**HELPFUL HINTS FOR ENGAGING IN CONVERSATIONS & CULTURAL EXCHANGE**

**WITH BEGINNING ENGLISH SPEAKERS**

Our goal is to engage Haitian English language learners in conversation as well as share American and Haitian culture. You can think of this as meeting an English language learner in person and trying to communicate – only in our case, this is online. Many of these students aspire to be English/French/Creole interpreters in Haiti and possibly, you are the only native American English speakers they will meet before they begin serving as interpreters. Your time with them is tremendously important and appreciated.

At times, you may see, on the Signup Genius, the topics that the students are currently studying. Please tailor your conversations so that you can engage the Haitian students in conversations that allow them to practice these topics.

\*It is helpful to have a small whiteboard and markers to help in communication. If you feel comfortable using a shared screen and want to write or share a presentation, you may be able to do that too. If you wish, you can have other visual aids such as photos, pictures, props, etc. You can also incorporate songs, holidays, other culture, etc. Have fun and smile, knowing that you are making a HUGE difference in these student’s lives.

\*Signing up to have online conversations at the same time of day, with the same level of Haitian students over consecutive days will allow you build rapport with students in the same class. Please sign up in groups of 2 – 3 with other Cambridge students. This way, you may feel less pressure and this will allow the Haitian students to hear different American voices. Also, if one of the Americans is sick or cannot do the online conversation, the other students who signed up to help can do it. We want to avoid not following through with our commitment to offer a conversation when we have signed up.

\*Whenever you speak with second language learners, they are first trying to determine context and this is difficult because they may only understand a few words (or less) in each sentence. To help them establish context, you can begin by talking about yourself. Then, you can ask them questions related to what you’ve just explained about yourself. Here are some examples of providing background information to establish context for discussion:

***“My name is Jenny. What’s your name?”***  (Writing your name on a whiteboard would help in comprehension).

***“I have 1 brother and 2 sisters. Do you have any brothers or sisters?”*** (If you have a family photo that you can show them, this will help their comprehension. You could also introduce your family members during the conversation!)

***“I’m from Alpharetta, GA. Where are you from?”*** (Showing them a map would help in comprehension)

***“For breakfast today, I ate cereal and an apple. What did you eat for breakfast?”***  (Showing them the type of boxed cereal and an apple would help in comprehension). \*talking about food often provides an interesting cultural comparison.

***“For lunch today, I ate a sandwich, chips and water. What did you eat for lunch?”***

“***My family has two pets, a dog and a cat. My dog’s name is Spot and my cat’s name is Fluffy. Do you have any pets?”*** (Here, it would be great for you to show them your dog and cat).

**For the Sign-up Genius, they may include topics that they are currently studying. For example, on Oct. 12 for level 1, they are suggesting that you talk about food, healthy habits and eating habits, frequency expressions.**

\*Create a short, simple story from your perspective that includes some of these topics. Read them the entire story, slowly. If you can project the story, that would be fine too! You can even ask them to repeat each sentence after you. They really want to improve their pronunciation! If you have visuals to show them, that is very helpful as well.

Here is a basic story that includes food, healthy habits and frequency expressions

Three days per week, I eat yogurt for breakfast. / I always drink coffee. I love coffee. / For lunch, I usually eat a sandwich. I try to drink 4 bottles of water every day but usually drink at least 3 bottles of water. / I also walk every day for 30 minutes in my neighborhood. / On the weekends, I go for walks with my family.

\*Now, using natural breaks in the story (after every few sentences), repeat your story but pause to ask them questions related to your story but from their perspective…

**Three days per week, I eat yogurt for breakfast.**

Q. Do you eat yogurt for breakfast? Do you eat cereal for breakfast? How often? What do you eat for breakfast?

 **I always drink coffee. I love coffee.**

Q. Do you drink coffee? How often? What else do you drink for breakfast?

**For lunch, I usually eat a sandwich.**

Q. Do you eat sandwiches? What do you put on your sandwiches…chicken, tomatoes, lettuce? What else do you eat for lunch?

**I try to drink 4 bottles of water every day but usually drink at least 3 bottles of water.**

Q. What do you like to drink? How much water do you drink per day?

**I also try to walk every day for 30 minutes in my neighborhood.**

Q. Do you walk, ride a bike or drive? How many minutes per day do you walk?

\*Above all, keep it fun, interesting and smile! Again, this is an amazing service opportunity and incredibly rewarding for the Haitian students as well as for us. This service opportunity fulfills hours for French Honor Society, the International Skills Diploma Seal and looks great on college applications.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions, comments or suggestions!

Merci! Mme LeClair-Ash