

REVISED Superintendent Interpretation

Fundamental 5

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

Superintendent Interpretation - Fundamental 5

Students come to school with different life-experiences and access to opportunities that must be recognized as part of each student's whole self and being. Regardless of background, each student is unique, capable of learning, and should be afforded the same equitable opportunities to reach their potential. Providing equitable opportunities for developing young people socially, emotionally, and academically requires recognition and alignment of each student's and school's individual strengths and needs, while ensuring that those students with greater needs have access to greater supports and/or services. The prioritization of social, emotional and academic development through a racial equity lens is one critical piece in educating the whole child. Educators must understand historical context and the role of race, racism, white privilege, and implicit bias and how these factors have held students back in their personal growth and development.

Diversity is considered an asset—where our different experiences and foundations of knowledge create rich opportunities for mutual learning. In an equitable education system, every student has opportunity to access the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, irrespective of their culture or background. Culture can refer to an individual's race, ethnicity, gender, gender identification, sexual orientation, language, disability, family background, family income, citizenship, religion, immigration status or tribal status. Students of different ethnicities and culture, and their families, bring tremendous assets to their schools and communities and increasing diversity in the classroom can create benefits for all students. Cultural competency is the ability to work effectively—and sensitively—across cultural contexts. It involves learning, communicating, and connecting respectfully with others regardless of differences. All these factors strongly influence people's lives and experiences.

Inclusive learning communities are ones in which all young people and adults feel a sense of belonging and respect for their individual self. Instructional materials and staff trainings incorporate strategies for affirming students' varied backgrounds. Teachers and staff recognize and address their own biases and stereotypes to create equitable learning environments.

Educational equity is a commitment to providing and fostering an environment where each student receives what they need to develop their full academic and social potential. Equity in the Mercer Island School District means raising the achievement of all students while decreasing and eliminating the gaps between the highest and lowest performing student groups. All students, and especially students not part of the majority race or ethnicity, need to be in learning environments that reinforce their sense of academic belonging and send constant signals that they are valued for all their assets and deserving of support, investment and rigor. Students learn best when they feel affirmed, recognized, and welcomed into the spaces in which they are learning.

Accepted by Board: 05/23/19

Renumbered: 11/12/20

Citations:

Pursuing Social and Emotional Development Through a Racial Equity Lens: A Call to Action May 2018 The Aspen Institute Education & Social Program

From a Nation At Risk to a Nation At Hope Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development January 2019

The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional & Academic Development