



Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Remote Education: Resources for High Expectations and Rigorous Instruction

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

- Centering and valuing students' cultures and identities
- Using rigorous and relevant curriculum, and anti-oppressive teaching practices
- Building strong, positive relationships between students, families, and staff
- Supporting students to develop the knowledge, skills, and vision to transform the world toward liberation

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.

Scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings highlights three core components of CRSE:

1. Academic achievement: CRSE is academically rigorous and has been proven to increase academic excellence.
2. Cultural competence: Educators and school staff understand culture and its role in education. They critically reflect on their own identities and privileges in order to relate to and understand their students.



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3. Sociopolitical consciousness: Educators and school staff address the personal and sociopolitical issues that impact students' lives, and create an environment in which students see themselves as agents of social change and transformation.

Culturally responsive-sustaining remote education is responsive to students' individual and collective lived experiences, and in particular during this time, their experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic. CR-S remote education:

- makes high quality education and academic excellence accessible to all students;
- is co-constructed by students, families, community, and schools;
- affirms racial and cultural identities to foster positive academic outcomes;
- develops students' abilities to connect across cultures;
- empowers *students as agents* in their own teaching and learning;
- anticipates and designs the education experience around and in response to students' social and cultural identities, and
- contributes to an individual's engagement, learning, growth, and achievement through the cultivation of *meaningfully relevant conversations*, activities, and engagements.

Scholar Gholdy Muhammad's framework for historically responsive literacy ([🔗 *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*](#)) describes high expectations and rigorous instruction in four domains: identity development, skills development, intellectual development, and criticality. Every time students come to learn, they should be making sense of who they are (identity), developing their proficiency in the content (skills), gaining new knowledge and concepts of the world (intellect), and understanding power and oppression (criticality). All understanding and shaping of curriculum, teaching, and pedagogy should revolve around these four pursuits. Culturally responsive sustaining remote education promotes sociopolitical and health agency for students and their families and is exciting and joyful for students who are seen and loved and therefore take ownership of their learning.

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Teaching & Pedagogy

- Establish a routine and rituals, and maintain clear communication. For example, begin the day with morning meetings, mindfulness practices, [restorative or healing circles](#), or another check-in to ground and center students. Doing so helps create and maintain psychological safety and gives students a sense of being able to manage stress.
- Relationships and well-being take priority alongside assignments. Remember that students may be dealing with challenging home-life situations while trying to maintain their academics. It may take them time to communicate why they can't complete assignments. Share that regardless of challenges, students' efforts are appreciated and teachers are willing to work together.
- Get to know students and families, what they need and want, what they possess and can contribute to continued learning experiences. You can reach out to hold informal interviews and conversations. You can also use Zoom-based focus groups for participatory planning and curriculum building,
- Provide opportunities for students to provide ongoing feedback on their digital experiences, learning assets, desired domains of practice, and comfort navigating digital learning environments (e.g., through surveys).
- Connect with students through platforms that students are already familiar with and ask questions to get student input. Meet students where they are, including on social media (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, etc.). If students will join lessons on Twitter chat more readily than on Google classroom, for example, then Twitter chat is where teachers should do lessons. This may require flexibility from school/districts on rules around educators' professional boundaries, which sometimes prohibit social media interaction, while also keeping students safe.
- Encourage teachers to identify their own biases and assumptions when it comes to remote learning, and how this might affect the learning experiences of students they teach.
- Request help when necessary, knowing that teachers are not alone, while also logging questions, best practices, and other insights that come up in the process of remote teaching (i.e., reflective practice).
- Take time to learn about students' culture and backgrounds and how they and their communities have been impacted by the pandemic.
- Acknowledge the grief and loss that has been experienced during COVID-19, including loss of Black and Indigenous community members to police violence, through creating memorials, bringing in community organizations, and holding space for students to feel and process their emotions.
- Encourage students to bring in their cultural healing practices and community knowledge.
- Demonstrate grace and flexibility for students who might have picked up a job or extra shifts to help their family during the pandemic.

- Demonstrate grace and flexibility for students with inconsistent access to technology.
- Center inclusive engagement. Allow students to use hand signals or the chat instead of unmuting themselves/ turning on the camera to engage in class, as not every student’s home environment might be quiet or an environment that they want to show their classmates.
 - Take into account that not all students’ devices may have the capabilities to engage in the “traditional” online ways, or that their internet connection may not be stable enough for it.
- Provide office hours or allow students to schedule meetings with you in case they are unable to ask questions or ask for clarification on topics during class.
- Commit to removing punitive discipline practices as part of acknowledging the additional trauma students are bringing to school and the ways that may manifest in the classroom.
 - [🔗 Talking Circles for Restorative Justice and Beyond](#)
 - [🔗 “Fumbling Towards Repair: A Workbook for Community Accountability Facilitators” by Mariame Kaba and Shira Hassan](#)
 - [🔗 Transforming Harm through Restorative Justice, Transformative Justice, Healing Justice, and More](#)
 - [🔗 Building Community With Restorative Circles](#)
 - [🔗 Healing Circles for Teachers as a Restorative Self-Care Practice](#)

Additional resources:

- [🔗 CRSE Remote Learning Resources](#)
- [🔗 Teaching Through the Coronavirus: What Educators Need Right Now](#)
- [🔗 Roses in Concrete Community School Videos](#)
- [🔗 Mindfulness resource: Liberate Meditation and Mindfulness App](#)



Supporting Queer and Trans Students Remotely

Building on resources for creating a welcoming and affirming environment:

- Pronoun etiquette online:
 - When you introduce yourself, state your own pronouns.
 - Do not assume pronouns; ask students when they introduce themselves, if they feel comfortable to. Note that all students may not have disclosed their gender identity or sexuality at home; therefore, they may not be comfortable having their names or pronouns used in certain contexts.
- If you misgender (use the wrong pronouns for) a student, apologize and correct yourself.
 - Ask students how they would like you to correct other students who misgender them.
- Use gender-neutral greetings and generalizations (e.g. *you all, friends, folks* instead of *you guys, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls*).
- Identify yourself as an ally to students; encourage them to reach out if they are struggling, so you can listen and support, and/or connect them to support and resources.
- Familiarize yourself with mental health resources for queer and trans youth:
 - [🔗 Trevor Project](#)
 - [🔗 LGBTQ+ National Youth Talkline](#)