

## WESTRIDGE SCHOOL

# Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

## Spring 2022 Update

I am pleased to present the first formal Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) report since I joined Westridge at the beginning of this school year. I feel fortunate to be part of a community with an acknowledged desire to be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive and where equity work moves beyond talk into action.

Westridge has done critical foundational work by putting in place resources and structures, such as student affinity groups, DEIJ vice chairs on the Board of Trustees, a Lower and Middle School curriculum audit, professional development, and parent education. We have built upon that foundation this year, holding grade-level meetings and assemblies for students and educational sessions with faculty, expanding our affinity group structure and efforts surrounding curriculum, and more.

As this work continued, my charge as the school's new, full-time director of equity was to meet with individuals and groups from across the school's constituencies to learn more about their experiences, assess how DEIJ is showing up naturally, and determine where we can grow as an institution. Systemic change takes three to five years, and this research and relationship building has been vital to helping chart the next steps strategically.

Listening and leaning into the stories and experiences shared with me by students, parents, faculty, and staff revealed to me that our community is ready to move these efforts into the next phase, which equity practitioners often refer to as "doing the work." Unfortunately, rarely is the time given to describe what "the work" is. For me, "the work" is the process of confronting the discomfort of becoming an agent of change in the fight against ignorance and fear, beginning with self.

Yes, DEIJ is indeed professional, institutional work, but it is also inescapably personal and private. As a community, creating space and establishing support for each of us to engage in the individual and private work of DEIJ must become a priority to be true advocates for our students. It is not always an easy or comfortable process, but it is necessary to help us work toward being the antiracist institution we aspire to become.

To this end, this year, we have worked to make spaces intellectually safe for questions to be asked and deeper learning to occur. As part of this, we have slowly introduced restorative practices to students, which provides a framework for how to improve interpersonal relationships and social connections within communities.

This year we also added "J" for Justice to our DEIJ acronym. Students expressed interest in having more opportunities to engage in activism socially. Adding the J for Justice expands conversations on this topic within the community. It dovetails nicely with our core values of integrity, respect, responsibility, and inclusion and elevates our equity efforts. Justice was already embedded in our behaviors and conversations in many ways—we simply gave it a name.

The last seven months have taught me a great deal about Westridge and how our personal lives intersect with school and work in myriad ways. I have gained a broader understanding of the power of vulnerability. While it felt risky, being vulnerable has deepened my capacity to connect with myself and others and strengthened my courage. Moreover, I believe leading with vulnerability is a strength in this approach, and it has led others to find their source of courage.

I celebrate our commitment to this work! It has the power to transform our culture and community in ways that will powerfully improve students' experiences and outcomes, and I am excited to engage in it alongside you.

Sincerely,



**Ian Tatum**  
*Director of Equity*

## FOUNDATION FOR

# DEIJ & Anti-Racist Work

*Since the summer of 2020 when Westridge embarked on a serious review of institutional culture and practices and committed to becoming an anti-racist institution, many foundational elements have been put in place. They range from forming student, parent, and employee groups and launching a multi-year curriculum and data review process to expanding support for students and funding for DEIJ and hiring trained, professional staff.*

*Our work to understand and expand diversity in all its forms, including racial, ethnic, socio-economic, neurological, and gender, and to create an equitable and inclusive environment to support all community members, is an ongoing process. This report provides a snapshot of recent work. To learn more about our foundational DEIJ efforts, please refer to prior updates at [www.Westridge.org/DEIJ](http://www.Westridge.org/DEIJ).*

### DEIJ TEAM DEVELOPMENT

The addition of Director of Equity Ian Tatum this year created the opportunity to formalize our core DEIJ team. Mr. Tatum has provided mentorship for Deans of Student Voices Amber Rodriguez '01 and Tamara Jaffe '08 and partnered with them to strengthen DEIJ efforts this year.

### PARENT SURVEY

In September the school conducted its first DEIJ parent survey. 70% of parents reported to be in the “Growth” or “Learning Zone” and 30% reported being in the “Fear or Unknown Zone.” Information from the survey is being used to develop plans and programming.



### ENDOWMENT FUND TO SUPPORT DEIJ AT WESTRIDGE

In October, a fundraising campaign was launched to honor Head of School Elizabeth J. McGregor upon her retirement in June of this school year. Proceeds from The Elizabeth J. McGregor Endowment Fund will support DEIJ programming in recognition of McGregor’s long-term commitment to these issues at Westridge and the institutions she served prior to joining our community. At publishing of this report, more than \$900,000 of the initial \$1 million goal had been raised.

### TRANSLATION CAPABILITIES

Capabilities for written and closed-caption translations of key parent communications into simplified and traditional Chinese have been expanded, which has been especially important for pandemic communications and online parent meetings. This allows parents to have more nuanced and immediate access to critical school information.

# Curriculum Review

## ADVANCED COURSES

A great deal of time was devoted this year to the development of the school's Advanced Courses program. Over the next three years, Westridge will replace AP courses with rigorous, innovative courses, developed by Westridge faculty and guided by the school's core value of inclusivity and vision of preparing students to lead lives of meaning, contribution, and impact. This change has many curricular benefits, including greatly expanding opportunities for a range of voices and perspectives to be represented in courses and for a broader range of learning styles to be supported. (For more information visit [www.Westridge.org/advancedcourses](http://www.Westridge.org/advancedcourses).)

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## ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

Academic leadership has continued its work with Dr. Kristi Woods '78 to examine the school's culture of teaching and learning to expand pedagogical practices to be more inclusive and provide equity of access and opportunity.



## MID-ATLANTIC EQUITY CONSORTIUM (MAEC) EQUITY AUDIT

In April, all faculty members took a version of the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium Equity Audit that had been tailored to be more relevant to our school and program. The audit examines policies, programs, and practices that directly or indirectly impact students or staff relative to their race, ethnicity, gender, national origin, color, disability, age, sexual orientation, sexual identity, religion, or other socio-culturally significant factors.



# Education & Programming/Students



## STUDENT LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Before school started in the fall, the DEIJ Team provided leadership training to Upper School affinity group leaders and students in other Upper School leadership groups. Topics included the roles and responsibilities of student leaders and how to balance leadership responsibilities with the school demands. In addition, a meeting was held in December with the Student Action Council on the topic of “Student Voice in the work of DEIJ.”

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## ASSEMBLIES & TALKS

- **September:** Hair Love
- **December:** LatinXellence with alumnae guest speaker Vanessa Delgado '95
- **January:** Historical Harmonies—Sounds of the Silence with guest speaker Kwame Young (in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.)
- **March:** Lunch Talk for Asian American and Black Student Union affinity groups with Bianca Mabute-Louie '08, recipient of the 2022 Westridge Young Alumnae Award
- **April:** Student Voices Collaboration with Allies of Disabled Students; and Lift Every Voice and Sing assembly and Literature Conference, a project of the Perspectives in Literature: Listening to Black Women classes.



## LUNCHEAS WITH MR. TATUM

This fall the first of optional, drop-in lunches with Mr. Tatum were held for Lower and Middle School students in separate sessions for each division. Students interested in getting to know Mr. Tatum, his work, and discussing DEIJ topics could join and share what they are curious about. After spring break the program expanded to the Upper School.



## AFFINITY & ALLIANCE GROUPS

- The Middle School JEDI Club (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) launched in the fall offering a space for open discussion about DEIJ topics and issues and experiences raised by club members. The DEIJ team helps students talk through issues, understand others' perspectives, and know what to do when they face challenging situations.
- An Affinity Group Fair held in March reintroduced affinity groups to the Middle School after several years without them. JEDI Club members discussed and selected the groups (Latinx, African American/Black, Asian American, and LGBTQIA Alliance). The first meetings took place in April.



## Education & Programming/Students

- In the Upper School, DEIJ staff is conducting a holistic review of the affinity group program to see how students can be better supported. In a first step, beginning next year all Upper School affinity group heads will take the Student Voices elective course to ensure all receive formal training and have time dedicated to the work of their affinity group.
- Two new Upper School affinities were formed this year: MENA (Middle Eastern & North African) and Christian. (While there have been Christian affinities in the past, because the groups are formed each year based on student interest, it has been dormant recently.)

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### **STUDENT DIVERSITY LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE (SDLC)**

Six students attended the Student Diversity Leadership Conference in December. Hosted by the National Association of Independent Schools, SDLC is an annual multiracial and multicultural event for Upper School student leaders that helps participants develop cross-cultural communication skills, design effective strategies for social justice practice through dialogue and the arts, and learn the foundations of allyship and networking principles.

### **REVIEW OF TRADITIONS/LUNAR NEW YEAR**

As part of ongoing work to improve equity and inclusion in school traditions and ensure they better respect our student populations, the Lunar New Year holiday was added to official school holidays beginning this February.



# Education & Programming/ Employees & Board

## PRESENTATIONS AND FORUMS

- Opening Days All Employee Professional Development: Collective Steps Toward Creating an Inclusive and Antiracist Community (August)
- DEIJ Overview for Board of Trustees (September)
- All Employee Meeting: DEIJ: What Are You Carrying? Unpacking Our Knapsacks (September)
- School Committee of Board of Trustees Meeting: DEIJ Reflections—Pathways to Understanding and Growth (January)
- All Employee MAEC Survey: In May, all employees will take the second portion of the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium Equity Audit, which focuses on school culture and climate.

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## POCC & WHITE PRIVILEGE CONFERENCE

Nine faculty and staff members attended POCC (the National Association of Independent School's annual People of Color Conference) and five people attended March's White Privilege Conference. Held online, the events provide opportunities to expand knowledge of diversity as well as to affirm personal identities and increase understanding of individual and group privilege.



## INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

At the end of March, Mr. Tatum and Lower & Middle School Director Zanita Kelly attended the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP). Among other programs, IIRP provides professional development to help educators expand restorative practices skills in order to:

- Create a positive learning environment and school culture
- Address social problems
- Respond when harm occurs
- Set high expectations while being supportive
- Provide direct feedback and ask questions that foster accountability

Relationship is a core principle of restorative practices and is central to building community.



# Education & Programming/ Parents & Alumnae

## **WESTRIDGE PARENT ASSOCIATION MEETING PRESENTATION: (SEPTEMBER)**

The main topic of the first WPA meeting of the year was DEIJ, centering on a presentation by Mr. Tatum entitled "DEIJ: Head, Heart, and Habit."



## **PARENTS OF STUDENTS WITH NEURODIVERSITY AFFINITY GROUP**

This group was formed in December to provide a space to connect, talk, and learn for parents who have students with different learning profiles. Meetings to date have featured Westridge learning support specialists Tami Millard and Susie Murdock and Tiffanie Hoang, educational therapist at the Center for Connection, talking about the process for receiving a learning profile and accommodations at Westridge.



## **WESTRIDGE ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURE AND HERITAGE GROUP (WAACH)**

Following last spring's listening sessions, a group of parent leaders has been in discussions with the school this year about what forms of programming and support they wish to see for Westridge families who identify as Asian, Pacific Islander, or South Asian Americans. In April, the Westridge Asian American Culture & Heritage Group was formed. They hosted an inaugural gathering, a family picnic and a parent education session focused on anti-Asian hate. In May, Dawn Lee Tu, an equity and social justice strategist and educator, will return to Westridge to meet with WAACH families. The discussion will focus on how parents can support students in conversations related to DEIJ and how parents can communicate their needs to the school.

## Education & Programming/Parents & Alumnae

### COMUNIDAD LATINX

This group, which was formed in the spring of 2021, has hosted several social events this year and in March hosted Navigating the College Experience, a conversation led by Latinx alumnae in which Latinx parents and students could share concerns, ask questions, and seek information unique to the Latinx college experience.

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

After several years of online activities, SWAHG families held an in-person get-together in February including athletics, community connection, a guided Black History Month STEM activity, and a SWAHG-themed paint project.

### ALUMNAE DEIJ COMMITTEE & ALUMNAE AFFINITY GROUPS

In their first year, these groups have focused on supporting current families during the college counseling process with language support and cultural conversations and providing speakers for Upper School affinity group meetings. These included four alumnae speakers and teaming with Comunidad Latinx and the faculty advisor of the student Latinx Affinity on the above mentioned Navigating the College Admission Experience event.

# Community Diversity

## EXPANDING DIVERSITY OF STUDENT POPULATION

- This year Westridge continued to strengthen and build relationships with partner access organizations and local charter schools serving underrepresented communities. In addition, the admission team expanded personalized engagement with local schools and organizations including the Boys & Girls Clubs of Pasadena and KIPP SoCal Public Schools in Los Angeles. These efforts, along with positive word of mouth from currently enrolled families, has contributed to the school's steady increase of Black/African American and Latinx representation in the student body over the past four years, most notably in Latinx representation.
- In the current 2021-2022 school year 69% of the Westridge student body identify as students of color with:
  - 7.2% identifying as Black/African American or multiracial Black/African American,
  - 15.8% identifying as Latinx or multiracial Latinx,
  - 33.3% identifying as Asian or Asian American.



The Westridge website can now be translated into more than 100 languages with a single click. In addition, specific informational web pages in Spanish and Simplified and Traditional Chinese were added to the admission

section of the website. These resources are accessible for families needing language assistance for general information, and we have expanded staff who can offer language assistance.

- Direct mail and online advertising were used to expand awareness of Westridge to new families living beyond the San Gabriel Valley and eastern portion of the city of Los Angeles.
- In September, the school updated its gender identity policy to formalize its admission policy of considering for admission any student who consistently lives and identifies as a girl and who would be well served by the school's mission.

## EXPANDING DIVERSITY AMONG FACULTY & STAFF

The school is currently in the hiring season for the 2022-2023 school year. It continues to work with recruiting firms specializing in identifying candidates of color and to use anti-bias training and frameworks for all search committees.

Stay up-to-date by visiting  
[www.westridge.org/DEIJ](http://www.westridge.org/DEIJ).  
Reach out to us with questions  
at [ITatum@westridge.org](mailto:ITatum@westridge.org).