

Fact or Fiction? – An Introductory Activity

Adapted from *The Uprooted: Refugees and the United States* by David Donahue and Nancy Flowers

Overview: Students compare facts with their own ideas or beliefs about human migration. In the process, they become acquainted with migration issues in their own communities, Minnesota, the United States, and the world.

Time: 45-60 minutes

Materials: One set of “Fact or Fiction” and “Information” cards for each small group. The cards should be cut up and put in separate, labeled envelopes.

Objectives:

- To assess the validity of personal ideas and beliefs about migration issues.
- To understand the “who, what, where, when, and why” about migration/immigration in the U.S.

Activity:

1. Students will read several statements about migration and will need to decide whether they believe each statement is true or false. They will then have the opportunity to learn more about the statement by reading the information cards.
2. Students may need to review the concept of percent. It may be helpful to have students draw six circles of the same size on the board and fill in the circles with the graphic representation of 100%, 75%, 50%, 25%, 10%, 5%. Students will need to know that some of the information they will be reading will give information in the form of percentages. Students may need to use these circles with the graphic representation of percents to help them understand the information.
3. Students work in pairs and then groups of four for this activity. Each group receives one set of “Fact or Fiction” cards and one set of “Information” cards. Students should read the “Fact or Fiction” cards first without looking at the “Information” cards. Students work in pairs to discuss and decide whether the statements on the cards are true or false. Each pair should keep a tally on a separate sheet of paper.
4. After student pairs have made decisions about the information on the “Fact or Fiction” cards, they read the “Information” cards and match each one with the appropriate corresponding “Fact or Fiction” card. They check their answers against the information card to determine whether they correctly identified the statement as true or false.

5. In groups of four, students discuss the experience. Each student shares something they learned, discovered, or an idea they had during this experience. As a group, they create a t-chart of the “myths” and “facts” about migration. Students brainstorm lists of the effects “myths” might have on immigrant groups. Next, they come up with another list of the effects these myths or misconceptions might have on native born community members. Finally, they brainstorm a list of the effects these myths might have on the community as a whole. The class meets as a whole and shares lists. They discuss which human rights issues are involved in the information this activity is based on and ideas about how to prevent the myths from continuing. Throughout the course of this unit, students continue to revisit the concepts of human rights and the myths and facts about immigration.

Fact or Fiction and Information cards follow
 [ADD NUMBERS TO THESE FOR EASY REFERENCE]:

Fact or Fiction? 1

There is a higher percentage of immigrants in the U.S. now than ever before in U.S. history.

Information 1

The current percentage of the U.S. population that is foreign born is 9%, which is lower than the 15% that it was during the 1870-1920 peak immigration period.

Fact or Fiction? 2

Immigrants abuse the social security and welfare systems.

Information 2

Immigrants contribute more in taxes than they receive in benefits. According to the U.S. census bureau, in 1999, fewer than one in seven foreign born householders received benefits such as food stamps and housing

Fact or Fiction? 3

Minnesota’s largest immigrant group comes from Somalia.

Information 3

In 1996, 42.2% of Minnesota immigrants came as refugees. Most refugees are coming from Russia, Bosnia, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

Fact or Fiction? 4

Everyone in Minnesota has immigrated here—we're all immigrants.

Information 4

The Ojibwe and Dakota peoples were here prior to European settlement. The Dakota people believe that this is their place of origin. The Ojibwe people migrated here.

Fact or Fiction? 5

Immigrants take jobs away from Americans.

Information 5

Immigrants create more jobs than they fill by starting new businesses and by buying U.S. goods and services.

Fact or Fiction? 6

Immigrants are working in America without paying taxes.

Information 6

An estimated 11 million immigrants are working in the U.S., earning at least \$240 billion a year and paying \$90 billion in taxes. The average immigrant family pays about \$2,500 more in taxes than the average U.S. born family.

Fact or Fiction? 7

Most illegal immigrants enter through the U.S.-Mexican Border.

Information 7

Only 40% of illegal immigrants enter through the U.S.-Mexican Border, although 85% of our border enforcement is located there.

Fact or Fiction? 8

Our country is being flooded with immigrants.

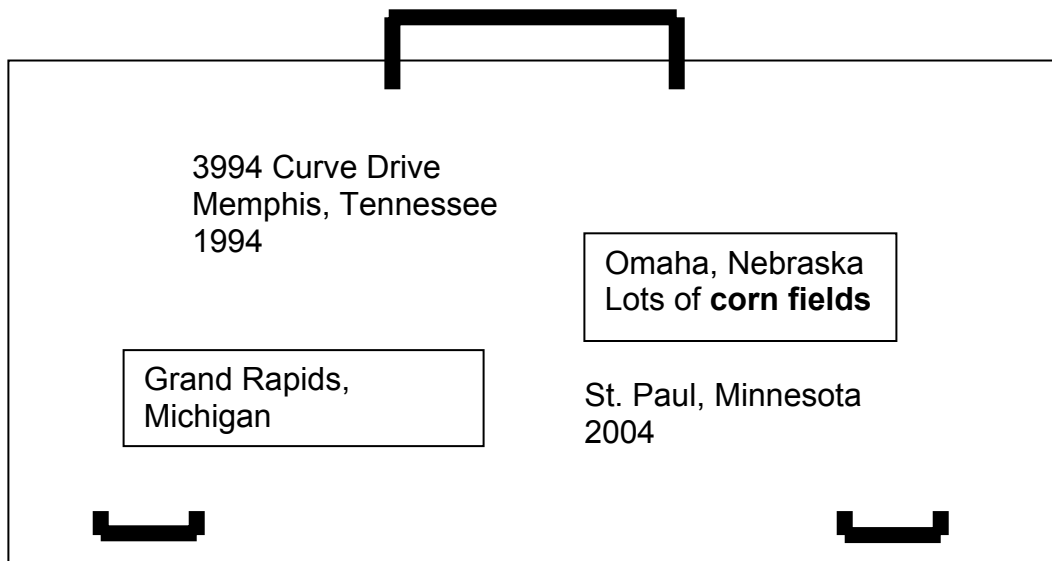
Information 8

Of the over 100 million migrants worldwide, less than 1% come to the U.S. each year.

Origin Stories

Part 1 Personal: Telling the story

How many times have you moved? If you have lived in several places, in different states or cities or even different parts of the same city, record your journey on a “suitcase” (see sample below). Make a colorful label (you may also want to draw pictures) for each state, city, or section of town in which you have lived. Include the year(s) you lived in that place if you remember any information you remember about it. If you have only lived in one place, give as much information about that place as you would like to fill your “suitcase.”



2. Make another “suitcase” to show what part of the city, state, U.S., or world other members of your family or significant people in your life have lived. You may want to use parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or foster parents.

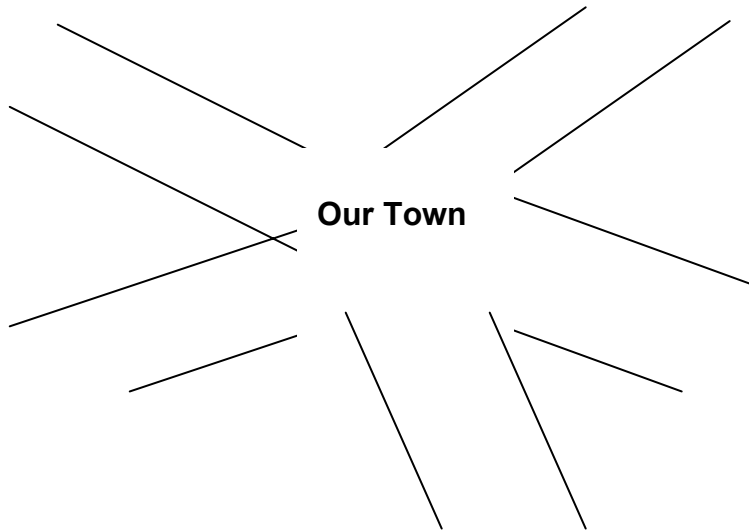
Write/record a story about moving. It may be your own story or a story about one of your family members or another significant adult in your life. Information you might want to include in your story:

- What were some of the reasons for moving?
- How did you or the other people feel before the move? (excitement, fear, anticipation, concern, happiness, uncertainty)
- How much did you or the other people know about the place to which you or they were going?
- How did you or the other people feel after the move?
- What were the surprises in the move?
- What about the new city, state, or country is interesting and different from where you or the other people lived before?

- What would you or the other people do differently if you were to move again?

Part 2 Community: Listening to the stories

As you listen to the other students' stories about moving, think about the states and countries people have moved from to come to "our town." On a large sheet of paper write "Our Town" in the center and on roads leading to the town draw suitcases rolling in from other places. Identify the origin of the movers by placing flags or symbols on each suitcase representing the city, state, or country from which they came. Group the people who came by countries and years if you can.



Make lists to answer some or all of these questions:

1. What were some of the reasons for moving, (for example, to join family, to seek employment, or to escape from persecution)? Was there any injustice, unfairness, or human rights issue that contributed to people wanting to move, (for example, religious, ethnic, racial, or economic discrimination)? Review the UDHR and try to match the injustice with the article(s).
2. Did people face injustices, unfairness, or other human rights violations before moving to their new home? After moving to their new home? Review the Minnesota Human Rights Act and try to match the injustice with the violation(s).
3. What words or phrases are new to you that are important in the experience of moving or immigration?

Letters to the Editor

Star Tribune July 9, 2004

Do it on your own

In the early 1920s, when my uncle came to America from another country, he did not speak English but was a very able-bodied person to work. He saved enough money to bring his four brothers to America with no government money involved. They learned to speak English, read and write, and all five went on to be successful businessmen.

If the Hmong or anybody else want to come to America, that's fine.

But they shouldn't do it at the expense of the Americans who have worked hard, pay high property, state and federal taxes, and tried to get ahead themselves.

Karon Looft, Crystal.

Star Tribune July 10, 2004

Making good on a promise

A July 9 letter writer writes that Hmong should not come to America at the expense of the Americans who have "worked hard, paid high . . . taxes" and cites the example of her uncle and brothers. The only problem with her argument is that there are too many other factors involved.

The Hmong fought with the U.S. forces during the Vietnam War, specifically in Laos. They rescued downed pilots, led forces through jungles, guarded transportation routes and were subjected to daily attack with their villages and families.

When U.S. forces pulled out we left these "friends" behind and tried to forget about their service to "hard-working American taxpayers."

However, the Communist governments that took over did not forget how these people had aided the U.S. forces. Thousands of Hmong were killed, and most fled for their lives to Thailand. The Thai government did not force them back, but did force them to stay in deplorable camps.

Today we are only making good on a promise. They helped our soldiers in the past, and they help build our culture and economy today as Americans.

Marque Jensen, Minneapolis.

Star Tribune July 10, 2004

Why worry about Hmong?

In response to the July 9 letter "Do it on your own," I have a question for the letter writer and her uncle: Did he give up his homeland and fight and die along American soldiers in order to earn his ticket to this great country?

For the writer's information, a lot of the Hmong are also very able-bodied people, just like her uncle. If she calms down and get the facts straight, she will know nobody is taking the country away from her.

Ming Tan, Oakdale.

Star Tribune July 9, 2004

Immigrants of another era

The front page of the July 4 Star Tribune quoted William R. Lundquist of Bloomington: "This whole issue of immigration needs to be addressed by responsible people who must evaluate our ability to support such irresponsible ventures."

What if responsible people raised this question 100 years ago when those hoards of low-income Swedes and Norwegians were trying to immigrate to the United States?

David Raymond, Minneapolis.

Going Home To The South

June 15, 2003

Children of many blacks who once fled the South and segregation are now returning to find better lives than they had in the North.

Reporters who covered the civil rights revolution of the 1960s know the bitterness felt by those who were back then known as Negroes - bitterness at the humiliation inflicted on them by Southern whites.

As a result, millions fled North in search of jobs, education, dignity.

But now, millions of their children are finding out that their best chance of living the American Dream is in the South, in places like the suburbs around Charlotte, North Carolina; Orlando, Florida; Houston, Texas; and especially Atlanta, Georgia.

And ironically, while their parents and grandparents may have fought for integration, many of them have chosen to live in all-black communities.

Correspondent Mike Wallace first reported this story on October 27, 2002.

Black suburban Atlanta may look like Beverly Hills, but it's Mecca for many new migrants who are buying homes worth from \$200,000 to more than \$2 million. And new subdivisions keep sprouting, marketed especially to blacks.

Jeff Moten and his wife, Wanda, were in the first wave of this new migration. Ten years ago, they moved here from outside New York City. Most of their neighbors are also former Northerners.

"I blazed a trail to get out of New York," says Moten. "I just wanted a better way for my kids."

That better way includes a lower crime rate than up North, easy access to athletic facilities and to the arts, and several performances a week at Atlanta's Chastain Park – which includes champagne, Chopin and Nancy Wilson.

It's a marvelous life, one that more blacks can now afford. Black buying power nationwide has doubled in the last decade. Half of all black households are now middle and upper income. And more blacks are graduating from high school and college so they're able to land better jobs and buy better homes.

Moten's neighbors, Eduard and Shari Weathers, and Keith and Detra Burrell said moving South brought them the promised land.

“My father used to always say, 'Stop asking for a piece of the pie. Make your own damn pie.' And this is us making our own pie,” says Detra Burrell.

“This is what we have. This is what we want. We're no different from anybody else. We want nice homes. All of us have college degrees here. All of us have white-collar jobs. Why should we have to settle for anything less than what we have?”

Their white-collar jobs include financial consultant, school principal, Xerox executive and computer programmer. Plus, high-tech jobs are attracting blacks and whites to the South. But for blacks, it's coming back to their roots. Many who've moved south say they feel they've come home. And more than 3.5 million came home in the '90s - twice as many as came in the '80s.

They can also find good black public schools, and trendy bars and cafes, where the only whites are behind the bar.

“My younger brother's in the Navy, in San Diego, and he was here for about a week,” says Eduard Weathers. “And I rode him around the neighborhood, and I said, 'Yeah, and it's just about all black out here.' And he looked at me, he said, 'You're kidding? Those houses we saw, black people live in those houses?' I said, 'Yeah.’”

Renee Thomas found it hard to be black in a white neighborhood, so her family left Philadelphia and moved to a black community outside Atlanta. Up north, they'd been the only African-Americans in a neighborhood of 100 white families.

“We were the first blacks that our neighbors' children had ever seen,” says Thomas. “You often feel like you don't fit in.”

But this is what really shocked her. Their son, Shay, the only black on his school football team, was scared because he was about to play a team that was all black.

“It really bothered me,” says Thomas. “Because here my son, who's African-American himself, was very afraid of the other team.”

The football incident convinced Shay's parents they had a problem.

“Our children really identified with Caucasian children, but were very

uncomfortable around African-American children,” says Thomas. “I hate to say it, but yes. But I really wanted an African-American boy. I didn't want a white child.”

Three months after that football game, the Thomas family moved south. Now, Shay's in a black public school making new friends.

Laurie Beard also grew up in a white neighborhood, in Milwaukee. But her parents sent her to an all-black college, Spelman, in Atlanta, to learn more about her own culture.

“It was just unbelievable because being from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, you know, you're one of, you know, a few,” says Beard. “And then when I got off the flight, it was like, 'Oh, my God.' I just never realized there were so many black people in one setting.”

But Beard says she'd never move back north. In Atlanta, she got her college degree, got married, and convinced her parents to leave Milwaukee and come live nearby. Her parents, Israel and Gwen Beard needed convincing because they had been part of the original migration north, and had bad memories of the South.

Back in the '50s, Israel Beard had been a teacher in Tennessee, but he got fed up when his white supervisor kept calling him and the school's other black teacher “boy” in front of their students.

“I thought that that was a little debasing,” remembers Israel, who says without question that it was better in the North at that time. “The overtness of the racism, the bigotry was not present.”

He says he never expected to come back, but visiting his daughter and seeing the change made him change his mind. Now, he says the new South has won him over.

The South that he left was segregated effectively by force, but in the new South, blacks can have segregation by choice.

“When we first moved here, we had the opportunity to pretty much move on any side of town,” says Moten. “And it was important to me for my kids to see black families, mothers and fathers, households, you know, doing well. I want them to think, 'Well, this is the norm.' I've arrived here in my lovely black neighborhood.”

“Why even move to a white neighborhood when you have a nice black neighborhood you can move into,” adds Keith Burrell, who says that white

families are welcome to move into his neighborhood.

“Everybody's welcome to move here. Wouldn't have a black power sign on their door or their yard. No. Wouldn't bother us at all.”

“I think that's the misconception, and I think that's because when we move into their neighborhoods, it's like, 'Oh, my God. Put the house on the market. Lock the doors.' And I hate to say it, but if they came in, I would wonder ... One of the things you'd say, 'Well, what's up your sleeve?' 'What is it that you want? Are you selling drugs?’”

Now, there are a lot of grown black people who wear braces on their teeth.

“That's our badge of courage. We've arrived,” says Burrell. “Growing up, the only kids that had braces were those kids that had money. Everybody we grew up with had the little bent-up teeth, going in different directions. And now, we're 40 years old. I have arrived. Look at my braces.”

But not everyone can afford them. Nationwide, one in five blacks still lives in poverty - one in five, even in Atlanta. But that's a dramatic improvement from 10 years ago when the poverty rate was one in three.

“You understand that you are middle class, so that you might help somebody,” says Cynthia Hale, who launched her church 16 years ago with just four people. Now, she preaches to more than 6,000 people, and most of them live in all-black, middle and upper class neighborhoods.

“I was so excited about being at a place where I could just kind of be myself and let my hair down,” remembers Hale. “I didn't have to prove anything to anybody. And I think that's what causes people of any race, any culture, to self-segregate.”

Alex Wilkerson agrees. He says he was the last person who ever expected to move back south. During World War II, he trained combat pilots in Tuskegee, Ala. But after the war, he couldn't land a decent job in the South.

“I realized that there were no opportunities, regardless of what skills I could have acquired,” says Wilkerson.

He moved north in disgust. But last year, he and his wife moved back south to be near their daughter, Isabella Wilkerson, a Pulitzer prize-winning reporter for The New York Times who moved to Atlanta to research a book on the original migration north.

She told us that now many northern blacks are drawn to the South because this is their mother country, the cradle of their culture.

“There's always a searching to find out what—where did this begin, and why do we eat the food that we eat? Why do we listen to the music that we listen to? Why do we speak the way that we do? And this is a way to find that out,” says Isabella Wilkerson, who admits she really didn't want to come back.

Isabella Wilkerson says she got a scare recently when she came out of an Atlanta bagel shop. It was raining so hard she couldn't make it back to her car.

“While I was waiting, a man came towards me. He was a gaunt, tall man who had a white goatee, and he looked as if he might have been in another time and place -- a Confederate general,” she says. “And I immediately had this visceral reaction to him, just at how he looked.”

The man, who had an umbrella, offered to walk her to her car in the pouring rain. “I was amazed that this was happening. I had sized him up as a Southerner that I should probably steer clear of, and he showed this Southern hospitality that you hear so much about but don't believe exists,” says Isabella Wilkerson. “It had never happened to me in all the years I've lived in the north.”

If Martin Luther King Jr. were alive, what would he say about what was going on in Atlanta today?

“Even he might be speechless,” says Isabella Wilkerson.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/06/12/60minutes/main558375.shtml>

COMPARE AND CONTRAST STORY SHEET

Story 1	Story 2
How alike?	

How different?		
	With regard to	
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Conclusion or interpretation

Mock Human Rights Commission Meeting

Students participate in a mock city council meeting or a human rights commission meeting around an immigration issue to build greater understanding of perspective on the issue.

Goal:

Students will be introduced to and understand local human rights issues, as well as the work of local Human Rights Commissions and the Minnesota Department of Human Rights, specifically as they relate to migration issues.

Time: 4 hours in sessions as needed

Introduction:

Who deals with human rights issues in your town? What are examples of human rights violations? Is there a Human Rights Commission in your town or county? What can be done to help those who believe they have been discriminated against? (Minnesota has a Department of Human Rights and 59 communities have Human Rights Commissions to deal with violations of the Minnesota Human Rights Act.)

Who's Protected and How, from the Minnesota Human Rights Act.

(For complete list see www.humanrights.state.mn.us)

Protected Class: Race

Areas of protection: Employment, Housing, Public Accommodations, Public Service, Education, Credit, Business

Protected Class: Color

Areas of protection: Employment, Housing, Public Accommodations, Public Service, Education, Credit, Business

Protected Class: Creed

Areas of protection: Employment, Housing, Public Accommodations, Public Service, Education, Credit

Protected Class: Religion

Areas of protection: Employment, Housing, Public Accommodations, Public Service, Education, Credit

Protected Class: National Origin

Areas of protection: Employment, Housing, Public Accommodations, Public Service, Education, Credit, Business

Activity:

Plan and conduct a mock Human Rights Commission meeting to resolve a case of reported discrimination against an immigrant. Write down the facts to be presented.

Background information:

There are 59 Human Rights Commissions in Minnesota. For information about the commission in your city or community see: <http://www.hrusa.org/league/background/members1.htm>

Human Rights Commissions usually have between 5–12 members and meet once a month at the city hall. Persons who have a human rights-related complaint may bring it to their local Commission or file directly with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights. Some options for filing such a complaint include the Duluth Human Rights Commission, the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights or the St. Paul Human Rights Commission if the complainant lives in those cities. These three Commissions have enforcement powers. The other 56 Commissions do not have such powers and cannot investigate cases. They can only mediate between the person who has a complaint and the persons against whom the complaint is being made.

This activity is a simplified version of a complex process, but should serve to raise awareness of the work of Human Rights Commissions.

Suggestions for a Mock Human Rights meeting**Roles:**

Commission members and chairperson

Complainant (person who is alleging discrimination)

Respondent (person against whom a complaint alleging unlawful discrimination has been filed; may be an employer, landlord or any person who has acted in a way that can be seen as discriminatory)

Recorder (takes notes)

Advocate (a friend or legal representative may accompany the complainant)

Witnesses or other presenters (these are community members at large who have various opinions and perspectives on the issues)

Audience (Non-presenting community members and members of the press)

General plan:

1. Introduce the concept of a Human Rights Commission and explain that the class will be enacting a mock version to gain a deeper understanding of migration issues and how they relate to human rights principles.
2. As a class, come up with a situation that might arise (or be present) in your community that is an example of a human rights violation that relates to migration issues. You may wish to draw on past experiences in this unit to come up with a situation. Example: A person is denied housing or employment because of race or national origin.
3. Assign roles and ask students to think about how the person whose role they are playing would respond to the violation. Students brainstorm about the different perspectives involved in the conflict.
4. Conduct the hearing.

- a) The Complainant describes events. Each incident needs to be described in clear, precise, factual and chronological order with as much detail as possible. An example on the board might be a good idea to get everyone started.
 - b) The hearing is very much like a trial. The Complainant and the Respondent present evidence.
 - c) A panel of Commissioners orders to dismiss the case or to rule in favor of the Complainant.
 - d) Specific “remedies” to correct the discriminatory behavior are usually part of the judgment: Money for lost wages, punitive damages, mental anguish and attorney’s fees.
5. If the complaint is taken to any of the 56 Commissions that have mediation but not investigative or enforcement powers, a face-to-face mediation session is conducted by one or two commission members. The parties attempt to resolve the complaint. There may be testimony and interviews by witnesses from both sides. The mediators are careful to remain neutral and not take sides.
 6. Possible outcomes of the mediation session: An agreement or no agreement is reached between the Complainant and Respondent. If there is no agreement, the Complainant may decide to file with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights.
 7. When filing the complaint with MN DHR, Duluth Human Rights Commission, the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights or the St. Paul Human Rights Commission, mediation is attempted first and is on-going, but if no settlement is reached there will be a hearing.
 8. Both sides of a discrimination complaint have the right to appeal the decision to the Minnesota Court of Appeals.

Follow-up activities:

1. Write a newspaper style story of the Mock Human Rights meeting.
2. Contact your local Human Rights Commission for information and a visit.
3. Research statistics on discrimination in your area of Minnesota.

Resources

Federal Protections against National Origin Discrimination

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt>

Minnesota Department of Human Rights

www.humanrights.state.mn.us

League of Minnesota Human Rights Commissions

www.mnleagueofhumanrights.org

Action Plan

Selected Issue:

Group Members:

- 1. Plan of Action--What are you going to do? Be specific and list the steps in order:***

- 2. What materials and/or resources will you need and where will you get them?***

- 3. What do you want to happen as a result of your action(s)?***

- 4. What problems or challenges might you face? How will you deal with them?***

- 5. What might be some other outcomes as a result of your action(s)?***

- 6. What information will you collect to see if your actions are successful?***

- 7. What events or actions will you be able to observe to determine if change happens?***