



## NATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT ACCELERATOR

*equalizing access to quality tutoring*

# Cultural Awareness

In this National Student Support Accelerator webinar, we'll be discussing the importance of practicing and maintaining cultural awareness in tutoring.

This video will first focus on introducing the importance of culturally aware tutoring, as well as the benefits of these practices. It will then discuss actionable steps that tutors and programs can take to ensure that their instruction is both culturally relevant and inclusive, as well as how to address cultural awareness during Pre-Service training. Lastly, this video will provide examples of relationship-building questions that tutors can ask students in order to foster more trusting and open communication, as well as a better understanding of students' backgrounds and experiences.

When developing a tutoring program, it is important to consider why learning should be both culturally relevant and inclusive. This is especially the case because learning can vary based on context, as well as the demographics of both the students and tutors. When students can make connections between what they learn in tutoring and their culture, language, or life experiences, they can better access key ideas, develop higher-level understanding, and see the value of learning in their daily lives.

Educational environments that are not culturally inclusive can devalue students' cultures and experiences, implicitly teaching students to see the education system as an adversary rather than as an ally. This undermines students' investment in their own education and, by extension, in their own learning. Not only is this tragic for individual students, but it can yield outcomes that perpetuate socioeconomic inequities and reinforce oppressive systems. In order to create a culturally relevant and inclusive tutoring program, considering the following focus areas can ensure that tutors understand how their instructional practices can have a significant impact on their students' experiences, both during and outside of tutoring. Firstly, tutors should focus on getting to know each student on a personal level, which includes pronouncing students' names correctly and encouraging students to share about their cultures, neighborhoods and other important influences in their lives. It is also important to foster a supportive environment by weaving in consistent, authentic messages of affirmation for each student, including diverse ethnicities, languages, abilities, identities, and socioeconomic experiences in sessions, and eliminating materials that reinforce stereotypes or insulting depictions of diverse communities. In order to cultivate your own understanding of cultural relevance and normalize being open about our backgrounds, share about your personal culture, experiences, and influences. Additionally, reflect on your own perspectives on family, community, and culture, and interrogate the assumptions and biases that you may have--while consciously correcting yourself on these behaviors. Lastly, adapt your curriculum. Keep your expectations high, and look for ways to make sessions more rigorous. Having a growth mindset can help you to

normalize both you and your students' mistakes so that you can learn from them. Look also for opportunities to incorporate relevant cultural references into models, practice tasks, and assessments.

In your pre-service training process, diversity, equity, and inclusion should be promoted by creating a culture that allows tutors to organically incorporate these topics when relevant and by providing time and space to question systems of oppression and power structures that may threaten these topics' advancement. Incorporate specific sessions dedicated to the following: - Setting a foundation for exploring identity:

- Building self-awareness through uncovering implicit bias
- Exploring different forms of privilege
- Building an understanding of the local context
- Generating awareness around the history of systemic racism, paying special attention to local context

All of these sessions should incorporate opportunities for tutors to build awareness related to their attitudes towards education and their past experiences with education. Engaging in this kind of exploration and discussion will help tutors uncover the biases they potentially hold about education. For example, do they value silence over discussion? Lectures over group work? Note-taking over project-based work? If tutors don't get the opportunity to unpack why they favor certain behaviors or approaches over others, their actions while working with students may unintentionally work against student learning and reify the dominant culture.

Once working with students themselves, relationship-building activities that you do with your students can allow you to gain a better awareness of your students' backgrounds and experiences, and to develop trust and openness in your relationship. To do this, try to incorporate "getting to know you" activities with questions like the following:

- What do you do for fun outside of school?
- What languages do you speak?
- What are some hobbies that are you interested in?
- Who do you look up to and ask for advice?
- What kind of responsibilities do you have to your family?
- Where is your family from?
- What kinds of activities do you and your family do together?
- What are your favorite musical artists and genres?

Ultimately, cultural awareness training and practices are a crucial foundation in tutor-student relationships. Tutors that are cognizant of their students' backgrounds as well as their own biases are far better prepared to provide the best instruction possible to their students.

Thank you for watching this National Student Support Accelerator Video. To find the complete collection of Accelerator tutoring tools, including those utilized in this video, please visit the link here. Thank you!

#### **Link to Tools:**

Tool Appendix: <https://studentsupportaccelerator.com/tutoring/tool-appendix>

**Links to Slide-Specific Tools:**

- Slides 3 & 4  
Relationship Building: <https://studentsupportaccelerator.com/tutoring/instruction/relationship-building#tools>
- Slide 5  
Training Support: <https://studentsupportaccelerator.com/tutoring/tutors/training-support#tools>
- Slide 6  
Relationship Building: <https://studentsupportaccelerator.com/tutoring/instruction/relationship-building#tools>