



Education Support Professionals (ESPs): Professional Growth Continuum (PGC) Cultural Competence: Valuing Diversity *Proficient Level*

Competency

The ESP values diversity with regard to culture (e.g., race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, beliefs, and other differences).

Key Method

The ESP demonstrates how valuing diversity shapes their experiences and effectiveness at work.

Method Components

This micro-credential is based on the Universal Standard of *Cultural Competence* from the [NEA's ESP Professional Growth Continuum \(PGC\)](#), which defines cultural competence as the ability to examine one's own cultural context, to understand the cultural contexts of others, and to interact across cultural contexts with sensitivity to differences (e.g., their

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experiences, background, knowledge, skills, beliefs, values, interests, etc.) in PK-12 schools/systems, institutions of higher education, communities, worksites, or the education system as a whole.

Cultural competence for education support professionals can be broken into three skill areas:

1. Valuing diversity
2. Being culturally self-aware
3. Understanding the dynamics of cultural interactions

This micro-credential focuses on *valuing diversity*.

Words to Know

Acknowledge: to accept, admit, or recognize something, or the truth or existence of something

Bias: an interest in one thing more than others; a strong feeling in favor of or against one group of people, or one side in an argument, often not based on fair judgment

Culture: systems of beliefs, values, and assumptions about life that guide behavior and are shared by a group of people. It includes customs, language, and material artifacts. These are transmitted from generation to generation, rarely with instructions

Diversity: many different types of things or people being included in something; a range of different things or people

*Important: An individual person is not diverse. A group or collection of people can be diverse.

Explicit: communicated directly in a clear and exact way

Homogeneous: of the same kind or nature [the same, alike]

Implicit bias: the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These implicit biases:

- Encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments.
- Are activated involuntarily without an individual's awareness.

- Lead to feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance.
- Develop over a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages.

Recognize: to know what something is because you have seen it before, or because you have heard or read about it

Valuing diversity: Accepting and respecting different cultural backgrounds and customs, different ways of communicating, and different traditions and values

NEA's ESP Professional Growth Continuum

Let's take a look at examples of proficient-level valuing diversity in the ESP Professional Growth Continuum. There are many ways for ESPs to demonstrate valuing diversity at a proficient level. Demonstrating skills and knowledge in this standard may look different depending on one's unique role, worksite, community, and experience. The following language adapted from the PGC, provides examples (indicators are bold, descriptors are sub-bullets):

- **Recognize differences among and across groups of people.**
(For All Career Families)
 - understand social construction resulting in the stratification of groups of people
 - identify cultural norms that vary based on race, language, socioeconomic status, country of origin, gender, religion, and other aspects of identity
 - be aware of systemic, institutional inequities based on race and other differences (e.g., disparity by race/ethnicity and ability/disability in academic achievement and employment)
- **Understand the value of diversity in a learning environment and create opportunities that will include and maximize students' strengths.**
(For All Career Families)
 - recognize the unique combination of cultural variables (e.g., race, language, economics, country of origin, gender, religion, ability/disability, etc.) within the worksite/district/community as assets
 - access resources to increase your knowledge of how race,

- ethnicity, and other aspects of diversity intersect
- examine beliefs and attitudes to discern the strengths, preferences, and biases of yourself and others in order to expand understanding of racial and cultural diversity
- acknowledge that a power imbalance occurs when one group's identity is established as the norm (e.g., an individual can be bullied when another feels empowered to do so)

- **Model cultural competence in interactions with students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and, the community.**

- **(For All Career Families)**

- express awareness of your own implicit and explicit biases
- ask questions to determine if any missing perspectives have been sought and included in decisions
- use protocols and skills in cross-cultural and interracial interactions

- **Acknowledge the value of speaking multiple languages.**

- **(For All Career Families)**

- learn key phrases in the language of students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and community

- **(For Clerical Services)**

- provide worksite/district documents in the home language of students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community
- advocate for worksite signage in multiple languages

- **(For Custodial and Maintenance)**

- advocate for worksite signage in multiple languages

- **(For Food Services)**

- post signage, menu, and labels in multiple languages
- use photos or pictograms along with signage, menu, and labels to assist in translation

- **(For Health and Student Services)**

- provide school health documents in the home language of students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community
- post signage and health notices in multiple languages

(For Paraeducators)

- locate worksite/district documents available in the home language of students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community
- post classroom signage and notices in multiple languages

(For Security Services)

- provide worksite/district documents (student handbook, code of conduct) in the home language of students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community
- advocate for worksite signage in multiple languages

(For Skilled Trades)

- advocate for worksite signage in multiple languages

(For Technical Services)

- make worksite/district documents in the home language of students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community available on the website
- include a translation option on the website
- advocate for worksite signage in multiple languages

(For Transportation Services)

- provide transportation documents in the home language of students, parents/guardians, staff, visitors, and the community
- post bus signage in multiple languages

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn this micro-credential you must receive a proficient score in Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4.

If any Part of the micro-credential is incomplete or left blank, the submission will be scored “Incomplete,” and you will receive an email with a note of encouragement to complete all Parts of the micro-credential, and to resubmit your work to NEA.

Please read the “How to earn a proficient score” section at the end of each Part below to make sure your micro-credential submission is complete and meets the requirements.

For each Part, you may choose to submit your response:

- in WRITING (created in Microsoft Word, Google Docs, or another word processing software; acceptable file formats are .doc, .docx, .pdf, .rtf); OR
- through an AUDIO RECORDING (created on a mobile device like a smartphone or tablet, or on audio recording equipment; acceptable file formats are .mp3, .wav, .aiff); or
- through a VIDEO RECORDING (created on a mobile device like a smartphone or tablet, or on audio recording equipment; acceptable file formats are .mp4, .mov, .wmv, .avi)

Video or audio recordings for each Part should be one single file. You may complete all of the responses in one clip, or you may edit multiple clips together as one file to submit per Part.

IMPORTANT:

ESPs are strongly encouraged to take time to explore the links in the *Supporting Rationale and Research* and *Resources* section at the end of this document.

Do this before working on Part 1 of your micro-credential submission.

Part 1: Skill Area Learning – Learn About Valuing Diversity

Directions:

1. Watch these 3 videos:
 - [What does diversity mean to me, as an ESP?](#) by ESP leaders Shasta Rosales and Cara Martin Howard
 - [Curiosity is the key](#) by ESP leader Cara Martin Howard
 - [Why diversity matters](#) by Dr. Katherine Phillips

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2. Think about what you heard in the videos and make notes. Write down your thoughts or full responses to the 5 questions/prompts below.
 1. What were 3 important points or insights that you heard from ESP leaders Shasta Rosales and Cara Martin Howard?
 2. What was the most interesting thing that Cara or Shasta shared in their videos, and why is it of interest to you?
 3. Name 3 examples of diversity that Dr. Katherine Phillips shared in her video.
 4. What did Dr. Phillips say about the difference in performance between diverse and homogeneous groups? Remember, diverse groups have a lot of differences and homogeneous groups have a lot of sameness.
 5. What did you learn from the story about the nannies, which begins at 10:07 in the video?

You may choose to submit a **written response** for Part 1. If you do this:

- Create a new Word document.
- Type or copy and paste your responses from your notes to questions/prompts #1 – 5. This should include responses to all of the above questions and prompts. Save the document.
- Upload the document file to the NEA Certification Bank submission page section for Part 1.

OR

- You may choose to submit an **audio or video response** for Part 1. If you do this:
 - Use a mobile device (e.g., smartphone or tablet) to make an audio or video recording of yourself answering all of the questions/prompts #1 – 5. Feel free to refer to any notes you have made during your exploration of the topic. Save your recording.
 - Upload the file of the recording to the NEA Certification Bank submission page section for Part 1.

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- The audio or video recording should be no more than 7 minutes in length. If a submitted recording for Part 1 is longer than 7 minutes, only the first 7 minutes will be reviewed.

Submission Checklist:

- Upload your written, audio, or video recording to Part 1.
- Completely answer each question/prompt;
- Include specific examples from the videos in each of your responses; and
- If you submit an audio or video recording: make sure the total length of your responses for Part 1 is no longer than 7 minutes.
- If you submit a written response: make sure the total length of your response for Part 1 is 350 words minimum and no longer than 1000 words.
- *If you have a job description, please upload a copy of it along with the rest of your files in Part 1 of the NEA Certification Bank submission page for this micro-credential. This will help NEA learn more about how employers view ESP roles, and will not affect your score. Submitting your employer-created job description is not required to earn a proficient score on this micro-credential.

How to earn a passing and proficient score in Part 1:

Part 1 Passing: At least three terms from the “Words to Know” section must be integrated accurately into your responses.

Part 1 Rubric: Responses to direction #2, questions/prompts #1-5.

Score:	Developing	Proficient
Direction #2, Questions/Prompts #1-5:	Provide answers to some or all questions/prompts but little to no detail illustrating the points shared.	Provide answers to all questions/prompts, using details from the videos for each question/prompt, and demonstrate an understanding of the valuing diversity

		concepts shared in each video.
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Part 2: Worksite Activity

Directions:

- Download and open this document: [Valuing Diversity Flower](#)
- Follow the directions on the activity sheet. You will upload this completed document as part of your micro-credential submission. To complete the activity, you may do one of the following:
 - a. Type directly into the document after you've downloaded and saved it to your computer. Be sure to save the file once you've completed it.
 - b. Or, you may print the document, write your responses on the paper copy, and then scan or take a picture of your completed document.

Submission Checklist:

- Upload your activity sheet to Part 2 of the NEA Certification Bank submission page.
- Make sure your activity sheet is completely filled out following all directions.

How to earn a passing score in Part 2:

Part 2 Passing:

- Worksheet is completely filled out.
- You have Identified 2 people in your worksite community who you think have different backgrounds or perspectives than the majority of the community for the diversity listed on each of the six petals of the flower and write down what the diversity is. (For example, Family Structure: Sally Greene is a single mother of two. Age/Stage of life: Bob Young is a millennial.)

- In the center of the flower, one person you know in your worksite community is identified as someone with whom you could have a safe, honest, conversation about diversity.

Part 3: Interview

Directions: Follow the steps below, make an audio or video recording or written transcription of the interview, and save it to upload as part of your submission.

Identify one person from the valuing diversity flower who you work with, and feel comfortable having a conversation about diversity. Do not have the interviewee share any personal information that could be used to identify them (e.g., name, school, district, etc.) as they should remain anonymous.

Before the interview, provide the interviewee with a copy of the questions and the PGC indicators and descriptors listed above. The recording should be 5-10 minutes in length. If a submitted recording for Part 3 is longer than 10 minutes, only the first 10 minutes will be reviewed. Written transcriptions should be no longer than 1000 words.

Interview the person using only questions #1-3 below and include their responses. After conducting the interview, answer all of the questions yourself:

1. What does valuing diversity mean to you?
2. Can you give me some examples of diversity you see in our [insert the work environment]: worksite, school, community, district, or institution of higher education?
3. Do you think that we, at our worksite, are making good use of/valuing the diversity we have; are we using diversity to make things better for all?
 - a. If yes, can you provide a specific example of what we are doing well to make good use of diversity? [Selecting to

respond to this prompt rather than 3b will have no effect on the submission score.]

b. If no, what specifically do you think we should do differently?

4. What have you learned from talking with a co-worker, colleague about valuing diversity?

Submission Checklist:

- Upload your audio or video recording or written transcription of your interview to Part 3 of the NEA Certification Bank submission page.
- Include complete and relevant responses to all three questions from the interviewee AND from the submitter/you.
 - Answer 1, 2; then
 - Answer 3a or 3b.
- Make sure your responses include relevant specifics on how school/worksite/community staff and/or leaders are leveraging diversity to make things better for all, or achievable ideas for what could be done differently to leverage diversity.
- Make sure the length of your recording is no longer than 10 minutes and the length of a written transcription is no longer than 1000 words

How to earn a proficient score in Part 3:

Part 3 Rubric:

Score:	Developing	Proficient
Interviews	Interview of co-worker and self do not provide answers to all questions, or provide answers to all questions but only with general examples (no specifics provided) about what valuing diversity means to each interviewee, examples of diversity; and whether adults are	Interview of co-worker and self provide answers to all questions, demonstrating understanding of valuing diversity with specifics provided about what valuing diversity means to each interviewee, examples of diversity,

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	encouraged to develop and use their valuing diversity skills on the job.	and whether adults are encouraged to develop and use their valuing diversity skills on the job and how this could be improved if needed; and applies understanding of co-worker's experiences to inform the submitter's knowledge about the skill area.
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Part 4: Reflection

Directions: Read all of the text in the three prompts/questions below.

Then respond to all three prompts/questions through a written response, OR through an audio or video recording of yourself.

- If you submit a written response: make sure your Part 4 response is 350 words minimum and no longer than 750 words.
- If you submit a recording (audio or video): make sure your recording for Part 4 is no longer than 5 minutes.

Prompts/Questions

1. Describe one missed opportunity in the past at your worksite, when you or others could have done a better job of valuing diversity. (*Your response describing a missed opportunity will not negatively impact your score and will not be shared.)

2. What small action step/change can you make in the current school year to capture the benefits of diversity at your worksite, school, community, or institution of higher education?

Some examples:

- create a new way of working as a team in which each person's voice is welcomed, respected, and heard;
- encourage those who are bilingual or multilingual to communicate with members of the school community in their native language;
- translate all messages and communications into the native languages of those who are part of the school/worksite community;
- acknowledge the religious and cultural holidays of all members of the school/worksite community;
- be curious about others who are different from you and seek to learn something new from them.

3. Describe who will benefit from your steps to actually value diversity. Tell us how and why they will benefit.

Submission Checklist:

- Upload your written, audio, or video response to the NEA Certification Bank submission page for Part 4.
- Include relevant, complete, and specific responses to all three prompts/questions.
- Make sure your responses reflect an understanding of what proficient valuing diversity means for ESPs.
- Make sure your written length is 350 words minimum and no longer than 750 words or your recording length is no longer than 5 minutes.

How to earn a passing score in Part 4:

Passing: Your reflection identifies an action step/change you can make to strengthen how you value diversity skills, how you will put these stronger skills to use at your worksite, school, community, or institution of higher education, and who will benefit and how you will benefit.

Supporting Rationale and Research

Moule, J. (2012). [*Cultural Competence: A primer for educators*](#). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth and Cengage Learning.

[*ESP Professional Growth Continuum*](#). NEA.

Mayfield, V. [*Cultural Competence Now*](#). ASCD. 2020.

NEA. [*Racial Justice in Education Framework Principles*](#). 2021.

De Anca, Silvia and Salvador Aragón. [*The 3 Types of Diversity that Shape Our Identities*](#). Harvard Business Review. May 2021.

Renkly, S. and K. Bertolini. [*Shifting the Paradigm from Deficit Oriented Schools to Asset Based Models: Why Leaders Need to Promote an Asset Orientation in our Schools*](#). Empowering Research for Educators. (Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.) 2018.

Phillips, Katherine. [*How Diversity Makes Us Smarter*](#). Scientific American 311, 4, 42-47 (October 2014).

Resources:

The PGC: What it is and how to use it ([English video](#); [Spanish video](#) and [Spanish resources](#)) by NEA

[*Promoting Educators' Cultural Competence To Better Serve Culturally Diverse Students*](#) by NEA

[*Whole Child Approach to Education*](#) by ASCD

[*Cultural Proficiency Continuum*](#) by The Center for Culturally Proficient Educational Practice

[*Diversity, Equity, and Cultural Competence*](#) by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

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[Valuing Diversity: Developing a Deeper Understanding of all Young Children's Behavior](#) by NAEYC

[Why Diversity Matters](#) (video) by Katherine Phillips