

A personal connection with immigrants motivates students to study U.S. policy

Issues concerning U.S. immigration policy, visa processes, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) have come under scrutiny and debate – from Capitol Hill to the classroom. For students from four high schools, videoconferencing connected these issues to the faces and experiences of two recently naturalized U.S. citizens.

Students spoke with a South Vietnamese university student who had become a naturalized citizen the day before the interactive session. They also connected with a self-employed businessman, originally from Turkey, who became a citizen in 1999.

The Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court of the Southern District of Indiana, who had presided over the student's naturalization, and the Assistant Officer in Charge from the INS office in Indianapolis, also participated. They answered questions about immigration and naturalization policies, practices, and processes.



With the recent focus on stricter immigration policies, tighter control of student visas, and more stringent border security, the discussion was extremely enlightening. Some participating students were immigrants themselves. For others, this was their first opportunity to meet face to face with a Middle Easterner or hear a South Asian's firsthand story.

“It was fascinating... the strength (of videoconferencing) is a face-to-face meeting that could not happen otherwise.”

– Deborah Hutton, International Studies for Indiana Schools

Impact on Learning

- n Inspired a student to ask for telephone contacts so that he could explore becoming a naturalized citizen.
- n Brought to life the content taught in government and history classes.
- n Prompted students to think deeply about the immigration and naturalization policies of the United States and their impact at home and abroad.
- n Allowed students to connect with people they only read or hear about in the news.
- n Encouraged students to reexamine their perspectives on many of the rights and freedoms that U.S. citizens take for granted.

Event Stats

Number of participating students95

Number of participating schools 3

Co-sponsors:

International Center of Indianapolis;
International Studies for Indiana
Schools; Madame Walker Theatre