

2020 2021



**CASCADES
ACADEMY**
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL PK-12

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY, &
INCLUSION
STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE
MAY 19, 2021**



ABOUT CASCADES ACADEMY'S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & ANTIRACISM

Since its founding in 2003, Cascades Academy has fostered an inclusive school culture which respects the unique experiences, beliefs, and contributions of each member of its community. This commitment has permeated all areas of the school, including school program, operations, and governance. **We believe this work is important because it provides students with the knowledge, skills, and tools to succeed in a diverse and changing world.**

In 2018, we deepened our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at Cascades Academy by developing a DEI Strategic Plan with input from faculty, staff, students, and the board.



2020-2021 DEI & ANTIRACISM GOALS:

- Provide a **safe community** for our students to have open, constructive, and civil conversations
- Embrace our responsibility as educators to provide our students with the **knowledge and skills to navigate our diverse and changing world** with grace and compassion
- Continue to **learn and grow as educators** and as a board, personally and professionally

Below is an update on the progress we have made on these goals during the 2020-2021 school year in the areas of **Curriculum**, **Professional Development**, and **Community Partnerships**.

CURRICULUM

A part of the Cascades Academy mission statement calls for us as a community to, “inspire socially responsible individuals ready for a diverse and changing world.” To be successful in this goal, educators are committed to teaching our students the importance of diverse life experiences and the importance of the impact of those experiences.

Students learn to identify injustice and develop tools to counteract it when they see it. Although these topics can be shared in a stand-alone class or activity, what makes them relevant is when they are deeply integrated into the classrooms and course curricula.

Below are a few of the themes that run throughout our work with students. This is by no means comprehensive, but rather aims to provide background on our teaching methods and approach to this work thus far.

Resource Review & Adjustment

Our educators frequently review their sources ensuring that a variety of perspectives and voices are represented. In doing this, there are times when biases, stereotypes, gender or racial imbalances are identified. Educators can then reexamine the resource and find an alternative that achieves the same goal without the negative impact. There are other times, however, when a resource might actually prove to be an excellent teaching tool around a DEI-related topic. The issue can result in a student-driven discussion that could lead to a greater understanding of the bias, stereotype, or discrimination.

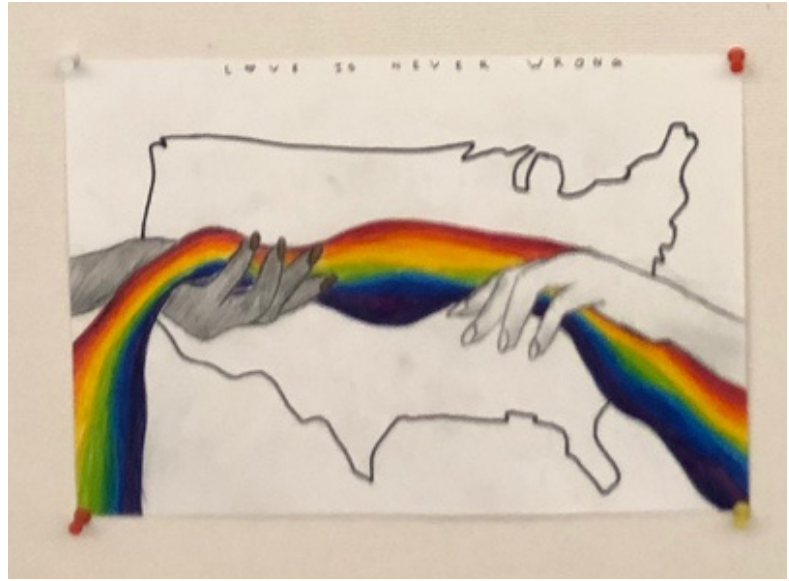


Curriculum Integration

Rather than approaching DEI as a stand-alone topic, our approach is to consider all areas of the curriculum through a DEI lens. Examples include:

- A recent middle school math and English interdisciplinary project evaluated the accessibility of our campus and then asked students to think of methods to provide access to all different mobilities.
- Our youngest students in the Lower School investigated their own family backgrounds and histories and shared those differences with one another.
- When learning about The Oregon Trail in fifth grade, teachers made adjustments to the variety of perspectives shared, including sources that would demonstrate what the experiences of marginalized groups were during this period of history. Specific examples included the impacts on indigenous people and the treatment of women and children during westward expansion.
- By watching the film *The Motorcycle Diaries*, upper school Spanish students looked at how inequality is influenced by colonization, political/social structures, and inequitable distribution of resources and how experiences inform and shape our identity and values. They explored essential questions such as: What causes inequality? Is inequality a problem we should try to solve?

Through studying diverse human experiences, students make connections to their own lives, and it is this realized commonality that builds understanding, empathy, and compassion.



**STUDENTS MAKE
CONNECTIONS TO
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Exploring Personal Identity

Through a variety of different modes, DEI topics are explored by students individually. From the earliest grades, students are asked to reflect on their personal history and identity and make connections with those around them as well as embrace and appreciate differences. The Advisory Program in the Middle School and Upper School provides a safe space for students to explore their own identity and share with peers their questions and insights. Working on personal identity provides the foundation needed for students to appreciate other identities in our community and beyond.

Open Inquiry

Just as important as introducing, sharing, and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion is fostering discussion around those topics. From a young age, students are encouraged to ask questions and share opinions. As the students progress through the grades, open inquiry is the foundation for learning content, but more importantly, it helps students make relevant connections to their lives. At the heart of this emphasis on DEI topics is the fostering of empathy and understanding as well as the self-confidence in knowing that each student can tackle injustice when they encounter it in their lives.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion at Cascades Academy

Cascades Academy seeks to create a safe, nurturing community where we honor our unique selves, embrace the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of others, and promote social responsibility both within the school and beyond.

We define diversity as any of the ways in which human beings recognize the broad range of human experience including but not limited to race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, socio-economic status, physical and neurodiversity, etc.



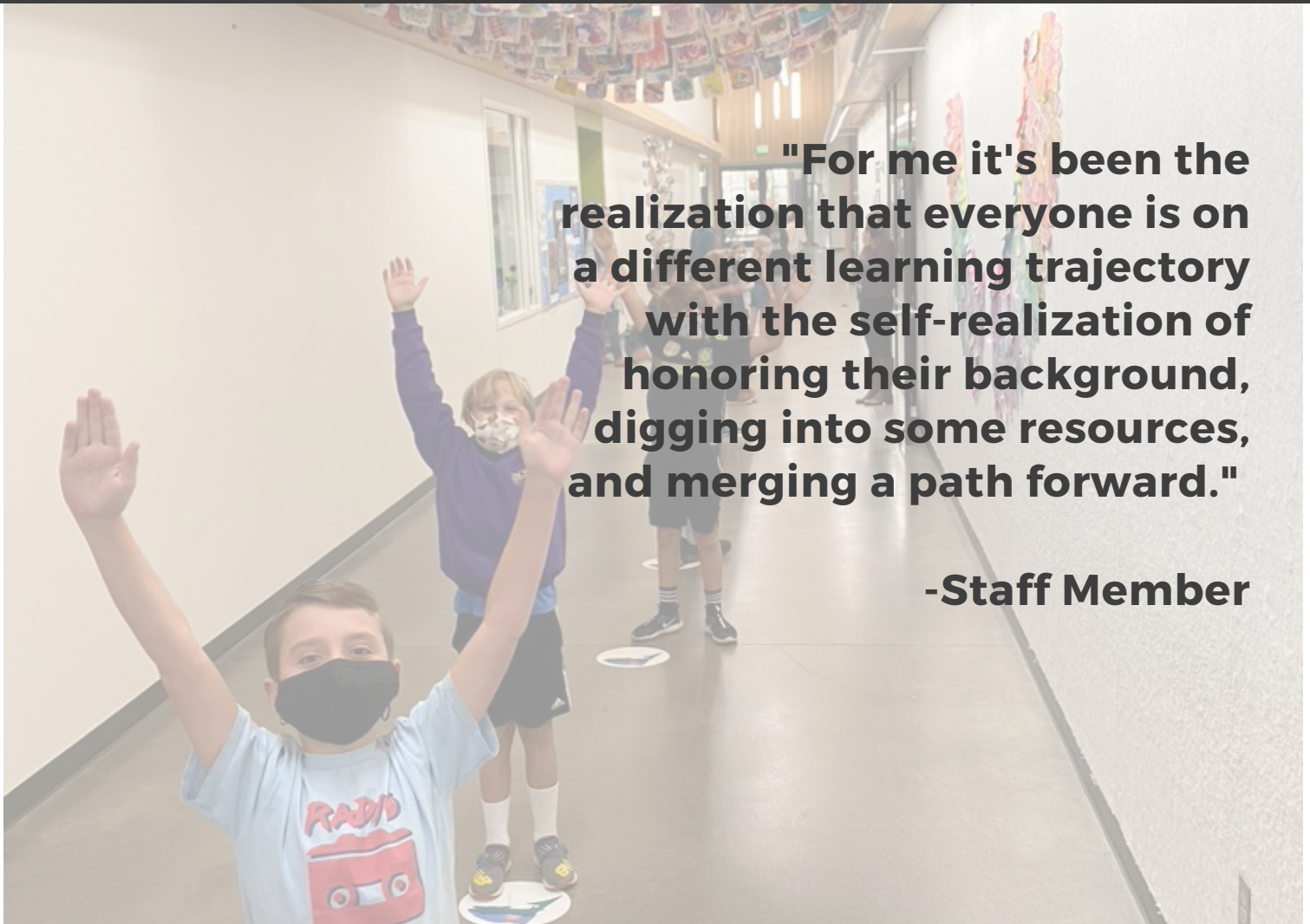
Learning for Justice: Social Justice Standards

For next school year, we are working to implement Learning for Justice's Social Justice Standards in the Lower School. This organization provides free resources for educators to supplement curriculum, inform practices, and create inclusive school communities where children and youth are respected, valued, and welcome participants.

Divided into four domains—identity, diversity, justice and action—their Social Justice Standards recognize that, in today's diverse classrooms, students need knowledge and skills related to both prejudice reduction and collective action. Together, these domains represent a continuum of engagement in anti-bias, multicultural, and social justice education.

Left: Lower school teachers meet during one of our monthly late start times to discuss how they will integrate the Social Justice Standards into their classrooms next year.

If you have specific questions about curriculum, please feel free to reach out to Katie Lamarre, Director of Curriculum and Faculty/Staff DEI Committee Chair.



"For me it's been the realization that everyone is on a different learning trajectory with the self-realization of honoring their background, digging into some resources, and merging a path forward."

-Staff Member

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At the core of teaching with a DEI lens is, in fact, learning. In order to nurture our students' growth, we know that we must continue to learn and grow by unpacking our own biases. Thanks to monthly late start days, our faculty and staff have spent more time this year than ever before diving deeply into their personal understanding of DEI as well as how to weave these critical themes into their courses and pedagogy. In addition, at the administrative level we have reevaluated our hiring, enrollment, and recruitment processes and have made adjustments working to provide greater access and equity throughout all ways that people join our community.

Finally, in addition to the Faculty/Staff DEI Committee formed in 2018, our Board of Trustees has established a DEI committee as well. The board has engaged a consultant to address our institutional understanding of these areas and the ways in which we can change our structure and practices to become more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. We are already beginning to see the impacts of these shifts and are energized to continue this work.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

One of our greatest assets in Central Oregon is our access to community partners who share our commitment to advancing DEI efforts in the region. Our focus has been on deepening a handful of key partnerships in a mutually beneficial way through work with the **Latino Community Association** (LCA), **Central Oregon Community College** (COCC), and **World MUSE**. Highlights of this work have included:

- Gaining a better understanding of how to attract and support Latinx families in our school community including offering our first bilingual Open House and deepening our understanding of how to recruit and retain candidates of color for employment opportunities
- Providing opportunities for community members to engage in virtual educational events around DEI by sponsoring COCC's Season of Nonviolence
- Amplifying local BILAPOC (Black, Indigineous, Latinx, Asian, People of Color) voices by sponsoring the annual MUSE conference featuring local leaders in DEI efforts
- Empowering students to make change by offering a Teen MUSE Club in the Upper School. Students involved in this club produced an online auction to benefit Ten Friends, an organization that supports education for women and girls in Nepal. They raised over \$4,000 which will support four girls to attend school in Nepal for a full year. These young leaders are truly our inspiration!



GRATITUDE FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We would like to thank Oscar Gonzalez, LCA's Empowerment Programs Manager, and Christy Walker, COCC's Director of Diversity & Inclusion, for serving on our board DEI Committee and offering their expertise and support to our efforts.

Finally, our free [Education Series](#) provided a platform for discussions about important topics related to social responsibility in our community such as food insecurity, homelessness, and sustainability. We are grateful to have more informal relationships with organizations working for social change in our community such as [Bethlehem Inn](#), [NeighborImpact](#), and [The Environmental Center](#), to name a few.





ONWARD

We recognize that there will always be more to do to ensure that our students are prepared to be socially responsible individuals ready for our diverse and changing world. As an educational institution it is our responsibility to model for our students how to navigate these critical topics with humility, deep reflection, and action. Thank you for your engagement with us in this journey. And, a special thanks to our Faculty/Staff and Board DEI Committee members for their work this year:

Faculty and Staff DEI Committee

Julie Amberg, *Head of School*
Barb Cartmell, *Director of Admission*
Caitlin Ciannella, *Director of Advancement*
Jessi Christiansen, *Lower School Head*
Joshua Klaus, *Upper School Head*
Katie Lamarre, *Director of Curriculum & College Counseling, Faculty/Staff DEI Committee Chair*
Jenae McCarroll, *Director of Auxiliary Programs*
Hailee Newman, *Upper School Spanish Teacher*

Board of Trustees DEI Committee

Julie Amberg, *Head of School*
Barb Cartmell, *Director of Admission*
Jennifer Delahunty, *Trustee & Board DEI Committee Chair*
Kim Garner, *Trustee*
Oscar Gonzalez, *Latino Community Association - Empowerment Programs Manager*
Sarah Goracke, *Trustee*
Tory Junkin, *Board Secretary*
Holly Wylam Klein, *Board Chair*
Katie Lamarre, *Director of Curriculum & College Counseling, Faculty/Staff DEI Committee Chair*
Christy Walker, *Central Oregon Community College - Director of Diversity and Inclusion*