

Addressing Student Concerns About ICE and Current Events

While there are well outlined resources informing the legalities of ICE presence on campus and recommended protocols for school staff and administrators to increase their ability to ensure safe and responsive schools, it is sometimes a challenge to know how to address student and family concerns in times of uncertainty. HCOE is committed to keep our districts and charters informed with resources posted on our website - <https://hcoe.org/immigration-support/> .

This simple document is to support our interactions with students who may be asking questions, showing signs of anxiety or fear related to ICE and how their families, friends, or them as individuals could be impacted by the current national climate related to immigration status.

Emphasis on Safety: It is important that we ensure students that they are safe in the school environment and that adults are there to protect them and help them grow and learn. It is recommended that we are aware of the developmental age of the child and how we approach these complex issues.

For *children PK-5th grades* the primary focus is on safety, learning, and skill development. A sample of how to address a child expressing concerns could be “know that the school is a place where you are safe, and the adults are here to make sure of that. The _____ community is here to protect and support our students.” If there appears to be a persisting or imminent worry it may be prudent to ask further “is there something that you’d like to talk about? We can talk or you could meet with _____.”

For *children 6th and older* there will likely be more complexities addressing their concerns. Children in middle school and high school are more likely to overhear information or be engaged with the information at home and in their communities. It is important to not silence or hinder concerns, though it is also important to not disrupt the educational process, or spread fear in a manner that is counterproductive. While there is no one way to engage youth about the issues – one approach that can be helpful is validating and empathizing with your students. An example may be, “yes, I’ve heard about that as well and this is something that is important to be aware of – right now let’s focus on learning, and let’s check in _____, or if you are open to it _____ is a great person to check in with about this”.

Be mindful to foster opportunities for communication. This is true for your students as well as the larger school community. Home school communication is paramount during these times to promote trust and keep our families informed. Morning meetings and restorative

circles are effective engagement formats to gauge student need. Circles offer equity of voice, a format for community building, and provides an opportunity to observe student behavior that may warrant a check-in. Relationships are key to promoting safety and opens channels of communication. Hosting “listening sessions” or other forms of community engagement also builds trust between families and schools. Events can be specific to concerns of ICE/Immigration to review protocols and actions the school is and will take in the event of involvement in our community, they can focus on celebrating our community, or they could look like resource or wellness fairs to raise awareness of community resources.

For resources or consultation please contact Dr. Peter Stoll (pstoll@hcoe.org) Director of Prevention and Intervention, Sharrone Blanck (sblanck@hcoe.org) Learning Specialist for Equity and Inclusion, or Klark Swan (kswan@hcoe.org) School Safety Director. We will assist and connect you to useful resources.