

# Frameworks

## An Overview of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Culturally Responsive Teaching

*This document offers a brief overview of Culturally Responsive Teaching and its overlap with SEL.*

### What is SEL?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a positive youth development framework that refers to the building of skills needed to recognize and manage emotions, develop care and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish and maintain positive relationships, and handle interpersonal situations effectively. These capabilities are critical foundations for academic learning and for a person's long-term personal and professional success.

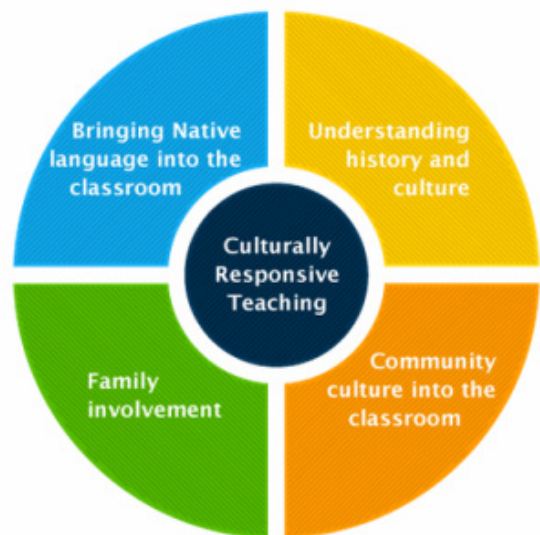
### What is Culturally Responsive Teaching?

Culturally Responsive Teaching is a way of teaching that emphasizes the importance of using cultural references that are familiar to students in order to make learning meaningful and accessible. Culturally Responsive Teaching is focused on relationships, cognitive scaffolding, and critical awareness. Cultural responsiveness is not a practice; it's what *informs* our practice so we can make better teaching choices for eliciting, engaging, motivating, supporting, and expanding the intellectual capacity of *all* of our students in ways that acknowledge and celebrate cultural diversity.

## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

- ★ “Using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students.”

(Gay, 2010, p. 31)



\*Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxXeZzcPAik>



## The Eight Principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching

1. Communication of high expectations
2. Active teaching methods
3. Practitioner as facilitator
4. Inclusion of culturally and linguistically diverse students
5. Cultural sensitivity
6. Reshaping the curriculum or delivery of services
7. Student-controlled discourse
8. Small group instruction

*\*Source: The Dreamkeepers by Gloria Ladson-Billings*

## Culturally Responsive Teaching and SEL Myths and Realities

**Myth: Culturally Responsive Teaching is only helpful or necessary for some students.**

**Reality:** Culturally Responsive Teaching is a pedagogy that empowers *all* students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Most important is the fact that Culturally Responsive Teaching is about the intellectual, social, and emotional foundations of learning. Students learn best when we honor and build off of their backgrounds and assets.

**Myth: Only teachers of color have the skills to be truly culturally responsive.**

**Reality:** Being a culturally relevant educator is less about the teacher's racial identity and more about his or her "cultural eye," or how (s)he views and responds to the cultural differences in the classroom. This requires teachers to self-reflect about their own cultural identities to avoid misinterpreting or underappreciating the various ways of thinking, doing, and knowing that students offer. This awareness and appreciation of differences is central to SEL, as well.

**Myth: Culturally Responsive Teaching and SEL both are "soft" and focus on building relationships and self-esteem.**

**Reality:** Building healthy relationships and student self-esteem is necessary for setting the stage for academic learning. Doing so allows students who have been marginalized to feel welcome and supported and makes students more able and willing to do challenging work.

**Myth: Being culturally responsive requires a teacher to master the details of every culture represented in his classroom.**

**Reality:** In reality, Culturally Responsive Teaching does not require that teachers individualize to that degree. The focus is on the school's demographics and finding out the largest demographic groups. This can lead to a focus on two to three different cultures, finding where their norms, values, beliefs, and ways of doing intersect and overlap.

*\*Source: 5 Common Myths about Culturally Responsive Pedagogy by Zaretta Hammond*

## Culturally Responsive Teaching and SEL Together

Culturally Responsive Teaching and SEL both help students get into the right mental state for learning. If a student's brain is full of the stress hormone cortisol, the brain's learning center shuts down. School has not always been a safe space for the most vulnerable students, but Culturally Responsive Teaching honors who they are and builds trust so that they can feel relaxed, can be their authentic selves, and can focus on learning.

*\*Source: CASEL Q&A with Zaretta Hammond*

## Social-Emotional Learning Skills & Culturally Responsive Teaching



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Adapted from <https://www.seltedconsortium.com/sel-ted-cultural-resilience--equity.html>