



## [Alma Partners](#) **Glossary of Terms**

**Anti-Racism: A commitment to undo racism at all levels: individually and interpersonally, structurally and systemically, in all spaces and areas, as it manifests at a passive as well as an active level.** “Anti-racism is the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.” - NAC International Perspectives: Women and Global Solidarity

**Bias:** *see “implicit bias”*

**Culture: The worldviews, value systems, practices, traditions and beliefs that a group of people share in, manifested on a daily basis.** A culture is often shaped by the beliefs and institutions of a group of people, passed down from generation to generation. It may include dress, language, religion, rituals, art, story, food, or ways of speaking. It also may include unspoken rules, body language, concepts of time, roles, relationships or communication styles. See Dr. Zaretta Hammond’s [culture tree](#) for further study.

**Cultural appreciation: Seeking to understand, learn about, and honor another culture in an effort to broaden perspective, uplift diversity, and extend cross-culturally.** Cultural appreciation often involves relationship building, citation of source and origin where possible, respect of boundaries, community, connection, curiosity, and willingness to learn.

**Cultural appropriation: Theft of another culture’s cultural elements for one’s own use, commodification, or profit.** This includes symbols, art, language, customs, etc. —

often without understanding, relationship, citation, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the original culture. Cultural appropriation is exploitative, and results from the assumption of a dominant culture's right to take another's cultural elements and use them to its own benefit, profit, and enrichment.

**Cultural competency: Being aware of your own cultural assumptions, beliefs, and values and how these may be different from other cultures—including being able to learn about, respect, and honor the cultures of those you interact with.**

**Cultural responsiveness: The application of a defined set of values, principles, skills, attitudes, policies, and behaviors that enable individuals and groups to work effectively across cultures.** Cultural responsiveness is a developmental process (and continuum) that evolves over time for both individuals and organizations. It is defined as having the capacity to: (1) value diversity; (2) conduct assessment of self; (3) manage the dynamics of difference; (4) acquire and apply cultural knowledge; and (5) adapt to and honor diversity and the cultural contexts of the communities in which one lives and works.

**Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) / diversity responsive pedagogy (DRP): Teaching practices that take into account cultural responsiveness (defined above) and/or student diversity of identity.** The goal of CRP / DRP is to interact with students as a culturally competent educator (*see “cultural competency” above*).

**Diversifying/Decolonizing/Contextualizing Curriculum:**

**a) Diversifying means broadening the sources of, and references within, your curriculum.** It might include telling stories / reading books from many cultures and authors of a wide variety of identities, having dolls who represent many backgrounds in your Early Childhood classroom, and/or celebrating the traditions of world religions, cultures, and belief systems in your classroom.

**b) Decolonizing includes reflecting on your own biases, recognizing what assumptions you make because you internalized an external standard, and working to articulate and share your own authentic, independent worldview.** Examples of decolonization include questioning your ideas about what a “good” student is and striving to operate from curiosity and openness rather than a fixed set of assumptions. The term

“decolonizing” stems from a description of a political process whereby colonized nations freed themselves from (often external) colonial or imperial rule.

**c) Contextualizing means situating your curriculum in relationship to time and place.** It can include teaching historical events in the context of their social as well as political milieu, asking why certain groups are or are not represented in the telling of events, and taking a place-based approach to what you are teaching. (Ex: acknowledging the Indigenous peoples who inhabited the land before you and working to develop relationships with their descendants, thinking about what events and practices are appropriate to your landscape or ecology.)

**Diversity: The presence, acceptance, and appreciation of difference.**

The concept of diversity embraces the wide range of human characteristics and cultures used to mark or identify individual and group identities. These characteristics include but are not limited to ethnicity, race, national origin, age, personality, sexual orientation, gender, class, religion, ability, and linguistic preferences. Diversity is a term often used as shorthand for visible and quantifiable statuses, but diversity of thought and ways of knowing, being, and doing are also understood as natural, valued, and desired states, the presence of which benefit relationships, organizations, workplaces, and society. Diversity can exist at the surface level in a group or organization without the needs of the people bringing diversity into the space being attended to, and diversity in a space can exist without equity, inclusion, or justice, to the detriment of all.

**Equity: The recognition that every person has different circumstances, and the practice of creating community principles, allocating resources, and providing opportunities accordingly so that everyone in the community can thrive.** Equity is a condition that balances two dimensions: fairness and inclusion. As a function of fairness, equity implies ensuring that people have what they need to participate in community life and reach their full potential. Equitable treatment involves eliminating barriers that prevent the full participation of all individuals. As a function of inclusion, equity ensures that essential educational programs, services, activities, and technologies are accessible to all and are a reflection of diversity. Equity is *not* equality, in which all people receive the same treatment and resources regardless of their circumstances and needs; it is the expression of justice, ethics, multi-partiality, diversity, and the absence of discrimination.

**Ethnicity: A social construct that divides people into groups based on characteristics such as shared sense of group identity, values, culture, language, history, ancestry, and geography.** Ethnicity differs from race. It is more specifically related to culture and heritage, while race is a broad, constantly changing categorical social construct based on skin color and other physical characteristics.

**Gender: Constructed categories and identities in our society that are influenced by cultural and social beliefs, as well as an individual's internal experiences.** Gender is often considered to be a binary of male and female, defined according to a person's assigned sex, with specific behaviors, clothing, and social expectations culturally associated with that assigned sex. However, sex is biological, and usually assigned at birth based on visible outer parts as male, female, or intersex. Gender is not sex, but a personal and social identity construct that can include how people experience themselves internally, how they express themselves outwardly, what activities they engage in, and their likes or dislikes, etc. Gender comes from within and is part of who one knows themselves to be (male, female, both, neither). While gender roles are strongly socially dictated and enforced, gender is ultimately a uniquely personal experience and expression. Gender is distinct from one's assigned sex (based on one's body parts) or one's sexual orientation (to whom they are sexually and/or romantically attracted).

**Gender expression: The way one expresses or shows their gender to the world.** This is done through such manifestations as clothing, hairstyle, mannerisms, activities, social roles, interests, etc. Gender and gender expression may be different from what others expect and may change throughout one's life.

**Gender identity: A person's internal sense of themselves as a specific gender.** A cisgender person has a gender identity consistent with the sex they were assigned at birth. A transgender person has a gender identity that does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender, however, is actually a broad spectrum and is not limited to just two possibilities or a binary. A person may have a non-binary gender identity, or a genderqueer identity, meaning they do not identify strictly within societal gender binaries of male or female and with how those genders are expected to present, express, or perform. Some people experience gender as fluid, not as consistent or fixed, and some people's gender identity changes.

**Implicit bias: Unconscious or automatic stereotypes and assumptions that all people and institutions carry, and which inform attitudes, decisions, and behavior.** Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intention. Everyone is susceptible to implicit biases and they are pervasive across all institutions and people. Naming implicit bias and understanding how it functions helps us act with consciousness and intention.

**Inclusion: Taking each individual's experience and identity into account and creating conditions where all feel accepted, safe, empowered, supported, invited, and affirmed.** An inclusive school or organization expands its sense of community to encompass all, cultivating belonging and providing opportunities for access and leadership across all forms of diversity. Inclusivity also promotes and enacts the sharing of power and recognition of interdependence, where authorizing individuals and community members share responsibility for expressing core values and maintaining respect for differences in the spirit of care and cooperation.

**Justice: The concept that all people deserve equal access to economic, political, and social rights and opportunities.** This includes safety, human rights, physical and mental health, well-being, privileges, resources, and leadership or decision making.

**Microaggressions: Words, cues, and/or behaviors that insult, invalidate, exclude, or oppress identities with a history of oppression and exclusion.** A microaggression is something someone says or does that makes others feel diminished, offended, threatened, stereotyped, discounted, or attacked. Microaggressions arise, often suddenly or seemingly surprisingly, out of harmful stereotypes and assumptions, and those committing them are often unaware that they have caused harm unless it is pointed out. The long-term cumulative effect of receiving microaggressions can have a significant negative impact on one's physical and mental health.

**Multiculturalism: The presence, value, and appreciation of many distinctive cultures and the manifestation of diverse cultural components in a given setting.** This may include cultural derivatives such as language, values, religion, race, communication styles, values, etc. Multiculturalism promotes the understanding of and respect for cultural differences, and celebrates them as a source of community strength.

Multiculturalism is also defined as a set of programs, policies, and practices that enable and maximize the benefits of diversity in a school community or organization.

**Multi-partiality: a practice that supports facilitators in giving equal attention to multiple identities and experiences.** Most importantly, it supports facilitators or those in leadership in giving attention to those identities and experiences that might be absent or unheard.

**Privilege: Systemic favoring, enriching, valuing, validating, and including certain social identities over others.** In our society, due to structural oppression, privilege provides such things as resources, safety, visibility, and voice to some social identities, while making it difficult for others to have access to the same things. Individuals cannot “opt out” of systems of privilege; these systems are inherent to the society in which we live.

**Race: A social, historical, and political classification system, which has been and presently is used as a tool for social and structural oppression and separation.** Race is a construct that divides people into groups based on non-biological factors, such as physical appearance, ancestry, culture, history, etc. It is a fluid concept, and the markers of race and racial categories change over time. While the experience of race and racial segregation are real, race is a concept that was used as a way to defend missionary work and African slave trading in western Europe. Its repercussions in today’s world reflect this, and the construct of race has tremendous global, personal, societal, and interpersonal impact.

**Racism: A system of advantage, prejudice, and power based on race.** Racism occurs at the individual, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels. On a systemic, structural, and cultural level, racism impacts distribution of resources, access to safety and human rights, and separates racial groups from each other. An ideology of racial hierarchy, it is erected to institute power and resources to a select group of people, classified as White people. Interpersonally, racism can be active or passive, and has been defined as *prejudice plus power*. Racism is a part of how society structures and upholds tools such as capitalism or globalism.

**Restorative justice: A theory of justice that emphasizes everyone’s humanness and believes in repairing harm through community process.** Restorative justice is practiced by holding cooperative circles that allow all willing stakeholders to meet, often in a facilitated circle with agreed-upon terms, although other approaches are available when that is not possible. Often, personal storytelling and active listening are integral in this approach. Restorative justice can lead to transformation and healing of people, perspectives, relationships, and communities.

**Sexual orientation: An identity and concept referring to a person’s sexual and romantic desire in relation to the sex and/or gender to which they are attracted.** Sexual orientation is an identity, and for some it can change over time. There are many sexual orientations and the language used to identify them is always changing, as society and culture develop. Some people identify as being heterosexual, homosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, demisexual, or pansexual, to name a few.

**Social class (upper or owning class, middle class, working class, etc.): Refers to one’s socio-economic status, which is based on factors such as wealth, occupation, education, income, access, living conditions, etc.** Membership in a social class often indicates belonging to a particular subculture, social network, or general value system. One’s social class may greatly impact their perspective, worldview, sense of community, and mental/physical health.

**Social identity: An individual’s social identity indicates who they are in terms of the groups to which they belong.** Social identities are a result of shared constructions and social relations of the people who created it, based on societal norms. (Johnson, 2006)  
**The “Big 8” socially constructed identities are: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, religion/spirituality, nationality, and socioeconomic status.** Social identity can be contrasted with personal identity, which includes less visible markers, and may encompass personality traits, likes/dislikes, etc. Social identity is also different from personal identity because of the emphasis on the individual rather than a collective group. Personal identity is what differentiates us from others within a social identity group, whereas social identity is how we categorize both ourselves and others.

*Sources for these definitions include the National Association of Independent Schools, The People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, The Kirwan Institute for the Study of*

*Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University, Lakeside School, Liberatory Education Tools, Martyn Rawson, Race Matters, RISE for Racial Justice, Searle Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning (Northwestern University), University of Wisconsin-Madison's Inclusion Education project, and Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum's book Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*

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