



NEW YORK STATE MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM

TITLE: Our Stories Impact Self-Advocacy

DESCRIPTION: This session will help parents develop their *Testimonios* (personal stories). Parents will learn how to use their personal stories to build a sense of empowerment and improve self-advocacy. To be empowered, parents must honor their own stories and create a foundation that allows them to believe they and their children deserve what they are asking for.

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SERIES: This is Module 2 in the 5-part “Developing Self-Advocacy Skills” series. While Module 2 can be used on its own, it is recommended to start with Module 1: “Our Culture is a Positive Tool in Schools,” as it creates the base on which the rest of the modules build.

Facilitator Guide

OBJECTIVES/LEARNING TARGET(S)

At the end of this session, parents should:

- Incorporate an understanding of their cultures in creating their own personal stories
- Find, value, and feel empowered in sharing their own personal stories
- Lay a foundation to help engage schools and their own children
- Develop their own personal stories
- Tell their own personal stories (with children, trusted school/community member)

WORKSHOP/MODULE DESIGN

This session can be facilitated with a group of parents or individually within a home. It can be adapted to use with adolescents.

Participant Agenda

- Introduction: What is *Testimonio*?
- Activity: If You Really Knew Me
- Activity: “I am From” Poem
- Activity: Developing an Effective Personal Story
- Closing & Next Steps: Using Your Personal Story for Self-Advocacy

CONNECTION TO THE NYS MEP THEORY OF ACTION

Developing Self-Advocacy Skills

- Knowing and sharing your own story is empowering, it is a step towards developing the courage to self-advocate.
- The workshop provides a safe environment for practicing speaking in front of people.

Identity Development

- Develop pride in who they are, their culture, and their life experiences
- Introduced to the life experiences and culture of others.

SUPPLIES AND MATERIALS

- Participant Handouts (*English, Spanish, Karen, Burmese*)
 1. *Participant Agenda*
 2. *Self-Advocacy Continuum*
 3. *“I Am From” Poem Template*
 4. *Developing an Effective Personal Story*
- Markers/Pens
- Paper, Timer

STAFFING NEEDS

- When this session is being done with a group at a local Parent Engagement location, plan for childcare.
- Provide interpretation when more than one language could be present.

Facilitator Note: The estimated times in this Guide are based on using one language. When adjusting to incorporate a second language, a general rule is to double the time needed.

Facilitator Note: This Guide has numerous places for the facilitator to provide an example from their own life and culture. [These examples have brackets, so the facilitator can replace the examples provided by the Developer.] These examples are provided to help prompt facilitators to think of examples to fit the situation, and in turn to help parents think of their own examples.

This Guide has places where the facilitator might want to use a participant's name. The sample dialogue uses a [sample name] with brackets around it as a reminder to substitute a real participant's name.

ADJUSTING FOR USE WITH INDIVIDUAL FAMILY IN THE HOME

If you are facilitating in a home with one family, the activities become conversations between you and the family with everyone sharing.

ADJUSTING FOR USE WITH ADOLESCENTS

These workshops will work with young people. Review the Facilitator Guide, and decide what elements you will use with students. You may need to modify some of the activities to work with your adolescents; however, all of the Participant Handouts remain appropriate.

WELCOME

(10 minutes)

Facilitator Note: Welcome the group to the workshop, state the name of the workshop, and then move into introductions. As you know, workshops are often foreign to migrant parents whether they are immigrants or not. When participants are shy, move around the group and give attention and a warm smile to each person as they introduce themselves.

In addition to asking participants to say their Name, pick one question from below for participants to answer, or feel free to use one of your own.

Questions

- Name?
- Share an activity you like to do in the summer.
- Share where you were born.
- Share your favorite toy when you were a child.
- Share your favorite cartoon when you were a child or your favorite cartoon that you watch with your child.

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

(5 minutes)

Key Points

- This is a process. Everyone is embarking on a journey.
- It is important for parents to develop their own personal stories based on their life experiences.
- It is important for parents to share their stories.

It might sound like: *This is a journey, a process, with each session providing a step along the process and empowering you to self-advocate in your child's school.*

Facilitator Note: If members of the group participated in Module 1, "Our Culture is a Positive Tool in Schools," this is a good time to connect the two workshops:

It might sound like: *This is the second workshop in a 5-part series focused on the journey from advocacy to self-advocacy. This is a journey, a process, with each workshop providing a step*

toward empowering you to self-advocate in your child's school. The first workshop allowed you to understand the importance of your culture.

When you look at the Self-Advocacy Continuum handout, there are arrows that cross each other in the middle, showing the journey, the process we are going through. When we arrive in a new community, we often need help from someone else, like the migrant educator, to help us negotiate issues with the school. Then as we get to know how things work, and what is available in our new community, we can be more independent, and take over more of the advocacy for our children and ourselves.

Take a minute to think about where you would find yourself on this Continuum.

Facilitator Note: If you are facilitating this in a home with one family, personalize the conversation instead of using the general reference to *parents*.

Now this workshop will help you develop your Testimonios, your personal stories based on your life experiences and cultural experiences. You will learn how to use your personal stories to build a sense of empowerment and improve self-advocacy. To be empowered, you should honor your own stories and create a foundation that allows you to believe that you and your children deserve what you are asking for.

At the end, we will talk about sharing our Testimonios, our personal stories.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS A TESTIMONIO?

(3 minutes)

Key Points

- Testimonio is a word that means *your story*.
- Our stories are our experiences, our values, our culture, how we view the world.
- Everybody has a personal story that is important and powerful.
- Sharing our stories is empowering.
- Hearing the stories of others is also empowering.
- We will be doing activities to help you develop your own story and build the confidence to share it with others.

It might sound like: A Testimonio is your personal story. It is your personal experiences, your culture, the way to connect your values to other people. Each of us have a personal story, a Testimonio. And there is power in our Testimonios. By taking time to think about our personal story and to share it with others, we can move ourselves and others to action. Our stories can leave other people with strong feelings and can let other people know about our character, values, and the reasons we need to be heard. We are going to take some time to do some activities that will help you put together your personal story and help you have the confidence to share it with others so that they can respect who you are.

Facilitator Note: A Testimonio is a literary genre – a first-hand account of someone’s life and/or an important event.

ACTIVITY: IF YOU REALLY KNEW ME

(10 minutes)

Key Points

- It is important to begin feeling comfortable with your personal story.
- This activity will help us get comfortable talking about our personal stories.

It might sound like: We are going to take some time to start being comfortable in talking about our personal stories. This activity helps us have fun in talking about who we are, the things we like, activities we like to do, our favorite things, and so on. First, I will model this activity with a volunteer. Then you will be able to practice it in pairs.

Who would like to volunteer? Yes, [Tracy]. Thank you for volunteering. [Tracy], I am going to talk for 1 minute and share about the things that are interesting in my life. I will start each sentence by saying “If you really knew me, you would know...” and include an interesting fact or story from my life. I will do this over and over, each time with a new and interesting fact, until the time is up. When the time is up, I want you to share and tell me about the things that are

interesting about your life. Start by saying “If you really knew me, you would know...” and fill in the rest with something interesting. Then continue saying “If you really knew me, you would know...” until your 1 minute is up. Got it? Ok, I will start to show you how it goes.

Facilitator Note: You might want a volunteer to be the Timer when you are modeling.

For Example:

- *If you really knew me, you would know that [I love baseball.]*
- *If you really knew me, you would know that [my favorite baseball team is the New York Yankees.]*
- *If you really knew me, you would know that [I have 2 kids.]*
- *If you really knew me, you would know that [I love to read.]*
- *If you really knew me, you would know that [my mother is from Puerto Rico but I was born in NYC.]*

“If you really knew me, you would know....”

My minute is up.

[Tracy], it is your turn. Do you understand the instructions? Wonderful. You have one minute. Go.

Thanks so much, [Tracy]. Now let’s get into pairs and everyone can try.

Facilitator Note: You may have to walk around the space when putting people in pairs. Participants without much experience in workshops often need encouragement and guidance.

Please note that you should only share the interesting facts/stories that you are comfortable with sharing. You do not have to share anything too personal. Think about the hobbies you do, your favorite shows, your favorite sports team, your favorite book, and so on. Things like that.

So please find a partner. Once you have a partner, decide who will share first.

Raise your hand if you are going first.

Remember, you will have 1 minute. After that minute is up, I will say “TIME” and you will switch.

After everyone has had a turn, thank your partner for sharing and for listening. Alright, do we all have that? Wonderful. Let’s begin.

Ready set go.

Stop and switch.

Stop!

Take a minute to thank your partner for sharing.

ACTIVITY: “I AM FROM” POEM

(15 minutes)

Key Points

- Using a poem frees people from punctuation and needing lots of words.
- Time to honor one’s culture, personal experiences, and memories from childhood and new memories creating now.
- Our own stories are important.
- It is important to share our stories with others.
- It is important to listen to other people and their stories.

It might sound like: This activity will continue helping you put together your personal story. We are going to create a poem.

This poem will include some things about your culture, your personal experiences. I will ask you to think about some of your memories from when you were a child. And I will ask you to think about things in your life right now. When we finish, we will read this poem out loud.

I am giving each of you the “I Am From” Poem worksheet, and something to write with.

Facilitator Note: It could help to write the template format on chart paper, so you can point to it as you talk about it. Alternatively, you may be able to enlarge the template on a copier, to ledger-size, for a visual reference.

You may want to leave the blanks empty when you give your example, so no one thinks they have to use your words.

The wording is careful so as not to assume that someone lived in one place during the participant’s childhood.

Find the Number 1. This first line starts with the words, “I am from... BLANK and BLANK.” The two blanks – two empty lines are for you to write on. In the first blank, write down something you remember from a home that you lived in as a child.

For example, if I was doing this, I might write [“the big poster of a coquí”] in the first blank, because that is something I remember from the home I lived in.

Then, in the second blank line, write down something that is in your home now.

Feel free to write in the language you are most comfortable with.

Since this is a poem, you can just write one or two words.

Facilitator Note: Since participants are writing short answers, it is worthwhile to pause between lines to make sure they understand the task and are filling in the blanks with their answers.

Find the Number 2. The second row says, "I am from the... BLANK and the BLANK." In the first blank, write a word or two about a smell or taste or sound from a home you lived in as a child.

Then on the second blank line, write a word or two about a smell or taste or sound from the home you live in now.

Facilitator Note: Lines 1 - 4 pair something from one's childhood with the same kind of thing from their life today. The prompts for each blank are written underneath the blank line. Line 5 breaks the pattern.

Each group is different, but it is often a good idea to read the whole worksheet with the group, to assist those participants who do not read regularly, and giving time to think and write before moving on.

Line 3 says, "I am from BLANK and BLANK." On the first blank line, write a name of a place where you lived as a child. On the second blank line, write a name of the place you live now.

Line 4 says, "I am from BLANK and BLANK." On the first blank line, write a song that you liked when you were growing up. On the second blank line, write a song that you like now.

Line 5 says, "I am from the BLANK and the BLANK." On the first blank line, write one of the languages you use. On the second blank line, write one of your favorite foods.

Okay, that was the last one. Do you feel you were able to get through all the prompts? Great. Congratulations, you wrote a poem. Give yourselves a round of applause.

Now, do I have any volunteers to share their poem?

Facilitator Note: If this is a large group, ask for a couple volunteers to share. If it is a small group, allow each person the opportunity to share.

ACTIVITY: DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE PERSONAL STORY

(30 minutes)

Key Points

- Think about those moments in our lives that challenged us.
- Think of a challenging time when we took action.
- Make connections to where we are today and how the story can impact the future, specifically your child's school and your child's own personal story.
- Communicating our personal stories allows for the sharing of experiences and allows others to value our lives and connect with our stories.

It might sound like: *Now that you had some chances to share about yourself, let's work on creating your Testimonio, your personal story that will help you communicate your value to others, motivate others to share their story, and lead in advocating for yourself and your children. When we communicate our personal story, share our experiences, we help others value our lives, we help other people connect with our stories – even if they have different backgrounds or believe in different things. Our personal stories can create emotional connections. Your life story is important and other people need to hear it to realize how important it is.*

Before we start, let's think of some important information we think our story needs to get across.

- *What are your values that you want other people to know?*
- *What are the important experiences in your life that led you to this place at this time?*
- *What is your vision for the future?*

Facilitator Note: Use these “before we start” questions as a group discussion. Allow think time and wait time for the group to answer the questions before moving on.

Great. Now, as we put together our own Testimonio, our own personal story, we want to think about a few things. I am handing out a worksheet that will help us begin to create our personal story. On this worksheet, you will see 4 columns. Each column is guiding you to think about something from your life. Let's go over what each column is asking you to think about.

We are thinking first, so you don't have to write anything yet, but think of the pictures these words make you think of. When we do start to write, we are going to draw pictures first.

Facilitator Note: This is the Brainstorming part of the activity, so it is a good idea to give people some time to think and draw as you are walking through the categories. They will still need some more time after you explore all four columns.

Challenges/Obstacles	Action Taken	The Present	The Future

Column 1: *The first column has “Challenges and/or Obstacles” written at the top. What were some of the moments in your life where you felt challenged, faced an obstacle, or experienced*

something that caused you to make a choice? Think about the moments that may have been difficult or where you had to make a choice about something.

Facilitator Note: Replacing the author’s [personal example inside the brackets] with your own example is more challenging for this activity because you will need to follow it all that through from the challenge/obstacle, to the action taken, the connection to your present life and the impact on the future.

For example, if I am thinking about this question, I would think of several challenges and obstacles.

- *One example is [when I went to college and one semester my grades weren’t good. I was put on probation and I was feeling overwhelmed, scared, and lonely. I had a choice to make – to study harder and ask for help from a tutor or drop out of school.]*

Then I would draw a picture in the first column. I can draw a picture that makes me think of this challenge. The drawing is just for me so it doesn’t have to be a picture that anyone would recognize.

If I think of another challenge or obstacle I have faced, then I can draw another picture.

...Has everyone had time to draw a picture of a challenge or obstacle? Then we will look at the second column called, “Action Taken.”

Column 2: *What were some of the moments in your life where you took action in response to those challenges/choices? Think about what you had to do, what you had to say.*

For example, if I think about this question for myself,

- *The action I took [was to seek help with my schoolwork so I can do better. I spent extra time on my work and tried to focus more. The reason I made this choice was because I didn’t want to drop out and let my parents and my sister down.*

Then I can draw a picture that reminds me of the action I took.

...Now, we will look at the third column. It says, “The Present.”

Column 3: *Make a connection to where you are today – how did those challenges, choices, actions lead you to where you are today? Think about some of the things you are doing today because of that choice.*

For example,

- *[For me, making the choice to not drop out and stay in college helped me to graduate and feel proud of being the first in my family to graduate. It led me to working with*

students today to help them understand the importance of going to school and helping them be successful.]

Under the third column about the present, I can draw a picture that reminds me about how the challenges, choices and actions led me to where I am today.

...This brings us to the last column about the Future.

Column 4: *Now think about how your story can impact the future? How can your story impact your child's school, your child's story?*

For example,

- *[For me, my story can help other Latino parents and students know that school can be hard, but we shouldn't give up. And it is important to show schools and society that Latinos can be college students and graduate.]*

Now that we went over what each column means, you will take some time to add to your worksheet to create your story. In your worksheet, draw pictures instead of words to fill it in. You don't have to be an artist to do this. Just draw something that will help show the challenges/obstacles you faced, what action you took to overcome that challenge/obstacle, how those things impacted you today, and how you think your story can impact the future. Take about 5 minutes to work on this.

...Wonderful! You are beginning to create your personal story.

Now we are going to get together in pairs, groups of two people. Does everyone have a partner?

With your partner, you are going to talk about what you drew. Put words to your pictures to start your Testimonio. Tell your partner your story. After you talk about what you drew, you will switch and the other person will get to share. After everyone is done sharing, talk to each other about what you heard. How did the story make you feel? What was easy or difficult about sharing your story? What is there about your story that makes you proud?

Who is going to talk first? Raise your hand if you are going to be the first person to share your story with your partner. I am setting the timer for 5 minutes. Go ahead and start.

(After timer sounds) Time to stop and switch. Raise your hand if it is your turn to share your story with your partner. I am setting the timer for 5 minutes. Go ahead and start.

Facilitator Note: Once everyone is in pairs, set your timer to five minutes. When time is up, ask partners to switch so the second person can tell their story and set your timer again.

If some groups need 3 people, ask the groups with 2 people to discuss the activity during the third round:

How did the story make you feel?

What was easy or difficult about sharing your story?

What is there about your story that makes you proud?

Return to the whole group to close the activity.

This has been great. Let's all come back to the whole group.

Does someone want to share what there is about your story that makes you proud?

Feel free to take these worksheets home and use it when you need to figure out how you want to share your story with someone else. You can use the second side of the worksheet to write out how you described the pictures to your partner.

CLOSING & NEXT STEPS: USING YOUR PERSONAL STORY FOR SELF-ADVOCACY

(5-10 minutes)

Key Points

- Share your *Testimonio* with your children.

***It might sound like:** Now that you have thought about the parts of your life that are important to share, the parts that you feel are valuable, you have a *Testimonio* that needs to be heard. Think about where you can share your personal story. It is important to share your *Testimonio* with your children so they can take pride in their parent's story and use it to impact their own *Testimonio*.*

When we share our own stories and hear other the stories of other people, we begin to understand the value in who we are. This process today was about building a foundation that allows you to believe that you and your children deserve what the school has to offer.

Understanding and believing that you and your children deserve everything that the school has to offer can give you courage when you need to advocate for your family when you face a challenge or barrier at school.

It has been great spending time together today. Thank you for your time and commitment to your children's education.

APPRECIATIONS

(5 minutes)

Key Points

- Share appreciations for self, others, or a new concept or idea learned.
- Create a climate that honors individual risk-taking.
- Create a forum for supporting each other.

***It might sound like this:** We like to close our workshops by taking time to share something you appreciate about yourself, someone in the group, or an idea or concept that you have learned. Appreciations are important because they create a climate that honors individual risk-taking. It can be hard to share in front of others. Workshops are a new way to learn for some of you. Appreciating what we have learned from each other is a good way to support each other.*

Facilitator Note: If you are doing this in a home, first appreciate something about what the parent shared. Then ask one or two leading questions asking what the parents appreciated from the session.