



## What is Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education?

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has come to understand that the results we seek for all our children can never be fully achieved without incorporating an equity and inclusion lens in every facet of our work (see also New York State's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan). This understanding has created an urgency around promoting equitable opportunities that help all children thrive. New York State understands that the responsibility of education is not only to prevent the exclusion of historically silenced, erased, and disenfranchised groups, but also to assist in the promotion and perpetuation of cultures, languages and ways of knowing that have been devalued, suppressed, and

imperiled by years of educational, social, political, economic neglect and other forms of oppression.

Culturally responsive education is about teaching the students in front of you. To do this requires that one work to get to know their students and develop meaningful relationships with students while engaging in the students' communities. However, culturally responsive education must also be sustaining, that is it must work to encourage cultural pluralism and not cultural assimilation. Home and youth culture should be welcomed into the classroom as areas ripe for discussion. Differences should not just be seen as strengths, but they should also be maintained because



### What is culture?

The New York State Education Department understands culture as the multiple components of one's identity, including but not limited to: race, economic background, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and ability. Culture far transcends practices such as cuisines, art, music, and celebrations to also include ways of thinking, values, and forms of expression. These ways and forms are in constant flux, renegotiation, and evolution. Schools then become a meeting point for cultures, containing children and adults who bring with them multiple facets of their identity, along with unique experiences and perspectives.

Access the full [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#).

they are what make students and families unique. How educators understand culture has real consequences for our children as a limited understanding of culture has the power to disadvantage some while privileging others (Kirkland, 2012).

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining (CR-S) Education draws on decades of research in asset-based pedagogies that recognize that cultural difference (including racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender, sexuality and ability) should be treated as assets for teaching and learning. This approach to education counters dominant narratives about difference as deficits or as characteristics of students and families that should be remediated or assimilated. Using this approach to education, all families are believed to have cultural capital, or knowledge, abilities, and networks, that can, and should, be leveraged in classrooms. While schooling has traditionally privileged the capital of families from dominant backgrounds, CR-S positions educators to acknowledge, value, and leverage the wealth of knowledge found in communities that have been marginalized.

The Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Framework aligns closely with other NYSED policies, including The New York State Board of Regents and the NYSED Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA plan), specifically:

- \* Recognize the effect of school environment on student academic performance and support efforts to improve the climate of all schools.

- \* Promote a relationship of trust and respect between schools and families, recognizing that student achievement and school improvement are shared responsibilities.
- \* Provide educators with opportunities for continual professional learning in the areas of equity, anti-bias, multicultural, and culturally responsive-sustaining pedagogies.
- \* Support districts and their communities in engaging in critical conversations about culturally responsive-sustaining educational systems.

NYSED recognizes that for culturally responsive-sustaining education to thrive, the impetus cannot be placed solely on students, teachers, and school leaders; all stakeholders must work together to create the conditions under which this vision of education can flourish. NYSED believes that we must incorporate an equity and inclusion lens in every facet of the state's work to achieve student success outcomes for all students.



Learn more about the [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#).

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