

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework

Welcome to our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Framework. We invite you to peruse this document and to use its core concepts as you make decisions and work toward continuous improvement.

We are Ankeny!

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What is a DEI Framework?

The Ankeny Community School District (ACSD) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Framework (“Framework”) is a living document that codifies our belief that all students can achieve at high levels and demonstrate readiness for postsecondary and career pathways. The Framework also describes the way our students, staff, and families will operate to realize this vision. Guided by our equity theory of change and core values, this document will grow and change as our equity work grows and changes.

This Framework is designed with a particular focus on student social identities that have had local and historical impacts on educational experiences and outcomes, including SES status,

race and ethnicity, class, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, English to Speakers of Other Languages, and other protected classes. Our ultimate vision, however, is that *all* students are recognized, included, and supported within ACSD schools, classrooms, and activities.

We believe that, *if* teachers, administrators, school leaders, staff, students, and families partner to implement and support system-wide strategies, *then* both students and adults will both experience belonging, academic success, and the qualities articulated in our graduate profile, and all students will be prepared to choose among postsecondary, career, and community pathways.

The means to achieving these goals will vary as our students themselves vary. We will use this Framework to help us identify when policies, programs, practices, or situations contribute to a lack of equity in educational performance, results, and outcomes. Examples of this could be the unequal distribution of academic resources, including but not limited to school funding, qualified and experienced teachers, books, and technologies to socially excluded communities.

This Framework outlines evidence of effective leadership and instructional practices and procedures, as well as parent and family engagement, that we will examine to ensure progress toward closing academic and opportunity gaps.

Who is the Framework intended to support?

Our DEI Framework establishes the leadership, teaching, and support behaviors needed to effectively implement the strategic plan. It is designed to support *everyone* in ACSD by describing how the district embeds our commitment to improving our students' experience, opportunities, and success into all of our work and providing guidance and tools for how the district monitors policies, programs, systems, decisions, and progress toward achieving our vision.

Because *all* ACSD staff and school leaders have a role in supporting our students, we aim to improve district and school-wide knowledge, skills, and actions explicitly focused on creating the conditions so all students feel a strong sense of belonging and developing a growth mindset among staff and students. In order to identify inequities, we will regularly review disaggregated data and use insights from these reviews to inform planning, academic programming, access to activities, professional learning, and instruction.

Defining Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Over the course of several months in 2021 and 2022, the ACSD DEI Leadership Team and Equity Committee met to discuss the definition and importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in Ankeny. These teams are comprised of school board members, students, parents, teachers, administrators, associates, administrative assistants and other concerned community members.

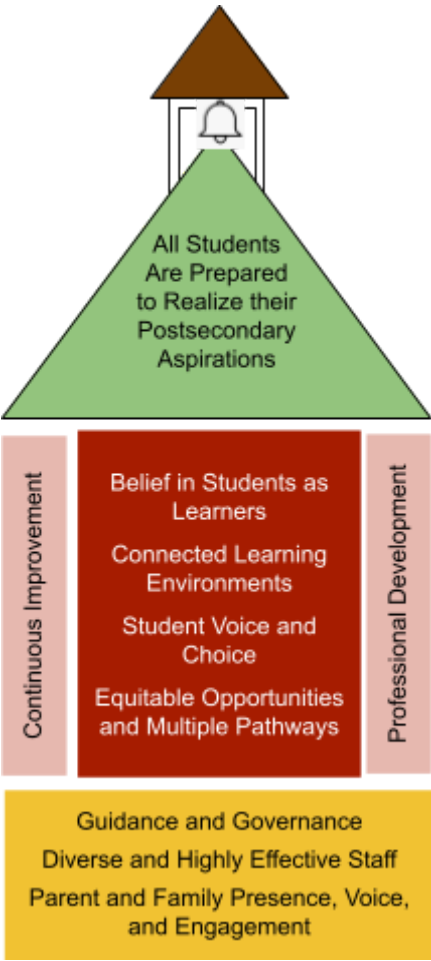
After reviewing definitions developed by other school districts, nonprofit organizations, educational equity assistance centers, and business sectors, the joint committees deliberated specific ways that diversity, equity, and inclusion show up in Ankeny's schools and devised the following working definitions for the Ankeny school district:

Diversity: The fact and strength of human difference that makes a difference, calling for representation of all varied identities collectively and as individuals.

Educational Equity: The condition of justice, fairness, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness in our systems of education. Moreover, when educational policies, practices, interactions, and resources are representative of, constructed by, and responsive to all people so that each individual has access to high-quality learning experiences, regardless of individual characteristics and group memberships.

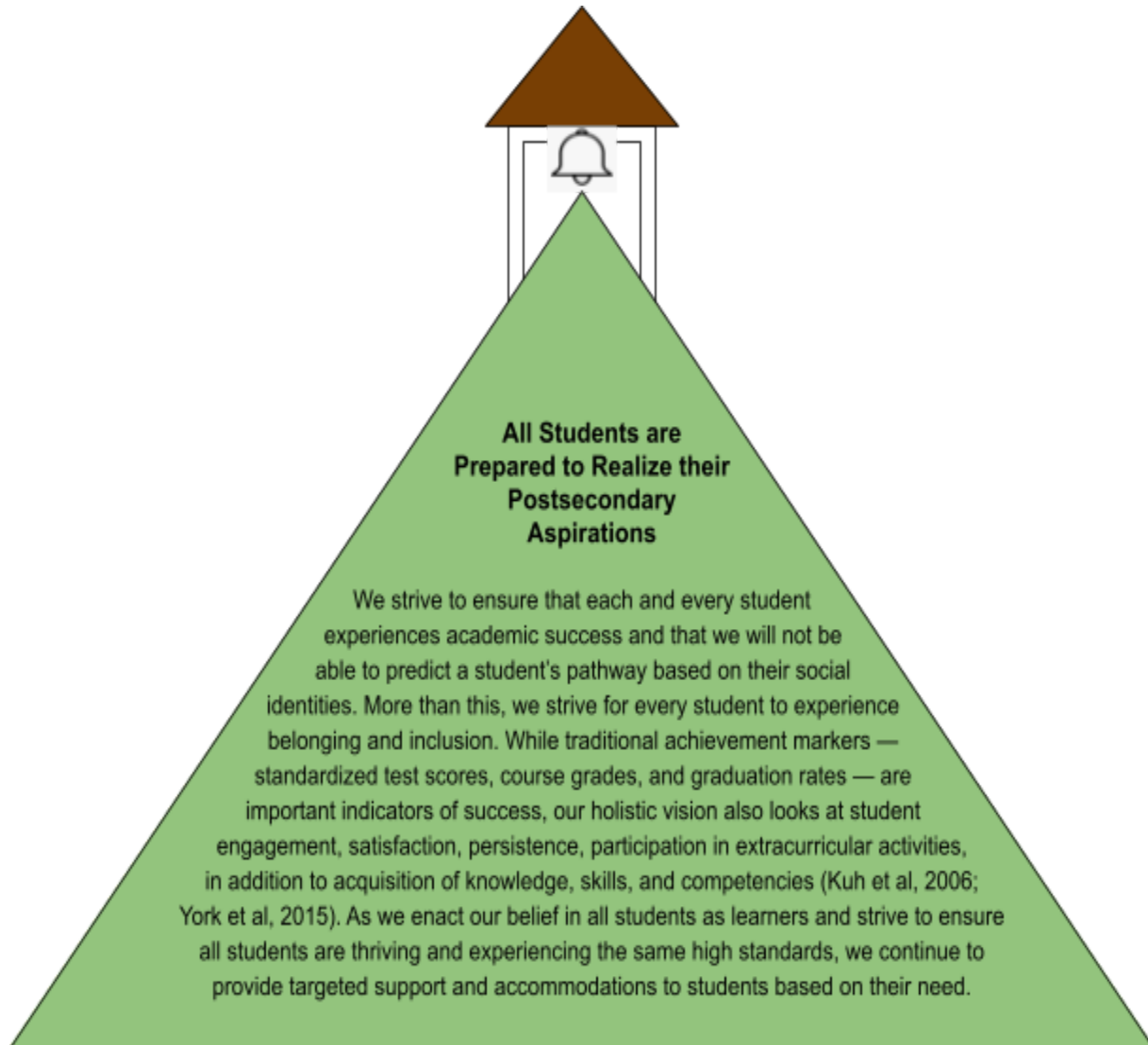
Inclusion: Building a culture of belonging by recognizing the impact and importance of all aspects of human difference.

Components of the Ankeny DEI Framework¹



¹ These components and their descriptions are adapted with permission from West Wind Education Policy Inc. (2021). *Equity Audit Domains*, which provides the research base behind our components.

The ultimate goal of our DEI Framework is that students experience belonging, have at least one adult they connect with, and have multiple opportunities to succeed



Our work is framed by a disposition and an investment that together provide the guard rails of support

Continuous Improvement

We strive for continuous reflection and inquiry; for the ongoing study of content, practice, and student effects; and for the constant use of disaggregated data to guide decisions. A continuous improvement mindset includes both skills and dispositions--being open to new information and opportunities for growth. The process of continuous improvement involves ongoing, step-by-step, incremental changes designed to get better and better within a practice. This requires a commitment to measuring the impact of policies and programs, not for accountability purposes, but for improvement.

Professional Development

We strive to provide ongoing professional learning opportunities to all of our staff that go beyond awareness, reaction, and the learning of discrete content to include deeper levels of professional growth. Our professional development offerings should help educators engage in equitable practices, create equitable environments, foster asset-based thinking, and avoid any form of stereotyping and identity-based assumptions. Feedback from observers and coaches can help teachers reflect on how they engage all students.

We strive to create environments characterized by high expectations, opportunity, connection, and student agency

Communicating to Students They Are Capable Learners

We strive to communicate our belief that each student is a learner capable of achieving in a rigorous curriculum. Affirming learning environments help teachers to communicate the valuable contributions each student brings to their own learning and to their class.

Equitable Opportunities and Multiple Pathways to Achieve the Iowa Core

We strive to provide students with multiple pathways to achieve their goals, such as college-preparation and college-level courses, career and technical education, community service, internships, military and online courses. All pathways must provide rigorous opportunities for learning, relevant content, and real-world experiences. Students should be able to move fluidly between pathways throughout their PK-12 careers. We look for our curricula to provide all students opportunities to explore their own cultural, social, and political identities and context, as well as those of others, and teaching to focus on in-depth understandings and the practice of thoughtful analysis.

Connected Learning Communities

We strive to create connected learning communities in which each and every student experiences a sense of belonging and success. A sense of belonging involves more than simply being acquainted with other people; it is centered on mutual attention, support, empathy, and honoring the dignity of all members of the group. To achieve this for all students, connected communities recognize and celebrate diversity by acknowledging differences that are important to its members (Gay, 2018; Gower *et al*, 2018; Hammond, 2015). This also fosters success, as research shows that exposure to diversity “leads to improved cognitive skills, including critical thinking and problem solving” (Wells, et al, 2016). School-wide and classroom behavior management also focus on fostering community connectedness and skill building (Brown, 2018; Day *et al*, 2016; Clifford, n.d.; Drewery, 2016; Kehoe, et al., 2018). In addition to collecting and disaggregating data such as in-class behavior management practices, office referrals, and suspensions and expulsions, student and staff feedback on the culture and climate of schools is sought.

Student Voice and Choice

We strive to ensure each and every student has both voice and choice in their learning. Research shows that elevating student voice has a positive impact on students' social and emotional wellbeing and can strengthen relationships between teachers and students (REL West, 2020). To equitably encourage student voice, teachers honor different discourse styles, create multiple opportunities for each student to share their ideas, insights, perspectives, and work, and ensure that the adults are not the ones doing most of the talking throughout a school day. Providing students with choices in their learning honors and supports student agency and autonomy.

The foundation of our Framework provides for the policies, people, and partnerships necessary to support student learning

Guidance and Governance

We strive for equity-advancing governance processes that engage a diverse array of stakeholders, including students, in key decision making points at all levels. Determining the potential benefit and burden of policies and practices before implementation and reviewing decisions and data through equity lenses throughout implementation are key aspects of continuous improvement. This requires collecting and reviewing disaggregated input and impact data for patterns and indicators of success and challenges, then using the data to inform decision making.

Diverse and Highly Effective Staff

We strive to grow and retain a diverse workforce and to support all staff to be successful teaching all students. Increasing teacher diversity has been shown to be beneficial for *all* students (Cole 1986; Graham 1987; Irvine 1988; Matcznski & Joseph, 1989; Cherng and Halpin, 2016; Bartoli et al, 2016); research further shows that teachers of color particularly improve the academic outcomes and school experiences of students of color (Gershenson et al, 2015; Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Pitts, 2007; Dee, 2004; Clewell et al, 2005; Ferguson, 2003; Hanushek, 1992; Evans, 1992; Ehrenberg and Brewer, 1995). Similarly, having administrators of color has shown to be important for students (Meier, 1993). A diverse and equity-advancing staff also is good for staff themselves, being directly correlated with staff members' perception of school climate and staff feeling a sense of belonging and self-efficacy (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016).

Parent and Family Presence, Voice, and Engagement

We strive to encourage parent presence in our schools and school district, seeking to “build the social and cultural capital of children, both inside and outside of formal educational environments” (McKenna & Millen, 2013). We seek a multidirectional flow of communication and partnerships between our parents and guardians of students and our educators. It is essential that parents and caregivers have the opportunity to share the importance of their cultural identities with schools and that schools are able to integrate that learning into the education system. We see the family as a positive source of strength for a child’s learning rather than an “oppositional force” for schools (McKenna & Millen, 2013).

What might DEI look like, feel like, and sound like in Ankeny?

Sometimes the research base behind a DEI Framework can make the work we need to do seem cerebral, academic, and dispassionate. We hope that this DEI Framework represents possibility, inspires action, and evokes joy. To that end, in addition to defining the core components of our Framework, we decided to describe what diversity, equity, and inclusion could look like, feel like, and sound like in Ankeny.

When we know and can share these examples, we can support one another in creating the culture, conditions, and community spirit needed to drive change.

What might it look like when we are fully living out our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion?
For teachers, it might look like students engaging in productive struggle together as they work on problems in class.
For students, it might look like a curriculum that encourages exploration of the contributions of people who look like them and people who don't.
In Professional Learning Communities, it might look like teachers using timely, accurate data to regularly help them make decisions about what to do next.
For administrators, it might look like facilitating Instructional Leadership Team meetings to review student performance levels disaggregated by race, gender, zip code, or other markers of social identity.
At the district level, it might look like a series of meetings to test out new practices and measure their actual impact, to adjust them based on the findings, and to start the cycle over again.
For parents and family members, it might look like a course catalog full of opportunities for the children to learn new and different skills.
For the superintendent and school board members, it might look like specific operational procedures that outline equity-focused questions to consider whenever a policy decision comes to the Board table.

What might it sound like when we are fully living out our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion?
In hallways, we might hear teachers welcoming all students into their classrooms by telling them how much they enjoyed the ideas they shared in class the day before.
For parents and families, it might sound like teachers starting out conferences by talking

about their students' strengths.
At the district level, we might hear someone say, "How did you determine that was a problem?" or "How do we know what the impact was of our actions on students in protected classes?"
For administrators conducting classroom observations, they might hear students in discussions asking where ideas and information came from.
For students who are speakers of other languages, it might sound like a teacher who has an accent similar to theirs.
For students witnessing a microaggression, it might sound like a teacher stepping in to stop the actions while treating everyone with dignity.

What might it <u>feel</u> like when we are fully living out our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion?
For students, it might feel like it is okay to not be perfect when trying something out, and that getting feedback on less-than-perfect work is helpful.
For students, it might feel like teachers believe every student can learn.
For parents and families, it might feel like hopefulness that their own children will thrive in Ankeny's schools.
For students, it might feel like they are valued for their strengths and contributions.
For family members, it might feel like their students have many different opportunities to experience success.
For staff, it might feel like being engaged as partners in supporting all students.
For teachers, it might feel like they have a safety net of support from parents and family members when they are ready to move students to challenging material.
For students, it might feel like they have a choice in how they demonstrate to teachers that they are learning.

How We Will Use This Framework

We built this DEI Framework to be used in multiple ways. Examples include the following:

- **To inform strategic plan implementation and review**

Our district leadership and staff will be using this framework as we review our developing strategic plan and graduate profile. Having our vision for diversity, equity, and inclusion in one

document will help our Action Teams, our staff, and our board to ensure we truly have our commitment to serving each and every student woven into our most important guiding documents.

- **To accelerate cycles of continuous improvement**

Cycles of continuous improvement begin with framing what a system's desired future state looks like. From there, practitioners can decide how they will measure the extent to which their system already is characterized by that desired future state. The next step in a cycle of improvement is to go about measuring what the current state is. Any gaps that are discovered between the current state and the desired future state provide opportunities for action and improvement.

For ACSD, this DEI Framework provides descriptions of our desired future state, one in which our district can be characterized as diverse, equitable, and inclusive. This is our vision for who we are and want to become and we can use that to design plans that will help us achieve equitable outcomes.

- **To make decisions about policies and practices**

We can think of the DEI Framework as a set of standards for how we want Ankeny's schools to operate. As this Framework is a living document, we will be building it out with tools that can be used to review new or existing policies and practices. This is critical because, when managing complex systems like schools, we too often develop, adopt, or implement policies and programs without explicit considerations of equity. This leaves us vulnerable to the possibility of replicating inequities we have identified both within and outside of our education system.

This DEI Framework can serve as the basis for equity analysis tools that provides a way to embed considerations of equity into our decisions around policies, practices, programs, and budgets. An example of this is how we used this framework to ground our 2021-22 district audit. Our School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) also will use the Framework to guide how they provide high-level oversight and support for school-based improvement plans.

- **To guide our professional learning, hiring and staffing, and "ways of work"**

This DEI Framework outlines specific priorities for our ongoing growth and development as education professionals. The Framework provides District staff with material we can use for our own self-assessments and for collaborative growth in Professional Learning Communities, at departmental meetings, and in formal professional learning sessions. Combined with findings from external and internal audits, we all will be able to better target our investments in learning and development individually and as a group.

We will use this DEI Framework to think about how we screen candidates for new positions and promotions within the district, providing the basis for specific criteria for what we are looking for in our hiring practices, which we can give to both candidates and hiring committees. The clarity and transparency this would support are critical for a fair and equity-advancing system.

This DEI Framework also invites us to think about our "ways of work," or how a team collaborates. We are mindful that the habits of schooling can either welcome students, colleagues, and family members or they can turn them away. We can use this Framework and related resources to reflect on our climate and culture and what we can do to create a sense of connection, belonging, trust, and momentum for everyone we work with, support, and serve.

Glossary of Terms

Able-bodied—Sometimes used incorrectly as an antonym of “disabled” in phrases such as “Disabled people, unlike able-bodied people.” The preferred antonym for ‘disabled’ is ‘non-disabled’ or ‘person without a disability’.

Access—All members of the educational community should have entrance into, involvement with, and full participation of resources, conversations, initiatives, and choices which are attentive to heritage and community practices.

Accessibility—When a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally integrated and equally effective manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use.

Agency—The capacity of individuals to have the power and resources to fulfill their potential.

Behavior disorder—Any persistent and repetitive pattern of behavior that violates societal norms or rules, seriously impairs a person’s functioning, or creates distress in others.

Belonging—The feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group. It is when an individual can bring their authentic self to work.

Cisgender—Cisgender: A person whose gender identity and expression are aligned with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Colorblindness/Color-evasiveness—Colorblindness an aspirational strategy to reduce racial prejudice that is not effective in a world of racial inequalities. Color-evasion is the denial of racial differences by emphasizing sameness.

Cultural Competence—An awareness of one’s own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families.

Disaggregated Data—In education, disaggregation refers to the breaking down of student data into smaller groupings, often based on characteristics such as sex, family income, or racial/ethnic group.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, also known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), enacted in 1965, is the nation’s national education law and shows a longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students. ESEA authorizes state-run programs for eligible schools and districts eager to raise the academic achievement of struggling learners and address the complex challenges that arise for students who live with disability, mobility problems, learning difficulties, poverty, or transience, or who need to learn English. ESSA replaces the previous reauthorization of ESEA, known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, enacted in 2002.

ESOL, English to Speakers of Other Languages— English for speakers of other languages: refers to the teaching of English to students whose first language is not English, but who are living in an English-speaking country. When students are learning English in a native English-speaking country (ESL), these students are not necessarily learning a second

language. It could be a student's third or even fourth language. Then, English as a Second Language is limiting and not fully comprehensive in its description.

Ethnicity—Group characteristic often based on national origin, ancestry, language, or other cultural characteristic.

Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRL)— A data point used as an indicator of poverty in education.

Gender Identity—Gender identity: How an individual identifies in terms of their gender. Gender identities may include, “male,” “female,” “androgynous,” “transgender,” “genderqueer” and many others, or a combination thereof.

Gender Non-conforming—Gender Non-conforming or Gender Variant: A person who has a gender identity and/or gender expression that does not conform to the gender they were assigned at birth. People who identify as “gender non-conforming” or “gender variant” may or may not also identify as “transgender.”

Gender Expression—Gender expression: The multiple ways (e.g., behaviors, dress) in which a person may choose to communicate gender to oneself and/or to others.

HF 802—An Act providing for requirements related to racism or sexism training at, and diversity and inclusion efforts by, governmental agencies and entities, school districts, and public postsecondary educational institutions.

Implicit Bias—The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. The biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control.

Indoctrination—The process of teaching a person or group to accept a set of beliefs uncritically.

Intersectionality—The study of overlapping or intersecting social identities and the ways that people with these identities experience mainstream institutions differently from those with dominant identities. [OR: the ways that people with these identities experience related systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion. (Crenshaw, 1989).

Intercultural Competence—The capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities.

Iowa Core—The Iowa Core standards describe what students should know and be able to do from kindergarten through 12th grade in math, science, English language arts and social studies. The Iowa Core also sets learning goals for 21st Century skills in areas such as financial and technological literacy. The Iowa Core is a set of common expectations for school districts across the state. It is not a curriculum, so decisions about how to help students meet learning goals remain in the hands of local schools and teachers.

Justice—The quality of being just; it involves schools and communities that work to provide equitable access to resources and quality education for all students.

Learning disability—Disorders that affect the ability to understand or use spoken or written

language, do mathematical calculations, coordinate movements, or direct attention. Although learning disabilities occur in very young children, the disorders are usually not recognized until the child reaches school age.

LGBTQ—An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Measures-Method (s) used to monitor and collect indicators of progress data.

Neurodiversity—Describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits.

Positionality—The multiple, unique experiences that situate each of us; namely that gender, [gender expression], race, class, [ability, religion, national origin, language], and other aspects of our identities are markers of relational positions rather than essential qualities.

Power—The legitimate control of, or access to, those institutions [resources and opportunities] sanctioned by the state [authorities].

Privilege—Any advantage that is unearned, exclusive, and socially conferred.

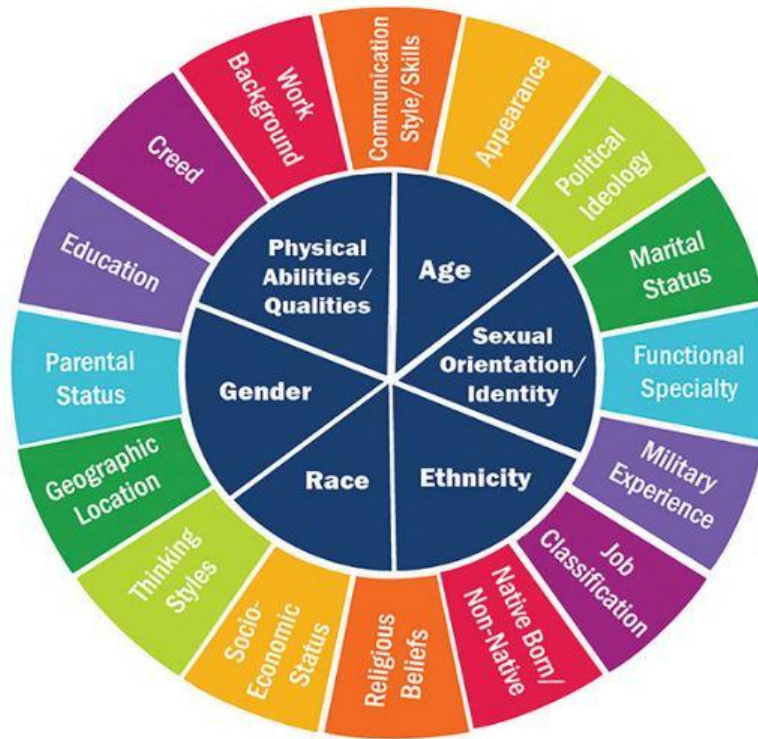
Protected classes—The groups protected from employment discrimination by law. These groups include men and women on the basis of sex; any group which shares a common race, religion, color, or national origin; people over 40; and people with physical or mental disability.

Racism—An oppressive system rooted in overt and covert harmful beliefs and actions of both individuals and institutions that unequally distributes privileges, resources, and power based on race, and in which one race/color group benefits from dominating another and defines itself and others through this domination.

Racial Slur—Derogatory, pejorative, or insulting terms for members of a racial or ethnic group. While some slurs, like the "n-word" are understood as such and are avoided, some slurs are still used in everyday speech, with little understanding of their harm.

Representation—Providing and having adequate presence of all when decision and choice making, as to examine the patterns of underlying beliefs, practices, policies, structures and norms that may marginalize specific groups and limit opportunity.

Social Identity—A person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s).



Social Identity Wheel(Kalish et al., 2021)

Transgender—Transgender: A person whose gender identity and/or expression are not aligned with the gender they were assigned at birth. “Transgender” is often used as an umbrella term encompassing a large number of identities related to gender non-conformity.

Sexual Orientation—Sexual orientation is a person’s romantic and/or physical attraction to people of the same and/or another gender, such as being straight or heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or asexual.

Strategic Planning— is a continuous process that examines the chain of cause and effect consequences over time of an actual or intended decision that a leader is going to make, as well as alternative courses of action

Universal Design—The design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

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