

Council for Exceptional Children
New Diversity Terminology
April 2008

The Council for Exceptional Children is pleased to share the updated diversity terms approved by the Council's Board of Directors for inclusion in the CEC Policy Manual Glossary. CEC will be infusing the new terminology as it develops and implements its current and new strategic plan. We encourage all CEC members and Units to embrace this new terminology and incorporate it into your work.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: *The country where you were born or which holds the most identity with a person.*

CULTURAL IDENTITY: *The context of one's life experience as shaped by membership in groups which can be based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, abilities, age, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographic region.*

CULTURE: *The sum of a group's socially transmitted behavior patterns, thoughts and experiences, and its perceptions, values, and assumptions about living that influence behavior and how those emerge with interactions and communications with other cultures.*

DIVERSITY: *Understanding and valuing the range and variety of characteristics and beliefs of individuals (including those who provide services to exceptional children, youth and adults) who demonstrate a wide range of characteristics. This includes ethnic and racial backgrounds, language, age, abilities, family status, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious and spiritual values, geographic location, and country of origin.*

ETHNIC OR MULTICULTURAL GROUP: *Any group which, because of racial or ethnic origin, constitutes a distinctive and recognizable entity in our society. Examples of such groups include Blacks or African Americans; American Indians, Alaskan Natives, or First Nations; Hispanics, such as Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Central and South Americans; Asians; and Pacific Islanders. (This term to be used only for the purpose of delineating the composition of the Board and the Nominations Committee as outlined in CEC's Constitution and Bylaws Article V- Board of Directors and Article IX- Committees).*

ETHNICITY: *Takes into consideration people's national origin, religion, or language. When applied to a group, it refers to a community within a larger society that is set apart by others or who identifies itself primarily on the basis of cultural characteristics such as national origin, religion, beliefs, language or tradition, that can be influenced by racial identity.*

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION: *A physical place where a person is regarded as established.*

MULTICULTURAL: *An understanding pertaining to, and respect for the range and variety of social, political, economic, academic, and historical constructs of ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, age, abilities, language, religion, sexual orientation, geographic location, or country of origin.*

RACE: *A social construction, traditionally based on biological/physical features, which may also include an individual's cultural identity.*