



# Facing Forward

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

The 2021-2022 school year began with the hope that things would resemble the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year. We remain undeterred in pursuit of our goals in spite of the challenges we face. Fortunately, consistency from our students, unwavering support from our community, and herculean efforts from our faculty and staff resulted in few disruptions to our program. Princeton Day School has been clear in communicating its two top priorities: delivering an in-person educational experience that's consistent with who we say we are and addressing our issues related to diversity, equity and inclusion.

We're excited to provide you with an update of the Work that we've been doing since the fall. While there's still much to be done, the turbulent journey of authentic culture change requires that we count our wins along the way. Our hope is that you will consider the information in this update as achievements toward advancing our diversity, equity and inclusion efforts here at Princeton Day School.

**Paul Stellato**  
*Head of School*

**Anthony McKinley**  
*Director of Diversity,  
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## **An update on our work from this fall:**

### **PUBLIC-FACING STATEMENTS**

Princeton Day School has a long-standing tradition of denouncing all forms of hatred. The spring of 2021 brought about an opportunity to reflect on the turbulence in our school and across the nation; public-facing statements became a way for us to communicate our thoughts on current events. However, with schools, colleges, and universities across the country, Princeton Day School has grappled with questions about when — and under which circumstances — it should release such a statement. With those institutions, Princeton Day School has begun to move away from public-facing statements, even as it continues to seek answers to those questions. Instead, the school will focus on our most important work: to continue to create safe spaces in our classrooms, offices, and many public spaces.

### **NEW FACULTY AND STAFF WELCOME**

Wednesday, 8/25/21, Community Multicultural Development Team (CMDT) Chair Caroline Lee and Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Tony McKinley welcomed the newest members of our faculty and staff during New Faculty Orientation. The session consisted of a timeline of where we've been, the Work we're currently invested in, and who we're in the process of becoming. Additionally, we provided an introduction to our year-long theme of Belonging, while discussing definitions for diversity, equity and inclusion. True to PDS history, our time together was grounded in storytelling and story listening as we focused on the following questions: Who do you carry with you? What do you carry with you? What is your grounding space? When have you felt you belonged?

### **ALL SCHOOL FACULTY AND STAFF MEETING**

On Monday, 8/30/21, an Advisory Group consisting of Science Department Chair Jason Park, Middle School Division Head Renée Price, CMDT Chair Caroline Lee, and Director of DEI Tony McKinley provided an update on Facing Forward, Princeton Day School's strategic plan to address DEI issues. The update detailed the forming of the Advisory Board, the time spent prioritizing the recommendations of the several 2020-2021 Working Groups presented to the community the spring prior, categories of the recommendations, and the next steps of presenting to the Working Group Chairs and the Leadership Team.

Members of CMDT spent the second half of the meeting expanding on the shorter presentation given to new faculty and staff the day prior. Returning members of the community had their chance to discuss the definitions of commonly-used terms, unpack the theme of Belonging and share/listen to stories of Belonging from their colleagues.

## HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

On Thursday, 9/30/21, we welcomed Cristina Henríquez to our Upper School Gathering honoring Hispanic Heritage Month. Prompted by questions asked by members of our Latinx Student Union, Ms. Henríquez shared her perspective on writing and the importance of discovering who one is. She touched upon her journey to accept herself as a full and complete person, despite the many different parts of her identity. She highlighted the challenges and roadblocks throughout her journey, but emphasized that persevering and accepting failure is part of becoming stronger and better. The talk was engaging, poignant and amusing.

## DIWALI

Diwali was much anticipated this year. The combined efforts of students, faculty, staff and families were instrumental to bringing the events to the greater community. For the first time ever, Diwali was acknowledged as a day off from school so that families could celebrate this important holiday with each other. During school, Lower School assembly, Middle School Focus assembly and Upper School Gathering were dedicated not only to learning more about the Festival of Lights, but also to sharing stories, memories and impressions of the holiday.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

From Wednesday through Friday, 12/1-12/3/21, a contingency of 21 faculty members across all three divisions and five Upper School students attended the National Association of Independent School's People of Color Conference and Student Diversity Leadership Conference (SDLC). Although the conference was virtual, adults and students zoomed in from home in order to maintain the spirit of the conference. This year's theme was *Reckoning with Impacts, Rolling with Just Intent*.

On Wednesday afternoon, 2/9/22, a panel of five PDS students who attended SDLC, three of whom are lifers, shared their experiences with Lower School faculty members. Moderated by Lower School teacher and CMDT representative Daniel Cohen, our students shared their experiences at SDLC and PDS while focusing on the importance of identity and representation. The same students are scheduled to share their experiences at the upcoming March Middle School faculty meeting; Middle School teacher and CMDT representative Victor Cirilo will moderate the conversation.

## **MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY**

Throughout Lower School classrooms during the week of January 10th, conversations about Civil Rights, peaceful advocacy and racial equality were held in memory of Dr. King. On January 11th, we enjoyed a virtual LS Assembly led by our very own PreK students.

Please view our [MLK-themed assembly video!](#)

Middle School students took some time to examine high-definition images and quotes in a beautiful multimedia presentation representing Dr. King. He was portrayed in everyday settings, enjoying time with his family, relaxing, playing and laughing. Students were asked to do the following:

- Reflect on what you see. What details stand out?
- What do you think is going on? What makes you say that?
- What does this make you wonder? What broader questions do these images raise for you?

Responses were collected on Padlet so that we can learn from and with each other.

On Friday, 1/14/22, Assistant District Attorney Sophie Robart visited the Upper School to discuss King's legacy and her interpretation of fighting for justice today. The conversation was moderated by Director of DEI, Tony McKinley, as students and advisors populated the chat with questions and concerns. While reflecting on her time as a student at Middlesex School, Sophie Robart underlined the importance of Belonging and finding one person at school to make your time more enjoyable.

## **ALL SCHOOL FACULTY AND STAFF MEETING**

On Tuesday, 1/18/22, all faculty and staff met to hear the Facing Forward Advisory Group detail the next steps for involvement in the ongoing Work. Those interested in continuing volunteering to be a part of Working Groups on a smaller scale than last year will have the opportunity to do so in select areas.

CMDT spent the latter half of the meeting providing a "check in" with our call to action. The focus was "how have you been co-creating a sense of Belonging here at PDS?" Breakout rooms allowed for an opportunity to gather and share triumphs and impediments. The judgment-free environment also reminded folx that it's more than okay to begin co-creating a sense of Belonging tomorrow.

The meeting ended with a voluntary self-identification survey to be completed by faculty and staff. This same voluntary survey was offered to alumni and our current study body. We're excited to have self-provided feedback about who we are pertaining to race, ethnicity, gender and faith.

## LIVELY ARTS PROGRAM

On Monday, 1/24/22, Keenan Scott II, playwright of *Thoughts of a Colored Man*, visited Princeton Day School to engage with Middle and Upper School students. Scott addressed the entire Upper School during Gathering while students and advisors zoomed in from classrooms on campus. He then spent some time in Middle and Upper School classrooms before visiting the Black Student Union (Upper School) at the end of the day. Scott's visit centered on his creative process, the importance of identity, and his humble beginnings as a native New Yorker.

## INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Thursday, 1/27/22, was International Holocaust Day of Remembrance. CMDT created and distributed a newsletter to the faculty/staff with [framing](#) by our very own History teacher and Jewish Union affinity Group leader, Dave Freedholm. The Newsletter included resources and lesson plans for all three divisions.

## LUNAR NEW YEAR

On Tuesday, 2/1/22, many in our community who identify as Asian and Asian American celebrated Lunar New Year. This year was the first time in PDS history that we honored this culturally important holiday and joyous celebration with a day off. The best part about this achievement is that it was 100% student driven. Our community joined together to view a virtual celebration, hosted by the US student Chinese Club, CMDT and the Chinese Parents Association which aired as a YouTube premiere on Friday, 2/11/22 at 6pm. Students and families across the Lower, Middle and Upper School participated in the video, which featured music and dance performances, student art, cooking demonstrations, cultural explorations and reflections on the meaning and traditions of Lunar New Year.

## PHOTOGRAPHY IS ALSO AN ACT OF LOVE

On Thursday, 2/3/22, Anne Reid '72 Gallery at Princeton Day School presented *Photography is also an act of love*, an exhibition of artwork by Naima Green, Allen Frame and Zachary Lucero. The exhibition takes its title from the opening sentence of *Ghost Image* (2014) by Hervé Guibert, a book of sixty-three prose poems about photography that reference Guibert's observations and experiences as a gay artist relating to family, friendship, memory and desire. The three featured artists in this exhibition speak to very different geographically-based experiences of queerness and belonging. They center sensitivity in their work and move fluidly between mediums, both found and created, to speak to memory and to unpack histories of chosen and inherited family.

## QUESTIONS OR FEEDBACK?

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