

Pennsylvania Department of Education

Culturally Relevant-Sustaining Education Competencies

COMPETENCY 1: Reflect on One's Cultural Lens

- A. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators reflect on their own life experiences and membership to various identity groups (i.e., race, skin color, ethnicity, gender identity, age, nationality, language, class, economic status, ability, sexual orientation, religion). They ask themselves how these aspects of identity influence their beliefs about others in the practice of critical self-awareness.
- B. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators understand that they, like everyone, can unwittingly adopt societal biases that can shape the nature of their interactions with groups and individuals such as students, families, and colleagues. Therefore, they confidently and courageously engage in critical self-reflective practices about how they communicate (spoken, unspoken, written) with students, families, and colleagues. They examine their own patterns of communication to recognize and uncover judgments, stereotypes, conscious/unconscious biases, and prejudices.
- C. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators engage in critical and difficult conversations with others to deepen their awareness of their own conscious/unconscious biases, stereotypes, and prejudices.
- D. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators reflect on how they meet the needs of each learner. They do this by respecting, acknowledging, and affirming learners' diverse identities, histories, cultures, and value systems. This may include demonstrating humility, patience, and a willingness to learn, listen, and expand their thinking.

COMPETENCY 2: Identify, Deepen Understanding of, and Take Steps to Address Bias in the System

- A. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators know and acknowledge that biases exist in the system.
- B. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators understand the importance of social markers, such as race, skin color, ethnicity, gender identity, age, nationality, language, class, economic status, ability, sexual orientation, and religion. They understand how these markers impact BIPOC learners', educators', educational leaders', and families' ability to access a wide range of opportunities and work to identify existing opportunities and create new ones.
- C. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators intentionally identify literature and professional learning opportunities for themselves to understand more about the manifestations of racism and other forms of oppression (e.g., sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and classism) at institutional and structural levels that can result in disadvantaging some groups of learners, educators, educational leaders, and families while privileging others.
- D. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators identify and make efforts to remove bias in their teaching materials and assignments, curriculum, and the allocation of resources. They intentionally increase learners' access to advanced placement courses and enrollment in enrichment opportunities in their school, district, and community.
- E. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators recognize schools' institutional biases and their relationship to these. They understand the tendency for procedures, practices, and norms to operate in ways that result in certain social groups being advantaged and

avored and others being disadvantaged and devalued

- F. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators disrupt harmful institutional practices, policies, and norms by advocating for colleagues, learners, and families negatively impacted by factors such as trauma and bias in the system and engage in efforts to rewrite policies, change practices, and raise awareness.

COMPETENCY 3: Design and Facilitate Culturally Relevant Learning that Brings Real World Experiences into Educational Spaces

- A. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators respect the real-world experiences of learners, educators, educational leaders, and families and the diverse funds of knowledge they bring into educational spaces.
- B. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators integrate multiple perspectives into learning experiences and interactions. They facilitate learning experiences with questions and activities that capitalize on learners' real-world experiences, identities, and heritage. They leverage learners' cultural backgrounds and funds of knowledge as resources to assist with learning new information and skills across learning experiences.
- C. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators recognize that learners are connected to local and global communities and events that influence and impact their learning and their relationship to and understanding of their social worlds.
- D. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators intentionally challenge their own beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors regarding the knowledge and backgrounds of dominant and non-dominant social groups. They think critically about the nuances of culture, identity, and other social markers and how they manifest themselves in curricula and other educational materials, including visual and structural representations.
- E. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators design learning experiences and spaces for learners to identify and question economic, political, and social power structures in the school, community, nation, and world.
- F. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators provide rigorous learning experiences and relevant projects in culturally supportive spaces that integrate advocacy skills, deep listening and thinking, collaboration, resource gathering, and strategic actions that build their sense of civic responsibility and their capacity to see themselves as agents of change.

COMPETENCY 4: Provide all Learners with Equitable and Differentiated Opportunities to Learn and Succeed

- A. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators make fair and equitable instructional and assessment decisions by ensuring that all learners have equitable access to educational resources, experiences, and opportunities to demonstrate understanding and knowledge.
- B. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators create an equitable learning environment by challenging and debunking stereotypes and biases about the intelligence, academic ability, and behavior of BIPOC and other marginalized learners, educators, educational leaders, and families.
- C. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators utilize differentiated methods of communication to articulate clear expectations aligned with the ability of each learner, which allows them to demonstrate knowledge through differentiated modalities.
- D. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators provide multiple pathways and opportunities for students to achieve academic and social success.

COMPETENCY 5: Promote Asset-based Perspectives about Differences

- A. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators recognize diversity to be an asset to the entire learning community and treat it as such. Therefore, they foster and nurture environments that are respectful and inclusive of every BIPOC learner, educator, educational leader, and family.
- B. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators show respect for every BIPOC learner, educator, educational leader, and family across cultural, racial, and linguistic differences.
- C. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators assess how learners from different backgrounds experience the environment and encourage them to reflect on their own experiences with bias.
- D. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators are sensitive to the ways in which BIPOC learners, educators, educational leaders, and families experience social and academic spaces. They find ways to highlight their experiences as a resource for learning.
- E. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators help learners to value their own and others' cultures. They help them develop a sense of responsibility for recognizing, responding to, and addressing bias, discrimination, injustice, and bullying when they encounter it.

COMPETENCY 6: Collaborate with Families and Communities through Authentic Engagement Practices

- A. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators believe that every family, regardless of race, skin color, ethnicity, gender identity, age, nationality, language, class, income, ability, level of education, sexual orientation, religion, and zip code, wants the best for their children. They believe that all families can support their child's education and make significant contributions to their learning. Therefore, they provide families with the tools needed to support their child's education at home, school, and in the community.
- B. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators view the cultural aspects of the community as an extension of their teaching spaces. They incorporate community members in students' school experiences, personal development, and classroom learning.
- C. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators value every family as an asset and resource. They believe that each family brings funds of knowledge that can inform culturally relevant curriculum development, instructional practices, and approaches to family and community engagement. They develop relationships with families and learn as much as possible about them and their cultural identities.
- D. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators understand the nuances of diverse families and the wide range of factors that shape how families interact with educators and schools. Therefore, they work to develop authentic relationships with families built on a foundation of mutual trust and respect and create the conditions that allow families to engage in ways that develop, utilize and leverage their strengths, talents, and skills.
- E. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators expose systems, structures, practices, and policies that exclude and marginalize BIPOC and multilingual families, families living in poverty, and families with varying sexual orientations and gender identities.
- F. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators see family and community engagement as a priority. They invite their participation in decision-making processes, share ways for them to support classroom learning, and include them as solutions in school improvement plans. Their work with families and communities is supported by principals who set organizational goals and strategies to foster a culture of belonging, inclusion, and family and community engagement.

COMPETENCY 7: Communicate in Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Ways that Demonstrate Respect for Learners, Educators, Educational Leaders, and Families

- A. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators seek to understand and honor the ways in

which culture influences communication, both in verbal and nonverbal ways. Therefore, educators are sensitive to factors such as body language, eye contact, tone of voice, and gestures that can impact the meaning and outcome of interactions with learners, educators, educational leaders, and families.

- B. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators use diverse channels to communicate with families in their first language. They choose the best modes of communication aligned with families' cultural and linguistic needs. They understand that various modes of communication such as spoken, print, technology, and social media platforms exist in an interconnected system of cultural beliefs, values, and practices, each with its own integrity, priorities, and resources.
- C. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators honor and respect the home language of learners and their families. They advocate for translation and interpretation services, dual language programs, language line services, and the use of community-based cultural brokers. They leverage technology and other resources to ensure equitable and effective communication between home and school.
- D. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators have an awareness of the multi-dialectical nature of language in American society. They understand the socially constructed nature of the favored dialect labeled "Standard English" and allow learners to use their natural ways of talking in educational spaces. They foster ongoing and critical examinations with their learners on why linguistic apartheid exists and how even their own dialectical and slang patterns are often appropriated by the dominant culture.
- E. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators believe that all learners have a choice and a right to practice the language(s) of their culture. They give them the tools and resources to access the language of the dominant culture--both spoken and written--while encouraging them to embrace their home language(s) as a resource.

COMPETENCY 8: Establish High Expectations for Each Learner and Treat Them as Capable and

Deserving of Achieving Success

- A. Culturally Relevant Sustaining Educators understand the importance of having high expectations for all BIPOC learners. They acknowledge that holding them to high standards and expectations impacts educational and personal outcomes in and beyond educational contexts.
- B. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators communicate expectations and a clear framework for all learners (specifically individuals from diverse backgrounds), which clarify and articulate the standards to which they are being held. They provide a clear purpose for the inclusion of specific standards and the way they contribute to and shape learning. Such clarity ensures that no ambiguity exists about the role of standards and their impact on educational outcomes.
- C. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators foster positive learning spaces that nurture creativity, build high self-esteem, support agency, and lead to self-actualization for all learners (primarily those from disadvantaged and historically marginalized backgrounds).
- D. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators recognize and respect that learners are agentic and are capable of contributing to their own learning. They work together to set individualized goals and determine strategies to measure growth.
- E. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators establish authentic relationships with learners. They make themselves a resource by offering feedback and support in achieving their personal and academic goals for learning.
- F. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators recognize the integral role families play in their child's education and work closely with families and students to set mutually agreed-upon goals and devise a plan for accountability that is supported by all

individuals.

Competency 9: Educate Oneself About Microaggressions, Their Impact on Diverse Learners, Educators, and Families and Actively Disrupt the Practice by Naming and Challenging its Use

- A. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators believe and acknowledge that microaggressions are real, and they take steps to educate themselves about the subtle and obvious ways in which they are used to harm and invalidate the existence of others.
- B. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators take responsibility for informing themselves about the various types of microaggressions and the specific communities and subgroups harmed by these practices. They consciously work through a process of reflexivity and actionable practices to eliminate this mindset and behavior.
- C. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators inform themselves about the long-term impact of unchecked microaggressions on the mental and emotional health of BIPOC and other marginalized learners, educators, educational leaders, and families.
- D. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators understand the relationship between impact and intent. They recognize the consequences of their actions, attitudes, and behaviors and assess the impact it may have on others in spite of their intentions.
- E. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators create learning communities and spaces that are inclusive and free of destructive and harmful microaggressions.
- F. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators actively counter deficit-based and invalidating behavior in themselves and others by engaging in affirming practices. This includes but is not limited to naming, rejecting, interrupting, and addressing microaggressions.
- G. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators engage in critically reflexive practice. They have a high level of self-awareness that enables them to assess a situation and immediately adapt; they are able to examine why things are the way they are and consider their role in shaping outcomes.