

DISTRICT-WIDE CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

Provide, monitor and support
cultural competence training for
100 percent of staff

—JCS Vision 2015 Strategy 4.7

The Jefferson County Public Schools Strategic Plan, *Vision 2015*, highlights the districts commitment to equity and the belief that every JCPS employee can contribute to a sense of acceptance and community so that no student feels alienated in any school. The JCPS Department of Diversity, Equity & Poverty Programs (DEP) designed and facilitated the implementation of cultural competence awareness training to all JCPS staff (i.e., central office administrators, bus drivers and mechanics, maintenance, and all school staff) beginning in the summer 2012 and through the Winter 2012. The goal of the strategic initiative to support increased knowledge, understanding and development of the skills and attitudes of all JCPS employees that result in culturally responsive environments for all of our students. The evaluation results are based on survey data collected after the trainings occurred. While this provides some useful information, the true impact of the training on interactions, school climate and implementation of culturally responsive practices should be assessed in a systematic manner in the near future.

"Cultural competence is an on-going process. We all must continue to educate ourselves"

-JCPS teacher

THE CULTURAL COMPETENCE AWARENESS TRAINING

The objective of the initial training roll-out of the awareness training was to communicate district-wide that cultural competence is a priority and key expectation and to engage all staff in awareness training to set the foundation for deeper development and applications. The training consisted of video modules and participant workbook guide for principals to use with their school staff. All principals were trained on facilitation and provided a facilitation guide. The modules were focused on the historical perspective, quality teaching across difference, student voice and seven principles for culturally responsive teaching. The training incorporated interactive exercises to guide courageous group conversations as well as help schools devise individual and school specific action plans for the year. Participant workbooks included guiding questions for each section, a glossary, and literature and website resources on various topics.

Participation

- Prior to coming to JCPS, almost one in four staff (24%) had zero prior course work or training in cultural competence, and nearly half (49%) had between 0 – 1 trainings.
- District-wide, 98% of regular schools (n=130) and 100% of special schools (n=25) participated in the training with their school staff. Early Childhood held several training sessions to cover 100% staff across all early childhood sites.
- A total of 4266 JCPS school based staff completed a survey after they received the training. The overall average response rate district-wide was 66%. Sixty-eight schools had a response rate of 90% or better.

KEY FINDINGS

PD Roll-Out Implementation & Engagement: Schools varied in the way they facilitated the training with the school and resulting engagement levels. Providing the training in a group setting and engaging in interactive exercises and dialogue were part of the training protocol.

- The **majority (71%) said they viewed the video modules in a group setting** with other staff while 7% said they viewed the videos on their own.
- Slightly **over half (56%) said they engaged in the exercises and dialogues**, revealing that a large portion (44%) did not experience the full intent of the training.
- The **majority (72%) reported being engaged or very engaged**, 26% said they were somewhat engaged, while 2% reported being "not engaged at all."
- Open-ended comments revealed a **relationship between low or passive engagement the absence of dialogue, exercises and staff interactions**. It was also noted that in cases where the training was perceived as compliance based and where the Principal did not facilitate the training, there was a perceived lack of school leadership commitment to cultural competence.

Reported Learning Outcomes

- The **majority (89%) reported learning "some" or "a lot of" of new information** while 11% said they learned nothing new. The majority also said it was "somewhat" or "very" helpful for understanding cultural competence



- There were statistically **significant increases in knowledge** in all areas measured, with the largest gains in "how cultural identity impacts teaching and learning" and "culturally responsive relationships."

- Almost half of the respondents (**47%**) **believe that the training will have a high to very high impact on their practice in school**, while 41% believe it will have a moderate impact.

- **Exercise and dialogue participation was related to perceived impact on practice.** 61% of the people that engage in interactive exercises with their colleagues during the training reported expecting a very "high" impact on their practice.

- Teachers were asked to describe the **most important message they received**. The following were the key themes that emerged from the open-ended responses:
 - The importance of acceptance, relationships and connecting with students from all backgrounds
 - The importance of awareness, understanding and reflection around bias, difference and culture
 - Culturally responsive teaching principles and practices

- Demographics of the district student population (e.g., homeless, poverty, languages spoken)

"As a teacher I have to consider the whole child and everything they bring to the table to make personal connections, build relationships, create relevant lessons, and modify instruction"

-JCPS teacher on the most important message received from the training

"Conversations need to take place with peers in school to effect change."
-JCPS teacher

Reported Professional Development Needs

- The top **support strategies** selected by staff for continuous improvement in cultural competence are:
 - Participate in ongoing "courageous conversations" with staff at my school
 - Embed cultural competence within other PD
 - Focused PD on culturally responsive classroom management
 - View a culturally responsive lesson or classroom in action
- The top **5 specific content** professional development needs reported by staff are:
 - Connecting with families and Increasing meaningful parent involvement
 - Supporting students that live in poverty
 - Understanding the relationship between culture and discipline
 - Using culture of students in curriculum/lessons
 - Supporting African-American students.
 - Importantly, nearly one in four respondents (25 %+) said they would like more information about supporting English language learners, students with disabilities and immigrant or refugee students.
- Teacher responses highlighted the need to have an on-going focus school-wide across the entire year with respect to curriculum and lesson plan development, school-wide structures and practices, using students to inform staff about their culture, inclusion of wide range of difference and cultures in PD, and tools for interactive with disruptive student behavior.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ongoing District-Wide Cultural Competence PD

- Have **each school identify 2-3 facilitators** [preferably staff with prior experience in the cultural competence institute, a school climate committee, and/or staff with a strong belief in the importance of cultural competence] and **4 central office personnel per region** to attend an in-depth facilitation training by DEP for the district-wide PD "roll-on". This will ensure more consistent and standard PD implementation at the school level and will support a more active, less passive PD experience.
- Implement the training to begin prior to the school year with **interval refresher trainings that build upon the initial PD several times during the school year** and provide various modules that address an array of topics for staff to choose from based on their needs across the school year.
- Ensure that the district-wide professional development:
 - Includes a focus on the top 6 areas staff reported needed more help with (listed above) including concrete examples of ways to grow and improve in each area
 - Is inclusive of all areas of difference and emphasizes that cultural competence is not a "separate thing to do" but is simply part of what "good teaching" is

- Includes student/staff voices, examples of culturally responsive lessons, teachers/classrooms in action, dialogue and interactive exercises, and development of individual growth plans

Supporting and Monitoring Cultural Competence

- Increase district-wide **emphasis, PD and support for improving school-wide culture/climate**, and **infuse cultural competence into all PD** around instruction, discipline, curriculum, and school climate/culture.
- Encourage schools to **utilize Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to continue on-going dialogue to improve cultural responsiveness in all areas of school practice, planning, and policy.**
- Implement the use of **classroom walkthrough observational tools** that includes culturally responsive practices to monitor and provide specific feedback to support continuous growth and improvement.
- Encourage schools to use the **experiences and voices of their students and families to teach staff** about their culture, experience and perspectives and suggestions for improvements.