



**EPIC**

**CURRICULA**

# The Culture Project



GRADE: 9-12

COMMON-CORE

Achieves Multiple Goals

ACADEMIC

CIVIC

ARTISTIC

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

Crafted for  
THE NEW REALITY

HYBRID

REMOTE

SYNC + ASYNC

ANTI-RACIST

STUDENT CENTERED

ENGAGES PARENTS IN  
THE LEARNING

4 Steps

WATCH

ASK

RESEARCH

CREATE

## What Does Culture Mean to Me?

The Culture Project asks students to investigate their own cultures, through research and oral histories conducted with members of their own families and communities.



# Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education

“The DOE uses an educational strategy that embraces students’ identities. We call it culturally responsive-sustaining education (CR-SE). It is a way of seeing diversity as a source of knowledge.

With CR-SE, students use their own identity to get education. They learn using aspects of their race, social class, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, or ability. Studies show that students learning with CR-SE are more active in class. They graduate more often, with better grades. Their self-esteem improves, and they become better citizens.”

**New York City Department of Education**





**STEP I:**

**WATCH**



STEP 1:

WATCH

## DEFAULT

What difference does it make to students if their school's curriculum reflects the history, experiences and knowledge of their communities and families? DEFAULT is a funny and moving original film created by the youth researchers/writers/artists of Epic NEXT that examines the impact that Ethnic Studies courses and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy have on students, teachers, administrators, and families.

## Skills

ACADEMIC

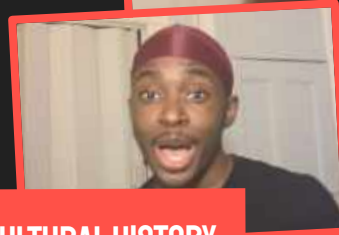
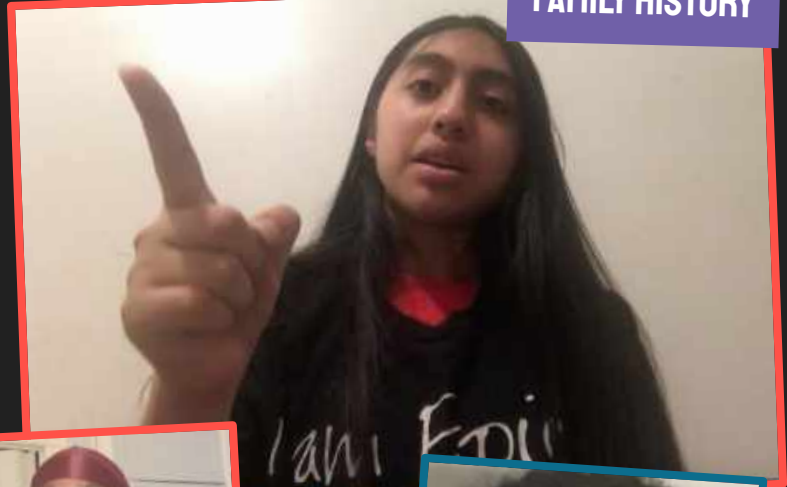
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

CIVIC

CULTURAL HISTORY

IDENTITY

FAMILY HISTORY





**STEP 2:**

**ASK**



**STEP 2:**

**ASK**

## The Essential Question

An essential question is the foundation. It guides research and encourages deep thinking and learning.

The essential question is like a “clothesline” on which the students hang characters, stories, historical accounts, emotions and ideas. The stronger the clothesline, the more it can support.

The Essential Question is...

**OPEN-ENDED**

**NON-JUDGMENTAL**

**THOUGHT-PROVOKING**

**RELEVANT**

**RESONANT**



**STEP 3:**

**RESEARCH**



STEP 3:

RESEARCH

## The Interviews

Students conduct much of their cultural research through recorded interviews with members of their family and their community. Excerpts from the recordings can be transcribed and built into academic and artistic presentations.

## Skills

ACADEMIC

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

CIVIC

CULTURAL HISTORY

IDENTITY



FAMILY HISTORY





**STEP 4:**

**CREATE**



**STEP 4:**

**CREATE**

## Write

Students synthesize their research to create a four minute culture presentation that includes:

- A brief mini-lesson on an aspect of their culture that they find important.
- A brief artistic response (scene, monologue, poem, or song) connected to this aspect of their cultural heritage.

## Skills

**ARTISTIC**

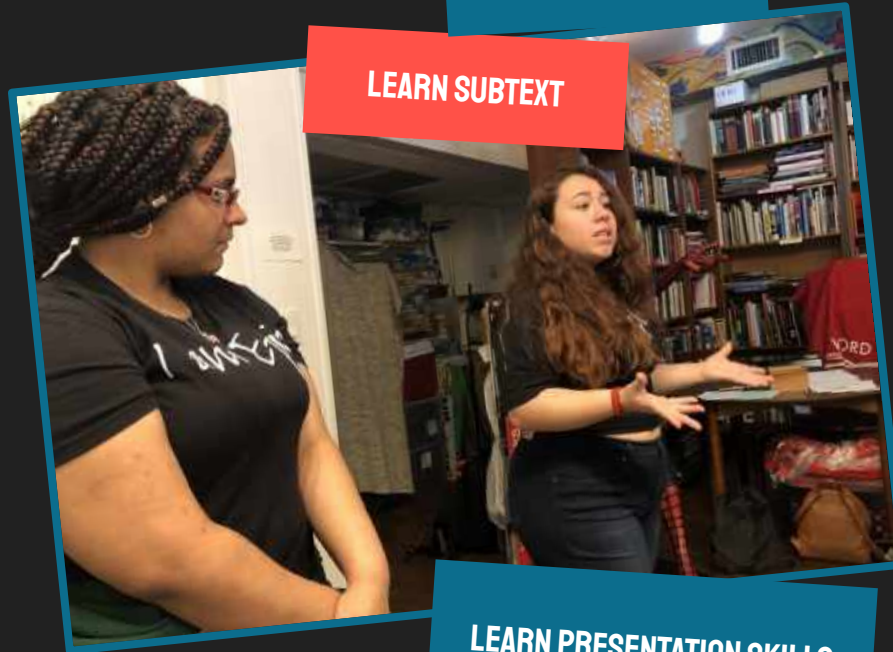
**SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL**

**ACADEMIC**

**LEARN DIALOGUE**

**LEARN RHETORIC**

**LEARN SUBTEXT**



**LEARN PRESENTATION SKILLS**



STEP 4:

CREATE

## Perform

Students share their cultural presentations with their teachers and classmates.

These presentations can be done in person, when possible, but if not, can also be done through videoconferencing, complete with virtual Q&A sessions.

## Skills

ARTISTIC

LIVE ( WHEN WE CAN! )

STREAMING ONLINE  
( ALWAYS! )





IT WORKS



## ACADEMICS

### Common Core, Language Art, Grade 11-12

**Reading Informational Text:** RI.11-12.1, RI.11-12.2, RI.11-12.3, RI.11-12.4, RI.11-12.5, RI.11-12.6, RI.11-12.7, RI.11-12.8, RI.11-12.9, RI.11-12.10

**Writing:** W.11-12.1, W.11-12.3, W.11-12.4, W.11-12.5, W.11-12.7

**Speaking & Listening:** SL.11-12.1, SL.11-12.4, SL.11-12.5, SL.11-12.6

CWIKR, SEL, "Close reading of the text"

Effective tool for *Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CRSE)*

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

## RESULTS FROM ONE OF OUR SCHOOLS

29%

**increase** in attendance during and following an Epic residency.

40%

**improved graduation** rates over ten years.

98%

project **completion** rate.

31%

**increase** in State Regents Exam passing rates ( English, US History, Global History ).



“Thrilled and honored to welcome the brilliant artists of Epic Theatre Ensemble- all NYC Public School students- to perform for staff today. Living proof that art can change our communities and the world.”

— **Chancellor Richard A. Carranza, New York City Public Schools**

“This is dope! I love it!”

— **High School  
Principal**



“Our students learned so many important skills in this one project. I am so proud of the work we’ve done together as a class during such a stressful time.”

— **ELA teacher**

“I hated being online. It was a lot of emotions, but good thing I was able to have these conversations with my family and Epic. Thank God for Epic. It has really been my happy place.”

— **Student**



“EPIC helped to build a more comprehensive narrative around the issue of school segregation and integration. It built public awareness in a way that I never could. It helped us center the public policy work in youth voices across the city.”

- **Matt Gonzales, Founder and Director of the Integration and Innovation Initiative (i3) at NYU Metro Center**



“I observed young people start at a very untutored place on the growth continuum as they sped down the line to accomplished researchers and actors, and I was stunned. The growth was extreme, and the sense of accomplishment by all concerned was exceptional.”



- **Amy Stuart Wells, Director of The Public Good at Teachers College, Columbia University**



**HYBRID**

**REMOTE**

**SYNC + ASYNC**

## Crafted for The New Reality

Three levels, accommodating any classroom situation.

### **8 SESSIONS**

Asynch, self-contained and pre-recorded. teachers lead in their own time.

### **12 SESSIONS**

Building on the 8 session track, EPIC leads more in-depth sessions in real time. In-person, hybrid or fully remote.

### **18 SESSIONS**

Building on the 8 and 12 session tracks, EPIC leads the most in-depth sessions in real time. In-person, hybrid or fully remote.



# Who is EPIC?

For 20 years, Epic has made theatre that empowers. Epic's artists are equal parts cyphers and mentors: they create and amaze; they teach and inspire; they translate the struggles of history into lessons for our future; they fight their way into the center of the civic dialogue. We value youth voice deeply, because we share a youthful passion for justice; we believe that theatre that embraces this passion transforms audiences from passive bystanders into active participants forging a more inclusive and collaborative vision of America.

Epic's artists challenge the institutional status quo by making theatre radically accessible, engaging thousands of students and first-time audiences in the transformative process of telling their own stories and learning to deeply empathize with those of others. At Epic, this high level of inclusiveness fosters artistic rigor and quality in all of our programs, mirroring the extraordinary professional work we present on our professional stages.



# Thanks!

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