



Book	Administrative & Board Policies
Section	1000: Board of Directors
Title	Equity and Diversity
Number	1610 BP
Status	Active
Legal	
Adopted	January 28, 2016

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## EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

### I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for the elimination of bias, particularly race, religion and national origin and cultural bias, as factors affecting student achievement and other learning experiences, and to promote learning and work environments that welcome, respect and value equity and diversity.

While we view diversity broadly, this policy sometimes focuses on addressing issues around racial diversity, since it remains a key issue in American society.

Further, the purpose is to establish particular actions that the District shall take to address either real or perceived disparities in educational opportunity, treatment and achievement. The District's 2020 Vision for learning encapsulates the District's commitment to provide opportunities for engagement for all learners that address their diverse strengths and challenges and to expect the highest levels of achievement of all learners.

### II. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy the following terms shall have these meanings:

- A. "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 protected class in conformance with federal, state and local laws.
- B. "District staff" includes all employees, consultants and contractors of the Mercer Island School District.
- C. "Educational equity" means providing the supports needed to raise the achievement of all students while increasing the performance of the lowest performing students to the levels of the highest performing students. Educational equity also encompasses program supports designed to eliminate the racial or cultural predictability and disproportionality of achievement of some student groups to access all district and school-based programs.
- D. "Institutional racism" means the collective failure of a public or private organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their race, color, culture or ethnic origin which can be seen or detected in practices, processes, systems, attitudes and behavior. It proactively looks beyond individual acts of prejudice to the systemic biases that may be built into institutions.
- E. "Implicit bias" is the bias in judgment or behavior that results from implicit attitudes or implicit stereotypes. Implicit bias often reflects subtle cognitive processes that operate at a level below conscious awareness and without intentional control. The underlying implicit attitude and stereotypes responsible for implicit bias are those beliefs or simple associations that a person makes between an object and its evaluation that are automatically activated by the mere

presence, actual or symbolic, of the attitude object.

### **III. Values**

Mercer Island School District is committed to the success of every student in each of our schools and to our mission and vision statements.

We believe learning and work environments are enriched and improved by the contributions, perspectives and very presence of diverse participants. The world is interconnected more than ever and our children must work collaboratively, directly or virtually, with people across the globe from a variety of cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds.

We believe the diversity of our student body, our community and our staff is a strength of this district that should be fostered and harnessed.

Diversity in education provides all children with the opportunity to learn from others with dissimilar backgrounds and recognizes the value of diversity in all learning environments.

We believe educational equity benefits all students and our entire community.

We value society's efforts to identify and eliminate institutional racism and we will follow the best practices that emerge.

The Board of Directors believes the responsibility for student success is broadly shared by District staff, families, our community and our students' own efforts.

We believe achievement gaps between white students and students of color and other diverse groups are unacceptable if we are to meet our mission and vision statements and our moral obligations to our students, their families and our community as a whole.

We value cognitive, social, and emotional learning and this should manifest itself among all diversity groups.

We believe adult behaviors must not contribute to achievement gaps or create barriers to success. Adult behaviors must be concentrated on identifying and eliminating achievement gaps, particularly those that are predicated on a student's race, ethnicity, home language, personal characteristics or culture.

We believe the individual biases inherent in implicit bias discriminate against and disadvantage people of color through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness or racial stereotyping.

Children benefit most when they are provided with familiar role models of all races, cultures, and backgrounds in schools and communities.

### **IV. Statement of Policy**

The District welcomes, respects and values the diversity of its students, parents, staff and the broader community.

The Board of Directors is committed to Board Policy 2020, which requires ongoing evaluation of the diversity and equity fundamental. This commitment also includes conducting assessments on policies that are periodically reviewed and updated through the policy development process that have a significant impact on student learning and resource allocation.

The following are established as District values:

1. All students deserve optimal treatment, opportunities and education, in accord with our 2020 vision including personalized learning.
2. All students and their families have dignity and worth.
3. All students are equally valued and bring unique talents to the educational community.
4. Academic and participation outcomes, not intentions, shall be the measure of whether we are successful.
5. Inclusion of all students and families supports District goals to advance student engagement and academic performance.
6. Embracing our diversity through inclusion creates an environment that creates schools where students, families, community members and employees feel welcomed, valued, supported, and where students and staff can perform to their personal bests.

Every student deserves a respectful learning environment in which his/her racial and ethnic diversity is openly valued and

contributes to successful academic, social and emotional outcomes. Mercer Island School District is committed to proactively identifying and correcting practices and policies that perpetuate disparate treatment among children and their families. All students are entitled to the opportunity to succeed and feel valued and respected.

The District is committed to promoting and providing equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, facilities and supports, even when this means differentiating resource allocations on the basis of student needs. Resource allocation that benefits all students shall support the definition of educational equity adopted in this policy while complying with state and federal funding mandates.

The District shall employ staffing and recruitment processes that support and engender all of the legally protected classes that exist in state and federal laws.

The District will actively recruit candidates for open positions so all students will have a better chance of learning from diverse educators as part of the education system. The District is committed to the recruitment and retention of highly qualified diverse staff. The District is committed to fostering a learning environment where diversity is encouraged and to recruiting and retaining a workforce that reflects the diversity of our students and community.

Consistent with Board Policy 5010, Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action, we are committed to hiring the best employees of all racial and ethnic backgrounds who bring their unique talents and skills into our school system.

The Superintendent is directed to offer opportunities for all staff to improve its cultural competencies in serving our diverse student body and community with annual training and refresher classes.

The District staff shall work together to increase their individual and collective capacity to effectively teach a diverse school population with special emphasis on serving racially and ethnically diverse families and communities.

The District shall offer opportunities for all staff to improve culturally responsive instructional practices, curriculum, and assessments competencies in serving our diverse student body and community to increase individual and collective capacity to effectively teach our diverse student population and serve diverse families.

Where effective models exist, the District shall provide professional development to teaching staff specifically designed to strengthen employees' knowledge and skills for identifying and eliminating achievement gaps between groups of students.

The District shall provide training to all staff to identify and eliminate incidents of implicit bias.

The District is committed to advancing optimal participation by diverse students, parents, staff and community. Practices, procedures and programs that result in over or under representation of any group of students compared to peers shall be subject to close review. The review is intended to assure that such results are due to meeting student legitimate educational, social or emotional needs and to determine if interventions are warranted to correct the under or over representation of any group. Teachers, administrators and district staff shall collaborate to establish and implement culturally responsive instructional practices, curriculum and assessments.

#### **V. Responsibility**

The Board of Directors shall consider the values stated in this policy in conducting its business and in exercising its responsibilities to the residents, families and students of the Mercer Island School District.

The Superintendent shall establish in accordance with this policy such plans and procedures as may be necessary and appropriate to accomplish its purpose and intent. Plans and procedures established shall include clear accountability for actions and oversight, and shall include metrics for evaluation.

Adopted: 01/28/16

Last Modified by Kendall Taylor on February 1, 2016