

GARRISON FOREST SCHOOL

300 GARRISON FOREST ROAD • OWINGS MILLS, MARYLAND 21117

Dear GFS Community,

As we prepare to come back together for the fall semester--first virtually and then in person in a few weeks--I would like to share updates about the work that the GFS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Advisory Board and others have been doing over the summer and what's to come in the weeks and year ahead. As recent events in Wisconsin show, these conversations continue to be a national priority, and this vital work is very much at the forefront of our minds.

DEI Vision Statement

Our DEI Advisory Board has been meeting throughout the summer to continue refining goals and initiatives. I encourage you to visit our website, [gfs.org/DEIAdvisoryBoard](https://www.gfs.org/DEIAdvisoryBoard), to stay up-to-date with our progress. First, we have established a vision statement for our approach to DEI work as a school:

At Garrison Forest School, the building and nurturing of an inclusive, antiracist campus is a vital component of our community and our Core Values. Our work to promote diversity, equity and inclusion is integral to every aspect of school life, and is essential to ensure that our campus is a place where all students feel welcomed, encouraged, supported and heard. As a key focus across our campus, diversity, equity and inclusion work at GFS examines our school-wide protocols, policies, practices and infrastructure with the goal of developing action plans that result in real and measurable progress.

This work is guided by three key pillars, which were identified as areas of focus based on feedback from our listening sessions and evaluation of where we are as a school:

- Community Life and Care
- Pedagogy and Curriculum
- Recruitment, Retention and Support

Over the summer, the DEI Advisory Board has built out specific initiatives within these key pillars. We have already begun implementing some of these, such as developing ongoing training and professional development, while others, like a full curriculum review, are larger goals that will take some time and careful evaluation to implement. Please visit our website, [gfs.org/DEIAdvisoryBoard](https://www.gfs.org/DEIAdvisoryBoard), to review all of our current specific action items and goals. We will continue to keep this site updated as we make progress and add more initiatives through our work.

Visit the GFS DEI Advisory Board webpage for updates

Listening Sessions Overview

Throughout July, GFS held 32 listening sessions for members of our community, including faculty and staff, Middle and Upper School students, parents and alumnae. The goals of these sessions were to hear directly from our entire community, guide the work of the DEI Advisory Board and the school as a whole going forward and give our community the opportunity to share their experiences. Faculty and staff and student sessions were led by

members of the DEI Advisory Board; for parent and alumnae sessions, we used professional, experienced facilitators who are licensed, practicing psychotherapists with experience working with young women and teens and a focus on racial justice and equality. We plan to continue engaging with these facilitators for training and additional listening sessions throughout the year.

Setting the Tone

To ensure we're setting the tone from the beginning of the school year, all faculty and staff will be participating in a DEI training session tomorrow, and students will engage in age-appropriate DEI work next week as part of their Orientation sessions. We intend for this to be a continual engagement, and these introductory sessions will set the stage for meaningful conversations as the year continues.

The Office of Community Life and Inclusion

Serving as co-chair of the DEI Advisory Board and overseeing DEI work is just one aspect of my role as the Director of Community Life and Inclusion. The Office of Community Life and Inclusion works to ensure that GFS meets its goal of supporting all students, faculty and staff in this community. In addition to DEI initiatives, my office also provides support for students and parents or families through individual meetings, affinity or identity-based group work and Parent Association sponsored events. My goal is to help all students feel welcomed at GFS, no matter their age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, race, economic background, ability, etc. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have specific questions or needs that I could help you with throughout the year.

I thank each of you for your support and patience as we continue to engage in this very important work and grow as a community. I look forward to providing regular updates throughout the year and working with all of you.

Warmly,



Carolyn Lewis
Director of Community Life and Inclusion
Co-Chair, GFS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Board



©2020 Garrison Forest School
300 Garrison Forest Road. Owings Mills, Maryland 21117
Ph: 410.363.1500 Fax: 410.363.8441

[Unsubscribe Link](#)