

**INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS IN CULTURAL COMPETENCY**

VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

# Interim Guidelines for Licensure Requirements in Cultural Competency

## Authorizing Legislation

The [Culturally Competent Virginia Educators Bill](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212+ful+CHAP0023) ([SB 1196](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?211+sum+SB1196) and [HB 1904](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?211+sum+HB1904)), passed by the 2021 General Assembly, was signed into law by the Governor and goes into effect on July 1, 2021. Amongst other things, the bill mandates the following:

*Every person seeking initial licensure or renewal of a license shall complete instruction or training in cultural competency.*

This licensure requirement becomes effective on July 1, 2021. Therefore, the Board of Education’s interim guidance is to ensure that educators seeking an initial license or license renewal beginning July 1, 2021, are able to comply with the above component of the statute.

Additionally, the legislation states, in part, the following:

*§* [***22.1-298.7***](http://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/22.1-298.7)*. Teachers and other licensed school board employees; cultural competency training.*

*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.*

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**](http://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/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**](http://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/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.

Therefore, the Board also must issue guidance establishing minimum standards for cultural competency training of employed and licensed educators no later than December 31, 2021. While this guidance will ultimately cover both of these components of the bill; in the meantime, the Board is issuing this interim guidance.

This interim Guidance will be effective following approval from the Board and the public comment process on Town Hall. The Guidelines will remain in effect until revision by the Board of Education.

## Background

In 2020, the Virginia Department of Education released the [Navigating EdEquityVA - Virginia’s Roadmap to Equity](https://www.virginiaisforlearners.virginia.gov/navigating-edequityva-virginias-roadmap-to-education-equity/) framework. The framework prioritizes two strategies for achieving education equity:

(1) **Increasing the Cultural Proficiency of Virginia’s Educator Workforce**, and

(2) **Closing Opportunity Gaps for Virginia Students**.

On March 18, 2021, the Virginia Board of Education revised its teacher performance standards and evaluation criteria to add a standard on culturally responsive teaching and equitable practices.

The action codified one of the [Governor’s African American History Education Commission’s recommendations](https://www.governor.virginia.gov/newsroom/all-releases/2020/august/headline-860154-en.html) and aligned to the goals outlined in [Virginia’s Education Equity Framework](https://www.virginiaisforlearners.virginia.gov/navigating-edequityva-virginias-roadmap-to-education-equity/). Additionally, this action carried out legislation approved by the 2021 General Assembly ([House Bill 1904](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDIsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTAzMjQuMzc2NTA1NjEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL2xpcy52aXJnaW5pYS5nb3YvY2dpLWJpbi9sZWdwNjA0LmV4ZT9zZXM9MjExJnR5cD1iaWwmdmFsPWhiMTkwNCJ9.GYyKWiH7w9ev4jPgO5uRJwa3zFCDR4eswP9_xWDGA-Y/s/1014635297/br/100590658888-l) and [Senate Bill 1196](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDMsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTAzMjQuMzc2NTA1NjEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL2xpcy52aXJnaW5pYS5nb3YvY2dpLWJpbi9sZWdwNjA0LmV4ZT9zZXM9MjExJnR5cD1iaWwmdmFsPXNiMTE5NiJ9.QaOPJVdxhg2eBR-BxEUeqh4DdADX9LIM72kioGw--HU/s/1014635297/br/100590658888-l)) requiring that teacher evaluations include an evaluation of cultural competency. As such, a new standard was added to the *Guidelines for* [*Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers*](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/performance_evaluation/teacher/index.shtml):

**Standard 6 - Culturally Responsive Teaching and Equitable Practices**: *“The teacher demonstrates a commitment to equity and provides instruction and classroom strategies that result in culturally inclusive and responsive learning environments and academic achievement for all students.”*

The minimum expectations set forth in these guidelines are aligned to the expectations set forth in the Virginia Board of Education’s revised teacher performance standards and the Navigating EdEquityVA framework.

## A Vision for Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Educational Practices in Virginia

Culture strongly influences the attitudes, values, and behaviors that students and teachers bring to the instructional process, making culturally responsive educators necessary for the equitable achievement of today’s increasingly diverse student population. Establishing clear expectations is critical to supporting the effective delivery of culturally responsive and inclusive education practice professional development.

The Department has framed these expectations into four quadrants representing practices at the following critical levels:

(1) culturally responsive schools,

(2) culturally responsive leadership,

(3) culturally responsive educators, and

(4) culturally responsive pedagogy.

Additional information regarding the expectations for each quadrant is available on the Virginia is for Learners website here: <https://www.virginiaisforlearners.virginia.gov/cultural-competence/>.

### Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Educators

Culturally responsive educators see the diversity in their classrooms as an asset and use their knowledge on students’ backgrounds to enrich educational experiences. These educators possess a thorough understanding of the specific cultures of the students they teach or serve, how that culture affects student-learning behaviors, and how they can change classroom interactions and instruction to embrace the differences.

### Culturally Responsive Educators

* See cultural differences as assets;
* Validate the inequities impacting students’ lives;
* Cultivate relationships beyond the classroom anchored in affirmation, mutual respect, and validation;
* Believe that ALL students can succeed and communicate high expectations for all students;
* Engage in reflection of their beliefs, behaviors, and practices;
* Utilize students’ cultures as vehicles for learning;
* Challenge racial and cultural stereotypes, prejudices, racism, and other forms of intolerance, injustice, and oppression; and
* Mediate power imbalances in classrooms based on race, culture, ethnicity, gender, and class.

### Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy comprises three functional dimensions:

(1) institutional,

(2) personal, and

(3) instructional.

The institutional dimension of culturally responsive pedagogy emphasizes the need for reform of the cultural factors affecting the organization of schools, school policies and procedures (including allocation of funds and resources), and community involvement. It reflects the administration, its policies, and values.[[1]](https://www.virginiaisforlearners.virginia.gov/cultural-competence/#_ftn1) The personal dimension refers to the process by which teachers learn to become culturally responsive and includes both cognitive and emotional processes. The instructional dimension refers to practices and challenges associated with implementing cultural responsiveness in the classroom. It includes materials, strategies, and activities that form the basis of instruction. All three dimensions significantly interact in the teaching and learning process and are critical to understanding the effectiveness of culturally responsive pedagogy.[[2]](https://www.virginiaisforlearners.virginia.gov/cultural-competence/#_ftn2)

[[1] Virginia Department of Education website](https://www.virginiaisforlearners.virginia.gov/cultural-competence/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn1)

[[2] Virginia Department of Education website](https://www.virginiaisforlearners.virginia.gov/cultural-competence/%22%20%5Cl%20%22_ftn2)

### Key Terms

**Anti-Racism:** acknowledges that racist beliefs and structures are pervasive in all aspects of our lives and requires action to dismantle those beliefs and structures; School leaders are to hold educators and students accountable when they say and do things that make school unsafe. They also should dismantle systems perpetuating inequitable access to opportunities and outcomes for students historically marginalized by race. (Christina Torres and Teaching Tolerance. “All Students Need Anti-racism Education". July 30, 2020.)

**Cultural Competency:** having an awareness of one’s own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families; the ability to understand the within-group differences that make each student unique, while celebrating the between-group variations that make our country a tapestry. (National Education Association. “Why Cultural Competence?” August 27, 2020.)

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**: recognizes the importance of including students’ cultural references in all aspects of learning. (Gloria Ladson-Billings, The Dream Keepers. 1994)

**Culturally Relevant/Responsive Teaching**: the behavioral expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning; an approach that emphasizes using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. (Geneva Gay, Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice. 2000).

**Culturally Relevant Teaching Practices**: expect and yield academic success, help students develop positive ethnic and cultural identities while simultaneously helping them achieve academically, and support students’ ability to recognize, understand, and critique current and past social inequalities.

**Cultural Proficiency**: environments that create opportunities for access, empowerment, and achievement by acknowledging, valuing, advocating, and empowering cultural diversity in all aspects of the educational process. (Adapted from: Cultural Proficiency, A Manual for School Leaders, 2nd Ed. Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell, 2003)

**Diversity:** recognizes differences and respects and values each individual irrelevant of their background including: age, gender, race/ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, and national origin. (Virginia Department of Education. Adapted from the Global Diversity Project. What is Diversity and Inclusion.)

**Education Equity:** eliminating the predictability of student outcomes based on race, gender, zip code, ability, socioeconomic status or languages spoken at home. (Virginia Department of Education. Adapted from the National Equity Project. Educational Equity Definition.)

**Inclusive School Communities:** environments where all students, educators, and families feel supported and are extended a sense of belonging regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, identity, learning preferences, socio-economic status or education. (Adapted from "Inclusive Classroom Climate". Strategic Resources & Digital Publications. The Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning)

**Marginalized Students:** individuals who have been systematically excluded and relegated to lower educational opportunity; in Virginia specifically, those groups of students who are over represented in Virginia Department of Education equity gap data include Black and Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students, English Learners, and students with disabilities. (Virginia Department of Education review of relevant literature and data)

**Racial Equity (Racial Justice):** the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all; not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but also the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity. (Racial Equity Tools Glossary. [www.racialequitytools.org](http://www.racialequitytools.org))

## Professional Development Requirements

High quality professional development in cultural competency must be delivered by individuals who have demonstrated qualifications and credentials in the field. The professional development must be approved and sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education.

Virginia’s objective for Culturally Responsive and Inclusive (CRI) Professional Learning is to equip educators to provide all students opportunities to learn in ways that are relevant to their lived experiences and create cultures of inclusivity and belonging in Virginia schools. Virginia Culturally Responsive and Inclusive (CRI) Professional Learning programs must provide for in person and/or virtual participation by individuals statewide, with opportunities for live interaction and discussion with participants and course leaders.

The CRI Professional Learning Program content must be appropriate for all educators and must specifically be aligned to the following performance standard for teachers set forth in the Board of Education’s Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers: *The teacher demonstrates a commitment to equity and provides instruction and classroom strategies that result in culturally inclusive and responsive learning environments and academic achievement for all students.*

### Competencies of Virginia CRI Professional Development

The professional development must include the following content and competencies:

* apply culturally responsive and anti-biased lenses to teaching and learning to develop educators who are culturally competent.
* embed the critical equity competencies included in the VDOE [EdEquityVA Compass](https://www.virginiaisforlearners.virginia.gov/navigating-edequityva-virginias-roadmap-to-education-equity/):
	+ 1. Continuous Reflection
		2. Courageous Leadership
		3. Curriculum Reframing
		4. Compassionate Student and Family Engagement,
		5. Cultural Responsiveness
* demonstrate strategies for evaluating instructional materials and resources for cultural relevance and inclusiveness.
* ensure that participating educators demonstrate an understanding and application of the following:
	+ Disaggregation of assessment, engagement, behavioral, and attendance data by student groups (including for gender, race, ethnicity, language, and students with disabilities)
	+ Identification and application of differentiated strategies to address growth and learning needs of all students with specific attention to students within gap groups.
	+ Strategies to foster classroom environments that create opportunities for access and achievement by acknowledging, valuing, advocating, and affirming cultural and social diversity in all aspects of the learning process. (including for gender, race, ethnicity, language, orientation, and students with disabilities)
	+ Strategies for establishing and maintaining authentic student and family engagement that is anchored in cultural affirmation and mutual respect.
	+ Strategies for incorporating student and family cultural knowledge into the curriculum.
	+ Strategies that yield academic success for all students while building positive ethnic and cultural identities within students.
	+ Strategies to develop and implement culturally responsive teaching practices (in accordance with the definition on page 4).
	+ Strategies to model and communicate high expectations for all students.
	+ Strategies to develop and identify inclusive curriculum and instructional resources that represent and validate diversity from all rings of culture (including generational, gender, religion, class, nationality, race, ethnicity, native language, ability, and orientation) by connecting classroom curriculum and instruction to the cultural examples, experiences, backgrounds, and traditions of all learners.
	+ Strategies to analyze, select, and integrate texts, materials, and classroom resources that reflect cultural inclusivity and the needs of all students. (including for gender, race, ethnicity, language, orientation, and students with disabilities)
	+ Strategies to utilize students’ culture to shape curriculum and instruction.
	+ Understanding of communication methods that are inclusive of the language, dialects, cultural, social and literacy needs of all students. (including gender, race, ethnicity, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities)
	+ Strategies and resources necessary to teach students the skills needed to communicate and engage with diverse groups in ways that support the eradication of discrimination and bias.
	+ Strategies to mitigate against classroom power imbalances (based on race, ethnicity, gender, identity, ability, and/or socioeconomic status) that perpetuate fear and anxiety of difference.
	+ Strategies to respond with a culturally responsive lens to student behavioral incidents in a way that understands and prevents disproportionality in school discipline caused by disparities in referrals and suspensions. (Refer to new code of conduct policy)
	+ Strategies to connect curricula to students' lives, lived experiences, and real-world issues and support students’ ability to understand and critique social inequities.
	+ Strategies conducive to culturally responsive teaching that is specific to academic subject areas.
	+ Strategies to effectively provide culturally informed trauma response intervention.
	+ Strategies to reflect on one’s cultural lens.

### Requirements and Demonstration of Evidence

Effective July 1, 2021, only the options and evidence set forth in this Guidance outlined below will meet the Culturally Competency requirement for individuals seeking an initial license or license renewal in Virginia. The Virginia Board of Education authorizes the Virginia Department of Education to approve additional professional development programs aligned with the requirements set forth in this Guidance.

Effective July 1, 2021, educators are required to submit evidence of the completion of one of the following options to meet the Culturally Competency requirement for individuals seeking an initial license or license renewal in Virginia:

* Certificate of Successful Completion of the Virginia Department of Education’s Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Educators Professional Learning Program. (provide certificate of completion)
* Certificate of Successful Completion of a Cultural Competency Professional Development program included in the Virginia Department of Education’s published list of approved Cultural Competency Professional Development programs.