



# Culture and Engagement: Activating Learning for AI/AN Students

## Competency

Educators demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between brain development and cultural engagement in the classroom to foster a more effective learning experience for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian (AI/AN) students.

## Key Method

Educators consider the cultural identities of self and students to implement and reflect upon lessons/strategies that engage students culturally.

## Method Components

### Defining Culture and Culture-based education

“Perhaps most simply, culture may be defined as shared ways of being, knowing, and doing.... Our use of the term culture-based education is consistent with more in-depth treatments referring to the grounding of instruction and student learning



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in the values, norms, knowledge, beliefs, practices, experiences, places, and language that are the foundation of a culture.” (Kana’iaupuni and Kawai’ae’ 2008)

## Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Education (CLRE)

### What is CLRE?

CLRE is a method of teaching that intentionally connects, engages, and implements the cultural beliefs, norms, and values of the student’s community and/or tribe into the classroom aesthetics (set-up), curriculum, lesson plans, and educator pedagogy (style of teaching). This teaching method provides an educational experience that connects the student’s prior knowledge and understandings through community-based culture and language.

### How is CLRE used?

Communities, schools, and tribes are all different, and CLRE provides an intentional way for educational institutions to engage and infuse community, school, and tribal understandings of local, place-based culture, and language. CLRE does not prescribe to education and instructional methods that are “one-size fits all”, but rather, honors the unique culture, history, and values of each tribal community.

### What does each term in Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Education mean?

- **Culture:** a particular group’s beliefs, knowledge, and values that have been developed over time.
- **Linguistic:** relating to a particular group’s use of language and how it relates to that group’s culture.
- **Responsive:** recognizing that culture and language overlap with all aspects of learning in order to connect and reflect the communities needs and wants.
- **Education:** the way of connecting, transferring, and utilizing knowledge.

## Culture & Engaging the Brain

“For culturally and linguistically diverse students, their opportunities to develop habits of mind and cognitive capacities are limited or non-existent because of educational inequity.” (Hammond, 2015) The achievement gap is less about achievement and more about a gap in cultural approaches to education. The brain is the place where intellectual capacity is developed. When the brain perceives that the environment is familiar and safe, the schema is activated and learning is magnified. If the brain perceives a threat or does not recognize familiar content or practice, then the brain moves into survival mode and shuts down. AIAN students are often confronted with a biased curriculum, projected stereotypes, and misrepresentation of their culture and history. A classroom that is not respectful or responsive to Native culture is a threat to brain development and intellectual growth.



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Educators can increase brain development and prepare students for independent learning and thinking in these four areas:

- **Awareness**—Know your own biases, recognize cultural frameworks and values, and know how the brain learns
- **Information Processing**—Hold high expectations and connect content to cultural understandings and authentic, culturally-grounded learning experiences
- **Learning Partnerships**—Supporting students to become independent and self-efficacious
- **A community-focused Learning Environment**—Support student voice and agency and utilize cultural approaches to classroom management and collaboration.

## Culturally Responsive Engagement for AI/AN Students

1. Physical Environment—Ensure that the images, artifacts, posters, colors, and words in the physical space are inclusive of and not harmful to Native communities. (Refer to Micro-credential #3, Building a Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Classroom for AI/AN Students)
2. Wellness & Balance—Consider the traditional perspective of wellness, such as the Medicine Wheel for Native students, that embodies wellness as spiritual, mental, physical, and emotional health (beyond academics)
3. Instructional Resources—In addition to incorporating AI/AN lesson content, literature, and art, teachers should respectfully consider pedagogy, community engagement, and assessment practices that align to Native values.
4. Relationship-building—Regardless of a student's ethnic background, trust and relationships are essential to learning. The process of building relationships varies across cultures, and acknowledging, respecting, and valuing Native student identity is key in building relationships and trust.

## Supporting Rationale and Research

MLB or APA format

Kana'iaupuni, Shawn Malia and Kawai'ae'a, Keiki K. C. "[E Lauhoe Mai Nā Wa'āya: Toward a Hawaiian Indigenous Education Teaching Framework.](#)"

*Hūlili: Multidisciplinary Research on Hawaiian Well-Being* Vol.5 (2008)

Paris, D. (2012). "[Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice.](#)" *Educational Researcher*: 2012 41: 93-97.



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Hammond, Z. L. (2015). [Culturally responsive teaching and the brain](#). Corwin Press.

Trumbull, E. and Rothstein-Fisch, C. (2011). "The Intersection of Culture and Achievement Motivation." *The School Community Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 2 [EJ957126.pdf \(ed.gov\)](#)

## Resources

Culture and Brain Engagement

[Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain](#)

[Climbing Out of the Gap](#)

 [Understanding Trauma: Learning Brain vs Survival Brain](#)

[5 Ways Neuroscience is Impacting the Classroom - Northeastern College of Professional Studies](#)

Cultural Responsiveness for AI/AN Students

[Building Connections with Students from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds Through Perspective-taking | REL Northwest](#)

[Culture Based Education and Its Relationship to Student Outcomes](#)

[Culture-Based Resources | Operation Prevention](#)

[A Native American Approach to Teaching and Learning](#)

[What Every Teacher Needs to Know to Teach Native American Students](#)

[Talking Circles Overview from the First Nations Pedagogy Online Project](#)

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## 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.*



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## Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

### (200-300 words)

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

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

1. What do you know about your students' identities?
2. What do you know about the cultures of your AI/AN students?
3. How do you incorporate your students' cultures in your instruction or classroom environment?
4. What do you hope to learn in this micro-credential that you can use in your classroom to impact student learning, especially AI/AN students?

**Passing:** Response provides reasonable and accurate information that justifies the reason for choosing this micro-credential to address the specific needs of both the teacher and the student. A learning goal that describes what they hope to gain from earning this micro-credential needs to be clearly stated.

## Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credentials please submit the following three artifacts as evidence of your learning.

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

Before beginning the following tasks, it is important that you read [Chapter 1](#) of *Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain* by Zaretta Hammond

**Before you start this part of the micro-credential, please review the requirements for Artifact 3: Journal.**

### Artifact 1: Social Identity Wheel Activity

Complete your own [Social Identity Wheel](#)

- Click on the Social Identity Wheel Activity Guide (pdf) to review the instructions.
  - Complete the [Social Identity Wheel Handout](#) linked in the guiding document
- Upload your completed identity wheel
- Have your students complete the Social Identity Wheel
- Upload your completed identity wheel and one of your student's wheels. Remove the student's name and any other personal identification.



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**Artifact 2: Lesson artifact from teaching a Culture-based Lesson on the Medicine Wheel**

- Visit the site [Culture-Based Resources | Operation Prevention](#)
- Select one of the lessons listed below. This is a culturally-based lesson on the medicine wheel.
  - Elementary—The Lakota Values of Wa on’sila and Wowokiye: The Healing Power of Finding Balance in Traditional Ways
  - Middle/High—The Medicine Wheel
- Upload a lesson artifact of a student Medicine Wheel with the name removed or a picture of the talking circle activity in the lesson.

**Artifact 3: Journal Reflection (250-350 words)**

After completing Artifact 1, respond to the following prompts (use the word count above as a guide) in your journal.

- How did you respond to the questions in the middle of the circle? Was this uncomfortable at all?
- How might your layers of identity support or conflict with students in your classroom, especially AI/AN students?
- How did your students respond to the Social Identity Wheel activity in class? What new things did you learn about your students?
- What new insight does this give you on how your identity intersects with your students?
- Was there a difference in engagement with students during this activity? How did your AI/AN students respond?
- How did this lesson and experience connect to [Chapter 1](#) of *Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain* by Zaretta Hammond.

Part 2. Rubric

	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>Artifact 1: Social Identity Wheel Activity</b>	Artifacts include a completed personal and student Social Identity Wheel.	Artifact includes either a personal or student Social Identity Wheel.	Artifacts are incomplete or missing.
<b>Artifact 2: Lesson artifact from teaching a Culturally-based Lesson on the Medicine Wheel</b>	Complete lesson artifact is loaded.	Lesson artifact is incomplete or not inclusive of lesson materials.	No lesson artifact was provided.



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<b>Artifact 3: Journal &amp; Creative Representation</b>	Reflection includes meaningful responses to all journal prompts and connections to classroom instruction.	Reflection is missing meaningful responses to the sub-questions for one or more journal prompts. Or creative representation lacks depth or insight into class identities.	Artifact is missing most of the responses to journal prompts.
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### Part 3 Reflection

**(200-300 words)**

Use the word count above 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. Now that you have completed this course, how do you understand the interaction of culture, identity, and engagement?
2. How will this knowledge change how you approach student engagement and instruction going forward?
3. What are the most impactful things you have learned about your students' cultural identities and needs as you completed the task for this course? What more do you think you need to learn?

**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.

NEA acknowledges the [National Indian Education Association](#) for its review and endorsement of this micro-credential.



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