

# GARRISON FOREST SCHOOL

300 GARRISON FOREST ROAD • OWINGS MILLS, MARYLAND 21117

CHRIS HUGHES, HEAD OF SCHOOL

Dear GFS families and alumnae,

We are standing at a pivotal moment in the nation's — and our school's — history. Over the past few weeks, since the killing of George Floyd as yet another victim in a tragically long list of black people who have suffered and died as a result of a deep-set and systemic racism, we have seen a truly historic call to action. There must be change; for GFS, that means holding ourselves accountable, being transparent and committing to real change.

Amid the national outcry for justice and equality, we have heard from students, parents, alumnae and staff with our own call to action: Do better, and acknowledge that we haven't lived up to our promise to all students.

We've heard these calls, and we will, as a school, do the important work of listening and hearing, evaluating and assessing and, most importantly, effecting change on our campus and in our classrooms and communities. It's also vital to say to you, and especially to our black students and alumnae: We are sorry. In particular, we are sorry to any students, faculty, or staff members who have felt like outsiders in this community. We must do better, and we WILL do better.

As an institution, we must engage in self-reflection and examine whether we have lived up to our promise to all students so that we can make real and meaningful changes. Words and promises are not enough; real change and real progress have to be our goals. We are committed to moving GFS to be proactively anti-racist, acknowledging racism and inequities where they exist, and taking action to address them. To guide this work, we have formed the GFS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Board. The Advisory Board members are:

- Chris Hughes (co-chair), Head of School
- Carolyn Lewis (co-chair), Director of Community Life and Inclusion
- Crystal Lee Alston '96, GFS Board of Trustee Member
- Lauren Misera Anderson '02, Middle School Dean of Students
- Jim Beam, Upper School Mathematics Teacher and Faculty Liaison to the Board of Trustees
- Randy Beckford, Upper School Dean of Students
- Shondra Cowling, Lower School Counselor
- Meisha Dockett, Human Resources Manager
- Jazmin Greene, Assistant Director of Admission
- Kate Gugerty, Director of Community Engagement
- Gail Hutton, Head of the Lower Division
- Lisa Fleck, Director of Counseling
- Gretta Gordy Gardner '86, GFS Board of Trustee Member
- Reema Khanchandani, Head of the Upper School
- Heather Malone-Wolf, Director of Dance
- Shelly Placek, Director of Communications and Marketing
- Shannon Schmidt, Head of the Middle School
- Bryna Stoute, Preschool Teacher
- Aminah Wells, Upper School Counselor

Their work will begin immediately, and the goals of this group are:

- To create opportunities for GFS community members to share their experiences with us through listening sessions and other formats to be

determined by the group. We expect this to be the first action taken by the group and will share information about these sessions as soon as it is available.

- Through listening sessions and feedback, determine what gaps and issues persist on our campus and within our community and assess our vision for diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Recommend both immediate and long-term action steps to address inequities and improve the experience of black students and other minorities on our campus.
- Provide input on curricular, policy and/or programmatic changes that need to be implemented.
- Report out to our community with updates and progress on a regular basis, providing transparency throughout this process.

In addition to the Advisory Board, the GFS Board of Trustees has authorized the creation of a full standing Board Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Though this work is overdue and will begin immediately, we anticipate that the impact and scope will be long-term and far-reaching. Outside of this Advisory Board, all faculty and staff will be engaged in this process and a part of making the changes that are needed to move the school forward. We fully intend for this to be a permanent fixture within our community, with the goal of taking a proactive approach in ensuring all of our students and community members have a voice and feel like they belong on our campus. There is a place for everyone in our community to participate and engage in this process as we build a better GFS. This work is never done.

Thank you to each of you for being a part of this community — and for your support as we work together toward this common goal.

Sincerely,



Chris Hughes  
Head of School and  
DEI Advisory Board  
Co-Chair



Carolyn Lewis  
Director of Community  
Life and Inclusion and  
DEI Advisory Board  
Co-Chair



Augie Chiasera  
President, GFS Board  
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