

GARRISON FOREST SCHOOL

300 GARRISON FOREST ROAD • OWINGS MILLS, MARYLAND 21117

Dear Parents and Families,

As we reach the end of our academic year, it's a time to reflect on the events and issues that have impacted our school community. While the past year-plus has been heavily focused on thriving through the many challenges and changes of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has also been a year of working to make our community more connected, more empathetic and more supportive through our diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts. May 25 marked one year since the killing of George Floyd; in addition, in the past few months, we have seen a national increase in attacks on Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) and Jewish individuals. This month, we celebrate our LGBTQIA+ community and are reminded of the struggles members of that community face to find belonging and inclusion. All of these events have had a profound impact on members of our community, and they provide a sobering reminder that our ongoing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging work is vital.

Last year around this time, in response to widespread calls to do better from all facets of our community, we created the GFS DEI Advisory Board, composed of faculty and staff members from across campus, as well as representatives from our Board of Trustees. Soon after, the Board of Trustees created a DEI Committee as well. These groups work to identify areas that need improvement or special focus and to hold the school accountable for making progress in these areas. At each step, schoolwide DEI work is grounded in our [Core Values, our Statement of Respect](#) and our desire to create a campus environment that fosters belonging, inclusion and empathy.

From the outset, we pledged transparency around the work that was happening. To provide you with an overview of how this work has progressed throughout the year, a few of the main initiatives and programs we have instituted this year include:

- Clarifying and structuring our DEI work by creating a vision statement and organizing goals into three main pillars—Community Life and Care, Pedagogy and Curriculum and Recruitment, Retention and Support.
- Engaging in regular school-wide and age-appropriate workshops with outside facilitators for all students as well as faculty and staff. The goal of these workshops was to create a common language and investigate topics of identity, empathy, belonging, civil discourse and community connections.
- Amplifying student voices through the creation of student DEI advisory boards in the Middle and Upper School, which includes leaders from all student alliance groups. In addition, a student curriculum committee was formed in the Upper School to invite students to provide feedback and insight.
- Providing more spaces for students to gather, process and connect, both during difficult events and in calmer times.
- Creating and supporting more opportunities for parent and alumnae connection. We were proud to welcome the Black Alumnae Association, as well as host several virtual connection events for parents and alumnae. In addition, in response to feedback, we were excited to welcome more parents than ever to our Parent Association meetings and the Community Life and Inclusion Committee of the Parent Association.

- Actively working to recruit and support a diverse faculty and staff.

This is a brief overview of our initiatives. We encourage you to visit [this page](#) for more in-depth information about these and other initiatives and programs we have instituted in our campus and in our community over the past year, as well as some that are in the works. Sharing this information is not to pat ourselves on the back; we fully understand that much of this work was long overdue and that, always, there is more to be done. Rather, the goal of this update is to offer transparency into our process and assurance that the work continues. Our goal is to be thoughtful, strategic and inclusive to ensure any efforts we are undertaking are sustainable and helpful to our entire community.

We thank you for your support and partnership as we continue working to make Garrison Forest School the supportive, inclusive community we all want it to be, for all students and community members.

Best wishes,



Chris Hughes
Head of School



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