



July 30, 2020

To the Princeton Day School Community,

I write to you with a little over a week left in my Private School Leadership program at Columbia University. The last five weeks have been spent experiencing remote learning from 9am to 5pm along with 49 members of my cohort representing 16 states and six countries. As I imagine is true for many of you, this has been a summer like no other; I have never felt more scattered and distracted. I look forward to my program coming to an end and shifting gears to the necessary responsibility of directing our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives full-time. As someone who identifies as a Black male, I've been one of one, or one of few for most of my professional career at predominantly White institutions; everything about this work has been a lived experience for me. In September I will begin my eighth year as a member of the Princeton Day School community, and although it brings my 15 years as a classroom teacher to an end, I'm still very much of the teaching and learning mindset. I'm excited about partnering with you as we look to move Princeton Day School forward with a specific focus on DEI work.

Authentic cultural change takes time. That said, there are immediate institutional priorities that have been informed by our town halls, the Black@pds Instagram account, and the information shared during focus groups led by Dr. Artis of Olive Branch Educators. The focus will be on accountability, training and transparency.

It's important that we begin with accountability. We must acknowledge the ways in which we've perpetuated inequities that have marginalized and silenced members of our community. This is a necessary first step that we've been engaging in all summer. As a result, we're committing to change in both practice and policy.

One of the ways that we're holding ourselves accountable is by training members of the Board of Trustees, Leadership Team, faculty and staff in DEI work. The goal is to make DEI work an organic part of our school culture. Much like our mission statement,

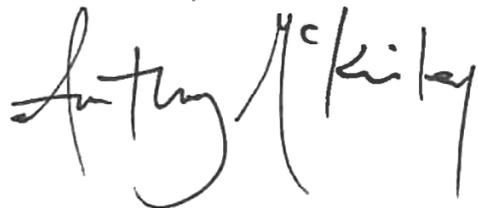
there must be evidence of diversity, equity and inclusion in every aspect of what we do.

Next is transparency. To repair and continue to build trust with neglected members of our community, we look to be as transparent as possible with our policies, procedures and programming, engendering systemic change. With seven task forces covering and reviewing every aspect of PDS, we will significantly enhance the experiences of all members of our community. American author bell hooks identifies the connection between educational institutions recognizing the entire individual and the work that gives us life as educators when she says, “As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another’s voices, in recognizing one another’s presence.” As a classroom community, we thrive when we can all show up as our full selves. Only then are we able to nurture the full mind, the full body and the full character of each student.

Our first charge as a community is understanding that the creation of a new position doesn’t result in change by itself. DEI practitioners have long existed, yet the issues around inclusion, equity and justice continue in schools all over the world. The kind of necessary change needed that was communicated to us via town halls, Instagram posts and focus groups will only take place if we work together. Our collective commitment to this work will sustain us when we tire, for there’s no doubt that the work is exhausting. Importantly, we will emphasize the need for endurance and supporting one another.

In this shared work, the work itself, rooted in our love for and commitment to our students and each other, will be the container that continues to bring us together. In order to be effective, we will need all levels all the time. The focus will be on the personal, the interpersonal and the systemic. In combining these efforts, we will ensure that our change is authentic. With your help, I look forward to addressing these issues that have gone on for far too long. Rather than reacting to a crisis, it’s important that we acknowledge our current situation as a constant, and take action accordingly. Here’s to change.

In Partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anthony McKiley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A' and 'M'.

Anthony McKinley