

# CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE



## *Assessment Practices*



**CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE-  
SUSTAINING EDUCATION**

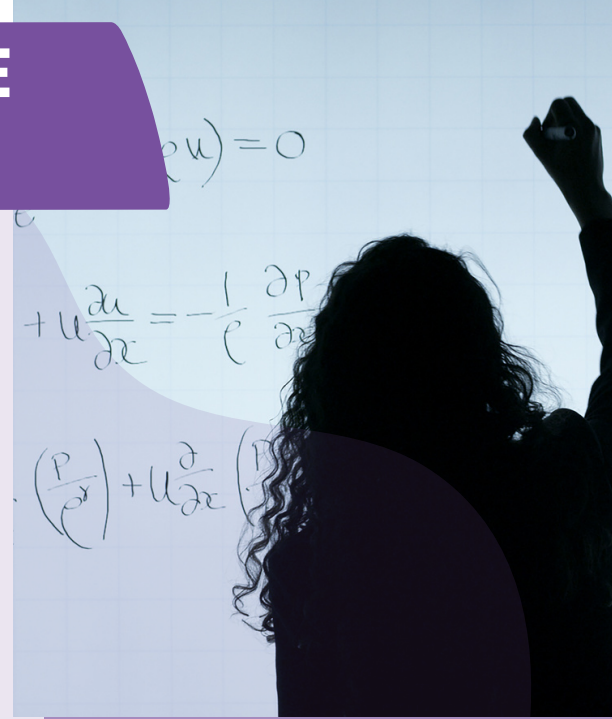
*Across  
Learning  
Environments*

# CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

*“You need to learn this because it’s going to be on the [insert relevant NYSED exam].”*

How many of us have been guilty of prefacing a lesson with this statement to our students? If we’re honest, we’ve all probably said it at least once – even if it was just a last-ditch effort to convince our students that they need to pay attention and do the work! However, statements like this not only undermine the true purpose of education but also represent a missed opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of what students are learning. This is why it is so important to include authentic assessments in our practice – especially if we want to uphold the principles of the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework.

The New York Performance Standards Consortium, which is currently developing models for reimagining assessment in the state of New York, asserts that authentic assessment tasks are those that “grow out of the curriculum.” Let’s explore this concept in more depth.



## WHAT IS AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT?

In TALE Academy Module 1, *Shifting Across Learning Environments*, we discussed how to give feedback that leads to investment, how to leverage that investment in the topic to fuel authentic assessment, and how to implement authentic assessment across all learning environments.

As a refresher, according to Jon Mueller’s Authentic Assessment Toolbox, authentic assessment is “a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills.” Student performance on authentic assessments is typically measured via a rubric that is aligned with specific standards.

## AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT AND CRSE

What we choose to assess and how we choose to assess are frequently embedded in culturally biased patterns and can result in perpetuating perceived deficits of marginalized students. An underlying assumption may be that our assessments are sound, and some of our students are impaired. However, looking at our assessments through a CRSE lens suggests that the reverse may be true. Perhaps our students are sound, and our assessments are impaired.

**If we evolve our assessments to be more inclusive of our students’ intersectional identities, we are more likely to engage them in ways that will lead to their enhanced learning and improved achievement.**

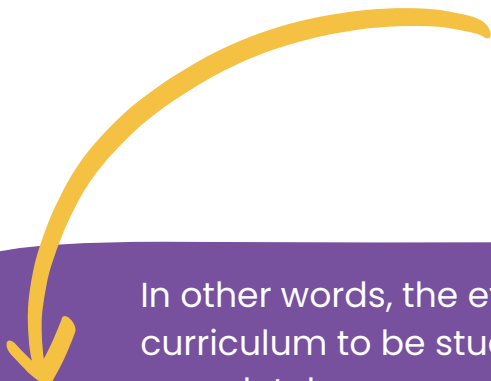
## A Helpful Starting Point

eTeachNY resources developed during the pandemic focused on the importance of inclusive, strength-based assessments that provide actionable feedback from multiple perspectives, cultures, and backgrounds and that can be implemented across various learning settings (remote, hybrid, in-person).

# CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ASSESSMENT

*There is an assumption at play within the field of assessment that while there are multiple ways for students to learn, students need to demonstrate learning in specific ways for it to count. For instance, in a specific course[,] different approaches may be used to engage students in the material, but demonstration of...students' knowledge, skills, and abilities are done uniformly in the same assignment or approach – so while there may be multiple approaches and methods used across a program or institution for assessing student learning, at each instance of demonstration a single approach is employed.*

Erick Montenegro and Natasha A. Jankowski,  
Equity and Assessment: Moving Towards Culturally  
Responsive Assessment



In other words, the efforts we make as teachers to modify our curriculum to be student-centered and culturally responsive can be completely compromised by not extending this to our assessments. Let's do a side-by-side comparison of traditional and authentic, CRSE-aligned assessment methods.

# CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE ASSESSMENT



## *Traditional vs. Authentic, CRSE-aligned Assessments*

TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT	AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT	CONNECTIONS TO CRSE
Tends to have concrete questions that seek "correct" answers	Promotes critical thinking with diverse perspectives	Invites perspectives grounded in students' intersectional identities
Seeks to measure knowledge acquisition	Seeks to develop meaningful skills	Recognizes various and equally valid ways of knowing
Primarily focuses on written measures	Combines written, performance, and arts-based measures	Acknowledges learning preferences, language proficiency, interests
Usually prioritizes the "what" of the standards	Usually prioritizes the "how" of the standards	Allows for inclusive and expansive ways to measure learning
Offers a single glimpse of student understanding	Offers a more comprehensive view of student understanding	Lends a more strength-based approach to assessment
Considers only direct measures of specific standards	Often incorporates factors that extend beyond academic proficiency	Offers flexibility and mitigates implicit bias
Prepares students in a singular way with an emphasis on more basic tasks and concrete skills	Equips students with academic dexterity to solve real-world problems through various mediums	Leverages the unique cultural lens and experiences of students
Focuses on the product and the summative outcomes	Focuses on the process of formative learning to achieve summative outcomes	Values diversity of learner readiness and increases equity by prioritizing growth
Curriculum drives assessment	Assessment drives curriculum	Creates opportunities for students to inform and co-design curriculum
Can create competitive environment focused on individualism	Can create a collaborative learning environment focused on cooperation	Affirms identities of students from cultures rooted in communal ways of being

# AN AUTHENTIC, CRSE-ALIGNED ASSESSMENT

*Here is an example of a traditional assessment vs. an authentic assessment that is CRSE-aligned:*

## TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT

Read the section in the U.S. history textbook about the Homestead Act, answer the multiple choice questions, and write a paragraph for the following prompt: Summarize the significance of the Homestead Act of 1862.

## AUTHENTIC, CRSE-ALIGNED ASSESSMENT

Read the section in the U.S. history textbook about the Homestead Act.

Read the article on local remnants of redlining and its residual impacts.

Write a letter as a novice lobbyist to your local state representative, advocating for some funding to go to first-time homebuyers who come from families who did not receive or have access to any of the benefits that came from the Homestead Act.

Make sure your letter demonstrates the connection between the Homestead Act and the systemic roots of the current racial wealth gap.

# AN AUTHENTIC, CRSE-ALIGNED ASSESSMENT WHEN TEACHING ACROSS LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

*Let's take the same example of an authentic assessment that is CRSE-aligned and see how it might look across learning environments.*

## CRSE-ALIGNED ASSESSMENT IN PHYSICAL CLASSROOM

Read the section in the U.S. history textbook about the Homestead Act independently during the class period.

Read the article on local remnants of redlining and its residual impact using a [Gallery Walk](#) method in small groups.

Write a letter as a novice lobbyist to your local state representative, advocating for some funding to go to first-time homebuyers who come from families who did not receive or have access to any of the benefits that came from the Homestead Act OR create a video for a social media campaign.

Refer to the rubric for your project for success indicators.

## CRSE-ALIGNED ASSESSMENT IN VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

Read the section in the U.S. history textbook about the Homestead Act independently as flipped classroom pre-work. (A [flipped classroom](#) is one in which students access content online, prior to the in-class discussion of the material.)

Read the article on local remnants of redlining and its residual impact, then complete a "gallery walk" that entails students responding to the text and to other students' comments digitally, using Jamboard in small groups.

Choose one of the following to advocate for some funding to go to first-time homebuyers who come from families who did not receive or have access to any of the benefits that came from the Homestead Act:

- Write a letter as a novice lobbyist.
- Create an infographic to share with your congressperson.
- Create a video for a social media campaign.

Refer to the rubric for your project for success indicators.



*It's important for us to remember that a foundational premise of CRSE is acknowledging, honoring, and leveraging the whole child and connecting their lived experiences to the content and, thus, also to the assessments.*

Below are a set of recommendations that are rooted in the CRSE principles of student agency, autonomy, and self-expression. By providing students with a variety of options and mediums to demonstrate their understanding, we expand rather than limit their ability to feel seen, heard, valued, and supported as learners.

Create choice boards: students have a choice in the “how” (product type) for the evaluation of the “what” (standards), which can be done through digital assignment handouts with hyperlinks for those choices in a learning management system, such as [Google Classrooms](#) or [Canvas LMS](#).

Include interactive content through platforms such as [genially](#).

Integrate the use of digital whiteboards, such as [Jamboard](#), [Kami](#), [Whiteboard.fi](#), or [Whiteboard.chat](#).

Utilize interactive videos that include [Flip](#), [Nearpod](#), and [Edpuzzle](#).

Provide feedback sessions in real-time with video conference platforms or asynchronous feedback using video platforms such as [Screencast](#) or audio platforms such as [Mote](#) and [Kaizena](#).

Foster digital collaboration through platforms such as [Padlet](#), [Wakelet](#), and [Pear Deck](#).

Provide additional customized practice on platforms such as [Seesaw](#) (for elementary school).

Include real-time polling through platforms such as [Mentimeter](#) and [Kahoot](#).

## *How to Identify, Discuss, and Dismantle Implicit Bias in Assessment*

**Consider the following questions when exploring the ways implicit bias affects the creation and results of our assessments:**

What are the performance disparities we see across various student intersectional identities, and what assumptions might we make about students as a result?

When we consider other demonstrations of student learning (e.g., class discussions, class work, group projects, etc.), is there a discrepancy between formal assessment performance and informal assessment performance?

If discrepancies exist, can we alter the nature of our formal assessments to integrate more of the elements included in the informal assessments that seemed to facilitate greater student success (e.g., oral presentations, artistic expressions, collaborations, authentic context, etc.)?



# IMPLEMENTING EQUITABLE GRADING

*"In the vast majority of schools across the country, educators are using practices that are outdated, inaccurate, and undermine student success. In fact, grading policies actually help fuel achievement gaps, reinforcing the differences in family resources and support based on students' race and income."*

*- Joe Feldman, School Grading Policies Are Failing Children: A Call to Action for Equitable Grading*

In addition to aligning our assessment strategies with CRSE principles, it is equally important to consider how those assessments become grades.

**Equitable grading is a response to disparities in grading practices that widen the opportunity gap.**

This includes a lack of consistency in grading practices among teachers throughout a school and across grade levels and subject areas. Grades may lack clarity on the actual student learning that is represented by the student score. Some methods for calculating grades rely on mathematically unsound practices that result in inaccurate depictions of student progress. These may all be reflective of implicit biases that need to be brought to the surface. Joe Feldman, author of Grading for Equity, and others assert there are better, more equitable ways to grade, including the practices shared below.

**Practices that calculate student proficiency in more mathematically accurate ways**



Using 0-4 instead of 0-100 scales  
Eliminating zeroes as a grade  
Weighting more recent scores more heavily

**Practices that communicate explicit expectations for what mastery entails and how to achieve it**



Creating clear standards-aligned rubrics  
Developing standards-based or standards-referenced grading scales and formulas for gradebooks

**Practices that cultivate soft skills but that are not calculated into the final grade**



Incorporating self and peer assessments  
Infusing formative feedback

**Practices that promote a "growth mindset" and offer students hope**



Incentivizing multiple attempts at mastery  
Allowing multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning

**Practices that place value primarily on student understanding and skill rather than environment or behavior**



Eliminating extra credit  
Eliminating any subjective criteria, such as effort or participation  
Providing alternative, non-grade-based consequences for any academic behavior-related issues, such as missed work

# TALE ACADEMY CONNECTIONS

**It's important to remember that authentic assessments possess the opportunity to integrate all of the pieces from the previous five sessions in Module 2.**

Assessments can, and should, align with the CRSE goals (Session 1). They can affirm students' intersectional identities and create a sense of belonging within the classroom and school communities (Session 2). They can also reinforce rigorous, relevant, and student-centered curriculum choices (Session 3) and the building of relationships that engage and empower (Session 4), as well as position students to strengthen their sociopolitical consciousness and sociocultural responsiveness (Session 5).

*Now it's your turn!*

After you explore these concepts more on your own, you will have a chance to transform a traditional assessment into a CRSE-aligned authentic assessment, inclusive of an equitable grading approach, for assessing student learning across environments.





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# About Us

## **The TALE Academy**

The TALE Academy is a series of virtual learning experiences available to all New York State educators and offers a rich array of resources on topics related to teaching across learning environments (TALE). The TALE Academy is built upon the work New York State educators carried out during emergency remote teaching (ERT) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and extends it toward the future. TALE invites educators to think beyond online learning to consider a broader perspective on teaching and learning that encompasses teaching across multiple environments (in-person, remote, and hybrid).

## **The Teaching in Remote/Hybrid Learning Environments (TRLE) Project**

The TALE Academy is part of a broader New York State Education Department (NYSED) initiative known as Teaching in Remote/Hybrid Learning Environments (TRLE). In July 2020, NYSED was awarded funding through the United States Department of Education's Education Stabilization Fund-Rethink K-12 Education Models Grant to implement TRLE – a three-year project to build the capacity of teachers and educational leaders to effectively implement remote/hybrid learning for all students. Launched in the depths of the pandemic, the first phase of the TRLE project focused on getting resources to the field through partnerships with Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and school districts across the state. The second phase, which began in February 2022, focused on aggregating lessons learned and emerging teaching and learning strategies to address a broader field of practice: teaching across learning environments.

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