



EPISCOPAL COLLEGIATE SCHOOL

Dear Episcopal Collegiate School Community,

Last June, the Board of Trustees made clear that our core value as an Episcopal school is to develop in our students a respect for the dignity and value of all persons, a reverence for God, and a sense of moral responsibility. We promised to renew our commitment to providing a learning environment where every student can experience the strongest sense of belonging. We stated unequivocally that we must demonstrate through our words and our deeds what it means to be a member of a truly inclusive community, one that embraces differences and values diversity. Our resolve to fully live out these principles is unwavering.

In that spirit, we are writing to update you on the School's diversity and inclusion efforts. In early fall, our School partnered with [Dr. Derrick Gay](#), an internationally recognized advisor on diversity and inclusion work in independent schools, to help us build a more diverse and inclusive learning environment. Dr. Gay started his work with us in late October and has invested considerable time getting to know the Episcopal Collegiate community. He has conducted multiple workshops with the Board of Trustees, senior administrative team, and our faculty and staff. Although he has not yet completed his planned outreach, especially to students, parents, and alumni, Dr. Gay has met with the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, Parent Diversity Council, and small groups of alumni and students.

From these sessions and other conversations, Dr. Gay has helped us construct a roadmap for our work that is tailored to the Episcopal Collegiate community. In crafting this roadmap, Dr. Gay reminds us that diversity and inclusion work is a journey, one that is unique to an organization. He advised that our work should be purposeful and that our plans should be thoughtful. He emphasized that our outreach to community must be extensive and transparent in order to create lasting change and community ownership. Finally, he has helped us develop plans that are timely yet realistic, so that we accomplish the work that we set out to do.

With these important goals in mind, we are pleased to share with you our Diversity and Inclusion plans for the remainder of the school year. Our key milestones include completing Climate Assessment Surveys (Grade 6-12 students, faculty and staff, parents, and alumni), analyzing the results of the surveys, communicating a summary of those results to each constituent group, and developing a Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan that incorporates key survey findings and that will provide structure and accountability. (The survey instruments are ones that have been used by Dr. Gay in his work with more than 50 independent schools, have been developed following best practices, and are demonstrably valid and reliable. Student surveys are age-appropriate.)

Here is the current timeline for these milestones:

- Diversity and Inclusion Task Force to review surveys to determine if there are opportunities to include additional questions helpful to the Episcopal Collegiate community. (February)
- Interviews with Dr. Gay will be shared with all constituents, explaining his work with Episcopal and the role of the Climate Assessment Surveys. (February)
- Dr. Gay to complete initial outreach to and introductory survey workshops with each constituent group. (February and March)
- Faculty and Staff and Grade 6-12 students complete surveys. (Before March 19)
- Parents and Alumni complete survey. (April 2)
- Survey results analyzed. (April 16)
- Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan with Action Plans developed. (May 10)
- Survey results and Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan communicated to the community. (May 17)

The Board of Trustees' next regularly scheduled meeting is on February 8. At that meeting, Board members will receive a full report on our Diversity and Inclusion efforts to date. Our goal is to provide you with another progress report later in February. If you would like to learn more about our work, we encourage you to follow [this link to our website](#).

Listen to understand rather than listen to respond.

The mindset that has grounded our initial efforts is captured by the words, “Listen to understand rather than listen to respond.” As we continue this important work together, this insightful guidance remains especially pertinent. We look forward to building the next important chapter in the story of Episcopal Collegiate School.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Joan Strauss
Board President

Dr. Chris Jones
Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Co-Chair

Ms. Lizzie Phillips
Board of Trustees
Diversity and Inclusion Task Force Co-Chair

Mr. Steve Hickman
Interim Head of School