

Culturally responsive teaching is an asset-based educational approach that validates and affirms students' social, emotional, cultural, linguistic, and intellectual assets. The integration of students' assets into curriculum resources and instructional practices promotes academic excellence.



SPARKS

Student-centered:

Teachers provide opportunities for students to engage in learning about issues **relevant to students' lives** through **project-based** and **structured inquiry learning**. **Student dialogue** is **cultivated** and recognized as essential to the learning process that enables **students' construction of knowledge**. Fostering **student voice, opinions, and ideas** will enrich the learning environment and ensure the **shift** to a **student-centered classroom**.

Positive learning communities:

Teachers create positive learning communities by **fostering safe spaces** **free** of gender, racial, and other **microaggressions**. A students' **sense of belonging** is nurtured through **respectful** and **reciprocal relationships** vital to facilitate student **intellectual risk taking** thus promoting **confidence** and **academic excellence**. Teachers display artwork, posters, signs and labels that **reflect** and **affirm** the **cultures representative of their students**, to create a welcoming community.

Academic and ethnic identity development through cultural content integration:

The integration of cultural content into curriculum and resources **nurtures students' academic and cultural identity development**. Academic identity is further developed when students are provided opportunities to share their expertise on a topic. Teachers recognize the importance of **cultural and linguistic knowledge** integration to access student schema. Additionally, teachers assert students' prior knowledge to scaffold learning.

Rigor through critical thinking integration:

Teachers hold **high academic** and **behavioral expectations** of all students. Students are challenged to **think deeply, creatively, critically, and divergently**. **Well-cultivated critical thinkers** raise **vital questions** and issues with clarity and precision; gather and assess relevant information; come to **well-reasoned conclusions** and solutions; consider **alternative points of view**, assess their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; collaborate with others to search for solutions.

Knowledge co-creation:

Students and teachers interact as co-creators of knowledge, **learning with each other** through multimedia resources that **build on students' prior knowledge and experiences**. Teachers regularly communicate with students' parents to **establish a relationship** that facilitates **connections** between **home experiences** and **academic knowledge**. By inviting parents and community members to serve as storytellers, guest lecturers, and family historians, teachers can tap into a family's "**Funds of Knowledge**" and take inventory of students' assets.

Social justice/Civic engagement:

Teachers advance opportunities to examine **real life issues** related to students' lives. Using a **social justice** framework teachers guide students in the process of **becoming productive and contributing citizens** by engaging in **inquiry learning** towards the development of a **critical consciousness**. Through civic engagement, students develop **agency** and **engage in civic action** based on the meaningful application of the following skill set they have developed; historical analysis, structural analysis, socio-political analysis, and the social skills. Civic engagement provides **purposeful and meaningful opportunities** for authentic and meaningful learning.

SPARKS culturally responsive teaching practices foster reflective, inclusive, relevant, and engaging learning experiences for all students. Incorporation of these practices sets the conditions in the classroom for strong Tier I instruction and the effective implementation of TUSD's multicultural curriculum, sure to ignite authentic learning.

SPARKS

Examples of classroom practices and strategies to incorporate SPARKS.

Student-Centered



Creating a student-centered classroom requires building on students' curiosity about issues and topics that matter to them. Fostering student voice further ensures student-centeredness.

- Provide students opportunities to reflect on what they learned through collaborative activities
- Assign students to small, heterogeneous groups that do not isolate underrepresented students
- Establish ways for students to intervene if they feel their perspective is being undervalued or not acknowledged
- Structure discussions to include a range of voices through activities such as; Socratic Seminars, Inside-outside Circles and Fish Bowls
- Seek multiple answers or perspectives to questions/issues
- Engage students in cooperative and collaborative learning
- Serve as facilitator and/or a mediator during student dialogue, intervening as necessary
- Create multiple opportunities for students to respond
- Invite students to construct new understandings regarding what they are learning
- Include opportunities for fluid dialogue throughout the day. e.g., math talks, number talks, science talks, etc.
- Extend and acknowledge students' responses

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Positive Learning Communities



Getting to know students is critical to build respectful relationships that foster safe and positive learning communities. By knowing students' traditions, beliefs, values, language, etc. insights are gained including respect for cultural differences, religion, gender/sexual identity. In getting to know students teachers can assess students' strengths and indeed build on the assets/intelligences that they possess thus validating their experiences.

- Avoid making generalizations about students' experiences
- Build community to facilitate welcoming environments through community circles, community time, and collaborative problem-solving
- Refrain from asking individual students to speak for a social identity group
- Establish classroom agreements or social contracts
- Highlight multiple moments of success throughout the day for confidence building
- Provide opportunities to work in small heterogeneous groups
- Implement diverse teaching to respond to multiple intelligences
- Ensure classroom is organized and materials are available and accessible
- Provide statements of positive reinforcement to foster success and build respectful culture and climate
- Learn and properly pronounce students' names
- Provide opportunities to engage in social/emotional learning such as daily "check-ins"

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Academic and ethnic identity development through cultural content integration



Intentionally seek resources that adequately and positively portray cultural groups. Culturally relevant materials serve as "mirrors" wherein students can make connections to their experiences.

- Provide access to literature and historical accounts that are reflective of students' culture
- Reference the multicultural book inventory for books that adequately portray cultural groups
- Ensure that learning materials present accurate and empowering portrayal of all students' cultures
- Examine multiple cultural descriptions and interpretations of events and experiences
- Challenge students to strive for excellence
- Build students' confidence in completing a challenging task
- Provide culturally relevant resources and materials for students to make personal connections
- Academic rigor is increased through scaffolding and immediate feedback for improvement
- Build student cultural competence through engagements in learning about self and other cultures
- Integrate curriculum that encourages student reflection of their lived experiences and on society
- Integrate students assets into academic concepts
- Provide multiple opportunities for student self-reflection in relation to academic identity

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SPARKS

Examples of classroom practices and strategies to incorporate SPARKS.

Rigor through Critical Thinking Integration



Cognitive rigor occurs when students are encouraged and challenged to think deeply in engaging topics. Moreover students are encouraged to express the extent and depth of their learning in a manner unique to them. Rigor includes metacognition, thinking and knowledge as well as the application and transferring of the knowledge.

- Allow for productive risk and failure by normalizing the struggle in learning
- Establish that struggle and challenge are important in the learning process
- Incorporate students' responses, ideas, languages, and experiences into the feedback
- Validate students' contributions by prompting students with both affective and cognitive feedback
- Ensure clarification and expounding of students' statements during instruction
- Schedule opportunities for individualized teacher-student conferences to ensure opportunities to receive individualized teacher feedback
- Incorporate different types of questions such as open-ended questions and analytic questions
- Providing appropriate wait time and taking turns
- Scaffolding may include reference to English language learners' primary languages or cultural knowledge
- Provide scaffolding that links academically challenging curriculum to students' cultural resources
- Conduct analyses of textbooks, mass media, internet, literary sources and personal narratives
- Investigate how different knowledge sources affect teaching and learning



Knowledge Co-Creation



Teacher and student synergistic learning embodies the co-construction of knowledge. Students enter classrooms with a wealth of knowledge from family and community sources that teachers can incorporate into the curriculum.

- Speak of students diverse perspectives as assets
- In class, explain the value of collaboration for learning
- Learning is a social endeavor provide opportunities to engage in knowledge building dialogue
- Meet with parents and dialogue about their goals and aspirations for their child
- Seek alternative strategies to encourage parent involvement
- Provide opportunities for cooperative cross-cultural learning, cross-age peer teaching, role modeling, and interpersonal interaction
- Engage students in collaborative knowledge creating opportunities such as Chalk-talk, Graffiti Boards and brainstorming sessions



Social Justice/ Civic Engagement



Teachers who implement social justice education do so from a historical and contemporary perspective, by highlighting people who have worked and continue to work for a more just world. Social justice education is a framework for students to use to examine various issues in relation to themselves, institutions, society and others. Additionally social justice education fosters the development of strong civic and community engagement.

- Social justice education is centered on critically engaging with issues that affect students, thus real world issues
- Provide resources that highlight diverse voices in seeking societal change
- Incorporate community engagement to apply skills students learn in real world situations
- Engage in Youth Participatory Action Research projects such as YPAR and Capstone Projects
- Engage students in active learning through Service-learning and Community Engagement



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