

## Inclusive & Equitable Teaching Online: Making Learning Relevant and Meaningful

As higher education student populations become increasingly diverse, it is crucial for us to be aware how we engage students through our teaching methods and course content. Are we creating a learning environment that prioritizes certain (*i.e.*, dominant) cultural backgrounds and experiences while sidelining others? When this occurs, we are often unintentionally hindering our students' success, especially if students then think their cultures, experiences & worldviews do not relate to their own learning.

In previous newsletters in this summer series, we discussed practices for [how to get started](#) with inclusive and equitable online teaching, and ways we can [support our online students](#). In this issue, we introduce principles and practices related to [Culturally Responsive Teaching](#), which incorporates students' identities, backgrounds, and ways of knowing to make learning inclusive, relevant and meaningful for all, including students from minoritized or under-represented groups. Through this approach, we may create a trusting learning relationship where students are willing to take risks to share who they are without feeling inferior or judged. By including students' cultural experiences and worldviews into our online classrooms, students are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their learning, as they see that their knowledge and experiences matter.

### CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING



- Describes a form of teaching that calls for engaging students whose experiences and cultures are traditionally excluded from mainstream settings.
- Uses asset-based approaches, instead of deficit-oriented teaching methods that view students' languages, cultures, and identities as barriers to learning.
- Positions students' cultural identities as an asset to increase motivation for learning.
- Aims to ensure students see themselves and their communities reflected and valued in the content they learn.

### CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING GOALS



- Facilitate academic success. To understand their students' challenges & needs, instructors employ various teaching practices to connect with diverse students.



- Foster development of positive cultural identities, while helping students achieve academically.



- Focus on social change and social justice. Support students to recognize and critique social inequalities & inequities.

[Use this link to view the infographic online](#)

Learn More from Stearns Center about: [Cultural Sensitivity](#) | [Teaching Multilingual Learners](#)

## How to Create a Culturally Responsive Learning Environment Online?

The Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching encourages participation, inquiry, and discourse by respecting students' varied backgrounds, and is also designed for adult learners. Please see the table below for examples of ways to get started with culturally-responsive teaching in an online learning environment, guided by the four elements of the framework: **Inclusion, Meaning, Attitude, and Confidence**.

Four Elements	How to Do This in Your Online Course?
<p><b>Establish INCLUSION</b></p> <p><i>Students feel safe, respected and connected.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start with the Syllabus! Include <a href="#">Mason Diversity Statement</a> in your syllabus.</li> <li>Share with your students that you support a culturally-responsive classroom; let them know what that means and what is expected of everyone in the course to support inclusion.</li> <li>In class introductions, you are encouraged to share your own cultural background, and have students share their cultural identities and backgrounds. Having students feel comfortable to share their voices promotes inclusion and a culturally-responsive learning environment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Develop ATTITUDE</b></p> <p><i>Students find learning relevant and related to their personal lives and goals.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most mainstream academic textbooks and curricula are tailored to the dominant cultural group. Include content, images and media that reflect diverse identities, especially the identities of your students.</li> <li>Include content acknowledging contributions of researchers, scholars, and scientists in your discipline who are from minoritized or under-represented groups. Contact your <a href="#">Mason Subject Librarian</a> for assistance in finding content.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enhance MEANING</b></p> <p><i>Students learn from challenging learning experiences that with support, lead to deep engagement &amp; meaning in learning.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead students in critical and reflective thinking, having them draw connections between their identities and course content.</li> <li>In the asynchronous online Blackboard classroom, have students share their reflections in <a href="#">journals</a>, <a href="#">wikis</a>, or <a href="#">discussion boards</a>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Engender CONFIDENCE</b></p> <p><i>Students are effectively learning something they value in ways that authentically apply to their lives and aspirations.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give students choices in assignments, allowing them to give their learning individual/personal meaning and relevance.</li> <li>Use assessment methods that allow students to showcase their individual learning. In asynchronous online Blackboard courses, this could include the use of <a href="#">portfolios</a>, <a href="#">journals</a>, and student-led <a href="#">discussions</a>.</li> </ul>

**Learn More Examples of Practices for Making Learning Meaningful and Relevant!**  
[Click to Download Planning Worksheet](#)

### Contact Us!

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