

**Board of Education Guidance on Cultural  
Competency Training for Teachers and Other  
Licensed School Board Employees in Virginia  
Public Schools**



**November 2021**

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# GUIDANCE ON CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING FOR TEACHERS AND OTHER LICENSED SCHOOL BOARD EMPLOYEES IN VIRGINIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Introduction

Pursuant to Code of Virginia § [22.1-298.7](#), this Guidance document is designed to provide assistance to local school boards in the Commonwealth regarding the adoption and implementation of policies that require every school board employee licensed by the Virginia Board of Education (Board), including teachers, leaders, and other licensed staff, to complete cultural competency training or professional learning at least every two years.

In 2021 Virginia policymakers established new requirements to support culturally competent educators in the Commonwealth. The *Guidance on Cultural Competency Training for Teachers and Other Licensed School Board Employees in Virginia Public Schools* (Guidance) was developed in response to House Bill 1904 and Senate Bill 1196, enacted by the Virginia General Assembly, which establish the following new requirements:

- *Evaluations shall include an evaluation of cultural competency;*
- *Every person seeking initial licensure or renewal of a license shall complete instruction or training in cultural competency;*
- *Every person seeking initial licensure or renewal of a license with an endorsement in history and social sciences shall complete instruction in African American history, as prescribed by the Board; and*
- *Each school board shall adopt and implement policies that require each teacher and any other school board employee holding a license issued by the Board to complete cultural competency training, in accordance with guidance issued by the Board, at least every two years.*

Additionally, the enactment clause states:

*2. That no later than December 31, 2021, the Board of Education shall issue guidance that establishes minimum standards for the cultural competency training required pursuant to § 22.1-298.7 of the Code of Virginia, as created by this act.*

*3. That each school board employee who is required to complete a cultural competency training pursuant to § 22.1-298.7 of the Code of Virginia, as created by this act, shall complete at least one such training no later than the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year.*

This *Guidance* has been developed to comply with the Board’s requirement to “issue guidance that establishes minimum standards for the cultural competency training” that each school board must require of its licensed employees, including teachers, leaders, and other licensed staff, at least once every two years. This document provides consistent definitions and essential competencies that training or professional learning that meets local school board policy implementing the requirement should cover. Local school boards may expand beyond these minimum standards at their own discretion.

The training requirement applies to all public school division employees licensed by the Board, which includes: fully licensed or provisionally licensed teachers, principals, superintendents, school counselors, or others. The law does not require training of school staff who do not hold a license issued by the Board; however local school boards may consider making such training available to those staff or requiring other staff to participate by way of local policy.

## **Background**

### *Terminology*

There are a variety of terms used in discussion about educators’ ability to understand, appreciate, and be responsive to student and staff who come from different backgrounds and cultures. The term cultural competency was used in the authorizing legislation, but was not defined there. Therefore, a Virginia definition of cultural competency was adapted to align with academic and national definitions. For purposes of this document, the Board defines cultural competency as the capacity of educators to understand their own cultural identity, understand the different dimensions of diversity, and use those dimensions of diversity to foster academic achievement, growth, and empowerment for all students.

### *Guidance Purpose and Local School Board Responsibilities*

To comply with HB 1904 (2021) and SB 1196 (2021), local school boards shall adopt policies that require their employees holding a license issued by the Board to complete cultural competency training, in accordance with this guidance document. This training must occur for the first time prior to the start of the 2022-2023 school year.

The purpose of this document, in fulfillment of the statutory requirement, is to present minimum standards for the content covered in the required local training, including standardized definitions and understandings of cultural competency.

## **Key Considerations in Establishing a Virginia Framework**

### *Alignment with Uniform Performance Standards for Evaluation of Teachers*

This Guidance was developed in alignment with the Board’s *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards for Evaluation of Teachers*, which set the statewide minimum criteria for the local evaluation practices. This Board responsibility to establish performance standards for teachers, principals, and superintendents that ultimately contribute to quality classroom experiences is set forth in the Virginia Standards of Quality. At the time this guidance was developed, the Board had adopted a new cultural competency standard in the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards for Evaluation of Teachers*, and is in the process of providing similar amendments to the Principal and Superintendent standards. It is the intention of the Board that this guidance support the development of teachers in successfully meeting the associated evaluation standard.

### *Academic Scholarship on Cultural Competency Professional Learning*

The academic literature on cultural competency has informed the development of a Virginia Framework for Cultural Competency that includes four domains of cultural competency (Mayfield, 2020). This guidance also includes a number of micro-competencies within those domains which are the minimum standards for any training to comply with the local policy statutory requirements.

# The Virginia Framework for Cultural Competency

In the table below, Virginia’s four domains are identified to provide a framework for types of capacity that licensed professionals should foster. While thought of sequentially, the four domains are interrelated and require continuous reflection, attention, and practice over time.

**Table 1. Virginia’s Cultural Competency Domains**

<b>Virginia’s Cultural Competency Domains</b>
Self-reflection
Pedagogy and Practices
Learning Environments
Community Engagement

Within the four Virginia domains of cultural competence, this guidance further articulates micro-competencies that should be covered in professional learning or training required pursuant to *Code of Virginia* § **22.1-298.7**. Further, these micro-competencies operationalize the Board’s definition of cultural competence and provide the foundation on which divisions may build as they develop content for local cultural competency training.

## Domain I: Culturally Competent Self-Reflection

Table 2 describes one micro-competency supporting culturally competent self-reflection. In this domain, education professionals acknowledge and continually examine personal lived experiences, the influence of dimensions of diversity on them and how that influence manifests itself in their own experiences.

**Table 2. Culturally Competent Self-Reflection**

<i>Culturally Competent Self-Reflection</i>
<b>Micro-Competency for All Licensed Professionals</b>

Continuously reflect on one’s own beliefs, behaviors, lived experiences, and practices and their impact on one’s educational decision making, and on one’s interactions with others generally.

## Domain II: Culturally Competent Pedagogy and Practice

Table 3 describes micro-competencies supporting culturally competent pedagogy and practice. In this domain, educators recognize the relevance of culture and adapt professional practices to meet the needs of students from all backgrounds.

**Table 3. Culturally Competent Pedagogy and Practice**

<i>Culturally Competent Pedagogy and Practice</i>
<b>Micro-Competencies for All Licensed Professionals</b>
Establish a classroom and school culture in which all dimensions of diversity are respected and valued.
Provide ongoing opportunities for student reflection and interpersonal interactions with diverse peers; support the development of self-regulation strategies, empathy, and civil discourse.
Build positive relationships with students and families and provide instruction to students on building and maintaining positive peer relationships in the educational learning setting.
Communicate with students, staff, families, and the community in linguistically and culturally responsive ways.
Build student capacity to think critically and consider alternative perspectives.

## Domain III: Culturally Competent Learning Environments

Table 4 describes one micro-competency to support culturally competent learning environments. In this domain, the goal is to foster inclusive excellence that impacts all learning environments. Therefore, to achieve this, culturally competent educators analyze policies, procedures, and programs that prevent or limit access and opportunity for students and staff and align resources to increase achievement for all, without lowering standards for any student.

**Table 4. Culturally Competent Learning Environments**

<i>Culturally Competent Learning Environments</i>
<b>Micro-Competencies for All Licensed Professionals</b>

Create safe, and culturally affirming learning environments where all dimensions of diversity are respected and all students are held to high expectations.

## Domain IV: Culturally Competent Community Engagement

Table 5 describes micro-competencies supporting culturally competent community engagement. Culturally competent professional educators have participatory, collaborative partnerships with internal and external stakeholders and are advocates for equitable access and opportunities for all.

**Table 5. Culturally Competent Community Engagement**

<i>Culturally Competent Community Engagement</i>
<b>Micro-Competencies For All Licensed Professionals</b>
Support students in learning about dimensions of diversity in the community. Provide opportunities for students to be active contributors in solving relevant local, state, national and global community challenges.
Create opportunities for authentic student, family, and community engagement by cultivating relationships beyond the classroom anchored in affirmation, mutual respect, and validation.
Work with students and families to process and respond to incidents of discrimination.

## Professional Learning and Implementation Considerations

This guidance provides four domains of cultural competence and respective micro-competencies as the minimum standards that shall be covered in training or professional learning that meets local school board policy requirements in implementing the Commonwealth's recently amended statute. While best practice would call for sustained professional learning and implementation over time with coaching and mentoring as educators refine their practice, the statutorily required time constraints of the implementation do not allow for this in the initial deployment of the training. The statute requires that training occur for the first time before the start of the 2022-2023 school year. Therefore, any training that satisfies the division's local policy requirement should cover all four domains and micro-competencies in at least an introductory manner that provides an initial overview or survey of the content by the 2022-2023

school year with the expectation of intentional and ongoing follow-up. Divisions may go beyond this minimum standard at their discretion, and all should prepare to support educators with additional training throughout the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years, given the ongoing nature of building capacity for cultural competency.