

Governance Process Ends Monitoring
Superintendent's Interpretation
December 10, 2015

Fundamental 7—Foster and embrace diversity, inclusiveness, and equity with a focus on respect and acceptance of every student."

Definitions

Diversity

Diversity includes characteristics of persons including, but not limited to: race, marital status, culture, family structure, color, citizenship status, creed, or religion, sexual orientation, or affectional preference, national origin, gender identity or expression, gender, economic status, mental and physical ability, veteran's status, age, and any other protected class in conformance with federal, state, and local laws. It is our common interest to ensure that all students receive an education that allows them to cultivate their talent and potential (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015).

Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness values and encompasses the perspectives and contributions of all students, and incorporates their needs, assets, and perspectives into the teaching and learning process.

Equity

At its core, equity is explicit attention to fairness and providing something to one in need without necessarily providing everyone with the same. Educational equity means providing opportunities and the supports needed to raise the achievement of all students while bringing up the performance of the lowest performing students to the level of the highest performing students. Educational equity also encompasses program supports designed to eliminate the racial or cultural predictability and disproportionality of achievement of certain student groups and access to certain district and school-based programs.

Interpretation

The Mercer Island School District is a community of educators who nurture authentic and effective relationships that acknowledge and address Mercer Island's diverse population. Cultural competence requires the acquisition of specific skills, which allows all staff to develop an awareness and knowledge of individuals' unique differences and commonalities. Through action and advocacy, equity and excellence is fostered in our schools.

Equity fosters mutual respect, social justice, and fairness within the learning community. As we strive to eliminate the opportunity gaps for students, we recognize that we must utilize a variety of different instructional approaches to meet our learners' needs in and out of the classroom.

Diversity is valued by recognizing differences and commonalities among people from which we can begin to reflect, understand, and value oneself and others. Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, which is a strength of our community. It encompasses accepting, respecting, and valuing each member's contribution to successful academic, social, and emotional outcomes. By welcoming and leveraging these differences, we create an environment in which everyone is valued and has a place.

Intentionally creating opportunities and avenues for all students to access and contribute to the learning community promotes inclusiveness of all. Student participation is facilitated and encouraged at the personal, small group, classroom, school, and district level. When all students are welcomed and encouraged to participate and engage, the entire community benefits.

Respect and acceptance of every student is evidenced by the system's values of diversity, inclusiveness, and equity. Through words and our actions, staff convey—in and outside of the classroom—every student has a place in our schools to grow, learn and thrive.

Blankenstein, A. M. & Noguera, P. (2015). *Excellence through equity: Five principles of courageous leadership to guide achievement for every student*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.