



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Executive Summary of DEI Position Paper - 2022

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League of Women Voters practices inquiry, advocacy, and action.

Our rationale for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Position Paper is based on the premise that the Manatee School Board should see ***diversity as a strength, equity as a moral obligation, and inclusion as a worthy goal***; therefore, teaching history should reflect everyone's lived experiences. Teaching and learning complete and truthful history is a civic duty. Manatee School Board creates policy to guide district staff, school leaders, and teachers to sustain teaching and learning. When everyone knows everyone's comprehensive history, we are all able to move forward together.

Manatee's student population reflects our community's population. Based on the 2021 data from the Florida Department of Education, 54% of Manatee school district's population of 49,181 students are economically disadvantaged. Among the overall student population, 36% are Hispanic or Latino, 13% are Black/African American, 44% are White, and 7% are identified as Other. For Manatee County to provide the highest quality of life for all citizens, everyone's children must be successfully engaged in rigorous and relevant learning. This includes teaching complete history through instruction in critical thinking skills to enhance each student's capacity to discern, compare, contrast, and make informed decisions. The League of Women Voters supports learning complete and truthful history as a civic duty.

Education is under attack today. Comprehensive, unabridged social studies education is being challenged. Efforts are underway to misinform the public about what is being taught in our schools. Making claims that learning the truth creates divisions and a sense of guilt and shame among some children is disingenuous. Some are using this as a 'dog whistle' to undermine public schools and cripple teaching and learning. These groups at the least want to deeply influence school boards and, at worst, to take them over.

Florida State Standards and Florida's "Next Generation Social Studies Standards, 2021" mandate that teachers approach historical events from a variety of perspectives, value the worth and dignity of every person, and to apply critical thinking skills. CPalms is an online tool box of vetted resources to help educators effectively implement the standards. Teachers should not be in constant fear of being challenged for what they are teaching. Links to all the mentioned rules, etc. are contained in the full Position Paper. We encourage each of you to read it.

The goal of public education is to create well-informed citizens; therefore, the discussion of historical racism impacting Blacks, Hispanic/Latina(o), Indigenous People, and the LGBTQ+ community must take place in the classroom. This is a way young people will learn to think critically about our history and the only way to create a united America for future generations. The history of our great republic will not be tarnished; it will be expanded. Maya Angelou, American poet and writer, stated, "*History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.*"