

## Policy 25

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### **POLICY 25 - IDENTITY, BELONGING, AND CONNECTION POLICY**

#### ***Preamble***

The Identity, Belonging, and Connection Policy was co-developed by a working group that was the result of the Board's Ad-Hoc Anti-Racism Committee. Members of this working group consisted of Indigenous Leadership students, union leadership, the District Sul'hween (Elder), District Indigenous Education Staff, and a local community member who is also a Journalist. The working group contained members who self-identified as Indigenous, and People of Colour, and those that did not. The working group was co-facilitated by the District Superintendent and Director of Communications.

#### ***Why 'Identity, Belonging and Connection'?***

As the group worked through the policy development, they felt that defining the policy as the 'anti-racism policy' would not be truly reflective of the work undertaken to get to this final document nor the sole intention of the policy. The naming was a crucial step in aligning the policy to the foundational beliefs under the First People's Principles of Learning. These principles guided the foundation of the Strategic Plan and guided the work in the naming of this policy. They show that learning starts with 'Me' (individual), then the larger 'We' (family / friends), and finally 'Community.' When the working group considered these terms in relation to this policy, they aligned the terms 'Identity' with 'Me' and examined the intentionality of how this policy will create environments where individuals can form identity and be in a place where that identity can be nurtured. The working group then aligned 'Belonging' with 'We.' After the intentional creation of spaces where belonging is fostered, this policy ensures the creation of belonging for staff/students/families where they can be connected to something larger than themselves. Finally, aligning 'Connection' with 'Community' ensures that the Board and District continue to create opportunities for impact 'Beyond Education' in the community.

#### ***Policy Introduction***

The Board of Education for the Cowichan Valley School District (Board) will actively work to ensure that schools are safe, welcoming, and caring places. To ensure this, the Board is committed to creating and supporting a positive and inclusive learning environment where all students, staff, families, and guests, especially those currently and historically marginalized, feel safe, included, welcomed, accepted, and experience a sense of belonging. Forming that sense of belonging leads to academic success for students and an equitable work environment for staff. This policy is being enacted specifically to eliminate barriers, and create pathways, to student, staff, and family access to opportunity, outcomes, and experience, regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, language, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, religion, (dis)ability, physical attributes, and/or socioeconomic status. Racism, discrimination, and marginalization of any people or groups of people, whether intentional or unintentional, have no place in schools, school-supported activities, the district, or the community. Such actions damage those

individuals, groups, and the whole community at which they are directed. Ending discriminatory policy, practice, and actions ensures the full potential of societies members.

### ***Statement of support***

All people deserve equal access to opportunity mindful of, and attentive to, the colour of their skin, their gender, their sexual orientation, the language they speak and their background. This right is fundamental to the K-12 education system and is extended to everyone without exception. The Board also recognizes the truth; that persons, and groups of people, have been historically marginalized in society due to inequities associated with aspects of their identities and their contexts, including, but not limited to, race, colour, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, (dis)ability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender (including gender identity and expression). The Board is committed to addressing these inequities, and historical wrongs, ensuring each student and staff member has equitable access to opportunities in schools and workplaces that enable them to thrive and to build a safe and inclusive society.

The Board is proud of the cultural diversity of the communities it serves. To properly reconcile and right historical wrongs, the Board acknowledges the historic and contemporary truth of the lands of the Hul'q'umi'num' speaking peoples, specifically the Quw'utsun, Malahat, Halalt, Penelakut, Stz'uminus, & Lyackson peoples, and the lands of the Ts'uubaa-asatx, Nuu-Chah-Nulth peoples that the district occupies and serves, and the unique truths and histories of the Métis and Inuit peoples who also live on these lands.

### ***The Board's Goals***

The goal of the Board of Education for the Cowichan Valley School District is to provide equitable, inclusive, and diverse educational opportunities free of racism, marginalization, and discrimination for all students and staff. To achieve educational equity, employment equity, and inclusive education, the district welcomes culturally diverse students and staff, and recognizes the need for students to have relevant connections among themselves and their learning.

To truly realize this goal, it is imperative that the Board, and district staff, be fully conversant in the historical injustices and inequalities in local, provincial, and national contexts, that have shaped society to recognize and eliminate the institutional barriers, including racism and biases, that contribute to unequal educational outcomes within schools. Equity and inclusive education work to understand, identify, address, and dismantle the prejudices, biases, barriers, and disparities that limit a student's chance to graduate from high school prepared for whatever their future may hold.

### ***Definitions***

#### **Equity:**

Ensuring equitable outcomes often requires different treatment and resources for historically marginalized people, or groups, to achieve a level playing field among all individuals and communities.

Adapted from: <https://www.mcgill.ca/equity/resources/definitions>)

#### **Equality:**

Equality means individuals, or groups of people, are given the same resources and opportunities, regardless of their circumstances. Equality can increase inequities in communities. Not every group needs the same resources or opportunities allocated to them to thrive.

(Source: <https://unitedwaynca.org/blog/equity-vs-equality/>)

**Racism:**

A historically rooted system of power hierarchies based on race – infused in institutions, policies, and culture – that is designed to benefit the dominant culture and harm those who are intentionally and purposefully marginalized by these policies or acts. Racism is not limited to individual acts of prejudice, either deliberate or accidental. Rather, the most damaging racism is built into systems and institutions that shape our lives. Individual acts of racism can be openly displayed in ‘jokes’, slurs or hate speech or can be hidden in unconscious biases and/or displayed as micro-aggressions. Racism is deeply rooted in attitudes, values, and stereotypical beliefs aimed at asserting that one group, as defined by the colour of their skin or their perceived common ancestry, is inherently superior to others.

Adapted from: <https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/racial-justice-education-key-terms-and>)

<https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/racial-discrimination-race-and-racism-fact-sheet>

and

<https://bchumanrights.ca/glossary/racism/>

**Discrimination:**

Treatment of an individual or group based on their actual or perceived membership in a social category, usually used to describe unjust or prejudicial treatment on the grounds of race, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, ability, socioeconomic class, immigration status, national origin, or religion.

Adapted from: <https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/racial-justice-education-key-terms-and>)

**Marginalization:**

In reference to groups of people, marginalization is when there are purposeful and intentional actions aimed at holding groups and communities back. Marginalized groups experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political, and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions.

Adapted from: <https://nccdh.ca/glossary/entry/marginalized-populations>

**Inclusion:**

Being included within a group or structure. More than simply diversity and quantitative representation, inclusion involves authentic and empowered participation, with a true sense of belonging and full access to opportunities.

(Source: <https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/racial-justice-education-key-terms-and>

### **Diversity:**

There are many kinds of diversity, based on race, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, country of origin, education, religion, geography, physical, or cognitive abilities. Valuing diversity means recognizing and honoring differences between people, acknowledging that these differences are a valued asset, and striving for diverse representation as a critical step towards equity.

Adapted from: <https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/racial-justice-education-key-terms-and>

### **Reconciliation**

“Reconciliation” is about establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in this country. For that to happen, there must be awareness of the past, acknowledgement of the harm inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour. There must be a commitment to partner with Indigenous peoples on this journey and direct efforts to inspire meaningful action.

Adapted from: [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2015/trc/IR4-9-6-2015-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2015/trc/IR4-9-6-2015-eng.pdf))  
– The Truth and Reconciliation Commission - Canada’s Residential Schools: Reconciliation, The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada – Vol 6, page 3

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