

# Culturally Affirming Learning Environment (CALE) Lesson Planning Guide

*Based on the Village of Wisdom CALE Review Tool created by Black Parent Researchers*

## Overview

This guide helps create lesson plans that affirm Black Genius through culturally responsive teaching practices. Every lesson should incorporate elements from the Black Genius framework while promoting holistic student development.

## Core Black Genius Elements

### 1. CAN-DO ATTITUDE

**Goal:** Consistently motivate learners to engage in and overcome challenging work

#### Lesson Planning Checklist:

- ☐ Include affirming resources that motivate learners through challenges and setbacks
- ☐ Provide healthy challenges that encourage growth beyond current knowledge
- ☐ Create opportunities for learners to lead or guide the learning environment

#### Implementation Strategies:

- Start with affirmations of student capabilities
- Design scaffolded challenges with multiple entry points
- Include student choice in learning pathways
- Celebrate progress and persistence over perfection
- Use culturally relevant examples of overcoming adversity

### 2. INTEREST AWARENESS

**Goal:** Turn learners' interests into collaborative exploratory skill-building opportunities

#### Lesson Planning Checklist:

- ☐ Guide activities by learners' interests or values
- ☐ Enable learners to explore their interests
- ☐ Provide opportunities to gain knowledge/build skills related to their interests

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Begin units with interest surveys or community circles
- Connect academic content to student passions (music, sports, social media, etc.)
- Allow choice in project topics within learning objectives
- Use culturally relevant examples and case studies
- Invite student experts to share knowledge

**3. MULTICULTURAL NAVIGATION**

**Goal:** Incorporate instructional practices and cultural funds of knowledge from the global majority

**Lesson Planning Checklist:**

- ☐ Invite Black learners to explore culture beyond racial identity
- ☐ Encourage confident navigation of unfamiliar cultures/environments
- ☐ Build connections between Black learners and other cultures

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Include diverse global perspectives in content
- Highlight connections across cultures (shared struggles, innovations, art forms)
- Use teaching methods from various cultural traditions
- Explore diaspora connections and cultural exchanges
- Discuss code-switching as a valuable skill

**4. RACIAL PRIDE**

**Goal:** Affirm racial/cultural experiences by highlighting contributions across groups

**Lesson Planning Checklist:**

- ☐ Affirm needs and cultural experiences of Black learners
- ☐ Offer positive racial or cultural experiences for Black learners
- ☐ Explore diverse experiences across the Black/African diaspora

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Center Black voices and contributions in curriculum
- Use diverse Black authors, scientists, artists, and leaders as examples
- Discuss the richness of African diaspora cultures
- Address both challenges and triumphs in Black history
- Validate cultural communication styles and ways of knowing

**5. SELECTIVE TRUST**

**Goal:** Build trust and belonging through healthy relationship building

**Lesson Planning Checklist:**

- ☐ Support learners in building relationships with adults and peers
- ☐ Encourage facilitators to be relatable to learner culture/interests
- ☐ Create practices that support positive Black learner development

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Begin with community-building activities
- Share appropriate personal connections to content
- Use collaborative learning structures
- Create safe spaces for authentic expression
- Demonstrate cultural competence and genuine care

## **6. SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**Goal:** Enable learners to envision justice and connect learning to social change

**Lesson Planning Checklist:**

- ☐ Give learners space to envision and dream about a just world
- ☐ Connect learning to pursuit of social justice in schools/community
- ☐ Offer opportunities for self-expression and environmental decision-making

**Implementation Strategies:**

- Include critical thinking about current events and social issues
- Connect academic content to real-world justice issues
- Provide platforms for student voice and advocacy
- Explore how knowledge can be used for community benefit
- Encourage solution-oriented thinking

## **Additional CALE Elements**

### **HOLISTIC WELL-BEING**

- Design activities that support emotional, physical, and spiritual health
- Include mindfulness, movement, and creative expression
- Address stress and trauma with culturally appropriate supports

### **CLARITY**

- Use clear, accessible language and instructions

- Provide multiple ways to understand and demonstrate learning
- Make learning objectives transparent and meaningful

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

- Remove barriers related to socioeconomic status
- Include accommodations for diverse learning needs
- Ensure materials and activities are inclusive

## **CREDIBILITY**

- Use sources and examples from trusted voices in the Black community
- Include contemporary and historical Black scholars and practitioners
- Validate community knowledge and wisdom

## **OUTCOMES**

- Design assessments that honor diverse forms of intelligence
- Measure growth in culturally affirming ways
- Protect and celebrate Black Genius in evaluation

# **Lesson Plan Template**

## **Opening Circle (5-10 minutes)**

- Community building or affirmation activity
- Connect to student interests and experiences
- Set intentions for learning

## **Cultural Connection (10-15 minutes)**

- Relate content to Black excellence, history, or culture
- Include global majority perspectives
- Make personal and community connections

## **Core Learning (20-30 minutes)**

- Present content through culturally responsive methods
- Include collaborative and discussion-based learning
- Provide multiple entry points and challenges

## **Application & Expression (15-20 minutes)**

- Students apply learning to real-world contexts

- Include creative expression opportunities
- Connect to social justice or community improvement

### **Reflection & Planning (5-10 minutes)**

- Students reflect on learning and growth
- Plan next steps or extensions
- Celebrate progress and build confidence

## **Assessment Approaches**

- Portfolio-based assessment showing growth over time
- Community-based projects with real impact
- Peer evaluation and collaborative assessment
- Self-reflection on personal and academic development
- Performance-based demonstrations of learning

## **Key Questions for Lesson Reflection**

1. How does this lesson affirm Black Genius and cultural identity?
2. What opportunities exist for student leadership and voice?
3. How are diverse learning styles and interests supported?
4. What connections to social justice and community are made?
5. How does this lesson build trust and belonging?
6. What multicultural perspectives are included?
7. How are students challenged while being supported?

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*Remember: Every lesson should make Black students feel seen, valued, challenged, and empowered. The goal is not just academic achievement, but the full development of confident, culturally-grounded learners who can navigate and transform the world.*