school.” He recognized that the children and their families were afraid of what would happen to them when family members were undocumented. I wanted “the kids to feel comfortable talking about this issue in school.” Juan, another eighth grade teacher, had similar concerns and started his lessons with class meetings, a kind of activity that the class would engage in where “students share stories...and they shared fears and explored what they understood...a lot of times it was having them talk and having them verbalize a lot of this anxiety of what was going on at that time.” Andres, a social studies teacher, was sensitive to how the controversy was affecting the families and used that as a principal rationale. “In our case, every student was affected by it in one way or another by their own family and by relatives. It was something, as an educator, we couldn’t run away from it.” As George stated for his rationale, “The students get to explore themselves, and ask those questions, who am I, why am I me?” Emilia, a sixth grade teacher, responded, “I wanted them to basically come out of their shell and not be shy, speak for what they believe in.” Geraldo seemed to offer a somewhat similar rationale: “It validated their culture. They learned that they have a voice, that they are not alone in the city.”

In the teacher as psychologist conception, teachers focused on emotional issues of students and wanted to create a safe environment where children could express these feelings and be reassured. They wanted the academic learning to be a tool for personal affirmation of the students, and the school to become a kind of “sanctuary” where children would be protected.

E. Teacher as Socio/Political Activist

These teachers argued that they considered themselves activists and advocates for their students and they wanted to model what social activism looked like for the children. As Mindy argued, “I grew up as a social activist cause of a church that was socially active and I boycotted grapes and lettuce...That is the Chicano civil rights movement or the parallel.” Her personal experiences as a social activist in the 1960’s influenced her approach to the topic of immigration. She wanted the children “to start to really realize at this age 11 and 12 and 13 years old, they are starting to understand the political implications of what these things mean...how that plays out and how discrimination and racism added to that have inhibited immigration.” Graciela, a third grade teacher, tried to teach her children that “protest might change the government, the politicians’ point of view.” Likewise, Carrie, a seventh grade teacher, stated that she wanted them to learn that “they have a voice and their voice matters, and if they get together and unite, that they can actually be heard.”

Many of these teachers participated in the march themselves in solidarity with the community. Emilia stated, “about 70% of my students participated in the marches, and ...I also participated because I felt that, it was, it’s my, I love everything it stands for, it stands for social justice and the kids really know how, I make them aware of that, and we are really into government, politics, ancient history, and how it relates to, how it’s affected us in the modern world as well.” “I am teaching you guys to be vocal, be active in your community and standing

up for yourself.” Andres, one of the older teachers interviewed, was reminded of previous activism from his youth during the Civil Rights Movement. “As being at my age close to 50, it is probably the closest event as I have seen since the Civil Rights movement. So it is real big to me. I lived through the civil rights and my neighborhood was affected by civil rights or the racism about, and my neighborhood changed...You can’t teach people this. It’s not in the books. They have to be a part of that.”

This activist stance required that teachers take a personal day if they wanted to participate in the marches. As George stated, “because I am politically active and an advocate for my students and their families, I wanted to be out with them.” On the other hand, there were some who felt that as much as they wanted to be on the march, it was important that they be at the school for their students, for those who couldn’t attend, and help them be involved in the issues even if they weren’t marching. Alicia, a special education teacher, was torn by that dilemma, “What about my kids who come to school?” She did not march but went to school and used the occasion to have students read *Si Se Puede*, a book about a Latino janitor’s strike in Los Angeles. Through the reading and discussion of the book she helped children make connections between that issue and what the marchers were involved with. She had the students participate vicariously by showing a video that a friend of hers had made of the March 10th march and extended the lesson by having the students make posters with their opinions of the march.

The teachers who identified as social activists were often in schools where the administration was also supportive. Reinaldo, a sixth grade teacher, appreciated the support from his principal. “He said what he could do is rent us two buses or three buses and we could choose students from the middle school, bring parents, make banners, bring the custodial staff and go and march.” Lillian, an eighth grade teacher, also acknowledged administrative support. “Our principal allowed our student council and upper grades to participate.” Marta, a teacher

from a Catholic School, acknowledged the rhetorical support of her school's administration as a result of its religious mission, since their administration claimed that "as Catholics, part of our deal is to be on the side of people who are marginalized; immigrants are being marginalized by this law and our motto is to be men and women for others." Marta criticized what she considered to be a manipulative response from the administration, however, when they argued against attendance at the march. She quoted her principal, "Well, you have an education and so you should exercise your right to obtain that education. And she went on to challenge that position by telling the students, "No one is asking you to give up your education. To give up one day of school is a very different thing than to be giving up an entire education." She was thereby teaching her students to critique the flowery rhetoric and recognize the gap between that language and genuine support for a cause, not an easy project for a teacher in a parochial school.

Not all the social activist teachers had supportive administrators. Some managed to circumvent this lack of support through a variety of strategies. Juanita worked with her colleague and said, "we pretty much did our own thing." Some stated that their administration really didn't know what was going on in their classrooms so they went ahead and taught. They felt comfortable that they could defend what they were teaching, even in a school where teachers were advised not to get "too political".

Evidence of an Integrated Approach

None of the teachers interviewed could be classified as adhering to only one orientation of the five discussed above. The richest interviews appeared to be from a school where teachers were able to integrate all five perspectives into their teaching and the school mission. In that school immigration was an ongoing theme of the fifth and eighth grades, a theme that seemed to involve many areas of the curriculum and where teachers collaborated to plan a

variety of extended activities. These teachers spoke about the importance of having children make connections—from the literature that they read, the historical issues that they learned about, the conversations they had with parents, the programs they watched on television. Samuel explained this approach: We set up three components of immigration: the history of immigration, immigration to Chicago and immigration today...We looked at four immigrations to Chicago: Swedish, Polish, Chinese and Mexican. The students investigated some of the reasons they immigrated to Chicago, as well as the areas that they settled in Chicago...we also visited some of the museums...the kids had initially created a biography of an immigrant.” The goal was for children “just to realize that the U.S. was a nation of immigrants.” Margarita explained the comprehensiveness of their approach: “In eighth grade my focus is for them to understand the economic basis of the United States. When we did the Civil War, we saw how slaves helped boost the economy. In doing this unit, I asked them to evaluate how immigrants helped boost the economy...How without the labor of immigrants the economy of the country would change.” Another activity had them actively explore the stance of the President and Congressional Representatives. “They also watched President Bush’s presidential address on the immigration issue. They also went online and looked at Congressional voting on what policies are under Congress right now...They created a timeline of immigrant policies and they added to this timeline the recent policies that are going on.”

The teachers in this school argued that academic study should be supplemented with opportunities for children to take action in the real world outside of the school. Clara gave an example of how the children in her class did this. “Last year the kids really wanted to do something that helped immigrants. We did some fundraising stuff to donate money to an immigration association or an organization that helps immigrants.” On a more regular basis classes in this school go to a community center, “like Centro Romero where they help people fill out their immigration documents.” This is intended to have the children learn about the

citizenship application process from actually working with immigrants completing this paperwork.

Interviewing these teachers showed the richness of what could be accomplished when thoughtful teachers work collaboratively and creatively with a supportive administration to deliver a dynamic curriculum. In such a setting the five orientations described in this presentation are not contradictory but rather represent meaningful teaching that helps students investigate, understand, sympathize, and take action.

Educational Implications

It is important for educators to deal with controversy in classrooms, for schools to find ways to help students understand the nature of socio-political events in their nation and communities, and the ways that these events can affect their lives. This is especially so when the events can have a significant impact on students whose families are generally underserved by the institutions of the society because they are poor, non-English speaking, non-citizens or undocumented immigrants with very limited political power to change their circumstances. Education that helps students formulate their questions, seek ways to answer them, and take the next steps towards action can help prepare students for effective citizenship in a democratic society.

The recent mobilizations on immigrant rights were an important movement in Chicago and in the United States because the huge numbers involved and the great diversity of participants made visible the sizeable numbers of immigrants in this country who are undocumented and also highlighted their supporters and the need for the nation to develop a comprehensive approach to addressing this issue. Media estimates are that the May 1st immigrant rights mobilization in Chicago was the largest protest march in the city's history.

Public polls show that the American public considers the issue of immigration reform as the

second most important issue facing the nation, after the War in Iraq. Students need to be able to understand the public rhetoric of the media, sort out facts from opinions, truth from

propaganda, and make judgments about appropriate responses from an informed stance.

Schools are the best place for this education to take place in a safe environment that recognizes students' rights to know, to make decisions, and to take actions based on their best judgments.

Teachers who value student inquiry will not avoid addressing controversial issues in their classrooms, but will seek ways to engage students on the road to becoming active and well informed members of their society, who can also challenge policies and practices that oppress and increase social injustice.

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