



# A Guide for Conversation Class Facilitators





This booklet was created as a resource for facilitators leading **We Speak NYC (WSNYC)** community Conversation Classes for mid- and upper-level English language learners in New York City.

**WSNYC** is a program developed and administered by the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs that partners with community-based organizations and The City University of New York (CUNY) to bring free ESOL materials and Conversations Classes to immigrant New Yorkers.

These materials are also available on the **WSNYC** website—[www.nyc.gov/WeSpeakNYC](http://www.nyc.gov/WeSpeakNYC)—a resource for all educators interested in incorporating the WSNYC series and accompanying materials into their classroom.



# A Guide for Conversation Class Facilitators

## We Speak NYC Conversation Classes: An Introduction

We Speak NYC (WSNYC) Conversation Classes are an empowering way to bring people together around a common purpose: to practice English and to learn about their rights to City services. WSNYC models English that can be used to manage everyday life situations and solve important problems such as:

- *How can I help my child in school?*
- *How can I get low-cost health insurance?*
- *Where can I get career counseling and help with my resume?*
- *What rights do workers have?*
- *What can I say when I don't understand someone?*
- *My friend is being abused. What can I do to help?*
- *I have a lot of stress and anxiety. Where can I find support?*

A WSNYC Conversation Class is a rehearsal for how people can take action, get involved and make a difference, just like the characters in the show.

When people feel more confident using English in your class, they will feel empowered and more confident using English everywhere. They will take what they learn and practice with you back to their friends, parents, neighbors, and children.

The work you do as a Conversation Class facilitator will make a big difference in the lives of many people.

## **WSNYC Conversation Class Goals**

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- To give learners the opportunity to practice speaking in English about issues that may affect their everyday lives;
- To give learners practice asking questions and working together like the characters in the episodes;
- To reinforce the information in the episodes about important City services;
- To create a space in which everyone in the class feels comfortable expressing themselves in English.

## **Who are the people in your class?**

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- They are adults 18 and over. Their ages will vary from 18 to over 65.
- Some have been in the U.S. for 1 month, some for 20 years.
- Some may have advanced degrees from their home country, and there may be others who have not completed high school.
- The people in your class may all speak the same language or they may speak different languages.
- Your class will likely have learners at different levels of English proficiency. This Facilitator Guide has tips for how to get everyone involved in the conversation.

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# 1 The *We Speak Way*

The *We Speak Way* refers to the approach to learning in the WSNYC Program and WSNYC Conversation Classes. It is designed to empower students to be active participants in the learning process while they build English language skills and knowledge to help meet their life goals. This is a brief introduction to the components of the *We Speak Way*.

## Story-based Learning

Learning in WSNYC is story-based. The educational materials on the WSNYC website and the activities in a WSNYC Conversation Class grow out of the stories—the characters, the situations, the problems and solutions—in the video episodes. The scripts and images are the foundation for the ESOL and civic content of the program.

WSNYC deals with real-life problems and solutions. The characters face problems and find solutions. The solutions come from multiple sources—the characters' own strengths and the support of friends, family and community. City services play a role too. In the *We Speak Way*, students discuss the experiences of the characters, and the problems and solutions presented in the videos, and relate them to their own lives and experiences.

In the *We Speak Way*, asking questions is key. The characters ask questions to get information and find solutions. One of the challenges for English language learners is the form of questions in English. A WSNYC Conversation Class is an opportunity for students to practice asking questions so they can find solutions to real-life situations.

## Content-based Learning

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WSNYC uses a content-based approach to English language learning. Students learn language while learning about topics that impact the quality of life—education, health care, work, money, and many others. They learn about their rights to City services and information they can use to manage and solve problems. The content is designed to empower students by representing immigrant stories that honor the everyday struggle and heroism of immigrant life.

## Facilitation

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Facilitating learning is a key ingredient of the ***We Speak Way***. In your WSNYC Conversation Class, your role is to facilitate learning processes to empower and engage students as active agents of their own learning. As a facilitator, students learn from each other as well as from you. Your role is not to give formal lessons about grammar or content. You are not expected to be an expert on any of the topics in the videos. Think of yourself as a moderator of discussions in which students talk about the stories, share ideas and information, respond to each other and construct meaning together.

There are many techniques you can use to facilitate conversation and learning. For example, when a student asks you a question, discreetly turn your head toward a different student. The student asking the question will face that person in turn, and more student-to-student discussion will take place. Also, toss questions addressed to you back to the class or to a specific student whose voice you want to hear. Facilitating in these and other ways maximizes communication, builds community, and helps achieve the WSNYC goal of empowering students. That is the ***We Speak Way***.

One of the most important techniques for facilitators is to start activities in pairs or groups of three. The activities in the Conversation Class Plan begin with pair- or small-group work. The purpose for doing so is to increase participation and build confidence. In pairs and small groups, students generate ideas, find words and practice (“rehearse”) what they can say in whole-class discussion. Use gestures to get students to face one another in pairs and small groups. Allow for silence. It can take a little time before discussion gets going in pairs and small groups. Circulate, listen and assist students when helpful. Resist the temptation to jump in and talk instead of the students.

WSNYC Conversation Classes often have students at different levels of English language proficiency. Starting activities in pairs or small groups gives everyone the chance to participate at their ability level. As a facilitator, there are times when it will be helpful for you to arrange pairs of students who have less English proficiency so you can work with them while more advanced students can speak to each other at their proficiency level. At other times it will be helpful to have students who are at different levels of proficiency work with each other, so that the more advanced students can help the less proficient speakers.

## Constructing Meaning

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In the *We Speak Way*, learning is dialogic. Students talk to each other, sharing observations, information and ideas, and construct meaning together. As a facilitator of a Conversation Class, your role is to facilitate this dialogue and the process of building meaning and understanding together.

Facilitating a discussion gives students the chance to build on each other’s understanding of the story and new words. If a student asks you what a word means, toss the question back to the class. Have the students share their knowledge and ideas. Clarify and explain when helpful, but look for opportunities for students to share their knowledge.



There is a pre-watching activity in the Conversation Class Plan called “Important Words.” In this activity, students talk about five important words that they will encounter in the episode. Instead of asking a yes-or-no question such as “*Does anybody know the meaning of the word “practice”?*” ask questions such as “*When do you see or hear the word “practice”?*” *Where have you seen or heard it? What do you think it means?*” Have students talk about their own experiences with the word. In this way, students construct the meaning by piecing ideas together.

## Pre and Post

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In a WSNYC Conversation Class, quality time is devoted to pre-watching activities. The purposes of pre-watching are to: activate schema, generate vocabulary, elicit predictions, initiate discussion, and build a wide range of skills. Pre-watching activities set the stage for students to maximize learning from an episode. Post-watching discussion is also important, but the foundation is set with pre-watching activities. The more effective the pre-watching activity, the more students will get out of the videos and discussion. The better the pre, the better the post.

## Visual Literacy

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Visual Literacy refers to a method for talking about images. It is a key component of the **We Speak Way** and is used in the Picture Discussion activity (on pages 22-23). The purposes of the Visual Literacy method are manifold. It builds vocabulary, observation skills, evidential reasoning skills, and skills using conditional language. Additionally, the Visual Literacy method activates schema and motivates students to watch and discover what happens throughout the arc of an episode. Here is a description of the method and some of the pedagogical principles in Visual Literacy:

- There are three core Visual Literacy questions:
  1. *What do you see in this picture?*
  2. *What do you think is going on in this picture?*
  3. *What do you see that makes you say that?*
- The first two questions build vocabulary and observation skills, and conditional language skills (*I think she could be... He might be... It's possible that...*).
- The third question builds vocabulary, and observation and evidential reasoning skills.
- Visual Literacy discussions encourage students to make observations and assertions about a picture. To maximize participation, do not front load a discussion with information about a picture or the episode the picture was taken from. Do not tell the students who the characters are, where they are, what is going on in the picture, or what will happen in the story. Do not give anything away.

I think George Washington is crossing the Delaware River and the boat hit an iceberg!



What do you see that makes you that!?

- As a facilitator, welcome all ideas and encourage students to respond to each other's ideas. In this method, there is no right or wrong answer. What matters is for students to give visual evidence to support their assertions.
- The third question—*What do you see that makes you say that?*—asks students to articulate reasons for their observations and assertions. In the process, students need to find words to explain their thinking. This process offers the opportunity for students to help each other. It offers the facilitator the chance to introduce vocabulary at the moment students need it.
- *What do you see that makes you say that?* is similar in meaning to the question, *Why do you say that?* However, it has an important advantage. It requires participants in a discussion to look at the picture. It asks the participants to provide concrete details.
- *What do you see that makes you say that?* does not come naturally to ask without rehearsing it. Instead, the question *Why?* is more common. Rehearse asking, *What do you see that makes you say that?* so it comes naturally to you.
- When you use the Visual Literacy method, students increasingly ask the three Visual Literacy questions to each other. When that happens, your students are taking charge of and facilitating their own dynamic discussions and learning.

## 2 Tips for Facilitators

### Getting Started

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- Arrive early to test the equipment before showing the episode. Make sure the English subtitles are turned on.
- Place the chairs in a circle or semi-circle, so students face each other.
- Greet people as they arrive.
- Create a welcoming atmosphere. Smile and use friendly gestures to help people relax.
- When showing the video, make sure everyone can see the screen and is close enough to read the subtitles.

### Getting Ideas Across

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- Use simple words and short sentences. Say things more than one way to help people understand. For example: *Who is your favorite character? Which person in the story do you like the most?*
- Speak slowly when you give directions to each activity. Practice what you will say ahead of time.
- Put yourself in the learner's shoes. Remember how difficult it is to understand someone speaking to you in a language that is new to you.
- Give people time to understand and to find the words they want to say.
- Avoid the temptation to jump in and speak when learners are thinking. Allow for silence while people are finding the words.
- Don't worry about correcting grammar. Mistakes are okay! It's the meaning that's important.

## Getting Ideas Across *(continued)*

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- Say encouraging things. For example: *That’s very interesting. Please continue. Can you tell me more? You said that very well. Take your time.*
- If it’s difficult to understand someone, **SAY: *I’m interested in what you are saying. Can you say that again, please?***
- Use gestures, actions and drawings to help explain a word or idea.
- Try not to ask questions that can be answered with “yes” or “no.”

**For example:** ~~*Do you understand the story?*~~

*What’s going on in the story?*

~~*Do you know how you can get good health care?*~~

*What can you do to get good health care?*

## Getting Everyone to Talk

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- Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak. Set rules: *Everyone gets a chance to talk. Only one person talks at a time.*
- Let the students do most of the talking! Limit the amount of talking you do.
- Don’t speak for the students. Allow them time to find the words.
- Welcome all ideas and opinions. Get different points of view on the same question. Don’t say anyone is wrong. Instead, ask the class for other ideas and opinions. **ASK: *Does anyone have another idea?***
- When a student asks a question, ask other students to respond to it. Avoid the temptation to answer questions yourself.
- Smile and encourage everyone’s efforts to speak, especially those who are struggling to speak English. (Remember how difficult it can be to begin to speak in a new language!)



- Some students speak up often. Say that you are interested in their ideas. But ask the quieter or less confident class members for their ideas before the more talkative ones speak a second or third time.
- Have students sit next to new partners, so everyone gets to speak with and learn from each other. This keeps things fresh and creates opportunities for people to get to know each other and to speak more.
- When helpful, have students with different English language abilities work together and help each other.

## Rehearsing for Action

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- Encourage students to share what they know about a topic and to talk about their own experiences. For example:
  - ***How can you help your children in school? What do you think you can do?***
  - ***What do you do to stay healthy?***
  - ***What do you say to a friend who needs your help?***

- Some students may talk about difficult experiences and may get emotional. Let them express their emotions. Refer to the show and ask what the characters do to solve problems.
- Ask what a particular character said or did to deal with issues you are discussing. In pairs, have people practice saying the character's words.
- Be supportive, but don't try to solve problems that learners may be facing. Share ideas together about actions people can take to manage situations.
- You are not expected to be an expert on any of the topics in the series. Remind people to call 311, and that 311 has interpreters in their language.
- Call 311 together to give students practice calling 311. There is an activity on [pages 43-45](#) for calling 311, with a sample transcript of the automated voice. When time allows, use or adapt this activity for practice calling 311, getting information and taking action.

### NOTE TO SHARE WITH THE CLASS ABOUT 311

**When you call 311, you can use your first language.**

**Here are the steps:**

- First, listen to the recording.
- When the 311 operator starts to talk, say the name of your language and they will find someone who can help you. You might have to wait a short time. Don't hang up!

## MIXED-LEVEL CLASSES

Your class will most likely have students at varying levels of English proficiency. **All of the tips in the Facilitator Guide are important for you as the facilitator of a mixed-level class.** Here are a few additional ideas for managing mixed-level classes.

- If you are co-facilitating a class, divide the class into two groups according to their proficiency, with each facilitator leading one of the groups. Use **Conversation Class Plan B** (on pages 34-37) for the lower-level group. If you have only one screen, join the groups together when showing the video. Pause frequently to facilitate discussion and comprehension.
- Often, it will be helpful to place students in pairs or small groups of learners in accordance with their level of oral proficiency. Tailor your facilitation to their proficiency. Give them extra support and encouragement.
- At times, it will be helpful for students who are more proficient to work with a partner or in a small group of students who are less proficient. When doing so, choose more proficient students who exhibit the patience that will be helpful for lower-level learners.
- When facilitating whole-class discussions, let the class know that it is important to hear everyone's voice. See the tips for **Getting Everyone To Talk** on pages 13-14 and the tips on pages 38-39 for **More Ways for Getting Everyone to Talk**.



### 3 Guidelines for WSNYC Discussions

**WSNYC episodes deal with real-life problems and solutions. Please keep in mind the following guidelines when leading discussions in WSNYC Conversation Classes:**

- When issues and questions about services come up in discussion, refer to the episode and ask what the characters do to solve problems. Ask what a particular character says or does to deal with issues you're discussing.
- Your class discussions may involve asking the students to talk about their own experiences. Make sure students know that they do not need to share any personal information that makes them uncomfortable.
- Some of the topics in the episodes may be sensitive for students. Prior to each WSNYC Conversation Class, share with the Site Coordinator the topic and services that will be covered in the upcoming episode. Ask the Site Coordinator whether there will be a social worker and/or legal service provider available before or after class that the students can contact to ask more detailed questions.
- The week prior to showing *Respond to Domestic Violence* and *Rafaela's Test*, let students know about the topic that the class will discuss in that class session. Tell them that together as a class they will be talking about how the characters in the episode respond to the situations in the episode, and about the City services available to support all New Yorkers. Remind the Site Coordinator about the upcoming episode topic and ask about any additional resources the site may have available for community members dealing with domestic violence or mental health challenges. Contact the WSNYC Team with any additional questions.

- Remember, you are not expected to be an expert on any of the topics or City services that are related to an episode. As a Conversation Class facilitator, you are there to help facilitate conversation and English language learning. Some students in your class may expect you to have technical knowledge or to be an authority on a topic. Let them know that you are not an expert but that they can go to the WSNYC website or contact 311 to learn more about the City services available to them.
- Do not give information that you're not sure about. Remind students to call 311, and that 311 has interpreters in their language.
- If you have additional questions about City services or how to handle difficult situations, contact the WSNYC Program Team. They are there to help guide and support you.
- See the companion guidebook, **Actions You Can Take**, for actions that students can take to manage situations relevant to the topic of each episode, with links to City services and community resources. (**Actions You Can Take** is in **Teacher Resources** on the WSNYC website.)

## 4 Conversation Class Plan\*

The Conversation Class Plan has three components:

- ***Before-You-Watch Activities***
- ***Show and Discuss the Episode***
- ***Wrap-Up***

You can think of the plan like a three-course dinner party, with appetizers, a main dish, and a dessert. The ***Before-You-Watch Activities*** are the appetizers. They welcome the learners to your class and set the stage for the main course (the video) by introducing vocabulary, eliciting predictions, and activating schema. ***Watching and Discussing the Video*** is the main course. You play and discuss the video in portions. (Don't try to swallow the whole meal at once.) The ***Wrap-Up*** is the dessert—a finishing bite to complete the delicious meal. At this stage, people say a few words about the experience before parting until the next Conversation Class.

\* **We Speak NYC** was created for mid-level English language learners and above. The **Conversation Class Plan** was similarly developed for this range of learner. However, if you have a lower-level class, you can also use the episodes to build vocabulary, speaking skills and knowledge of the important information in the episodes. There is an adaptation of the plan called **Conversation Class Plan B** (on pages 34-37) for lower-level classes. Regardless of the level of the learners in your class, read the entire Facilitator Guide. It has important steps and tips that you will use and adapt regardless of the proficiency of the learners in your class. For additional support facilitating a WSNYC Conversation Class for lower-level learners, contact the WSNYC Program Team at [WeSpeakNYC@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:WeSpeakNYC@cityhall.nyc.gov). The Program Team has additional ideas and materials they can share with you.

As facilitator, think of yourself as the host of the dinner and conversation. Like a skillful host, you don't want to dominate the conversation. Instead, try to create a welcoming space and facilitate the flow of words between your guests.

Here's an outline of the Conversation Class Plan. The activity times are approximate.

**A BEFORE YOU WATCH** (50 minutes)

1. Introductions
2. Picture Discussion
3. Important Words

**B SHOW AND DISCUSS THE EPISODE** (1 hour)

**C WRAP-UP** (10 minutes)

## Before You Watch (50 minutes)

### 1 Introductions

The start of each session is a chance for people to get to know each other better, share a laugh and warm up.

The first time you meet with your class, take a moment at the beginning to explain what you will be doing together. Give the participants an idea of what they can expect.

You can say:

- *This is a conversation class. We are here to practice speaking English together.*
- *We will meet once a week for 7 (or 10) weeks to watch a video series together. The name of the show is We Speak NYC.*
- *The people in the show We Speak NYC come from all over the world, and live in New York City. They speak slowly to help us understand.*
- *Together, we will learn new words and important information. Let's get started.*

#### STEPS

- a. Arrange the chairs in a circle so everyone faces each other. The first time the class meets, introduce yourselves (you and your co-facilitator). Slowly and clearly, say your name, where you come from, where you live and one thing you like about New York City. Then have the class members introduce themselves, following your example.

**Example:** My name is \_\_\_\_\_.  
I come from \_\_\_\_\_.  
I live in Jackson Heights, Queens.  
I like \_\_\_\_\_.

- b. The next time the class meets (and at each subsequent meeting), have people say their names and something new. You can ask them to say a word they learned in the previous class, a character they liked from the show, something they did that day or week...

## LOWER-LEVEL CLASSES

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For lower level classes, you can do the Introductions Activity as a “ball toss” activity. See **Conversation Class Plan B** on *pages 34-37*.

### TIPS FOR INTRODUCTIONS

- To build confidence and comfort level, have students first introduce themselves to a partner, then have them introduce themselves to the whole class.
- If you wish, you can split the whole class into circles of five or six students each for this activity.

## **2** Picture Discussion

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This activity gets everyone talking, using words they know, learning new words from each other and making predictions about the episode. (Use the pictures in the Materials Packet you receive at the beginning of the cycle from the WSNYC Program Team for this activity.)

### STEPS

- a. **SAY:** *Let’s talk about today’s story. I have some pictures from the video.* Hold up the pictures from the Materials Packet so everyone sees them.
- b. **SAY:** *I want you to talk about the pictures in pairs (or small groups.) Turn to the person (or two people) next to you. Talk about the picture with your partner (or small group).*

- c. Use gestures to get classmates to face each other. Hand out a picture to each group of 2-3 people. Different groups will have different pictures. Each group will talk about one of the pictures.
- d. Read the questions at the bottom of the picture out loud.  
**SAY:** *Talk about the picture with the people in your small group. What do you see in this picture? What do you think is going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that?*  
 You can add these additional questions: *Who do you think the people are? Where do you think they are? What do you think they are doing? Make up any story you can about the picture!*
- e. Give the group members a few minutes to talk freely with each other about their picture. Encourage people to make up any story they can. **SAY:** *There's no right or wrong answer!* (See tips on the next page.)
- f. Get everyone's attention for full-class discussion. **SAY:** *I want everyone to hear your ideas.* Ask the questions printed below each picture. Give everyone a chance to talk. Students may make connections between people in different pictures. Facilitate a discussion about possible connections. Don't give anything away in the story.
- g. Be encouraging. **SAY:** *Those are great (interesting, cool...) ideas! We'll watch the show and see what happens. But before we watch, let's talk about some important words you'll hear in the show.*

### LOWER-LEVEL LEARNERS

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If you have lower-level learners in your Conversation Class, contact the WSNYC Program Team for alternative pictures for this activity. The pictures for lower-level learners have lists of people, things, actions, and emotions in the pictures. Give those pictures to lower-level students in your class to help them build vocabulary. If the majority of your class has very limited English proficiency, use Conversation Class Plan B on [pages 34-37](#).

## PICTURE DISCUSSION TIPS

- The picture discussion is a Visual Literacy activity. See the section on Visual Literacy in the *We Speak Way* (on pages 9-11) for a description and explanation of the method.
- Let people talk about the pictures with their partners first before you facilitate a discussion with the whole class.
- Use hand gestures and body language to encourage people to face one another. Encourage them to use English, but it is fine if they use their native language to help each other get an idea.
- Give people time to start talking. Allow for silence. Avoid the temptation to talk for the students. When you go around the room, listen and encourage the students' ideas. Suggest words they can use when it is helpful.
- Don't give away the plot of the show! Encourage ideas and possibilities. **SAY:** *Those are very good/interesting ideas. We'll watch the show and see what happens!*

### 3 Important Words

This activity introduces important words and themes in the episode.

#### STEPS

- a. Show the class the **Important Words** sheet. **SAY:** *This page has some important words you will hear in the show.*
- b. Hand out a copy of the **Important Words** sheet to everyone. (Everyone can keep this handout.) Have the students look it over with a partner.



**ALTERNATIVE STEP B:** Do not distribute copies of the **Important Word** handout at this point. Instead, write the first word on the list on the board. Wait to give the **Important Words** sheet until you have discussed all the words.

- c. Point to the episode title at the top of the handout or write it on the board. Lead everyone in saying the title together.  
**ASK:** *What do you think the show is about?*
- d. Point to the first word. **SAY:** *Look at the first word on the list.*  
**ASK:** *Where have you seen this word before? When did you see it? What do you think it means?* Help build the meaning of the word by piecing their answers together. Think of it like putting a puzzle together; each answer is a clue to build upon.
- e. **SAY:** *Let's say the word together.* Lead the class in saying the word together. Then have the students practice saying the word with a partner.
- f. Point to the example sentence on the handout (or write it on the board). **SAY:** *Let's look at the example sentence. Let's say it together.* Lead the class in saying the sentence. Then have partners turn to each other and take turns saying the sentence.
- g. Point to the question. Ask the question in the question column. Encourage students to suggest possible answers. Then **SAY:** *Turn to the person next to you. Ask the person next to you the question.* Give the students a moment to practice asking and answering the question (or just asking the question).
- h. Repeat the process with the other words, sentences and questions on the list.

### LOWER-LEVEL CLASSES

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See **Conversation Class Plan B** (on pages 34-37) for a different approach to introducing the Important Words.

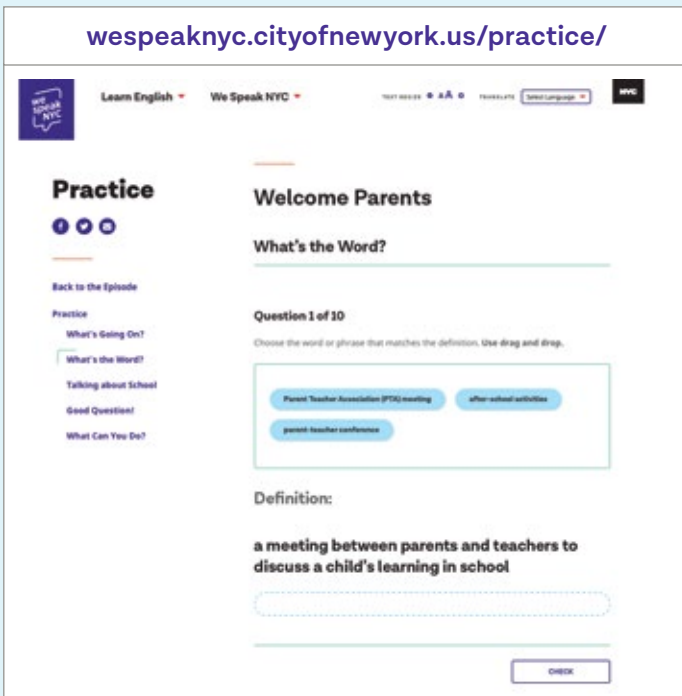
## TIPS FOR THE IMPORTANT WORDS ACTIVITY

- See the section on **Constructing Meaning** in the *We Speak Way* on *pages 8-9*.
- Use gestures, actions and drawings to help express the meaning of a word. Have students use these methods too.
- Using dictionaries is fine, but see if students can figure out a word or phrase before opening their dictionaries. Have people teach each other the words.
- Have students talk about their own experiences related to the words on the sheet. For example, for a phrase such as “parent-teacher conferences,” **ASK: *Who has gone to a parent-teacher conference? What happened in the conference? Tell us about it. What else happened? Who else has gone to a parent-teacher conference? Tell us about it...***
- If someone asks you about a word or a related topic, don’t answer it yourself immediately. First, ask the class what they think. Toss questions about words and other topics back to the class to encourage students to learn from each other. This will facilitate more discussion. Clarify ideas when helpful.
- The episode will provide answers to some of the questions on the handout. **SAY: *We’ll watch the show and talk about these questions after the show.***

## What's the Word?

The **Practice** page of the We Speak NYC website has quizzes for language and content practice for each episode, including a vocabulary quiz called **What's the Word?** If you have access to the website and a projector, you can project the **What's the Word?** pages of the website to introduce or review important words from the episode. The **What's the Word?** quizzes can be used both before and after showing an episode.

Let the class know about the **Practice** page of the website so they can use it for independent study as well. Show learners how to access the website on their mobile devices for self-study on the go.



The screenshot shows the website interface for a practice quiz. At the top, the URL [wespeaknyc.cityofnewyork.us/practice/](http://wespeaknyc.cityofnewyork.us/practice/) is displayed. The page has a navigation bar with 'Learn English' and 'We Speak NYC' menus, and a 'Select Language' dropdown. The main content area is titled 'Practice' and includes a 'Welcome Parents' section. The quiz is titled 'What's the Word?' and is 'Question 1 of 10'. The instruction is 'Choose the word or phrase that matches the definition. Use drag and drag.' There are three draggable options: 'Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting', 'after-school activities', and 'parent-teacher conferences'. The definition provided is 'a meeting between parents and teachers to discuss a child's learning in school'. A 'CHECK' button is located at the bottom right of the quiz area.

## Show and Discuss the Episode (1 hour)

After talking about the pictures and introducing important words, begin the main course—showing and discussing the video. Pause between scenes as helpful, and have people talk about the scene or scenes that you have just played. (*The number of times you pause for discussion will depend on the level of your class.*) Throughout the process, be mindful of the pace of your speech and of your choice of words. Speak slowly and clearly.

### STEPS

- a. Make sure everyone can see the screen and is close enough to read the subtitles.
- b. **SAY:** *The name of the story is \_\_\_\_\_ . While you watch, look for the pictures we talked about.* (Hold up the pictures.) *Listen for the important words.* (Hold up the Important Words handout.) *We'll talk about the show afterwards.*
- c. Pause the video after a scene in one of the pre-watching pictures. Have the students turn to a partner or a small group of three people. **SAY:** *Look at the picture.* **ASK:** *What's going on? Who are these people? Talk about it with each other.*
- d. After a few minutes of paired or small-group discussion, **SAY:** *Let's talk together as a whole class.* **ASK:** *What's going on in the story? Who are these people? Where are they? What else did you learn? What do you think? What questions do you have?*
- e. Have students look at the Important Words handout. **ASK:** *What words did you hear? When did you hear it? Who said it? What did (name of character) say? What other new words did you hear? What questions do you have?*
- f. **ASK:** *What problem does (name of character) have? What does s/he do? What else does s/he do? What does his/her friends do to help? What else can s/he do? What services (help) does the City provide (give)? What else did you learn? What questions do you have?*

- g. ASK:** *What do you think is going to happen next? What else? Who has a similar or a different idea?* **SAY:** *Okay. Let's continue the show and see what happens.*
- h.** Pause after the next key scene(s) and have the students talk about it with a partner or in small groups first, then with the whole class. Follow this pattern of pause-and-discuss till the end of the episode. At the end of the video, use the **Sample Discussion Questions** on [page 30](#). Give people time to form and practice asking their own questions about the episode topic. Have them practice asking questions that characters in the episode ask (for a doctor to slow down, to get help for a child in school, to get information about bank accounts...). For more advanced classes, the **Teacher Resources** section of the WSNYC website has additional discussion questions for each episode.

## DISCUSSION TIPS

- Have students use the pictures and **Important Words** handout to help them talk about the story.
- Each time you pause and discuss a scene, refer to the class's pre-watching discussions. See what new ideas and information people have about the topic.
- Encourage everyone to participate. Ask students by name to respond to each other's ideas. **SAY:** *What do you think about that, Sumi? Who has another idea? What do you think, Xuang?*
- See the **Teacher Resources** section of the WSNYC website for discussion topics and questions specific to each episode. Adapt as appropriate to the English language ability of the class.
- Don't try to play the expert on a topic. Remind people that they can get information about services related to the episode by calling 311 and on the WSNYC website.
- Follow all the tips for **Getting Ideas Across** and **Getting Everyone to Talk** on [pages 12-14](#).

## SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Here are additional questions you can use when facilitating discussion about an episode. (See the website for a guidebook with episode-specific discussion questions for mid- and upper-level classes. It has both *Before-You-Watch* and *After-You-Watch* discussion questions that are related to the topic of each episode.)

### Questions about characters in the story:

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- *Who is your favorite character? Why?*
- *What does she or he do that you liked?*
- *What does she or he say that you liked?*

### Questions about solving problems:

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- *What is the problem in the story?*
- *What do people in the story do to solve this problem?*  
*What do friends do? What does the family do?*  
*What services does the City offer?*
- *Have you or someone you know had a similar experience?*  
(Or: *Do you know anyone who has a problem like this? Would you like to tell us about it? What happened?*)
- *What things can you do to try to solve a problem like this?*
- *What things can people do together—friends, family, others?*
- *What questions did the characters ask to help get information they needed and to solve problems? What words did they use that are new for you?*
- *What questions do you have about... (topic of the episode)?*  
(Give the students, in pairs, time to practice forming questions.)
- *Where can you get more information about some of these questions? What did you learn from the video about this?*

## Actions You Can Take

The **Teacher Resources** section of the WSNYC website has a guidebook called **Actions You Can Take** with actions related to the content of each episode. You can download the **Actions You Can Take** and have students choose one action they want to take to learn more about the episode topic or to access City services. The guidebook also has a **Taking Action Form**. Have students help each other complete the **Before Taking Action** section of the form. Students may be able to take an action using a cell phone in class. You can take an action as a whole class or students can take an action with a partner. Other actions can be taken for homework. When doing it for homework, have students share their experiences at the start of the next Conversation Class.



## Wrap-Up (10 minutes)

This activity brings everyone together before you break up until the next session. It reinforces the importance of everyone's contributions to the class and encourages people to take action, individually and with others, to achieve important goals.

### STEPS

- a. Bring everyone together in the circle.
- b. **SAY:** *Before we go, say your name and where you come from again, so we all know each other. Then say either one thing you liked, one thing you learned, or one thing you think was important from today's class. You can say a word or an action, or anything you want to say. (Give an example yourself to get the conversation started.)*
- c. Have everyone write down the time and date of the next meeting.  
**SAY:** *See you at (time) on (date). We'll watch another episode and practice more English together.*



## WSNYC Online

Tell the class about the WSNYC website. Tell everyone that they can watch the show again, practice English and get good information on the website. Write the web address ([www.nyc.gov/WeSpeakNYC](http://www.nyc.gov/WeSpeakNYC)) in a place where everyone can see and copy it. Let them know that they can access the website on their phones or for free at a library. Ask where else they can go to use the Internet.

If you have access to the Internet in the classroom, be sure to walk through the WSNYC website at least once during the Conversation Class cycle. Helping students learn to navigate the WSNYC website and showing all of its resources will give your students the tools to practice on their own and to continue building confidence in speaking English outside of the classroom.



The screenshot shows the WSNYC website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Learn English' and 'We Speak NYC'. The main content area features a video player titled 'Sonam's Mom' with a play button. Below the video is a 'Read the script' section containing a dialogue between Sonam and her mother. To the right of the script is a blue circular button labeled 'Practice!'. Further down, there is a 'Downloads' section with links to 'Study Guide', 'Short Story', 'Images and Words', and 'Script'. At the bottom, a section titled 'Services featured in this episode' lists 'AsksNYC' and 'SNYC' with brief descriptions of their services.

# 5 Conversation Class Plan B

This is an adaptation of the Conversation Class Plan on *pages 19-33*. It is designed for lower-level classes. If you have a class with students who have very limited proficiency in English, please contact the WSNYC Program Team for picture-and-word materials created specifically for use with this plan.

## Before You Watch (45 minutes)

### 1 Introductions (15 minutes)

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Begin each class with introductions to make everyone feel welcome, and to build community and confidence making introductions.

#### STEPS

- a. Welcome everyone and bring everyone together in a circle. Speak clearly and slowly.
- b. **SAY:** *My name is \_\_\_\_\_ . I'm very happy to see you. Welcome to our class. Together, we will learn words. We will watch and talk about a video. We will meet once a week for two hours, from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_. First, let's learn our names.*
- c. Say your name again: *My name is \_\_\_\_\_ .*
- d. **SAY:** *Let's practice.*
- e. Model a ball-toss activity: Gently, toss a nerf ball (or any ball of soft material) to a student. **ASK:** *What is your name?*
- f. The student answers: *My name is \_\_\_\_\_ .*
- g. The student tosses the ball to another student and asks: *What is your name?*

- h. The student who receives the ball answers the question, then tosses the ball to another student.
- i. Follow this process. Make sure everyone gets a turn to introduce themselves.
- j. Model saying where you come from: *I come from* \_\_\_\_\_ .
- k. Toss the ball to a student. **ASK:** *Where are you from?*
- l. Follow the ball-toss steps. Make sure everyone gets a turn to say where they come from.

## **2** Picture and Word Discussion (30 minutes)

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The WSNYC Program Team will give you a picture with a list of *people, things, actions, and emotions* in the picture. In this plan, use only this picture for the picture discussion, giving a copy to each of the learners in your class. Here are the steps.

- a. **SAY:** *We are going to watch a video. I have a picture from the video.*
- b. Hold up the picture for the class to see.
- c. **SAY:** *The picture has a list of words: people, things, actions, and emotions.*
- d. Write on the board: *people, things, actions, emotions.*
- e. Use gestures, point to things in the room, and demonstrate actions and emotions to help explain the meaning of *people, things, actions and emotions.*
- f. Hand out the picture, one for every two students. **SAY:** *With your partner, find the people, things, actions and emotions in the picture.*
- g. Go around the room to facilitate with vocabulary and discussion about the picture. Help with pronunciation.

- h. After a few minutes, bring the class together for discussion. At this time, give everyone a copy of the picture. **ASK:** *What do you think?... Who are the people in the picture? Where are they? What are they doing? What emotions (happy, sad...) do you see? What other things do you see in the picture?*
- i. On the back of the picture, there are a four words that appear in the scene in the picture. Each word is used in a sentence. Have the students practice saying the words and sentences. **ASK:** *When do you use the word \_\_\_\_\_ ? Where do you use it? Build the meaning together.* (See the section on **Constructing Meaning** on *pages 8-9* and see the tips for **Getting Ideas Across** on *pages 12-13.*)
- j. **SAY:** *We are going to start to watch the video. We will meet the people in the picture and hear the words.*

## Show and Discuss the Episode (1 hour)

- a. Play the beginning of the video. Pause after the scene in the pre-watching picture. **SAY:** *Turn to the person next to you and talk about the video.* Point to the screen and **ASK:** *Who are the characters (the people in the video)? Where are they? What are they doing? What things did you see? What emotions did you see? What words did you hear?*
- b. Bring the class together for whole-class discussion. Use the pre-watching picture to help facilitate the discussion.
- c. Ask the class what they think is going to happen next.
- d. Before resuming the video, introduce an **Important Word** from the sheet of **Important Words** (in the Materials Packet) that students will hear in an upcoming scene. You do not need to hand out the **Important Words** sheet to the students at this time. Instead, write the **Important Word(s)** on the board and have the class practice saying and building the meaning together.

- e. Continue showing the video. Pause at moments to facilitate comprehension and to build vocabulary. When you pause the video, refer to the scene on the screen. **ASK:** *What is going on? Who are the characters? What are they doing? What things do you see? What emotions do you see? (How do the characters feel?)*
- f. Ask these additional questions when problems and solutions are introduced in the video: *What is the problem? What can the characters do?*
- g. Pause as often as helpful and repeat scenes as needed.

## Wrap-Up (15 minutes)

This activity brings everyone together before you break up until the next class.

### STEPS

- a. **SAY:** *Before we go, let's make a circle.*
- b. When everybody is in the circle, take out the ball that you used in the introductions. **SAY:** *I am going to toss the ball to someone. When you catch the ball, say your name and where you come from again, so we all know each other. Also, say one thing you learned today. It could be a word or an action, anything you want to say.*
- c. Give an example so everyone knows what to do.
- d. Start the ball toss.
- e. Make sure everyone has a chance to participate.
- f. Before leaving, have people write down the time and date of the next meeting.
- g. **SAY:** *See you next week at (time) on (date). We'll watch another episode and practice more English together.*

## 6 More Ways for Getting Everyone to Talk

- Often, there are learners in a class who may be shy or less confident and inclined to speak. Get to know everyone in your class by name and use their names to engage them in both small and whole-class discussions. For example: *Maria, what do you think? Jing, I know you have an important idea. What do you want to say?* Calling your students by name, in a friendly and encouraging way, is especially important for getting the quieter people to participate in the conversation.
- In conversation about a particular topic, ask specific follow-up questions based on what students are saying. For example:
  - *Lin, you told Jorge that you have a library card. What do you need to do to get a library card in New York City?*
  - *Hamid, how did you get your library card?*
  - *Carmen, Ming says that people in New York talk too fast. What can you say when someone talks too fast?*
- Start the activities with partners or groups of three students talking to each other. Pair and small-group discussions create opportunities for everyone to talk and help build confidence. To make pairs or small groups, tell the students to turn to the person or people sitting next to them. Go around the room to encourage people to face and talk to each other.
- Give time for people to start talking with their partners. Allow for silence. It can take a little time for pairs to start talking with each other.



- Encourage the students to use English, but it's fine (in both small and whole-class discussions) if they use their native language to help each other understand.
- When you call on students in whole-class discussion, give them time to gather their thoughts and find the words they want to say in English. Avoid the temptation to jump in and speak for the learners.
- Review all the tips in this Facilitator Guide to encourage conversation in your WSNYC Conversation Class.

## Supplemental Activities

The Conversation Class Plan contains the core set of activities to use in a WSNYC Conversation Class. This page has supplemental activities that you may wish to incorporate into the plan as appropriate to the level and needs of your students. These activities use resources from the **Teacher Resources** section of the WSNYC website. You may want to project these website resources on the board and/or print out pages for your students as needed.

- Show select scenes from the episodes with the volume off.  
**ASK:** *What do you see in the video? Who are the characters? Where are they? What is going on?* (If you do this after showing a scene, you can ask: *What is she or he saying?*)
- Use the **Meet the Characters** video clips (in **Teacher Resources** on the website) to introduce characters as a pre-watching activity or for post-watching review.
- Use the **What's Going On?** video clips (in the **Practice** section of the website) for comprehension quiz/review of specific moments as a post-viewing activity.
- Project or print out copies of the **Word Cloud** from the **Study Guides** for the episode you are showing and discussing. You can find the Word Clouds in the **Teacher Resources** section of the website and in the episode **Study Guide** that students receive for self-study. Tell students to look for character names, words they

Lesson 13

### Tell the Story

Use these words to tell a friend about **Making New Friends**.

1. Find the name of the social worker at the senior center. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Find the names of two dogs. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Find the food that Mrs. Belkina cooks for Lela. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Find the rights of a person who rents. (two words) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Find a solution to a rent increase for some seniors and people with disabilities who live in rent-regulated apartments. (two words) \_\_\_\_\_



know, words they want to know, words related to specific topics (e.g., work, health care, education, community, friends, family...), or people, things, actions, and emotions. The **Word Clouds** can be used for *Before-You-Watch* and *After-You-Watch* activities.

- Use the **Study Guide title page** for pre and/or post-watching discussion. **ASK: What do you see in the picture? Who are the people in the picture? What is going on? Where is it? What do you think the story is about?** Tell students to write brief dialogues between the characters in the title page or to add thought bubbles for specific characters. Have lower-level students find people, things, actions and emotions in the picture(s) in the title page.

**The Seed for a Good Life**  
César loses his job...  
Now he's in search of the seed for a good life.

**The Wedding**  
The band is lost.  
The photographer is sick.  
The dress is too big.  
The wedding is... tomorrow?!!

**Making New Friends**  
Nobody needs to be lonely in New York City!

- Project or print out the video script from the website for the scene that includes the picture (used in **Conversation Class Plan B**) with the list of people, things, actions and emotions. You can find the episode script on the webpage for each episode. In small groups, have the students read the characters' lines, playing different parts, and then come together as a class to read and act out the script together.

- In lower-level classes, use the ***My Name Is*** short story series from the WSNYC website. Each short story tells the plot of the episode from the point of view of one of the supporting characters. Project the ***My Name Is*** short story from the WSNYC website on the board or contact the WSNYC Program Team for copies of the ***My Name Is*** short story you are going to include in your Conversation Class. Use the pictures and text in the ***My Name Is*** short story to introduce characters, build vocabulary and prompt questions about the episode. You can read selected portions or the entire short story together as a class before showing the episode.
- Select activities from the ***My Name Is*** curriculum (in the **Teacher Resources** section of the website) for pre-watching activities and/or for post-watching review of particular scenes. Contact the WSNYC Program Team for a copy of the ***My Name Is*** curriculum book. Use the **Character Pictures**, **Who is in the picture?** or the **Picture Story**. For example, cut out the pictures from the **Picture Story**. Give different pictures to different pairs of students. Use the pictures to build vocabulary and as prompts for pre- and post-watching discussion. **ASK: *What is going on? Who are the people? What are they doing?*** After showing the video, have students put the pictures in order.

# Calling 311

311 provides information about New York City services and access to all New York City agencies. 311 provides information in all languages. The following activity gives students practice calling 311 in English. As time allows, use or adapt elements of this activity for episodes in which 311 plays a role.

1. **ASK:** *Who uses 311 in the episode? When does s/he use it? Where? Why?*
2. Tell the class that you are going to practice calling 311 together. Talk about the automated response in a 311 call. Distribute the transcript of the automated response (*on page 45*) and have the students read it together.
3. Tell students that the automated response can change due to emergency weather announcements, holidays that affect alternate-side-of-the-street parking rules, or other factors.
4. Tell students that you are going to listen to the automated response together.
5. Put your cellphone on “Speaker.” Call 311 and listen to the automated response together. Do this a couple of times.
6. Tell the class that you are going to call 311 again, but this time you are going to ask for information about a problem a character is facing in the episode. Tell the students to take notes when 311 gives you information.
7. With the speaker function on, call 311 and ask your question. Begin the conversation with 311 by saying that you are a teacher and you are calling to get information to share with your students. Take notes when you get information and ask follow-up questions as a model for the students.

8. After the call, talk with the students about the experience. Talk about the possibility of being connected by 311 to another agency. (It may have happened in your call.)
9. **EXTENSION ACTIVITY:** Ask for a volunteer to call 311 to ask a question about anything they want to know.
10. Tell the students to have pen and notebooks ready for taking notes on the information when the student who volunteers calls 311.
11. After the call, ask the caller about the experience. Ask the whole class what information they learned.
12. In pairs or small groups, have students form questions about topics they are interested in, then call 311 and write down the information they receive.
13. Discuss the 311 call experiences. Have students share information that they received.

**WSNYC deals with real-life problems and solutions.** Students may be dealing with similar or related situations in their own lives. Be sensitive to this.

When you do this activity, review with the class the purposes of WSNYC.

- One of the goals of WSNYC classes is to help people learn about their rights to City services.
- Another important goal is to create a supportive, encouraging environment in which people can learn from each other.
- Also, let students know that they do not need to practice calling 311 in class about anything that they are not comfortable talking about in class.

## 311 Automated Response Transcript

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Below is a transcript of a 311 automated response. At the end of the automated response, the voice prompts the caller for his/her reason for calling. Read the transcript and discuss the vocabulary and related details. Call 311 as a class and listen to the automated response. The automated message that you hear may be slightly different than the one below. Listen for any changes. Then prepare questions and practice calling 311 with a partner.

### TRANSCRIPT

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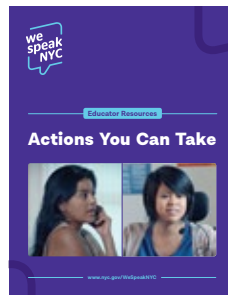
- Automated Voice:** Hello and thank you for calling 311 in New York City. We're here to help, but if this is an emergency, please hang up and dial 911.
- Thursday, alternate side parking and parking meter rules are in effect. Tomorrow, Friday, alternate side parking and parking meter rules are in effect.
- To continue in English, please press 1. All other callers please remain on the line.
- (Short classical music then a ring)*
- Now briefly tell me what I can help you with this afternoon. You can say things like: *find a park or subway schedules*. Go ahead.
- (Now you say what you are calling about.)*
- You:** Can you tell me how I can get health insurance?
- Automated Voice:** You are calling about health insurance. Please hold while I transfer you to a 311 representative. This call may be recorded for quality purposes.
- 311 Operator:** Hello, you called for the health insurance information. Please hold while I transfer you to the agency that can help you.

# WSNYC Educator Resources

The following additional resources are available in the [Teacher Resources](#) section of the WSNYC website.

## Actions You Can Take

**Actions You Can Take** is a guidebook that contains specific actions that students can take to manage situations relevant to the topic of each episode, with links to City services and community resources. (See complete description on page 31.)



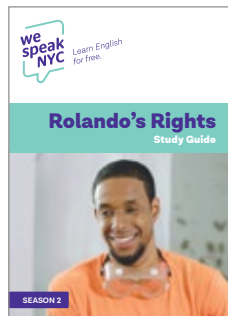
## Discussion Questions and Topics: An Episode Guide

**Discussion Questions and Topics** is a guidebook with *Before-You-Watch* discussion questions and *After-You-Watch* discussion questions. The *Before-You-Watch* questions connect the topics of the episodes to the lives of your students—to activate their prior knowledge and open the door to learning and discovery. The *After-You-Watch* questions refer go deeper into exploration of episode topics and strategies for managing real-life issues.



## Study Guides

The WSNYC **Study Guides** are student workbooks that reinforce language skills and content learning from the episodes. There is a Study Guide for each episode. Each Study Guide begins with a 10-12 page storyboard with pictures and dialogue from the episode, followed by content- and language-rich exercises for self-study.



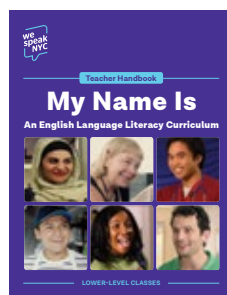
## The Languages We Speak: A Teacher Handbook

**The Languages We Speak** is a teacher handbook with classroom activities for using the WSNYC Study Guides for interactive practice in the ESOL classroom. It also contains an introduction to pedagogical principals and methods used in the WSNYC Program.



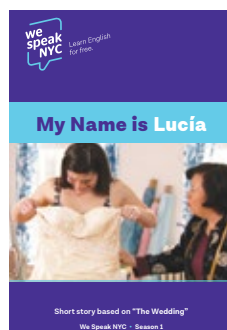
## My Name Is: An English Language Literacy Curriculum

This is a curriculum for teaching the English language literacy skills that low-level learners need to read the **My Name Is** series of short stories. It contains lesson plans and handouts for each **My Name Is** short story.



## My Name Is: Short Stories

On the WSNYC website, there is a series of short stories for low-level learners called **My Name Is** that tell the plot of the episode from the point of view of one of the supporting characters. There is also a curriculum for teaching English language literacy skills that accompanies the series.



You can find more resources in [Teacher Resources](#) on the WSNYC website.

The logo consists of the words "we speak NYC" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, arranged in three lines. The text is contained within a white speech bubble outline that has a tail pointing towards the top right.

# Learn English

with our stories

[www.nyc.gov/WeSpeakNYC](http://www.nyc.gov/WeSpeakNYC)

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