Core Function → **Instructional Practices**

Effective Practice → **All ELs have access to comprehensible, grade-level, standards-based instruction in all content areas**

Success Indicator IN05: The district and school leaders provide all content-area classroom teachers primary and/or supplemental materials that include narratives, references, and perspectives from diverse cultures. (5882)

Overview: A key component of a system of support is ensuring that teachers have access to culturally and linguistically diverse instructional materials and resources that are appropriate to address ELs' instructional needs (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Elfers, Lucero, Stritikus, & Knapp, 2013) so that they can access grade-level and standards-based instruction; this component has been linked to positive learning outcomes for ELs (Williams, Hakuta, Haertel, et. al., 2007). Unfortunately, high-quality, rigorous, grade-level instructional materials that represent diverse cultures and are prepared for ELs at varying levels of English proficiency are scarce, particularly at the secondary level (Council of the Great City Schools, 2017; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Rumberger, 2008; Movit, Petrykowska, & Woodruff, 2010).

Questions: How does the use of appropriately diverse instructional materials impact ELs? How can school and district leadership ensure that content teachers have access to culturally relevant instructional materials?

How does the use of appropriately diverse instructional materials impact ELs?

Identifying and developing ways to effectively teach diverse groups of students arose as a new movement in the 1980s, following the onset of school desegregation efforts (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Several major research strands emerged addressing culturally relevant education, including a strand focused on culturally responsive teaching (Dover, 2013). Gay (2013) describes culturally responsive teaching (CRT) as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (pps. 49-50). Validating students' cultures by creating bridges between school and home through the use of diversified instructional strategies and curricula is one of several key aspects of the broader goal of providing CRT (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014). CRT has been used successfully for ELs across a variety of content areas, including science (e.g., Johnson, 2011; Johnson, Bolshakova, & Waldron, 2016); math (e.g., Fulton, 2009); social studies (e.g., Epstein, Mayorga, & Nelson, 2011; Choi, 2013); and English language arts (e.g., Bui & Fagan, 2013; Feger, 2006); however, very few studies have explicitly and rigorously linked CRT practices to student achievement and/or standards-based learning (Lee, 2010; Sleeter, 2012).

One important component of CRT is using culturally relevant instructional materials. Researchers have noted that instructional materials often do not allow students to feel connected to the curriculum as they frequently do not represent diverse cultures or address controversial issues (Epstein, et al., 2011; Loewen, 2007, as cited in Aronson & Laughter, 2016). For teachers to practice CRT, they must develop their own knowledge on cultural and ethnic diversity and be able to translate that knowledge to the classroom, in part through the selection of culturally relevant curriculum materials. Several studies demonstrate how using culturally relevant materials can engage ELs and promote success. For example, a case study of an 8th grade social studies teacher of ELs found that the teacher was able to promote engagement and achievement by shifting the curricular approach away from being primarily "Eurocentric" towards emphasizing global, multicultural citizenship to better address newcomer students' needs (Choi, 2013).

Feger (2006) reported that used culturally relevant fiction and non-fiction texts resulted in more positive engagement and self-efficacy for her high school EL students. Bui & Fagan (2013) found that adding multicultural literature elements to an integrated reading comprehension strategy was able to move 5th grade EL students from a frustration level to an above instructional level in reading. One teacher of EL Laotian children was able to incorporate readings from poetry reflection of Lao experiences in the US and current relevant newspaper articles, among other activities, to enhance children's understanding of, and attitudes towards, the writing process (Souryasack & Lee, 2007). Additional research is essential to understanding how CRT approaches that incorporate culturally relevant pedagogies and instructional materials contribute to EL learning (Lee, 2010).

How can school and district leadership ensure that content teachers have access to culturally relevant instructional materials?

CRT requires that instructional materials for ELs convey respect for diverse cultures and be culturally relevant to the students served. For example, English Language Arts (ELA) instructional materials should "be respectful and inclusive of all students' backgrounds, language, culture, ethnicity, race, gender, and refugee or immigration experience; and must pay special attention to cultural implications for ELLs, providing appropriate supports for teachers" (Council of the Great City Schools, 2017, p. 28). Districts and school leaders should ensure that teacher resources include explicit guidance that helps teachers identify discourse patterns and linguistic features that are culturally distinct, and include classroom tasks and questions that are culturally respectful and that draw upon ELs life experiences as they engage in critical thinking and discourse (Council of the Great City Schools, 2014, 2017). In addition, instructional materials (including digital) should be free of negative stereotypes, and address sensitive topics with respect, including carefully chosen videos and images to develop ELs background and provide context (Council of the Great City Schools, 2017).

The process of selecting and acquiring culturally relevant instructional materials for ELs is time-consuming and expensive, and teachers are often tasked with developing their own materials for ELs (Heiten, 2016). Free, open educational resources show promise, but extensive time is needed to sift through available materials. Districts must establish systematic approaches for developing and/or reviewing these materials and ensuring they are easily accessible by teachers (Council of the Great City Schools, n.d.).

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Resources

For many practical tools and strategies for ensuring that EL instructional materials are culturally relevant see:

Council of the Great City Schools (2017, May). *Re-envisioning English language arts and English language development for English Language Learners.* Retrieved from https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/CGCS_ReinvisEngLang_pub_final.pdf