



Asset-Based, Student-Centered Learning Environments

Competency

Educators will use high expectations, rigorous curriculum, and culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies to create an assets-based, student-centered learning environment.

Key Method

Educators will conduct empathy interviews to uncover their students' hopes and perspectives. They will then create structures for co-constructing a curriculum with students.

Method Components

Please complete Part I. Overview Questions before beginning your learning under Method Components (see below under submission guidelines).

What is DECC?

Diversity, Equity and Cultural Competence (DECC) are essential components of a thriving learning community.

- **Diversity** is the presence of differences. It includes race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language, physical appearance, and more. Diversity also involves different ideas, perspectives, values, and multiple pathways to achievement. Rigor requires students to think critically, Being specific about what is meant by diversity is lacking in an area is critical. Saying "X" was not a racially diverse space, or "Y" event had little gender diversity helps clarify what is meant when we say, "diversity."



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- **Equity** refers to fairness and justice. It recognizes that advantages and barriers exist. As a result, everyone does not start from the same place. It is a process that acknowledges that unequal starting place and works to correct and address the imbalance. Creating equity is an ongoing process that strives to ensure that people who have been marginalized have ongoing opportunities to grow and thrive.
- **Cultural Competence** is the ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one's own.

Part of being culturally competent includes having cultural humility, a dispositional trait that allows us to be dynamic. “It takes the stance of being open to the “other” when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. Additionally, cultural humility lacks the superiority complex evident when an individual interprets their own cultural values as more meaningful and worthwhile than the values of others. Rather than concentrating solely on knowledge of another person’s cultural background, cultural humility proposes openness and humility when engaging with individuals from a cultural background different from our own.” *Source: Celebrating Cultural Humility in Education*

In this micro-credential, you will demonstrate your ability to support students on a variety of topics related to diversity, equity, and cultural competence.

Teacher-Centered vs. Student-Centered Learning

In teacher-centered learning, the learner is passive and receives knowledge. In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire offers the following definition of teacher-centered learning:

“Student-centered learning focuses on students’ individual goals and unique contributions to the classroom and invites learners to be active participants and co-constructors of learning with the teacher as a facilitator of this process. This aligns with the constructivist model of education.”

Teacher-Centered vs. Student-Centered Learning		
Element	Teacher-Centered Learning	Student-Centered Learning
Knowledge	Transmitted from teacher to students	Constructed together
Student engagement	Passive	Active



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Educator's role	Holder of knowledge	Facilitator/co-construct or of knowledge
Assessment Method	One dimensional	Multidimensional
Role of the Assessment	Grading purposes	Informs teaching and learning processes
Classroom culture	Individualistic	Collaborative
Student voice	Absent (Teacher is the expert)	Present (Student has agency; is responsible for their own learning)

Table adapted from

<https://sclworkshop.wordpress.com/teacher-centered-and-student-centered-paradigms/>

Deficit vs. Asset-Based Approaches

Our expectations and beliefs about students are powerful. Studies show that expectations influence our student's behavior and success. For example, high expectations lead to greater student success and low expectations can result in low performance. Deficit-based thinking hinders our ability as educators to have high expectations of all students and our belief that all students can succeed in rigorous, engaging learning environments. The definitions below will help you understand the terminology needed to complete this micro-credential.

High expectations mean having the same high standards for ALL students.

- **Rigor** means having clearly communicated expectations of what success looks like, making connections, asking their own questions, and taking charge of their own learning process.

Deficit-based approaches focus on students' weaknesses. When using deficit-based thinking, educators often fail to notice what is within the school's or their own control, and instead, often blame the student, family, or community for students' shortcomings. Deficit-based thinking is often applied to historically marginalized groups. Deficit-based thinking often results in pedagogies that focus on facts, memorization, and drilling skills separate from the relevant application of those skills. Focusing on facts and memorization is the opposite of rigor and often contributes to a cycle of continued low expectations.

Asset-based approaches focus on the unique strengths of each student and their communities. These approaches also consider how students can leverage those assets for their own learning and to develop a richer classroom community. Teachers with an asset-based mindset expect brilliance from all their students



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while at the same time teaches them to embrace and learn from failure. An asset-based approach helps students find the personal meaning and relevance in learning and supports them in meeting the goals they have for themselves. Asset-based approaches encourage multiple pathways to demonstrate learning and focus on critical thinking, collaboration, and authentic assessment— elements that ensure a rigorous, engaging classroom environment. **Culturally Relevant Teaching** (CRT) and **Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy** are two asset-based approaches to teaching and learning.

Asset-Based Pedagogy Do's and Don'ts

Beware. When asset-based pedagogies are not implemented well, they can cause harm and encourage stigmatization.

Do

- **Reflect on your own cultural lens.** Be mindful of how your own life experiences and group memberships can create biases that influence your interactions with students, families, and colleagues.
- **Draw on student culture and life experiences to shape curriculum and instruction.** Be sure to reject instructional materials that contain cultural biases and/or stereotypes, and supplement the curriculum if it lacks representation of your student's heritage.
- **Model high expectations for all students.** Asset-based pedagogy believes that all students are capable of academic success.
- **Collaborate with students, families, and the local community.** Get to know your students and their families. Learn about the community in which you teach, especially what they want to sustain through schooling
- **Value community languages, practices, and ways of being.** Student languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being should be centered meaningfully and consistently in classroom learning instead of being considered as “add-ons.”
- **Use a curriculum that connects to cultural and linguistic histories.** Connect present learning to the histories of racial, ethnic, and linguistic communities both locally and nationally.

Sources:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ee/responsiveteaching.asp>

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ee/culturallysustainingped.asp>

Don't

- **Don't ignore your biases.** This can be equally dangerous and harmful. As teachers, we often have perceptions of our students, their families, and their communities that are incomplete or inaccurate.
- **Don't view the culture, language and literacy of students as deficiencies that need to be overcome.**



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- **Don't center curriculum and instruction on the White, heterosexual, western experience.** More than 50% of today's public school students are children of color, and this population will only increase. Students in schools are more racially and culturally diverse than ever and have a broad variety of identities that should be reflected in their learning environment.
- **Don't hold on to traditional teaching strategies that position the teacher as the expert and the student as the "vessel to be filled with knowledge."** Asset-based instruction should be collaborative and generated along with students.
- **Don't hold lower expectations of students because their cultural background, family structure, life experiences, etc. may be different from your own.** Asset-based pedagogy believes that all students are capable of academic success.

Examples of Asset-Based Pedagogies

Culturally Relevant Teaching

Culturally Relevant Teaching, also called Culturally Responsive Teaching, is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning. This pedagogy can help strengthen relationships between students and teachers, and instruction becomes more dynamic. It builds on a student's individual experience and prior knowledge and is also justice-oriented. It reflects the social context we currently live in. According to Geneva Gay (2010), Culturally Responsive Pedagogy has eight qualitative attributes. Culturally responsive teaching is:

- Validating
- Comprehensive and Inclusive
- Multidimensional
- Empowering
- Transformative
- Emancipatory
- Humanistic
- Normative and ethical

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster cultural pluralism in schools. Cultural pluralism is a term used when smaller groups within a larger society maintain their unique cultural identities, whereby their values and practices are accepted by the dominant culture, provided such are consistent with the laws and values of the wider society

(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_pluralism)



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Frameworks that Support Asset-Based Learning Environments

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework

This New York State Education framework is based on culturally relevant pedagogy and includes guidelines for students, teachers, school leaders, district leaders and community members. This framework helps educators create student-centered learning environments that:

- Affirm racial, linguistic and cultural identities
- Prepare students for rigor and independent learning
- Develop students' abilities to connect across lines of difference
- Elevate historically marginalized voices
- Empower students as agents of social change

Below are four principles of culturally responsive and sustaining education:

- Creates a welcoming and affirming environment
- Fosters high expectations and rigorous instruction
- Identifies inclusive curriculum and instruction
- Engages in ongoing professional learning and support

The Teaching for Equity Framework from Leading Educators

Teaching for Equity is an integrated vision to guide you as you reflect on your teaching, support whole students, and live out your commitments to anti-racism. The following classroom strands provide a framework that connects the big ideas to daily practices.

Classroom Strands

- Antiracist Curriculum and Standards
- Radically Inclusive Relationships and Communities
- Equitable Instructional Practices

Strategies to Discover and Engage with your Students' Assets

Empathy Interviews: Conduct one-on-one interviews with students and their families about their expectations, hopes, and interests. Empathy Interviews:

- Allow you to test your assumptions and beliefs about what students need
- Help students feel valued and heard
- Allow you to build stronger relationships with students
- Help to create a more positive classroom culture

Sample Empathy Interview Questions:

- What do we do in my class or that you've experienced in other classes that helps you learn best?
- What could I do as a teacher to better support your learning?
- What are your goals for yourself?



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- What are your strengths?
- What are you good at?
- What do you hope to get out of this class?
- What might make this class more meaningful for you or more applicable to your goals?

Supporting Rationale and Research

Cuahtin, R. T. (2019). Ethnic Studies Pedagogy as CxRxPx. In R. T. Cuahtin, M. Zavala, C. Sleeter, and W. Au (Eds.), *Rethinking Ethnic Studies* (pp. 26-32). Rethinking Schools.

España, C. and Yadira Herrera, L. (2020) *En Comunidad: Lessons for Centering the Voices and Experiences of Bilingual Latinx Students*. Heinemann.

Podcast with authors & publisher:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/heinemann-podcast/id1145532509?i=1000466831471>

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Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice (3rd Edition)*. Teachers College Press.

Hammond, Z. (2015). *Culturally Responsive Teacher and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*. Corwin.

Johnston, O., Wildy, H., & Shand, J. (2019). A decade of teacher expectations research 2008–2018: Historical foundations, new developments, and future pathways. *Australian Journal of Education*, 63(1), 44–73.

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Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children (2nd Edition)*. Jossey-Bass.

Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), 132-141. Retrieved June 25, 2021, from

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Martínez, R. A. (2018). Beyond the English Learner Label: Recognizing the Richness of Bi/Multilingual Students Linguistic Repertoires. *The Reading Teacher*, 71(5), 515-522. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1679>



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Pollock, M. (Ed.) (2008). *Everyday Antiracism: Getting Real About Race in School*. The New Press.

Renkly, S. and Bertolini, K. (2018) "Shifting the Paradigm from Deficit Oriented Schools to Asset Based Models: Why Leaders Need to Promote an Asset Orientation in our Schools," *Empowering Research for Educators*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 4. Available at: <https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/ere/vol2/iss1/4>

Tsiplakides, I. & Areti, K. (2010). The Relationship between Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement in the Teaching of English as A Foreign Language. *English Language Teaching*. 3. 10.5539/elt.v3n2p22. Available at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1081569.pdf>

Resources

Student-Centered Learning

[Student-Centered Learning: It Starts With the Teacher](#)

[Teacher-centered vs. Student-centered course design | Teaching Commons](#)

[What is Student-Centered Learning and Why is it Important? | Rethink Together](#)

High Expectations

[The Power of Expectations | Invisibilia | NPR](#)

[The Warm Demander: An Equity Approach](#)

[Rigor Expectations Chart](#)

["IS THE LEARNER A DEFICIT OR AN ASSET?" | Reimagine Education Conference & Awards\)](#)

Asset-Based vs. Deficit-Based Thinking

[How asset-based teaching can improve classroom behavior](#)

[An Asset-Based Approach to Education: What It Is and Why It Matters](#)

[Deficit thinking in schools is a social justice issue. Here's why we need to do better.](#)

Asset-Based, Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Pedagogies

[Asset-Based Pedagogies - Educator Excellence \(CA Dept of Education\)](#)

[What Is Culturally Responsive Teaching?](#)

[\[Episode 2\] Culturally Responsive Teaching & the Brain 10/06 by anewkindofPD | Education](#)

[Author Interview: 'Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies' \(Opinion\)](#)

[Reality Pedagogy: Christopher Emdin at TEDxTeachersCollege](#)



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[The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children](#)

Asset-Based Pedagogical Tools for Reflection

[Funds of Knowledge Handout](#)

[Teaching for Equity — A New Guide from Leading Educators](#)

[Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#)

Empathy Interviews

[Next: How to Conduct Empathy Interviews](#)

[Empathy Interviews — HTH Teacher Center](#)

[Empathy Interviews—Learning Forward](#)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3, and be proficient for all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

(200–400 words)

Please use the suggested word count as a guide to answer the following contextual questions. This will help our assessor understand your current context for working on this micro-credential.

Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

1. Why do you wish to earn this micro-credential and what impact do you hope it will have on your students based on your context (content, level, demographics, community)? Make sure to include details about your context in your answer..
2. What does student-centered mean to you in your context? What strategies are you already using to make your pedagogy student-centered? How do you know you are being effective?

Passing: Response provides a detailed description of context and reasonable and accurate information that justifies the reason for choosing this micro-credential to address specific needs of both the teacher and the student. Response may also focus on a learning goal that describes what they hope to gain from earning this micro-credential needs to be clearly stated and specific strategies already used to meet different student needs and support a student-centered environment.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following three [add number of artifacts here] artifacts as evidence of your learning.



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**Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.*

Artifact 1: Empathy Interviews (500–800 words)

Before beginning, review the resources on Empathy Interviews included in the resource section of this micro-credential. Write a summary of your process and submit all the elements below as one document. Your document needs to include these five sections:

- 3–5 interview questions. Interview questions should be:
 - neutral
 - open-ended
 - adjusted for the needs of your studentsInterview questions should also address students’:
 - Needs
 - Hopes
 - Strengths
 - Expectations for themselves
- Describe at least three different subgroups of learners in your classroom.
 - What are their specific needs and your expectations for them?
 - What are you doing to meet the needs of each group specifically?
- Choose at least one student to interview from each of the three subgroups you identified. **Include your notes on student answers, but do not include identifying information.**
- Identify 3–5 key take-aways or action steps.
 - How has your thinking changed (I used to think...now I think...)?
 - What mindsets or belief statements do you want to keep in mind when planning to meet the needs and hopes of your students?
 - What specific action steps will you take to address the needs and hopes of each subgroup?
 - What are the implications of what you learned?

Artifact 2: Self-Analysis (300–500 words)

Choose either the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework from NYSED or the Teaching for Equity Framework from Leading Educators to reflect on your current practice in relation to culturally responsive-sustaining pedagogies. These resources can be found in the resource section of this micro-credential.

- Refer to the following:
 - **Option 1:** Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework (NYSED), begin by reading pages 1–16 for an overview and then pages 25–28 for guidelines for teachers.
 - **Option 2:** The Teaching for Equity framework from Leading Educators, begin by reading pages 1–11 for an overview and pages 12–30 for beliefs and practices.



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- List one or two of your current strengths with evidence for each of the guidelines or beliefs and practices (see above for sections)
- List two growth areas, and describe one or two actions you can take to improve in each of these areas.

**Artifact 3: Action Plan
(300–400 words)**

Create an action plan to address the areas of need identified from your Empathy Interviews and the areas of growth that you identified in your self-analysis. Your action plan should include all of the following and be combined into one document:

- SMART Goals: For each of your growth areas, list one to two bite-sized, specific, and time-bound action steps that you will be able to implement effectively in your current context.
- Seek feedback on your action plan.
 - This could be an administrator, instructional coach, department head, or other colleague.
 - Include who you choose and why you choose them. (*do not use names*)
 - Share your action plan and ask them to provide you with feedback.
 - Include a summary of the feedback you received and what changes you made to your action plan based on feedback.
 - Implement two of your action steps
- Include an annotated artifact for the two action steps you implemented.
 - Your artifact should be pasted into your action plan document. Some examples are:
 - A picture of student work with no identifying information
 - An email
 - A teacher-created assignment
 - An anchor chart
 - Or another artifact that shows that you implemented in your action plan
 - Annotate each artifact with a brief commentary (25–50 words) that includes:
 - Description
 - The impact
 - What you would change next time

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing
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<p>Artifact 1: Empathy Interviews</p>	<p>Develop 3–5 interview questions that are open-ended, neutral and age-appropriate.</p> <p>Questions address students' needs hopes, strengths and expectations of themselves</p> <p>Three students are chosen from thoughtfully defined subgroups.</p> <p>Clear and well-supported take-aways based on specific examples from the interviews</p>	<p>Develop 3–5 interview questions are age-appropriate, neutral and/or open-ended.</p> <p>Questions may not address students' needs hopes, strengths and expectations of themselves</p> <p>Fewer than three students may have been interviewed.</p> <p>Take-aways may not be based on information learned from the interview.</p>	<p>Less than three interview questions are developed..</p> <p>Less than three students were interviewed.</p> <p>Take-aways may be vague and not based on student assets.</p>
<p>Artifact 2: Self- Analysis</p>	<p>Strengths and growth areas are aligned with the resource in either Option 1 or Option 2</p> <p>And</p> <p>Strengths are given with evidence.</p> <p>And</p> <p>Growth areas include one or two actionable steps.</p>	<p>Strengths and growth areas may not be aligned with the resource in either Option 1 or Option 2</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Strengths may not include evidence.</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Growth areas may not include one or two actionable steps.</p>	<p>Strengths and growth areas are not aligned with the resource in either Option 1 or Option 2</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Strengths are not given and/or no evidence is included.</p> <p>And/or</p> <p>Growth areas are not provided.</p> <p>And/or</p>



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			Growth areas do not include actionable steps.
Artifact 3: Action Plan	A SMART Goal is written for each growth area identified. And Evidence of feedback is provided. And Two artifacts are included and annotated with: -Description -The impact -What you would change for next time	A goal is written for each growth area identified but may not be a SMART Goal. And/or Evidence of feedback may not be provided. And/or Less than two artifacts are included and annotations may not include: -Description -The impact -What you would change for next time	A goal is not written for each growth area identified. And/or Evidence of feedback is not provided. And/or two or fewer artifacts are included but are not annotated.

Part 3 Reflection

(400–600 words)

Use the word count as a guide to write a personal reflection about your work on this micro-credential. For tips on writing a good reflection, review the following resource: [How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?](#)

Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

1. Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between your perceptions and those of your students'?
 - a. What beliefs or practices were affirmed?
 - b. What surprised you or challenged your thinking?
 - c. What did you learn about your lens impacts how you see your students?
 - d. Be specific and address what you learned about each subgroup.
2. How have your mindsets and thinking about your students and/or about your practice changed because of this micro-credential?



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3. How has this micro-credential impacted your students and how do you know? How do you anticipate it will impact your students in the future?
4. How will you share your learning with other colleagues?

Passing: Reflection provides evidence that this activity has had a positive impact on both educator practice and student success. Specific examples are cited from personal or work-related experiences to support claims. Also included are specific actionable steps that demonstrate how new learning will be integrated into future practices.



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