

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan

2020-2021



History & Genesis of the Current Plan

Since its inception, The Meadows School has valued a diverse population of students and faculty. From its founding in 1984, 10% of every tuition dollar taken in by the school was returned to the community in the form of need-based financial assistance. Moreover, the school's mission statement for years included its non-discrimination statement. That commitment to diversity and inclusion has been unwavering, as the school's more recent history illustrates:

2018-2019

The Board allocated funds for the Head of School to hire a Director of Counseling Services and a half-time School Counselor to examine campus climate and culture. Services included academic counseling for struggling students, meeting with individuals and families to address student concerns, teaching Social Emotional Learning lessons, and speaking to faculty about issues of multicultural competencies. The counselors began to revamp the advisory program in the Middle and Upper Schools, focusing on fostering a sense of belonging, equity, and inclusion for all students. Middle School Advisory lessons centered on healthy peer relations, social awareness, self-management, and providing language and skills to students to express their needs and concerns in a culturally sensitive way. Counselors headed up the accreditation self-study committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). During that process, counselors, teachers, board members, and parents analyzed the current strengths and areas of need in regards to DEI work at The Meadows School.

Also during this school year, the Board of Trustees added a section on diversity to the school's latest strategic plan, made global citizenship a pillar of the revised school mission statement, and named "Inclusion" as one of the school's core values.

2019-2020

The board approved funding to hire a second full-time counselor. The counseling department continued to work with faculty on educational practices that supported inclusion and equity. Steps included consulting with teachers on lessons and units to be more inclusive, establishing testing practices that adhered to the Americans with Disabilities Act and NAIS's best practices. Upper School Student Council sent a selection of student leaders to attend the NAIS People of Color Conference in Seattle, followed by faculty training and workshops and community circles for students. Further, the Upper School established or continued to grow affinity groups including the Multicultural Club, Latin Alliance (Alianza), Alliance for LGBT+ Youth, and the Jewish, Christian, and Asian American Culture Clubs. The final faculty in-service of the year was also to be dedicated to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work, but instead had to be devoted to training in distance learning as a result of the school closure due to the global coronavirus pandemic.

Also in March, the Board of Trustees examined a draft diversity plan that was meant to deliver on the "Diversity" section of the strategic plan. However, the board felt that the plan did not contain enough in the way of deliverables and did not hold the school, its administration, or the board accountable enough for its success. Moreover, the board expressed concerns that the plan made no mention of neurodiversity or learning differences. The school shutdown in response to the global coronavirus pandemic meant a return to this plan had to wait until the 2020-2021 school year.

History & Genesis of the Current Plan

2020-2021

During the summer of 2020, a group of concerned alumni and students collected a group of anonymous testimonials regarding the lived experiences of students at The Meadows School dealing with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. These testimonials, along with a letter demanding anti-racist action on the part of The Meadows School, were sent to the school's administrative team and many trustees. The Head of School opened a dialogue with this group of students and alumni, and on the basis of that series of conversations, put together a task force comprised of students, alumni, faculty, and parents to revise the board's plan that was paused in March. The work below is largely composed by that group.

In preparation for the 2020-2021 school year, the entire staff participated in a 5-day seminar in Nonviolent Communication (NVC), and the NVC practitioner was engaged for 5 weeks thereafter to meet with groups of students and teachers to discuss ways the school might improve dialogue with all members of the school community. To begin to further address The Meadows' improvement in the areas of DEI, a group of faculty members has volunteered to be part of the **JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) Group** to brainstorm avenues of positive change. This group will form the core of many of the working groups tasked with addressing the goals below.





Definitions & Guiding Principles

At The Meadows School, **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion/Interdependence** is an essential component in our mission for our students to love and respect higher learning, to passionately serve their communities, and to lead meaningful lives as citizens of a global society.

Research has shown that diversity improves educational outcomes across all learning and leadership abilities and is essential for the wellbeing of our entire community. We recognize the urgent nature of this work, the need to make immediate changes where necessary, and will create a long-term sustainable plan to ensure The Meadows School is a diverse, equitable, and inclusive institution moving forward.

Definitions

The following definitions will provide the underlying meaning behind the use of each word in future documentation:



Diversity

Means understanding that each individual is unique and recognizing our individual differences. This includes the dimensions and intersectionalities of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, abilities, learning differences, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies. It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. We commit to understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual.

Equity

Means putting systems in place to ensure that every person has an equal chance for success. We commit to working actively to challenge and respond to bias, harassment, and discrimination. We are committed to creating equitable opportunities for all persons. This requires understanding the unique challenges and barriers faced by individuals or by groups and providing additional supports to help them overcome those barriers. While this in itself may not ensure equal outcomes, we all should strive to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity for success. We believe this is only possible in an environment built on respect and dignity.

Inclusion/Interdependence

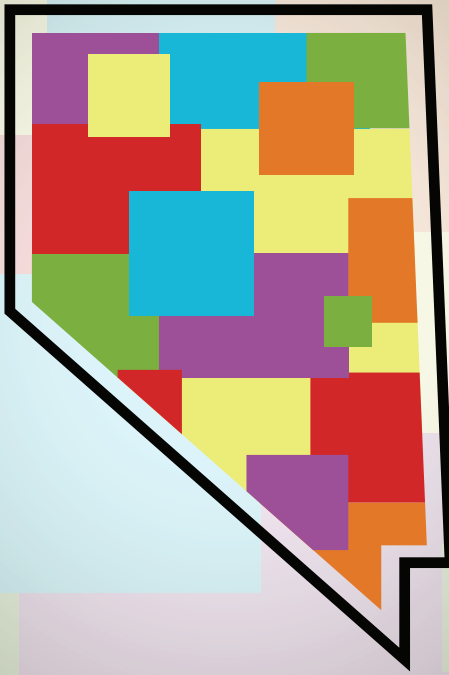
Is involvement and empowerment, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognized. An inclusive school promotes and sustains a sense of belonging; it values and practices respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds, and ways of living of its members. As a collective, we recognize the racial stereotypes and other biases that permeate individuals, systems, and practices. Together, we commit to working to dismantle racism and discrimination on all of these levels and to work toward creating a community of belonging for every person.

Guiding Principles

As The Meadows School moves to create actionable items and strategic planning, we will use the following guiding principles in our work to move the community forward:

- Remind one another to remain true to The Meadows' motto, "In Pursuit of Excellence," in order that a Meadows educational experience must be unequivocally inclusive;
- Work to create a welcoming, nurturing, inclusive environment that promotes interaction among all community members;
- Recognize each individual's limits to understanding the lived experiences of community members students and faculty of diverse backgrounds and seek to approach others' points of view with a sense of cultural humility;
- Bear in mind that this work is an ever-evolving process and not expect a sense of "arrival," so that we might avoid engaging in meaningless box-checking and quota-filling exercises;
- Reaffirm that a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus benefits every community member.





Vision

The Meadows School, in keeping with the strategic plan articulated by the Board of Trustees, in order to deliver on its mission to inspire students to lead meaningful lives as citizens of a global society, and to hold true to its core value of Inclusion, seeks to pursue the following six goals. The Head of School will build working groups to address these goals and the working groups will create actionable recommendations for the Meadows community to move the work forward. The Head of School will report the school's progress to the Board of Trustees on a semiannual basis, and to the community at large on an annual basis.

Goals

1. Examine and revise faculty recruitment and hiring procedures with the preliminary goal of having our highly-qualified faculty reflect the diversity of the Las Vegas community and the student body. The pursuit of this goal must bear in mind the fact that diversity in the faculty body need not be limited to the demographic makeup of the Las Vegas community.
2. Examine and revise student recruitment, enrollment management, and financial aid procedures with the preliminary goal of having the student population more closely reflect the diverse populations of the Las Vegas community, with an ultimate understanding that diversity is reflected in more than the number of minority students attending our school.
3. Continue developing practices and policies that serve to promote a culture of inclusion at The Meadows School in order to promote student well-being and retention. This work includes, but is not limited to revising handbooks, developing necessary student advocacy and support groups, developing mentorship opportunities, developing affinity groups and a forum for faculty, student, and family voices to be heard and amplified, and inviting thought leaders to campus to share in and facilitate conversations about how the school might best continue to promote such a culture.
4. Build a multiyear professional development plan around cultural competence and implicit bias so that all faculty, staff, and administration have the tools to create a more just, inclusive, and equitable environment, and to better appreciate the unique contributions of every student and colleague in the Meadows community.
5. Review the entire PreK-12 curriculum and make recommendations for improvements so that a rigorous and challenging Meadows education serves the needs of a diverse and inclusive community dedicated to the success of all learners. This will include adaptations and additions to content, course offerings, support structures, field trips, and other ancillary experiences, and the addition of research-supported competencies.
6. Review community outreach efforts in terms of how they might better provide students with exposure to the broad range of identities and backgrounds in our community and beyond. Further, look for ways in which community service, as a central tenet of our core value of "Character," can be employed to promote meaningful interactions with the larger Las Vegas community, and positively and authentically impact the lives of those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds.



THE MEADOWS SCHOOL
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