

TRANSFORMING OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Guide to Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education



“Culturally responsive education is the understanding that children are people, and without building relationships and without understanding children, we can’t teach them.”

José Luis Vilson
Math Teacher

Created by the
NYC Culturally Responsive Education Working Group and
the Education Justice Research and Organizing Collaborative
(EJ-ROC) at the NYU Metro Center.

For more information, visit crehub.org

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Alleanna Harris, 2020

DOES YOUR PUBLIC SCHOOL

- Center students' cultures, families, and communities in the curriculum?
- Make students feel proud of who they and their people are?
- Teach history and literature in ways that are inclusive of perspectives and wisdom of the communities students come from?
- Connect academic learning to students' lives, passions and struggles outside of school?
- Show students that they have the vision and power to create a better world?

**ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS MUST DO THIS.
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE-SUSTAINING EDUCATION DOES
ALL OF THE ABOVE.**

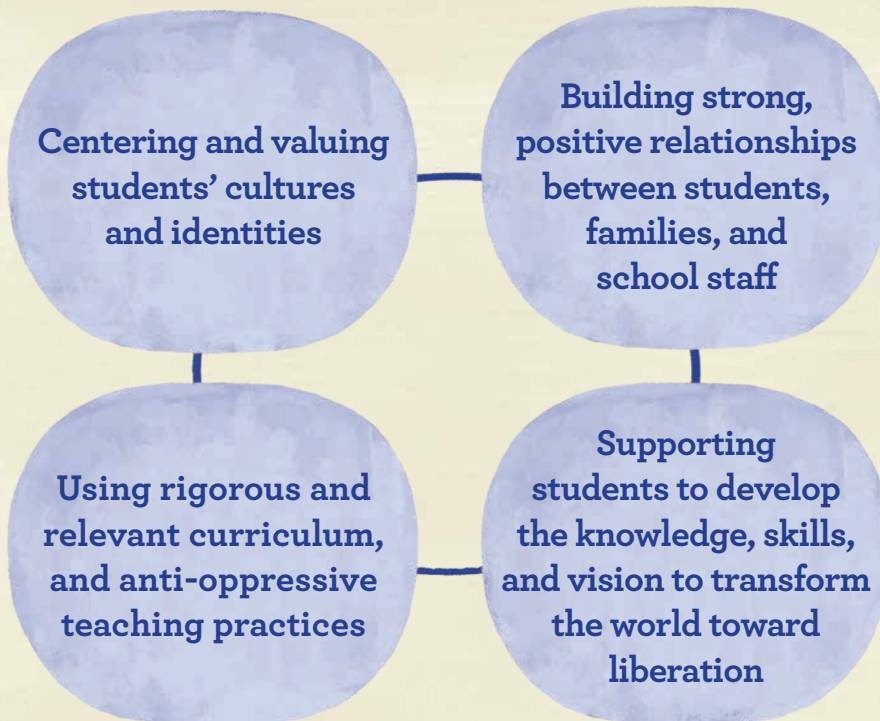
Students, parents, and educators have seen the inequities in public schools worsen during COVID-19, especially for students of color, low income students, multilingual language learners, and students with disabilities. Public schools now more than ever need culturally responsive-sustaining education to support students social-emotionally and academically. We must address the loss, harm, and grief, and truly heal.

VISION & VALUES OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE-SUSTAINING EDUCATION



WHAT IS CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE-SUSTAINING EDUCATION?

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CRSE) advances equity and social justice by:



“Our goal is for our kids to graduate with a level of consciousness: conscious of who they are and what they bring to the table, conscious of their history, conscious of the world that they live in, and how they navigate that from a place of strength.”

Jamaal Bowman
Public School Principal

Culturally responsive-sustaining education is a part of every aspect of a student’s education including culture, curriculum, instruction, school climate, and family and community engagement. CRSE is an approach that can transform schools into places that deserve our children.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE-SUSTAINING EDUCATION IN PRACTICE: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Culturally responsive-sustaining education works. Students excel in school when they see themselves reflected in the classroom and have strong, authentic relationships with their teachers.

This is what CRSE in rigorous and relevant curriculum and instruction can look like:

During reading time, students have a variety of books to choose from that center Black characters and authors, and portray Black people in positive and uplifting ways.

A math class learns about charts and tables by counting the gender and racial representation of characters in popular TV shows.



“I want all my students to feel seen in the classroom, to be seen in the curriculum. I want my daughter not to wonder if people that look like her made contributions to the world.”

Aaron Harris
English Teacher and Parent



A science class learns about planetary orbit in relation to its impact on the timing and celebration of Eid during the month of Ramadan.



Teachers support students to learn about important and overlooked people in U.S. history. Students, for instance, learn about Black and Latinx trans women leaders such as Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera during the Stonewall Riots.



A social studies class in an immigrant neighborhood has students read stories about immigration, interview their families or neighbors about their immigration experiences, compare themes, and hold a community event to share their stories and learnings.



In social studies class, students learn about the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and its connection to anti-immigrant policies today.

DID YOU KNOW

Across 16 commonly-used English Language Arts curricula and booklists, 83% of the books are written by White authors. A majority of the curricula were found to portray people of color in inferior, stereotypical, and destructive ways.

CRSE has been shown to increase grade point averages, student engagement, self-image, critical thinking skills, and graduation rates, and decrease dropout rates and suspensions.

K-12 students who participated in Tucson's Mexican American Studies program and San Francisco's Ethnic Studies program were more likely to be engaged in literature and history lessons, pass state standardized tests, graduate, and increase their attendance and GPAs.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

Many schools currently have discipline policies and practices that disproportionately target Black, Latinx, and Native students, and students with disabilities. A culturally responsive school is a safe and liberatory space that respects and honors students of all races, cultures, and abilities, especially those who have been historically marginalized. It is a school where all staff work to develop the skills and knowledge of students to transform the injustices in our society.

“As Malcolm X once said, ‘Education is the passport to our future’. But how can we attain this passport if we are not reflected in our educational curriculum?

In high school I had an honors Spanish teacher who was Latina and she helped me and my friends start the *Hispanos Unidos Club* to discuss pressing Latinx issues and helped us learn about Puerto Rican history, art and culture. That teacher is the reason I’m studying education in college today, and plan to be an educator.”

Iman Abdul
Public School Student

Studies show that White teachers tend to have lower expectations for students of color. They are significantly less likely to expect Black students to finish high school and college. Nationally, 86% of teachers are White, when over 50% of students are Black, Latinx, Asian, or Native.

Black students and students with disabilities are more likely to be suspended or expelled than White students for similar behaviors. This trend mirrors the disproportionate number of Black students and students with disabilities targeted for incarceration.

This is what CRSE in a school climate can look like:



The school district recruits, supports, and promotes teachers and school leaders of color.

Teachers, principals, and school staff receive anti-bias trainings on race, power, and privilege.

The school district creates “Grow-Your-Own” programs to recruit, train, and support parents and community members to become certified teachers.



School staff implement positive, restorative practices as alternatives to punitive discipline policies. They hire restorative justice/peace circle coordinators to prioritize school-wide social and emotional well being.

The school district invests in social workers and guidance counselors, instead of police officers, to support youth development.

The school district expands and invests in access to mental health services.

“The whole Western canon is rife with horrible stories and atrocities of who we are as people of color. Erasing who are Lesbian, Gay, Transgender. Creating images of women that are flat, completely unreal. These legacies live on in the way we move, we walk, and treat each other and think of ourselves. So in many ways, we are enacting a kind of revolutionary counter-narrative, just by telling the truth.”

Daniel José Older
Author



FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Schools can move towards culturally responsive family engagement by transforming traditional notions of parents' values and roles, and providing opportunities for staff and parents to build strong, authentic relationships as equal partners.



This is what CRSE in family and community engagement can look like:

School staff take the time and space to understand and respect students' cultures. For example, they can take a yearly community tour led by parents and community members to get to know the neighborhood history, institutions, leaders and culture.

Schools ensure that parent meetings and parent-teacher conferences are held at different times of day to accommodate parents' work schedules, and offer translation, food, child care, and assistance with transportation.

Schools provide opportunities for staff and parents to build strong, authentic relationships as equal partners. School staff and teachers are given the time and money to make regular home visits to students' families with the goal of building relationships, not discussing a problem.

Outreach and communication with parents is active and personal, in their home language, and on their home turf; rather than by fliers, robocalls or emails, only in English and on the school premises.

IMAGINE

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

that teach students how to love, respect, and honor themselves, their people, and their histories.

STUDENTS

who grow into their full potential when every aspect of their education centers and honors their cultures, knowledge, and communities.

EDUCATION

that prepares students who have been marginalized and denied a fair share for the world and life they deserve.

CRSE prepares the next generation to confront the challenges they will face. It prepares students to transform our public schools, and create a better world for all.



FAQS

Will CRSE prepare students for state tests?

Yes. State standards mandate skills that must be taught, but does not mandate the curriculum to teach those skills. This means teachers and schools can use many different types of texts, books, authors or videos. Incorporating **CRSE would add rich knowledge and content to the curricula, teaching practices, and school environment to help students be more engaged and active in the classroom, and prepared for state tests.** Research has shown that incorporating **CRSE helps students excel in school and on standardized tests.**

Some schools have many ethnicities within a single classroom. How can we teach and learn everyone's cultures at the same time?

CRSE is about teachers educating themselves about some aspects of their students' cultures and identities. It does not mean that teachers need to know everything about every student's cultures, but they need to be open to learning, and to know enough to truly value, respect, and honor the rich cultures of their students and families. They should know different themes across different cultures' histories, beliefs, and practices. **This is the foundation of building strong, positive relationships with students and families. CRSE requires that teachers understand how who they are impacts how they teach.** It asks teachers to reflect on and address their own biases in order to improve their teaching. When teachers truly know the interests, passions, and assets of their students, they can use them to support all students' academic, social, and emotional growth.

Will CRSE prepare students for the world outside of school?

CRSE is a rigorous educational approach that prepares students to excel academically, and to be knowledgeable about their own communities and those in and beyond their schools. CRSE teaches students the history, literature and wisdom of the communities and countries they and their peers come from, and **connects academic learning to students' lives, passions and struggles outside of school. CRSE shows students that they have the vision and power to create a better world.** CRSE is the best way to prepare students for the world beyond their schools.

For more FAQs, see "A Brief Guide to Making Your Schools More Culturally Responsive" listed on the next page.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CRSE IN PRACTICE

Use your phone camera to hover over the QR code and it will prompt you to tap to go to the site.



CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATION HUB

History, tools, and resources to contextualize and build the movement for culturally responsive education and ethnic studies. Included are resources for culturally responsive remote learning.
crehub.org



BRIEF GUIDE TO MAKING YOUR SCHOOL CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE

A guide to help advance culturally responsive education in school curriculum, climate, teacher recruitment, and family engagement.
bit.ly/BriefCREGuide



CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM SCORECARD

A tool to help evaluate the books in English Language Arts curricula for cultural responsiveness.
bit.ly/CRCScorecard



WE SCORED... NOW WHAT? POST-SCORECARD TOOLKIT

A toolkit for parents, educators, principals, and schools to make their classrooms more culturally responsive.
bit.ly/CRCToolkit



LEE AND LOW

The largest multicultural children's book publisher in the US, offers collections of diverse books by grade, level, and interest.
leeandlow.com



TEACHING TOLERANCE

A multigenre, multimedia collection of diverse short texts that include political cartoons, non-fiction, photographs, and literature.
tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts



TEACHING FOR CHANGE

Provides teachers and parents with tools to create schools where students learn to read, write, and change the world. They curate resources, develop lessons, and offer professional development for K-12 teachers.
teachingforchange.org



ZINN EDUCATION PROJECT

Offers free, downloadable lessons and articles that emphasize the role of working people, women, people of color, and organized social movements in shaping history.
zinnedproject.org

GLOSSARY

Ableism A system of superiority and discrimination that provides or denies resources, agency, and dignity based on one's abilities e.g. mental/intellectual, emotional, and/or physical.¹

Anti-oppressive Describes the process of making one's views of the world large enough to include everyone—looking for ways to make connections among different people's struggles and finding ways to think about how issues affect different people in different ways.²

Bias Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another.³

Colonization A form of invasion, taking of land and property, and forced control of a peoples. Colonization provides colonizers with political power and control, with economic gain through using people and resources for profit, and with social power through the colonizer's control of cultural practices and beliefs.⁴

Critical consciousness The process by which individuals apply critical thinking skills to examine their current situations, develop a deeper understanding about their concrete reality, and devise, implement, and evaluate solutions to their problems.⁵

Curriculum Lesson plans, texts, activities and academic content taught in schools.

Decolonize The active unlearning of values, beliefs and behaviors that have caused physical, emotional, spiritual or mental harm to the people or the land through colonization.⁶

Educational equity The policies, practices, and programs necessary to: (a) eliminate educational barriers based on gender, race/ ethnicity, national origin, ability, age, etc.; and (b) provide equal educational opportunities.⁷

Intersectional A concept used to describe the ways in which different kinds of oppression, e.g. racism, sexism, ableism, classism, etc. are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another.⁸

Intergenerational Several generations.

LGBTQ Short for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Liberation The act of being free; the state of being free from oppression.

Marginalized When a member of a racial, ethnic, religious, cultural or any social group is dismissed to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group. Being marginalized requires historical and ongoing oppression of the identity in question.⁹

Oppression Power that is historically formed and perpetuated over time that allows certain groups of people to assume a dominant position over other groups. This dominance is maintained and continued at an institutional level, such as with governments and education systems.¹⁰

Racism A system of advantages and disadvantages based on race. Racism is perpetuated through both interpersonal and institutional practices.¹¹ The systemic actions and beliefs enforce the superiority of one race over others through exclusion, discrimination, and forcible oppression often supported by legislative and corporate authorities.¹²

Rigorous Extremely thorough, exhaustive, or accurate.

Pedagogy The art, science, or profession of teaching.

Privilege An unearned, special advantage or right that a person is born into or acquires during their lifetime. It is supported by the formal and informal institutions of society and conferred to all members of a dominant group, by virtue of their group membership. Privilege often gives a person or group power over others.¹³

Punitive Inflicting, involving, or aiming at punishment.

Social Justice Equal access to and distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.

“The idea of having culturally responsive and sustaining curricula and pedagogy is not a matter of just educational practice. In many of our communities, it’s a matter of life and death.”

Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza

1. <https://www.antiviolenceproject.org/glossary/#anti-oppression>
2. <https://www.antiviolenceproject.org/glossary/#anti-oppression>
3. <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/bias>
4. <https://www.antiviolenceproject.org/glossary/#colonization>
5. <https://newarkccb.org/framework/critical-consciousness-theory/>
6. <https://www.antiviolenceproject.org/glossary/#decolonize>
7. <https://www.napequity.org/nape-content/uploads/Educ-Equity-Defined.pdf>
8. <https://www.antiviolenceproject.org/glossary/#intersectionality>
9. <https://guides.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/c.php?g=285382&p=1900870>
10. <https://www.antiviolenceproject.org/glossary/#oppression>
11. Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? And other conversations on race by Beverly Daniel Tatum, 1997
12. <https://byp100.org/faq/#glossary>
13. <https://www.antiviolenceproject.org/glossary/#privilege>

“I want my children to get a culturally responsive curriculum so they can learn about their history and ancestry—not just the food, but also their culture, customs and the heroes from our culture. When students know where they come from, they feel more motivated to achieve. I want this for all children.”

Yenny Cepeda
Public School Parent



**NYU Metro Center’s Education Justice
Research and Organizing Collaborative
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