

# WESTRIDGE SCHOOL

# Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism

## UPDATE

November 10, 2020



Dear Members of the Westridge Community,

As the national discussion of racial injustice and systemic racism arose this summer, Westridge was called upon by its alumnae to acknowledge racism in our school and make urgent change. We acknowledge racism is present, regret the pain that it has caused, and are answering this call.

That change will take self-examination, accountability, and community wide engagement, and we thank the many members of our community who have lent their voice to calls for change, offered their support, and asked for anti-racist educational opportunities.

An important part of accountability and community engagement will be transparency and communication, and we start with this first formal update on work started or planned over the summer. We are developing a comprehensive diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) plan that will guide the long-term implementation of the DEI portion of our strategic plan, as well as expand upon it based on discussions with Black and African American alumnae, students and parents, and faculty and staff. The plan will be ready for our community after the beginning of the year. In the meantime, a great deal of work is underway as you will read in the following pages.

Significant institutional change is not easy or fast, but we are ready and committed for the long term. We have made progress in DEI in recent years, have resources to deepen and expand our work through our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, and now, with the reckoning urged by Black and African American alumnae and families, and other members of our community, we understand the urgency of this work and the potential toll of stasis.

We will provide regular progress reports through school newsletters and dedicated communications. We look forward to working with all of you as we strive to make Westridge an anti-racist institution and an equitable, inclusive home for all students where they may engage deeply in learning and thrive as individuals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth J. McGregor".

**Elizabeth J. McGregor**  
*Head of School*

# FOUNDATION FOR

# DEI & Anti-Racist Work

 Denotes new program

## **OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

This important component of our strategic plan is being formed this month to provide comprehensive and systemic focus on DEI and anti-racist priorities as well as accountability for progress. The committee will consist of students, parents, faculty & staff, trustees, alumnae, and independent community members and will report to the head of school and board chair.

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## **FACULTY & STAFF DEI TASK FORCE**

The school's long-standing Diversity & Unity Committee became a DEI task force two years ago for strategic planning. This year the task force will track initiatives happening in the many areas of the school, help identify elements of the student experience that need critical review, and develop student assemblies, parent education, and faculty/staff professional development opportunities.

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## **DEANS OF STUDENT VOICES**

A third dean of student voices position (roles held by faculty in addition to their teaching responsibilities) has been added to lead the expansion of our affinity group program into the Lower and Middle Schools. The existing co-deans of student voices work with Upper School student affinity groups.

## **PART-TIME COUNSELOR**

The school is in the process of recruiting for a new counselor who has experience working with underrepresented populations as well as training in DEI work to join our student support team. We hope to fill the position before the end of the calendar year.

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## **DIRECTOR OF EQUITY**

Westridge will begin the search for a director of equity, a senior administrative level position reporting to the head of school, later this month. The expected start date is Spring/Summer 2021.

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## **DIRECTOR OF TEACHING & LEARNING**

The school will restart the search for a director of teaching and learning that had to be paused last spring. A significant focus of this new role will be coaching and mentoring our faculty through curricular changes and pedagogical skills, ensuring DEI and SEL (social emotional learning) are at the heart of our academic program.

## **FOUNDATION FOR**

# DEI & Anti-Racist Work

### **WESTRIDGE LEADERSHIP TEAM**

Because this work touches every part of our school, the entire management team is actively involved. Each member of the school administrative team, including the head of school, must have DEI goals in their annual goals and review process.

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### **DEI CO-CHAIRS ON THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The DEI chair position was instituted in 2018 to ensure that DEI goals, priorities, and initiatives are an explicit aspect of the work of the board. The efforts of the chair were instrumental in the development of our transgender student policy and ensuring greater representation of people of color on the board. This year, we have two co-chairs whose focus has extended to include the formation of and participation in the DEI Oversight Committee, and board education and training on DEI and anti-racism. At the November Board Retreat they began work with committee chairs to review policies and procedures ensuring any bias or systemic racism is addressed.



### **ANTI-RACIST AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES**

This summer the school expanded its anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies to explicitly address racist behaviors including hate, bias, racism, bigotry, and microaggressions. A new policy that specifically addresses the use of the N-word and other slurs and racial epithets is in final review and will be published in November. These policies articulate a safe reporting process including non-retaliation or recrimination clauses. Evaluation of the processes and their implementation will be part of the work of the new DEI Oversight Committee.

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### **STUDENT VOICES STUDENT LEADERSHIP GROUP**

(see Anti-Racist Education & Programming)

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### **DEI CONSULTANTS**

Westridge works with a number of consultants on different aspects of its DEI work. The school began an ongoing engagement with Elizabeth Denevi and Randolph Carter of East ED in 2019 to provide faculty & staff training and assist us in assessing our needs and priorities in the areas of DEI. Since the summer Ian Tatum, a restorative practices facilitator in schools, has been working with faculty, staff, and Westridge students. We have also used consultants to guide our curriculum reviews and will be starting a new curriculum project later this year.

# Curriculum & Program



## LOWER SCHOOL COUNCIL

Lower & Middle School Director Dr. Zanita Kelly integrated racial identity development and anti-racist education into the Lower School Council program this fall.



## MIDDLE & UPPER SCHOOL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Human development in grades 7-10 is now taught from an anti-racist framework. The 8th grade class includes a 5-week anti-racism course, 9th grade focuses on identity development including racial identity, and HD 10 focuses on three main points: relationship building, conflict resolution, and methods of communication as they relate to interpersonal dynamics and the cultivation of applied anti-racist values.

## CURRICULUM AUDIT

Last school year Westridge worked with a DEI consultant to launch an audit within Lower and Middle School to look for bias and lack of diverse voices and perspective. Department chairs took the lead working with their individual departments schoolwide. This work will continue, and we will contract with an expert in anti-racism education who will guide our ongoing curriculum audit.



## DATA ANALYSIS

An essential component of understanding how bias and racism impact our students and program is gathering and analyzing student and school data. The school is in the process of gathering multiple years worth of student information such as grades, course schedules/trajectories, standardized test scores, attendance records, discipline records, and student support needs among other data, and has employed the services of an outside consultant who specializes in this type of institutional data analysis.



## REVIEW OF TRADITIONS AND CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

The school's DEI Task Force will lead a review of traditions and co-curricular programs to ensure that programs are equitable and inclusive. In a first such move, this fall the school announced that, going forward, the school will provide class rings to each 11th grade student at no cost. This will ensure all students can participate in this long-standing school tradition and ceremonial rite of passage without financial barriers.

## ANTI-RACIST

# Education & Programming/Students



### STUDENT ASSEMBLIES

While in the past assemblies related to DEI have been led largely by student affinity group leaders, this year we are adding a series of DEI/anti-racism assemblies led by faculty, administrators, and outside experts. In October, each division took part in an assembly on the topic of microaggressions.

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### STUDENT VOICES STUDENT LEADERSHIP GROUP

Student Voices is an Upper School student leadership group comprising student heads of affinity groups and students who attend the Student Diversity Leadership Conference. They conceive of and lead an annual series of assemblies on topics such as Black History Month, socio-economic status at Westridge, and gender identity. Two years ago, an elective course was developed around this program to give students more dedicated time for their work. There also is a Middle School Student Voices group focused on assemblies and cultural conversations.



### LOWER & MIDDLE SCHOOL AFFINITY GROUPS

Each year Upper School students form affinity groups based on their needs and interests. This year, there are 20 groups ranging from Black Student Union, Latinx, Chinese, and Christian affinities, Students of Socio-economic Disadvantage, and LGBTQ+ (Skittles). Each group has a faculty advisor. In 2021, affinity groups will expand to the Middle and Lower divisions.

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### STUDENT DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE & YOUTH ACTION PROJECT

Each year the school sends six students to the national Student Diversity Leadership Conference (hosted by the National Association of Independent Schools) and six students to the Youth Action Project, a conference focused on white privilege. These students return to campus as Student Voices leaders and peer educators on these topics. In 2019 the school began to cover the expenses of conference attendance so that cost is not a barrier to student participation.

## ANTI-RACIST

# Education & Programming/ Faculty & Staff



### LEADERSHIP TRAINING

This summer, a team of administrators participated in training with an outside facilitator focused on identifying “racial equity detours” that may be happening at Westridge, skill-building needed in school leadership, and next steps for the school.



### FACULTY & STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Though the school has hosted faculty & staff DEI trainings for many years, beginning this summer training accelerated and shifted to anti-bias/anti-racism and equity issues. Summer and fall work includes:

- Anti-bias professional development and reading of *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* by Beverly Daniel Tatum.
- Summer 2020 Faculty/Staff Reading Circle: *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo.

- October 19 In-Service Day focused on racial equity, equity literacy, and racial identity.
- Westridge DEI Working Sessions, a regular series of meetings focused on DEI conversations.



### ANTI-RACIST WORKING GROUP

A faculty and staff group formed this year of people interested in continuing personal growth in identity development and anti-racism while supporting colleagues in this work.

### PEOPLE OF COLOR AND WHITE PRIVILEGE CONFERENCES

Each year Westridge sends 5-6 faculty and staff members to the People of Color Conference, which is the largest and most renowned DEI conference in the U.S. for independent school educators. It also sends adult delegates to the White Privilege Conference. Students, faculty and staff, and parents are also involved in the work of SoCal People of Color in Independent Schools (SoCal POCIS).

## ANTI-RACIST

# Education & Programming/ Parents & Alumnae



### LISTENING SESSIONS

In June and July, the school held listening sessions with Black and African American alumnae, students, parents, and faculty and staff to gain insight into their experiences and the work needed to make Westridge safe and equitable for Black and African American students. This fall we held similar meetings for Latinx and Asian American alumnae.

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### ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION SESSIONS FOR CURRENT FAMILIES AND ALUMNAE

When the conversation of racial injustice erupted nationally and within our community, many parents asked for resources for anti-racist education for themselves and their children. The school enlisted its consultants from East Ed to host anti-racist education sessions for Lower School families, Middle & Upper School families, and alumnae.

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### ALL-SCHOOL READ

This summer all current parents were invited to read Beverly Daniel Tatum's *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* and join with parents and faculty and

staff for a three-part series of book discussions. The discussions were facilitated by Elizabeth Denevi and Randolph Carter of East Ed. Middle and high school students were invited to join the discussions as well.

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### SPEAKER & DISCUSSION SERIES

Based on the interests in this year's All-School Read, the school is developing an ongoing series of anti-racist parent education opportunities. We anticipate the series will include facilitated discussions on short readings and videos as well as speaker engagements.

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### STUDENTS AT WESTRIDGE OF AFRICAN HERITAGE GROUP (SWAHG)

Thanks to the dedication and commitment from a group of lower school parents, the Students at Westridge of African Heritage Group was formed in 2019 with the intention of bringing families together for activities, learning, and community. The school is working with SWAHG leadership to help formalize and institutionalize SWAHG so it has support and funding to grow and thrive for many years to come.

## **ANTI-RACIST**

# Education & Programming/Parents & Alumnae

### **WESTRIDGE PARENT ASSOCIATION (WPA) DEI ORGANIZATION**

For 10 years the WPA has included a Multi-cultural Parent Collaborative (MPC) with the goal of increasing awareness of and an appreciation for the cultural diversity present in our community. As the school looks anew at its work in equity and inclusion, the WPA is working with school administration to reconfigure MPC and its volunteer efforts to center on equity and anti-racist education and programming to better meet the educational needs of families and ensure a strong sense of belonging.

### **ALUMNAE BOARD**

Westridge expanded its alumnae board with a diverse group of new members this summer. The board is actively recruiting additional alumnae to serve as ambassadors to increase our outreach to fellow alumnae and connect with current student affinity groups. Ambassadors will serve as mentors and identify new opportunities for engagement and support. To date, the groups include Black and African American, Latinx, and Asian American alumnae, with more to come including a group for Multiracial alumnae.





# Community Diversity

## EXPANDING DIVERSITY OF STUDENT POPULATION

In recent years the school has expanded its work with community organizations working to increase access to and support for underrepresented populations in independent schools. Westridge is a founding member of the Independent School Alliance, and most recently, Private School Village and Private School Axis. Westridge has been a site host for the Alliance's information sessions, and for the past two years, Westridge has hosted the Southwest Regional A Better Chance Fair. In this virtual world where school interactions are limited, we have organized and participated in online information sessions for the Alliance, KIPP: SoCal Public Schools, and A Better Chance, and worked with Pasadena Rosebud Academy (a local K-8 charter school whose enrollment is predominantly Black/African American and Latinx students) to help organize a high school fair for their families.

Approximately 65% of the Westridge student body identifies as students of color with

- 6.2% identifying as Black/African American or multiracial Black/African American
- 13.9% identifying as Latinx or multiracial Latinx
- 30.4% identifying as Asian or Asian American.

Currently, our financial aid budget is approximately \$2.7 million being allocated to about 23% of our students.

## EXPANDING DIVERSITY AMONG FACULTY AND STAFF

We remain committed to ensuring that all of our students can see themselves reflected in our staff and faculty. We recruit at diversity hiring fairs and work with a firm that specializes in placing candidates of color in independent schools. In addition, last year the administrative team underwent anti-bias hiring training and all hiring managers will complete this before the end of this calendar year.

Going forward we will increase our efforts to recruit from sources we have not traditionally used. We also know that often the best candidates come from word of mouth (research has shown that most teachers and staff of color are not aware of opportunities in independent schools, and if they are, often assume that independent schools are not interested in hiring them due to historical precedents and underrepresentation). We hope our community will share available openings to their networks to help increase our visibility.

Stay up-to-date by visiting  
[www.westridge.org/DEI](http://www.westridge.org/DEI).

Reach out to us with questions  
at [advancement@westridge.org](mailto:advancement@westridge.org).