

## **88. Immigrant cultural values and language barriers as communication class lessons**

Experiences of immigrants can contribute to the improvement of curriculum design. In this session, several stories will be told to illustrate how.

Matthew, a young 12-year-old middle school student from the Philippines, joined an American classroom after his stepfather married his single Mom. He spoke little English and kept to himself, had no friends and seldom talked. A decision need to be made to place him under the ELL programme or the Special Education programme. I was hired to try to get him to talk.

The school's attempt to support the student by hiring an interpreter went in a completely different direction. After a few sessions measuring his first and second language levels, the school board felt ready to make a decision. But late one night, I received an email from the young boy confessing the abuse he had suffered. My report to the principal generated a host of events that included Child Protection Services and the police.

Another story revolves around my work as a natural helper for the Domestic Abuse Hotline. I volunteer as an interpreter for immigrant spouses who experience domestic abuse. The unique qualities of abusive relationship reveal cultural values and language barriers as important factors that inform university studies to understand this community problem. These stories allowed teachers like me to develop lectures in communications classes that address this concern.

One mother's ordeal under the violent control of her husband continued because of her deep feelings of debt of gratitude from her American citizen husband. The stigma of divorce and the loss of financial stability due to lack of education and community support inform curriculum specialists about the need for research that will explore these communication problems.