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## Our Mission

The mission of the Association of Alaska School Boards is to advocate for children and youth by assisting school boards in providing quality public education, focused on student achievement, through effective local governance.

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# Educational Equity versus Critical Race Theory

## Definitions

### Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is a framework and analytical tool primarily and historically used in university-level courses. Originating in the 1970s, CRT was first used to help law students think critically about the impact of historical and present-day racism in the legal system. In the 1990s, some colleges of education also started incorporating CRT into their coursework to help aspiring school administrators and teachers better understand inequities in the context of education.

### Educational Equity

Educational equity is a K-12 term referring to federal and state policies and requirements. Specifically, the term is closely associated with "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) legislation led by former President George W. Bush and signed into law in 2002. This watershed moment in US education policy established clear requirements for school districts to disaggregate achievement data by student groups to address and close achievement gaps.

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

**Diversity** describes the presence of similarities and differences within a given setting, collective, or group based on multiple factors, including race and ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, age, educational status, religion, geography, primary language, culture, and other characteristics and experiences;

**Equity** includes developing, strengthening, and supporting procedural and outcome fairness in systems, procedures, and resource distribution mechanisms to create equitable opportunities for all individuals, and also includes eliminating barriers that prevent the full participation of individuals and groups; and

**Inclusion** describes intentional efforts and consistent sets of actions to create and sustain a sense of respect, belonging, safety, and attention to individual needs and identities that ensure full access to engagement and participation in available activities and opportunities. When inclusion occurs for all identities, then assimilative processes are negated.

## Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a comprehensive systems approach that supports children, youth, and adults in developing skills for school and life. SEL reaches beyond the classroom to all aspects of life. The five SEL competencies identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, Emotional Learning (CASEL) teach the skills we each need to successfully manage life tasks such as learning, developing relationships, solving everyday problems, and operating in the workplace.

## Cultural Competence

Includes knowledge of student cultural histories and contexts, as well as family norms and values in different cultures; knowledge and skills in accessing community resources and community and parent outreach; and skills in adapting instruction to students' experiences and identifying cultural contexts for individual students. **Culturally Competent** educational leaders have a mindset and behaviors that enable them to foster policies and practices that provide the opportunity to effectively engage with and serve diverse students, educators, and community members.

## Trauma Engaged Schools

Educators have a legal and moral responsibility to provide equitable educational opportunities for all students regardless by ending and preventing systemic trauma. The Department of Education says that "this hinges on access to a school environment equipped for safe and stimulating learning opportunities, resources for social and emotional growth, and excellent educators who are able to support students in getting and remaining on track to graduate from high school ready for college or careers."\* With high rates of trauma in our schools and communities, if it is not addressed in our schools, it can become a barrier to students. Trauma Engaged Schools practices and strategies use strengths already present in our students and families to encourage lifelong learning and success.

\*Source: [deiexpert.org](https://deiexpert.org), adapted from: *The Department of Education*

## School Climate

School climate is the experience you have when you are in a school – that feeling you have – safe or unsafe, connected or isolated, the way you know if the school is welcoming for you and your family. Feeling safe, connected, and welcomed starts with relationships that extend well beyond the brick and mortar of a school building and include our connections, partnerships, and the conditions for learning. Both measuring and strengthening school climate, in person or virtually, can impact students' academic, social, behavioral, and physical outcomes.