CLH	Hello, Gina and hello, listeners! Welcome to Session 6 in Module 6 of your TALE Academy learning experience, Culturally sustaining SEL: Beyond the textbook and into students' lives. In this session, we'll look at ways we can integrate the principles of culturally responsive-sustaining education to design SEL experiences that are embedded in academics and portable across learning environments.
GK	I feel like this is a good moment to note that we have developed a pretty rich tapestry here in the TALE academy. Our topic today has been in development over the course of the last five modules. Social emotional learning, culturally responsive-sustaining education, and family engagement are intertwined systems of supporting the whole learner. In Module 2 of the TALE Academy, we explored New York State's Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education, known by the acronym of CRSE, Framework. We considered the importance of creating a welcoming classroom that affirms the racial, linguistic, and cultural identities of students, developing empowered learners and elevating the students' voices. In Module 5, we explored family and community engagement. We considered the importance of building trust, transparency, and capacity to develop partnerships between family and school when teaching across learning environments – partnerships that affirm the funds of knowledge, identities, and cultural assets each learner bears.
CLH	Thank you for that recap. The other thing we have been doing is grounding some of these concepts in real-life stories. Let's jump into today's session with a scenario we like to call "A Tale of Two Teachers." Mr. Bishop – a high school history teacher in Yonkers, New York - is a committed and experienced teacher. Mr. Bishop diligently uses his 10th-grade advisory period to integrate into his lessons the SEL curriculum adopted by his school. When schools went remote during COVID-19, Mr. Bishop was ready to dive into his remote advisory period, but something was different. Many students were not participating in the scenario-based lessons. Frustrated by this change, Mr. Bishop finally asked if he was wasting his time. One student's response? "No offense, Mr. Bishop. Could we talk about what's happening in the world right now instead?"
GK	Ok, ouch and what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.Here's our second teacher. Ms. Marchetti is in her second year teaching 5th-grade students near Syracuse. While her school does not implement a whole-school SEL program, each teacher submits an evidence-based SEL plan to the principal at the beginning of the year. As

	do most of the teachers in her school, Ms. Marchetti refers to the New York State SEL Benchmarks and the New York State Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework for guidance. She knows from her own experience of living with anxiety and ADHD the value of attending to emotional well-being and wants to build that awareness for her students. Her goal is to integrate SEL into a culturally responsive classroom, finding she is drawn to restorative practices, academic parent-teacher teams, dialogue journals, and student interest inventories. A new teacher navigating a sea of choices, Ms. Marchetti confides to her mentor, "I know what I want to do and what I should do, but I don't know how to sift through all of the material and make it all come together."
CLH	Ambitious. Laudable.

GK	Yeah, they both are. And both of them share a growing understanding that SEL is not a stand-alone program.
	
	 Some of our listeners may have already discovered, like Mr. Bishop did, that
	
	     ● SEL can't be pigeon-holed into one lesson a week.
	
	     ● SEL has to be relevant to all learners.
	
	     ● SEL has to be responsive to the students, families, and communities we serve.

CLH	And you may agree with Ms. Marchetti that
	
	     ● SEL is an essential part of education and human development.
	
	     ● It's challenging to prioritize and attend to many responsibilities to holistically serve our students.
	
	     ● So, we need to integrate best practices into a cohesive whole.
	
	 In this session, we'll look at ways we can integrate the principles of culturally responsive-sustaining education to design SEL experiences that are embedded in academics and portable across learning environments.

GK	We'll be returning to Mr. Bishop and Ms. Marchetti later in the session, but first we're going to get grounded in two things: how we design culturally responsive SEL, and how we embed it into the curriculum for maximum impact.
CLH	So first let's look at culturally response and sustaining considerations for SEL design. Gonna start with a quotation here, so hold onto your hats. In March 2021, activist and scholar Dena Simmons published the article "Why SEL Alone Isn't Enough," unequivocally stating that when SEL is not grounded in culturally responsive-sustaining education, it runs the risk of becoming "white supremacy with a

	hug." Simmons points to the need to embed culturally responsive and sustaining educational principles into SEL design so that learners see themselves and the systems that impact them.
GK	Christina, because I'm white, I'm still sitting with the phrase "white supremacy with a hug." Can you say more about that?
CLH	Yeah, I didn't mean to blow by that one! So Simmons explains in the same article "Through my work with school districts nationally, I have learned that some educators share distinct reasons for implementing SEL depending on who their students are. In mostly Black, indigenous, and people of color school districts, SEL is often about compliance and control…On the other hand, for white, privileged students, SEL is about supporting college and career readiness. These opposing mindsets lead to different practices and outcomes, which ultimately perpetuate a racial hierarchy that positions white students on top."
GK	Got it! That's very helpful. So that stands as a reminder that we have to check our biases around SEL, and cross-check with what our students say they need, and believe them.
CLH	To be culturally sustaining, SEL must move beyond improving students' behaviors or working on decontextualized skills. It must give learners the opportunity to reflect upon and make connections through their personal experiences. Speaking to students' personal experiences requires us to create student-centered learning environments that affirm our students' cultural identities and develop students' abilities to connect across differences.
GK	Here are three strategies you can use to make SEL more culturally responsive and sustaining, adapted from the article ["4 ways to make SEL more culturally relevant."](#)
CLH	Good article title. I just linked it for our listeners in the transcript.
GK	Thank you, and here are the highlights. First, you can elevate student voice. Building on students' funds of knowledge and personal experiences during SEL instruction ensures that SEL is relevant to students' lives. Tailor your SEL instructional approach to start where students are. For example, when teaching about self-direction, start the lesson by asking learners to share what they know about self-motivation, what self-motivation means to them, and what strategies work well for them. Or, when teaching responsible decision-making, use scenarios that resemble low-stakes problems you've witnessed in your students' lives. Use digital polls to gather student opinions, challenges, experiences, interests, and cultural touchstones.
CLH	Second, you can celebrate classroom cultural assets. Building self-awareness requires students to be skilled in identifying their personal, cultural, and linguistic

	assets. Celebrating the diversity in your classroom and the cultural assets of your students is a tool to help your students along their path of integrating their personal and social identities toward greater self-awareness. It also provides an opportunity for students to examine their biases, a key capacity of self-awareness. When celebrating students' cultures, it's important to avoid comparing students to a dominant culture's norms. Help students see that social emotional skills can look different across individuals and contexts, and there are many pathways to developing our individual SEL capacity!
GK	Finally, you can provide "Mirrors and Windows." Check out the link in the transcript. Mirrors, in an analogy from educator Emily Style, are examples that reflect a student's culture; windows are examples that give us a new view into someone else's world. During SEL instruction, offer your students both windows and mirrors. Mirrors are culturally sustaining, providing an opportunity for the social emotional content to feel and look like their life, whereas windows help us empathize with others from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts, improving our social awareness. Dr. Cailin Currie writes in her article "4 Ways to Make SEL More Culturally Relevant," "By showing more than one illustration of what social-emotional skills can look like, teachers can acknowledge and honor that learners inhabit varied experiences, identities, contexts, and cultures."
CLH	The second part of this session focuses on embedding CRSE SEL in instruction. To be effective, culturally responsive SEL must be integrated into the academic curriculum and delivered through explicit instruction with opportunities to practice SEL skills. Furthermore, New York State's CRSE Framework charges us with embedding the topics of equity and inclusion in our SEL instruction. Let's explore project-based learning and civic learning as two strategies for the authentic integration of SEL and academic instruction in ways that engage and empower students.
GK	One way to integrate cultural relevance, social emotional learning, and academics is to lean into project-based learning, or PBL. Project-based learning is a teaching method in which students learn by actively engaging in real-world and personally meaningful projects over an extended period of time. At the heart of a PBL unit is an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge. Collaborative learning projects such as PBL can leverage the power of collectivism, a cultural asset that is central to the lives of many students. Project tie-ins may include inviting students to incorporate personal identity, family identity, and community values. A well-constructed guiding question can help learners practice cognitive flexibility and perspective-taking – skills that can support critical thinking through the evaluation of different opinions, perspectives, and points of view.

CLH	Nice. The success of PBL as a learning experience depends on students' abilities to work and solve problems together. With modeling and practice, PBL provides embedded skill development in the New York State SEL goals related to self-awareness, social awareness, interpersonal skills, and intentional decision-making while providing opportunities to offer students cultural learning tools. I'm out of breath for some reason. PBL became the vehicle for Ms. Marchetti to bridge the gap she was experiencing of having so many CRSE and SEL materials but struggling to connect the dots for herself and her students. PBL allows her students to put their own "spin" on their work, informed by their own identities and perspectives, yet in collaboration with others in the classroom.
GK	Much can be learned when PBL reflects the strengths and perspectives of the learners in the room and gives them the opportunity to learn from their peers.
CLH	For sure. Now what about Mr. Bishop and the challenge of implementing an SEL program that feels like the real world to students?
GK	While Ms. Marchetti's 5th graders are learning together through PBL, Mr. Bishop responds to his high school students by integrating culturally responsive, social emotional learning, and civic learning. In civic learning, as defined by NYSED's Civic Readiness Initiative, "students learn how to identify and address problems in their community or school community. Students also learn how to demonstrate respect for the rights of others, respectfully disagree with other viewpoints, and provide evidence for a counterargument." In this approach to SEL, students develop the skills and relationships needed to participate as engaged community members. After asking his students about the topics that matter the most in their lives right now, Mr. Bishop designed his first civic learning unit to answer the guiding question: What does it mean to police a community? His students will use digital tools to reflect, conduct oral histories of family and community members, analyze crime-mapping data, compare media coverage, and develop a public presentation. The goal of civic learning is to help young people connect with their own voice, agency, and self-efficacy and learn how to work with others to create solutions. Mr. Bishop will be asking his students to use SEL to support their priorities: They will build self-direction and social awareness by analyzing and reflecting on issues they care about in their schools and communities and develop relationship skills and responsible decision-making as they work with others to take action to improve their world.
CLH	Both of the strategies for embedding CRSE SEL in instruction that we've described are highly portable across learning environments. Project based learning takes place over an extended period of time and requires students to engage in "real world"

	research and activities. Leveraging remote learning tools such as video conferencing and vlogging allows students to document and share individual "real-world experiences" with peers.
GK	Yup! Organizing research, documentation, and artifacts related to PBL work can be accomplished via shared drives, documents, and presentations. This organization supports both the processes and products of PBL: students can access shared resources asynchronously to work independently on projects over time, and they can leverage the resources in a culminating presentation to their community, a typical component of PBL, that is accessible across modalities as well!
CLH	In civic learning, the tools of remote learning open up the walls of traditional classrooms to allow students to engage in civic activities that may be inaccessible otherwise. So for example, they can participate in video conference-based public meetings, request video conference interviews with civic leaders, and engage in ongoing community discussions through public blogs, discussion boards, and social media. As with PBL, students can also document and present their work <u>digitally</u>, which allows students to participate in civic engagement in ways that are portable across multiple learning environments, which is what we want.
GK	Which is what we're up to here. Now it's your turn! In what ways does the SEL program in your school or classroom speak to students' personal experiences and cultural identities? Let's explore additional resources and activities to help you consider this question! The goal of the TALE Academy is to help teachers rethink education so that everyone–students, families, educators, school leaders, and communities–all have the opportunity to succeed. You've just added another tool to your toolbox when you use culturally sustaining SEL practices in your classroom. Thanks for listening.
CLH	Thank you.