

DEFINING DIVERSITY¹

Schools tend to use the word “diversity” to mean both “diversity” and “multiculturalism.” This is fine, though it can be helpful to consider the difference between the two.

Diversity simply describes the various constituents of a group. It’s *quantitative*. Most obviously, it is defined by race, gender, and culture (or ethnicity). On a more subtle level, it includes class, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and even appearance. But the list can be as varied as a school deems necessary and right. It is helpful to pause and reflect on the many forms diversity can take:

- race
- gender
- socioeconomic status
- national origin
- physical ability or disability
- ethnicity
- politics
- culture
- family structure
- sexual orientation
- constituency (parents/alumnae/I, faculty, students, past parents, funders, friends)
- geographic area of residence
- age
- marital status
- religion
- values
- mental ability
- ...and on and on

¹ *Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards*, by Mary Hundley DeKuyper, 8th ed., © 2003 National Association of Independent Schools, pp. 107-108.

DEFINING MULTICULTURALISM²

Multiculturalism is generally considered to be an evolving process. Although diversity is quantitative, multiculturalism is *qualitative*.

It is the shift that occurs when we move from defining everyone by one cultural norm to understanding the value of multiple norms.

To put it another way, a multicultural community is one that embraces diversity and that believes the community is stronger, more equitable, and more just specifically because of its diversity.

² *Trustee Handbook: A Guide to Effective Governance for Independent School Boards*, by Mary Hundley DeKuyper, 8th ed., © 2003 National Association of Independent Schools, pp. 107-108.