

The Agnes Irwin School



Dear Agnes Irwin Community,

I am honored to have joined The Agnes Irwin School at this seminal moment in our history. The work of diversity, equity and inclusion is some of the most critical work that a community can do because schools are where we go to learn, to understand, to grow and to make meaning of ourselves, our lived experiences, and of the world around us. It is fitting that in this moment of celebrating 150 years as a school, that we have been given a charge to examine and reconcile our past and move our school into a different space for our 151st year and beyond. What an incredible opportunity we have been presented with to live into our mission by becoming a school that teaches our students to learn, lead and live a legacy of anti-racism, inclusion, equity and justice.

The Agnes Irwin Summit on Racial Justice has been designed to serve as an initial step in the important work of collectively committing as an entire school to the work of reconciling our past, healing our present, and planning for our future. This three-day event will serve as a beginning for the work that we will do as students, families, faculty, staff, administrators and alums to wrestle with our history and to unify our efforts to make Agnes Irwin a truly inclusive, culturally responsive, and anti-racist institution for our current students and all those who will come to our school in years to come.

The schedule below has been crafted to allow meaningful listening and discussion to take place so that all of our voices are heard. Each session is designed based on initial feedback we have received from all of you and is focused on healing and identifying solutions, maximizing the collective wisdom that our diverse community has to offer to the school. We invite you to register for the events that are specific to your role in our school to ensure that we can hear from as many members of our community as possible. Please know that all sessions will be recorded and shared more broadly with the community, with the exception of the Affinity Group sessions, and we will provide additional opportunities for you to share ideas about all the topics explored during the Summit.

The Summit will culminate in a Rally & Walk for The Lives of Black Women planned and hosted by our current upper and middle school students. We invite current students, families, faculty, staff, and local alum to join us in this event; registration is required and all local guidelines for safety, including wearing masks, will be expected. Those members of our community who wish to support and represent other constituent groups, or cannot attend in person, are invited to walk with us in your own communities and share photos or videos of your walk with us.

In her poem, *Praise Song for the Day*, Elizabeth Alexander writes, "Praise song for struggle, praise song for the day. In today's sharp sparkle, this winter air, anything can be made, any sentence begun. On the brink, on the brim, on the cusp, praise song for walking forward in that light." Reconciling history and honoring truth can be difficult but there is something beautiful about the struggle. There is a freshness that comes with a moment like this, and in this season, something new can begin. We are on the brink of something powerful for our school. I look forward to walking ahead, hand in hand, with each of you.

Yours in partnership,

Camille Seals
Assistant Head of School for Academics and Inclusive Excellence