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Culturally Responsive Teaching

A 50-State Survey of Teaching Standards

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Introduction

For the first time in our history, students of color make up the majority of students enrolled in U.S. public schools.¹ Yet 65 years after *Brown* tried to pave a fair path for these students, the promise of educational equity remains elusive. Too many students of color are languishing in under-resourced schools, where they lack access to high-level academic courses, enrichment opportunities, quality materials, and adequate facilities.² These resource inequities only begin to scratch the surface, however. It is also the case that too many students of color are held to lower academic standards, subjected to harsh discipline approaches, and taught in ways that overlook or discount their cultural and linguistic assets.³ These and other barriers give way to massive imbalances in academic performance that serve to limit students' life opportunities.

Building a diverse pool of educators who are prepared to demonstrate culturally responsive teaching or relevant teaching (herein CRT)⁴ is critical to reversing underachievement and unlocking the potential of students of color as well as that of other groups of underserved learners. Culturally responsive teaching is an approach that challenges educators to recognize that, rather than deficits, students bring strengths into the classroom that should be leveraged to make learning experiences more relevant to and effective for them. Adopting CRT goes beyond celebrating students' cultural traditions once a year. Educators who practice CRT set rigorous learning objectives for all of their students and they continually build helpful bridges between what students need to learn and their heritage, lived realities, and the issues they care about. In short, culturally responsive teaching is about weaving together rigor and relevance.

What is needed now is a major investment in developing culturally responsive educators, one that goes beyond providing one-off courses or workshops.

The need for culturally responsive teaching is more pressing than ever before, especially when you consider the deep demographic gaps between teachers and students. A teaching workforce that remains overwhelmingly female, white, middle-class, and monolingual is increasingly likely to teach students who are of a different race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, language group, and so on.

Teachers are the drivers of culturally responsive practices in schools and classrooms. But without the appropriate training and support, even the most well-meaning teachers can unwittingly provide instruction that is irrelevant, ineffective, and even antagonistic to today's diverse learners.⁵ Research concludes that recruiting a more racially diverse teaching workforce can dramatically improve cultural responsiveness in schools,⁶ but demographic parity is unlikely to be achieved in the coming years.⁷ Therefore, all teachers, regardless of background, benefit from support in reaching the diverse learners they are likely to serve.

Unfortunately, teacher preparation programs and professional development systems across the country are not sufficiently preparing educators to bring CRT to life in the classroom. Consider: while some educator preparation programs are now required to offer coursework on teaching diverse students,⁸ these courses are often narrow and disconnected from the mainstream curriculum.⁹ In-service support and development fall short as well, as confirmed by teachers themselves. For instance, a 2018 survey of New York City teachers conducted by the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, found that fewer than one in three teachers had received ongoing professional development on how to address issues of race and ethnicity in the classroom.¹⁰

Culturally responsive teaching is about weaving together rigor and relevance.

What is needed now is a major investment in developing culturally responsive educators, one that goes beyond providing one-off courses or workshops. Developing comprehensive professional teaching standards that incorporate expectations for CRT is a foundational step state leaders can take to bolster the focus of CRT in current systems of teacher preparation and development. Not only would such standards ensure that teachers receive clear and consistent messaging about the knowledge, skills, and mindsets needed to be culturally responsive throughout their careers—they would also establish CRT as a formal state priority. Though not a panacea, comprehensive state-level professional teaching standards offer an opportunity to send a bold message that far from being an "add-on" initiative, CRT is integral to the work of all quality teachers.

New America analyzed professional teaching standards in all 50 states to better understand whether states' expectations for teachers incorporate culturally responsive teaching. To support this analysis, we identify eight competencies that

clarify what teachers should know and be able to do in light of research on culturally responsive teaching. Our research finds that while all states already incorporate some aspects of culturally responsive teaching within their professional teaching standards, the majority of states do not yet provide a description of culturally responsive teaching that is clear or comprehensive enough to support teachers in developing and strengthening their CRT practice throughout their careers. As an added resource, we have assembled excerpts from state standards in which CRT is already well articulated, as well a data visualization that describes the prevalence of CRT competencies in teaching standards across states.

Understanding Culturally Responsive Teaching

While the term culturally responsive teaching is gaining popularity, what this approach actually means often depends on who you ask. Researchers have raised concerns that, without the proper guidance, education leaders and individual educators can adopt simplistic views of what it means to teach in culturally responsive ways.¹¹ Moving forward therefore requires that educators and those who support their efforts have a coherent understanding of what culturally responsive teaching does and does not entail.

What is Culturally Responsive Teaching?

Several frameworks exist for culturally responsive approaches (e.g., culturally responsive education, culturally relevant teaching, and culturally congruent teaching), each outlining various components. Capturing the history and broad base of scholarship on CRT is not possible here as there are decades of research and analysis. However, outlining the seminal work of key scholars and teacher educators Gloria Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay, and Django Paris is a necessary starting point.¹²

Over two decades ago, Gloria Ladson-Billings introduced the term *culturally relevant pedagogy* to describe a form of teaching that calls for engaging learners whose experiences and cultures are traditionally excluded from mainstream settings. Based on her research of effective teachers of African American students, Ladson-Billings proposed three goals on which these teachers' practices were grounded. First, teaching must yield academic success. Second, teaching must help students develop positive ethnic and cultural identities while simultaneously helping them achieve academically. Third, teaching must support students' ability "to recognize, understand, and critique current and social inequalities."¹³ By centering these goals in their practice, culturally relevant practitioners can empower students not only intellectually but also socially, emotionally, and politically.

Building on the work of Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay developed a framework with a stronger focus on teachers' strategies and practices—that is, the *doing* of teaching. Gay coined the term *culturally responsive teaching* to define 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."¹⁴ Gay calls on culturally responsive practitioners to make positive changes on multiple levels, including instructional techniques, instructional materials, student-teacher relationships, classroom climate, and self-awareness to improve learning for students. Gay argues that an asset-based view of students is fundamental to

ensuring a higher degree of success from students of various cultural groups. Like Ladson-Billings, Gay also places a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for students to think critically about inequities in their own or their peers' experience.

These scholars promote asset-based approaches as alternatives to popular deficit-oriented teaching methods, which position the languages, cultures, and identities of students as barriers to learning.

More recently, Django Paris expanded on the work of culturally relevant pedagogy to develop a vision for *culturally sustaining pedagogy*, an approach that takes into account the many ways learners' identity and culture evolve. In a 2014 article, Paris and co-author H. Samy Alim posit that culturally sustaining educators not only draw on but also *sustain* students' culture—both static culture (e.g., heritage ways, and home language) and evolving culture.¹⁵ In other words, culturally sustaining educators help students develop a positive cultural identity while teaching math, reading, problem-solving, and civics. Paris also offers a “loving critique” of CRT, arguing that relevance in the curriculum cannot, alone, ensure students will be prepared to live in an increasingly diverse, global world.¹⁶ Paris and Alim maintain that culturally sustaining practice “has as its explicit goal supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers.”¹⁷ This is an important goal at time when schools are increasingly racially segregated and students are grappling with racially motivated bullying.¹⁸

Collectively, these scholars promote asset-based approaches as alternatives to popular deficit-oriented teaching methods, which position the languages, cultures, and identities of students as barriers to learning. While these pedagogies are not identical, they share a common goal: defy the deficit model and ensure students see themselves and their communities reflected and valued in the content taught in school.

What Does Research Say About Culturally Responsive Teaching?

Compelling research highlights the benefits of culturally responsive teaching. For instance, studies in brain science and education find that drawing on learners'

background knowledge shapes comprehension; indeed, all learners process new information best when it is linked to what they already know.¹⁹ Research also illustrates that instructional materials, assignments, and texts that reflect students' backgrounds and experiences are critical to engagement and deep, meaningful learning.²⁰ A smaller, yet promising group of studies evaluating the effectiveness of CRT interventions link this approach to a wide range of positive outcomes such as academic achievement and persistence, improved attendance, greater interest in school, among other outcomes.²¹

Culturally responsive teaching also has critical synergies with other reform efforts in education, such as initiatives to improve school climate and implement social-emotional learning.²² For instance, research shows that students who develop a positive sense of racial and ethnic identity are more interested in befriending people of different backgrounds.²³ Other studies have found that a strong racial-ethnic identity is linked to higher self-esteem, academic attitudes, well-being, and the ability to navigate discrimination.²⁴ Though more rigorous, large-scale studies are needed,²⁵ existing studies already support taking action to boost teachers' cultural responsive practice.

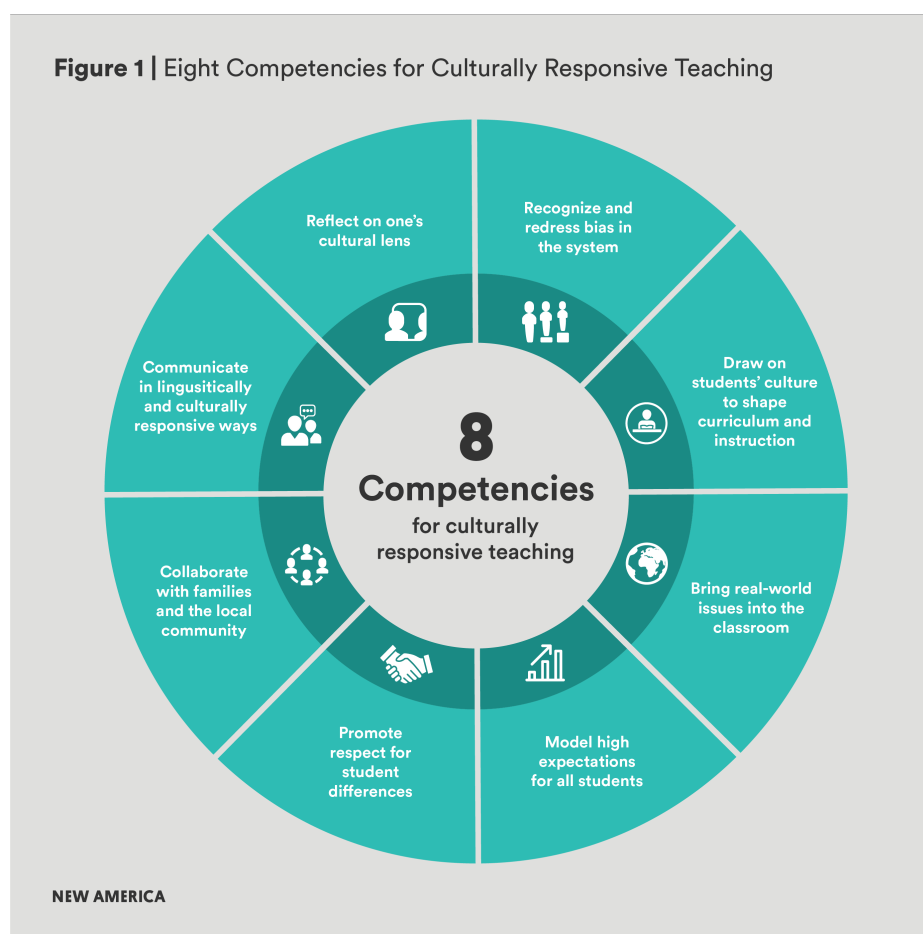
Who is Culturally Responsive Teaching for?

In a culturally responsive classroom, learners' varied identities and experiences are identified, honored, and used to bridge rigorous new learning. This type of individualized instruction benefits *all* students, which is why Gloria Ladson-Billings titled her seminal text on culturally relevant pedagogy: "But That's Just Good Teaching!"²⁶ However, culturally responsive teaching begs the question: Which students do not receive this type of culturally relevant instruction? For Ladson-Billings, the answer is African American students. It remains true that far too many black students have their cultural ways of knowing treated as barriers in the learning process, they have their ability and potential questioned, and they encounter educators who proclaim: "I don't see color!"²⁷

Several scholars have expanded on Ladson-Billings' framework to address learners with other varying and intersecting identities (including based on social class, English proficiency, disability status, LGBTQ status) whose identities and experiences are likewise excluded from mainstream settings.²⁸ It is clear that these students can also benefit from "mirrors" that allow them to see themselves, their experiences, and their communities in school. For these and other students culturally responsive teaching also provides critical "windows" into the cultural heritage and experiences of others. In an increasingly diverse society, all students benefit from learning to honor their own, and one another's cultural heritage and lived realities.

Teacher Competencies that Promote Culturally Responsive Teaching

Bringing together insights from extensive research on culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining pedagogies, New America developed eight common competencies of culturally responsive educators (see **Figure 1**). Though not an exhaustive list, these interconnected competencies illustrate the common skills and knowledge that research and theory in the field suggests are critical to enacting culturally responsive teaching with fidelity, across grade levels and subject areas. These competencies were used to guide our scan of teaching standards, which is described in Section 5 (“**Integration of CRT in State Professional Teaching Standards**”) of this report.



Competency 1: Reflect on one's cultural lens

Culturally responsive educators routinely reflect on their own life experiences and membership in various social groups (such as by race, ethnicity, social class, and gender), and they ask themselves how these factors influence their beliefs about cultural diversity. They understand that they, like everyone, can unwittingly adopt societal biases that can shape the nature of their interactions with students, families, and colleagues. Therefore, they actively work to develop *cultural competency*: understanding, sensitivity, and appreciation for the history, values, experiences, and lifestyles of other cultures. They also gain comfort having critical conversations and challenging stereotypes and prejudices when they encounter them. Though becoming critical and self-aware can be difficult and uncomfortable, particularly for educators who have never explored their ethnic and racial identities, research shows that actions such as guided reflection, reflective journaling, and group discussions can help educators overcome those feelings.²⁹

Competency 2: Recognize and redress bias in the system

Culturally responsive educators seek to deepen their understanding of how social markers (such as race, ethnicity, social class, and language) influence the educational opportunities that learners receive. Sonia Nieto suggests that teachers ask questions like: “Where are the best teachers assigned?” “Which students take advanced courses?” and “Where are resources allocated?”³⁰ Teachers further engage with literature and professional learning opportunities to learn more about how institutional racism and other forms of bias (e.g., racism, sexism, homophobia, and classism) at an institutional level can result in disadvantaging some groups of learners while privileging others. Teachers who are informed about institutional bias, accept that not all learners are equally rewarded for their hard work. They advocate for the disruption of harmful school and district-level practices, policies, and norms. Conversely, teachers who are poorly informed about institutional biases may blame learners and perceived cultural deficiencies for academic achievement disparities.

Competency 3: Draw on students’ culture to share curriculum and instruction

Central to culturally responsive teaching is the belief that students’ cultural background is a resource to learning. Believing this to be true, culturally responsive teachers plan learning encounters that validate students’ lived realities, cultural identities, and heritage. Although school districts and schools traditionally select formal curricula, culturally responsive teachers strive to evaluate all textbooks and instructional materials they use to ensure they do not perpetuate stereotypes or fail to represent diverse groups. They complement the traditional curriculum with examples, newspaper clippings, articles, song lyrics, plays, comics, video games, and other resources that reflect experiences, characters, settings, and themes their students can relate to. They deploy *cultural*

scaffolding by providing links between academic concepts and the experiences that are familiar to students. In addition to providing “mirrors” reflecting students’ familiar world, teachers provide “windows” into the history, traditions, and experiences of other cultures and groups.

Competency 4: Bring real-world issues into the classroom

Culturally responsive teachers address the “so what?” factor of instruction by helping students see how the knowledge and skills they learn in school are valuable for their lives, families, and communities. They ask: “What does this material have to do with your lives?” “Does this knowledge connect to an issue you care about?” and “How can you use this information to take action?” Culturally responsive educators employ lessons and regularly assign projects that require learners to identify complex, real-world issues they encounter in their daily lives and propose solutions for these problems. For example, elementary school students might learn about environmental injustice and devise a plan for cleaning up a local river;³¹ middle school students might learn to apply math concepts to an analysis of racial inequities in traffic stop data in their community;³² and high school students might engage in a Socratic seminar to explore solutions to the police brutality experienced by their community.³³ Learners in these culturally responsive classrooms, learn to see themselves as agents of change who aspire for a better world.

Competency 5: Model high expectations for all students

Culturally responsive educators adopt the view that all students are capable of academic success, a belief that research shows is critical to supporting student growth.³⁴ These educators do not assume some students will inevitably underperform on the basis of their race, culture, or other group difference. They understand that students of color and other marginalized students are particularly vulnerable to negative stereotypes about their intelligence, academic ability, and behavior, which can hobble their academic performance.³⁵ Therefore, they support all students in producing high-level work by scaffolding instruction; for instance, by using culturally relevant materials (competency 3). Research has identified many other behaviors that communicate high expectations. These include using eye contact and proximity with both high-achieving and struggling learners; ensuring language, gestures, and expressions communicate that students’ opinions are important; and of course, ensuring all students have access to a rigorous core curriculum.³⁶

Competency 6: Promote respect for students differences

CRT practices are best implemented in environments that are respectful, inclusive, and help learners value the cultures of their peers. Educators contribute to such learning environments by modeling how to engage across difference and embodying respect for social, cultural, and linguistic differences.

Culturally responsive educators assess how learners from different backgrounds experience the environment and encourage students to reflect on their own experience with bias. These educators help students develop a sense of responsibility in addressing mistreatment, prejudice, injustice, and bullying when they encounter it. Research finds that when students face discrimination, they may develop feelings of frustration, anger, and unworthiness that can result in low achievement, dropout tendencies, and behavioral problems. On the other hand, a caring school community where students feel a sense of belonging can contribute to stronger academic performance.³⁷

Competency 7: Collaborate with families and the local community

A strong home-school partnership is critical to supporting academic success,³⁸ but it can be difficult for educators to engage families and community members if there are demanding schedules, inconvenient meeting locations and times, or past trauma in interfacing with school.³⁹ Culturally responsive educators assume that parents are interested in being involved in their children's education and they develop engagement strategies that are sensitive to the unique barriers faced by immigrant families, families of color, and low-income families. Because schools have traditionally privileged the input and collaboration of families from dominant backgrounds, culturally responsive educators aim to develop the trust of diverse families to ensure they are involved at all levels of their child's education throughout the year. Moreover, they continually seek to learn more about the local community as well as families and their cultures and values, and they collaborate with local agencies and organizations to arrange resources for students and families. Overall, these educators see themselves as members of the community, and they see teaching as a way to give back to the community.

Competency 8: Communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive ways

When educators communicate in culturally sensitive ways, students and families feel more welcome and inclined to participate in schools. Too often, however, miscommunication can occur between white teachers who value passive and indirect, European styles of communication and students who come from cultures that prefer frank, direct, and participatory styles of communication.⁴⁰ The communication styles of black students, in particular, can be misconstrued as adversarial or defiant, which can lead to over-disciplining.⁴¹ Therefore, culturally responsive teachers seek to understand how culture influences communication, both in verbal ways (e.g., the tone of voice, rhythm, and vocabulary usage) and nonverbal ways (e.g., the amount of space between speaker and listener, eye contact, body movements, and gestures). Culturally responsive teachers also work to honor and accommodate home languages, including by advocating for translation services and resources in various languages.

Using Professional Teaching Standards to Promote Culturally Responsive Teaching

Since the 1990s, professional teaching standards have played an important role in the way teachers are prepared and developed. Today, all 50 states use professional teaching standards to articulate what teachers in their state should know and be able to do.⁴² States rely on professional standards to anchor teacher preparation coursework, pre-service field experiences, licensure assessments, induction programming, systems of evaluation, and professional development requirements for in-service growth and licensure renewal. Given their important role, professional teaching standards offer an opportunity to ensure a strong focus on culturally responsive practices throughout teachers' careers. Several national organizations have made progress in embedding responsive teaching practices into their own professional teaching standards. For their part, a few states have developed free-standing standards explicitly focused on teachers' cultural competencies. This section provides an overview of these efforts.

Culturally Responsive Teaching in National Models

In 1992, the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) articulated the *Model Standards for Beginning Teacher Licensing, Assessment and Development: A Resource for State Dialogue*. These standards were revised in 2011, as the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards, to define what *all* teachers "should know and be able to do to ensure every K-12 student reaches the goal of being ready to enter college or the workforce in today's world."⁴³ In 2013, the Learning Progressions for Teachers were developed to supplement the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards by describing levels of teacher practice across a continuum of development, from beginning to advanced teaching.⁴⁴

It is notable that the InTASC Model Core Teaching standards include a strong focus on teaching diverse groups of learners. Standards now describe desirable teacher behaviors such as demonstrating respect for children's cultures, offering classroom instruction that accommodates the cultures of the children in it, and avoiding personal bias when interacting with learners. The InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards have gained currency in the field and are used by the majority of states in some way. For example, some states draw from these standards in developing their own, while others adopt these standards with no significant changes (see **Appendix B** for a list of standards reviewed for all 50 states). The national accrediting body, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), endorses the InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards, ensuring all CAEP accredited preparation program across the country are aligned to these standards.⁴⁵

To a lesser extent, standards developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) have also informed the development of states' standards. Based on a comprehensive set of standards established in the late 1980s by the NBPTS, initial National Board Certification is a rigorous process that requires teachers to submit extensive evidence (videos, lesson plans, student work, reflections, etc.) of their positive effect on student learning to an external assessor—a much higher bar than other teacher licensure requirements in nearly every state.⁴⁶ Developed for all grade levels and disciplines, the standards are based around five core propositions that “describe what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do to have a positive impact on student learning.”⁴⁷ Current National Board propositions, updated in 2016, advise teachers to embrace diversity in the learning environment, connect students with cultural experiences, and recognize their own biases.⁴⁸

Freestanding Culturally Responsive Teaching Standards

Alaska and Washington State are unusual in that they have prioritized CRT by developing and implementing a stand-alone set of teaching standards that focus on the knowledge and skills that are crucial to culturally responsive teaching. While Alaska and Washington take different approaches to how standards are embedded into their state's programs and policies, both states' CRT-related standards are intended to reach all teachers throughout their careers.

Alaska's State Board of Education & Early Development adopted the Cultural Standards for Educators in 2010. These standards form part of the *Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools*, developed in 1998 by the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRI).⁴⁹ Regulation requires that the Cultural Standards for Educators are integrated into teacher preparation programs, and four of the five standards are linked to teacher evaluation processes. In 2012, the *Guide to Implementing the Alaska Cultural Standards for Educators* was developed in collaboration with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, the Alaska Comprehensive Center, Alaska Native Educators, and Education Northwest to support school leaders and educators in implementing the standards. This guide includes rubrics to support teacher self-reflection and is not intended for evaluation.⁵⁰ An additional guide, *Culture in the Classroom: Standards, Indicators, and Evidences for Evaluating Culturally Responsive Teaching*, published in 2015, does include rubrics and guidelines to support evaluation.⁵¹

In Washington, the state Legislature charged its Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) with identifying model standards for cultural competency, in partnership with the Education Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee in 2009. This partnership yielded the *Cultural Competency Standards*, which were adopted by PESB in 2010 and integrated into educator preparation programs as well as standards for teachers and school leaders.⁵² Legislation also

requires that standards for cultural competency be linked to the continuum of teacher preparation, induction, and career-long development.⁵³

Professional Standards and Alignment

It is critical to note that while all state teaching standards offer an opportunity to better prepare and develop teachers to employ culturally responsive teaching, standards that form part of an aligned, coherent system of pre-service and in-service training offer the most powerful opportunity. Unfortunately, variation exists in how states use their teaching standards and how embedded they are into their system of teacher preparation and development. Though a few states have taken steps to ensure standards are part of an integrated, coherent system by extending them across a teacher's career (see **Alignment Spotlight** for details), in many states teaching standards are not well integrated across the career continuum. For instance, a 2016 New America review of 21 state-developed teacher evaluation systems found that less than half of states provide resources that highlight how teaching standards are integrated into their evaluation systems for in-service teachers.⁵⁴

→ ALIGNMENT SPOTLIGHT

Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Utah are a few of the states that are notable for their alignment of teaching standards. Each of these states ensure that their teachers receive consistent expectations, aligned to their state's teaching standards, throughout their careers.

The **Massachusetts** Professional Standards for Teachers (PSTs) serve as the foundation for its preparation programs, helping to shape program design and course offerings and feedback for student teaching; they are aligned to the state's licensure exams. Once teachers enter the classroom, the PSTs are aligned to the state's educator evaluation system, the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework. This level of alignment ensures teachers in Massachusetts are prepared, evaluated, and supported under consistent expectations throughout their careers.⁵⁵

In **New Mexico**, the NM Teacher Competencies serve as the foundation for a three-tiered licensure system which supports educators as they advance from provisional to professional to master teachers. To progress to the next level of licensure, teachers must develop a personalized professional growth plan. Educators use the NM Teacher Competencies and Indicators to set learning growth goals in their focus area and to create strategies to meet

those goals. Based on their growth plans, educators participate in personalized professional learning opportunities throughout the school year, including conferences, online courses, and professional learning communities. They must provide evidence of mastery in growth areas to move onto the next tier.⁵⁶

Similarly, regulations require that **Utah** Effective Teaching Standards are linked to the work of that state's preparation programs and expectations for licensure, as well as the screening, hiring, induction, and mentoring of beginning teachers. These standards are also aligned to Utah's evaluation and tiered-licensing system. Finally, the state is tasked with providing resources, including professional learning opportunities, to assist local educational agencies in bringing these standards to life in classrooms.⁵⁷

Integration of CRT in State Professional Teaching Standards

Gathering and Analyzing Standards

New America collected and reviewed publicly available standards documents in all 50 states,⁵⁸ which describe the pedagogical knowledge and skills expected of all teachers, regardless of grade level or subject area.⁵⁹ Standards relevant to culturally responsive teaching were examined for two states: Alaska and Washington. Also analyzed were the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) standards, given that 12 documents reviewed here reflect these standards without any significant changes.⁶⁰ Our review of standards focused on the extent to which state standards explicitly address the eight CRT competencies of interest (see [Appendix A](#) for our full methodology and [Appendix B](#) for a list of each state's teaching standards).

Findings: Culturally Responsive Teaching Competencies Across States

A close reading of state teaching standards revealed that all states embed some combination of the key CRT competencies into their standards, though some competencies are more widely addressed than others. All 50 states, for example, address family and community engagement (competency 7) by describing teacher actions such as: engaging families in setting goals for students, using family contacts to learn more about students' cultural background, and confronting cultural barriers to family and community engagement. States also widely expect teachers to exhibit high expectations for all students (47 states; competency 5), though no state explicitly addressed how low expectations are commonly associated with race, class, culture, language, gender and sexual orientation, or disability status.

All 50 states embed some combination of the key CRT competencies into their standards.

The majority of states expect teachers to promote respect for student diversity (46 states; competency 6) and link curriculum or instructional practices to students' culture (45 states; competency 3). States describe varied activities for competency 4 such as: setting clear rules to respect individuals and individual differences, respecting the value of students' home language, and preparing students to participate in a globally interconnected and diverse society. Activities described for competency 3 include: employing learners' diversity and culture as assets for teaching and learning, planning learning experiences that teach the contributions of people of diverse cultures and backgrounds, and planning lessons that address bias and stereotyping about cultures. Teachers' ability to engage in cultural or linguistically sensitive communication (36 states; competency 8) and bring real-world issues into the classroom (28 states; competency 4) received less attention, though the majority of states still addressed these competencies to some degree. Activities described for these competencies include: engaging in culturally proficient communication with families about student performance and expanding learners' ability to understand local and global issues, respectively.

Slightly more than half of all states (28) call on teachers to reflect on their own cultural lens and potential biases in this lens.

While almost all states include standards or elements that broadly highlight the importance of ongoing self-analysis and reflection in improving teachers' practice, only 28 states explicitly call on teachers to reflect on their own cultural lens and potential biases in this lens (competency 1). Specifically, state standards ask teachers to: analyze their cultural backgrounds and worldviews, recognize biases they may hold and their effect on relationships with students and families, and recognize how common societal "isms" (e.g., racism, sexism, and classism) can influence on their own attitudes.

Only three states explicitly advise that teachers acquire knowledge about institutional biases.

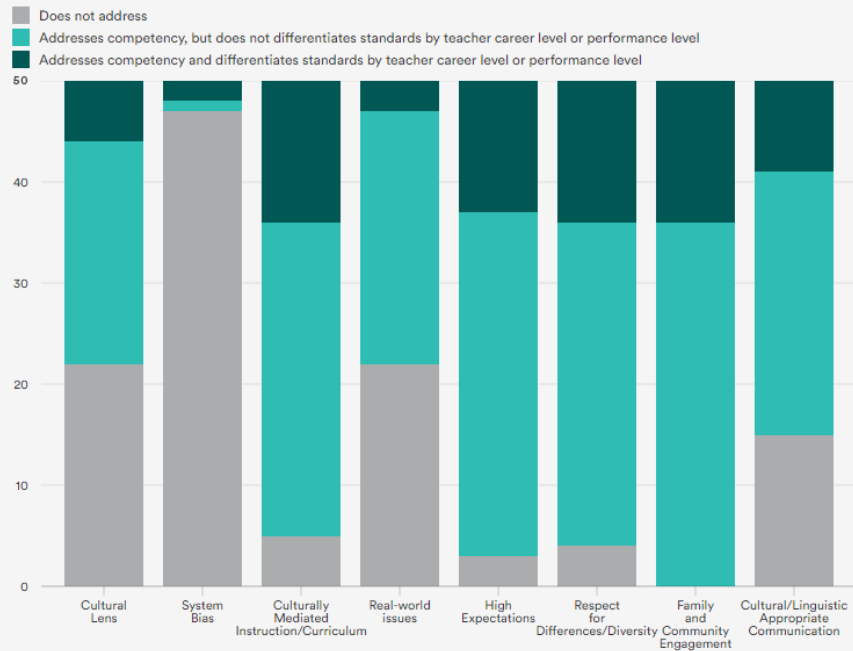
Overall, competency 2 received the least attention in states' teaching standards. While a many states account for teachers' responsibility in prompting school improvements or advancing "educational equity" to some extent, only three states (Alabama, Washington, and Minnesota) explicitly advise their teachers to become abreast of institutional biases (competency 2).⁶¹ These states describe activities such as: understanding structural privileges and how they impact educational practices and organizations, learning to deal with institutional racism and sexism, and empowering learners to analyze and overcome the effect of institutional bias.

Some teaching standards stand out for their tremendous depth and nuance, while others are broad and vague in their approach.

Though all states embed some combination of the culturally responsive competencies, we found variation in how much detail states included: some teaching standards documents stand out for their tremendous depth and nuance, while others are broad and vague in their approach. Our review revealed that standards documents are typically composed of *standards*⁶² (big-picture statements that identify what teachers need to know and do) and *elements*⁶³ (finer-grain statements that describe how teachers need can meet the standards), but only a few states articulate a *continuum of practice* that delineates what teachers should know and be able to do at various levels of development.⁶⁴

Figure 2 displays how many states address each of the eight competencies and differentiates between states that employ a continuum of practice. Overall, a much smaller share of states we reviewed address competencies through varied levels.

Figure 2 | What Culturally Responsive Competencies do State Teaching Standards Address?



Source: New America's analysis based on standard documents reviewed. See Appendix A for the Methodology and Appendix B for the full list of standards documents reviewed.

Note: Washington and Alaska each had two standards documents that were reviewed for this chart; see Appendix B for the full list of standards documents reviewed.

Generally, we find that standards that are not accompanied by a continuum of practice address the CRT competencies less substantially. For instance, Kansas, a state that does not feature a continuum of practice, meets competency 3 by requiring teachers to “know how to apply a range of developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate instructional strategies to achieve learning goals.” While this element certainly raises the need to draw from learners’ culture when planning instructional strategies, the statement does not capture the actual instructional shift that is needed to ensure that varied cultures are represented in the classroom.

Similarly, New York addresses competency 3 by asking teachers to be “responsive to the economic, social, cultural, linguistic, family, and community factors that influence their students’ learning,” yet the state does not provide an additional element that captures how teachers are supposed to be “responsive to” students’ “cultural factors.” Rhode Island likewise requires teachers to “design instruction that accommodates individual differences (e.g., stage of development, learning style, English language acquisition, cultural background, learning disability) in approaches to learning,” but it provides no other elements to elaborate on this competency. Both of these states, like Kansas, outline broad goals but not

approaches to achieve those goals. Reasonably, a lack of specificity makes it difficult for educators to act upon the expectations.

Professional standards that are accompanied by a continuum of practice take a more granular approach, outlining numerous elements that describe the various competencies in greater specificity while avoiding broad statements that can be interpreted in multiple ways.

By contrast, we find that professional standards that are accompanied by a continuum of practice take a more granular approach, outlining numerous elements that describe the various competencies in greater specificity while avoiding broad statements that can be interpreted in multiple ways. Alabama, for instance, has developed the *Alabama Continuum for Teacher Development* to support teachers in enacting the Alabama Quality Teaching Standards. This resource defines five levels at which teachers can meet competency 3, each level increasing in complexity. The state requires all teachers to “develop culturally responsive curriculum and instruction in response to differences in individual experiences, cultural, ethnic, gender, and linguistic diversity, and socio-economic status.” To embody this competency, a teacher at the Beginning/Pre-Service level⁶⁵ “selects instructional strategies, resources, and technologies with some consideration for diverse learners.” Educators who strengthen their practice and move to the Applying level employ “lessons that teach the contributions of people of diverse cultures and backgrounds and that provide opportunities for learners to develop understandings, empathy, multiple perspectives, and self-knowledge.” At this level, a teacher also “invites learners to contribute resources that augment curriculum and reflect culture and other aspects of diversity.” A more accomplished, Innovating-level educator take a leadership role and “models and coaches colleagues in expanding culturally responsive curriculum and instruction in school and district.”

By providing graduated levels of teacher performance, states make clear that teachers are expected to grow and develop competency 3 as they advance from novices to teacher-leaders. When state standards provide this kind of comprehensive picture of what each CRT competency 3 entails, they can also serve as a tool to support growth. Thus, while it is encouraging to see that states are addressing many of the competencies, it is important to consider which states

are addressing the competencies more extensively by providing more fine-grained guidance.

Figure 3 shows which competencies are addressed by each state’s standards. Like Figure 2, it highlights states that differentiate their standards by level of teacher development or performance level. Overall, states with the most specific and detailed account of the competencies include Alabama, California, and Washington’s Cultural Competency Standards. All of these standards include a continuum of practice and comprehensively address the pedagogical skills, knowledge, and dispositions that embody the eight competencies.

State by State Comparison

- Does not address
- Addresses competency, but does not differentiate standards by teacher career level or performance level
- Addresses competency and differentiates standards by teacher career level or performance level

State	Cultural Lens	System Bias	Culturally Mediated Instruction/Curriculum	Real-world Issues	High Expectations
Alabama	Green	Green	Green	White	Green
Alaska	White	White	Blue	White	Blue
Alaska (Cultural Standards)	White	White	Green	White	Green
Arizona	Blue	White	Blue	Blue	Blue
Arkansas	Blue	White	Blue	Blue	Blue
California	Green	White	Green	White	Green
Colorado	White	White	Green	White	Green
Connecticut	Green	White	Green	White	Green
Delaware	Blue	White	Blue	White	Blue
Florida	White	White	White	White	Blue
Georgia	White	White	White	White	White
Hawaii	Blue	White	Blue	Blue	Blue
Idaho	Blue	White	Blue	White	Blue
Illinois	Blue	White	Blue	White	Blue
Indiana	White	White	Blue	Blue	Blue
Iowa	White	White	White	White	Blue
Kansas	White	White	Blue	Blue	Blue
Kentucky	White	White	Blue	Blue	Blue

To view the interactive table, please visit newamerica.org/culturally-responsive-teaching/

Excerpts from Excellent Teaching Standards Documents

To provide deeper insight into states' CRT-focused standards, New America has outlined examples of state standards, organized across the eight competencies of culturally responsive teaching. These excerpts were chosen for their level of clarity and detail and are intended to serve as examples of exemplary language to states aiming to improve their own.

Competency 1: Reflect on one's cultural lens

- Throughout their Continuum for Teacher Development, **Alabama** sets a clear expectation that teachers ought to develop an awareness of their cultural positioning and how it informs their practice. For instance, an Alabama teacher “demonstrates and applies to own practice an understanding of how personal and cultural biases can affect teaching and learning.” To meet this element at the Pre-Service/Beginning-level, a teacher must become “aware of the need to consider own assumptions, attitudes, and expectations about learners,” and “begins to reflect on possible personal biases and their impact on learning.” To advance to the Applying level, a teacher not only “reads, attends workshops, and asks questions of people different from self to raise understanding of diverse cultures and backgrounds,” but also “implements instructional strategies that avoid use of bias, stereotypes, and generalizations and reflect current understanding of own personal/cultural biases.”
- Like Alabama, the **InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards** cover the need for teachers to analyze their cultural frames and potential biases in these frames. These standards expect that a teacher “understands how personal identity, worldview, and prior experience affect perceptions and expectations, and recognizes how they may bias behaviors and interactions with others.” Additionally, they expect that a teacher “reflects on his/her personal biases and accesses resources to deepen his/her own understanding of cultural, ethnic, gender, and learning differences to build stronger relationships and create more relevant learning experiences.” According to the **InTASC Learning Progressions for Teachers**, a more advanced teacher “assists others in exploring how personal identity can affect perceptions and assists them in reflecting upon their personal biases in order to act more fairly.”
- The **Washington** Cultural Competency Standards address teachers' cultural self-awareness most extensively. These standards dedicate Component 3 (“Reflective Practice, Self-Awareness, and Anti-Bias”) to

this competency, stating that a teacher should develop an “awareness of one’s own cultural background and how it influences perception, values, and practices.” Washington also asks its teachers to develop an understanding of “unearned-privilege,” a concept no other state covers. Specifically, teachers are expected to understand how advantages, or privileges, can be “created by social structure, i.e., race/ethnicity, national origin/language, sex and gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical/developmental ability, socioeconomic class,” and how these advantages have an “impact on the educator-student [sic] relationship.”

Competency 2: Recognize and redress bias in the system

- **Alabama** is one of only three states (along with **Washington** and **Minnesota**) that explicitly discuss institutional biases. For instance, an Integrating-level teacher in the state “collaborates with colleagues to overcome some of the effects of institutional biases in the classroom by using strategies that include but are not limited to flexible grouping, differentiation, providing broader, curricular perspectives, and using alternative assessments.” A more advanced Innovating-level teacher “takes leadership with colleagues in influencing school culture on issues of race, culture, gender, linguistic background, and socio-economic status.” Moreover, Alabama is one of the few states whose standards specifically highlight the need for teachers to empower learners to themselves “recognize, analyze, and overcome the effects of institutional bias.” For their part, an Integrating-level teacher “structures opportunities for individual learners and groups to surface viewpoints regarding personal and cultural biases based on experience and other evidence in the classroom and the school.”
- In our review, Cultural Competency standards in **Washington** stand out as having the most extensive content related to teachers’ understanding of and commitment to redressing institutional biases. These standards ask that the professional teacher “understands the difference between prejudice, discrimination, racism, and how to operate at the interpersonal, intergroup, and institutional levels.” All teachers are expected to have the “ability to find and use tools, processes and programs that promote professional [and] organizational self-examination, and assessment in order to mitigate behaviors and practices (e.g., racism, sexism, homophobia, unearned-privilege, euro-centrism, etc.) that undermine inclusion, equity, and cultural competence in education.” To reach the Career level, teachers must understand “the need for social advocacy and social action to better empower diverse students and communities.” Washington joins Alabama in recognizing the need for teachers to engage students in an analysis of inequities, stating that teachers should be

“helping students accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities schools perpetuate.”

Competency 3: Draw on students' culture to shape curriculum and instruction

- **Alabama** includes in its Continuum for Teacher Development an expansive overview of culturally mediated instruction. Teachers are expected to develop “culturally responsive curriculum and instruction in response to differences in individual experiences, cultural, ethnic, gender, and linguistic diversity, and socioeconomic status.” Standards ask that teachers make “curriculum and content standards meaningful to diverse learners by designing differentiated instructional activities that specifically connect to and reflect learners’ culture and background.” According to the standards, teachers should develop lessons that “teach the contributions of people of diverse cultures and backgrounds,” and “provide opportunities for learners to develop understandings, empathy, multiple perspectives, and self-knowledge.” Taking on leadership responsibilities, an Innovating-level teacher “models and coaches colleagues in expanding culturally responsive curriculum and instruction in school and district,” and “builds capacity in learners and colleagues to utilize the assets that each learner brings to the learning community based on their backgrounds and experiences.” Alabama stands out for asking teachers to involve students authentically, requiring, for example, that teachers ask students to contribute resources to “augment the curriculum” and gauge how students feel the curriculum reflects relevance in their lives.
- Through several standards and elements, **Alaska’s Guide to Implementing the Alaska’s Cultural Standards for Educators** strongly emphasizes the need for teachers to “ground all teaching in a constructive process built on a local cultural foundation.” For instance, Standard A affirms that “culturally-responsive educators incorporate local ways of knowing and teaching in their work,” while Standard B calls on them to “use the local environment and community resources on a regular basis to link what they are teaching to the everyday lives of the students.” Teachers at all levels are expected to “continuously learn about and build upon the cultural knowledge that students bring with them from their homes and community,” and “seek to learn the local heritage language and promote its use in their teaching.” Alaska joins **New Mexico, Minnesota, Montana,** and **Hawaii** in including specific provisions that address their respective state’s indigenous populations. Alaska provides detailed information about Alaska Native students and advises its Exemplary-level

educators to embed “student learning in the community’s natural cycle of people, ceremonies, and place into classroom lessons and activities,” as well as to invite “Elders and other local residents into classroom activities to demonstrate cultural knowledge for students.

- At five different levels of development, **California** describes the expectation that all teachers “connect learning to students’ prior knowledge, backgrounds, life experiences, and interests.” To address this element, an Applying-level teacher “uses school resources and family contacts to expand understanding of students’ prior knowledge, cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and interests to connect to student learning.” An Innovating-level teacher “uses extensive information regarding students and their communities systematically and flexibly throughout instruction.” California is one of a few states (along with **North Carolina** and **Washington**) that explicitly attend to potential sources of bias in lesson design. For instance, a California Integrating-level teacher ensures that “planning addresses bias, stereotyping, and assumptions about cultures and members of cultures.”
- **Washington's** Cultural Competency standards include a wealth of information about culturally responsive instruction and curriculum. These standards call for teachers to recognize the “importance of understanding the deep knowledge that students bring to the classroom from families and their cultures,” as well as “the history of culture and cultures in the United States.” Beginning at the Pre-Service level, these teachers are expected to “understand students’ families, cultures, and communities,” and use “this information as a basis for connecting instruction to students’ experiences.” At the Induction-level, teachers engage in “a learning community in order to critically reflect on and examine culturally relevant instructional practices,” while teachers who have reached the Career level, share “culturally relevant instructional practices and insights with learning communities.” Included among the skills for teachers is a strong emphasis on their ability to evaluate resources for diverse learners. For instance, an Induction-level teacher “uses evaluative practices to review curricula, textbooks, and instructional materials for cultural appropriateness,” and “reviews instructional materials to ensure that they are unbiased, representative, and relevant to learners.”

Competency 4: Bring real-world issues into the classroom

- The **InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards** have a strong focus on teachers' ability to connect academic concepts to real-world issues. Under Standard 5 (“Application of Content”), teachers are expected to engage

learners in “applying content knowledge to real-world problems through the lens of interdisciplinary themes,” as well as “connecting application of concepts from more than one content area to real-world problems, community needs, and/or service learning.” The **InTASC Learning Progressions for Teachers** articulate that a more advanced educator “guides learners in developing possible solutions to real-world problems through invention, combinations of ideas, or other creative approaches,” while the most sophisticated educator “structures options that engage learners in independently and collaboratively focusing on a real-world problem or issue, carrying out the design for a solution, and communicating their work.”

- **Missouri** standards make clear that teachers are expected to link content to real-world issues in Quality Indicator 5 (“Diverse social and cultural perspectives”). A Proficient teacher “builds background knowledge from a variety of perspectives critical to fostering innovation, solving global challenges, and assuring a healthy democracy,” while a Distinguished teacher “facilitates student action to address real-world problems from a variety of perspectives related to the discipline that improve their community and/or world.”
- An strong emphasis on the “21st Century Context” is woven throughout **West Virginia’s** standards, which ask that teaching is done “through the use of relevant real-world examples, applications and settings to frame academic content for students,” and by making “connections between instruction and the real world outside the classroom both now and in the future.” Teachers in West Virginia are charged with enabling students “to see the connection between their studies and the world in which they live.” Most explicitly, a Distinguished teacher “engages students in collaborative solving of real-world problems,” so that “learners in the 21st century will understand all content at high levels of thinking and in the context of real-world applications.”

Competency 5: Model high expectations for all students

- **California** dedicates an entire element under Standard 2 (“Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments”) to the use of high expectations. Element 2.4 involves “creating a rigorous learning environment with high expectations and appropriate support for all students.” Beginning at the Emerging level, a California teacher is expected to develop an awareness of “the importance of maintaining high expectations for students,” while an Exploring-level teacher “works to maintain high expectations for students while becoming aware of achievement patterns for individuals and groups of students.” A more advanced, Integrating-level teacher

“integrates strategic scaffolds and technologies throughout instruction that support the full range of learners in meeting high expectations for achievement.” An additional indicator under this element involves using “scaffolds to address achievement gaps.”

- **Ohio** advises its teachers to “expect that all students will achieve to their full potential.” In addressing this element, Proficient teachers “establish and clearly communicate high expectations for all students through such actions as focusing on students’ positive traits and conveying a belief in their abilities.” At the Accomplished level, “teachers set specific and challenging expectations for each individual student and each learning activity.” At the Distinguished level, teachers take on a leadership role and “assist other educators in their school and district in setting high expectations for all students.”
- **West Virginia** standards address teachers’ expectations of learners in some level of detail. A West Virginia teacher, not only “sets high expectations based on a conceptual understanding of what is developmentally appropriate for all students,” but also “establishes a learner-centered culture that allows all students to be successful while respecting their differences in learning styles, as well as socio-economic, cultural, and developmental characteristics.” The state dedicates Indicator 3B1 under Standard 3 (“Teaching”) to teacher expectations, stating that a Distinguished teacher “clearly and regularly communicates the belief that all students can master the learning targets and offers support for students in self-direction.”

Competency 6: Model and promote respect for student differences

- **California** standards are explicit about the need for teachers to engender respect for student diversity in the classroom. An Exploring-level teacher “seeks to understand cultural perceptions of caring community,” while an Applying-level teacher “incorporates cultural awareness to develop a positive classroom climate.” More advanced teachers are expected to foster classrooms where students “promote respect and appreciation for differences,” and “take leadership in resolving conflict and creating a fair and respectful classroom community where students’ [sic] home culture is included and valued.”
- **Ohio** provides an expansive overview of how teachers are expected to engender respect for student differences. The state’s standards make it clear that all teachers are expected to “model respect for students’ diverse cultures, language skills, and experiences.” To address this element, Proficient teachers “set clear rules to respect individuals and individual

differences and avoid the use of bias, stereotypes, and generalizations in their classroom.” Along with **Alabama, California, and Washington**, Ohio is one of the few states that explicitly call attention to the importance of avoiding stereotypes and generalizations in the classroom. In addition, Accomplished teachers in Ohio “foster a learning community in which individual differences and perspectives are respected,” while Distinguished teachers “challenge disrespectful attitudes by modeling behavior for others and working to ensure that all students are recognized and valued.” Ohio standards further address the area of linguistic diversity, stating that teachers must “respect and value the native languages and dialects of their students.”

- **Washington's** Cultural Competency Standards are one of the few standards that specifically call attention to the critical social markers of race and ethnicity throughout various standards and elements. These standards say that an Induction-level teacher in Washington “recognizes students’ internal strengths, respects their identities, and supports cultural (including racial and ethnic) identity development through his or her attitudes and actions.” Meanwhile, Career-level teachers “appraise their classroom organization, environment, and management routines to ensure that they are free of cultural biases and equitable to students from all cultural backgrounds.” Inside and outside of the classroom, a Washington teacher “promotes policies and practices that demonstrate respect for difference and promote equity and social justice for all students.” Moreover, these teachers consider “how students from different backgrounds experience the classroom, school, or district.”

Competency 7: Collaborating with families and the local community

- **Alaska's** *Guide to Implementing Alaska's Cultural Standards for Educators* emphasizes the importance of collaborating with families and communities in tremendous depth. The standards affirm that “culturally-responsive educators work closely with parents to achieve a high level of complementary educational expectations between home and school.” Educators who meet this cultural standard both “involve Elders, parents, and local leaders in all aspects of instructional planning and implementation” and “promote extensive community and parental interaction and involvement in their children’s education.” Alaska standards also stand out for highlighting the importance of extending learning into the community. Teachers are advised to “regularly engage students in appropriate projects and experiential learning activities in the surrounding environment,” and to “utilize traditional settings such as camps as learning environments for transmitting both cultural and academic knowledge and skills.”

- **California** standards have a clear focus on engaging families as leaders and sources of information about students' cultural strengths. Specifically, an Exploring-level teacher “acknowledges the importance of the family’s role in student learning,” and “seeks information about cultural norms of families represented in the school.” An Applying-level teacher further “uses school resources and family contacts to expand understanding of students’ prior knowledge, cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and interests to connect to student learning.” Beyond offering “a wide range of opportunities for families to contribute to the classroom and school community,” Innovating teachers also foster “a school/district environment in which families take leadership to improve student learning.”
- Only in **North Carolina** do standards explicitly speak of potential cultural barriers to parent engagement. North Carolina teachers are expected to “seek solutions to overcome cultural and economic obstacles that may stand in the way of effective family and community involvement in the education of their students.” Teachers are also advised to “improve communication and collaboration between the school and the home and community in order to promote trust and understanding and build partnerships with all segments of the school community.”
- In **Washington**, the Teacher Standards-Based Benchmarks articulate the need for professional teachers to engage in “informing, involving and collaborating with families and community members as partners in each student’s cultural identity, educational process, including using information about student achievement and performance.” Washington asks teachers to know how to work with diverse families and calls on them to exemplify “cultural sensitivity in teaching and in relationships with students, families, and community members.” Career-level teachers are expected to continually engage in and pursue “partnerships with respect to students’ [sic] cultural identity within and beyond their teaching context, including parent and community partnerships that result in greater educational opportunities.”

Competency 8: Communicate in linguistically and culturally responsive ways

- **Alabama** places a strong emphasis on the use of linguistically and culturally appropriate communication. It is expected that every teacher “communicates in ways that demonstrate sensitivity to diversity and that acknowledge and are responsive to different cultural, ethnic, and social modes of communication and participation.” To exemplify this standard

at the Pre-Service/Beginning level, a teacher becomes “aware of differences in communication modes between self and learners and their families/guardians,” while an Applying-level teacher “seeks greater knowledge and understanding of communication patterns through conversations with colleagues, family/guardians, as well as through community visits, school resources, or study.” Regarding linguistically appropriate communication, a teacher “recognizes the value of using learners’ native language and linguistic background during instruction.” Alabama is one of a few states that emphasize the need for linguistically appropriate outreach to families, stating that an Innovating-level teacher “advocates for school-wide outreach to families/guardians whose first language is other than English.”

- **Alaska’s** *Guide to Implementing Alaska’s Cultural Standards for Educators* makes a strong case for the inclusion of students’ home language in the classroom. Alaska standards establish the expectation that teachers “seek to learn the local heritage language and promote its use in their teaching.” To address this element, a Proficient educator “builds partnership(s) with heritage language speaker(s) to enrich curriculum with cultural knowledge and heritage language(s),” while an Exemplary teacher “engages in conversational heritage language, and mentors students’ uses of heritage language(s) in the classroom.” Proficient and Exemplary teachers further co-teach lessons with heritage language speakers, embed common expressions from heritage language(s) in lessons, and integrate heritage language(s) into classroom discussions.
- As part of Standard 3 (“Family and Community Engagement”), **Massachusetts** articulates a “Communications Indicator,” which calls on teachers to engage “in regular, two-way, and culturally proficient communication with families about student learning and performance.” Massachusetts joins Alabama in calling for teachers to recognize the importance of native language when communicating with families. Teachers are expected to collaborate “with families, recognizing the significance of native language and culture to create and implement strategies for supporting student learning and development both at home and at school.”

Conclusions and Recommendations

By opening the “black box” of culturally responsive teaching, this report offers a springboard for ongoing dialogue about the skills, knowledge, and mindsets all teachers need to work effectively with today’s learners. It is more pressing than ever that states update their definitions of quality teaching to privilege these characteristics. This recommendation has recently been buoyed by several stakeholder organizations. For instance, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), which spearheads a multi-state initiative to support the development of a diverse and culturally responsive workforce, calls for states to “develop, pilot, revise, and adopt standards of cultural responsiveness with clear metrics, guidance, professional learning avenues, and evaluation strategies for their operationalization in systems of licensure.”⁶⁶ In a recent report, Chiefs for Change likewise advises that states “adopt standards and competencies focused on the skills necessary for teachers and school leaders to ensure the integration of cultural relevance into preparation and training.”⁶⁷

We recognize that assessing, revising, and adopting standards that better align to culturally responsive practices is not easy. This work requires thoughtful collaboration between state education agencies, institutes of higher education, local education agencies, state legislatures, and many other stakeholders. This report offers insights that can help support this difficult but necessary work. Our scan finds that while all states are including CRT competencies in their universal professional teaching standards as well as their free-standing culturally responsive teaching standards, there is room for improvement in three critical ways:

1. **Revise teaching standards to articulate the eight culturally responsive teaching competencies described in this report.** Our scan suggests that additional attention should be paid to teachers’ understanding of system biases (competency 2), self-examination of biases (competency 1) as well as promoting real-world problem solving (competency 5) and culturally and linguistically responsive communication (competency 8). By integrating these competencies into their standards states can provide shared language and a common roadmap for teachers to implement CRT in their daily practice. However, it is important to note that the competencies outlined in this report are in no way exhaustive; school system leaders ought to convene stakeholders to identify additional CRT competencies that are appropriate for their contexts.
2. **Craft a continuum of teaching practice that articulates a detailed vision of quality teaching at different levels of sophistication.** In addition to integrating additional standards or elements that address all

eight competencies, state leaders should consider developing a tool to support and guide teachers as they develop and refine their culturally responsive practice over time. Teachers need to see what effective CRT practice looks like at higher levels so that they can set goals to strengthen their practice. Developing stand-alone standards for culturally responsive teaching along with relevant teacher practice continuums, such as those reviewed here from Washington and Alaska, offer an opportunity to describe the knowledge, skills, and dispositions associated with cultural responsiveness in greater depth and at different levels of sophistication. However, this is only one option. Ohio, California, and Alabama are three states that have developed comprehensive continuums of teacher practice to expand on their state's universal standards. Teacher practice continuums in these states are good examples of tools states can develop to support their teachers as they engage in self-assessment and goal setting for professional growth.

- 3. Design teacher professional learning systems that help teachers develop and strengthen the competencies outlined in your state's professional standards.** It is important to recognize that changes in teacher practice will not automatically follow from updating standards. For updates to pay off, states need to make certain that their professional teaching standards are intentionally aligned to a coherent system of preparation and development, one where pre-service coursework and curricula, licensure assessments, evaluation systems, and ongoing learning opportunities all elevate the need for culturally responsive practice and support full implementation. In addition, professional standards should help education leaders at all levels set goals for the development of resources, tools, and ongoing professional learning opportunities that will help teachers enact the CRT competencies in their daily instruction. Although leadership standards were beyond the scope of our analysis, we would be remiss not to acknowledge the critical role of school leaders in fostering teaching and learning environments that encourage, rather than thwart, culturally responsive teaching. Therefore, it is essential that system leaders also evaluate and update their leadership standards to align to teaching standards and include a greater focus on CRT. Like teachers, these leaders should receive ongoing support and development so that they can strengthen their practice as culturally responsive instructional leaders.

Helping teachers develop and strengthen their skills as culturally responsive practitioners, puts them in a better position to foster the types of learning encounters that are relevant to and effective for the learners of today. But teachers are unlikely to get the support they need if culturally responsive teaching is treated as an “add-on” approach by policymakers and education leaders. By taking bold action to weave CRT competencies into their state's

definition of quality teaching, system leaders can begin to ingrain CRT into the DNA of districts, schools, and classrooms; thereby ensuring that all learners in their state have access to rigorous and relevant learning experiences that will set them up for college, career, and life success.

Appendix A: Methodology

Data Collection

We first gathered statewide teaching standards (including stand-alone culturally responsive standards) from the website of each state's department or board responsible for establishing the standards. We collected standards intended for all teachers across grade levels and did not collect standards that apply to only a subgroup of teachers (e.g., bilingual teachers) or standards we deemed "optional". We also collected supporting documents, including introductory language or preambles on state websites that provide additional information about the purpose, uses, and intended audience. We contacted officials via email to verify that we had identified the correct, most recent documents. We asked about the purpose and uses of standards if this information was not available from a review of publicly available documents. State officials had an opportunity to identify their state's correct standards and provide additional information about these standards. We received feedback from 33 states by March 27, 2019.

Sample Questions Sent to SEAs

- Could you confirm if the documents attached are the correct (and most recent) professional teaching standards for your state?
- Is there a set of professional teaching standards that align expectations for teacher preparation candidates and in-service teachers in your state?
- Has your state developed any additional guiding documents and/or rubrics that support your teaching standards?
- What are the current uses of your state's professional teaching standards?
- Who is the primary audience for your state's professional teaching standards?
- Has your state adopted a stand-alone set of teaching standards relevant to cultural responsiveness?

Selection of Standards Documents

We were most interested in analyzing one standards document for each state, which undergirds processes in both pre-service and in-service such as licensure, induction, evaluation, re-licensure, and professional learning. In some cases, however, we were only able to identify teaching standards for initial certification/licensure (e.g., Delaware, Georgia, and Illinois). It was also the case that some states (e.g., Alaska, California, and Connecticut) had multiple sets of teacher-related standards. If we identified more than one teaching standards document, we reviewed standards documents that we identified as offering the most robust guidance. In some cases, states developed a supplemental document to expand on their standards and differentiate these by career level or stages of development. Because these documents expand on the states' standards and provide more detailed guidance, we opted to review these supplemental documents for states that have developed them (e.g., Alaska, California, and Connecticut). Aside from Washington and Alaska, only one standards document was reviewed for each state. We recognize this is a limitation, as some states rely on multiple standards, including the InTASC Model Core Standards and Progressions, and each standards document may approach CRT competencies differently.

Coding Standards

We coded the content of standards across the eight CRT competencies outlined in Section 2 of this report (“Defining Culturally Responsive Teaching”) by using the following questions:

- Do standards or elements explicitly address teacher ability to understand their own frames of reference and/or biases in these frames?
- Do standards or elements explicitly address teacher understanding of institutional biases and/or commitment to addressing institutional biases?
- Do standards or elements explicitly address teacher ability to use student culture to adjust curriculum and/or instruction?
- Do standards or elements explicitly address teacher ability to connect content and/or concepts to real-world problems (e.g., local and global issues)?
- Do standards or elements explicitly address teacher understanding of the need to set high expectations?

- Do standards or elements explicitly address teacher understanding of how to model and/or promote respect for learners’ diversity/differences?
- Do standards or elements explicitly address teacher ability to engage with families and communities?
- Do standards or elements explicitly address teacher ability to be culturally and/or linguistically sensitive in engaging with learners and/or families?

We were conservative in our analysis of standards, opting not to “count” standards or elements unless they included at least one statement that explicitly addressed the relevant competency. For instance, broad references about teacher reflection that did not explicitly mention the ability to reflect, specifically, on one’s own cultural frames and/or personal biases did not meet the criteria of competency 1. Examples of statements categorized under each competency are presented in section four of this report (“[Excerpts from Excellent Teaching Standards Documents](#)”).

Appendix B: Overview of State Teaching Standards

State	Teaching Standards Reviewed ⁶⁸
Alabama	Alabama Quality Teaching Standards (AQTS) and Continuum for Teachers
Alaska	Standards for Alaska's Teachers ⁶⁹
Alaska	Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools ⁷⁰
Arizona	Arizona Professional Teaching Standards
Arkansas	Arkansas Teaching Standards
California	California's Continuum of Teaching Practice ⁷¹
Colorado	Colorado Teacher Quality Standards Rubric for Evaluating Colorado Teachers
Connecticut	Connecticut Common Core of Teaching (CCT) Rubric for Effective Teaching ⁷²
Delaware	1597 Delaware Professional Teaching Standards
District of Columbia	No standards were identified for D.C. ⁷³
Florida	The Educator Accomplished Practices (FEAPs) (Rule 6A5.065)
Georgia	TAPS Performance Standards and Rubrics ⁷⁴
Hawaii	Hawaii's Teacher Performance Standards
Idaho	Idaho Core Teaching Standards
Illinois	Illinois Professional Teaching Standards
Indiana	Indiana Developmental Standards for Educators ⁷⁵
Iowa	Iowa Teaching Standards and Criteria

State	Teaching Standards Reviewed ⁶⁸
Kansas	Professional Education Standards
Kentucky	Kentucky Teacher Performance Standards
Louisiana	General Competencies⁷⁶
Maine	Common Core Teaching Standards
Maryland	Essential Dimensions of Teaching⁷⁷
Massachusetts	Professional Standards for Teachers⁷⁸
Michigan	MI-InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards
Minnesota	Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers (8710.2000)
Mississippi	Model Core Teaching Standards ⁷⁹
Missouri	Teaching Standards
Montana	Teaching Standards (10.58.501)
Nebraska	Nebraska's Performance Framework for Teachers Nebraska Framework Levels of Performance: Teacher
Nevada	Model Core Teaching Standards ⁸⁰
New Hampshire	Professional Education Requirements ⁸¹
New Jersey	NJ Professional Standards for Teachers
New Mexico	New Mexico Teacher Competencies
New York	New York State Teaching Standards
North Carolina	North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards
North Dakota	Uniform Teacher Professional Standards
Ohio	Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession

State	Teaching Standards Reviewed ⁶⁸
Oklahoma	InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards ⁸²
Oregon	Oregon Model Core Teaching Standards
Pennsylvania	InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards ⁸²
Rhode Island	Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards
South Carolina	South Carolina Teaching Standards 4.0
South Dakota	South Dakota Framework for Teaching ⁸⁴
Tennessee	InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards ⁸⁵
Texas	Teacher Standards (RULE §149.1001)
Utah	Utah Effective Teaching Standards
Vermont	InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards
Virginia	Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers
Washington	Washington Teacher Standards-Based Benchmarks
Washington	Cultural Competency Standards
West Virginia	West Virginia Professional Teaching Standards
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Teacher Standards
Wyoming	InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards ⁸⁵
InTASC Model Core Standards	InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards and Learning Progressions for Teachers 1.0

Notes

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59 For the purpose of this research, these standards are referred to as “universal” teaching standards.

60 These states are: Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, and Wyoming. Other

states (e.g., New Jersey, Hawaii, and Utah) have adapted these standards by adding additional indicators or coupling these standards with a continuum of practice. See Appendix B for a full list of standards reviewed.

61 Though our scan did not analyze standards for educational leaders, it is notable that an important set of standards developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (formerly known as the ISLLC Standards) do address system bias in explicit terms. These standards require school leaders to “confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status.” See *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders* (Reston, VA: National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015), http://npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Professional-Standards-for-Educational-Leaders_2015.pdf.

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63 States have different names for these statements, such as key “indicators” (Florida), “elements” (California), “knowledge and performance indicators” (Illinois), and “teacher knowledge and application” (Texas). This report refers to all of these statements as elements.

64 Standards can be differentiated by developmental levels (e.g., Emerging, Exploring, Applying, Integrating, and Innovating) or by teacher performance levels (e.g., Proficient, Accomplished, and Distinguished).

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83 Based on communications with the Pennsylvania Department of Education, January 1, 2018.

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highlight=PTSB%20Endorsement%20Standards.



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