

# Suggested Activities for Fostering Academic Success

## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY



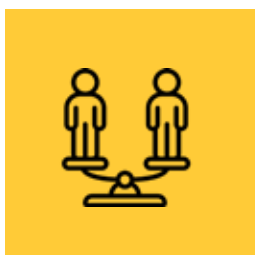
### APPRECIATING CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS NORMS AND KNOWLEDGE

Students may exhibit behaviours that seem unusual in Britain or hold beliefs about certain subjects that are influenced by their culture or religion. It is important that teachers understand this and appreciate that the types of knowledge which are important in British culture are not universal. Understanding key components of students' religions can also help teachers prepare for topics which may be new or challenging for them and to avoid causing offence accidentally. For example, it is never appropriate in Islam to depict God or any of the Prophets in pictures or drawings. Whereas, in Christianity, it is common to see pictures, paintings, stained glass windows and statues depicting God and the Prophets.



### HONEST, OPEN CONVERSATIONS

CRP requires staff and students to have honest, open, and sometimes difficult conversations about society and their place in the world. Discussion of culture, religion, poverty and other factors we see in society are vital to the learning process and helps teachers to understand their students better— putting them in a position to teach them more effectively in the future. All students are not treated equally in society and it is important that schools acknowledge this and try to unteach the prejudices leading to these kinds of inequality.



### CREATIVE, VISUAL, HANDS-ON, AND SPOKEN TEACHING METHODS

Using debates, discussions, effective questioning and hands-on projects can help students with limited English. These methods can help them access the learning and develop key skills. Giving new students space to speak English is vital even if they only know a few words. Wherever possible use graphs, charts and diagrams to display information so students who don't have a strong grasp of English can still understand how content fits together.<sup>34</sup> Nick Morrison from the EAL Academy advises to “focus on visual delivery of vocabulary.”<sup>35</sup>

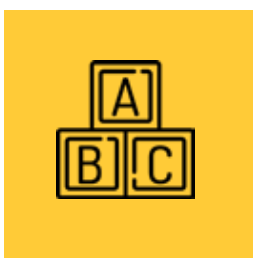
34 Bell Foundation. (2022) 'The Effective Teaching of EAL'. Retrieved from: <https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-programme/guidance/effective-teaching-of-eal-learners>.

35 Morrison, N. (2014) 'How schools are breaking down the language barrier for EAL students'. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2014/mar/05/teaching-eal-foreign-languages-students-integration-schools>



## UTILISE NATIVE LANGUAGE

UNESCO's research found that "early instruction in the home language can support children's development of a positive self-image as well as their academic learning, preparing them to acquire foreign languages in the later years of schooling" as children learn a second language more efficiently when they have established a solid foundation in their native language.<sup>35</sup> Students may go back and forth between their languages to write or process, but that just means they are using all the language at their disposal as "learners actively use the languages they already know to learn English". If students are taught to think about the connections between first and new language, their skills can develop exponentially. Encouraging students to translate songs, poems and short texts, using Google Translate can help them to find these connections. When dealing with more complex pieces of work you can allow students to answer in their native language first before translating it. This increases the chance that the student will better understand the topic.



## BUILDING ON PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND ASSESS PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

If you have children from a range of cultures, countries and religions in your class, use existing knowledge as a starting point for learning. Ask students to present certain topics to show an appreciation of their lived experiences. When teaching abstract topics, look for links to the students' contexts – be it local or in their home countries. For example, when teaching about gentrification in Geography, show examples in the local community or link it to development in countries where your students may have ancestral roots. When teaching about poetry, find diverse poets who tell stories we don't often hear in Britain.

Have high expectations of newcomers. Students with refugee status may have experienced an interrupted education but lack of opportunity is not equivalent to lack of ability. Provide them with every opportunity to grow and develop as learners and community members. Refugees may require more guidance and support to reach aspirations. Connect with families to check the educational history of your new students. Find out which language they speak and if they are literate. Find out if they have any skills or interests that could help you teach them or build a rapport faster. "Activities that enable learners to activate their prior knowledge of the topic of the lesson facilitate greater understanding and engagement. Example strategies include taking advantage of the learner's first language and finding out what the learner knows through questioning."



## **PRE-LEARNING**

A further technique to allow students to engage fully in lessons is to provide them with resources that outline what will be taught throughout the scheme of work along with key words. This pre-learning will allow students to become more engaged in the lesson. This is particularly useful for refugee students who may have covered the topics in their previous schools, but due to insufficient English, they cannot grasp what they are supposed to be learning and cannot participate.



## **GROUP PROBLEM-SOLVING TASKS AND GAMES**

Students can build a range of skills such as critical thinking, evaluation and cultural competence by being assigned tasks relating to real-world issues. For example, each group is given a global issue (e.g., education, health, poverty) and asked to work together to present solutions. This could be used in PSHE lessons or embedded into humanities and English lessons to help students understand the intricacies of topics and develop viewpoints about them. Big questions work well in primary schools (e.g., how can we make the world a happier place?).

Group projects offer students challenge, support and space to develop social skills. They can learn about cultural norms by watching how other students behave and interact. Teachers can facilitate a range of activities such as debates, role plays, project planning and creative projects where students build a product. Many of these learning strategies will help with language acquisition for newcomers and to build friendships.



## **DIVERSE RESOURCES, CASE STUDIES & TOPICS**

Students will find it easier to engage with the learning if they feel connected to the content in some way. Take time to examine the books, case studies, examples, and images used in your schemes of work. Do they reflect a range of cultures, voices, and experiences or are they all depicting a similar culture, nationality and way of life? Making adaptations to schemes of work even as simple as using pictures of people and places outside of Britain can help students to feel appreciated in the classroom and more interested and willing to engage with the learning. There are numerous books about refugees for all age groups, including Benjamin Zephaniah's 'Refugee Boy' and Onjali Q. Rauf's 'The Boy at the Back of the Class', and Khaled Hosseini's 'The Kite Runner'.



## PUT EAL STUDENTS IN HIGHER ABILITY SETS

English language fluency is not an indicator of academic abilities. Students should not be placed in low sets where they may be exposed to bad behaviour and content that is too easy. Research shows that EAL students placed in higher ability sets pick up the language much faster as they see good practice and a wider range of vocabulary used. They are also able to access the learning due to better behaviour and the teacher having more time to support them, as students are able to work independently. Other students can also offer better support as they have a strong understanding of the content and expectations of tasks.

Notes:

## Why is culturally responsive pedagogy vital for refugees?

- Children who are refugees may have lived through war, persecution natural disasters. They may have a very different worldview to a child who has been raised in a safe country.
- They likely also come from a culture quite different to the one they find themselves in now. If they are presented with lessons and resources where nobody looks like them, it can be alienating and cause them to suffer academically and in terms of self-worth.
- Children who are refugees bring a whole world of knowledge, understanding and skills with them when they come to the UK, culturally responsive pedagogy helps to bring that into their lessons so they can thrive and feel pride in who they are.
- It is vital we use an asset-based approach rather than focusing on deficits like not being fluent in English yet, having gaps in formal education, or struggling with trauma and loss.

Strategies to introduce CRP to your classroom could include:

**Providing multiple perspectives about a topic**

**Praise for students who have struggled with their learning but persevered**

**Using diverse topics, examples and images in lessons**

**Activities where students share their culture**

**Encouraging debate and questioning of ideas**

**Using case studies from inside and outside of Britain**

**Teaching content that gives voice to marginalised groups**

**Linking abstract/tough concepts to events in students' lives**

**Encouraging students to share their experiences and knowledge**

**Praising students who challenge the content and ask deeper questions**

**Flipped learning activities where students bring their own research**

**Challenging prejudices which may arise in discussions, explaining why**

*CRP is focused on getting students into an academic mindset where they are confident challenging content, struggling through parts of their learning and sharing their own perspectives and understandings.*