



# Is Your ELA Classroom Student-Centered?

Building an environment that places students at the center of learning is critical for creating a culturally responsive ELA classroom. Use this checklist as you work to craft a space where students drive the learning.

## Student agency

- Do you collaborate with students to draft class policies, expectations, and procedures?
- Do students have a choice when selecting which texts they read and write about?
- Do students lead conversations and select the themes, passages, and questions that get discussed?

## Empowering student voice

- Do you invite students to share their thinking frequently, both in literary discussions and in less formal contexts?
- When a student asks a question, do you let other students answer before following up as needed?
- Do students read their work aloud? Or share other things they've created?
- Do you actively teach the skills students need to articulate their views in discussion and, just as importantly, teach them the tenets of active, engaged listening?

## Instructional design

- Do you prioritize project-based or other forms of collaborative learning that allow students to explore texts through their own cultural lens and draw on the resources of their communities?
- Do the texts you read over the course of the year represent every student in the classroom?
- Do you build activities that require various skills and assets, such as debate, movement, storytelling, collaboration, creativity, and multiple modes of analysis?
- Do you work to create assignments and projects that encourage students to make the texts they read relevant to their own lives, cultures, and futures?

## Pulse checks

- Do you check in with students regularly to see how they're feeling emotionally and academically? Do you have a basic idea of what's going on in their lives?
- Do you check in with students before each unit to see what they're most excited, nervous, or curious about?
- Do you question students during or after a unit to see what they like, don't like, and would like to see more of in the future?

## Valuing diverse perspectives

- Do you make space for multiple interpretations of literature and encourage students to link these interpretations to their cultures and identities?
- Do you value and encourage personal/emotional connections to literature as much as "academic" interpretations?
- When disagreements arise, do you ask students to practice their listening and empathy skills but also reiterate that, while multiple perspectives are valued, no one is allowed to express views that threaten the safety of others?

Want to learn more about building a student-centered, culturally responsive ELA classroom?

Check out our webinar

["Creating Culturally Responsive Literacy Spaces" ▶](#)