

Facilitation Guide

Engage Students through Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Academic Instruction

Introduction

This facilitation guide accompanies the professional learning session, titled “**Engage Students through Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Academic Instruction.**”

The goal of this session is to support educators in intentionally planning culturally responsive and sustaining academic instructional practices that engage students by recognizing and sustaining their unique backgrounds and lived experiences, and by building strong, meaningful connections to rigorous learning processes.

Across PBIS, MTSS, and K–12 research, evidence consistently shows that when academic instruction is culturally relevant and sustaining, students achieve stronger academic outcomes, show higher engagement, and exhibit more positive classroom behavior. A meta-analysis of culturally relevant education research found consistent links to increased engagement, motivation, academic performance, and identity affirmation (Aronson & Laughter, 2016), and a large observational study across 274 classrooms found that culturally responsive instructional practices were associated with greater participation, more on-task behavior, and fewer instructional disruptions (Larson, Pas, Bradshaw, Rosenberg, and Day-Vines, 2018). When embedded across the instructional cycle from planning to instruction to reflection, these practices function as proactive supports that promote learning, relationships, and student well-being (Cornelius-White, 2007; Haydon et al., 2009; Korpershoek et al., 2016; MacSuga-Gage and Simonsen, 2015).

By intentionally partnering with families, integrating culturally sustaining approaches, and implementing safe and inclusive practices, educators can maximize these outcomes and create classrooms where all students thrive (Riddle, 2014; Payno-Simmons, 2021; Santiago-Rosario et al., 2022).

This session invites educators to:

- Reflect on their current practices and assumptions.
- Explore and engage students through culturally responsive & sustaining academic instruction.
- Embed culturally responsive and sustaining academic instruction in instructional cycles.
- Assess current instructional practices and develop an actionable plan using the Plan–Do–Check–Reflect framework.

The professional learning session is built around a **20-minute video presentation**. The facilitation guide is designed to **intentionally extend learning** *with structured pauses, reflection prompts, and discussion & application activities* that can **adapt to your available professional development time**, allowing for deeper engagement depending on your context. These activities help make the learning active, collaborative, and directly applicable to participants’ classrooms.

By the end of this professional learning, participants will have identified one or more actionable steps they can take immediately to engage students through culturally responsive & sustaining

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academic instruction, so every student is involved, contributing, influencing, and connected to their learning.

Pause To Facilitate	Key Content	Pause & Activity	Facilitator Notes
Pre Reading Activity	Understanding Culturally, Responsive, & Sustaining Learning Environments	PCQ Reading Activity: Read the <i>Culturally, Responsive, And Sustaining Learning Environment</i> article. Use the Plus, Check, Question (PCQ) protocol as you go: put a + (Plus) by something you already knew, a ✓ (Interesting/Insightful) by something that surprised you, and a ? (Question): by something you want to learn more about. After reading, discuss in small groups what your PQQ notes reveal about your teaching practice and identify one idea you might try in your classroom.	Facilitate Provide each participant a PCQ chart or blank sheet. Give 10–12 minutes for individual reading/reflection. Group discussion: 5–7 minutes to share insights and identify actionable practices. Use poster paper to capture ideas from each group for a gallery walk or share-out.
Pre-Video Probing Question	Intro & Purpose of PD Series, Overview of 9 practices, today’s focus on Engaging Students through Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Academic Instruction	Pause & Reflect (Quick Write): Think about a recent learning experience you led. Who participated, whose voices influenced what happened, and which students likely felt valued, connected, and able to influence their learning?	Facilitate Encourage participants to jot 1–2 sentences. Optionally share with a neighbor. Emphasize this as a quick reflection on leveraging culture to prevent disengagement or behavior challenges.
Pause After Slide 12 Before Progressing To Slide 13	What is Culturally Responsive and sustaining Academic Instruction? Defining culturally, responsive and sustaining practices and considering the CRS approach in the classroom for behavior	Video Reflection & Small Group Discussion: Watch Gloria Ladson-Billings Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy videos. Reflect on how their ideas about culturally sustaining pedagogy connect to your current instructional practices.	Facilitate Encourage small groups to share one insight each, then discuss how it could inform lesson design. Note themes on a shared board or chart. Use prompts: Which students’ voices are fully valued? How could your teaching better sustain

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	and for academic instruction		student cultures? Where do you want to grow?
Pause After Slides 13-17 Before Progressing To Slide 18	Why: Supporting Evidence for using Culturally, responsive, and sustaining academic instruction	CRS In Action Group Activity: Read From Answers to Questions: A Beginning Teacher Learns to Teach for Social Justice article Using a two-column poster, record What Aligns with My Practice on one side and What I Want to Try on the other. Highlight moves that are culturally responsive and sustaining, then discuss in small groups.	Facilitate Circulate among groups to prompt deeper thinking, encourage connections between the article and participants' own instruction, and support small groups in preparing to share their posters with the whole group. Use the posters as artifacts for reflection and group discussion.
Pause After Slides 18-31 Before Progressing To Slide 31	How: Implementation Tips	Evidence in Action: Respond, Reflect & Share: Review summarized CRE and CRS outcomes. Respond by identifying which results resonate and reflect on how they connect to your classroom practice.	Facilitate Ask staff to jot 1–2 sentences about outcomes most relevant to their students (engagement, behavior, learning). Invite a quick partner share to discuss connections and next steps.
Pause After Slide 32-34 Before Progressing To Slide 35	Complete the self-assessment	Self-Assess Your Engagement Practices Individually leverage your <i>Plan, Do, Check, and Reflect & intentional Inputs planning document</i> (p.1), to complete the self-assessment of your current culturally, responsive, and sustaining academic instructional practices.	Facilitate Have staff use their planning document to complete the self-assessment individually, reflecting honestly on current academic instructional practices; circulate to clarify but do not guide responses.
Pause After Slide 35 Before Progressing To Slide 36	Intentional inputs Collaborative partnerships, culturally, sustaining, inclusive, and safe space	Plan Intentional Inputs Complete planning for intentional inputs.	Facilitate Staff will complete Intentional Inputs part of the Plan–Do–Check–Reflect doc. Remind staff to reflect on day's learning as they plan.
Pause After Slide 36 Before	Plan to implement	Pause & Apply	Facilitate

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Progressing To Slide 37	Using Plan–Do–Check–Reflect doc; intentional inputs; setting practice rate	Provide time for staff to reflect on their academic instructional practices, assess current use of call, responsive, and sustaining strategies, set a realistic goal, and identify specific action steps to plan and monitor increasing students’ meaningful participation.	Staff will complete Plan–Do–Check–Reflect doc. Circulate to clarify questions, prompt deeper reflection, and encourage staff to set actionable, realistic goals. Emphasize that this is for personal planning and growth, not evaluation.
Pause After Slide 37-38	Plan to Check, Reflect, Adjust Monitoring, celebrating progress, self-reflection	Pause & Apply Provide time for staff to plan for they will reflect on their use of engagement strategies, identify challenges and successes, and determine adjustments to stay aligned with their goals for increasing students’ meaningful participation.	Facilitate Circulate to prompt reflection and discussion, help staff identify practical adjustments, and reinforce that this process is for continuous improvement, not evaluation.
After The Video	Close with Next Steps Recap key messages and describe next steps to support implementation in your context (e.g., share copy of action plan with coach, and share self-collected data with coach or peer at the end of each week)	Closing Commitment Provide additional time to complete the planning document, if needed, and share with peer or coach, if applicable	Facilitate Encourage sharing with a partner or coach (or submitting anonymously) to build accountability

References

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