

Coming to Know (in) This Place Called Home: Teaching and Learning Sustainability at Portland Community College

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Sustainability at PCC

Portland Community College is the largest institution of higher education in Oregon.



- **Annual enrollment: 85,000 students**
- **Service area: 5 counties**
- **PCC sites:**
 - 3 comprehensive campuses
 - 3 Workforce Training Centers
 - Southeast Center
 - Extended Learning Campus
 - Multiple community sites



Sustainability at PCC

PCC is committed to becoming a leader in academic programs and operational practices that model the sustainable use of resources so that the needs of current generations are met without impairing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

- **What we are doing to achieve this goal:**
 - Green Teams on each campus
 - Sustainability courses and infused curriculum
 - Certificate and transfer programs
 - Cooperative education
 - Service learning

Sustainability at PCC



PCC courses boost environmental literacy and provide practical training.

- **Sample non-credit courses include:**
 - Sustainable Business Practices: Implementing Sustainability at Work
 - A Beginner's Guide to Greening your Life
 - Native Plants & Naturescaping
 - Urban Farming—Permaculture
- **The following disciplines offer environmentally-related courses:**
 - Building Construction Technology and Landscape Technology
 - Architectural Drafting and Interior Design
 - Environmental Studies
 - Social Sciences
- **Credit programs:** Environmental Studies & Resources
- **Certificate & transfer programs:** Environmental Science Transfer Program

Sustainability at Southeast Center

PCC's Southeast Center has an annual enrollment of 9500 students.

- **What we are doing to contribute to the goal of sustainable practices at PCC:**
 - Southeast Center Green Team
 - English Literacy and Civics (EL/Civics) courses



Sustainability and English literacy

- **Ecological literacy**

- There are many ways to be “literate”; some examples include:
 - Language literacy: read and communicate verbally and in writing in a language
 - Information literacy: find and critically analyze information
 - Emotional literacy: express feelings and actively listen to others
 - Environmental literacy: familiarity with features of natural and social environments

- **Social sustainability**

- Sustainability is not just *environmental*; it is also *social*
- Social sustainability depends upon connected communities
- Being able to communicate (i.e. sharing a language) helps build community

Sustainability and civics education

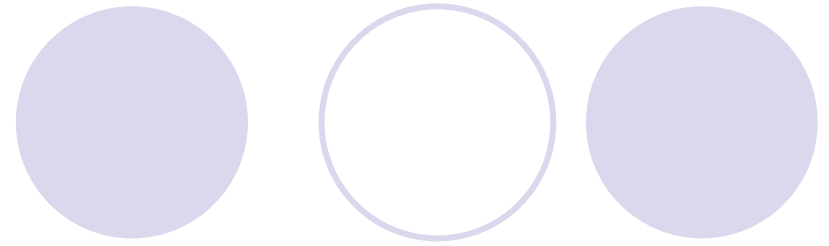
- **Environmental citizenship**

- There is no one “right” definition of citizenship
 - Citizenship can be seen as a status *and* a practice
- What does it mean to be a “citizen of place”?
 - Understanding natural and built environment(s)
 - Cultivating relationships
 - Participating in community decision-making

- **Intercultural competence**

- Our society is increasingly diverse
- Civics education is not unidirectional
 - Everyone is a teacher, and everyone is a learner

EL/Civics Grant



EL/Civics = English Literacy and Civics Education.

- According to the Federal Register on November 17, 1999 (Vol. 64, No. 221):
 - **“English literacy program”** is defined as a program of instruction designed to help individuals of limited English proficiency achieve competence in the English language, and
 - **“Civics education”** is defined as an educational program that emphasizes contextualized instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and U.S. history and government to help students acquire the skills and knowledge to become active and informed parents, workers, and community members.

EL/Civics Grant



There are 17 community colleges in Oregon with Adult Basic Skills (ABS) programming. 12 of them, including PCC, administer EL/Civics grant programs.

- **Some of the goals for the EL/Civics grant:**
 - Successful partnerships with local agencies, organizations, or institutions
 - Innovative approaches to providing EL/Civics instruction (including integration of technology)
 - Effective strategies for professional development
 - Materials, such as curricula and assessment instruments, that address emerging areas in EL/Civics education

EL/Civics: Implementation

A group of instructors developed the EL/Civics sustainability courses based on Civics Objectives developed in California.

- **Courses include:**
 - 2 six-hour/week Integrated Skills courses
 - 3 three-hour/week hybrid courses in partnership with PSU Capstone class
 - Summer Term 2007 – Recreation/Transportation
 - Fall Term 2007 – Energy Conservation
 - Winter 2008 – Water
 - Spring 2008 – Food

EL/Civics: Partnerships

Partnerships are a key component of the EL/Civics classes.

- **PCC and PSU partnership:**

- In the three-hour hybrid classes, Portland State University Capstone students tutor small groups of adult English language learners for 2.5 hours a week at PCC's SE Center.





EL/Civics: Approaches

Instructors are innovating approaches to the EL/Civics classes.

- **PCC/PSU Capstone website:**
 - <http://www.abslab.org/2007>

New directions



Sustainability has successfully been integrated through civics education in the ESOL community.

- **What does this mean for other audiences?**
 - Teaching and learning sustainability with this diverse group of students indicates that sustainability topics may be appropriate for many other audiences, as well.
- **How might this success be shared?**
 - ESOL/TESOL and other states' EL/Civics websites don't have sustainability components, but they could.
- **How could sustainability be infused across other subject areas?**