OKLAHOMA CareerTech

SUPPORTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN CTE CLASSES

Contents:

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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https://educationnorthwest.org/resources/what-all-teachers-should-know-about-instruction-english-language-learners

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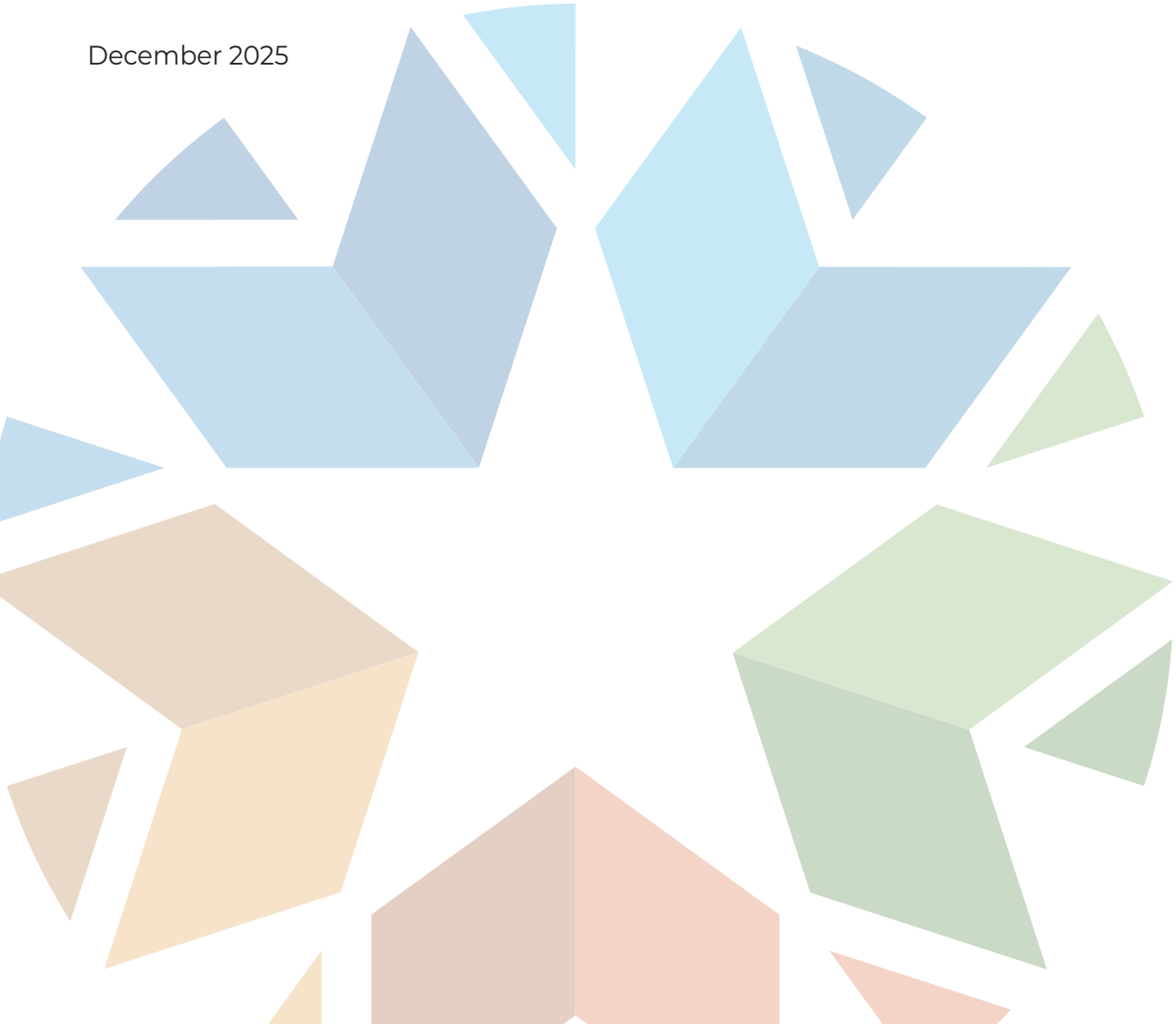


Key Takeaways:

- CTE classrooms offer a good learning environment for English language learners. Some of the characteristics of CTE instruction accommodate specific principles for supporting academic success for English language learners.
- In addition to good instruction, ELLs need modifications and supports.
- Research-based principles can help CTE teachers adapt their instruction and better support academic success for English learner students.
- English Language Academic Plans (ELAPs) provide important information.
- To better appreciate why someone acts as they do, you must know more about what they believe and value.

English language learners (ELLs) are a diverse student population. They are students who are learning English while they are also in school. They come from varied cultural and economic backgrounds and they live in all 50 states. They include:

- Individuals who were born in the United States, but whose parents or grandparents speak their native language at home
- Immigrants seeking educational or economic opportunity
- Refugees from countries affected by war, crime, and other sources of violence
- Children with high literacy skills in a first language other than English
- Teenagers with little prior formal schooling
- Adult migrant workers and/or their children
- Children of international students or faculty members at a university

Did You Know?

In fall 2021, English language learners represented 10.6 percent of public-school students in the United States. In Oklahoma, they represented 9.3 percent. Spanish was the home language of more than 4 million ELL publicschool students in fall 2021, representing 76.4 percent of all ELL students and 8.4 percent of all public K-12 students. Arabic was the next most commonly reported home language. (Source: "English Language Learners in Public Schools," National Center for Education Statistics, May 2024)

How Can the CTE Learning Environment Benefit English Language Learners?

CTE classrooms offer a good learning environment for English language learners:

> Some of the characteristics of CTE instruction align with principles for supporting English language learners.
>
> CTE teachers can effectively contribute to literacy development for ELLs. The typical CTE classroom presents students with workplace-relevant resources, such as plans and blueprints, technical manuals, software, tools and equipment, floor plans, and other authentic resources.
>
> Providing students with resources that align with their interests can inspire any student to become an active participant in the learning process.

Incorporating literacy strategies in CTE classes can be difficult at first for both teacher and student. However, CTE classes can provide English language learners not only with the workplace skills to reach their career goals, but also with the strategies to communicate for success in life.

Why Provide Supports for English Language Learners?

Like other students, English language learners need good instruction. This includes:

- high standards,
- clear goals and learning objectives,
- a content-rich curriculum,
- clear and well-paced instruction,
- opportunities for practice and application,
- appropriate feedback,
- frequent progress monitoring and reteaching as needed, and
- opportunities for student interaction.

At the same time, simply expecting good instruction to meet the needs of English language learners is not realistic. By itself, good instruction does not provide these students with the English language development they need to build proficiency. It also does not ensure access to "comprehensible input," or information that is conveyed in a way so that English language learners can understand most of it. In addition to good instruction, these students need modifications and supports. Modifications and supports vary depending on a student's language proficiency, literacy background, and prior level of education.

What Are Some Strategies Aligned with Research-Based Principles?

The research-based principles that follow are "big ideas" or concepts about second-language acquisition and the academic challenges that English learners face. When combined, these principles can help CTE teachers adapt their instruction and better support academic success for the English learner students in their courses.

These five principles apply to all teachers, regardless of the grade or subject area.

Principle 1: English learners move through stages as they acquire English proficiency and need comprehensible input at all stages.

Beginning English learners often understand a little but may not speak very much. These students face different challenges than those with intermediate level skills, who may be able to communicate interpersonally but lack specific vocabulary.

Regardless of students' proficiency levels, they need "comprehensible input" or information that is conveyed in a way that ensures they can understand, even if they do not know every word. For example, for some students, that might mean communication through gestures or pictures; for other students, it might mean conveying new ideas with reference to terms already learned.

What teachers should do:

- Scaffold their instruction and assignments and provide multiple representations of concepts.
    - When teachers **scaffold instruction**, they engage in the gradual release of responsibility from themselves to the students. Many teachers are already familiar with scaffolding; it is a technique that can be helpful for all students. The difference is that teachers may need to use scaffolding more often in classrooms that have many English language learners. Teachers can scaffold instruction for their English language learners in a variety of ways.

      Example: A widely known example is the "I do it, we do it, you do it" approach, in which the teacher first demonstrates a skill, then does it with the students, then withdraws as students do it themselves. Another example is the multi-step task or problem in which the teacher first moves through all steps with the students, then moves through the initial steps, but has the students take the last step or two unassisted, then repeats the process, each time relinquishing involvement at an earlier stage.

Scaffolding Method

Modeling - Providing students with clear examples of the work that is requested of them, or demonstrating how to think through a problem

Bridging- Connecting new material to prior learning

Schema building - Organizing information into interconnected clusters (for example, using advance organizers, "walking through" texts looking at subheadings, or graphic organizers)

- Use of **multiple representations** is another way to provide comprehensible input. The idea is that using multiple forms of communication aids the cognitive process. This helps students connect words with meaning by using nonverbal clues and representations of ideas, thereby providing opportunities for comprehension without mastery of English. Multiple representations include these supports to language-based instruction:

  Graphic organizers: diagrams that help students identify main ideas and identify how those ideas are related

  Realia: real-life objects or photographs of real-life objects

  Manipulatives: physical objects that can be operated by hand to aid in learning

- Promote student interaction that is structured and supported. Interactive instruction relies heavily on discussion and sharing among participants. Students learn from interacting with other learners and from their teachers to develop social skills and abilities, organize their thoughts, and develop rational arguments.

  Interactive strategies provide English language learners with opportunities to verbalize their thinking strategies and learn from the thinking of others. Interactive strategies shown to have positive effects include the following:

  Peer-assisted learning opportunities, such as partner work in which students of different abilities are paired to work on academic tasks. For example, a stronger reader and a weaker reader may be paired to partner-read a text, alternating pages.

  Cooperative learning, which uses small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. Cooperative learning groups are appropriate across all content areas. They are especially helpful with English language learners when the groups are small and heterogeneous (students with varying levels of English language ability and content knowledge).

  Instructional conversations, in which students explore their ideas orally with the teacher and other students, addressing open-ended questions rather than questions that have a single correct answer.

  Inquiry-based methods, which include asking questions; planning and conducting investigations; using appropriate tools and techniques to gather data; thinking critically about relationships between evidence and explanation; and constructing and analyzing alternative explanations.

How could you apply this principle in a CTE course?

Principle 2: There is a difference between conversational and academic language; fluency in everyday conversation is not adequate to ensure access to academic texts and tasks.

The language used in everyday communication is distinct from the language used in classroom discussion. It is easy to misinterpret a student's ability to communicate with classmates—a student's facility with conversational English—as an ability to understand English in any setting.

> Learners' successful transition into postsecondary classes related to their career pathway or into family-sustaining jobs depends on their ability to navigate the academic language and content-specific vocabulary found in their course textbooks and training materials or their workplace tasks. Learners require direct vocabulary instruction in words and terms that are difficult to learn independently, and they need explicit instruction in vocabulary learning strategies that enable them to tackle vocabulary on their own.
>
> There is an expectation of a technical vocabulary burden for any learner entering career training (native English speaker and English learner alike). A learner reading a CNA textbook would expect to encounter technical vocabulary specific to the field such as *ambulate* or *cyanosis*. However, sub-technical terms also are included in these texts. These are terms that are specific to a field but that have become familiar to English speakers (e.g., *cardiac arrest*, *communicable*, or *lifestyle*). These terms are not part of the average English learner's vocabulary; therefore, both sub-technical and technical terms need to be included in instruction.
>
> Source: *Preparing English Learners for Work and Career Pathways*, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education

What teachers should do:

- Provide explicit instruction in the use of academic language. English language learners need to learn how to vary language appropriately with the audience and how to address different people appropriately. They need to adjust their use of language to fit a range of functions: signaling cause and effect, hypothesizing, generalizing, comparing, contrasting, making formal requests. These are things teachers can both explain and model.

- Provide intensive vocabulary instruction with a focus on academically useful words. Students learning English face a vocabulary challenge. Not only do they enter the CTE classroom knowing fewer words than native English speakers, they also know less about word meanings and when it may be appropriate to use a word.

Teachers must choose which words deserve time and attention in the classroom and how to teach them. Many of the same vocabulary-building strategies that work for English-speaking students are appropriate for English language learners. These practices can also help:

- Teaching students about multiple meanings of the same words
- Repetition, review, and reinforcement (such as pre-teaching key words and then conducting language activities afterwards, or reinforcing vocabulary words in different subject areas and contexts)
- Using visuals (including real-life objects) and graphic organizers to help convey meaning

How could you apply this principle in a CTE course?

Principle 3: English learners need instruction that will allow them to meet state content standards.

Just as children move through stages as they develop their primary language, English language learners also move through stages as they develop their English proficiency. It takes multiple years (perhaps as many as five to seven) for English learners to learn English to a level of proficiency high enough to perform on par with their peers who are native English-speakers. As a result, English learners must develop their academic and CTE skills while learning English.

"Watering down" instruction for English language learners does not help them achieve academically or prepare them to be constructive citizens. What they need is the appropriate support to continue to build the necessary content knowledge as they are developing their proficiency in English.

What teachers should do:

- Provide bilingual instruction when possible.
- In English-language instructional settings, allow and promote primary language supports. This could include the following:
  - Repeating directions or clarifying in students' primary language during or after class
  - Providing a "preview" of a lesson in their primary language
  - Offering translations of individual words
  - Allowing students to read texts in translation
  - Allowing students to use their primary language to write about or discuss concepts
  - Providing dictionaries
  - Encouraging collaboration with students who speak the same language

Note: Relying too much on content explanations in the student's primary language could have negative results. For example, translations provided by peers could be inaccurate. The English language learner might also develop a tendency to wait for the explanation in the primary language instead of trying to understand the discussion in English. One way to avoid these pitfalls is to provide students with preview/review in the student's primary language while keeping the lesson itself in English. Lesson preview also provides background knowledge that may help English language learners to understand the lesson.

- In English-language instructional settings, use sheltered instruction strategies to combine content area learning with academic language acquisition. In sheltered instruction, English learners learn the mainstream curriculum but often work with modified materials and extra supports to accommodate their language-learning needs. The term "sheltered" is used to indicate that this creates a more learner-friendly environment for the students.

- Several models of sheltered instruction exist and are known by their acronyms. They include: SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), Project GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design), ExC-ELL (Expediting Comprehension to English Language Learners) and CALLA (Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach). Common threads across three or more of these approaches include the following:

    - Explicit, direct teaching of vocabulary
    - Explicit modeling by the teacher (including "think alouds" in which teachers demonstrate exactly how they think through a problem or task)
    - High levels of student social interaction with each other and with the teacher
    - Explicit instruction in learning strategies and opportunities to practice using those strategies
    - Linkages to students' background and experience
    - Using a variety of formal and informal assessments to measure student learning in both content and language

How could you apply this principle in a CTE course?

Principle 4: English learners have background knowledge and home cultures that may differ from the U.S. mainstream.

It can be easy for educators to see "gaps" in the knowledge of English language learners. In fact, English learners bring as much background knowledge as any other student, but it is often knowledge of different histories, cultures, and places.

Depending on their background, English language learners may have cultural values, patterns of social interactions, and expectations of school that differ from the U.S. mainstream. For some students, a world of difference may exist between their life at home and their life at school. These differences can include the following:

- Beliefs about teaching practices
- Beliefs about the value of education
- Roles for parents versus teachers
- Roles for adults versus children
- Ways of engaging and interacting with others
- Ideas about what constitutes "knowledge"

Differences can lead to misunderstandings that create obstacles to student learning. For example, some students may come from backgrounds in which the authority of adults is unquestioned. As a result, they may be reluctant to ask questions of the teacher, to challenge the ideas put forth in texts, or to engage in inquiry-based instruction. Although the families of some English language learners value education highly, the adults may not participate in school activities because they defer decision-making about school to their children's teachers, or because they are uncomfortable with their own English language skills.

What teachers should do:

- Use culturally compatible instruction to build a bridge between home and school.

  "Culturally compatible instruction" describes instruction that is aware of and incorporates the language and cultural backgrounds of students in the classroom, seeing them as resources rather than as deficits. Culturally compatible instruction creates an environment in which students are comfortable drawing upon their prior knowledge and sharing previous experiences in the classroom. In turn, this builds a bridge between home and school. Without this connection between school and their life at home, English language learners are more likely to disengage.

  Note: Culturally compatible instruction rests on teachers' ability to be open to other cultures. Ideally, teachers should know something about the backgrounds of the students in their courses. However, they do not have to become experts in the backgrounds of all student groups. It may be enough for teachers to be open and willing to recognize the resources that their English language learners bring.

- Make the norms and expectations of the classroom clear and explicit.

  When there are differences between the home cultures of English language learners and that of the classroom, teachers can help by making the norms and expectations of the classroom clear and explicit. This might include describing the expectations for behavior, conveying that questions are encouraged, and explaining how and when to ask questions. Without such explanations, students may become frustrated or not understand how to participate successfully, ultimately risking reduced student engagement in learning and even withdrawal.

- Activate existing background knowledge and build new background knowledge to increase comprehension.

  A clear relationship exists between background knowledge—information already acquired through experience or formal instruction—and comprehension of new material. This is relevant at all instructional levels.

  Teachers can increase student engagement and improve comprehension by helping English language learners construct a schema. This is a mental structure that organizes information so that the student can connect new information to what the student already knows.

Activating existing background knowledge can involve strategies such as the following:

- Helping students see links between texts and their own experiences ("text-to-self" connections)
- Asking student to draw from earlier readings or past learning in order to link to new material ("text-to-text" connections)
- Providing vocabulary that helps students see that they do know about the topic, though what they learned earlier was in another language

Sometimes students genuinely lack prior knowledge related to a given topic. Part of the teacher's job is to build enough background knowledge so that the new lesson makes sense to English language learners. Some strategies for doing this include the following:

- Showing short video clips to give students a sense of time or place
- Taking students out of the classroom (field trips)
- Providing a demonstration by the teacher or a guest

How could you apply this principle in a CTE course?

Principle 5: Assessments measure language proficiency as well as content knowledge.

Oral or written assessments inevitably measure not only the content being tested, but the English skills of English language learners. It is easy for English-language difficulties to obscure what students really know. It sometimes may make sense to provide testing accommodations or alternative forms of assessment for English language learners:

Accommodations are changes to the test administration procedures, such as the amount of time allocated for responses, the use of special equipment or materials, or the place where the test is taken.

Alternative assessments make changes to the test format itself, such as replacing a written test with an oral one.

In many instances, states decide what accommodations are acceptable, especially about accommodations during high-stakes assessments at the state level. It may also be possible for teachers to permit accommodations or alternative assessments within the classroom so that students can demonstrate their content knowledge.

What teachers should do: Use testing accommodations as appropriate.

How could you apply this principle in a CTE course?

ACTIVITY

The Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education has several resources to support teachers of English language learners. These resources include teaching strategies, scaffolded unit planning checklists, an engagement model for teacher collaborative mentorship, helpful websites, and more.

Access these resources at https://oklahoma.gov/careertech/educators/counseling-and-career-development/special-populations/english-language-learner.html

Why is an English Language Academic Plan Important?

English Language Academic Plans (ELAPs) provide:

- information about how much English a student knows (language proficiency).
- suggestions for classroom teaching modifications.
- suggestions for testing accommodations.

How Can Schools Plan for Getting Support to Multilingual Students?

Coordination Between Schools

Have a plan for communication:

- Schedule a meeting with the sending school counselor.
- Request ELAPs.
- Share.

Coordination Within Schools

- Have a site-wide plan for communication. Set up a support request form.
- Have a site-wide plan for teacher professional development. Provide teachers with tools to be successful when working with multilingual students.
- Ensure counselors have an understanding of programs that may limit multilingual learners with lower proficiency or without documented status.

How Can Culture Shape the Attitudes and Actions of English Language Learners?

What is meant by culture? Culture represents the values and assumptions that are at the core of a society. You can compare a culture to an iceberg—you can see a small part, but a much larger part remains beneath the surface. A culture has many features. Like an iceberg, some of these features are visible, while many others are not visible and must be imagined (based on an individual's behavior) or learned. Some of these features of a culture include the following:

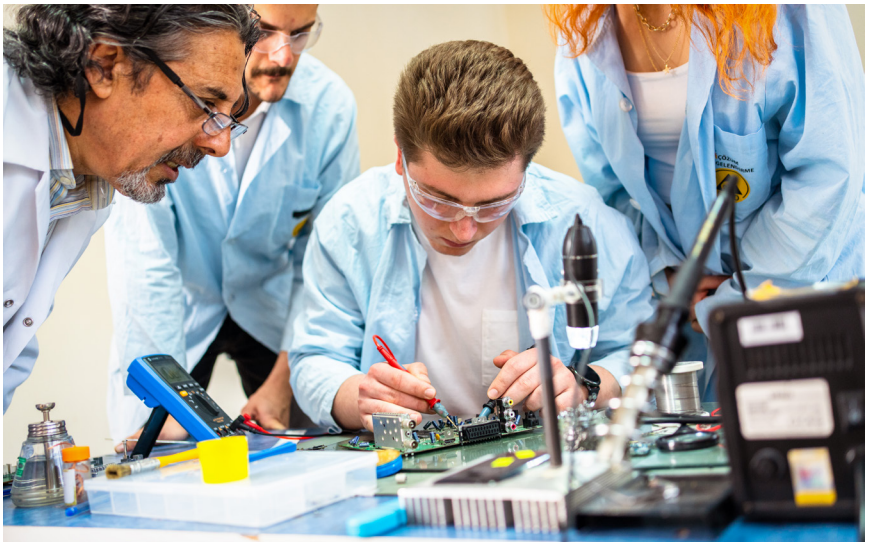
- Religious beliefs and observances/rituals
- Communication styles
- Gestures and facial expressions
- Etiquette rules
- Concept of time
- Concept of self
- Eating habits
- Meanings of words
- Sense of humor
- Holidays and customs
- Values
- Concept of fairness
- Gender roles
- Child-raising beliefs
- Tone of voice and emotions
- Work ethic
- Ideas about modesty
- Nature of relationships
- Styles of dress
- Concept of personal space
- Silences in conversation

The values and beliefs of a culture are the foundation for how people from that culture behave. To better appreciate why someone acts as they do, you must know more about what they believe and value. The values and beliefs of a culture can include respect for age, importance of family, directness and indirectness, formality and informality, saving face, and respect for authority, among others. The reason that any person's behavior—including yours—makes sense to that person is because the behavior is consistent with what that person believes in and values.

Below are some features of culture and how they compare in traditional American culture and in some other cultures.

Cultural Features		
Cultural Feature	**In American Culture**	**In Other Cultures**
Concept of self and personal space	• The individual is most important. Being self-sufficient is important to the well-being of the group. This is the individualist concept of self. • Individuality is respected. Individuals control their own futures. ("Where there's a will, there's a way.") • Personal space is large. • Greetings are informal, including handshakes. • Titles are less important than accomplishments. • Challenging authority is accepted and directness is a virtue	• The group is more important than any individual. The success of the group is important to the well-being of the individual. This is the collectivist concept of self. • Conformity with the group is expected. Individuals accept their roles in society. • Greetings are formal and may include bowing and handshakes. • Authority and hierarchy are to be respected. • Conflict is avoided and harmony is valued.
Communication styles and meanings of words	• Direct with focus on content; words have meaning ("say what you mean and mean what you say"). • You do not have to "read between the lines." • What a person says and how a person feels are often very similar. • It's okay to say "No." • Conversation may include few gestures; gestures may attract unwanted attention	• Indirect with focus on context; words alone are not enough to determine meaning. • People may only suggest what they really mean; you must read between the lines. • What a person says and how a person feels may be very different. • Saying "No" is difficult; may say "Yes" but mean "No" (to maintain harmony and "save face"). • Gesturing may be a very common feature of conversations.
Concept of time	• Time moves in a straight line. • Being prompt is important. • "Time is money."	• Time is flexible. • Time spent on relationships is most important use of time. • Punctuality is not expected.

Cultural Features		
Cultural Feature	**In American Culture**	**In Other Cultures**
Nature of relationships	• Work itself has value. • Focus is on work-related tasks. • Career rewards reflect personal accomplishments.	• Work is a necessary part of life. • Focus is on relationships. • Career rewards stem from relationships and seniority.
Gender roles	Men and women are considered equal.	Men and women have different roles in society.
Eating habits	Eating is a necessary activity that benefits from convenience. Time saved at mealtimes can be used on other tasks.	Eating is a social experience that requires time. Time spent eating with other people is important in itself.



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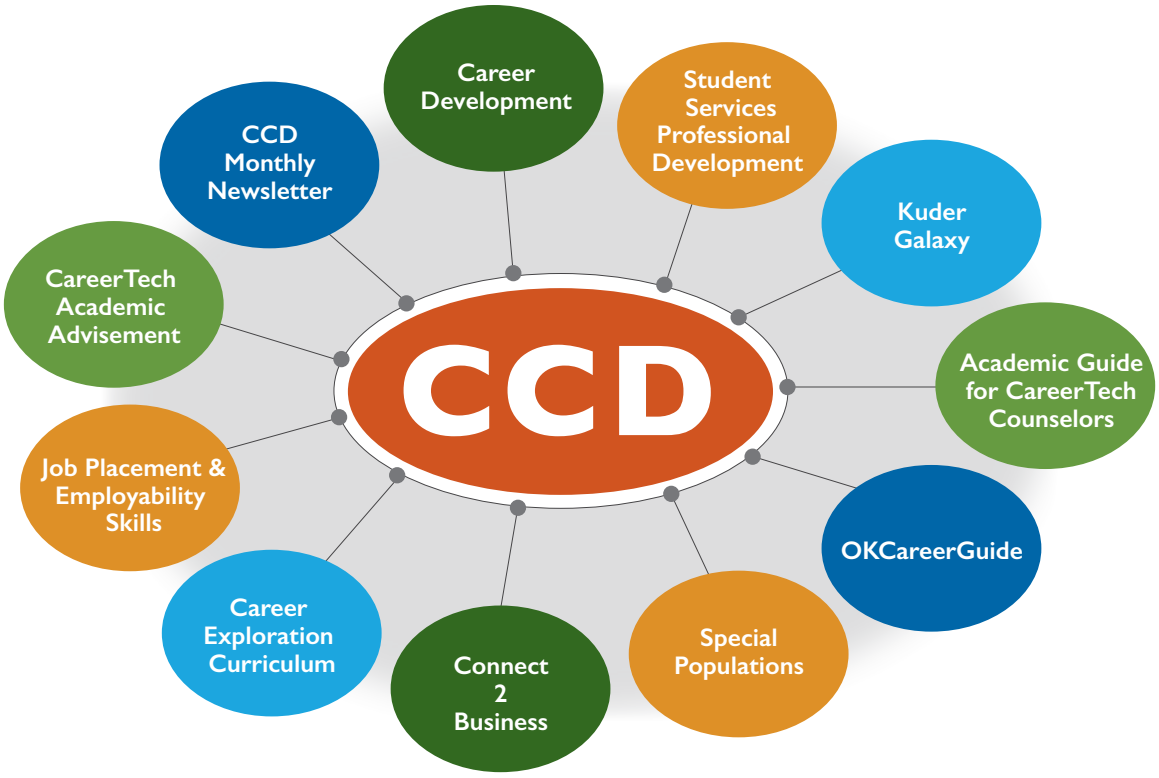

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