

# The Pennsylvania Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education Competencies



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## Introduction

In 2020, the Pennsylvania State Board of Education approved the following statement regarding Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education (CR-SE): "Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education requires a genuine commitment to equity for all students. At the core of CR-SE is an anti-racist undertaking that aims to eliminate the systemic and institutional barriers that inhibit the success of all Pennsylvania's students—particularly those who have been historically marginalized. A Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education encompasses skills for educators, including, but not limited to, approaches to mental wellness, trauma-informed approaches to instruction, technological and virtual engagement, and any factors that inhibit equitable access for all Pennsylvania's students."

In order to operationalize Culturally Relevant Education and Sustaining Education in Pennsylvania, educators cannot do it alone. It will take systemic solutions, topline goals, resources, and the engagement of everyone in the education ecosystem. However, we offer these CR-SE competencies to educators as a place to begin. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators demonstrate through their beliefs, actions, and practices their investment in and commitment to the empowerment, achievement, and success of every learner. Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators take an anti-racist stance, which includes acknowledging the systemic inequities that hinder equal access for all learners and stand in solidarity with and act on behalf of every learner. This demands a commitment to dismantling systemic racism, nurturing a love of learning, and ensuring equitable paths to success for each learner regardless of race, skin color, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, language, and other factors. Therefore, Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educators connect academics to their learners' daily lives, cultural backgrounds, challenges and build upon the funds of knowledge of learners and their families.

The Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education competencies described in this document were developed with the understanding that all educators, regardless of race, skin color, ethnicity, gender identity, age, nationality, language, class, economic status, ability, sexual orientation, religion, and other identity markers have a responsibility to provide fair and equitable access to all educators, learners, their families, and the larger ecosystem of which they are a part of.

Developed in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Pennsylvania Educator Diversity Consortium (a wide range of universities, organizations, and partners across Pennsylvania), and the US Department of Education's Region 4 Comprehensive Center, these competencies are agreed-upon standards that all educators are to be accountable for when working with learners, colleagues, and families. Building on the 50-state survey of culturally responsive standards completed by [New America](#), these competencies have been developed over one year and a half. The competencies take the form of behavioral expectations and are accompanied by actionable indicators and reflexive questions that ground the expectations in practice. The reflexive questions are designed to allow educators to think deeper about the practical application of each competency and its indicators--now and in the future. The questions complement one another, and a given response may be relevant to more than one question.

There are several terms whose definitions are fundamental to understanding and engaging with the competencies:

**BIPOC:** The acronym BIPOC (Black and Indigenous People of Color) is used to distinguish between Black people, Indigenous people, and other individuals of color who face specific systems of interlocking



oppression. The term highlights difference while honoring and emphasizing the struggles that unify these racial groups.

**Educator:** The term "Educator" includes individuals who teach students, engage them in learning, and are responsible for curriculum development and school operations. "Educator" also includes all administrators (PreK-12 and higher education) and professional personnel like counselors, school psychologists, librarians, state department leaders, higher education faculty, individuals who influence policy (e.g., school board members and community leaders), and anyone who affects the learning of students or the preparation of teachers.

**Equity:** The process of ensuring a just and fair educational experience for every learner and educator across race, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, language, religion, ability, sexual orientation, family background, and family income. This process includes engaging in self-awareness, data practices, authentic family and community engagement, and culturally relevant and sustaining academic and disciplinary access. Also, general equity practices, including funding, programs, policies, hiring, and retainment, are paramount to maintaining effective, equitable educational systems.

**Microaggression:** The nefarious practice of harming (whether intentionally or unintentionally) members of marginalized groups through the use of verbal or non-verbal behaviors and words. These behaviors include (but are not limited to) hostile communication, put-downs, slights, derogatory messages, snubs, insults, passive-aggressive behaviors, and negative body language. These practices are often subtle and non-verbal but can also be overt, explicit, straightforward, and unambiguous. (For examples, see [power, privilege, and everyday life](#))

**Racial Trauma:** Racial trauma or race-based traumatic stress (RBTS) is the cumulative macroaggressive and microaggressive forms of racism that result in emotional, physical, spiritual, psychological, and mental injury caused by lifelong encounters with racial and ethnic discrimination and bias. BIPOC learners and educators are more susceptible to RBTS throughout their lives, and if not treated, addressed, or confronted, can result in stress-related conditions, such as anxiety, depression, suicide, hypertension, and inequities in education such as racial achievement gap, low test scores, low graduation rates, and over-identification of disciplinary actions and special education placements. (For resources, see [Addressing Race and Trauma in the Classroom: A Resource for Educators](#))

**Reflexivity:** This is a process of questioning your unexamined assumptions about a wide range of ideas. It demands the interrogation of implicit bias and actively countering those biases when and where they are identified. Reflexivity asks you to step away from your thinking and to determine how your actions, beliefs, and practices shape outcomes as an educator. Reflexivity is actionable; it demands that you take action with what you know. Each competency requires a process of reflexivity and an active engagement with oneself. The difference between reflection and reflexivity is that reflection might lead to insight about something not noticed in time, pinpointing perhaps when the detail was missed. While reflexivity is finding strategies to question attitudes, thought processes, values, assumptions, prejudices, and habitual actions to understand our complex roles with others.

The development of these Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education competencies comes at a pivotal moment for Pennsylvania and the national teaching force. With national teacher shortages, a lack of diversity within the teaching workforce, the ongoing racial and political unrest, and the unveiling of disparities highlighted through the COVID-19 pandemic, the competencies arrive at a very historic time.

# Culturally Relevant and 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.

### Questions to Stimulate Reflexivity

- How do I identify factors such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender influence my beliefs, thinking, and actions?
- How do the various aspects of my identity, upbringing, beliefs, values, and lived experiences shape my thinking and understanding of the world? And how do these differ from those of learners, their families, and my colleagues?
- How are my beliefs, values, and assumptions about others reflected in my interactions and practices with learners, families, and colleagues?
- How will I recognize, be conscious of, and respond to my uncomfortableness, resistance, and emotions that might arise as I continue to examine and increase awareness of my own biases and stereotypes?
- To what degree do I understand that the work of being a Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educator (wherever I am on the continuum) is challenging and requires questioning, deep critical thinking, reflexivity, engagement, collaboration, action steps, and more? And, while doing this work, how will I give full attention to my mental and emotional well-being as a way to sustain and honor myself?

- What do I see as the benefits (to learners, colleagues, myself) of being a Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Educator?
- What steps do I need to take—now and in the future—to enhance my ongoing ability to reflect on and understand my own cultural lens? What resources will I identify and utilize to support those actions in examining my thinking about how unconscious/conscious biases, stereotypes, prejudices, and racial trauma impacts students and colleagues who belong to identity groups other than mine?

## 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 favored 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.

### Questions to Stimulate Reflexivity

- What do I understand to be the differences between bias at intrapersonal, interpersonal, and institutional levels? And what specific instances of bias have I seen or participated in at each level?
- To what degree and how often do I disaggregate and analyze data by learners' subgroups (those defined by race, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender) to check for and to uncover hidden inequities?
- In what ways am I complicit in enabling bias in my educational settings: Do I stay silent? Do I allow discrimination? Do I take action to address and mitigate bias?
- What actions do I take to disrupt policies, practices, procedures, and norms that disadvantage learners as defined by race, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender?

- What is my process to ensure that my assessments are differentiated, and results are interpreted in ways that are fair, equitable, inclusive, and do not systematically advantage or disadvantage specific subgroups of learners?
- How often do I ask and answer critical questions such as:
  - Which learners are in advanced courses and which are not (i.e., talented and gifted, honors and AP/IB courses) and why?
  - Which learners face stringent disciplinary actions, and which do not, and why?
  - Which learners are more often recommended for special education and which are not and why?
  - Which learners are selected for certain opportunities (educational, economic, extra-curricular, and enrichment) and which are not and why?
- What specific actions will I take (present and future) to increase my ability to identify, deepen my understanding of, and address bias (my own and at the interpersonal and institution levels of the system)? What resources can I find and utilize to help me accomplish these goals (who might I enlist as an accountability partner)?

### **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.

#### **Questions to Stimulate Reflexivity**

- How often and to what extent do I utilize learners' cultural backgrounds and knowledge to help bridge and enhance new learning?
- What processes do I use to review and evaluate curriculum, textbooks, and other instructional resources for historical accuracy, bias, stereotypes, cultural relevance, and global perspectives to ensure that distinct dimensions of the diversity of learners are represented?
- How do I enhance the curriculum with real-life examples, newspaper and magazine clippings, song lyrics, poetry/spoken word poetry, comics, plays, movies, TV programs, video games, and other resources that reflect the worldview, lived experiences, characters, settings, and themes that are meaningful to diverse learners?
- How have I designed my classroom and other educational spaces—posters displayed on walls, literature, bulletin boards, websites—to be culturally sensitive and inclusive of learners' diverse identities in my classroom and the school?



- How do I engage the curriculum (e.g., English Language Arts, Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies) to help learners in ways relevant to their lives, their communities, and the world?
- What are my long and short-term goals for designing and facilitating culturally relevant learning that will bring real-world experiences into my classroom, school, and other educational spaces?

## **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.

### **Questions to Stimulate Reflexivity**

- How do I ensure that the assignments, projects, assessments, and instructional resources that I use allow learners to respect and see positive representations of themselves and others?
- How do I provide equitable learning assignments that cater to learners' strengths and offer multiple opportunities to meet mastery level standards?
- What kinds of equitable and differentiated opportunities do I give learners to meet standards? For example:
  - Do I offer the possibility of assignment revisions?
  - Do I offer individual feedback and suggestions for improvement?
  - Do I offer alternative ways to meet a standard?
- Does the rubric I design for each assignment clearly articulate the criteria and standards for each level of achievement?
- In what ways do I leverage high-quality data to create a unique learning path for each learner?
- How do I use student-centered technology to understand better what learners know and can do? And how do I use that information to co-create, with learners and their families, individual learning plans that integrate their beliefs, values, funds of knowledge, and lived experiences?
- How often do I meet with colleagues from other identity groups to discuss, collaborate, and exchange ideas about providing equitable and differentiated learning experiences while recognizing that each learner enters the classroom with unique lived experiences, preferences, and conditions that affect how they learn?
- What specific actions will I take now and within the next year to ensure that all students have equitable and differentiated opportunities to learn and succeed? Who might I enlist as a collaborator from a social identity group other than my own?

## 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.

### Questions to Stimulate Reflexivity

- How am I thinking broadly about culturally relevant teaching and leading to ensure that learners, educators, educational leaders, and families understand that culturally relevant and equitable practices benefit white learners in addition to BIPOC and other marginalized learners?
- To what extent do I intentionally embed community and relationship building exercises into my learning activities where learners have opportunities to work with their peers in diverse identity groups and varied backgrounds (i.e., family settings, skin color, races, abilities, gender identities, zip codes, nationalities, religions, economic settings), thereby creating an environment in which everyone can learn from and with each other to build a respectful, trustful classroom community?
- What messages are communicated about diversity and differences in the design of my classroom and other educational spaces?
- How do I use asset-based approaches that focus on the strengths of learners, families, and colleagues and demonstrate that I value diversity of thought, culture, and characteristics as positive and necessary assets?
- How do I show respect and appreciation for the funds of knowledge, ideas, and opinions of learners, families, and colleagues from BIPOC and other diverse identity groups?
- How aware and intentional am I in listening for and identifying moments of bias, stereotypes, oppression, racial trauma, and subconscious and identity-based assumptions and ideas that learners articulate in the classroom and other learning spaces? And how comfortable and skillful am I in clearly, gently, directly, and immediately interrupting and addressing these matters as teachable moments so that learners can understand societal inequities?

- How often do I track and bring attention to singular instances of the subconscious and identity-based assumptions and ideas occurring over time and give learners opportunities to explore, discuss, identify, debrief, and reimagine the socialization processes that may have caused these patterns?
- What clear expectations have I set, early on in the learning process, for how my classroom or learning environment will operate in ways that promote equity, inclusion, diversity, and respect for all learners?
- What are specific ways that I will immediately integrate asset-based strategies into my practice and demonstrate that I value and appreciate the diversity of learners, families, and colleagues in each identity group?

## **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.

### **Questions to Stimulate Reflexivity**

- In what ways do I fully acknowledge and explore the unique make-up and life experiences of learners and their families from varied backgrounds, cultures, family structures (i.e., single, married, divorced, grandparent-led, same gender, interracial, foster), skin colors, races, abilities, gender identities, sexual orientations, zip codes, nationalities, religions, economic situations, levels of education, perspectives, beliefs, and values? For example, in what ways do I:
  - Make time to consider and leverage the talent, skills, knowledge, and experiences families bring to the table?
  - Get to know families, develop relationships built on mutual trust, and form partnerships with families?



- Connect all families to what their child is learning and their classroom experiences--at home and in the community? For example, at the beginning of each month, do I share with families what their child should know and can do and make suggestions about ways families can help their child at home?
- How do I encourage and give every family the tools to engage in their child's learning experiences? For example, how might I help families incorporate science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) into their everyday lives, congruent with families' culture and structure, help their child enjoy STEM, and advocate for their child's academic success in STEM?
- In what ways do I encourage educational leaders in my building and district to provide professional learning opportunities that empower my colleagues and me to:
  - Connect the engagement of each family to their child's learning and development?
  - Engage families as partners and co-creators?
  - Honor and utilize the funds of knowledge of families and community members?
  - Create a sense of belonging and cultivate inclusive environments that honor, respect, and welcome all families, including those with diverse identity markers?
- How often do I consider the complexity of family structures (i.e., single, married, divorced, grandparent-led, same gender, interracial, foster)? For example:
  - How do I seek to understand and respect the uniqueness of learners' diverse family structures and systems in ways that will enhance the effectiveness of my professional practice?
  - How do I play an integral role in shaping how learners view themselves, their family, and the world?
  - How do I encourage learners to understand and respect the value of all family structures and not just the ones that look similar to their own families?
- How do I help families from every identity group enhance their child's academic socialization skills (verbal and non-verbal messages, communication, behavior, and actions about families' attitudes, values, and expectations regarding education)? For example:
  - Reflect the importance of education
  - Convey the enjoyment of learning
  - Link learning to current and real-world events
  - Discuss learning strategies with their child
  - Foster educational and occupational aspirations
  - Make preparations and plans for the future/post-high school
  - Make linkages between schoolwork and future goals
  - Discuss learning styles and strategies
- What specific actions will I take (immediately, short-term, long-term) to develop effective partnerships with each family and community members to support learners--at home, at school, and in the community? And how will I integrate the skills, talents, and funds of knowledge of family and community members into my action steps?

## **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.

### **Questions to Stimulate Reflexivity**

- How do I collaborate with educators and educational leaders to ensure that every learner has a variety of educational experiences that help them make informed decisions about the role they play in language, literacy, and life?
- In what ways do I recognize and encourage the linguistic validity of learners' home dialects and languages?
- To what extent do I embrace learners and families' racial, cultural and linguistic diversity and communicate in linguistically and culturally appropriate ways? For example:
  - Do I assume a dominant role in conversations with families, or do I ensure that they contribute equally?
  - Am I aware of communication nuances (spoken and unspoken) and how language may be fraught with misunderstanding, affirming, or offensive to learners and families of varying ethnic and cultural groups?

- Do I have easy access to and utilize interpreters who can help me communicate with linguistically diverse families (i.e., explain or clarify information related to programs, services, and opportunities to promote family participation in their child's education)?
  - Do I utilize services to translate information in languages that family members readily understand?
  - Have I developed a "survival list" of words and phrases in the native languages of the families of learners in my classroom to make them feel welcome and at ease?
  - Am I aware of the various dialects (as distinguished by features of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation from other regions and cultures) and how language may impact meaning among culturally and linguistically diverse learners, educators, educational leaders, and families?
  - Do I realize that the languages and cultures that learners bring to educational spaces are assets for their own learning and essential contributions to learning communities?
- In what ways do I maintain open, ongoing communication with learners and families from diverse linguistic backgrounds based on each family's preferred mode of communication (i.e., email, phone, home-school program notebooks, oral exchanges, social media, language line, and virtual platforms)?
  - To what extent do I make deep connections by seeking out and utilizing the participation of community leaders as "cultural guides" to:
    - Facilitate communication and understanding between myself and linguistically diverse learners and families to provide insights concerning community beliefs, values, and communication style?
    - Keep abreast of and offer learners and families information about programs, services, opportunities in culturally sensitive and responsive ways?
    - Act as facilitators, mediators, and ombudspersons to bring the family and school closer together to increase positive outcomes for learners?
    - Help me adapt to the diverse cultural and linguistic contexts of the communities of learners?
  - In what ways do I learn more about learners' lived experiences outside of the learning environment and let that information inform the curriculum in ways that have meaning for learners, connect with their wider lives, and encourage their families' support?
  - Many African American students regularly switch between dialects, a skill known as code-switching. This skill requires high levels of linguistic, social, cultural, and cognitive ability, but it often goes unnoticed. How can I support this skill and help learners navigate contexts in and out of school and support them in using language that is appropriate to each context?
  - What assumptions do I make about learners and colleagues based on their names? And, how sensitive am I to the importance of correctly pronouncing their names to make them feel valued, included, and respected at school?
  - What steps will I take to educate myself about the cultural and linguistic identities of learners? How will I use what I learn to enhance my practice, create a positive learning environment, and provide relevant learning opportunities and experiences?

## **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.

### **Questions to Stimulate Reflexivity**

- How do my beliefs, values, and perspectives inform my ability to establish high expectations for each learner regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, zip code, sexual orientation, and ability? What does it look like in practice?
  - Do I examine and supplement the curriculum, when needed, to empower and support every learner to achieve personal excellence, regardless of their circumstances?
  - How do I monitor and modify my teaching practice to ensure that learners progress at the rate they need to succeed?
  - What strategies do I use if learners are progressing more slowly or quickly than anticipated?
- When assessing learners' progress, how do I ensure that I hold BIPOC and historically marginalized learners to the same high level of expectation as white learners? And what steps do I take to prevent factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, zip code, sexual orientation, and ability from unjustly influencing outcomes?
- How do I make time to get to know learners and their interests to establish authentic relationships with them, especially those from disenfranchised and historically marginalized communities, in support of their dreams and aspirations for their academic and social lives?

- To what degree do I engage with families when setting learning goals for their child to ensure that expectations for academic success are at a high level? For example:
  - Do I demonstrate respect for families by inviting them to participate in setting learning goals for their child?
  - Do I consider the goals and dreams they have for their child?
  - Do I collaborate with learners and their families to talk about assessment outcomes and strategies to support learners?
  
- How do I demonstrate high expectations for every learner, regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, zip code, sexual orientation, and ability? For example:
  - Am I grading and assessing BIPOC learners fairly in relation to white learners?
  - Do I disproportionately recommend Black, Latinx, and low-income learners for special education services?
  - How often do I recommend BIPOC and other historically marginalized learners for advanced level courses?
  - Do I engage BIPOC and other historically marginalized learners in discussions about their life goals after high school and support and guide them in finding resources to enhance their dreams?
  - Do I overlook BIPOC and other historically marginalized learners for enrichment, educational, and other opportunities that I usually offer to white learners?
  
- In what ways do I encourage school and district leadership to provide equitable access to resources for BIPOC and historically marginalized students to ensure they are starting from an equal platform as their peers, and therefore should be held to high expectations.
  
- What specific actions will I take to let learners know that I believe in their ability to excel and to help them maximize their fullest potential, regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, zip code, sexual orientation, and ability? What strategies will I use to recognize each learner's unique learning trajectory and plan for them to utilize their strengths? And what high expectations do I hold for myself as an agent of change who is confident in my capabilities to be an effective educator?



## **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.

### **Questions to Stimulate Reflexivity**

- In what ways am I thinking consciously about the intent versus the impact of my actions (both verbal and non-verbal), behaviors, and practices with BIPOC learners, educators, families and colleagues, and other marginalized individuals?
- How might my innate behaviors, biases, and stereotypes regarding marginalized and BIPOC learners, families, colleagues, and communities result in microaggressive behaviors?
- How does my relationship and understanding of BIPOC, low income, and other identity groups and their communities inform how I speak about, talk with, write about, and engage with them in various educational contexts?
- How sensitive am I to how various forms of microaggressions show up in my communication with learners, families, and colleagues from varying ability, linguistic, cultural, racial, and ethnic groups? For example:
  - Do I use microassaults in symbols and messages (verbal and nonverbal) that threaten, intimidate, and make individuals or specific identity groups feel unwanted, unsafe or less than?

For example: using racial slurs, intimidation, mocking laughter due to ability, race, gender, confederate flags, statues, etc.

- Do I use microinsults that perpetuate stereotypes, rudeness, and insensitivities that may demean and cause racial trauma to learners, families, and colleagues based on race, gender, sexual orientation, heritage, or identity? For instance:
  - Ascriptions of intelligence: "You are very good at math." (to an Asian learner).
  - Insinuations of being second-class citizens: "Where are you really from?" (to a colleague or learner from diverse identity groups)."
  - Assumptions of criminal status: "Are your family members terrorists?" (to a learner from the Middle East).
  - Pathologizing cultural values and communication styles: "Wow, you speak really good English" (to a colleague or learner from a diverse identity group); "You are very articulate" (to a Black learner or colleague).
- Do I use microinvalidations to negate, deny, nullify, or disregard the thoughts, feelings, experiences, and reality of learners, families, and colleagues based on race, gender, and sexual identity? For example:
  - Learners, colleagues, and families are treated as invisible.
  - Learners, colleagues, and families are treated as aliens in their own land: "That's good for an international student" and letting them off easy--having different expectations than American students.
  - Color, gender, sexual orientation blindness: "When I see you, I don't see color."
  - Denial for racism and sexism: "There is no such thing as white privilege."
  - Overgeneralizing to an entire group of people: Being singled out as the only person of color in a group and as the spokesperson for one's entire community everywhere in the world.
- What is my self-awareness level regarding race-based traumatic stress and the emotional and psychological ramifications of all forms of microaggressions to BIPOC learners, colleagues, and families? And how do I respond to the injury that has been inflicted?
- What does it mean for me as a BIPOC educator to care for myself as I engage in this work and deal with issues, challenges, and traumatic experiences that my white colleagues may be unintentionally causing or may not be experiencing?
- What specific steps will I take to increase my awareness and change my behaviors, practices, and actions regarding the use of all forms of microaggressions toward learners, families, and colleagues who are BIPOC and from other identity groups? What strategies will I put in place to disrupt microaggressions when they happen?

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