

M2-S3: A Seat at the Table, Student Centered Approaches to Engage and Empower

GK	<p>Hello Listeners! Welcome to the third session in Module 2 of your TALE Academy learning experience –Student-Centered Approaches to Engage and Empower.</p> <p>What are your opening thoughts on that, Christina?</p>
CLH	<p>You know, Gina, Every September, we teachers come in with full hearts and high expectations for our school year, ready to educate, inspire, and ignite the fire in every student we see. We make lesson plans, decorate bulletin boards, and we tell ourselves that this will be the best year yet. Though our intentions are good and our impetus for teaching stems from a place of service, our best laid plans often center around curriculum and systems rather than the students themselves.</p>
GK	<p>That’s a real mindset shift. In this session, the TALE Academy invites us to <i>reconsider our approach</i> to culturally responsive-sustaining education, or CRSE. We will shift our perspective from teaching-centered to student-centered and to make these portable across learning environments. Our session will focus on being open to the possibilities of high expectations, identity-centered learning, and critical thought processes that empower our students with the tools they need to create the world they get to live in..</p> <p>This session is divided into three concepts, like three chunks of how we can approach this work : WE RISE. WE ARE. And, WE THINK. We’re going to start with WE RISE.</p>
CLH	<p>WE RISE is all about maintaining high expectations for all students, and what we do to help students move up to the next level.</p> <p>That makes me wonder about the ways I am actually setting low expectations.</p>
GK	<p>Me too. Here’s what we know: Students know. When we give a “gimme” quiz or award extra points for meaningless activities, the message we send is clear: “I don’t expect much from you.” It is only when we challenge students to push past their comfort zones that we convey high value, high expectations, and an understanding that they can and are expected to be their best selves every day.</p>
CLH	<p>I guess I’m wondering about the balance between high expectations and being overly-demanding. We know that as teachers we set the tone in our classrooms. Will we be fun and engaging? Will we be stern and strict? Is there a way to be all of these at the same time?</p>
GK	<p>Great questions. According to the idea of the “warm demander,” there is. In her 2014 book, <i>Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain</i>, author and educator Zaretta Hammond defines the warm demander as a teacher who displays personal warmth toward students while demanding that students pursue high standards for learning. Here’s what Hammond says about warm demanders:</p> <p>“The teacher provides concrete guidance and support for meeting the standards, particularly corrective feedback, opportunities for information processing, and culturally relevant meaning making.”</p>

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CLH	<p>So by using high-warmth and high-demand practices, we cultivate a classroom that is not only effectively managed, but that also produces high academic achievement for students of varying identity markers.</p> <p>Pairing the high warmth with high demand is key.</p> <p>It can be tempting to make excuses for our students and to rationalize their failures as a result of low opportunity, oppression, or poverty. However, when we consciously hold lower expectations out of sympathy for a student’s outside experiences, we do them no favors. Though this type of teacher is compassionate, they are not effective.</p>
GK	<p>That’s powerful. Conversely, the warm demander provides challenges, encourages productive struggle, and instills a growth mindset to support students in reaching their highest potential.</p> <p>Once we set that high bar, our work is still not done. How can we as teachers foster the impetus within students to set their own high bar, so the next level is to not do it for them but to have them be able to set their own high bar and take that bar with them to college, into their careers, and beyond?</p>
CLH	<p>Hammond goes on to say that we can leverage the power of peer pressure – the good kind! By providing a space across learning environments to showcase exceptional student work, we provide all students with not only examples of quality work, but also a tangible and proximate goal to work towards. There are platforms online such as Artspace and Artsonia exhibit student images and art. There are blog spaces such as Weebly and Edublogs that host student opinion pieces and writing. Giving students a means to showcase their work gives rise to the self-motivation to do their best work!</p>
GK	<p>I have questions and thoughts but I’m going to hold onto them because I want to save something for the choice board. But I’m going to stop here and say I have questions about the kids who never get their work showcased. I guess that’s part of being overly sympathetic- What do you think about that?</p>
CLH	<p>You know, that’s a really great question. I think that it can be motivating for those students. I think that’s the point of what Hammond is saying here is that those students then are motivated to get there.</p> <p>So then I guess as a teacher it’s sort of our responsibility to keep our eyes on all of the students and make sure the ones who maybe aren’t reaching that spot yet, that we’re encouraging them along or giving them their own individual encouragement.</p>
GK	<p>OK, alright, So that’s one, leveraging the power of positive peer pressure. and, another one is to– this is actually embodied in the New York State Education CRSE framework, which is linked in the session resources, it offers these descriptors for how it looks when students contribute to the creation of a culturally responsive-sustaining education. So it tells us here are the targets we’re aiming for, here are some things you can do and here’s what it looks like when your students are doing ‘this’.</p> <p>The target we are aiming at can include when you see students..</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drawing upon past learning, prior experiences, and the richness of their cultural background to make meaning of new concepts and apply learning on an ongoing basis, - Promoting the group’s success and supporting the participation of everyone in the learning task, - Expressing the need for challenging work and extension activities after achieving a goal, - Striving and taking pride in producing high-quality work, using feedback to revise work, trying to continuously improve, and set new goals, and - Developing or sustaining the mindset that having high expectations means caring about more than just a grade, but also personal growth and character development.
CLH	<p>That is a very strong vision for student-centered engagement. It’s always good to know what success looks like, and to plan accordingly.</p> <p>That really does sound like a teacher's dream but I think a lot of teachers maybe don't give themselves enough credit. I think the hardest one is probably always the last one, which is caring about more than just a grade because you have to fight so hard against other factors there, for a lot of students.</p>
GK	<p>This isn’t in the list but what if students had the mindset that you doing all of these things and working this way shows how you care about them too, like that’s what love looks like, me holding this high standard for you.</p>
CLH	<p>Oh wow. OK, If we want to start off with enough flexibility to allow for true student-centered engagement, it is important to revisit backward design. In TALE Academy Module 1, Session 5, Instructional Planning Across Learning Environments, we explored the three stages of backward design:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify desired results 2. Determine acceptable evidence 3. Plan learning experiences and instruction <p>In backward design, student-centered engagement would be front-loaded as a “desired result” across units of both study <i>and</i> learning environments. Student-centered engagement would always be a desired outcome to remind us that no matter where or what we are teaching, the CRSE objectives shared a minute ago are fundamental to engaging, responsive, and sustaining education.</p>
GK	<p>So that’s a rundown on WE RISE, or holding high standards. Next, let’s look at the concept of “WE ARE.”</p> <p>If the ultimate goal is to foster our students’ sense of self-discipline and high expectations of themselves, we must consider who they are from a whole-identity perspective.</p> <p>Centering our students’ intersecting identities is key to creating an environment that provides the motivation needed to keep them moving towards their goals. We</p>

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	<p>consider their experiences not as a story to justify their outcomes, but rather as a tool to center their learning around what matters most to them.</p>
CLH	<p>That’s a valuable distinction! So let’s apply that.</p> <p>Across learning environments, we can give students access to films that include children who look and act like them. We can provide online peer groups and the space for students to share their identities through getting-to-know-you activities that span in-person, remote, and hybrid learning environments.</p> <p>In addition, students must be able to see themselves – their race, gender, sexual orientation, language, ability, and economic background – in their curriculum, activities, and assessments. Here’s a quote from the NYSED Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework : “Educators should highlight resources written and developed by traditionally marginalized voices that offer diverse perspectives on race, culture, language, gender, sexual identity, ability, religion, nationality, migrant/refugee status, socioeconomic status, housing status, and other identities traditionally silenced or omitted from curriculum.”</p>
GK	<p>We want our students to develop a sense of ownership and affirmation that lets them know that who they are matters. And when they believe they matter, they believe they will achieve.</p>
CLH	<p>So let’s see. We looked at WE RISE and WE ARE. Let’s finish up with the “WE THINK” concept.</p> <p>Once we address and overcome our personal biases to set high expectations for our students regardless of their backgrounds AND cultivate an environment in which our students believe in their own abilities AND center learning around their intersecting identities, then we’ve laid the groundwork for growing young people who are empowered to create a future of equity and justice for themselves and their peers.</p>
GK	<p>That means the first step in any discussion of change is the acknowledgement of power and privilege in our society. This can be uncomfortable, stimulating, or anywhere in between.</p> <p>Allowing our students to participate in these critical thought experiments within a safe and supportive environment is like putting training wheels on a bike – we slowly and steadily develop the tools that will one day allow our young people to ride off on their own to create the future that matters to them.</p>
CLH	<p>In classrooms that are on-campus, remote, or hybrid, our job is to task our students with identifying the issues that power and privilege create, then give them the confidence, knowledge, and skills to dismantle these factors of inequity. Across learning environments, students can bring their own seat to the table by collaboratively writing to legislators or participating in debates with other young people across the country. Our goal as teachers must be to help students create a future not only for themselves, but for all people, regardless of their identity markers.</p> <p>Consciously and continuously centering students and their experiences is an ongoing task that requires our full diligence and commitment. As teachers, we know that the</p>

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	only way to motivate a student is to get to the heart of their identity and to use that knowledge to ignite the proverbial fire.
GK	<p>Across all learning environments, we can help our students to be themselves, see themselves, and to create for themselves. The task is mighty, but as we have seen over the past few years, New York State educators are always up to the challenge.</p> <p>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're on your way to learning how you can take a student-centered approach to engage and empower.</p>
CLH	Thanks for listening. You can now return to Canvas to continue your learning!
GK	Bye everybody.