

# How can I honor and extend the languages, literacies and practices of my students and communities?

## What's the Opportunity?

This year, the secondary Focal Area for the Oklahoma Public Schools Classroom Support Grant addresses [Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy](#) (CSP). CSP has roots in Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) and makes “a more explicit commitment to **sustaining** the valued practices and ways of being of students and communities of color.” Attention is focused on understanding students' languages (e.g., Native languages, African-American language, Spanish, "standard" English), literacies (e.g., Hip Hop, poetry, social media, street art) or ways of being (e.g., spiritual and cultural beliefs, story telling, ways of relating to adults and elders).

CSP takes many different forms across PK-12 classrooms and content areas. In elementary classrooms, educators may expand the classroom library or take students out of the classroom to learn in their communities. At the secondary level, students may learn about historical events from multiple perspectives or perform works by writers and composers outside of the Western European canon. Whatever the grade level or subject area, educators commit to sustaining their students and their communities.

As educators adjust their teaching to respond to student's needs, many are realizing they need new materials and resources in their classroom. **It is critical that teachers have access to materials that help sustain student's languages, literacies, or ways of being.**

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## Key Features of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

- **A critical centering on dynamic community languages, valued practices, and knowledges**  
Center students' selves and communities in classroom learning, units, and projects.
- **Student and community agency and input (community accountability)**  
Have conversations with students and families about what they want to see in education.
- **Historicized content and instruction**  
Connect present learning to the histories of the neighborhood, city, state, and region.
- **A capacity to contend with internalized oppressions**  
Work to show the value of communities and their practices beyond the dominant narrative.
- **An ability to curricularize these four features in learning settings**  
Work to make these four features part of the curriculum.

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## Critical Actions

- ➔ **Get to Know Your Students**
  - Build relationships with your students, their families, and community. What languages do they speak? What literacies are used for communication? Is there a strong faith or religion? What's the relationship between children and adults? Ask questions and get to know your students.

## → Review Current Materials and Resources

- Examine your classroom materials and resources. Ask yourself the following questions:
  - i. What do I need?
  - ii. Do my current materials and resources sustain all students?
  - iii. Are voices from my student's communities represented?
  - iv. What are the valued practices, languages, literacies, and cultural ways of my students? Are these included in my materials and resources?
- Ask other teachers in your grade level or content area for their input.

## → Research Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP)

- What ideas exist for my subject area? Search for CSP or CRT and your subject area. Develop your understanding and gain new ideas for expanding classroom materials and resources.

## → Honor and Extend Languages, Literacies, And Practices of Your Students

- Consider literature, music and instruments, props, art and other supplies that support the presence of the voice of students and their cultures.
- Strong proposals identify how particular instructional strategies and learning experiences will be improved by the purchase of materials and resources listed in the application budget and are reflective of the characteristics of culturally sustaining teaching.

## Learn More

1. **Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy** - This comprehensive [module from Project READY](#) in North Carolina introduces educators to CSP and includes multiple resources for understanding CSP.
  - As you plan to better serve students and their communities, this [module](#) may be a helpful resource.
2. **Native American Students** - Oklahoma schools serve over 130,000 Native American students. Educators should work to ensure inclusion and positive learning environments for these students.
  - [OSDE Office of American Indian Education](#)
  - [The Gift of Education: How Indigenous Knowledges Can Transform the Future of Public Education](#)
3. **Teacher Reflections** - Educators across the U.S. are working to create culturally sustaining classrooms for their students. Take a look at what they have shared about their experiences.
  - [Uncertainty, Insight, and Hope: My Personal Journey in Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy](#)
  - [You're Asian, How Could You Fail Math? Unmasking the myth of the model minority](#)
  - [How Schools can Sustain Students' Cultures](#)

## Top Tips for Improving Your Application

- Include information about all of your students and what they need in the classroom.
- Highlight gaps in your current materials and resources.
- Present new materials and resources you would like to add to your classroom.
- Share the potential impact of new materials and resources on instructional strategies and student learning experience.
- Carefully review your budget. Remember, taxes should not be included and shipping costs should be estimated for delivery to the school site.

**For more guidance, please review the following briefs addressing this year's grant:**

- [An Introduction to the 2020-21 Oklahoma Public School Classroom Support Grant](#)
- [How can I help my students explore and reason about social issues?](#)

