



California Council on Teacher Education

CCTE Statement in Support of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Education

*Drafted by CCTE JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion) Committee
and Approved Unanimously by the CCTE Board of Directors on April 23, 2025*

The California Council on Teacher Education (CCTE) strongly reaffirms its commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in education, particularly in light of the recent actions by the Trump Administration and the U.S. Department of Education to eliminate DEI initiatives at the federal level. These actions, as outlined in the Department's official statement, reflect a fundamental misunderstanding of what DEI represents within PK-12 schools, higher education institutions, and in teacher education programs.

At the heart of the current discourse is a widespread mischaracterization of DEI, often framed as a divisive and discriminatory ideology rather than what it truly is—a research-based, pedagogically sound framework that ensures access, representation, and success for all students. The recent federal guidance claims to be dismantling DEI in order to “end discrimination based on race” and “eliminate harmful race stereotypes.” However, this assertion is based on a false premise that DEI itself is discriminatory, when in fact, DEI efforts have always aimed to counteract discrimination and provide equitable educational opportunities.

What DEI Actually Means in PK-12 and Higher Education

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are not political talking points, nor are they mechanisms for exclusion. Instead, they are fundamental principles that shape effective and fair educational environments for all students.

- Diversity acknowledges the broad spectrum of identities, backgrounds, and lived experiences that students bring into the classroom. This includes but is not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, ability, socio-economic status, language, citizenship status, and cultural heritage. In schools, diversity means recognizing and valuing these differences rather than erasing them.
- Equity ensures that all students have access to the resources, opportunities, and support they need to succeed. It is not about giving preferential treatment but rather about removing systemic barriers that have historically disadvantaged certain groups. Equity recognizes that different students may need different levels of support in order to achieve their full potential.
- Inclusion is the practice of creating learning spaces where every student feels valued, heard, and respected. Inclusion goes beyond representation; it fosters a sense of belonging and engagement for all students, ensuring that curriculum, teaching practices, and policies reflect the diverse experiences and needs of the student population.

And consider the opposite of these terms. A lack of diversity means that the varied identities, backgrounds, and lived experiences of students are not being represented, acknowledged, or valued within the school community. A lack of equity means that individuals are not being treated equally. A lack of inclusion means that some groups and individuals are being excluded from activities and benefits enjoyed by others. Ultimately a refusal to acknowledge and implement goals and programs that foster justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion is to invite and accept the opposite; to instead champion inequality, bigotry, and white supremacy.

These principles are foundational to effective teaching and learning. They are supported by decades of educational research showing that when schools embrace DEI, student achievement, retention, and engagement improve. Schools that implement DEI frameworks cultivate critical thinking, empathy, and problem-solving skills—essential competencies for success in a multicultural democracy and global economy.

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DEI Is Not What the Federal Government Claims It to Be

The recent statement from the U.S. Department of Education suggests that DEI initiatives are inherently discriminatory and use harmful racial stereotypes. This could not be further from the truth. DEI efforts do not promote exclusion, racial bias, or ideological indoctrination. Rather, they:

- Work to dismantle barriers to opportunity by ensuring that historically marginalized students have access to high-quality education and the necessary resources to thrive.
- Promote factual, comprehensive, and historically accurate curricula that reflect the contributions and experiences of diverse communities.
- Cultivate inclusive school climates where students from all backgrounds and abilities feel safe, supported, and valued.
- Prepare future educators and leaders to effectively serve diverse student populations with cultural competence and responsiveness.

DEI is not about lowering academic standards, forcing ideological conformity, or privileging any one group over another. It is about ensuring that every student—regardless of background—has a fair and meaningful chance at success. The recent efforts to dismantle DEI at the federal level not only misrepresent its purpose but also threaten to roll back decades of progress in educational access, equity, and excellence.

The Role of DEI in Teacher Education

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are not abstract concepts—they are central to effective teacher preparation and student success. DEI efforts in teacher education focus on:

- Ensuring that teacher candidates develop the skills to teach diverse student populations. Teachers must be prepared to work with multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students from varied cultural and racial backgrounds.
- Addressing disparities in teacher preparation and student outcomes. Research has shown that students of color benefit academically and socially when they have teachers who reflect their backgrounds. DEI efforts aim to diversify the teacher workforce and provide all students with high-quality instruction.
- Creating inclusive school climates that support student learning. Schools that embrace DEI principles see higher student engagement, reduced disciplinary disparities, and improved academic outcomes.

Recommendations for Action

As the federal government continues to attack DEI efforts, teacher educators, researchers, and teacher preparation programs must take a proactive stance. Based on the recommendations from Shaun Harper's Dear Colleague letter (2025), we encourage institutions to:

- **Defend and Publicly Reaffirm Their Commitment to DEI:** Institutions should make clear statements supporting DEI and demonstrating how it aligns with their mission of preparing effective educators.
- **Use Data to Show the Impact of DEI:** Teacher education programs should collect and share data on student outcomes, faculty diversity, and school climate to demonstrate the necessity of DEI efforts.
- **Challenge Misinformation:** When critics claim that DEI promotes discrimination, segregation, or political ideology, educators must push back with evidence-based responses.
- **Strengthen Coalitions to Protect DEI:** Teacher educators, school districts, and professional organizations should work together to advocate for policies that support equity and inclusion in education.

The California Council on Teacher Education reiterates its commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion as essential components of the preparation of teachers and other educational professionals needed to assure that our schools are open to, fully serving, and offering role models to all California students. Further, we urge—indeed we demand—that all of our member institutions stand firm in maintaining and expanding activities and programs that promote justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.