

**THE NEW NEBRASKANS**  
**36 minute videotape - Produced by Nebraska Educational Television**  
**in cooperation with the**  
**Lincoln/Lancaster County “New Americans Task Force”**

***MEETING GUIDE & TEACHING MATERIALS***  
**SESSION “A” TAKES ABOUT 45 MINUTES**  
**“B” SESSION ADDS ABOUT 15 MINUTES**

**SESSION “A”**

**LEARNING ABOUT CULTURE:** Meeting and learning about the culture of new neighbors can be very rewarding for both those who have lived longer in the community and those who have more recently come to the community. The differences and similarities between and among people is related to the culture in which a person was raised. According to Edward Taylor, a mid-1800's British anthropologist, “Culture . . . is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”

**OBJECTIVES FOR THE LEARNER:** At the completion of the discussion/video, learners will be able to:

1. Develop an awareness of culture as it helps to explain how and why people behave as they do.
2. Envision what new residents are experiencing by listening to their personal stories.
3. Explore opportunities for assisting newcomers in becoming better acclimated to the community.

**BEFORE PRESENTING THE MATERIAL:**

1. Review the videotape as background for your own preparation. The tape is a compilation of comments from a number of new Nebraskans, originally from Mexico, Iraq, Bosnia, Viet Nam, and Sudan addressing the following topics:
  - a. Leaving Home – Respondents discuss the need to escape religious persecution, war, and political repercussions; seeking education; and opportunities to improve English language ability by living in the US.
  - b. A New Culture – Respondents find that family roles are different, shopping and transportation must be learned, life is much faster, and the weather is sometimes a shock. Human rights are respected in the US.
  - c. Language Barrier – Learning the English language is considered to be the biggest challenge and of the highest priority. Lack of language makes one feel helpless and fearful.
  - d. Refugees and Immigrants – There is a great difference between opportunities provided to refugees who are in the US legally with extended government services to help them get started versus the lack of government resources for immigrants, whether here legally or without legal papers.

- e. Gaining Employment – Consider the differences in moving from mostly agricultural areas to the US which demands the skills for industrialized labor.
- f. Housing – Differences in family size with numerous children make it difficult to find affordable rentals. Persons must often wait a long time for subsidized assistance.
- e. Health Care – Translation is often hard to find in emergency situations. Often, those persons lacking health insurance don't have the money for routine care and wait until it is "too late" to correct the health problem.
- f. Recognizing Education – Lacking documentation to pursue education in the US can be a long process before being able to pursue educational goals.
- g. New Nebraskans Contributions – New Nebraskans have many talents that they want to share, while still teaching their own children about their culture, religion, and language.
- h. A New Home – New Nebraskans feel welcome and find that local people have been good to them. There are still many Nebraskans who seem indifferent to the newer residents, but those who have come to the US feel that they are here to stay. If they were to go back to their countries of origin, they believe that many of them would die.

As one new resident responded, "We're like a bouquet of different flowers rather than just one kind of flower."

2. Prepare a transparency or poster with the definition of culture.
3. Arrange the room so that participants can see the videotape presentation and still be able to have conversation before and after the video.

### **PRESENTATION AGENDA/FORMAT:**

1. Share the definition by anthropologist Edward Taylor of culture. (Use the overhead or poster description).
2. Share learner objectives.
3. Ask participants to introduce themselves by briefly telling where their families originated or how they usually define themselves as to their own backgrounds. For example, you might introduce yourself as "Jane Jones, a daughter of early Nebraska homesteaders, who originally came from England to escape religious persecution."
4. As you prepare the group for the video presentation, ask participants to attempt to put themselves "in the shoes" of the respondents in the tape. Imagine what it would be like to learn a new language before being able to order food in a restaurant or go grocery shopping. Consider the fear one would feel if a child became ill and there was no money for care and no way to describe the illness. How would you feel if the family with whom you have always lived needed to be separated because of the size of the apartments.
5. After the video is finished, ask participants to share comments on the issues that most surprised them from the videotape. Did they realize that language was such a major obstacle? What about the differences in the pace of life or the "neighborliness" of the community?

6. If you have more time for discussion, move now into the next section on cultural competency.
7. If you are finishing the discussion at this time, ask participants to consider what each might do to provide an easier transition for the new community residents. Are there activities that could be organized within the neighborhood, church, or social group to assist new residents in becoming better acclimated? What about arranging a cultural event that illustrates the foods or dances of all residents in the area? Are there ways to initiate conversation groups for adults or young people to become more familiar with English or US subject matter areas?

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## **SESSION “B”**

**CULTURAL COMPETENCY:** We often don’t really understand our own or another culture because we recognize only what is visible – just as you would visibly notice the ice in the iceberg above the water, but not really see the part of the iceberg below the water.

Understanding culture is much the same, if we realize that there is even more ice below the water surface that we don’t see, or as in the culture example, don’t really understand. The visible culture in the iceberg example would be the food, holidays, literature, clothing, or heroes. The part of the culture that is not really visible to those out of the culture would be roles, attitudes, behavior, beliefs, ways of talking, cultural norms (what is proper or improper), verbal and non verbal messages. .

### **OBJECTIVES FOR THE LEARNER:**

1. Explore the visible and not-so-visible aspects of culture.
2. Recognize your own cultural context and reflect on how this affects your interaction with others.
3. Understand that cultural competency is a long-term process of stages that involve better understanding your own culture, learning about another culture, and then interacting with that culture to appreciate similarities and differences.

### **BEFORE PRESENTING THE MATERIAL:**

1. Prepare a transparency or poster with the “Iceberg Concept of Culture”.
2. Photocopy the handout titled “Understanding Culture Through Context”.

### **PRESENTATION AGENDA/FORMAT:**

1. Introduce the topic of understanding cultural competency by showing the “Iceberg Concept of Culture” illustration. Use a half-sheet of paper to cover the bottom of the iceberg while discussing the visible or top of the iceberg. Ask participants to add other visible aspects of their

own culture. Uncover the bottom half of the sheet and describe those cultural aspects that are not really obvious to those persons outside of the culture. Ask participants to think of their own examples.

2. Distribute the handout “Understanding Culture Through Context” and ask participants to complete the questions. There are no right or wrong answers. It is not necessary to share this information unless the participant wants to share with others. Ask participants if they were surprised with their own context level? Next, ask participants if they believe that there would be differences in context level within their own families? What about the context level of their new neighbors? Do they agree or disagree with the generalizations that are proposed by this questionnaire?

4. In summarizing, discuss the stages in developing cultural competence. Use the illustration titled “Developing Cultural Competence”.

Stage 1 – Discover Your Self – self knowledge and awareness of your own culture is the beginning in understanding why you believe, think, and act as you do. We can’t assume that others believe, think or act in the same way. A good question for participants is “How many of you are married or have a very special friendship?” These persons will appreciate the comment from Edward Hall, renowned anthropologist, who said, “No human will ever be able to understand someone else’s culture. All of us need a lifetime to understand our own culture.”

Stage 2 – Experience and gain knowledge about a particular culture. Enjoy the exploration of finding new locations on the map, reading more about other countries, tasting new foods, attending cultural events or celebrating other cultural holidays. Also, recognize that even as you begin to learn more about someone from another culture, it is a common mistake to “lump” an entire population into one. Remember that even as all of us in the United States are different, so will persons within another cultural setting.

Stage 3 – Take real action for successful interaction with other cultures. Gather as much information as you can and continue to learn. Remember that almost all of us have come to the United States for a better life (recognizing the Native Americans as permanent residents). Our backgrounds and the reasons for coming to the United States, although sometimes several generations earlier, have likely been similar to those of the newest residents. The challenge is to search for the common ground that we do share in our similar values of wanting our families to have safe and healthy lives with the educational opportunities that provide a more prosperous lifestyle.

## Understanding Culture Through Context Are You Low or High Context?

**Context** – refers to the interrelated conditions and environment in which communication events take place. It includes the amount of attention people pay to the social and cultural conditions that surround and influence them. It applies to individuals, organizations, communities, and cultures.

Answer the following questions with a “yes” or “no”. Count the number of “yes” answers you give, and mark your total number of “yes” answers on the chart below.

- 1) When people take too long to come to a point, do you finish sentences to speed them up?
- 2) Is being punctual important?
- 3) Do you feel more comfortable planning in advance or being spontaneous on vacation?
- 4) Do you find competition on the job enjoyable?
- 5) Do you prefer getting to the point in conversation?
- 6) Are you more rational than emotional when you’re involved in conflict?
- 7) Do you think the spoken word is more important than a lot of gestures, facial or movement?
- 8) Do you like lists and feel dissatisfied if you don’t complete all tasks?
- 9) Are you uncomfortable with periods of silence in conversation?
- 10) Do you prefer to work on your own or with another person or a group?

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
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**High Context**

**Medium Context**

**Low Context**

**A Low Context style:** If you are a low context person you generally filter out and pay a low amount of attention to the surrounding circumstances of an interaction.

**Communication Style:** You focus on speed, accuracy and objective facts in messages.

When you speak, your verbal message is efficient and direct. Words are very important to you and you like to spell things out exactly. You tend to consider communication as a way of exchanging information and ideas. Speaking openly and honestly is important.

**Interpersonal Relationships:** You are a task-oriented person.

You can develop and end relationships quickly and they frequently depend on situational factors such as work, church, or sports. Your identity is rooted in yourself and your own personal accomplishments. You prefer to focus on rational solutions to a conflict, not personal ones. Issues are important.

**Time:** You like to schedule things to be done at particular times, in an efficient and, preferably, fast manner. You believe that one can make change and see immediate results.

**European-American males and urban populations** are considered to be **low context**.

**A High Context style:** If you are a high context person you pay a high amount of attention to the surrounding circumstances and environment of an interaction.

Communication Style: You take into consideration nonverbal behavior, tone of voice, gesture, posture, social status, history, and social setting in order to interpret the messages. When you speak, your verbal message is often implicit and indirect. You assume people can infer meaning without having to say it. You tend to consider communication as an art form. You place a high value on intuition in deriving meaning.

Interpersonal Relationships: You are a relationship-oriented person.

You need time to develop relationships, which depend on trust and are life long commitments. Your identity is rooted in family, world, and your culture. You are sensitive to conflict situations and take disagreements personally. Not hurting feelings is important.

Time: You may consider the needs of people more important than keeping to a set time and you are at ease when change happens slowly. Time is for building long-lasting relationships.

**Hispanic, Asian-American, African-American, and Native American women and rural populations** are considered to be **high context** in varying degrees.

<b>HIGH</b>	<b>MEDIUM (Higher)</b>	<b>MEDIUM (Lower)</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>Latin America</b>	<b>Greece</b>	<b>United States</b>	<b>Scandinavia</b>
<b>Asia</b>	<b>France</b>	<b>England</b>	<b>Germany</b>
<b>Africa</b>	<b>Italy</b>	<b>Canada</b>	<b>Switzerland</b>
	<b>Spain</b>		
	<b>Middle East</b>		

Sources:

Hall, Edward. (1976). *Beyond culture*. New York: Doubleday & Co.

Halverson, C.B. (1993). *Developing human resources*. CA: Pfeiffer & Co.