



**MTI 690: Culturize Your Classroom:  
Leadership, Culture, and Student Impact**

**DISTANCE COURSE FOR DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY**

<b>MTI Contact Information:</b>	
<b>MTI Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:info@midwestteachersinstitute.org">info@midwestteachersinstitute.org</a>
<b>Instructor</b>	Garth Larson
<b>Instructor Background:</b>	<p>Garth Larson (Ed. D, M. Ed) is the Co-Founder and CEO of FIRST Educational Resources. He began his career as a high school English teacher and Associate Principal, later serving as an elementary principal and the Director of Learning for the Winneconne Community School District in Northeast Wisconsin. In 2015, he co-founded FIRST Educational Resources, aiming to enhance student achievement across the United States. Since then, over 2500 school districts worldwide have partnered with his company. Garth consults globally, providing customized professional development on topics such as Professional Learning Communities, Learning-Centered Grading Practices, Leadership, and School Improvement. He is the co-author of six books, including <i>Collaborative Systems of Support</i>, <i>PLC 2.0</i>, <i>Grading for Impact</i>, <i>The STAGR Process Roadmap</i>, <i>Extinguishing the Fires Within Assessment and Grading Reform</i>, and <i>Simplifying School Improvement: A Framework for Impact in Today's Schools</i>.</p>
<b>MTI Grading:</b>	<a href="mailto:grades@midwestteachersinstitute.org">grades@midwestteachersinstitute.org</a>

<b>Course Information</b>	
<b>Course Format (distance learning, online, webinar, experiential onsite)</b>	<p><b>Distance Course</b> Once you have registered for this course, you can immediately begin working. This is the syllabus for the course, and all materials needed can be found at the bottom of this syllabus under "Course Materials" or via</p>

<b>courses):</b>	<p>your own research on the topic. Approximately 45 hours of instructional time is devoted to this course.</p> <p>Please see rubrics below for assessment and grading criteria. MTI Instructor will evaluate, grade, and process your final work within 7-10 business days of receiving it. Grades will be posted within 14 days and a grade report via email will be sent to the student.</p> <p>ALL questions, customer service, grades and transcript questions are to be directed to MTI, <b>NOT Dominican University</b>, for this course.</p> <p>All distance courses allow you to work at your own pace as your schedule permits. All coursework is due within one year of the registration date. If you need more time due to unforeseen circumstances, please contact MTI at the address provided above to request an extension.</p>
<b>Formatting Requirements</b>	<p>All assignments should be included in the same document. Please do not submit separate documents for each portion of the course. The first page of your submission should include the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Name</li> <li>● Home address</li> <li>● Email address</li> <li>● School district name, address</li> <li>● Date of submission</li> </ul> <p>All following assignments must be submitted in the same order as they appear on the syllabus. Please name your document with your course number and full name (ex. 500JohnSmith). You may submit a Microsoft Word document or a Google document (if using Google, please make sure to allow the grader to comment on the assignments). Any missing assignment will be treated as a zero.</p> <p>Once you have completed all of your assignments, please submit them to <a href="mailto:grades@midwestteachersinstitute.org">grades@midwestteachersinstitute.org</a> to be graded by your instructor.</p>
<b>Prerequisites and Credit Limits</b>	<p>All MTI courses are designed for educators who have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and professional educator license. Prior to beginning the course, check with your district office to ensure that credit will be accepted for salary increase and professional development. All courses are for 3 graduate semester hours (credits).</p>
<b>Course Materials</b>	<p>Resources provided for this course can be found towards the bottom of this document in the section labeled <b>Course Materials</b>.</p>
<p><b>Learning Outcomes/Competencies:</b> Following the completion of this course, the student should be able to:</p>	

1. Analyze the components of positive school culture and evaluate how educator beliefs, mindset, and actions influence student outcomes and learning environments. InTASC 2,3,9
2. Apply principles from the Culturize framework to design strategies that promote positive relationships, high expectations, and inclusive classroom environments. InTASC 1,3,8
3. Engage in ongoing, structured reflection to assess their current practices and identify areas for growth related to school culture and student engagement. InTASC 9,10
4. Develop a comprehensive plan to implement culture-building strategies within their classroom or school, including measurable outcomes and practical steps for execution. InTASC 3,7,10
5. Critically evaluate the effectiveness of the Culturize framework and related practices in improving student experiences and school culture, using evidence from course content and professional practice. InTASC 6,9,10

**Course Description:** This course is designed to support educators in developing and sustaining a positive, student-centered school culture through participation in the Culturize Institute. Grounded in the core principles of the Culturize framework, participants will engage with conference sessions, keynote presentations, and recorded materials to examine the role of educator mindset, leadership, and intentional practices in shaping school culture.

Through structured reflection, application-based assignments, and critical analysis, participants will connect conference learning to their own professional contexts. Emphasis will be placed on translating key concepts into actionable strategies that promote student success, strengthen relationships, and foster high expectations.

**Learning Strategies:** Professional literature analysis, personal reflection, project-based learning.

**Experiential Learning Opportunities:** Students will be reflecting on the assessments and tools that they develop/learn about in class and measuring/estimating the intended impact on student learning in the classroom. Students will learn by doing while completing a variety of activities throughout the course.

<b>Assessments</b>		<b>Approximate contact hours for each assessment</b>
Reflection questions	90 points	12 hours
Application	100 points	8 hours
Seat time, video review time, and study/reflection time		15 hours
Final evaluation essay	100 points	10 hours
<b>Total points possible</b>	<b>290 points</b>	<b>45 hours</b>

**Grading Scale: A (90-100%); B (80-89%)**

***\*Anything below a B will not receive graduate credit and result in a failing grade of F.***

If you do not receive a B or higher, your work will be returned to you for further correction and completion.

You will be allowed one (1) re-submit to your instructor to achieve a grade of B or higher. If after your re-submit, you still do not achieve a B or higher you will receive a failing grade of F and therefore forfeit the 3 graduate credits.

### Reflection Question Rubric- 10 questions @ 9 points each

Category	Superior (3 pts)	Sufficient (2 pts)	Minimal (1 pt)
<b>Supporting Evidence in Practice</b> ___/3	Response shows strong evidence of ideas and insights from this course and how they are applied to the classroom.	Response shows evidence of ideas and insights from this course and how they are applied to the classroom.	Response shows some evidence of ideas and insights from this course and how they are applied to the classroom.
<b>Accuracy</b> ___/3	All supporting facts and statistics are accurately represented.	Almost all supporting facts and statistics are accurately represented.	Some of the supporting facts and statistics are accurately represented.
<b>Grammar and Spelling</b> ___/3	Response includes 0-1 mistakes in grammar or spelling.	Response includes a few grammar and spelling mistakes.	Response includes several grammar and spelling mistakes.

### Application Rubric- 1 application @ 100 points

Category	Superior (40-36 pts)	Sufficient (35-31 pts)	Minimal (30-26 pts)	Below Standard (25 to 0)
<b>Supporting Evidence in Practice</b> ___/40	Response shows strong evidence of ideas and insights from this course and how they are applied to the classroom.	Response shows evidence of ideas and insights from this course and how they are applied to the classroom.	Response shows some evidence of ideas and insights from this course and how they are applied to the classroom.	Response shows little evidence of ideas and insights from this course and there is little evidence they are applied to the classroom.
<b>Accuracy</b> ___/40	All supporting facts and statistics are accurately represented.	Almost all supporting facts and statistics are accurately represented.	Some of the supporting facts and statistics are accurately represented.	Many of the supporting facts and statistics are inaccurately represented.
<b>Grammar and Spelling</b> ___/20	Response includes 0-1 mistakes in grammar or spelling.	Response includes a few grammar and spelling mistakes.	Response includes several grammar and spelling mistakes.	Response includes numerous grammar and spelling mistakes.

### Evaluation Rubric- 100 points

Category	Superior (20-18 pts)	Sufficient (17-16 pts)	Minimal (15-14 pts)	Below Standard (13 to 0)
<b>Supporting Evidence in Practice</b> ___/20	Response shows strong evidence of ideas and insights from this course and	Response shows evidence of ideas and insights from this course and how they	Response shows some evidence of ideas and insights from this course and how they	Response shows little evidence of ideas and insights from this course and there is little evidence they are

	how they are applied to the classroom.	are applied to the classroom.	are applied to the classroom.	applied to the classroom.
<b>Accuracy</b> ___/20	All supporting facts and statistics are accurately represented.	Almost all supporting facts and statistics are accurately represented.	Some of the supporting facts and statistics are accurately represented.	Many of the supporting facts and statistics are inaccurately represented.
<b>Grammar and Spelling</b> ___/20	Response includes 0-1 mistakes in grammar or spelling.	Response includes a few grammar and spelling mistakes.	Response includes several grammar and spelling mistakes.	Response includes numerous grammar and spelling mistakes.
<b>Sequencing</b> ___/20	Response is written in a clear, concise, and well organized manner. Thoughts are presented in a coherent and logical manner.	Response is mostly clear, concise, and well organized. Thoughts are presented in a coherent and logical manner.	Response is somewhat unclear and/or disorganized. Some thoughts are presented in a coherent and logical manner.	Response is mostly unclear and/or disorganized. Many thoughts are presented in an incoherent and illogical manner.
<b>Reflection</b> ___/20	Response demonstrates an in-depth reflection on, and personalization of, the theories, concepts, and /or strategies presented in this course.	Response demonstrates some reflection on, and personalization of, the theories, concepts, and /or strategies presented in this course.	Response demonstrates a minimal reflection on, and personalization of, the theories, concepts, and /or strategies presented in this course.	Response demonstrates no reflection on, and personalization of, the theories, concepts, and /or strategies presented in this course.

## Course Assignments

### Reflection Questions (90 points)

Each question is designed to get you thinking about the concepts explored in the institute. Use the questions to help you reflect on what you learned, apply the concepts, and evaluate how the information can be related to your current work. Each response is expected to be one paragraph or more.

1. What were the most impactful ideas or strategies presented during the institute, and why did they resonate with you in your current educational context?
2. How did the presenters challenge or reinforce your existing beliefs about school culture, student relationships, or educator responsibility?
3. Describe a specific moment, story, or concept from the institute that caused you to reflect on your own practice. What did it reveal?
4. In what ways do your current classroom or school practices align with the principles emphasized during the institute? Where are the gaps?
5. How can the concept of being a “champion for students” be applied in your daily interactions with students, particularly those who are underserved or disengaged?
6. What does “expecting excellence” look like in your specific role, and how might you need to adjust your practices to better reflect this principle?
7. How can you “carry the banner” for positive culture within your school or district, even if you are not in a formal leadership position?

8. Reflect on the idea of being a “merchant of hope.” How does this concept influence your approach to student motivation, discipline, and support?
9. What challenges or barriers might you face when implementing the strategies or mindset shifts presented during the institute, and how can you address them?
10. How has your overall perspective on school culture and your role within it evolved as a result of participating in this institute? What are your next steps?

### **Application (45 points) Culture Shift Implementation Plan**

This assignment requires participants to design a comprehensive, actionable plan to improve or strengthen school or classroom culture using concepts and strategies learned through the Culturize Institute.

Participants will identify a relevant need within their educational setting and develop a structured plan that applies key principles from the institute to create meaningful, measurable change. The focus of this assignment is on translating learning into practice.

The purpose of this assignment is to:

- Bridge theory and practice
- Encourage intentional, reflective decision-making
- Support real-world application of culture-building strategies
- Develop leadership capacity within participants’ current roles

#### **Step 1: Identify a Problem of Practice**

Describe a specific challenge related to school or classroom culture in your current setting.

Examples may include:

- Low student engagement or motivation
- Negative classroom climate
- Lack of student ownership or accountability
- Weak staff or student relationships
- Inconsistent expectations

Requirements:

- Clearly define the issue
- Provide context (grade level, subject, school setting, etc.)
- Explain why this problem is significant

#### **Step 2: Analyze Current Practices**

Examine how this issue is currently being addressed (if at all).

Requirements:

- Describe existing strategies or approaches
- Identify strengths and limitations
- Reflect on your own role in the current situation

#### **Step 3: Connect to Institute Learning**

Identify 2–3 key concepts, strategies, or principles from the institute that relate to your problem.

Requirements:

- Clearly explain each selected concept
- Reference specific sessions, speakers, or ideas
- Explain why these are relevant to your situation

#### **Step 4: Develop Your Action Plan**

Design a detailed, step-by-step plan to address your identified problem.

Your plan must include:

- Goal Statement: What specific outcome are you trying to achieve?
- Action Steps: What will you do? (Be specific and sequential)
- Timeline: When will each step occur?
- Resources Needed: Materials, support, or collaboration required
- Stakeholders: Who is involved? (students, staff, families, administration)

#### **Step 5: Implementation Strategy**

Explain how you will realistically put this plan into action.

Requirements:

- Describe how you will introduce and sustain the change
- Address potential resistance or challenges
- Explain how you will build buy-in from others

#### **Step 6: Measurement and Evaluation**

Explain how you will determine whether your plan is successful.

Requirements:

- Identify specific indicators of success (qualitative and/or quantitative)
- Describe how data will be collected
- Explain how you will adjust if the plan is not effective

#### **Step 7: Reflection on Impact**

Conclude with a reflection on how this plan could impact:

- Student experience and outcomes
- Classroom or school culture
- Your own growth as an educator

#### **Submission Requirements**

- Length: 3-5 pages (double-spaced)
- Clear headings for each section
- Integration of institute learning throughout

### **Final Evaluation Assignment (100 points)**

Critically evaluate the effectiveness of the Culturize Institute framework and its application to school or classroom culture. Drawing on insights from keynote presentations, breakout sessions, recorded videos, and personal professional experience, analyze the strengths, limitations, and real-world applicability of the concepts presented during the institute.

Specifically, how effective do you think the Culturize framework is in improving school or classroom culture, and how can its principles be realistically implemented to improve student outcomes in your educational setting? Which concepts were the most significant? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the framework? How will this influence your thinking or practice as an educator? **3-5 pages, APA format.**

## **Course Resources**

This course is built around immersive, practice-based professional learning centered on participation in the Culturize Institute. Primary instructional content will come directly from the institute experience, including keynote presentations, breakout sessions, and supporting materials provided by conference presenters.

All such materials will be provided by FIRST Educational Resources, and any issues with access to those resources should be directed towards them.

### **End of Course Survey**

Now that you are finished with this class, please take the time to help us improve our product. In order to make sure that we are providing the best possible service, please take our [survey](#). We appreciate your help and your commitment to the profession.

**The ten INTASC standards are listed below. Specific standards for knowledge, dispositions, and performances accompany each principle, but space does not permit listing them below. For a complete copy of the INTASC standards, contact Jean Miller, Director of INTASC, Suite 700, One Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington DC 20001-1431.**

#### **The InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards (April 2011)**

##### **The Learner and Learning**

###### Standard #1: Learner Development

The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

###### Standard #2: Learning Differences

The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and

communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.

### Standard #3: Learning Environments

The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

## **Content Knowledge**

### Standard #4: Content Knowledge

The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

### Standard #5: Application of Content

The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

## **Instructional Practice**

### Standard #6: Assessment

The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher's and learner's decision making.

### Standard #7: Planning for Instruction

The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.

### Standard #8: Instructional Strategies

The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

## **Professional Responsibility**

### Standard #9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice

The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

### Standard #10: Leadership and Collaboration

The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.