



Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching (CRST) in Adult ESOL

Massachusetts Professional Standard #3 - Video Transcript

Transcript

Welcome to this introduction to Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching in Adult ESOL, based on the Massachusetts Professional Standard number three.

By watching this video, you will be able to answer the following questions:

- What is Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching (CRST), in general and in the context of adult ESOL?
 - Why is CRST important for English learners?
 - How can you create a culturally responsive and sustaining ESOL class for your adult learners?
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What Is CRST?

Geneva Gay, who originated the term around the year 2000, defines culturally responsive teaching as:

“Using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students.”

— Geneva Gay

The culturally sustaining component was later expanded by Django Paris and Samy Alim. It emphasizes that learners’ languages and cultures should not only be respected, but actively supported and sustained.

CRST explicitly supports:

- Bi- and multilingualism

- Cultural pluralism
 - Asset-based identity development
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Why Is CRST Important?

1. It Works

Research shows that students—particularly racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities—achieve more when instruction affirms their cultures and languages.

Students demonstrate:

- Greater academic achievement
 - Increased engagement
 - Development of critical consciousness
 - Stronger positive ethnic and racial identity
 - Greater respect for others
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2. It Is an Anti-Racist Educational Approach

Drawing on Ibram X. Kendi’s definition, anti-racism is:

A practice or policy that produces or sustains equity and actively breaks down racial hierarchies.

CRST intentionally disrupts oppressive instructional practices and centers equity in education.

CRST in Adult ESOL

The Massachusetts ESOL Professional Standard explains that CRST:

- Facilitates language learning
- Promotes intercultural and global awareness
- Lowers the affective filter
- Encourages civic engagement
- Enhances socio-political consciousness

In contrast to assimilation-focused instruction, CRST values, sustains, and leverages learners’ linguistic and cultural identities.

Creating a Culturally Responsive and Sustaining ESOL Classroom

1. Create an Inclusive and Equitable Learning Environment

- Learn and correctly pronounce students' names
- Build authentic relationships
- Learn about students' languages, cultures, and communities
- Include cultural representation in classroom materials and space
- Foster belonging and safety

A CRST classroom is one where students feel at home.

2. Recognize Students' Identities as Assets

CRST rejects English-only rules and welcomes translanguaging.

Students may:

- Translate instructions
- Access complex texts
- Draft ideas in multiple languages
- Draw on cultural knowledge

Cultural identities are affirmed, explored, and sustained.

3. Include Diverse Materials and Perspectives

CRST classrooms:

- Include authors from diverse backgrounds
 - Feature varied English accents
 - Represent marginalized voices
 - Share immigrant success stories
 - Teach multiple perspectives within U.S. culture
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4. Maintain High Academic Expectations

CRST teachers:

- Hold high expectations
- Support productive struggle
- Engage learners in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation
- Provide scaffolding for complex language

Discussions include:

- Power and privilege
- Systems of oppression
- Equity and representation
- Civic participation

CRST encourages learners to become agents of change.

5. Commit to Teacher Self-Awareness

Teachers:

- Examine their own assumptions and biases
 - Reflect on power dynamics
 - Welcome student feedback
 - Engage in ongoing professional development
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CRST as an Ongoing Practice

CRST is not a checklist. It is an educational philosophy grounded in:

- Critical self-awareness
- Equity
- Academic excellence
- Celebration of diverse identities

As Maya Angelou said:

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”
— Maya Angelou

We encourage you to explore CRST further and visit the SABES website for professional development opportunities:

<https://www.sabes.org/>
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