

# Title: The Influence and Evolution of Cultural Competence in K12 Classroom Practice, Handbook Content, and Discipline Policies.

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## Abstract

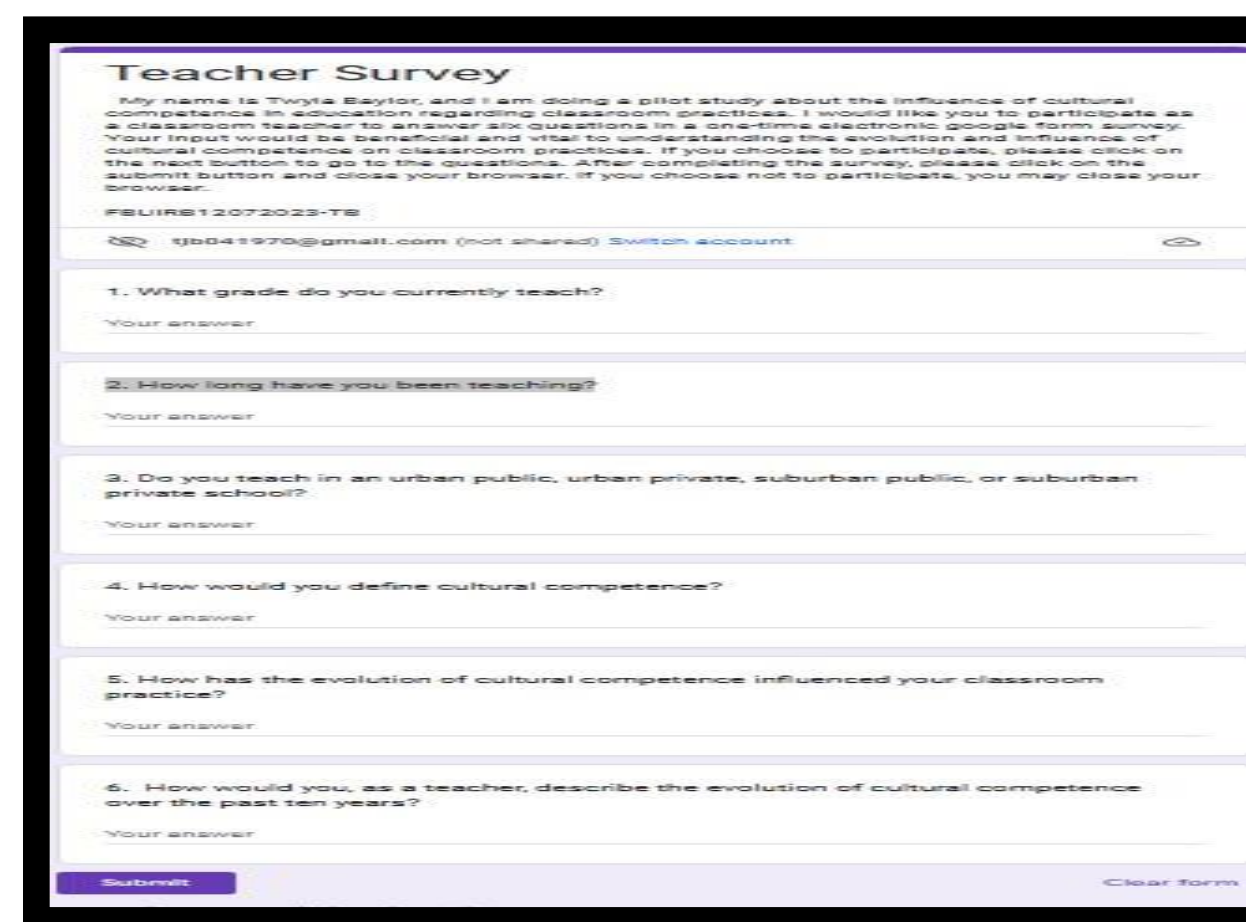
Classrooms are becoming diverse nationwide. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), the cultural demographics of elementary and secondary high school classrooms consisted of white, black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Alaska Native, and two or more unidentified cultures. Therefore, teachers, administrators, and staff must create an environment that embraces cultural competence. Also, it is important to remember "when a teacher displays cultural competence, they demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and take action accordingly" (Macqueen et al., 2020, p.116). This study focused on two questions. First, if I surveyed a k12 public school classroom teacher about their perception of the evolution of cultural competence in classroom practices, in what ways would the information alter my understanding of how teachers view cultural competence? In addition, if I reviewed the handbook and policies of a k12 public school, would the policies and handbook information reflect cultural competence, and in what ways, if any, would my understanding be altered about incorporating cultural competence in a handbook and discipline policies? My thoughts regarding the importance of cultural competence in classroom practice and policies were not changed. Cultural competence is necessary to ensure that all students have equitable access.

## Introduction

Culturally diverse classrooms have become visible nationwide. Lehman (2017) stated the diversity in the student population continues to exceed the number of teachers with diverse backgrounds. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), the cultural demographics of elementary and secondary high school classrooms consisted of white, black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Alaska Native, and two or more unidentified cultures. This data showed that students of color made up at least 75% of total enrollment in 2019. Taking a deeper look into the data revealed that students of color included "Hispanics (60 %), Black (59 %), and Pacific Islander (54 %) students attended public schools". The increase in enrollment from 2009 showed black students at 17 %, Hispanic students at 22 %, and Pacific Islanders with no representation. According to the 2019 census, which includes student demographics for public and private schools, 51% were non-Hispanic white students, 55% were Asian students, 25% were white students, and 15% were black students.

## Methodology

This pilot study occurred in an urban public k12 elementary school in the Midwest. The student population of the school was 364. The student demographics were 93% African American, 3% multi-cultural, 2% white, 1% Pacific Islander, 1% Hispanic, and Asian and American Indian 0% (less than two students). Study data sources included an electronic google form survey comprising six short answer questions. The content analysis of the handbook content and discipline policies was conducted utilizing a checklist of 14 culturally competent terms and phrases. The results from the content analysis were presented in a quantitative data chart with a frequency count of the exact terms or related phrases. The results from the electronic survey were presented qualitatively, comparing the perspective of two K12 public school teachers regarding cultural competence and classroom practices.



Handbook and Discipline policy content analysis		
Document Analyzed: Name and Year of Publication		
Number of Pages:		
Format of Document: Online/web based, PDF, hardcopy, hardcopy bound, printed, stapled		
Terms and Phrases	Yes Present (list term or phrase, page, and content)	Not Present
1. Acknowledge cultural competence		
2. Related term of diversity		
3. Related term of equity		
4. Related term of inclusion		
5. Related term of belonging		
6. Related term of values		
7. Related term of acceptance		
8. Related term of beliefs		
9. Acknowledgement of cultural traditions		
10. Acknowledgement of cultural holidays		
11. Acknowledgement of cultural attire		
12. Acknowledgement of participation of holiday activities		
13. Acknowledgement of attendance impacted by cultural traditions		
14. Exclusion from activities such as lunch		

## Results

The results of the content analysis and teacher survey were insightful. Both provided more in-depth perspective on how teachers and districts embrace cultural competence. Cultural competence is essential in policies and instruction because it sets the tone for teaching, instructing, and interaction. The results from the content analysis were surprising because I did not think I would find cultural competence being referenced in as many areas. The survey responses provided insight into a teacher's perception of cultural competence. Although the responses had some differences, the overarching message was similar. Cultural competence is not an option but a necessity in education.

## Conclusion

The action research study provided valuable experience for the upcoming dissertation. Developing research questions, deciding the research methodology, and analyzing the data provided great insight into the process I will use for the dissertation. The results of this pilot study validated the need for further research regarding the perception of cultural competence in k12 public schools. Understanding how a district develops policies that impact the students, and the staff is essential. It is also important to gain insight into the thought of teachers about cultural competence and have them engage in a moment of reflection. This pilot study positively impacted my thoughts about the dissertation by allowing me to think about my approach and framework.

## Acknowledgements

The charts display the data comparing national demographics and Missouri demographics of students in schools, frequency count for content analysis, and a comparison chart of the participants responses.

Survey Questions and Responses	1.) What grade do you currently teach?	2.) How long have you been teaching?	3.) Do you teach in an urban public, urban private, suburban public, or suburban private school?	4.) How would you define cultural competence?	5.) How has the evolution of cultural competence influenced your classroom practice?	6.) How would you, as a teacher, describe the evolution of cultural competence over the past ten years?
Participant 1	4th	17 years	Urban public	Being aware of your own cultural beliefs and values and how these may be different from other cultures including being able to learn about and honor the different cultures of those you work with.	My classroom is majority African American students, I try to bring in different cultures and beliefs so my students can grow knowledge	I think it can be better. We need to be teaching all different cultures and not just the ones that are built in the curriculum.
Participant 2	3rd	28 years	Yes	Today we teach students of different cultures, races and sexual orientation. This mean we must have tolerance for all students and their families. Cultural Competence mean creating a culturally safe space were all children feel affirmed and able to express themselves.	We are now able to teach more black history and about other cultures. Teaching about culture competence make all students feel valued.	Culture Competence, evolution has given us the ability to be empathic and build relationships. We are exploring different cultures and traditions. We are now teaching diversity and culture awareness.

Content Analysis Results				
Term	Exact Term	Related Phrase	Location/Section	Frequency Count
1.cultural competence		Yes	Guiding Principles	1
2.diversity	Yes		Philosophy and Board Process	3
3.equity	Yes		Relating to Discipline Policy	1
4.inclusion		Yes	Student Expectation Code	1
5.belonging		Yes	Guiding Principles	1
6.values		Yes	Student Expectation Code	1
7. acceptance		Yes	Student rights and responsibilities	1
8. beliefs		Yes	Discipline Policy	1
9. cultural traditions		Yes	Absences and Excuses	1
10. cultural holidays		Yes	Absences and Excuses	1
11. cultural attire	Yes		Student Dress Code	1
12. participation in holiday activities		Yes	Student Rights and Responsibilities	1
13. attendance impacted by cultural traditions		Yes	Absences and Excuses	1
14. exclusion from activities such as lunch	---	---	-----	0

