

EDUC 476, Effective Teaching Strategies for ELLs has been developed around the Texas Education Agency's competences for teachers of English Language Learners. A strong part of these competences focus on understanding diverse cultures and their importance in student learning. Understanding diverse cultures begins with understanding your own cultures. The importance of relationship building is stressed. Opportunities to explore diverse cultures and develop ways to incorporate this knowledge into their practices are included in this course.

1. The ability to reflect on one's own culture and biases—this course requires students to focus on their own culture and what defines their cultural story. It also looks at the dominant cultural in our schools and helps the student make connections between their culture, the dominant culture, and the cultures of others. The students examine biases, not only biases they may hold, but common biases observed in their social settings including media.

This competency is measured through multiple activities including group discussion of the elements of culture in general and their own. The students will also create and present a product that represents the elements of their culture through a medium of their choice (e.g. digital story, poster, video, song, etc.). Finally, the students will view a selection of current media that looks at biases and discuss their views on these biases in classroom discussion and a personal reflection.

2. Ability to consider experiences and issues from the prospective of others with differing world views—this course provides opportunities for students to explore different cultures and the how language and culture are significant variables guiding human interactions. Specifically, the students will explore how language and culture play a part in how students learn in classrooms.

This competency is measured through multiple assignments the most authentic being the interview project. The students, in groups of 3 or 4, will create an interview of 3 people who are or were second language learners. They will use their knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity to design a protocol for the interview that will focus on the interviewees' experiences and world views. They will then create a video of these interviews to present to the class. They will examine their own feelings in a two page reflection about the entire project.

3. Ability to articulate understanding of cultural differences in verbal and non-verbal communication—communication is a large part of this course. Developing the ability to communicate effectively with a variety of culturally and linguistically diverse students is the core of this course. Understanding both verbal and non-verbal communication is stressed. This course includes multiple opportunities for the students to articulate these understandings both formally and informally.

This competency will be assessed primarily through the students' writing of two lesson plans that focus on understanding the cultural and language differences and building upon them to facilitate new learning.

A second assessment will be their participation in an event from a culture other than their own. They may choose from a school, church, city-wide, or private event. They will document their verbal and non-verbal communication understandings in a reflection journal.

4. Ability to ask complex questions about beliefs, values, and practices of other cultures and articulate answers to those questions that reflect cultural understandings—this course focuses on building relationships with students from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds. To do this, the students must develop skills in cultural relevant interactions including asking questions and responding to the answers in culturally sensitive ways. Through interactions with a variety of students from varying backgrounds and learning about how other teachers respond to cultural and linguistic diversity, the students begin to develop this cultural competency.

This competency will be assessed through the interview activity (Competency 1), lesson plans, reflective journal and group discussion. In addition, the students will read a culturally relevant book or article. They will participate in literacy circles to ask and answer questions that came from their reading.

5. Ability to initiate and develop interactions with individuals from cultures that differ from that of the student —the focus of this course is on learning ways to honor linguistic and cultural diversity while engaging others in learning experiences. Sharing of experiences in these situations is a large part of the course. In addition, crafting lessons that are engaging to all student helps develop this competency. Opportunities to engage in relationship building with other cultures is included in this course.

This competency will be assessed through the assignments listed in Competency 1 and 3. In addition, the students will observe and participate in learning environments that are culturally and linguistically diverse. They will reflect on this in their journal.