



Facing Forward

AN INTERIM REPORT ON THE PLAN FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION FOR PRINCETON DAY SCHOOL

Anthony McKinley, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and I are pleased to share the ***Facing Forward Progress Report***, a summary of a year's efforts of its seven working groups, the charges for which were outlined in the [6/28/20 letter](#) from the Head of School and Board of Trustees.

Encompassing all areas of school life, the *Facing Forward* Report sharpens our collective sense of the community as we find it today and the community we aspire to be as it clarifies and focuses the work awaiting us. Brave, clear, and thoughtful, it will guide our steps for many years to come.

Rich and full as is this document, it reflects the ambitious efforts of the last fifteen months: the Town Halls that began in June of 2020; participation with @BlackAtPDS Instagram, scores of meetings with parents, students, faculty and staff, and alumni; focused work on curriculum, practice, protocols, and processes in every division and department within the school; and the countless candid conversations that shaped and defined much of the last school year.

Although we have anticipated the completion of this document since the close of the school year, as is our school's habit, we could not wait to get started. And so we have. Our school-wide inquiry has already brought with it enhancements to the academic and co-curricular programs; hiring and retention processes; perspectives on school culture and standards of conduct; and the organization and operation of administrative offices. It has benefitted from broad participation from our alumni community through the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee of the Alumni Council. It has engaged the Board of Trustees through its Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Proud as we are of our school, we have gained a stronger sense of the opportunities and prospects that await our becoming the most equitable, fair, and just community we can be. We have embraced a particular recommendation from the report: selecting a school-wide theme to guide and shape our work and guide our conversations. For this school year, we have chosen a particularly powerful and resonant theme: *Belonging*.

The *Facing Forward* Report demands and deserves our attention in so many areas. To prioritize the many recommendations and advance this endeavor on many fronts, Anthony McKinley has assembled an Advisory Group to recommend to members of the Leadership Team and me the steps we will take now and those to which we will commit ourselves in near term. With this group and the membership of the Community Multicultural Development Team (CMDT), we will continue to expand and enhance educational opportunities for all members of our school community, as we draw on an array of resources—readings, speakers, affinity groups, class and division meetings, faculty and staff meetings, the Parents Association, Board of Trustees, and our alumni body—to deepen our understanding of the school community and our obligation to one another.

We want to thank and recognize the members of the working groups, faculty, staff, and parents, all of whom devoted themselves entirely to meeting the many goals set out in my letter of June 2020. Their success is both evident and extraordinary, and each of them has earned our praise and gratitude. So, too, have we been aided and supported by the wise, patient counsel of Dr. Diana Artis of Olive Branch Educators. Her perspective and experience proved essential to our work, and the deep ties she cultivated to our community have hastened our work. In her role as counsel to Anthony, CMDT, the Board of Trustees, the Advisory Group, and me, we will call upon her often in the coming year.

We know you will take time to review this important document. As was our habit last year, we will report back often on our progress toward these many goals and invite all members of our community to participate in that endeavor.



Paul Stellato
Head of School



Anthony McKinley
Director of Diversity,
Equity and Inclusion



Report of the seven working groups

I. TRAINING AND EDUCATION WORKING GROUP

MEMBERS

- Daniel Cohen, CMDT Lower School Representative, LS teacher; co-chair
- Caroline Lee, CMDT Chair, US teacher; co-chair
- Courtney Carr, US teacher
- Toni Dunlap, MS/US Computer Science
- Michael Friedman, US teacher
- Nick Perry, US teacher
- Casey Upson, LS Learning Resource Coordinator

CHARGE

- To review our current training, content/education, and practices around anti-racist and cultural competency education
- To develop a plan for the incorporation of anti-racism and cultural competency education for students and parents, faculty and staff
- To provide shared language and understanding of the responsibilities of membership in a diverse community
- To build and implement a year-long education and training program for faculty and staff, students and parents
- To consider the role the Community and Multicultural Development Team will play in these efforts
- To make recommendations on behalf of the task force

In the fall of 2021, the Training and Education Working Group took on the first charge to review our current training, content/education, and practices around anti-racist and cultural competency education. In doing so, we asked the following Essential Questions: *What is the current training, who administers it, what does it look like, and how effective is it? In what ways is our current system supporting a DEI culture through our training and education and in what ways might our system be perpetuating a culture of exclusion and bias through our training and education?*

PROCESS

Over the course of the winter and spring terms of 2020–2021, the Training and Education Working Group met to discuss and establish methodology, essential questions, data collection, findings, and recommendations. The group also met with the Academic Programming Task Force to ensure alignment of methodology and data collection.



In order to collect data from our faculty, the Training and Education Working Group surveyed the full faculty, interviewed key constituents from all three divisions, and partook in a literature review to better understand DEI professional development within independent schools.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Training and Education Working Group collected the data through narrative surveys and interviews. They then coded the data to determine patterns and themes. The data collection from the Training and Education Working Group reflected the following findings:

1. Our faculty defines our current Training and Education mostly as work with Dr. Artis. When the faculty were asked about the school's current DEI initiatives, most identified the after school department meetings with Dr. Diana Artis as their DEI training.
2. Our faculty is unclear about our school's DEI Mission, Goals, Measurements, and Accountability. The Working Group data collection also revealed a lack of transparency regarding what the school was hoping to accomplish in terms of *Facing Forward* and how its members were being held accountable to achieve these ends. A majority of faculty members raised questions about purpose/learning objectives, measurement, and tracking of progress/feedback.
3. Our faculty desires more in-house collaboration and strategies (articles, frameworks, practice, case studies, curriculum planning, etc.) The third finding reflected a desire to have more on-going professional development administered by in-house faculty members including, but not limited to, CMDT representatives. Many also registered needing more pedagogical tools, strategies, and frameworks to support the Self Work.

After reviewing the data and the findings, the Training and Education Working Group made the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION #1

- Reframe DEI Training and Education
- Clarify what Training and Education looks like in the service of shifting culture
- Clarify and work towards shifting the mindset in relation between "Self Work" and Culturally Competent "Educator Work"

RECOMMENDATION #2

- Create transparency around DEI mission, goals, and learning outcomes, e.g. shared/common language, frameworks that are published, available, and measured, use of Folio as a form of self study.



RECOMMENDATION #3

- Create an ongoing Teaching and Learning / Reflective Practice Professional Development Program led by CMDT through small faculty work groups/cohorts (ie Critical Friends, Affinity Groups, Reflective Practice, Lunch and Learns).

RECOMMENDATION #4

- Expand roles of CMDT to continue training with a focus on Department Chairs and Deans, as well as ongoing programmatic support across Departments and Divisions.

RECOMMENDATION #5

- Develop school wide, year-long, Division and Department themes (e.g. belonging, feedback) to build capacity for Cultural Competency in the classroom

RECOMMENDATION #6

- Shift “DEI Professional Development Work/Training ” to a “Community of Practice” to sustain the Work and address the other charges (to scale out); support of Affinity Groups

These recommendations align with the charges and sequence first proposed by the *Facing Forward* Plan including: to develop a plan for the incorporation of anti-racism and cultural competency education for faculty and staff; to provide shared language and understanding of the responsibilities of membership in a diverse community; to build and implement a year-long education and training program for faculty and staff; and to consider the role the Community Multicultural Development Team will play in these efforts.

ONGOING INQUIRIES

The Working Group’s work this year culminated in May of 2021 when they presented to the Leadership Team and the full faculty. Moving forward, the Working Group would like to explore the following questions in conjunction with the recommendations:

- How might we build upon the foundation set by Dr. Artis and the Work we’ve begun this year?
- How might we implement stronger connections / communication among divisions?
- How might we shift culture and perceptions of what DEI Training is and what might it look like in our context so that folx are motivated?
- How might we leverage the strengths we have within our current culture to promote DEI Work more authentically, e.g. Presenting resources (display websites) at staff meetings,
- How might we hold ourselves and faculty accountable in the service of teacher growth?
- How might we motivate faculty?
- How might we create appropriate “tracks” for teachers to learn and reflect?



II. ACADEMIC PROGRAM WORKING GROUP

MEMBERS

- Neetika Bhalla, MS teacher
- Emily Gallagher, LS teacher
- Sheila Goeke, MS Librarian and Head of Libraries, co-chair
- Karen Latham, 7–12 English Department Chair and US teacher
- Lauren Ledley, Director of Academic Technology, co-chair
- Jason Park, 5–12 Science Department Chair and MS/US teacher, co-chair
- Angharad Rebholz, MS teacher and 6th Grade Dean

CHARGE

As articulated in the *Facing Forward* Plan of June 2020 update, the formal charge for our Working Group was to conduct “a comprehensive review of the PreK–12 curriculum, to ensure that the program fully incorporates the experiences and contributions of Black and other underrepresented and marginalized communities. It will consider the academic program and, in particular: reading lists at all levels, grading policies, standardized testing, and course placement/prerequisites.”

PROCESS

Through regularly scheduled meetings, this Working Group began by exploring the tenets of Culturally Responsive Education, ultimately identifying the NYU Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard as a framework for evaluating representation and authenticity in our school’s curriculum. Although the charge of the Working Group encompassed the entire PK–12 academic program, we chose to initially narrow the focus of our inquiry to curriculum and reading lists in the humanities (specifically History, English, Humanities, Classical and Modern Languages, Performing Arts, and Libraries).

We prioritized the focus on humanities to address the feedback about book choices and historical narratives that emerged from summer 2020 PDS Town Hall meetings and the @blackatpds Instagram account. That said, we believe that a rigorous investigation of the Science, Math, and STEAM programs is critical to achieving equity and inclusion across the curriculum, so we recommend expanding our initial inquiry to include all departments in the coming school year. In addition to narrowing our committee’s focus, we also decided to conduct our interviews of teachers and academic leaders in conjunction with the Training and Education Working Group given how questions of curriculum creation often overlap with teaching competencies and professional development.



KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1

As part of our investigation, we interviewed 22 humanities teachers and academic leaders from across the school. Many faculty expressed a desire for support when it comes to ensuring that curriculum is culturally responsive, representative and anti-racist. It was clear that the desire to create curriculum that responds to the needs and identities of our community is there across the board, but not everyone feels equipped to do this work on their own. In some cases, curricular teams of teachers seem better able to critically examine curriculum for biases and gaps, but this depends highly on personnel composition and departmental culture.

Therefore, it is our recommendation that the School appoint DEI curriculum facilitators to work actively with teachers and departments in each division. The role we envision can be appended to our current CMDT representative structure, or it can exist as a separate position. What's most important is that these individuals have the needed space in their schedules, resources at their disposal, and empowerment to assist faculty in the creation of curriculum. The role would go beyond “checking the box” to deliver more than superficial coverage of the content. Rather, these facilitators would bring valuable cultural competency and DEI lenses to discussions about what we teach and how we teach it.

Many of the teachers we spoke to describe feeling defensive about their curricula. Critical examination tends to happen when we face criticism or controversy about our choices, putting us in a reactive posture. DEI curriculum facilitators could help us approach curriculum proactively so that we can better anticipate the impact of our lessons and syllabi.

RECOMMENDATION #2

The second recommendation of our Working Group is curriculum mapping. As we spoke to teachers across divisions it became clear that in order to meet the charge of our working group, the curriculum needs to be articulated in a way that is accessible—in written form—to members of the community. Many teachers expressed uncertainty about what was taught before and after their current classes, and they were uncertain about not only what was taught but how it was taught. While the method of curriculum mapping is yet to be determined, we recommend that it exist as a living document—a document that is updated regularly as the curriculum changes.

We recommend that there be departmental mission statements that articulate the mission, purpose, and overarching ideas, illuminating why curricular choices are made and how DEI goals are addressed through the program. This mission statement would help departments to better communicate their approaches to curriculum development and DEI proactively, which in turn will help the PDS community better understand the choices that are made.



This mapping will facilitate PK–12 curriculum coordination vertically across divisions but also within divisions and departments. In addition to tracking curriculum through a DEI lens, this will also enable academic programs such as Global Studies, Service Learning, Library Services, and other programs to better collaborate with teachers, ultimately impacting the learning experiences of all students in a holistic fashion.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Equipped with a curriculum map and with the assistance of a DEI curriculum facilitator, we now come to our third recommendation that will help our teachers build a more inclusive and just curriculum for our students. It is our belief as a Working Group that every teacher at PDS should utilize our existing professional development platform, FolioCollaborative, in order to develop and articulate specific DEI goals that relate to the teaching of each individual’s curriculum.

As part of this process, we recommend that faculty first examine what they teach through a framework like the NYU Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard, which will help each teacher reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their curriculum through a DEI lens. Next, a set of guiding questions built into the FolioCollaborative system can help teachers develop specific DEI goals that can be articulated and shared through the platform. For the sake of accountability, we believe that these Folio goals should also be accessible to various academic leaders, including division heads, department chairs and the DEI director. Finally, it was our conclusion that the entire process should be informed by DEI-related student feedback that can be facilitated by the existing Folio surveys administered annually to our current students in the middle and upper schools.

Furthermore, it is important for teachers to remember that a key element in thinking about a culturally responsive curriculum is the delicate balance that must exist between student choice and core instruction. While we do believe it best practice for students to be given the opportunity to select their own research topics for guided inquiry, we also believe that students should not be allowed to opt out of DEI core instruction.

ONGOING INQUIRIES

Though our investigation focused primarily on curriculum development in the humanities, we understand that there are many areas of the academic program that demand further inquiry related to DEI. For example, to ensure more equitable access to educational opportunities, it is important that our work include a thorough investigation of how our wide array of learning support systems meet the needs of our diverse learners. Additionally, we need to take time to consider how we grade and assess students, and how these practices and policies contribute to demographic gaps in academic achievement and impact our placement and tracking of students, particularly in Math, Science, and Classical and Modern Languages. Another area for continued investigation is standardized testing, and the way these particular assessments are utilized for evaluating academic ability and admissibility at various levels of schooling. Finally, we believe that we need to look closely at why certain demographics are underrepresented in the STEAM disciplines.



III. STUDENT LIFE WORKING GROUP

MEMBERS

- Amanda Briski, US teacher, Admission Associate, US Service Learning Representative
- Victor Cirilo, MS CMDT Representative, MS teacher, co-chair
- Seraphine Hamilton US teacher, co-chair
- Michael Kideckel, US teacher
- Jess Manners, US teacher
- Carol Olson, LS Technology Coordinator
- Maritoni Calon Shah, MD, Director of Health and Wellness, co-chair
- Cloey Talotta, MS Learning Specialist/Coordinator
- Tracy Young, LS teacher

CHARGE

In direct response to feedback received through multiple PDS Town Hall gatherings, and as part of the *Facing Forward* initiative, this group looked to the different non-academic activities that our Princeton Day students engaged in as part of their school experience. Our charge was two-fold:

1. To identify programs that constitute Student Life in each division of the School.
2. To critically evaluate those identified programs with regards to accessibility to individuals inclusivity and the feeling of belonging amongst participants, and equitable practices within the activities.

PROCESS

We asked our members to look at Student Life through an equity lens and ask ourselves, “Can everyone access what we offer and do folks feel like they belong?” Members worked tirelessly throughout the year collecting data through interviews and surveys in order to begin to meet our objectives. As a group, we employed surveys and had both formal interviews and informal conversations with the purpose of understanding how participants viewed their student life experiences.

This past year was unique and challenging for so many reasons. We are so grateful for all of those faculty and staff that could offer aspects of student life to enrich and enhance the academic experience at PDS during the pandemic. In some instances, cornerstones of student life could not be offered (e.g.: Lower School After School activities, Middle School competitive athletics), or were significantly altered to ensure safety (e.g.: Varsity Sports, Peer Group Program), or were transformed to a completely virtual offering (e.g.: Model United Nations, Mock Trial). Our Working Group observed and evaluated activities acknowledging that past experiences may not be reflected on what occurred this year, but still aware of concerns and challenges that were brought up previously. That said, our work in this area led our Working Group to identify these findings and make the following recommendations.



KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lower School Findings:

- School activities/Extracurricular Activities are encouraged and promote a sense of belonging to students.
- According to third and fourth graders, adults are regarded as positive role models.
- Students feel supported by both staff/faculty and their peers at school.
- Students learn how their actions make others feel and learn about how to be a good person.

RECOMMENDATION #1 (LOWER SCHOOL)

We need to further explore and evaluate current practices on equitable accessibility to extracurricular activities and in-school non-academic activities so that students and their families could participate in offerings if they are interested. (eg: sledding in the winter during recess, ice skating during PE).

Middle School Findings:

Based on current research and best practices, PDS supports the development of affinity group spaces for Middle School students. Recognizing the importance of ongoing identity development, we believe that affinity groups are an essential part of supporting, affirming and empowering all school community members.

Affinity groups are for students who identify as members of the group and speak about their experience from the “I” perspective. The purpose of an affinity group is to strengthen the community by increasing the ways a student can find connection, support and express their voice at PDS. The affinity groups at PDS begin with small groups of students who want to connect on specific areas of their experiences or identities.

MS AFFINITY GROUP LAUNCH 2020–2021:

- Students who participated in a voluntary survey let us know which affinities/identifiers/groups they would be most interested in attending and offered suggestions for possible groups. We leave it to each family and student to self-identify their racial, ethnic, cultural, and group identities.
- Middle school faculty members reviewed student feedback, selected which groups to offer, and determined which adults would facilitate each group. Faculty facilitators agreed upon norms and goals for each meeting.
- Groups met four times this year, beginning on April 21, 2021. We will solicit and review continuous feedback from students and faculty to inform our approach for the following academic year.



RECOMMENDATION #2 (MIDDLE SCHOOL)

The success of affinity group spaces demands an intentional approach. Given that students are at various stages of their identity awareness, it is essential to cultivate spaces for affirmation and belonging that challenge and affirm students but are mindful that every young person is in a different place in their identity development.

RECOMMENDATION #3 (MIDDLE SCHOOL)

When developing future student programming initiatives, we will work collaboratively and respectfully with the school community to identify critical issues and relevant perspectives, ideas and information. This would need to be a comprehensive, democratic and thoughtful process inclusive of input from within and outside the school community.

Upper School Findings:

STUDENTS

- Many of the students who attain leadership positions have similar characteristic traits (extroversion) and activities (athletics).
- Students in leadership positions often hold 3–5 leadership positions in the community by their senior year.
- Students find themselves not trying for a leadership position because they assume (or have preconceived notions) the system is set up in a way that will prevent them access.

FACULTY

- Many faculty members find they are working to rebrand the assumptions that students have based on past reputation—OR—faculty came into a position not knowing what their expectations are.

RECOMMENDATION #4 (UPPER SCHOOL–STUDENTS)

- Leadership Training and Monitoring: Provide leadership training for 6th–11th graders. Have a system of accountability and feedback for students in leadership positions.
- Capping Leadership Positions: Let's find a way to cap an individual's opportunities to provide more for others.
- Written and consistent protocol: Each program must create written protocol for how leadership is chosen.



RECOMMENDATION #5 (UPPER SCHOOL-FACULTY)

- Clear directives for faculty to set them up for success.
- Common Facilitator/Supervisor Training and Ongoing Support/debrief sessions during the year.

Again, acknowledging that this was a unique year for everyone, we appreciate that our work has gotten us this far. We know that we have more work to do and as Princeton Day School again adapts to current circumstances and climate it is our wish to continue what we have started. We would have liked to talk to other constituents of the PDS community, namely family members and alumni in order to better formulate both the past and current climate. We have more questions at this point, and we feel that further energy should be put forth in addressing the following for the PDS community:

- How can we implement anti-racist curriculum in our student life programs?
- How do we decide what are essential characteristics/skills/prerequisites as we choose leaders and craft curriculum?
- How do we create two-way feedback when we participate in these activities to ensure equitable experiences?

Finally, we feel strongly that the Student Life Experience is essential to the success of every Princeton Day School Student. We must make it everyone's responsibility that we meet each student where they are and provide them opportunities to engage in non-academic programming at each level and division.



IV. HIRING, RETENTION, ADVANCEMENT AND EVALUATION

MEMBERS

- Alana Allen, US teacher
- Beth Hatem, LS teacher, LS Service Learning Representative, co-chair
- Mia Manzulli, US teacher, 11th Grade Dean
- Amy Matlack, US Librarian, co-chair
- Stefanie Santangelo, US teacher, 9th Grade Dean

CHARGE

The team was charged with the review of hiring, orientation, retention, professional advancement and evaluation policies and programs, to increase and enhance the diversity of faculty, staff and leadership across the School and to make available resources sufficient to retain and support a diverse faculty community. After reviewing the charge, the group prioritized its focus on Hiring and Retention for the 2020–2021 school year.

PROCESS

Data was collected through interviews and surveys from members of the Leadership Team and faculty and staff members, including the Associate Head of School; Division Heads; Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Director of Human Resources; Department Chairs; and BIPOC faculty and staff. Additionally, the committee reviewed articles, reports and human resources policies to deepen understanding of DEI work within the scope of Hiring and Retention.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations address areas for growth, which were identified through the data collection process. The recommendations acknowledge the importance of consistency and transparency of PDS processes related to hiring as well as the need to further build an inclusive community in which BIPOC faculty and staff feel valued and supported.

RECOMMENDATION #1

PDS should explore these questions regarding hiring processes and practices:

- What can PDS do to make the process consistent across divisions and departments?
 - In open searches, PDS is very consistent with the initial process, from how and where positions are posted and who is involved in the initial screening of applicants. In the latest hiring cycle, the DEI Director interviewed every candidate as well. However, practices differ between departments and divisions, especially in closed searches, and there is a need for greater communication to reduce bias and ensure equity.



- How can PDS standardize interview questions?
 - Standardization and sharing of interview questions would help ensure that all important areas are covered, the candidate experience is not redundant, and questions are edited for potential bias.
- How can PDS revise candidate evaluation to reduce bias?
 - Candidates are evaluated at many points—initial applicant screening, formal interviews, informal conversations. For example, all community members who interview a candidate fill out an evaluation form. This form was identified as one area for improvement; the evaluation points can be more clear, evidence-based, and reflective of the school’s and departments’ true goals. The form could be position-specific, and the use of rubrics during interviews and demo lessons could mitigate evaluation bias.
- What can PDS do to ensure a consistent and meaningful exit interview process?
 - Exit interviews can provide an excellent opportunity to acknowledge growth opportunities for the school, but the committee found that there was not a universal understanding of our process or clarity on how the data is used or tracked. It is recommended that the school actively seek out these conversations with employees who are leaving. Centralizing the process to Human Resources would create consistency and allow for more accurate tracking of information. The school should also establish a process for reviewing exit interview data and creating action plans as necessary.

Our findings and second recommendation are focused on retention. These recommendations were composed after looking carefully at the data from our survey of BIPOC faculty and staff. We consolidated some of the data into several pie charts that captured important takeaways. It was eye opening to see the shift of our colleagues’ experiences from feeling quite valued among departments and teams to feeling less valued overall.

Through the entire survey process, we observed that many BIPOC faculty and staff do not feel a sense of belonging at PDS. Many do not feel that there are opportunities for growth at PDS and are likely to search for other job opportunities, or are here because they need a stable job, but not because they are passionate about being here. Of course, this is not a representation of everyone’s experience. There were colleagues who reported feeling a strong sense of belonging, but it was striking, and somewhat disappointing, to see that this feeling wasn’t more common.



RECOMMENDATION #2

PDS should explore these questions regarding faculty and staff retention practices:

- What can PDS do to foster a sense of belonging for BIPOC faculty and staff?
 - This might mean creating BIPOC affinity group time and space that is scheduled into the academic calendar, or even school day.
 - This exploration might result in a commitment to continued Professional Development around cultural competencies and DEI work for ALL colleagues. The goal of PD would be for the community to gain a larger understanding of the experience of BIPOC faculty/staff as well as to provide a shared language for discussing DEI topics.
- What can PDS do to make advancement opportunities more accessible and available?
 - This might mean considering term limits on certain positions and roles. We know advancement opportunities are limited at all schools but having term limits could widen the scope of opportunities.
- How can Department Chairs best support faculty and staff growth and advancement?
 - We know that many department chairs and leaders have fostered meaningful relationships with their colleagues, but through the interview and survey process, we observed that conversations and efforts around professional growth are inconsistent.
 - Perhaps every folio conversation includes a discussion around the question, “Where do you envision yourself in 3 years? Or 5 years?” and encourages growth as educators by pursuing PD and/or other roles.

ONGOING INQUIRIES

In addition to further exploring the Advancement and Evaluation aspects of the initial charge, there are continuing inquiries regarding both Hiring and Retention.

- How can we make professional development opportunities more accessible?
- How can we widen our networks so that we can increase the diversity of our candidate pools?
- How can we provide more support for department chairs?
- How can we reduce bias upon initial screenings of candidates and applications?



V. ADMISSION WORKING GROUP

MEMBERS

- Shonell Best, LS teacher, LS Admissions Committee, co-chair
- Teddy Brown, LS teacher, Assistant Director of Admissions, co-chair
- Darling Cerna, Assistant Director of College Counseling and US CMDT Representative, Give Something Back Coordinator, Latinx Student Union Faculty Advisor, co-chair
- Jeanne Crowell, Associate Director of Admission
- Samantha Dawson, Director of Counseling and Learning Specialists PK–12, US Learning Specialist
- Jack Madani, MS teacher, MS Admissions Committee
- Cindy Michalak, Associate Director of College Counseling
- Matt Trowbridge, MS teacher, Director of Squash, MS Admissions Committee
- Deva Watson, MS teacher

CHARGE

This past summer, when given our charge, it read:

A review of admission, financial aid and retention policies and programs, to build a diverse pool of candidates and allow enrollment to fully reflect the communities from which it is drawn. The working group will assess and make recommendations about admission practices, the uses and goals of financial aid, admissions outreach and the retention of current students and families of color.

Our charge essentially revolved around reviewing our policies and programs in place and identifying where we could make some gradual changes that would then lead to a more diverse pool of applicants. Our goal was to make recommendations that would touch upon our financial aid, admissions outreach and connections with families of color.

PROCESS

The chairs of this group met biweekly to plan and discuss the charge at hand. Through various meetings with Dr. Artis and Mr. McKinley, we came up with a game plan to get our group started on the work. As a task force, we had several meetings with Admission and Financial Aid Director Julie Cucchi, where we had a tremendously helpful overview of admissions and financial aid. Jeanne Crowell proved to be an essential member of the task force, as she would often answer questions in our meetings. Her insight was indispensable and incredibly valued. The admissions staff as a whole was completely receptive to our inquiries and needs, they collected data after our task force brainstormed what numbers we wanted to look at. After a few weeks of attempting to address the entire charge at hand, we decided collectively to focus on the admissions and financial aid piece.



KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Before we get to our recommendations, it's important to note that the Admission Office was able to populate some data from the 2021–2022 admission season for this work.

RACE AND ETHNICITY	APPLICANT POOL	ADMITTED	ENROLLED
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	1	1
Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander	179	83	45
Black or African American	60	31	22
Latino or Hispanic	29	15	7
Multi-Racial	46	26	11
Prefer Not to Respond	43	22	7
White	136	90	58

However you chose to view this data, the results are evident. We have a significant number of White and Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander students applying to our institution. Thus, our recommendations are focused on increasing our Black, Latino and Multi-racial applicant pools.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Our first recommendation is that race needs to be a factor that is openly and consistently discussed and talked about in the Admissions Committee process and when making decisions. Therefore, we need racial and ethnic groups to be equally represented on each admission committee. This stems from the facts that our admissions committee in each division does not reflect the diversity we'd like to see in our applicants. In our Lower School, three out of nine members are faculty of color. In the Middle School, three out of eight are faculty of color, and in the Upper School only two out of thirteen are faculty of color.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Our second recommendation is to create advertising in other languages—Spanish/Chinese (but not limited to these in any way)—and create print copies for open houses/information sessions. This is geared so that all families feel that all information is just as accessible to them as it is to other families.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Our third recommendation is that the Admission Office should work with Summer Programs to foster a program that supports and enhances readiness and academic/social emotional skills for our school. This comes from a need that was seen during the admissions season. A student who did well at their school we feared would not do well at PDS, due to the differences in our curriculum and what they were being exposed to at their school. To help us be able to extend our admission to students who are doing well at a school that does not have a curriculum as robust or diverse as ours, this idea was born. Someone's resources should not hinder them from coming here if they are still



finding success, and a program to help students develop skills or bridge the gap, we think, would be extremely beneficial to supporting new students.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Our fourth recommendation stems from the Sunshine Fund. This is a fund that is not too well known, but is in place to help students who are already on financial aid should they have any extra, unprecedented costs during the school year. In conversations, we found that not many are aware of this fund's existence. Our hope is that Admissions and our School would reimagine how our Sunshine Funds are publicized, who they are shared with, and strategize to make sure students who could benefit from this aid receive it.

RECOMMENDATION #5

Our fifth recommendation is that Admissions compare our standardized financial aid methodology (previously known as SSS) with those of colleges and universities across the country who offer the most generous need-based financial aid. The program we use determines the needs of our students and families, which is not always entirely accurate. This allows our institution to be very generous with its financial aid, which can be great throughout their time on the Great Road, but shocking when the time comes to receive financial aid from colleges. Perhaps by comparing methodologies to those of colleges and universities, we can enroll an even more socioeconomically diverse group.

RECOMMENDATION #6

Our sixth recommendation is to enlist parents of color and work with them on creative ways to network, conduct admissions outreach, and provide new family support. An example of this would be POCC, Parents of Color Coalition. Having this support system in place and being able to have families of color network with prospective families of color will provide families with an honest and pure impression of our institution.

ONGOING INQUIRIES

Due to the time restraints of this past academic year, we have several ongoing inquiries that we hope will continue and provide results that can guide us in the coming years. They are the following:

- Revisit our advertising options, perhaps look at what different newspapers are out there and which public areas we could advertise in.
- Admissions should look back and collect data from at least the past 5–7 years, as this was not collected through our databases, so that we can identify and analyze trends in our applicant pool and admitted students.
- Continuous outreach to local public schools that may not necessarily be on our radar, with a focus on students of color and what PDS can offer them that their school doesn't.



VI. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT WORKING GROUP

MEMBERS

- Ashleighann Young, LS Psychologist
- Michelle Hays Simonds, US teacher
- Katy Radice, MS teacher
- Elizabeth Monroe, US Dean of Students, US teacher
- Marjorie Gibson, LS teacher, Director of Service Learning
- Susan Ferguson, LS teacher
- Janet Dickson, MS Librarian

CHARGE

“A review of standards of conduct and behavioral policies, academic honor policies, judiciary and student handbooks, to see that all expectations are fair and applied equally; and to ensure that discriminatory conduct of any kind is not tolerated.”

PROCESS

Our Working Group first met to understand who we were as a group, to establish the norms for our conversation, and then to confirm a common vocabulary surrounding race, conduct, behavior, discipline and equity. Next, we conducted a literature review¹ regarding:

1. The historical and contemporary experiences of students of color (especially Black students) in independent schools;
2. The concept of *cultural humility* (an ongoing and individualized process of self-awareness, reflection and critique);
3. The practice of *cultural competence* (one’s ability to engage with those from different cultures); and
4. Current best practices in equitable discipline.

At the conclusion of our literature review, the group came to an understanding and agreement that “equitable discipline” is best viewed as “the policies and practices that are representative of, constructed by, and responsive to *all members of the PDS community* such that each has access to and can meaningfully participate in our high-quality learning experiences.”

We agree with current research indicating that *equitable discipline* reduces disparities in discipline outcomes regardless of an individual’s personal characteristics and/or cultural identities. Put more simply: Equitable discipline in real-time is a clearly articulated consistently applied set of expectations, processes, consequences and restorative practices. A recent article in *American School Board Journal* explains:



“Concern over disproportionality in education is of special importance when looking at how discipline is administered in schools. The emphasis in special education law and the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 on establishing multi-tiered supports is recognition that *what may be effective for some students may not be effective for all students*. When it comes to equity in discipline, teams at the school ... need efficient and effective practices that are likely to improve outcomes for each student group. For any education unit (school, district, region, state) to produce real change, three things are necessary. Always start with your values. From there, make sure you are measuring what you value. Then, go looking for the practices and procedures that have been demonstrated to be effective and fit your unique social, cultural and organizational contexts.”

After coming to a mutual understanding of equitable disciplinary assumptions and practices, we consulted Hanover Research’s *Strategies to Support Equitable School Discipline (2017)* that reviews best practices and offers a framework to support student discipline and behavioral outcomes through a DEI lens. Our team quickly realized that before we could evaluate the impact of PDS’ Standards of Conduct we first needed to understand to what extent policies and procedures were in place in each Division and who was responsible for their implementation. As a result, we consulted the US Department of Education’s *Action Steps for Equitable Discipline* model in the development of survey and interview tools for our PK–12 faculty and staff.

Our anonymous surveys were blind-administered in the months of January and February via Survey Monkey. In the Lower School, the survey participants included 4 academic teachers; 2 specials teachers and 1 Student Support faculty member. In the Middle School, the survey was sent to all Class Deans, 5 academic teachers and one member of the Student Support Staff. In the Upper School, the survey was sent to all 4 Class Deans, 2 leaders of co-curricular activities, 4 academic teachers, and 3 members of the Leadership Team representing specific interests in the Upper School.

In addition to surveys, our Working Group members conducted one-on-one interviews with PK–12 faculty in person and via Zoom. These interviews were not recorded to preserve anonymity, however notes were taken and scrubbed of any identifying information prior to sharing with other Working Group members. The same questions were employed both in the survey and the interviews. These interviews included the 8 Lower School faculty, 10 Middle School faculty and 4 Middle School Dean, 12 Upper Schools faculty and 4 Upper Schools Deans, all 3 School Counselors and all 3 Division Heads.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our first key finding relates to prevention and the creation of a positive school culture (the beliefs and behaviors, the relationships and attitudes, the written and unwritten rules that influence every aspect of how a school operates).



We found that there is no uniform faculty understanding across the divisions of a PDS ethos, or, the fundamental practices and values that distinguish our school. Only once we have a common understanding of the ethos informing our standards of conduct, behavioral policies, academic honor policies, judiciary and student handbooks, can we determine if they are equitable. Proactively teaching and modeling our values will encourage positive behaviors, reduce the number of infractions and hence reduce the need for discipline. If we do not define the principles and articulate the practices informing our Standards of Conduct, our system will not be understood and cannot be equitable.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Our first recommendation is therefore to assess student and family perceptions of school culture and climate. We recommend administering the *Center for Positive Behavioral Supports and Interventions School Climate Survey* or the *NAIS Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism* to collect data specifically from a DEI lens. These data will then be used to guide our next steps.

Training in Equitable Discipline: Our second key finding relates to equitable discipline, in other words, a disciplinary process in which expectations are clearly articulated and consequences as well as restorative practices are uniformly applied.

We learned from our coaches, staff, division heads, seasoned teachers and those who are new this year that there is a perception that everybody does discipline differently at PDS. We feel strongly that consistency is fundamental to equity.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Therefore, we recommend that PDS provide training to all faculty and staff on research-based best practices for discipline including:

- Positive Behavioral Interventions
- Tiered supports
- Restorative justice (particularly as an alternative to zero tolerance policies)
- Social-Emotional Learning
- Cultural Humility and Cultural Competency

Collaborative Engagement: Analysis of our survey data revealed that faculty, students and families have not been regularly consulted in the development of our standards of conduct (including corresponding policies and procedures).

To many of those surveyed and interviewed, there was little to no knowledge of the philosophy or frameworks that inform our standards of conduct. Many faculty are unfamiliar with the processes used to develop these standards. Furthermore, there was little agreement as to whether the existing standards are reflective of our values as a community.



RECOMMENDATION #3

In response to these findings, our Working Group posed the question:

How can we ensure policies and procedures that reflect a diverse community AND include a multitude of perspectives and experiences?

Recent research confirms when a school invites all community members to co-design policies and procedures, greater strides toward equity are made. Collaborative engagement also ensures transparency and accountability. Thus, we recommend that all faculty, students, and families be purposefully and regularly engaged in both the development of policies and procedures around Standards of Conduct and corresponding discipline policies. Ideally, the review, development, and/or revision of standards of conduct would take place in the late spring with an eye toward implementation in the fall. We propose that these opportunities occur at the Division level, engaging the various stakeholders of each Division in a manner that best suits their specific needs.

Equity and Continuous Improvement: At present, Princeton Day School does not formally collect or track student discipline data. There is no formalized policy or process for identifying disproportionalities, inequities and/or discriminatory practices in the application of discipline at PDS. Furthermore, we do not currently employ a formal process to reflect on lessons learned.

RECOMMENDATION #4

In response to these findings, our Working Group posed the question:

How do we know how to do better if we do not make time to collect data and self-assess?

Trust is the most essential element in building community relationships and improving student learning. The intentional practice of equity builds trust within schools. If PDS embeds trust in our school culture, we will enable powerful and honest conversations that help us all—faculty, students and families—grow and improve our community.

Our Working Group recommends two inter-related action items:

- A. Investigate transparent discipline data collection and analysis practices for each division; and
- B. Develop a process for the reporting of annual schoolwide discipline data and capturing feedback.



ONGOING INQUIRIES

It was clear throughout our year of investigation that PDS is a community of people who care deeply and want to respond directly to the needs of our Black students and families. Through our Group's work, we have identified three specific avenues for ongoing inquiry:

1. Articulate a clear process for development and review of disciplinary policies and procedures in each Division;
2. Identify a research-based system of disciplinary data collection (and analysis) that will enable us to recognize disproportionalities and provide steps to ensure equity, and

Determine culturally-responsive practices that reflect our community and support positive behavioral interventions across all 3 Divisions.



VII. PARENT AND FAMILY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

MEMBERS

- Edem Afemaku, US teacher
- Nancy DiFazio, P'18, '21, Parent Association Committee Chair
- Sejal Doshi, P'22 '25, 2020–2021 Parent Association President, co-chair
- Nicole Hughes, P'21, Grade Parent
- Sundaa Jones, P'24, Grade Parent, co-chair
- Edith Juarez, P'28, Grade Parent
- Joanne Liu, P'19, '22, 2021–2022 Parent Associate President Elect, co-chair
- Melanie Shaw, Director of Communications

CHARGE

The charge of this PDS parent and family-focused Working Group was to review the parent and family orientation and outreach, to “Welcome, Connect, and Support” Black families and other families of color. The Working Group will review the practices and goals of the Parents Association (PA), new parent orientation and ongoing engagement of families of color with the School.

PROCESS

The Working Group utilized four sources to review current practice and collect parent and community feedback. First, the Parent Association Governing Board conducted a focus group discussion to review the goals of the Parent Association and current practices and collect recommendations on how to actively engage families, especially Black families and families of color within the PDS community. Second, the Working Group reviewed available information from feedback/recommendation letters and emails that PDS received (e.g., letter from current Black families). Third, Dr. Artis shared the parent/family input from the PDS Town Hall meetings conducted last summer and the Book Club discussion meetings that she developed after the Town Hall meetings. The co-chairs of the Working Group also checked in regularly with Director of DEI Anthony McKinley for advisory purposes and to share perspectives on the Group’s developing work. Last but not the least, the Working Group members met regularly throughout the year for several rounds of discussion and collective idea generation based on our personal experiences, observations and interactions with other community members through our parent/family roles in the PDS community, with PDS faculty/staff perspectives from our two voluntary faculty/staff members.

The Working Group recommendations were developed based on the collective inputs from these four sources, with the goal of enhancing the personal and collective inclusion experience of each member in the PDS community through welcoming, connecting, and supporting Black families and other families of color in the PDS community.



KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1

Create a new PA-sponsored event, “New Parent Welcome and Orientation.” Currently new parents’ activities are primarily organized by the Admission Office. The activities include various social events, such as the ice cream social, new parents’ lemonade, new parents’ dinner. A new event “New Parent Welcome and Orientation” will be a division-specific, semi-formal onboarding program to provide a comprehensive overview of important things for new families to know, conducted by the division chair of the PA together with parent panelists. It would include parents’ experience-sharing, tips, must-not-miss activities/events, communication channels with School as well as how to get involved in the Parent Association and volunteer. We plan to launch this new event during the New Student Orientation prior to the start of school each summer.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Personalize the existing “Parent Partner Ambassadors” program. Personalize the Parent Partner Ambassadors program through a survey to new parents and ambassadors designed to identify new parents who are receptive to connect with a Parent Partner Ambassador, matching new parents with ambassadors who have common interests of their own or child(ren) with common interests, e.g., culture, language, religion, hobbies. The personalized match will elevate the new parent and ambassador partnership experiences.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Increase leadership presence of Black parents and parents of color in the Parent Association. To make our PA community more inclusive and diverse, one of the goals of the Parent Association this year is to increase the leadership presence of Black parents and parents of color in the PA, which includes PA Governing Board members and Committee chairs. We are happy to share that in the recent PA nomination cycle (January to April), 4 out of the 10 vacant Governing Board positions are filled by Black parents and 2 additional positions are filled by parents of color.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Engage more Black parents and parents of color in PA and other events. The PA will consider implementing some changes during the 2021–2022 school year to engage more Black parents and parents of color to participate in various PDS events and activities:

1. Proactively promote PA committees and PA events through PA meetings, PA sponsored events, division newsletter, grade parents communication, PA website and social media channels.
2. Attract more parents to join the Volunteer Fair.
3. Explore the possibility of inviting diversified parent speakers with different expertise.
4. Find innovative approaches to engage and inspire volunteers.
5. Acknowledge volunteers’ time, efforts, and their contributions in a timely manner.



RECOMMENDATION #5

Form parent interest groups within the PA. We will explore the opportunity to form parent interest groups within the PA. It could include affinity groups or cultural interest groups as well as special interest groups such as a Working Parents Group. We can connect with the existing parents' networks (built outside of school) such as the Chinese parents and Black family groups.

RECOMMENDATION #6

Increase parents' access to information and community events. We will also implement some specific actions with the goal of increasing parents' accessibility to volunteer opportunities, PA meetings and events. For example, to enrich the website and portal content about the PA; friendly PA meeting times to accommodate working parents and parents with young kids; IT tips that will help parents using PDS apps, tools, website, portal and social media.

ONGOING INQUIRIES

The Working Group believes these recommendations are steps towards helping all parents feel known, respected and connected, and creating an inclusive community with strong participation of diverse perspectives and identities. Many of these recommendations will be moved forward through communications from the Parents Associations about new events, volunteer opportunities and ways to engage. The Working Group believes these initial recommendations should be built on through further inquiry and evaluation of the PDS family community's needs and desires.

As our school community continues this important work, we'd appreciate your guidance, questions, and suggestions. You may share your thoughts by contacting:

Anthony McKinley, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: amckinley@pds.org

Caroline Lee, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Associate: clee@pds.org

Paul Stellato, Head of School: pstellato@pds.org

