

Memorandum

To: Kim Gleason and Tammy Kolbe
From: Amanda Garces and Mark Hage, Chair & Vice Chair of the Act 1 Working Group
RE: Reflections and recommendations in respect to recent query on EQS Manual & its Proposed Definitions
Date: March 28, 2023

Kim and Tammy, we hope this finds you well.

We spent time after receiving Kim's e-mail of March 19 searching for where terms added to Definitions Section of the EQS Manual by the Working Group are found (or not) outside the Definitions section (2114) and Statement of Purpose (2110).

Here is a list of the new definitional terms we could not find outside these sections. If we have unintentionally omitted any, let us know.

- Anti-discrimination
- Caste
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students
- Culture
- Ethnic Group
- Ethnicity
- Race
- Racial Discrimination
- Social Identity Group

We'll start with what is obvious: the Statement of Purpose, as currently amended, requires that all students be provided an education that is not only "substantially equal," but "**equitable, anti-racist, culturally responsive, anti-discriminatory, and inclusive.**"

It also states that *"In addition to the non-discriminatory protections in Section 2113, these rules **strictly prohibit discrimination** against any student pursuing an education or participating in the general life or activities of a public school or an approved independent school as a result of, or based upon, **ethnicity, caste, language and linguistic diversity, socio-economic status, religion, housing status, and non-citizenship or immigration status.**"*

Given the statements above, it is imperative there be definitions in the manual for "race," "racial discrimination," "anti-discrimination," "ethnicity," "ethnic group," "culturally and linguistically diverse students," "caste," and "culture."

Additionally, it would be impossible to explain or advance a program of "ethnic studies" without defining "**ethnic group**" and "**ethnicity.**" More pointedly, the definition of "ethnic studies" in the Manual references "**ethnic group**" and "**ethnicity.**"

The terms “**race**,” “**ethnicity**,” “**social identity groups**,” and “**culture**” are also referenced in other definitions, further requiring that they, too, be defined. The word “**cultural**” is found in multiple places in the Manual.

Linked by degrees to the definition of “**social identity groups**,” which is found in the definition of “ethnic studies,” are the terms “social equity,” “social diversity,” “socially diverse,” and “social identities and experiences” – defining “**social identity group**” for this reason alone makes good sense.

Take, also, the definition of “**culturally and linguistic diverse students**”: in different parts of the Manual, we find the terms “linguistic,” “linguistic diversity,” “linguistically responsive,” and “linguistically and culturally responsive.” In one section, the words “cultural” and “linguistic” are used together (along with “**ethnic**,” “**racial**” and “**social**”) to qualify the noun “**diversity**.”

Throughout the Manual, as you’ll see below, there are terms or language constructions that are so close in meaning or form that they require or would be well-served by one or more of the definitions above in Section 2114:

2120.1 Instructional Strategies

*multiple **ethnic, cultural, and racial** perspectives*

culturally responsive** understanding of students’ **social, racial, linguistic, and ethnic identities

*recognizing the essential role that **language acquisition and literacy** play*

*communicating in **linguistically and culturally responsive** ways*

2120.2 Flexible Pathways

*integrate an understanding and respect for the diversity of **cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and social identities and experiences***

*...**linguistically appropriate and culturally responsive**, including in their home languages and in an accessible format.*

***ethnically, racially, linguistically, and socially diverse student populations** in the program*

*who represent a range of **cultural, ethnic, racial, linguistic, and social diversity**.*

2120.5. Curriculum Content.

***socially and culturally responsive** learning opportunities*

2123.2. Development and Implementation of Local Comprehensive Assessment System.

*The performance criteria of the assessment system shall be clear and be communicated to teachers, administrators, to students and their parents or legal guardians, and other community members in their home language(s) and in an accessible format. Students and parents shall be informed at least annually regarding progress toward achieving the standards. This includes **accommodating linguistic diversity** and providing information in students' home language(s) and in an accessible format.*

That said, if the State Board prefers to see “**culturally and linguistically diverse students**” and “**social identity groups**” explicitly mentioned outside of Sections 2110 and 2114, the terms can be inserted as follows:

2120.1 Instructional Strategies

Educators shall promote personalization and high expectations for each student, so that each student-successfully engages in the curriculum and meets graduation requirements. Classroom instruction shall incorporate a range of evidence-based instructional strategies that most effectively improve student learning and engage all learners, **including culturally and linguistically diverse students**, as identified by national and Vermont guidance and locally collected and analyzed student data.

[Note: if using the words “learners” and “students” in the same sentence is an issue here, “learners” can be changed to “students.” Or, if we settle ultimately on “learners” throughout the Manual rather than “students,” except as required by law or regulation, “culturally and linguistically diverse students” could be changed to “culturally and linguistically diverse learners” in Section 2114.]

b. modeling high expectations for all learners, regardless of prior academic experience, family background, socio-economic status, **social identity groups**, or (dis)abilities, and promoting respect for student differences;

The term “**anti-discrimination**” can be added in the manual in this way:

2121.1. School Leadership.

Engage in professional development coursework and professional learning opportunities to understand and advance equity **and anti-discrimination protection** across the supervisory union.

and/or

2123.2 Development and Implementation of Local Comprehensive Assessment System

d. enables decisions to be made about student progression and graduation, including measuring proficiency-based learning, the social-emotional wellbeing of students, the existence and severity of opportunity and achievement gaps and deficiencies, and the state of progress on local, state and national directives intended to advance social and academic equity and **anti-discrimination protection**.

The terms “race,” “culture,” “ethnicity,” and “ethnic groups” can be added in this fashion:

2120.1 Instructional Strategies

*Examining their own identities and biases and fostering a learning environment that emphasizes multiple **perspectives on ethnicity, ethnic groups, culture, and race**, ~~ethnic, cultural and racial perspectives~~, presents and critiques historical counter-narratives, and encourages students to examine issues and expressions of social equity within and beyond the classroom or school;” ...*

Let us know what you think of this response. If Chair Samuelson has ongoing concerns, or wants to suggest alternative wording, feel free to suggest she contact us.

Thanks, and take care.