



River Forest
Public Schools

Definitions

Addressing the issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity requires a common understanding of the terms and issues. Diversity and inclusiveness have many definitions depending on the organization, industry, objectives, and their values. The definitions below represent the manner in which District 90 intends to develop a common language to address the subjects.

Diversity

Diversity can be defined as the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different. The dimensions of diversity include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, gender identity and expression, culture, national origin, immigration status, physical characteristics, age and generation, religion, family status, mental and physical ability, class, and veteran status. While diversity itself is not a value-laden term, the way that people react to diversity is driven by values, attitudes, beliefs, and so on. — *Adapted from NEA (National Education Association) and the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM)*

Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness, also known as inclusion, describes the extent to which each person in an organization feels welcomed, respected, supported, and valued as a member. *Belonging* is an important element of this. Inclusion represents two-way accountability; each person must grant and accept inclusion from others. In such an environment, everyone will tend to feel more engaged and will be more likely to contribute toward the organization's goals. This requires people from diverse backgrounds to communicate and work together, and understand each other's needs and perspectives. *Definition from the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM)*

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is a discrete skill that can be learned, practiced, and institutionalized to better serve diverse students, families and staff members. It is the ability to recognize, value, and navigate through cultures other than one's own. On the educational front, cultural competence is the ability to successfully teach students who come from a culture or cultures other than our own. It entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, understanding certain bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills

that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching and culturally responsive teaching. *Adapted from Diversity Best Practices and the NEA (National Education Association)*

Educational Equity

Educational equity represents the educational policies, practices, and programs necessary to eliminate educational barriers based on gender, race/ethnicity, national origin, color, disability, age, or other protected group status; and provides equal educational opportunities that ensure that historically under-served or underrepresented populations meet the same rigorous standards for academic performance expected of all children and youth. *Adapted from the definition by Barbara A. Bitters, the former Assistant Director for the Career and Technical Education Team at the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*

Achievement Gap/Opportunity Gap

The *Achievement Gap* refers to the disparity on a number of educational measures between the performance of groups of students, especially groups defined by gender, race/ethnicity, ability, English language proficiency, and socioeconomic status. It is often used interchangeably with the *Opportunity Gap*. While both describe the disparity between groups of students, generally, the achievement gap refers to outputs – the unequal educational results. Conversely, the term opportunity gap refers to inputs – the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. *Adapted from the NEA and the Great Schools Partnership*