



*South Washington County Schools  
Cottage Grove, MN*

## **102.1 RACIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSION POLICY**

### **I. PURPOSE**

South Washington County Schools recognizes the value of sustaining and advancing a safe and welcoming learning environment and strives to honor and recognize employees' and students' social identities based on their membership in multiple racial and ethnic groups in society.

The purpose of this policy is to promote educational equity and inclusion for each student, staff, and family member. This policy requires a collective systemic culture that values equity. This policy will ensure educational equity is implemented districtwide with fidelity, consistency, connection, and coherence.

In developing and implementing its equity plan, South Washington County Schools will honor the following five agreements:

- We will actively create a safe space to engage in conversations around race, ethnicity, and culture.
- We will put ourselves in positions to listen and value all voices, with intentional amplification of historically underrepresented or undervalued voices and perspectives.
- We will provide a common definition of equity for the school district and our work.
- We will continually and transparently assess and measure progress toward our purpose.
- We will prioritize representation of students, staff, and parents in all aspects of the organization to the degree possible.

### **II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

South Washington County Schools is on a racial equity journey to provide a welcoming, respectful, and inclusive environment for learning and success. We will accomplish this by continuously examining our policies and practices to remove obstacles that contribute to systemic inequities. We will be responsible for nurturing anti-racist learning environments where students, staff, administrators, school board members, and families are respected and valued for who they are regardless of their culture, race, or ethnicity. The district is committed to ensuring that the school a student attends will not be the predictor of his or her success. In addition, the following guidelines will be established:

- A. Student achievement will not fall into predictable patterns identified by race, ethnicity, or culture.
- B. Each student will have access to learning opportunities that represent their race, ethnicity or culture that honors each student's unique background and culture to promote a sense of belonging.
- C. Each student will be supported, encouraged, and academically challenged by the adults around them regardless of culture, race, or ethnicity.
- D. We will state as a district that the lives of our Black, Indigenous and students, staff, and community members of color matter.

The district is committed to racial equity and inclusion. All school district staff are responsible for adhering to this policy. In addition, any individuals or groups renting or utilizing district facilities must adhere to this policy.

### III. DEFINITIONS

- 1. **Educational Equity** - The creation of policies and procedures.
- 2. **BIPOC** - Racially and ethnically Black, Indigenous and People of Color - this term refers to people who identify as non-white.
- 3. **Culturally Responsive Teaching** - An educator's ability to recognize students' cultural displays of learning and meaning and respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content to promote effective information processing. All the while, the educator understands the importance of being in a relationship and having a social-emotional connection to the student to create a safe space for learning (Hammond, 2015).
- 4. **Culture** - Term which encompasses the social behavior and norms found in human societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, and habits of the individuals in these groups.
- 5. **Hate Speech** - "Hate speech" means speech that lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value and: (1) disparages or demeans a person or group based on protected class status; (2) targets a person or group based on protected class status; or (3) threatens or harasses a person or group based on protected class status.
- 6. **"Speech"** means any form or expression that is intended to convey a particular message and is likely to be understood by those who view it or hear it. Speech can take many forms. Examples include, but are not limited to, written, verbal, and electronic words, statements, or expressions; images and graphic representations; messages on clothing, jewelry, and buttons; and posts on social media platforms.
- 7. **Government Speech** - speech or expression by or on behalf of a governmental entity, including a public school district. In determining whether speech is "government speech," courts consider: (1) whether the governmental entity established the message; and (2) whether the governmental entity exercises control over the content and dissemination of the message.
- 8. **Ethnicity** - Fact or state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition.

- 9. Equity** - The creation and enforcement of systems which are created in ways which provide equal opportunity and are inclusive of Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Color (BIPOC).
- 10. Equality** - Providing the same systems and support to all students.
- 11. Power** - The capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events.
- 12. Prejudice** - Dislike, hostility, or unjust behavior deriving from unfounded opinions.
- 13. Privilege** - Unearned and most times unacknowledged societal advantage that a restricted group of people has over another group.
- 14. Race** - A socially constructed way of categorizing people by skin color or region of origin.
- 15. Racism** - Prejudice plus power. Prejudice against a particular racial group, and power to enforce the prejudice.
- 16. Racist** - Racist systems are those which were and are created in a way which prejudice against or are excluding of Black people, Indigenous people, and People of Color (BIPOC). Individual acts of racism are born out of systems which produce an ideology of superiority for one race and inferiority of another.

#### **IV. SCHOOL DISTRICT ACTION AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES**

##### **A. ELIMINATE SYSTEMATIC DISPARITIES**

- a. Invite and include people from various races and ethnicities to examine issues and to design and develop solutions which address the root causes and systems, rather than technical solutions, which provide one-time situational fixes.
- b. Develop the personal, professional, and organizational skills and knowledge of its employees to enable them to address the role and presence of racism; and
- c. Eliminate practices and procedures that result in predictably lower academic achievement for any student racial group compared to peers.

##### **B. ENSURE SYSTEMIC EQUITY**

South Washington County Schools will implement the approved Resolution supporting racial equity and that Black lives matter. This resolution was approved by the School Board on November 19, 2020, in a 7-0 roll call vote and includes the following action steps:

1. We believe that Black lives matter.
2. We condemn all forms of bullying and discrimination.
3. We condemn hate speech and systematic racism directed at Black, Indigenous and people of color.
4. We condemn all manifestations and expressions of racism, xenophobia discrimination and ethnic or racial intolerance.
5. We believe that an accurate understanding of the past is necessary to build a successful vision of the future that works for each student. We cannot

value the lives of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) without teaching their history, recognizing the contributions of BIPOC leaders, and celebrating the sacrifices and achievements that were necessary to move us closer to the fulfillment of America's promise of justice and equality for all.

6. We will create a curriculum review process that incorporates accurate portrayals of Black, Indigenous and people of color. (Policies 603 and 616)

7. We will foster a culture of anti-racism and take all legal steps necessary to further racial equity within our schools, departments, and buildings through the creation of a racial equity plan for the academic achievement and mental/social-emotional well-being of each student.

8. We will provide professional development opportunities for staff that focus on combating systematic and institutional racism and further develop the attitudes, skills and beliefs that are necessary to support each student and their families.

9. We will create and foster school environments that promote respect for and curiosity about all cultures and that affirm equal humanity of all students, staff members, families, and community members.

10. We will adopt the following messages as official government speech: "We believe Black lives matter. The Superintendent is asked to promote this government speech across the district and to approve additional messaging, signage and visuals that are consistent with this government speech and that further the work to support racial equity.

11. We will seek to amplify diverse perspectives in support of students of color, their families, and educators. We will pledge to leverage those concerns and aspirations to inform our decisions.

12. We will incorporate equity into all district decision making, school board policy review and curriculum adoption processes.

### C. INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

South Washington County Schools supports Indigenous land acknowledgement as an expression of gratitude and appreciation to those whose territory we reside on, and a way of honoring the Indigenous people who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial. The land acknowledgement statement is meant as a living celebration of Indigenous communities and recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. At School Board meetings, district committee/advisory meetings and other district gatherings, the following land acknowledgement will occur: "We would like to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the land of the Mdewakanton (Mid-ah-wah-kah-ton) Dakota people. Mdewakanton means, "dwellers of the spirit lake." It is within District 833's responsibility as an academic institution to disseminate knowledge about Native peoples and their history with this land. District 833 works to build relationships with Native American students and families through academic pursuits and historical recognition."

## V. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The Board directs the Superintendent to develop and implement a systemwide equity plan including an annual review of Policy 102.1 - Racial Equity and Inclusion Policy.

## **LEGAL REFERENCES**

U.S. Const. amend XIV, § 1 (Equal Protection)  
20 U.S.C. § 1703 (Equal Educational Opportunity)  
42 U.S.C. § 2000c et seq. (Desegregation)  
42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq. (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964)  
42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2 (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964)  
25 U.S.C. § 452 et seq. (Johnson-O'Malley Act)  
Minn. Stat. § 124D.855 et seq. (School Desegregation and Integration)  
Minn. Stat. § 124D.71 et seq. (American Indian Education Act of 1988)  
Minn. Stat. § 123B.02, subd. 11 (Agreements with Indian Tribes)  
Minn. Stat. § 123B.30 (Classification of Pupils by Race)  
Minn. Stat. § 124D.74, subd. 2 (Assignment of Students by Race)  
Minn. Stat. § 124D.123 (Race discrimination in Flexible Year Programs)  
Minn. Stat. § 181.59 (Discrimination by Contractors)  
Minn. Stat. Chapter 363A (Minnesota Human Rights Act)  
Minn. Rules Part 3535 (Equal Opportunity in Schools)

Garcia et al. vs. The Board of Education of Independent School District No. 625: Order, Consent Decree and Final Judgment Dated July 9, 1984, United States District Court for the District of Minnesota (Latino Consent Decree)

**POLICY ADOPTED:** August 26, 2021