# Cultural Literacy

*This document serves as guidance in order to understand our diverse student and staff population and it reflects the specific educational equity work that needs to be done in Loudoun County Public Schools.*

## Identity

Identity is how someone perceives their individuality and life experiences. The language we use when talking about identity is dynamic, it changes and there are reasons for these changes. In all cases, it is best to allow individuals to self-identify.

### Culture

Culture refers to the multiple components of one’s identity, including but not limited to: race, economic background, gender identity, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and ability.

### Religion

Religious or spiritual beliefs are important cultural identifiers. It is important to be aware of hate-based actions against religions such as anti-Semitism, anti-muslim, anti-Sikh, etc.

## Race

Race is a social construct and does not have a scientific basis. It is typically how you are seen, your skin color, or “physical features, that groups and cultures consider socially significant.” (APA)

### Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a socially constructed grouping of people defined by cultural traits, such as language, religion, food. *When referring to someone’s ethnicity, if possible, refer to a specific nation of origin, region of origin or tribe of origin.*

## Socio-Economic

Socioeconomic status (SES) encompasses not only income but also educational attainment, occupational prestige, and subjective perceptions of social status and social class.

## Nationality

The status of belonging to a particular nation, whether by birth or naturalization.

## Sexual Orientation

*Sexual orientation* is a part of individual identity that includes “a person’s sexual and emotional attraction to another person and the social affiliation that may result from this attraction. Some examples of sexual orientation are lesbian, gay, heterosexual, straight, asexual, bisexual, queer, and pansexual.” (APA)

### Gender Identity

*Cisgender* is a term that refers to people whose gender identity corresponds to their sex assigned at birth. *Transgender* is a term that refers to “people whose gender identity differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.” (GLAAD). *Gender expression* varies widely among cisgender and transgender people. It is always helpful to ask someone what pronouns they use.

LGBTQ+. acts as an umbrella term to refer to a whole community of people. The abbreviation stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or sometimes Questioning. The “+” represents other orientations, identities, and/or allies.

## English Learner (EL)

EL describes a student who is eligible for LIEP (Language Instruction Educational Program) Services. ELs may have immigrated to, or been born in the US: country of origin or linguistic heritage does not identify one as an EL. Students eligible for a LIEP are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners, varying in background knowledge, strengths and needs.

## Ability

Ability is the result of isolated and combined cognitive processes, background experiences and opportunities for ongoing growth, specific to the skill set examined. Every individual has the capacity for personal growth within their existing abilities when they are provided opportunities to foster academic, social and emotional skill development.

## Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups. (Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary)
American Indian

American Indian refers to the first human inhabitants of what we now call the Americas. There are many different groups of American Indians. In Virginia, eleven tribes have state recognized sovereignty (6 of these tribes have federal recognition). There are also tribes whose sovereignty is not recognized by state or federal governments. Other terms that are often used to refer to first people include, Indigenous People, First Peoples, Native American, First Nation Peoples (widely used in Canada).

Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI)

Asian and Pacific Islander (API) refers to people whose heritage is from a region of Asia and the Pacific Islands. People of Asian and Pacific Islander descent sometimes prefer to be identified regionally; South Asia (ie. India, Afghanistan), Southeast Asia (ie.Vietnam, The Philippines), East Asia (ie. China, Japan) and the Pacific Islands (Polynesia, Micronesia, etc.). While there are forty countries in this region, there are even more ethnicities, which are often not defined by political borders.

Black / African-American

Black is a term used for people of African descent, regardless of nationality. African American typically refers to Black people who are born in the United States. Some Americans identify as both and some prefer one term over the other. "Black" can be seen as a label that recognizes and celebrates the race, culture, and lived experiences of a people.

Latina/Latino/Latinx, Hispanic

Latina (female), Latino (male), and Latinx (gender neutral) are people whose heritage and lineage are traced to Latin America or the Caribbean, and whose language heritage includes Spanish, Portuguese, and/or other regional indigenous languages common to that region/country. Chicano/Chicana is someone who is native of, or descends from, Mexico and who lives in the United States. The term "Hispanic" has no basis on geography or a person’s heritage, it is based solely on the language native to the European Settlers that conquered the Americas from the Indigenous. The U.S. government adopted “Hispanic” as a universal term that grouped all Spanish-speaking groups within the United States.

Middle Eastern / North African (MENA)

People from the Middle East and North African region represent many diverse identities including Arab, Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, etc. Many people from this region identify culturally as Arab, it could mean that they speak Arabic. People who identify as Arab practice many religions including Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

White

People of European ancestry in America often identify as “White” or “European American”. The original use of the term “Caucasian” was to refer to the people whose origins are in the Caucasus region of eastern Europe. The use of the term “Caucasian” as an alternative to “White” or “European” is discouraged because it originated as a way of classifying White people as a race to be favorably compared with other races. (APA).

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) is a term that highlights unity among these groups of individuals in the fight/push for racial justice. The history of Black people and Indigenous people is distinct and unique because historically, one group was predominantly enslaved (Black), while the other group was predominantly colonized (Indigenous).

Sources: Multiple resources were used including but not limited to: APA, GLAAD, Race Reporting Guide, US Census Bureau, Teaching Tolerance, Courageous Conversations About Race (Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton), and Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain (Zaretta Hammond)