



# DEFINITIONS RELATED TO EQUITY

## *in Early Childhood Education*

<b>ability</b>	<i>The means or skills to do something. In this position statement, we use the term “ability” more broadly than the traditional focus on cognition or psychometric properties to apply across all domains of development. We focus and build on each child’s abilities, strengths, and interests, acknowledging disabilities and developmental delays while avoiding ableism (see also ableism and disability)</i>
<b>ableism</b>	<i>A systemic form of oppression deeply embedded in society that devalues disabilities through structures based on implicit assumptions about standards of physical, intellectual, and emotional normalcy</i>
<b>agency</b>	<i>A person’s ability to make choices and influence events. In this position statement, we emphasize each child’s agency, especially a child’s ability to make choices and influence events in the context of learning activities, also referred to as autonomy or child-directed learning.</i>
<b>bias</b>	<i>Attitudes or stereotypes that favor one group over another. Explicit biases are conscious beliefs and stereotypes that affect one’s understanding, actions, and decisions; implicit biases also affect one’s understanding, actions, and decisions but in an unconscious manner. Implicit biases reflect an individual’s socialization and experiences within broader systemic structures that work to perpetuate existing systems of privilege and oppression. An anti-bias approach to education explicitly works to end all forms of bias and discrimination.</i>
<b>classism</b>	<i>A systemic form of oppression deeply embedded in society that tends to assign greater value to middle and upper socioeconomic status and devalue the “working” class.</i>
<b>culture</b>	<i>The patterns of beliefs, practices, and traditions associated with a group of people. Culture is increasingly understood as inseparable from development. Individuals both learn from and contribute to the culture of the groups to which they belong. Cultures evolve over time, reflecting the lived experiences of their members in particular times and places.</i>
<b>disability and developmental delay</b>	<i>Legally defined for young children under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), disabilities include intellectual disability; hearing, speech or language, visual, and/or orthopedic impairment; autism; and traumatic brain injury. Under IDEA, states define developmental delays to include delays in physical, cognitive, communication, social or emotional, or adaptive development. These legal definitions are important for determining access to early intervention and early childhood special education services. The consequences of the definition can vary based on the degree to which they are seen as variations in children’s assets or the degree to which they are seen as deficits. (See also ableism and ability)</i>

<p><b>diversity</b></p>	<p>Variation among individuals, as well as within and across groups of individuals, in terms of their backgrounds and lived experiences. These experiences are related to social identities, including race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, social and economic status, religion, ability status, and country of origin. The terms <i>diverse</i> and <i>diversity</i> are sometimes used as euphemisms for non-White. NAEYC specifically rejects this usage, which implies that Whiteness is the norm against which diversity is defined.</p>
<p><b>equity</b></p>	<p>The state that would be achieved if individuals fared the same way in society regardless of race, gender, class, language, disability, or any other social or cultural characteristic. In practice, equity means all children and families receive necessary supports in a timely fashion so they can develop their full intellectual, social, and physical potential.</p> <p>Equity is not the same as equality. Equal treatment given to individuals at unequal starting points is inequitable. Instead of equal treatment, NAEYC aims for equal opportunity. This requires considering individuals' and groups' starting points, then distributing resources equitably (not equally) to meet needs. Attempting to achieve equality of opportunity without considering historic and present inequities is ineffective, unjust, and unfair.</p>
<p><b>equitable learning opportunities</b></p>	<p>Learning opportunities that not only help each child thrive by building on each one's unique set of individual and family strengths—including cultural background, language(s), abilities and disabilities, and experiences—but also are designed to eliminate differences in outcomes that are a result of past and present inequities in society.</p>
<p><b>funds of knowledge</b></p>	<p>Essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge embedded in the daily practices and routines of families.</p>
<p><b>gender identity</b></p>	<p>A social concept that reflects how individuals identify themselves. Traditionally viewed as a binary category of male/female linked to an individual's sex, gender identity is viewed by current science as fluid and expansive. <b>Cisgender</b> individuals develop a gender identity that matches their legal designation. <b>Transgender</b> individuals are those whose gender identity and/or expression differs from cultural expectations based on their legal designation at birth.</p>
<p><b>historical trauma</b></p>	<p>"The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences." Examples of historical trauma include the multigenerational effects of White supremacy reflected in colonization, genocide, slavery, sexual exploitation, forced relocation, and incarceration based on race or ethnicity.</p>
<p><b>inclusion</b></p>	<p>Embodied by the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and their family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society. The desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to help them reach their full potential.<sup>79</sup> Although the traditional focus of inclusion has been on addressing the exclusion of children with disabilities, full inclusion seeks to promote justice by ensuring equitable participation of all historically marginalized children.</p>
<p><b>intersectionality</b></p>	<p>The overlapping and interdependent systems of oppression across, for example, race, gender, ability, and social status. Intersectionality encourages us to embrace and celebrate individuals' multiple social identities. It also highlights the complex and cumulative effects of different forms of structural inequity that can arise for members of multiple marginalized groups.</p>
<p><b>LGBTQIA+</b></p>	<p>An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more, reflecting the expansive and fluid concepts of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.</p>

<b>marginalization</b>	<i>The process by which specific social groups are pushed to the edges or margins of society. Marginalized groups are treated as less important or inferior through policies or practices that reduce their members' economic, social, and political power.</i>
<b>microaggressions</b>	<i>Everyday verbal, nonverbal, or environmental messages that implicitly contain a negative stereotype or are in some way dehumanizing or othering. These hidden messages serve to invalidate the recipients' group identity, to question their experience, to threaten them, or to demean them on a personal or group level. Microaggressions may result from implicit or explicit biases. People who commit microaggressions may view their remarks as casual observations or even compliments and may not recognize the harm they can cause.</i>
<b>norm, normative</b>	<i>The definition of certain actions, identities, and outcomes as the standard ("the norm" or "normal"), with everything else as outside the norm. For example, the terms White normativity or heteronormative refer to instances in which Whiteness and heterosexuality are considered normal or preferred. Such norms wrongly suggest that all other races and sexual orientations are outside the norm or are less preferable. Art activities focused on filling out a family tree, with designated spaces for "mommy," "daddy," "grandma," and "grandpa," for example, may assume a two-parent, heterosexual household as the normative family structure. (While some research-based norms provide guidance regarding healthy child development and appropriate educational activities and expectations, these norms have too often been derived through research that has only or primarily included nonrepresentative samples of children or has been conducted primarily by nonrepresentative researchers. Additional research, by a more representative selection of researchers and theorists, is needed to develop new norms that will support equitably educating all children.)</i>
<b>oppression</b>	<i>The systematic and prolonged mistreatment of a group of people.</i>
<b>privilege</b>	<i>Unearned advantages that result from being a member of a socially preferred or dominant social identity group. Because it is deeply embedded, privilege is often invisible to those who experience it without ongoing self-reflection. Privilege is the opposite of marginalization or oppression that results from racism and other forms of bias.</i>
<b>race</b>	<i>A social-political construct that categorizes and ranks groups of human beings on the basis of skin color and other physical features. The scientific consensus is that using the social construct of race to divide humans into distinct and different groups has no biological basis.</i>
<b>racism</b>	<i>A belief that some races are superior or inferior to others. Racism operates at a systemic level through deeply embedded structural and institutional policies that have favored Whiteness at the expense of other groups. On an individual level, racism can be seen in both explicit and implicit prejudice and discrimination. Both individual and institutional acts of bias work to maintain power and privilege in the hands of some over others.</i>
<b>resilience</b>	<i>The ability to overcome serious hardship or adverse experiences. For children, resilience is promoted through such protective factors as supportive relationships, adaptive skill building, and positive experiences.</i>
<b>sexism</b>	<i>A belief that some gender identities are superior or inferior to others. Sexism operates at a systemic level through deeply embedded structural and institutional policies that have assigned power and prestige to cisgender men and caring and nurturing roles with little economic reward to cisgender women, to the detriment of all.</i>
<b>stereotype</b>	<i>Any depiction of a person or group of people that makes them appear less than fully human, unique, or individual or that reinforces misinformation about that person or group.</i>

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<p><b>structural inequities</b></p>	<p>The systemic disadvantage of one or more social groups compared to systemic advantage for other groups with whom they coexist. The term encompasses policy, law, governance, and culture and refers to race, ethnicity, gender or gender identity, class, sexual orientation, and other domains.</p>
<p><b>White fragility</b></p>	<p><i>A concept based on the observation that White people in North America and other parts of the world live in a social environment that protects and insulates them from race-based stress, heightening their expectations for racial comfort and lowering their ability to tolerate racial stress. Even small amounts of racial stress can be intolerable to White people and can trigger defensive actions designed to restore the previous equilibrium and comfort.</i></p>
<p><b>xenophobia</b></p>	<p><i>Attitudes, prejudices, or actions that reject, exclude, or vilify individuals as foreigners or outsiders. Although often targeted at migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and displaced persons, xenophobia is not limited to these individuals but may be applied to others on the basis of assumptions.</i></p>