

## Frequently Asked Questions about ESSB 5044, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Equity in the Enumclaw School District

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### What is ESSB 5044?

ESSB 5044 (which created a new section of 28.345 RCW) titled AN ACT Relating to equity, cultural competency, and dismantling institutional racism in the public school system, is a bill passed by the Washington state legislature and signed into law by the governor in April 2021. Among other things, the law requires WSSDA to identify or develop and periodically update governance training programs that align with Cultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion standards for school director governance.

The law requires a professional training day for school district staff that focuses on topics such as diversity, equity and inclusion. The training isn't just about race. It's about helping teachers so they can create a sense of belonging for everyone in the classroom, as well as help encourage self-respect in every student.

This bill has no component of training or curriculum for students. Critical race theory (CRT), is not even mentioned in the bill, nor is any related curriculum.

### What do the terms equity, diversity and inclusion (sometimes referred to as DEI) and cultural competency mean?

Those terms are defined in ESSB 5044 as follows:

- **Diversity** describes the presence of similarities and differences within a given setting, collective, or group based on multiple factors including race and ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, age, educational status, religion, geography, primary language, culture, and other characteristics and experiences;
- **Equity** includes developing, strengthening, and supporting procedural and outcome fairness in systems, procedures, and resource distribution mechanisms to create equitable opportunities for all individuals, and also includes eliminating barriers that prevent the full participation of individuals and groups; and
- **Inclusion** describes intentional efforts and consistent sets of actions to create and sustain a sense of respect, belonging, safety, and attention to individual needs and backgrounds that ensure full access to engagement and participation in available activities and opportunities.
- **Cultural Competency** includes knowledge of student cultural histories and contexts, as well as family norms and values in different cultures; knowledge and skills in accessing community resources and community and parent outreach; and skills in adapting instruction to students' experiences and identifying cultural contexts for individual students. **Culturally Competent** educational leaders have a mindset and behaviors that enable them to foster policies and practices that provide the opportunity to effectively engage with and serve diverse students, educators and community members.

## What is Critical Race Theory (CRT)?

Critical race theory comes from 1970s academia when legal scholars — including the late civil rights activist and Harvard Law School professor Derrick Bell — coined the phrase as a way to describe how embedded racism affects America’s legal and social systems. A decades-old academic concept that seeks to explain why there are racial disparities in our country. CRT is a FRAMEWORK that examines how systems, policies and the law perpetuate systemic racism. It is called Critical Race Theory because it asks you to look critically at systems to better understand the origins of racial inequities. This knowledge can then be used to mitigate and stem the inequities at the root cause (ie. the system, policy or law).

## What is the Enumclaw School District Training and Teaching?

- We continue to provide training to ESD Staff on topics of Cultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- We continue to provide additional “teaching tools” for teachers to support and teach **ALL** students.
- We are examining our system and policies to ensure equitable impact for all students and staff.
- Our equity work **is not** about “forcing into stereotypes of oppressed vs oppressor” or having individuals “feel ashamed of who they are or guilty for being a certain race”. **It is** about creating SAFE LEARNING SPACES for ALL.
- The goal of our equity work **is not** to put up obstacles or to make people feel guilty about who they are. **It is** about creating a culture that is safe and welcoming to all. **It is** about allowing everyone to show up as themselves, be respected for it, and have the same opportunities as everyone else.

## Cultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Enumclaw School District

### What it IS:

- Creating a safe learning space for each student
- Ensuring equitable opportunities for each student
- Providing professional development for staff
- Promoting understanding of ALL of our students experiences
- Offering support to students
- Eliminating barriers for students
- Alignment with ESSB 5044

### What it is NOT:

- Forcing into stereotypes of oppressed vs oppressor
- “Critical Race Theory Curriculum”
- “Special treatment for certain students”
- “Making people feel guilty about who they are”
- “Making people hate America”
- “Teaching children to be racist”