

# ***Cultural Competence: Can it be Taught?***

**“California Cadet Corps members have an obligation to set an example of cultural competence in the schools where cadet programs exist. We must be shining examples of cultural competence.”**

**Lieutenant Colonel Mark Ryan, Ph.D. at the 2002  
Commandant’s Conference, Sacramento, CA**

# Overview

- ***What is Cultural Competence?***
  - Culture vs. Race/Ethnicity
  - Competence vs. Sensitivity
  - Stages of Cultural Competence



# Keynote Overview

- ***Why is it Important?***
  - Increased Ethnic Diversity;
  - Ethnic Disparities in Schools;
  - Cadets' Background Different From others



# Keynote Overview

- ***How to Achieve it?***
  - Organizational Transformation
  - Personal Transformation



# What is Cultural Competence?

## *Cultural Competence*

- A set of congruent practices, skills, attitudes, policies and structures, which come together in a system, agency, or among professionals, which enable that system, agency or professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

Cross, T.L., Bazron, B.J., Dennis, K.W., Isaac, M.R. (1999)

# What is Cultural Competence?

## *Cultural Competence*

- Congruence across aspects of school life;
- Aspects include:
  - Practices, skills, attitudes (Individual);
  - Practices, policies, structures (Organization)

# Culture vs. Race/Ethnicity

## *Culture*

- Shared values, beliefs, traditions, norms, customs, folklore, art, history of a group of people
- A foundation – *“grounds” you*
- Passed on from generation to generation;

# Culture vs. Race/Ethnicity

## *Culture*

- Dynamic & evolving;
- Shapes attitudes & values;
- Shapes styles and modes of communication;
- Shapes notions about education;
- Shapes school behavior.



# Culture vs. Race/Ethnicity

## *Race*

- Historically ascribed to groups of individuals categorized as ***biologically*** distinct.
- Modern Times – “race” is a *social construction*
- Physical, behavioral and cultural differences incorrectly ascribed to race;

# Culture vs. Race/Ethnicity



## ***Ethnicity***

–A subgroup that shares common ancestry, geography, history, language or culture;

# Sensitivity vs. Competence

## *Cultural Sensitivity*

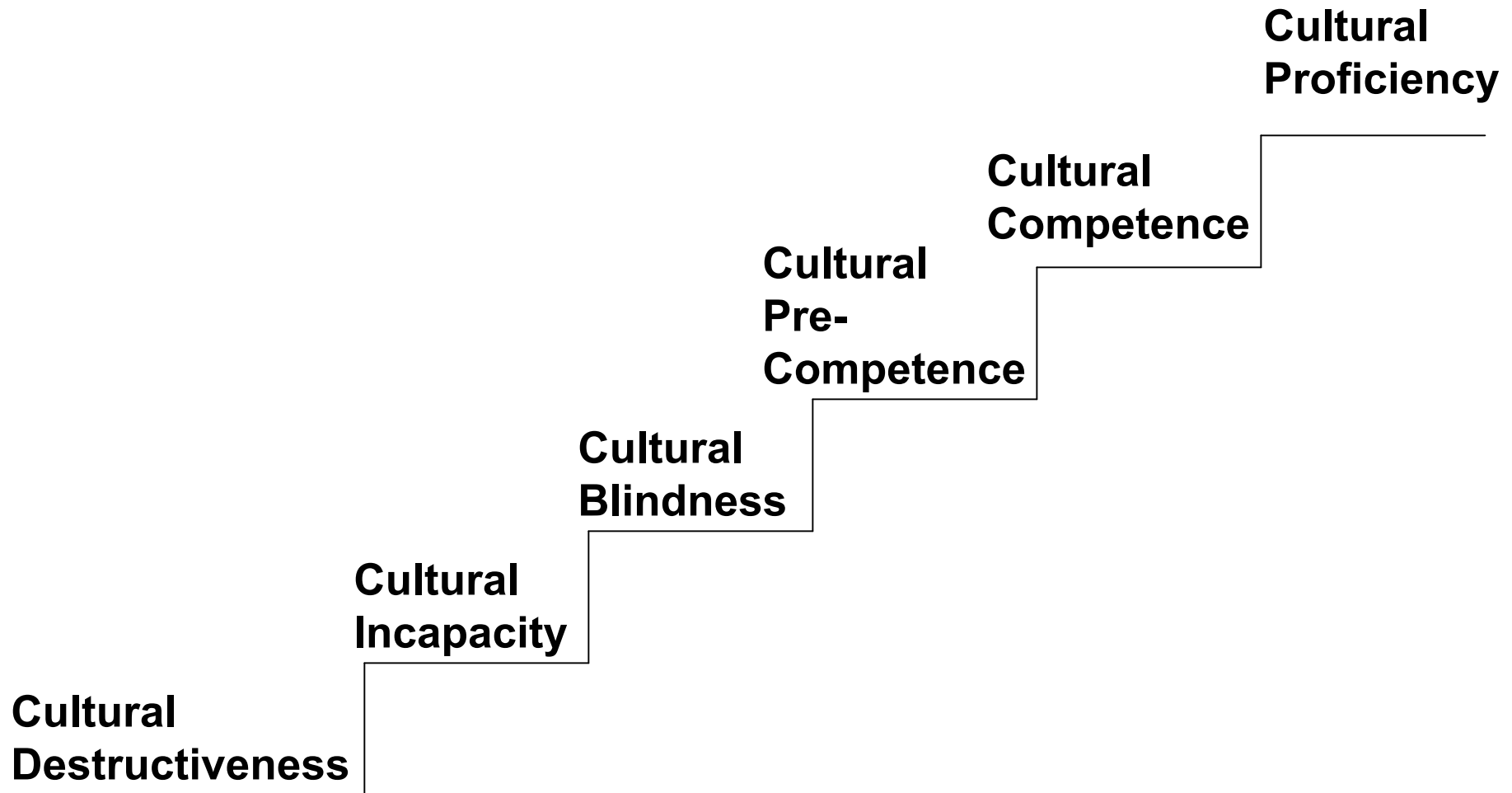
- Heightened awareness of cultural differences
- Increased ability to interpret and respond to non-verbal or cultural cues
- Willingness and ability to adapt behavior

# Sensitivity vs. Competence

## *Cultural Competence*

- Incorporate plans, policies & practices to respond to differences
- Cultural sensitivity is necessary but insufficient for achieving competence

# Stages of Cultural Competence



## Stages of Cultural Competence

- ***Destructiveness*** -- actively working to destroy or diminish well-being
- ***Incapacity*** -- not actively seeking to destroy, but not actively working to improve well-being
- ***Blindness*** -- unbiased treatment is the most effective treatment

## Stages of Cultural Competence

- ***Pre-Competence*** -- Belief, desire & commitment, not clear on how to move forward
- ***Competence*** -- Belief, desire & commitment + structure, systems & policies in place
- ***Proficiency*** -- Competence + Vocal advocates for societal change

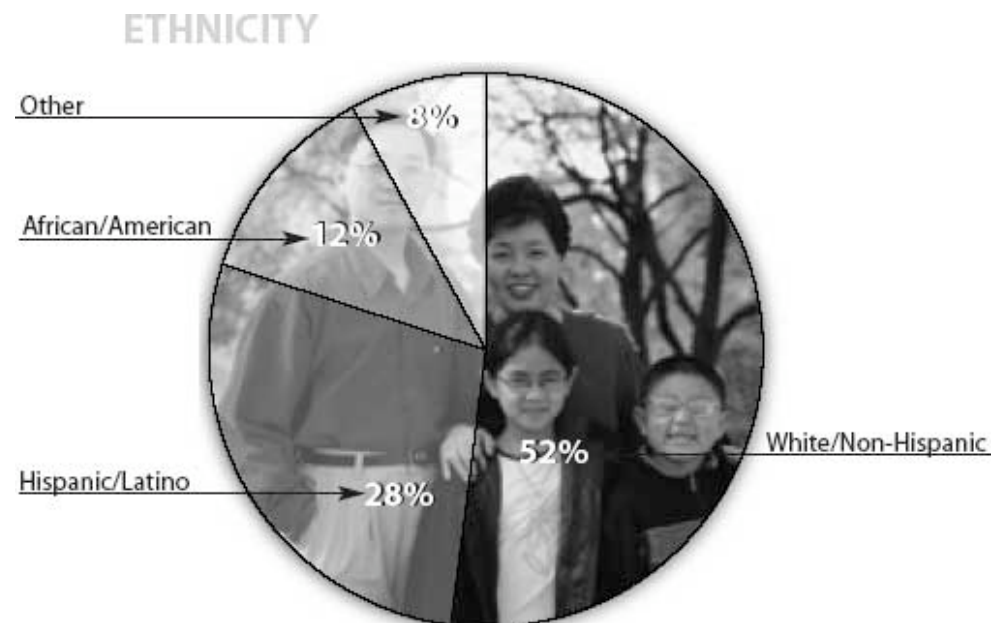
# Why is Cultural Competence Important?

- Ethnic Disparities in Educational access
  - Dropout and failure rates higher among racial/ethnic subgroups
  - Some improvements – gains modest and uneven



# Why is Cultural Competence Important?

- Increased Ethnic Diversity
  - Non-whites ~ 31% of US Population
  - Increase of 25% since 1990
  - Density of Ethnic Populations



# Achieving Cultural Competence

- **Practices of Successful Organizations:**
  - Define Culture Broadly
    - Beyond ethnicity, heritage, language
    - Shared attributes (gender, sexual orientation)
    - Shared life experiences (violence, homelessness)

# Achieving Cultural Competence

- **Practices of Successful Organizations:**
  - Value cadet's cultural beliefs
    - Genuine concern and respect
    - Ability to learn about needs and challenges of community
    - Willing to understand cadets' life experiences

# Achieving Cultural Competence

- **Practices of Successful Organizations:**
  - Recognize Communication is Complex
    - Communication is more than shared language
      - Language differs across cultures
      - Linguistic variation within cultures
      - Cultural variation within language
      - Variation in literacy for all groups

# Achieving Cultural Competence

- Personal Transformation
  - Know and Understand Culture (broadly)
  - Value Diversity
  - Seek Opportunities to Experience Culture

# Achieving Cultural Competence

- Personal Transformation
  - ***Self-reflection and Self-examination***
    - Styles, Attitudes & Behaviors
    - Limitations
    - What are my biases?

