

Culturally Sustaining Practices in Community College Classrooms

Culturally sustaining pedagogy is a strengths-based instructional approach that centers and sustains the cultural and linguistic identities, experiences, and ways of knowing of diverse students, families/caregivers, and communities. This approach recognizes that culture is a dynamic set of values, beliefs, and practices that varies across students' social identities related to gender, sexuality, disability, socioeconomic status, geographical location, and time period. (U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific).

Importance of utilizing culturally sustaining practices at the community college level:

- Affirms students' cultural and linguistic identities as assets in learning
- Increases engagement and relevance by connecting learning to lived experiences
- Expands access to rigorous academic content through meaningful, relevant connections
- Supports deeper understanding by bridging everyday and disciplinary language

Example Practice #1: Think-Pair-Share

Think–Pair–Shares that invite students to draw on their lived experiences and community knowledge position those experiences as meaningful contributions to academic learning.

Example: In a community college math course on statistics, asking students to reflect on how they encounter data in their daily lives (e.g., prices, ratings, surveys) and discuss with a partner how these experiences relate to how data is collected and interpreted.

Example Practice #2: Academic Discourse Rubric

Academic discourse rubrics that make expectations for participation visible and flexible support students in building on their existing ways of communicating while expanding their ability to engage in academic conversations.

In a community college English composition course, students use an academic discourse rubric during small-group discussions to reflect on how they contribute ideas, build on others' thinking, and ask questions, using their own language and communication styles as a starting point while working toward using disciplinary discourse.

See the example [Academic Discourse Rubric](#) from the Crafton Hills Multilingual Program