



# Embrace, Contradiction, or Prohibition: A National Scan of State Policies for Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education

**Meghan Comstock**

University of Maryland,  
College Park

**Maya Kaul**

University of Pennsylvania

**Sora Kim**

University of Maryland,  
College Park

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Meghan Comstock, University of Maryland, College Park

Maya Kaul, University of Pennsylvania

Sora Kim, University of Maryland, College Park

## **Abstract**

This qualitative document review is a national scan of state policies pertaining to culturally responsive and sustaining education (CRSE) as of September 2025. We present a typology of states—CRSE Forward, CRSE Conflicted, CRSE Limited, and CRSE Prohibitive—reflecting how CRSE is taken up in states’ teaching standards and the extent to which states’ policy environments are supportive of CRSE. Our results shed light on the nature and complexity of policy signals educators may be receiving about equitable instruction through state policy, and indicate that state-level embrace of CRSE is a partisan political issue, as well as a complex policy one.

**Keywords:** culturally responsive and sustaining education; instructional policy; state teaching standards; education policy

In recent years, the US has seen dramatic swings in attention to equity in public schooling. The Covid-19 pandemic and racial uprisings of 2020 prompted renewed commitments to equity, especially racial equity, in schools (Green et al., 2025). Subsequently, widespread backlash to equity advancements has led to a barrage of state legislation and federal proclamations condemning diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) (see Kelly, 2023; PEN America, n.d.). Although the legality of federal attacks on DEI have been challenged (American Civil Liberties Union, 2026), this policy environment has sown confusion among educators and promoted self-censorship in instruction (Pollock et al., 2022; Schoorman & Gatens, 2024).

In this environment, culturally responsive and sustaining education (CRSE)—educational experiences that support the academic success of every student, build students’ cultural competence, and engage students in understanding and critiquing social issues (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2014)—holds a tenuous position. CRSE has long been discussed in teacher education and practitioner spaces as critical for ensuring that educational experiences are responsive to the cultural, racial/ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the US student population (Carey et al., 2018; Gay, 2002; Villegas, 2002). Empirical scholarship has shown positive effects of CRSE on students’ academic and affective outcomes (e.g., Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Dee & Penner, 2017; Hubert, 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2004). Yet, little is known about the current status of state policy for CRSE. Because of its attention to equitable instructional experiences for students, some states might embrace CRSE while others avoid it. Still others might take up CRSE in policy alongside anti-DEI or other restrictive equity policies, leading to mixed policy signals to educators on what and how to teach (e.g., Pollock et al., 2022; Woo et al., 2024).

In this qualitative document review, we provide a national scan of state policy for CRSE, characterizing state policies pertaining to CRSE in all 50 states and Washington DC. Our aim was to document not just how states attend to CRSE in state teaching standards, but also the

extent to which CRSE is supported in states' policy environments, shedding light on the nature and complexity of policy signals educators may be receiving about equitable instruction.

### **Conceptual and Empirical Grounding**

We situate our study in scholarship on CRSE and the attributes of policy environments that may support translation of policy into practice.

#### **Conceptualizing CRSE**

We use the term CRSE to synthesize across prominent asset-based, socioculturally-rooted frameworks for teaching and learning, including culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014). These conceptualizations emphasize CRSE not as a set of specific technical teaching practices, but as a paradigm that encompasses educators' dispositions, beliefs, and practices (Comstock, 2025; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2018). Following Muñiz (2019), we draw on several central/common dimensions across these distinct frameworks to ground our conceptualization of CRSE and to inform our analysis of state policy. The first dimension is a commitment to *high academic success* for each student—CRSE assumes that educators believe in all students' capabilities to learn at high levels (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995). The second dimension is *cultural competence*—students' and educators' understanding of their own and others' cultural identities (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Within this dimension, we recognize several tenets: the expectation that educators respect diversity and difference as a fundamental precondition to validating students' cultural identities (Gay, 2018), engage in instruction that integrates students' cultural identities (e.g., through meaningful attention to students' interests and lived experiences), embrace communication and engagement norms that are culturally and linguistically responsive (e.g., school-family communications translated into languages spoken at home), and make other connections between students' home and school lives (e.g., attention to cultural traditions in

instruction) (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Muñiz, 2019). Third, CRSE emphasizes *sociopolitical consciousness*—supporting students to understand and “critique the existing social order” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 474), including social inequalities, institutional bias, and systemic racism (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Muñiz, 2019).

Although most CRSE literature focuses on teaching and teacher education, there are notable existing studies that document how states have taken up CRSE in policy. In her review of states’ teaching policies, Muñiz (2019) found evidence of CRSE in all states’ standards, but particular tenets, such as family engagement and high expectations for academic success, were most widely embraced. Tenets reflective of sociopolitical consciousness were much less common. This finding aligns with CRSE scholarship that has documented how the more critical elements of CRSE are often overlooked in practice (Comstock, 2025; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Sleeter, 2012; Young, 2010). In another review of teaching policies, Carrier (2024) analyzed the racial frames embedded in states’ teaching standards (excluding CRSE-specific state frameworks), drawing attention to the largely race-evasive nature of states’ standards.

Our policy scan makes two notable contributions to this existing work. First, given the massive political swings in attention to DEI in schools, we provide a timely update to these existing scans, documenting ways that states have modified their attention to CRSE in their teaching standards and other teaching frameworks in recent years. Second, existing scans do not situate CRSE policies in states’ broader policy environments. Yet doing so is important because complex policy environments often lead to competing messages to educators (Coburn, 2004; Coburn et al., 2016; Cohen & Hill, 2001). For instance, given that the more critical and equity-centered elements of CRSE are often diluted in practice, we might expect that some states may use the language of CRSE while only meaningfully embracing a subset of the less controversial CRSE tenets, or while simultaneously embracing anti-DEI policies.

## The Attributes of Policy That Support Implementation

To understand states' policy environments for CRSE, we rely on policy attributes theory (Desimone, 2002; Porter et al., 1988; Porter, 1994). This theory identifies five attributes of policy that support translation of policy to practice. *Specificity* is the degree of prescriptiveness and detail of the policy—e.g., a state providing detailed guidance documents or professional learning on CRSE. *Consistency* is the alignment of a policy with other existing policies—e.g., other content-specific frameworks that align with the teaching standards, whether and how CRSE is emphasized in discussions about diversifying the educator workforce. *Authority* is the level of legitimacy or institutional support for the policy—e.g., a state having a pro-equity policy in place indicates some institutional support generally for equity-oriented teaching. *Power* refers to the accountability mechanisms for the policy—e.g., teacher evaluation that explicitly includes CRSE. Finally, *stability* is the likelihood that the policy will persist.

The policy attributes theory has commonly been applied to understand instructional policy and standards and accountability reforms (e.g., Desimone et al., 2019). Prior work has shown how teachers' perceptions of the attributes of policy—e.g., their buy-in for content standards, the extent to which they see policies as clear and specific—predicts how much they align their instruction with what the policy calls for (Comstock et al., 2022; Desimone, 2002; Edgerton & Desimone, 2018). This work also suggests that state education agencies play an important role in developing resources and guidance for educators to support implementation of instructional policies (Comstock et al., 2022). We adapt the policy attributes theory to policies pertaining to CRSE to understand the extent to which state policy and guidance establishes the attributes that might promote take-up of CRSE—beyond just expectations laid out in teaching standards. In doing so, our findings speak to broader signals that educators in different states may be receiving about equitable teaching.

## Methods

We conduct qualitative analysis of public documents (Bowen, 2009) from all 50 states, plus Washington DC. Our analysis represents policies as of September 2025. Our use of the term “states” throughout includes DC. For the sake of anonymity in politically contentious times, we do not name states/DC in our findings.

### Document Collection

Our criteria for document collection were to include: (1) each state’s *current* professional teaching standards and other formalized instructional frameworks (including CRSE-specific frameworks), (2) *previous* iterations of teaching standards, if modified since 2020, and (3) *current* CRSE policy guidance or resources that are publicly available on state department of education websites.

We employed a systematic search strategy, which yielded a total of 513 documents. First, we searched each state’s department of education website to locate the state’s teaching standards. We conducted separate Google searches as needed when state website search functions did not readily return their teaching standards. Importantly, many states rely in some form on the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium’s (InTASC’s) *Model Core Teaching Standards* (see Appendix). If states’ websites referenced InTASC model standards as their teaching standards, we included (and coded) the model standards document itself. In many cases, states had their own modified versions of InTASC standards, which we collected. Second, to discern if changes had been made to teaching standards since 2020, we checked if the current teaching standards referenced the most recent modifications, and we reviewed version histories and legislative amendment histories on state websites. Using this information, we conducted a Google search to locate the most recent prior version.

Third, to identify other policy guidance documents and resources about CRSE or that integrate CRSE, we conducted a search on each state’s department of education website using

a Boolean search strategy organized around two terminology categories: “cultural responsiveness” and “instruction.” To supplement search functions on state websites, we also used Google’s site-specific search function (i.e., the “site:” operator) to identify documents within state website domains specifying the same terminology. Although this approach enabled more comprehensive retrieval of documents, it sometimes surfaced outdated materials. Therefore, we revisited the state websites to verify whether the identified documents were current and publicly accessible. We excluded documents identified through Google searches that were not available on current state websites. Finally, to identify the current status of state DEI policies, we searched for state educational equity policies (pro- and anti-DEI), using existing databases including PEN America’s Index of Educational Gag Orders (PEN America, n.d.).

### **Coding and Analysis**

To code the documents, we generated a Qualtrics form with a priori codes aligned with tenets of CRSE and the policy attributes and open-ended items to capture excerpts of the data and researcher memos (Miles et al., 2014; see Appendix for codebook). All three authors conducted coding. To support interrater reliability, we conducted multiple rounds of collaborative coding. In each round, we independently coded documents from the same state and met to compare results and reconcile discrepancies (MacQueen et al., 2007). Afterward, each author independently coded a subset of the remaining states, documenting questions in a shared file for follow-up discussion. We met regularly during coding to address questions.

To discern how states attend to CRSE in state teaching standards, we coded for the presence or absence of core tenets of CRSE in standards documents. Specifically, we considered presence of tenets to be explicit language in the standards indicating embrace of (1) expectations for high *academic success* for all students, (2) elements of *cultural competence*: respect for diversity/difference, integrating student culture and identity in instruction, cultural/linguistic sensitivity in student and family communication, and home-school connections

in instruction; and (3) elements of *sociopolitical consciousness*: attention to institutional bias, systemic racism, and social justice issues. For states using InTASC model standards, we coded the model standards themselves and ensured consistent coding across states. When states used a modified version of InTASC standards, we coded those modified versions. We labeled states as having a **strong conceptualization** of CRSE if they had any evidence of expectations for high academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. We labeled states as having a **thin conceptualization** of CRSE if their teaching standards were missing evidence in one or more of these dimensions.

To discern the extent to which CRSE was supported in states' policy environments, we coded for the presence or absence of evidence for each of the five policy attributes in other state documents (i.e., all documents collected other than current teaching standards). We reviewed all documents to determine whether there was evidence of: (1) *specificity*—documents or rubrics specify levels of CRSE practice and/or provide further explication of CRSE, and the state offers additional guidance (e.g., modules, resources) related to CRSE; (2) *consistency*—CRSE requirements in formal educator preparation program standards and/or accreditation, CRSE integration in teacher workforce policies, and CRSE integration in other instructional policies (e.g., instructional frameworks for mathematics, English learner policies); (3) *authority*—having a pro-equity state education policy in place or *not* having an anti-DEI equity policy in place, indicating a positive or neutral DEI policy environment; (4) *power*—CRSE in formal in-service teacher evaluation and other evidence of monitoring and/or requirements for districts to take up CRSE; and (5) *stability*—decreases in attention to CRSE in the last five years amid the contentious political environment. We labeled states as having a **supportive policy environment** for CRSE if they had evidence of specificity, consistency, authority, and power, and no evidence of decreased attention to CRSE in recent years (indicating instability). We labeled states as having a **limited policy environment** for CRSE if they had an anti-DEI policy in place (indicating low authority), had decreased their attention to CRSE over time (e.g., by

removing language from their standards, indicating instability), or were missing evidence of specificity, consistency, or power.

After coding, we generated a state-level dataset that included all CRSE and policy attribute indicators. Given partisan patterns in anti-DEI policies, we added a variable to our dataset indicating state government trifecta status as of 2025, based on data from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL, 2025). Then, we used coded data to generate a matrix of strong/thin conceptualization in teaching standards and supportive/limited policy environment, which led us to identify four types of states. To ensure trustworthiness of our categorizations, we closely reviewed the data for states in each category to generate qualitative themes on their similarities and differences. We also solicited feedback on our state categorizations from three policy experts in the field.

## Results

We present a typology of states based on the extent to which they take up CRSE in their teaching standards and the nature of their policy environments for supporting CRSE. We characterized states as CRSE Forward, CRSE Conflicted, CRSE Limited, and CRSE Prohibitive (Figure 1).

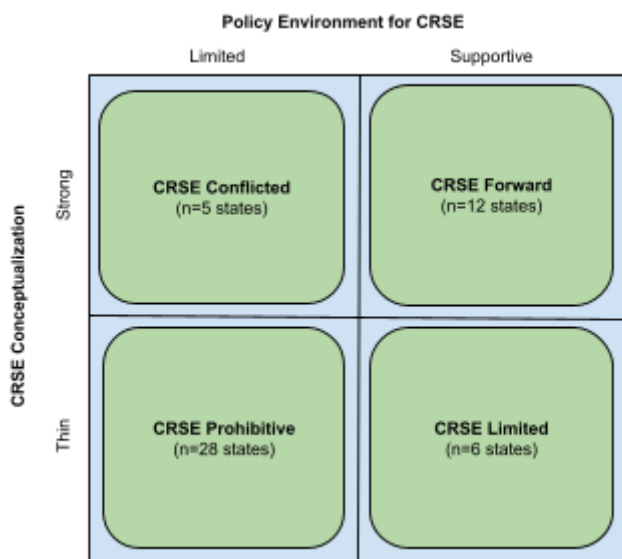


Figure 1. Typology of US States' Embrace of CRSE in State Policy

### **CRSE Forward (n=12 states)**

We characterized twelve states as CRSE Forward because they had evidence of: (1) strong CRSE conceptualization in their teaching standards, and (2) a supportive policy environment for CRSE. The integration of CRSE in these states' teaching standards was bolstered by aspects of the broader state policy environment, creating conditions that enabled them to center CRSE. Politically, CRSE Forward states tended to lean progressive, with the exception of two Republican-controlled states.

All of these states had evidence of strong conceptualizations of CRSE in their teaching standards: they attended to academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness, and the majority of CRSE Forward states (n=10) included explicit definitions for CRSE or a related term. For example, states' standards centered cultural competence, calling more generally for teachers to incorporate knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds (e.g., "Teacher shows sensitivity and respect for families, the greater community, school culture, values and beliefs."). Aligned with sociopolitical awareness, states' standards also explicitly situated cultural relevance into a historical view of inequality (e.g., "the responsibility of education is [...] to assist in the promotion and perpetuation of cultures, languages and ways of knowing that have been devalued, suppressed, and imperiled by years of educational, social, political, economic neglect and other forms of oppression."). Notably, within the domain of sociopolitical consciousness, all but one of the CRSE Forward states explicitly drew attention to *institutional bias* in their teaching standards (e.g., "As schools have historically reflected the norms of the dominant culture, those of us of the dominant race or culture need to work especially hard to examine power, privilege and bias, to see the invisible").

All of the CRSE Forward states also had evidence of supportive state-level policy environments for CRSE, as reflected in evidence of each of the five policy attributes. Regarding authority, five of the states had pro-equity policies and none of the states had anti-DEI legislation in place. In terms of consistency, the majority of CRSE Forward states embed tents of

CRSE into their EPP standards, their teacher workforce initiatives (e.g., recruitment programs), and other instructional policy agendas (e.g., literacy, STEM, EL, and other subgroups). For example, one state aligns its workforce initiatives around its systemwide “educational vision” to articulate how a range of different pathways into the teaching profession are designed to support a pipeline of diverse and culturally-responsive educators. Another state presents a particularly strong case of alignment across instructional policy, as CRSE is central to not only its main teaching standards but also embedded across literacy, social and emotional learning, and multilingual learner support.

There was greater variation amongst CRSE Forward states in terms of power. We observed that *all* of these states had systems of teacher evaluation that touched on CRSE. However, fewer than half (n=5) had CRSE embedded in other monitoring materials (e.g., for EPPs, districts, and mentoring programs), suggesting potential gaps in the overall coherence of CRSE across systems of teacher performance. Notably, in terms of specificity, ten of the CRSE Forward states’ standards or rubrics explicated levels of CRSE practice and/or provided further explication of CRSE more generally. The majority of CRSE Forward states also supplemented their standards with additional guidance materials, such as research-backed materials defining and providing background on CRSE. In terms of stability, no CRSE-Forward states reduced attention to CRSE over time.

### **CRSE Conflicted (n=5 states)**

We characterized five states as CRSE Conflicted because they had evidence of (1) strong CRSE conceptualization in their teaching standards and (2) limitations in their state policy environments. In this way, these states offered conflicting policy signals—they embraced core dimensions of CRSE in teaching standards, but aspects of their policy environments suggested CRSE might be restricted and/or not fully supported. These states varied in state

partisanship, representing Republican-controlled, Democratic-controlled, and divided state governments.

Limitations in the policy environment showed up in three ways: they have anti-DEI legislation in place (limited authority), no evidence of accountability mechanisms for CRSE (limited power), or have decreased attention to CRSE over time (instability). For example, one state's current teaching standards showed evidence of expectations for high academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness; however, the state weakened its attention to CRSE over time. In 2022, the state adopted a CRSE framework specifying competencies expected of teachers, including explicit attention to racism. In 2024, the state shifted to a more race-evasive version of these competencies. Another state similarly had evidence for high academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness in teaching standards; however, that state has an anti-DEI policy in place (indicating low authority), no clear accountability mechanisms for CRSE (indicating low power), and some evidence of reduction in attention to CRSE over time (instability); in particular, while the state's 2018 standards explicitly named and defined "culturally responsive pedagogy," their current teaching standards, updated in 2022, removed this term.

### **CRSE Limited (n=6 states)**

We characterized six states as CRSE Limited because they had evidence of: (1) thin CRSE conceptualization in their teaching standards, yet (2) a supportive policy environment for CRSE. We refer to these states as CRSE Limited because their state documents signal some support for CRSE but also an underdeveloped conceptualization of CRSE. These states were somewhat similar in partisan patterns, with one divided state government and the remaining being Democratically controlled. Notably, this group contains states that drew heavily on the InTASC standards, suggesting that the InTASC standards themselves reflect a thin conceptualization of CRSE.

All of these states' teaching standards included explicit evidence of high expectations for academic success for all students (e.g., "The teacher believes that all learners can achieve at high levels"). They also included evidence of all four tenets of cultural competence that we coded for: respect for diversity/difference, integrating student culture and identity in instruction, cultural/linguistic sensitivity in student and family communication, and home-school connections in instruction. For example, reflecting integration of student culture and identity into instruction, several states, relying in InTASC model standards language, included: "The teacher knows how to access information about the values of diverse cultures and communities and how to incorporate learners' experiences, cultures, and community resources into instruction."

Missing from all of these states' teaching standards, however, was attention to sociopolitical consciousness. We found evidence in these states' standards of attention to teachers reflecting on their own individual biases (e.g., InTASC standards include: "The teacher is committed to deepening understanding of his/her own frames of reference..., the potential biases in these frames, and their impact on expectations for and relationships with learners and their families."). However, no states' standards (InTASC or otherwise) explicitly named the importance of understanding or interrogating *institutional* bias or other *structural* injustices, like systemic racism or social justice issues.

At the same time, these states did attend to CRSE in their policy environments, reflected in evidence of all five policy attributes. Regarding authority, none of these states had anti-DEI policies in place; three of them had pro-equity state policies in effect. These states also had at least some evidence of consistency, specificity, and power, and we did not find any evidence of these states decreasing attention to CRSE over time. For instance, one state has a pro-educational equity state policy (authority), was part of a multi-state Diverse and Learner Ready Teachers Initiative that named CRSE as a component of this workforce initiative (consistency), has materials on its website providing further explication of CRSE (specificity),

had evidence of CRSE tenets being incorporated into teacher evaluation (power), and had no evidence of decreasing attention to CRSE in teaching standards (stability).

### **CRSE Prohibitive (n=28 states)**

We characterized 28 states as CRSE Prohibitive because they had evidence of (1) thin conceptualization of CRSE in their teaching standards and (2) limited or prohibitive policy environments for CRSE. These states were predominantly Republican-controlled (n=21), with a few divided governments (n=6) and one Democratic-controlled state.

Regarding CRSE conceptualization, while all but one of these states had evidence of setting high academic expectations for all students in their standards, attention to cultural competence was thin and sociopolitical consciousness was absent. All but one state showed *some* evidence of cultural competence in their teaching standards; yet, some tenets of cultural competence received far less attention than others. For instance, most states emphasized teachers' respect for cultural diversity (n=24) (e.g., "Demonstrating respect for each learner and exhibiting actions consistent with recognizing learners' diverse backgrounds"). However, many of these states lack one or more of the other tenets of cultural competence that we coded for: integrating culture and identity into instruction, practicing culturally and linguistically sensitive communication, and fostering home-school connections. Notably, in nearly half of the states, we found no evidence of culturally and linguistically sensitive communication with students and families. Furthermore, none of the states addressed sociopolitical consciousness in their teaching standards. And, unlike the CRSE Limited group, where all states' standards named attention to individual bias in teachers' practice, most CRSE Prohibitive states' standards did not.

CRSE-Prohibitive states also had evidence of limited policy environments for CRSE, particularly in authority for CRSE. A majority of these states (n=24) currently have anti-DEI policies in education in effect (limited authority). For example, as is common for such legislation,

one state law prohibits schools from requiring training that presents “race or sex stereotyping or blame” and restricts instruction that includes concepts such as the claim that one race or sex is inherently superior to another or that individuals should feel “discomfort,” “guilt,” or “anguish” because of their race or sex. A majority of states (n=17) in this category also had little evidence of accountability mechanisms for CRSE—such as teacher evaluation or state-level monitoring to support CRSE (limited power). For other attributes, about one-third (n=10) of the states lack detailed guidance or materials to support the implementation of CRSE (limited specificity), four states had limited integration of CRSE across other instructional domains and teacher policy areas (limited consistency), and four states have decreased their attention to CRSE since 2020 (instability). For example, in one state, “culturally responsive schools” and “culturally responsive-sustaining education”, which were a major priority in their 2020 statewide education plan, were no longer mentioned in the 2025 plan.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Our study offers important insights to the research, policy, and practice of CRSE. First, aligning with prior policy scans (Carrier, 2024; Muñiz, 2019) our typology of states signals wide variation in the extent to which states embrace CRSE in their state teaching standards. While some states offer robust frameworks for CRSE, others only minimally reference CRSE in their teaching standards. A majority of states showed evidence of thin conceptualizations of CRSE in their teaching standards, and there was a notable absence of attention to sociopolitical consciousness across states. Given evidence on the value of CRSE for promoting equitable instructional opportunities for a diverse student population (e.g., Aronson & Laughter, 2016), our results suggest there is ample room for states to strengthen their support for CRSE. Notably, InTASC model standards were a clear resource for states, evidenced by approximately half of states drawing on them in some form (see also Carrier, 2024). However, attention to sociopolitical consciousness in these model standards is limited. Thus, states adopting these

model standards necessarily overlook sociopolitical consciousness in their expectations of teachers. InTASC model standards could be updated to better integrate elements of sociopolitical consciousness. If not, states should treat InTASC model standards as a starting point, modifying the standards to better attend to institutional bias, racism, and social justice. This finding also raises questions about the extent to which CRSE might live in content standards adopted by states (e.g., mathematics or literacy), which may also be a lever for CRSE becoming more widely institutionalized nationally.

Second, state policy environments for CRSE range from supportive to conflicting to actively prohibitive. Given scholarship on the importance of the authority, specificity, consistency, power, and stability of policy for promoting take-up of the instructional policy locally (Desimone et al., 2019), our findings suggest that, in addition to bolstering attention to CRSE in state teaching standards, states should also attend to the ways in which they foster a broader policy environment supportive of CRSE. Here, we draw attention to the CRSE Conflicted and CRSE Limited states, where there is a disconnect between what state teaching standards call for regarding CRSE and what their policy environments support. Policy scholarship has long found that teachers as policy actors contend with mixed policy signals that complicate classroom-level decisions and make for wide variation in policy implementation (Coburn, 2004; Coburn et al., 2016; Cohen & Hill, 2001). These mixed policy signals are exacerbated by anti-DEI policies that sow confusion and contradictions about what and how to teach in schools (Pollock et al., 2022; Schoorman & Gatens, 2024; Woo et al., 2024). If state teaching standards call for CRSE but they are situated in a limited policy environment—e.g., one that constrains how teachers can talk about race, gender, and other forms of identity, does not provide specific guidance or teachers on what CRSE looks like, and does not have accountability mechanisms in place that bolster support for CRSE—then we should not expect wide-scale embrace of CRSE at the local level. Given that teachers in several states face mandates to *both* implement teaching

standards grounded in CRSE and avoid DEI in their teaching, this also raises pressing questions regarding how K-12 teachers make sense of conflicting guidance.

Importantly, we also see clear partisan patterns, particularly among the CRSE Forward and CRSE Prohibitive states, suggesting that teachers in Republican-controlled states are far less likely to receive clear and robust guidance on CRSE from their state education agencies. These results suggest a need to understand how local education agencies and teachers in these states support diverse student populations in spite of restrictive policy climates. At the same time, partisan patterns were less stark among CRSE Conflicted and CRSE Limited states, further bolstering the notion that supporting CRSE at the state level is not just a partisan political issue, but a question of how to support equitable instruction in complex policy environments.

We also note several limitations to our policy scan in drawing conclusions about how best to support CRSE through policy. We rely on public documents that can be found on state education agency websites. While this approach provides a sense of the types of resources teachers themselves have access to, it also means that we cannot discern other ways states may be supporting CRSE. Second, because we focus on state policies, we cannot speak to how other factors shape CRSE in classrooms, such as district and school leadership (e.g., see Khalifa et al., 2016) and teacher and teacher educator sensemaking (Kaul et al., 2026). We also know that states have different approaches to state instructional policy and orientations to local control—some states prioritize state-level resources for instruction, whereas others defer to local education agencies (Comstock et al., 2022). This variation begs questions about how different approaches to state-level policy for CRSE can support local districts to move towards greater embrace of CRSE. Future implementation studies at the district level and in a variety of state policy contexts would shed great light on these questions.

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## Appendix

**Table A1. State-Level Information**

State	InTASC Alignment	Teaching Standards and/or Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education Framework and Date Last Updated	Total Number of Artifacts Collected (including teaching standards and additional policy documents)
Alabama	Minor modification	Alabama Core Teaching Standards (15 May 25)	4
Alaska	No mention of InTASC	Alaska Educator Content & Performance Standards (n.d.); Standards, Indicators, and Evidences for Evaluating Culturally Responsive Teaching (n.d.); Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools (n.d.)	9
Arizona	Minor modification	Arizona’s Professional Teaching Standards (30 September 2024)	5
Arkansas	Minor modification	Arkansas Teaching Standards (n.d.); High-Quality Materials (HQIM) Teacher Competencies (n.d.)	4
California	No mention of InTASC	California Standards for the Teaching Profession (April 2024); California Teaching Performance Expectations (June 2016); Continuum of Teaching Practice (2025)	13
Colorado	No mention of InTASC	The Colorado Teacher Quality Standards (n.d.); A Resource Guide for Deepening the Understanding of Teachers’ Professional Practices (2019)	22
Connecticut	No mention of InTASC	Common Core of Teaching: Foundational Skills (2010); Creating a Culturally Sustaining Classroom through Building Relationships and Intentional Instructional Practices (n.d.)	15
Delaware	Identical	1597 Delaware Professional Teaching Standards (1 July 2025)	10
Florida	No mention of InTASC	The Florida Educator Accomplished Practices ( 22 August 2023)	4

Georgia	No mention of InTASC	Georgia Department of Education TAPS Standards Reference Sheet: Performance Standards and Sample Performance Indicators (1 July 2014); Georgia's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System: Implementation Handbook (1 July 2024)	2
Hawaii	Minor modification	Hawaii Teacher Performance Standards (n.d.); Interstate New Teacher Assessment Consortium Standards (26 August 2011); Nā Hopena A'ō Statements (16 June 2015)	7
Idaho	Minor modification	Idaho Core Teaching Standards in "Idaho Standards for Initial Certification of Professional School Personnel" (1 July 2022)	5
Illinois	No mention of InTASC	The Illinois Professional Educator Standards, Beginning July 1, 2026 (29 December 2022); Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards (July 2022); Code tit. 23, § 24.50 - The Illinois Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards (2 March 2021)	22
Indiana	Major modification	Indiana Developmental Standards for Educators (n.d.)	3
Iowa	No mention of InTASC	Iowa Teaching Standards and Criteria (n.d.); Model Descriptors in "The Iowa Model Educator Evaluation System" (2021)	3
Kansas	Major modification	Regulations and Standards for Kansas Educators 2020-2021, "Professional Education Standards" (13 July 2015)	8
Kentucky	Minor modification	Kentucky Teacher Performance Standards (2018); Framework for Teaching (November 2017); Characteristics of Highly Effective Teaching and Learning (CHETL) (10 July 2023)	8
Louisiana	No mention of InTASC	Title 28: Education, Subchapter C. General Teacher Competencies, §205. Introduction (July 2017); §207. General Competencies (for teacher preparation) (February 2025); Louisiana Teacher Preparation Competencies (November 2024)	5
Maine	Major modification	Unit Standard One in "Purpose, Standards, and Procedures for the Review and Approval of Preparation Programs for Education	8

		Personnel" (September 2012)	
Maryland	Identical	Maryland Teacher Competencies in "Regulations Deep Dive: Educator Preparation and Licensure Updates" (24 January 2023); Teacher Preparation Competencies: Cultural Responsiveness (n.d.); Teacher Preparation Competencies: General Competencies (n.d.); Teacher Preparation Competencies: Literacy Competencies (n.d.)	10
Massachusetts	No mention of InTASC	603 CMR 35.03 Evaluation of Educators, Standards and Indicators of Effective Teaching Practice (25 October 2017); Standards of Effective Teaching Practice (June 2024) Focus Indicators For Teaching In 2025-2026 (n.d.)	20
Michigan	Identical	Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Standards (2013)	10
Minnesota	Major modification	8710.2000 Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers (1 July 2025)	8
Mississippi	No mention of InTASC	Professional Growth System, Teacher Growth Rubric: Observation and Feedback Guidebook 2019-2020 (n.d.)	11
Missouri	Major modification	Missouri Teacher Standards (May 2013); Professional Continuum of the Teacher (n.d.); Missouri Model Teacher and Leader Standards: A Resource for State Dialogue (June 2011)	5
Montana	Minor modification	Framework for Teacher Evaluation in "Montana Educator Performance Appraisal System: Teacher Evaluation Guide" (2022)	6
Nebraska	Major modification	Nebraska Teacher and Principal Performance Standards (April 2020)	10
Nevada	Major modification	Teacher Instructional Practice Standards and Indicators (March 2023)	8
New Hampshire	No mention of InTASC	Chapter Ed 500 Certification Standards for Educational Personnel (1 July 2023)	6
New Jersey	Minor	Professional Standards for Teachers and	18

	modification	School Leaders N.J.A.C. 6A: 9, Professional Standards (2014); New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers (N.J.A.C. 6A: 9C-3.3) Foundations of Effective Practice (August 2014)	
New Mexico	No mention of InTASC	Teacher Competencies and Indicators for Licensure Levels 1, 2, and 3-A in “Performance Evaluation System Requirements for Teachers” (18 January 2023); Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Framework (2020)	20
New York	Major modification	The New York State Teaching Standards (12 September 2011); Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework (January 2018)	33
North Carolina	No mention of InTASC	North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards (1 May 2013)	5
North Dakota	No mention of InTASC	Chapter 67.1-03-01 Code of Professional Conduct for Educators (August 2002); Model Code of Ethics for Educators (n.d.)	5
Ohio	No mention of InTASC	Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession (n.d.); Standards Glossary (n.d.)	3
Oklahoma	No mention of InTASC	Oklahoma TAP Teaching Standards (OTTS) (2013)	6
Oregon	Identical	Oregon Department of Education, Chapter 581, Division 22 Standards for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, Administrative Rule 581-022-2415 Core Teaching Standards (15 December 2011); Oregon Model Core Teaching Standards (n.d.)	20
Pennsylvania	No mention of InTASC	Pennsylvania General Assembly 2020, Act 13 Public School Code of 1949 – Rating System, Persons to be Suspended, Revised Rating System and Pandemic of 2020 Act of Mar. 27, 2020, P. L. 62, No. 13 (March 27, 2020); Pennsylvania Department of Education Educator Effectiveness Observation and Practices Framework for Evaluation: Classroom Teacher (June 2021); Common Ground Framework (November 2024)	15

Rhode Island	No mention of InTASC	The Rhode Island Professional Teaching Standards (June 2025); Rhode Island Professional Educator Standards in "Subchapter 20 Educator Quality and Certification" (1 June 2025)	20
South Carolina	No mention of InTASC	Effective and Adaptive Strategies and the South Carolina Teaching Standards (2025); South Carolina Teaching Standards (SCTS) 4.0 Rubric Landscape (n.d.)	11
South Dakota	No mention of InTASC	Teacher Performance Standards and Evaluation in "South Dakota Codified Law: Teacher Evaluations, SDCL 13-4233" (3 July 2017); Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching (n.d.)	4
Tennessee	No mention of InTASC	General Education Rubric (June 2024)	5
Texas	No mention of InTASC	Texas Administrative Code RULE §149.1001 Teacher Standards (30 June 2014); Texas Administrative Code RULE §235.21 Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities Standards, Early Childhood-Grade 6 (17 May 2018)	9
Utah	Major modification	Utah Effective Teaching Standards (August 2023)	13
Vermont	Minor modification	Vermont Core Teaching Standards (5 June 2018)	11
Virginia	No mention of InTASC	Teacher Performance Evaluation System Handbook (2021); Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers Interim Guidelines (18 March 2021); Board of Education Guidance on Cultural Competency Training for Teachers and Other Licensed School Board Employees in Virginia Public Schools (November 2021)	9
Washington	No mention of InTASC	Teacher Evaluation Criteria and Descriptors (n.d.); Teacher Criteria, Criteria Definitions, and Instructional Framework Alignment (n.d.); Cultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (CCDEI) Standards for Educators (2021)	15
West Virginia	Major	West Virginia Department of Education West	2

	modification	Virginia Professional Teaching Standards (2023)	
Wisconsin	Minor modification	Wisconsin Educator Standards, Teacher Standards (n.d.); Equity: Wisconsin’s Model to Inform Culturally Responsive Practices (September 2017)	22
Wyoming	Minor modification*	PTSB Endorsement Standards (n.d.) Standards for Professional Practice in "The Wyoming model Leader and educator Support and evaluation System" (21 February 2014)	6
District of Columbia	No mention of InTASC	The DCPS Essential Practices Grades 1-12, IMPACT The District of Columbia Public Schools Effectiveness Assessment System for School-Based Personnel (n.d.)	7

*Notes.* The following criteria were used to determine the extent of states’ alignment with the InTASC standards: (1) “Identical” refers to cases where a state does not provide a separate set of teaching standards and instead uses the InTASC standards as its own, or explicitly directs readers to the original InTASC model in its standards; (2) “Minor modification” indicates states that include the ten standards and their descriptions from the InTASC model, but with slight wording differences or additional state-specific standards; (3) “Major modification” describes states that based their standards on the InTASC model but reorganized them in a significantly different structure or framework; (4) “No mention of InTASC” applies when there is no reference or clear evidence of the InTASC standards within the state's teaching standards. \*Wyoming adopted the 10 high-level InTasc standards as-is; because they didn’t adopt the full, detailed standards, we characterized this state as “minor modification.”

**Table A2. CRSE Policy Scan Coding Form**

Category	Item	Item Description/Examples	Response Options
Coder	1. Coder Name	Provide the coder's name.	
State	2. State Name	Provide the name of the state analyzed.	
CRSE Definition	3. A <b>CRSE definition</b> included in state teaching standards	Identify whether the state teaching standards document provides a definition of CRSE or any CRSE-related term (e.g., culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, cultural relevance).	Select one: 1) Yes 2) No
	4. <b>Terms</b> used to refer to CRSE in state teaching standards	Copy the exact term(s) used in state teaching standards.  Examples: “Culturally relevant,” “culturally and linguistically sustaining practices,” and “responsiveness to the cultural backgrounds.”	
	5. <b>Dimensions of culture</b> specified in state teaching standards	Identify which dimensions of “culture” are specified in state teaching standards.	Select all that apply: 1) Race/ethnicity 2) Culture/heritage 3) Incomes (SES) 4) Gender/sexuality 5) Language 6) Dis/ability 7) Geography 8) Other
CRSE Conceptualization	<b>CRSE conceptualization</b> in state teaching standards	Items in this category identify how CRSE is conceptualized in state teaching standards, using three dimensions of CRSE as analytic criteria: 1) high academic expectations, 2) cultural competence, and 3) sociopolitical consciousness. The objects of analysis include state teaching standards policy documents, state guidance on teaching standards, and CRSE-specific standards and/or frameworks.	

High academic expectations			
	6-1. Expectations for academic success	<p>Identify whether the state teaching standards address teachers' expectations of high academic success for all students.</p> <p>Examples:            "The teacher believes that all learners can achieve at high levels and persists in helping each learner reach his/her full potential."</p>	<p>Select one:</p> <p>1) Yes 2) No</p>
Cultural Competence			
	6-2. Respect for diversity/difference	<p>Identify whether the state teaching standards explicitly address teachers' understanding of how to model and/or promote respect for learners' diversity and differences.</p> <p>Examples:            "Connects instruction to students, experiences creating a trusting environment by employing strategies that respect differing cultures and draws explicit connections during instruction/assignments that are related to students, experiences and culture."</p>	<p>Select one:</p> <p>1) Yes 2) No</p>
	6-3. Cultural and/or linguistic sensitivity in student & family engagement/communication	<p>Identify whether the state teaching standards explicitly address teachers' ability to be culturally and/or linguistically sensitive when engaging with learners and/or families.</p> <p>Examples:            "The teacher communicates verbally and nonverbally in ways that demonstrate respect for and responsiveness to the cultural backgrounds and differing perspectives learners bring to the learning environment."            "[Establishes communication with families that is] culturally and linguistically sustaining and aligned with family preferences, in language(s) that families understand, and in approachable language and formats."</p>	<p>Select one:</p> <p>1) Yes 2) No</p>
	6-4. Student culture and identity in	<p>Identify whether the state teaching standards explicitly address teachers' ability to leverage students' culture and identity to adjust curriculum and/or instruction. The evidence must include an implication for instructional</p>	<p>Select one:</p> <p>1) Yes 2) No</p>

	instruction/ instructional adaptations	<p>approaches or student learning.</p> <p>Examples: “The educator knows how to access information about the values of diverse cultures and communities and how to incorporate learners’ experiences, cultures, and community resources into instruction.”</p>	
	6-5. Home-school connections	<p>Identify whether the state teaching standards explicitly address teachers’ ability to engage with families and communities.</p> <p>Examples: “Educators include students, families, and communities as valued members of and contributors to the education community.” “The teacher respects families’ beliefs, norms, and expectations and seeks to work collaboratively with learners and families in setting and meeting challenging goals.”</p>	<p>Select one:</p> <p>1) Yes 2) No</p>
<b>Sociopolitical Consciousness</b>			
	6-6. Individual bias	<p>Identify whether the state teaching standards explicitly address teachers’ ability to understand their own biases, frames of reference, or perspectives.</p> <p>Example: “[Teachers] must have a deeper understanding of their own frames of reference (e.g., culture, gender, language, abilities, ways of knowing), the potential biases in these frames, and their impact on expectations for and relationships with learners and their families.”</p>	<p>Select one:</p> <p>1) Yes 2) No</p>
	6-7. Systemic racism	<p>Identify whether the state teaching standards address teachers’ understanding of systemic racism.</p> <p>Examples: “[Anti-racist teacher and leader] believes racial groups are equals in all their differences and continually engages in self-reflective work that leads to educational policies, practices, conditions, and cultures that resist and dismantle inequities due to individual and systemic racism to advance racial equity.”</p>	<p>Select one:</p> <p>1) Yes 2) No</p>

	6-8. Institutional bias	<p>Identify whether the state teaching standards address teachers' understanding of institutional biases and injustice and/or their commitment to addressing such biases. Here, institutional biases include systemic or structural forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, homophobia, and linguistic bias.</p> <p>Examples:          "Ensuring that assessment tasks, methods and instruments (...) do not perpetuate racial, cultural, or linguistic bias."          "Educators balance competing interests and mitigate challenges by practicing restorative justice, civil discourse, social-emotional intelligence, self-reflection, and facilitating courageous conversations centering on complex issues of educational justice and systemic inequities."</p>	<p>Select one:</p> <p>1) Yes 2) No</p>
	6-9. Social justice issues	<p>Identify whether the state teaching standards address teachers' understanding and/or ability to connect instructional content to social (in)justice issues, such as racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic disparities or other forms of social oppression.</p> <p>Examples:          "Develops students' abilities to think critically, ask questions, and analyze sources, perspectives, and biases in order to deepen learning and make connections between the content and real-world problems and events (e.g., issues of identity, equity, power, and justice)."</p>	<p>Select one:</p> <p>1) Yes 2) No</p>
	6-10. Explicit mention of justice/social justice	<p>Identify whether the state teaching standards explicitly name justice or social justice. This item captures whether social issues and problems are framed in justice-oriented terms. Unlike the previous item, which focuses on substantive content, this item captures the use of justice-related language.</p> <p>Examples:          "Issues of equity and justice," "issues of identity, equity, power, and justice," and "Advocate for social justice and equity."</p>	<p>Select one:</p> <p>1) Yes 2) No</p>
CRSE Policy Environment	<b>CRSE policy environment</b>	<p>Items in this category identify the extent to which CRSE is supported in the state policy environment based on five policy attributes (authority, consistency, power, specificity, and stability). The objects of analysis include all collected state documents other than the state teaching standards.</p>	

	7-1. [Authority] Pro-equity educational policy passed and/or enacted	<p>Identify whether the state governing authority has enacted or issued any pro-equity education policies.</p> <p>These policies include, but are not limited to:          establishing a new advisory body to promote educational equity, mandating equity training for education personnel, monitoring racial and socioeconomic disparities among students, or promoting equal access to educational resources.</p>	<p>Select one:          1) Yes          2) No</p>
	7-2. [Authority] Anti-DEI educational policy passed and/or enacted	<p>Identify whether the state governing authority has enacted or issued any anti-DEI education policies.</p> <p>These policies include, but are not limited to:          prohibiting the promotion, support, or maintenance of programs, activities, or organizations that advocate DEI or “divisive concepts” in public educational institutions.</p>	<p>Select one:          1) Yes          2) No</p>
	7-3. [Consistency] CRSE in formal EPP program standards and/or accreditation	<p>Identify whether any state-level EPP program standards and/or accreditation documents address CRSE.</p>	<p>Select one:          1) Yes          2) No</p>
	7-4. [Consistency] CRSE in teacher recruitment policy	<p>Identify whether any state-level teacher recruitment policies (e.g., Grow Your Own programs or workforce diversity initiatives) address CRSE. The emphasis here is on whether state teacher recruitment policies explicitly connect teacher recruitment with culturally responsive instruction in K–12 classrooms.</p>	<p>Select one:          1) Yes          2) No</p>
	7-5. [Consistency] CRSE connected to other instructional	<p>Identify whether any other state instructional policies (e.g., literacy policies, STEM policies, multilingual learner policies) address and/or promote CRSE.</p>	<p>Select one:          1) Yes          2) No</p>

	policy agendas		
	7-6. [Power] CRSE in formal in-service teacher evaluation	Identify whether the state teacher evaluation framework or rubric explicitly addresses CRSE.	Select one: 1) Yes 2) No
	7-7. [Power] Other evidence of monitoring and/or requirements to take up CRSE	Identify any other evidence of monitoring and/or requirements of CRSE, including mandatory CRSE professional developments and monitoring district-level CRSE implementation.	Select one: 1) Yes 2) No
	7-8. [Specificity] Standards or rubrics describe any levels or CRSE practice and/or provide further explication of CRSE	Identify whether the state teaching standards and/or rubric provide detailed levels of CRSE practice or further explication of the dimensions of CRSE. This includes offering a detailed continuum of CRSE practices.	Select one: 1) Yes 2) No
	7-9. [Specificity] Additional guidance related to CRSE	Identify whether the state provides additional practitioner-oriented guidance documents or resources to help articulate and explicate CRSE practices. This includes professional development modules and exemplars of CRSE practices in the form of documents or videos.	Select one: 1) Yes 2) No
	7-10. [Stability] Evidence of shifts in CRSE emphasis over time in teaching standards policy	Identify changes in the emphasis on CRSE in formal requirements—e.g., inclusion or exclusion in teaching standards, requirements to participate in CRSE professional development, inclusion of CRSE or equity in strategic plans, or the creation of new pro- or anti-DEI policies.	Select one: 1) Yes: decreased attention to CRSE 2) Yes: increased attention to CRSE 3) No
Other	8. Any excerpts	Provide excerpts that capture the state's notable orientation toward CRSE	

	capture states' <b>notable orientation</b> toward CRSE in state teaching standards	in the state teaching standards.	
	9. Any <b>CRSE definition</b> provided in documents other than state teaching standards	Identify whether any definitions of CRSE are provided in the state documents other than the teaching standards.	Select one: 1) Yes 2) No
	10. Any other evidence of the <b>CRSE policy environment</b>	Provide any other evidence of the CRSE policy environment.	
	11. Any <b>general takeaways</b> and notable characteristics	Provide any general takeaways and notable characteristics of the state's CRSE conceptualization and policy environment.	