

Date of Hearing: March 26, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Al Muratsuchi, Chair
AB 857 (Gipson) – As Introduced February 19, 2025

SUBJECT: School employees: cultural competency training

SUMMARY: Requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to develop an online cultural competency training delivery platform and online cultural competency training curriculum for school employees to support students of color. Also requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to ensure that all school employees complete the training beginning in the 2027-28 school year. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the CDE to develop an online cultural competency training delivery platform and online cultural competency training curriculum for school employees to support students of color.
- 2) Requires LEAs to:
 - a) Provide the training developed by the CDE to all school employees in the 2027-28 school year and in subsequent years, to all school employees within six weeks of commencing employment unless they had completed the training at another LEA;
 - b) Provide a proof of completion to school employees of the cultural competency training and maintain records documenting the dates that each employee completed the training; and
 - c) Ensure that the cultural competency training is completed by employees on paid time during the employees' regular work hours or during designated professional development hours, unless otherwise negotiated and mutually agreed upon with the employees' exclusive representative.
- 3) Defines the following terms:
 - a) "Cultural competency" as the active engagement in an ongoing process of self-reflection that informs deeper understanding and respect of cultural differences where an increase in cultural competency can lead to behaviors, programs, policies, practices, and services that are more culturally appropriate; and
 - b) "Local educational agency" means a school district, county office of education (COE), or charter school serving students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires the CDE to complete the development of an online training curriculum and online delivery platform by July 1, 2025, and requires LEAs to provide and require at least one hour of training annually to all certificated staff, beginning with the 2025-26 school year through the 2029-30 school year, on cultural competency in supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ+) students. Requires the LEA to maintain

documentation on the completion of the training by each employee, as specified. (Education Code (EC) 218.3)

- 2) Requires school districts, COEs, state special schools and diagnostic centers operated by the CDE, and charter schools to provide annual training, using the online training module provided by the State Department of Social Services (DSS), to their employees who are mandated reporters during the course of the school year, and to develop a process for all persons required to receive training within the first six weeks of each school year, or within the first six weeks of the person's employment. (EC 44691)
- 3) Specifies the minimum requirement to earn an authorization to teach English learners includes, among other requirements, completion of coursework in human relations in accordance with the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) standards of program quality and effectiveness that includes, at a minimum, instruction in all of the following:
 - a) The nature and content of culture;
 - b) Cross-cultural contact and interactions;
 - c) Cultural diversity in the United States and California;
 - d) Providing instruction responsive to the diversity of the pupil population;
 - e) Recognizing and responding to behavior; and
 - f) Techniques for the peaceful resolution of conflict. (EC 44253.3)
- 4) Requires the CTC to develop and administer examinations on which a teacher can demonstrate his or her competence in the knowledge and skills necessary for effective teaching of limited-English-proficient pupils. Requires that the scope and content of the examinations include the following domains:
 - a) First- and second-language development and the structure of language;
 - b) Methodology of English language development and specially designed content instruction in English;
 - c) Culture and cultural diversity;
 - d) Methodology of content instruction in the pupil's primary language;
 - e) The culture associated with a specific language group; and
 - f) Competence in a language other than English that is spoken by limited-English-proficient pupils in California. (EC 44253.5)

FISCAL EFFECT: The Office of Legislative Counsel has keyed this as a possible state-mandated local program.

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, “Assembly Bill 857 comes at a critical time – when, from pupils to staff as targets, cultural diversity in schools is under attack on a national scale, from a federal administration that sees such diversity as a threat. For those of us that value diversity and inclusion, and an understanding of cultures often outside of our own among those in our schools, we understand the tremendous benefits: student engagement rises, student outcomes increase, student self-esteem increases, and students' strengths are recognized and utilized. AB 857 seeks to ensure that school employees in the state of California have the training they need to support the diverse students that make up our K-12 institutions.”

What is cultural competency in the context of education? Research indicates that “Cultural competence in education is a multifaceted concept that encompasses the ability of educators and educational institutions to effectively understand, respect, and respond to the diverse cultural backgrounds and identities of students, families, and the communities they serve. It involves creating inclusive learning environments where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to succeed regardless of their cultural heritage or background.” (Horvat, 2014)

“Cultural competency in education aims to create inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity and promote equitable opportunities for all students. The “foundation of cultural competence lies in recognizing and respecting the cultural backgrounds, experiences, and identities of students, educators, and communities. Through culturally responsive teaching practices, educators can leverage students’ diverse backgrounds to enhance learning experiences.” (Eden, 2024)

According to researchers, fostering inclusivity and diversity awareness in education is essential for a number of reasons, including:

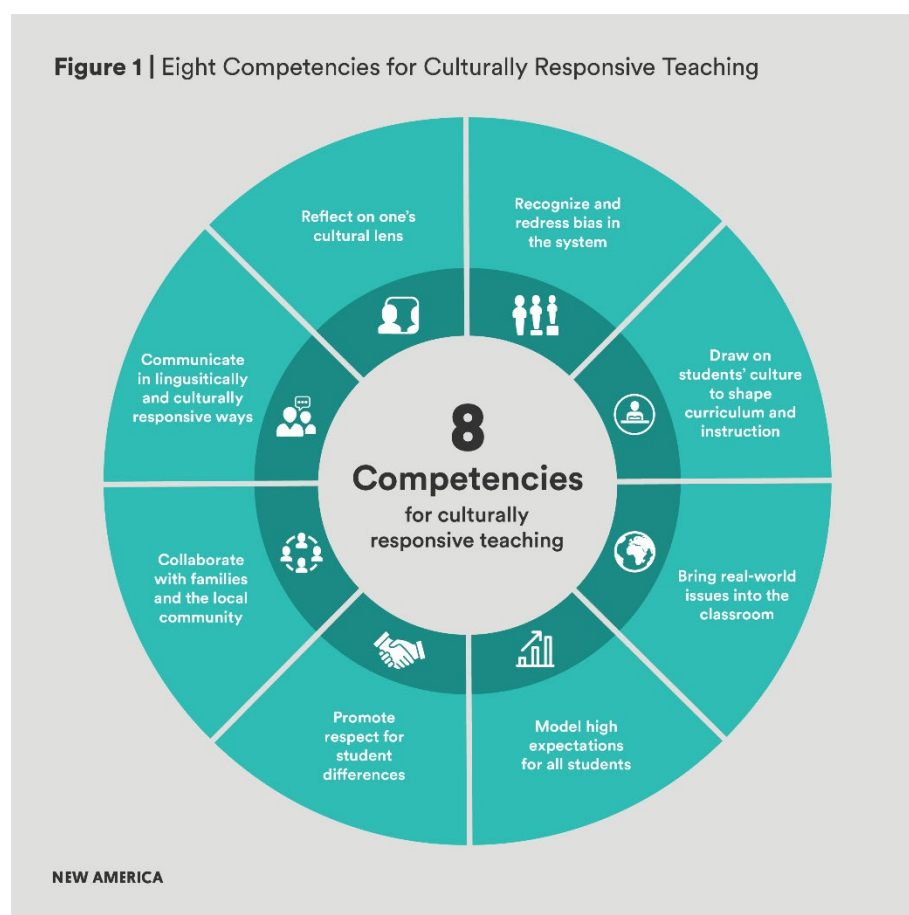
- Promotes equitable access to education by addressing the unique needs and experiences of students from various cultural backgrounds;
- Enhances academic achievement and social-emotional development by creating a supportive and culturally responsive learning environment; and
- Embracing diversity fosters mutual respect, empathy, and understanding among students, preparing them for an increasingly diverse and interconnected world. (Dewsbury, 2019)

Building cultural competence among educators requires ongoing training and professional development to enhance their understanding of cultural diversity, unconscious biases, and strategies for creating inclusive classrooms. This includes culturally responsive teaching practices that honor and embrace the diverse cultural backgrounds of students. By integrating materials, resources, and examples from diverse cultures into their curriculum, they can make learning experiences more meaningful and relatable for students. (Eden, 2024)

Importance of culturally responsive schools. According to the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), we need schools and classrooms to be culturally

responsive—meaning they use the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and learning styles of diverse students to make learning more engaging and effective.

According to research conducted by New America, “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 culturally responsive teaching competencies into their state’s definition of quality teaching, system leaders can begin to ingrain it 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.” The report identifies eight competencies for culturally responsive teaching, as shown in Figure 1 below. (New America, 2020)



Cultural competency embedded in current credentialing standards. The California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP), adopted in April 2024, reflect the need to serve California’s diverse student population. According to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), “The CSTP are foundational for teacher preparation and teacher induction. They also serve as a guide for educator professional learning, development, and evaluation statewide. With the ultimate goal of improving student learning and well-being, the standards provide a broad and complex vision of the teaching profession within which all teachers can define and develop their practice. The updated CSTP are organized into six broad, interdependent standards that embed California’s vision for teaching in an effective, equitable learning system. Their focus is to

ensure inclusive learning experiences based on individual learner assets and needs while also creating equitable outcomes for all.”

Relevant examples of cultural competency within these standards include the following:

- 1A: Focus on students: teachers plan and implement a student-centered learning perspective that frames diversity as an educational asset and supports each student in relevant and challenging experiences that explore students’ identities and extend their learning;
- 1B–1: Affirm each student’s cultural, linguistic, and racial identities by actively seeking knowledge and approaches for creating culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining learning opportunities;
- 1B–2: Create learning opportunities that draw on students’ interests, prior experiences, culture, and linguistic assets to support active engagement for each learner;
- 1D: Teachers are responsive to students’ diverse experiences, cultures, languages, identities, interests, strengths, and needs and apply evidence-based principles that intentionally cultivate equitable access, opportunities, and positive outcomes for each student;
- 1D–1: Establish and maintain positive relationships with each student to promote understanding, respect, and affirmation of diversity;
- 2A–2: Leverage the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, goals, interests, and abilities of each student to build trusting relationships that ensure that each student learns and thrives;
- 2B–3: Employ culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate and relevant norms, procedures, and supports to strengthen positive behavior and celebrate success;
- 2C–1: Implement student-focused learning that is culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining when designing classroom and school schedules, routines, procedures, and support systems;
- 3A–2: Integrate content-based curriculum, resources, and evidence-based teaching practices with culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining learning experiences that promote student learning;
- 3E–4: Use learning materials and resources that reflect diverse cultures, races/ethnicities, and languages to support socially and emotionally relevant subject matter content and skills;
- 4B–5: Deliberately incorporate culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining teaching and learning experiences into instruction that actively supports student agency;

- 5A–5: Use bias-free and culturally and linguistically responsive assessments that best help students reach learning and social–emotional goals; and
- 6B–5: Deepen their cultural responsiveness and anti-bias capabilities by appropriately using approaches and tools that build on students’ backgrounds, interests, and experiences and that positively affect students’ learning and well-being.

CLAD embedded in preparation programs for all teachers. The English Learner Authorization and Crosscultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD) Certificate authorizes instruction to English learners. Since 1992 California has required teachers to hold an appropriate authorization prior to providing instructional services, including to English learners. As a result, preparation to earn the CLAD authorization is embedded in California teacher preparation program requirements. All current single-subject, multi-subject, and special education credentials are issued with a CLAD authorization. The only educators without this authorization would be those who earned their credential prior to 1992, and possibly those educators coming from out-of-state with a preliminary license, who must earn the CLAD prior to clearing their credential.

Holders of the CLAD authorization must demonstrate, among other requirements, completion of coursework in human relations in accordance with the CTC standards of program quality and effectiveness that includes instruction in all of the following:

- The nature and content of culture;
- Cross-cultural contact and interactions;
- Cultural diversity in the United States and California;
- Providing instruction responsive to the diversity of the pupil population;
- Recognizing and responding to behavior; and
- Techniques for the peaceful resolution of conflict.

Bilingual authorization. The bilingual authorization prepares teachers to work with bilingual learners in programs such as dual language immersion. According to the CTC, the bilingual authorization program includes options for candidates to complete the program in a concurrent model and/or as a post-credential model and takes into consideration a candidate’s prior bilingual teaching experiences toward meeting program requirements. The design also specifies how the program is responsive to local needs and current contextual conditions. The program provides opportunities for ongoing professional development in the field of bilingual education and helps concurrent candidates transition to teacher induction.

The bilingual authorization program standards were updated in 2021 and include bilingual teaching performance expectations (BTPE), which specify that bilingual teacher candidates:

- Apply their knowledge of students, students' backgrounds, assets, learning needs, and goals using the state-adopted academic content standards to engage and motivate students in developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning activities;
- Collaborate with colleagues to design and implement learning activities through a transnational lens to support and improve student achievement and promote learning in two languages such that all students have opportunities to become bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural;
- Support all students in learning through respecting the dynamic nature of language change, students' own language use, cultural practice, beliefs, traditions, and values, and funds of knowledge;
- Recognize students' transnational educational and cultural experiences and ongoing transnational participation of their communities and apply these understandings within culturally and linguistically appropriate learning activities and engagement with families;
- Collaborate with colleagues to promote authentic family/community engagement opportunities, including collaborating with the family/community to engage them as assets to help and support all students in learning and engagement at home;
- Demonstrate an understanding of assets-based practices with students as well as family and community outreach and partnership efforts that are consistent with ethnic, racial, and social justice that support equity and inclusion; and
- Demonstrate pedagogical understanding of the philosophical, theoretical, legal, and legislative foundations of bilingual education and their effects on students' educational achievement.

Given that holders of the CLAD authorization, English learner authorizations, and bilingual authorization have been trained and demonstrated cultural competency, *the Committee may wish to consider* whether employees holding these authorizations should be exempted from the requirement for annual cultural competency training.

Current training requirements for California teachers. The state has not typically mandated teacher training as this tends to be a locally bargained issue based upon the needs of each school community and staff. Exceptions include the Mandated Reporter Training, which is required for all school staff annually and consists of a four-hour course, and the LGBTQ+ cultural competency requirement beginning in the 2025-26 school year which will require one hour of training annually for all certificated staff. LEAs may impose other training requirements upon staff. One large school district in California requires the following of their staff:

- a) Administrator Certification;
- b) Bloodborne Pathogens Training;
- c) Breaking the Silence (Child Abuse Awareness);
- d) Child Abuse Awareness Training;
- e) Code of Conduct with Students;

- f) English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) Training;
- g) Implicit/Unconscious Bias;
- h) Injury Illness Prevention Program;
- i) IT Cyber Security Training;
- j) Sexual Harassment Training for Supervisors;
- k) Suicide Prevention and Awareness; and
- l) Workplace Harassment Prevention Training for Non-Supervisory Employees.

Many of these are required annually or bi-annually. This is in addition to the statewide requirement of four hours of Mandated Reporter Training.

Arguments in support. The California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) writes, “CABE’s mission is to support the vision of biliteracy, multicultural competency, and educational equity for all students through the shared values of implementing priorities, initiatives, and services designed to increase California’s capacity to create caring and highly effective learning environments that promote multiliteracy and support English learners and all diverse populations.

CABE is pleased to support AB 857 (Gipson), as introduced on February 19, 2024, which requires the State Department of Education to create an online cultural competency training program and curriculum by 2027 and requires local education agencies to provide training to all school employees on this new curriculum. CABE believes cultural competency training is imperative to support the growing, diverse student population.”

Recommended Committee Amendments. *Staff recommends that the bill be amended* as follows:

- 1) Require that the training developed by the CDE be provided to all school employees for at least one hour annually for five years beginning with the 2027-28 school year.
- 2) Require that a teacher or certificated employee holding a valid English Learner authorization, Crosscultural, Language, and Academic Development certificate, or Bilingual Authorization earned within the previous 10 years be exempt from the annual training requirement.
- 3) Specify that nothing in this section prohibits an LEA from providing longer, more frequent, relevant in-service cultural competency training provided that it is mutually agreed to with the employee’s exclusive representative.
- 4) Requires the CDE to monitor compliance with the training requirement through its existing annual compliance monitoring of state and federal programs.
- 5) Requires the CDE to provide a report to the Legislature and post on its website, within 9 months after the conclusion of the 5th and final year of the training requirement, summarizing the data collected through compliance monitoring over the five-year period, including the LEAs selected for monitoring and relevant compliance findings. Requires the report to comply with relevant Government Code requirements.

- 6) Repeals the provisions of the section as of January 1, 2034.
- 7) Adds co-authors at the request of the author.

Related legislation. AB 5 (Zbur) Chapter 220, Statutes of 2023, requires the CDE to complete the development of an online training curriculum and online delivery platform by July 1, 2025, and requires LEAs to provide and require at least one hour of training annually to all certificated staff, beginning with the 2025-26 school year through the 2029-30 school year, on cultural competency in supporting LGBTQ+ students. Requires the LEA to maintain documentation on the completion of the training by each employee, as specified.

AB 1913 (Addis) Chapter 814, Statutes of 2024, requires school districts, COEs, state special schools, and charter schools to include child abuse prevention in the annual mandated reporter training requirement for teachers beginning July 1, 2025.

AB 1058 (Baker), Chapter 748, Statutes of 2015, encourages school districts, COEs, state special schools and diagnostic centers, and charter schools to participate in training on the prevention of abuse, including sexual abuse, of children on school grounds, by school personnel, or in school-sponsored programs, and also encourages schools to provide all school employees with that training at least once every three years.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Alameda County Office of Education
California Association for Bilingual Education
California School Employees Association
CFT- a Union of Educators & Classified Professionals
Teach Plus – California

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Debbie Look / ED. / (916) 319-2087