



Georgetown Day School DEI Audit: 2021-22 Executive Summary, v2

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A. Audit Rationale

In 2020, Georgetown Day School (GDS) engaged Blink Consulting to undertake an audit to assess the status of GDS's ongoing commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and inform its efforts to "continuously build" toward justice.

GDS's commitment to DEI is reflected in its founding principles, mission and statement of inclusion. As "the first integrated school in the district," GDS was founded on principles of diversity, equity and inclusion that are articulated in its mission:

"Georgetown Day School honors the integrity and worth of each individual within a diverse school community. GDS is dedicated to providing a supportive educational atmosphere in which teachers challenge the intellectual, creative, and physical abilities of our students and foster strength of character and concern for others. From the earliest grades, we encourage our students to wonder, to inquire, and to be self-reliant, laying the foundation for a lifelong love of learning" (GDS, *Our Mission*).

This commitment to DEI continues to ground GDS's educational philosophy and aspirations for its students:

"GDS graduates leave the School with a love of learning, an abhorrence of bigotry and intolerance, a broadly rounded fund of knowledge, the ability to enter the great conversations of life, and the willingness and capacity to bring needed change to a troubled world" (GDS, *Our Philosophy*).

as well as its aspirations for the entire GDS community:

"Georgetown Day School is devoted to continuously building an inclusive community open to a multitude of perspectives" (GDS, *Statement of Inclusion*).

DEI is also incorporated into its philosophy:

GDS conducted its audit in 2021-22, recognizing its responsibility not just to *intend*, but to concurrently *practice* and *realize* DEI.

B. Audit Priorities

Because progress and accountability for DEI require prioritization, GDS articulated the institutional priorities for the audit—establishing the baseline, not the limit, for inquiry: ethnoracial, gender, political viewpoint, religious, sexual orientation and socioeconomic DEI. Within ethnoracial DEI, GDS articulated a focus on pro-Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) antiracism, and, more specifically, pro-Black antiracism as a result of various experiences shared by former and current Black identifying students on an anonymously created social media platform page titled “blackatgds.”

C. Audit Methodology

Blink’s audit is structured to query DEI in:

1. **Design** – How and to what extent are GDS’s institutional and programmatic structures, processes and practices designed to be diverse, equitable and inclusive?
2. **Demonstration** – How and to what extent is GDS demonstrating DEI in outcomes (i.e. perceptions, experiences and other vital indicators of thriving within the GDS community)?

Blink audited GDS’s design and demonstration of DEI through five areas of inquiry:

Assessment area	Method
Design	Preliminary Inventory of Institutional Design for DEI
Design	Focused discovery of program design and practice in core areas of institutional operations
Demonstration	Surveys of critical stakeholder groups (e.g. employees, students, families, graduates)
Demonstration	Affinity focus groups with specific stakeholders, as guided by the vital diversity priorities of the audit
Demonstration	Analysis of available equity and inclusion data

1. **Preliminary Inventory of Institutional Design for DEI (IID).** To assess how GDS is designed to be diverse, equitable and inclusive, a Steering Committee, composed of members of the Board of Trustees, administrators faculty and staff, was convened to complete a preliminary inventory of institutional design for DEI at the beginning of the audit. The Steering Committee assessed the status of core factors of design for DEI at the institutional level, assessed the status of knowledge about the design for DEI among GDS leaders, and provided preliminary insight into what, if any, data GDS could provide for the audit. The Steering Committee was asked to form their own recommendations from the IID findings.

2. **Discovery of program design.** The program discovery, conducted in Fall-Winter 2021 by the majority of GDS employees and some volunteer leaders, examined the design for and demonstration of DEI in the operations of 22 core departments, offices and programs:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. academics – curricular b. academics – assessment c. academics – access d. admissions e. admissions – financial aid f. advancement g. alumni engagement h. board of trustees i. business j. college counseling k. communications 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> l. DEI m. DEI – performing arts n. employees – recruitment, retention and attrition o. employees – professional growth and promotion p. families – community events q. families – volunteering and PSA r. institutional design s. library t. student life – athletics u. student life – wellness (counseling and advisory program) v. student life – incident reporting and outcomes
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GDS’s discovery groups were asked to form self-recommendations and complete an Inventory of Program Design (IPD), which tracks the status of core factors of design for DEI at the program level.

3. **Stakeholder [surveys](#)**—which all students, employees and families were encouraged to complete—were administered in Fall 2021. Through these surveys, Blink audited *perceptions* of DEI, including perceptions of the intended outcomes of DEI: safety, access, dignity, belonging and thriving.



4. **Focus groups.** In alignment with GDS’s audit priorities, GDS’s Office of DEI designated student, employee and family focus groups, affinitized by under-represented identity, with an emphasis on ethnoracially under-represented groups:
- a. Students (in grades 7-12) who identify as Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI), Black, LatinX/Hispanic, multiracial, students of color (SOC), LGBTQIA and LGBTQIA SOC;
 - b. Employees who identify as BIPOC;
 - c. Family members who identify as AAPI, Black, LatinX/Hispanic and
 - d. Graduates who identify as Black.

Facilitated by Blink in Spring and Fall 2021, the focus groups were designed to engage stakeholders in dialogue, complementing the “one-way” format of the survey and allowing further inquiry into stakeholder perceptions and experiences.

5. Blink reviewed **available equity and inclusion data**, as indicated through the IID and program discovery, and confirmed by the Office of DEI.

D. Principal Findings: Design and Demonstration

Regarding GDS's design for DEI, the audit indicated that:

- GDS has clear institutional-level leadership of DEI, in policy and personnel;
- GDS's identification with its founding commitment to DEI is a pillar of its design for DEI, relying on a shared sense of values and understanding of how to implement those values in practice to advance DEI in experiences and outcomes; and
- While GDS is currently tracking some demographic information (and, initially, a few additional equity and inclusion indicators), GDS does not currently have integrated systems to formatively track vital indicators of design for and demonstration of DEI, and to use that data to inform institutional and programmatic decision-making.

Regarding GDS's demonstration of DEI, the audit indicated that:

- While there is robust recognition of GDS's founding commitment to justice across the community, there is less—and less equitably distributed—responsibility taken for upholding that commitment—i.e. there is more *buy-in* than *ownership*;
- While GDS has done and continues to do much programmatically in its commitment to DEI, evidence of the transformative impacts and outcomes of these efforts (e.g. equity in student grades, employee retention and family engagement) is not currently available, beyond *perceptions* of impacts and outcomes; and
- Perceptions of GDS's enacted commitment to DEI range from: appreciative recognition, to concerns about performativity and the belief that GDS needs to commit more substantively, to fear that GDS is doing too much and compromising its core work of education.

E. Principal Recommendations

Blink’s principal recommendations focus on building on the school’s strong, existing commitment, and coordinating GDS’s design and accountability for DEI from a central institutional vision, framework and strategic plan that will require collective ownership to implement and advance.

1. Clarify GDS’s institutional vision and philosophy of DEI.

Findings:

- While GDS’s founding “as the first integrated school in Washington, DC” and, thus, its historical commitment to DEI, are clearly recognized by all stakeholder groups, there is less understanding about the grounding philosophy and impelling vision of this commitment.
- Focus group and survey responses found a wide range of perceptions of GDS’s DEI work.

Recommendation:

Blink advises that GDS develop more fully the institutional vision for GDS’s founding commitment to DEI, in order to empower and unify DEI efforts. As an institutional vision for DEI is vitally linked to its underlying **philosophy**, Blink concurrently advises that GDS articulate – not presume – its rationale for “**why DEI**”, strengthening its “**educational business case**” in support of its DEI commitment within an academically rigorous education, and clarifying its core values *about* DEI that inform both its aspirations and its everyday practices.

Guidance:

An institutional **vision** for DEI will :

- illuminate specific, critical priorities, goals and metrics;
- guide strategic and interim planning; and
- empower all members of the community to do their part, in campaigning toward a shared, inspiring vision.

2. Communicate the rationale for institutional DEI priorities.

Findings:

- Constituents across stakeholder groups recognize GDS’s prioritization of specific under-represented groups within its commitment to DEI, and also perceive that some groups are under-valued and marginalized at GDS

(including, but not limited to: AAPI, Latine¹ and/or Hispanic, and socioeconomic groups other than the wealthiest and/or already experienced / fluent in independent school culture).

Recommendation:

GDS should affirm its DEI priorities, including whether priorities are standing, strategic or specific to an initiative; communicate why it is vital to have priorities as an institution (and within programs); engage in dialogue about what those priorities do and don't mean in policy and practice (not just explaining intent, but listening and learning about impact); and continuously discern how to center priorities in a necessarily comprehensive and intersectional commitment to DEI, recognizing when GDS may be unnecessarily, ineffectively and unfairly exclusive in its design and implementation. For example, GDS' rationale for its focus on pro-BIPOC antiracism, and, more specifically, pro-Black antiracism is grounded in the school's founding, the experiences shared through "blackatgds" and the broader social crisis of anti-Black racism.

Guidance:

- DEI priorities should be like vital signs of health: critical indicators on their own, while also significantly (although not comprehensively or absolutely) indicative of overall DEI "health."
- Progress and accountability for DEI requires prioritization, which should not be – but all too often is – perceived as an either/or, good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us delineation. Failing to articulate the rationale for priorities will hinder effective progress in this area by allowing the work of DEI to be framed as both an all-or-nothing proposition and a zero-sum competition. A critical aspect of owning the school's DEI commitment is accuracy and clarity in design and language (ex. when an initiative is specifically redressing anti-Black racism; when it is focused on anti-Black *and* anti-Indigenous racism; and when its scope is all, interconnected racism).
- When faced with real limits (e.g. for curricular materials, assembly times) on representation and inclusion, GDS should not just consider how to allocate the resources it has, but challenge the "set up" of scarcity mindset (e.g. the representation approach in curricula), which is not always legitimate. The question is: How may GDS not just add, but reconceive DEI of identities, cultures, perspectives and experiences in curricula?

¹ *Latine (pronounced la-'ti-ne) is a gender-neutral form of the word Latino, created by LGBTQIA+, gender non-binary and feminist communities in Spanish speaking countries. The objective of the term Latine is to remove gender from the Spanish word Latino, by replacing it with the gender-neutral Spanish letter E. This idea is native to the Spanish language and can be seen in many gender-neutral words like "estudiante." – callmelatine.com

3. Establish clear responsibilities for DEI.

Findings:

- GDS has a long history of designated responsibility for DEI, which over time, has evolved from a single practitioner to a departmentalized team. In addition, GDS institutionally recognizes affinity groups for students, employees, parents/guardians and graduates, although the question of their responsibilities for DEI at GDS should be clarified. It is at that stage that many predominantly white institutions, including independent schools, rest in their design for DEI. Audit findings through the IID and program discovery indicate that GDS has an opportunity and responsibility to consider the structure and adequate resources necessary, not just to “handle DEI issues” but to advance the school’s DEI values and aspirations.
- In continuing to rely solely on the DEI Office to “handle the DEI issues,” the school has effectively siloed DEI from the heart of operations and externalized DEI leadership and accountability, which effectively constrains efforts toward and realization of greater, integrated diversity, equity and inclusion.
- In actuality, the Office of DEI *should* lead and support, however the Office cannot advance DEI alone. At its most effective, the office is inherently collaborative; yet, the audit indicates that collaboration is still optional, because the institution at large has not assumed responsibility for DEI: while employees, including leadership, may be expected to *value* DEI, they are not yet accountable for *operationalizing* and *realizing* DEI. And while students and adults who are under-represented are supported in their initiative to form affinity groups, they should not bear disproportionate responsibility to lead and advance DEI, as a consequence of their identity and their personal sense of the imperative to advocate on behalf of themselves and others. A critical question for GDS is: While they do their work, what should everyone else be responsible for?

Recommendation:

Blink advises that GDS systemize shared responsibility and accountability for DEI, not to replace current structures and groups, but to supplement and complement their efforts. Thus, in support of its current infrastructure for DEI, and ultimately, to realize its aspirations for DEI, the school must further evolve its entire web of professional and community responsibility. By articulating clear DEI expectations and responsibilities for all of its stakeholders, GDS has an opportunity at this stage in its institutional development to advance responsibility for DEI systemically.

Guidance:

- Blink advises that GDS should **articulate clear expectations and criteria** for DEI in program design, in employee and volunteer (e.g. trustee, room parent/guardian, admission tour docent...) roles and responsibilities, and in assessments of both, to more fully, consistently and impactfully realize DEI in the experiences and outcomes of students, employees and families.
- GDS should **identify those responsibilities that are universal for all programs, and those that are specific to particular programs**, as core responsibilities within the educational programs will overlap with and may also differ from core responsibilities in, for example, business operations.
- Regarding **DEI in position descriptions**, GDS should:
 - clarify universal and more role-specific responsibilities, including responsibilities for DEI in all leadership positions (e.g. administrators, department heads, trustees);
 - provide feedback and support for DEI practice, growth and outcomes for all employees and volunteers; and
 - articulate complementary and mutual responsibilities for DEI between the Office of DEI and program/department leaders, to formalize expectations and accountability for DEI that may otherwise be assumed or implied (and optional).

4. Establish expectations for baseline DEI fluency, including the capacity to “think diversely.”

Findings:

- While GDS is a community that actively talks about and engages in DEI work, the audit evidenced the need to define common language and clarify some basic DEI terminology and, more broadly, to cultivate more of a growth mindset about how individuals speak about and engage in the iterative process of striving for equity and inclusion. Acknowledging that DEI fluency is a skill and that individuals join the GDS community with different levels of experience will help to disabuse the assumption that DEI fluency is achieved by simply being a member of the community.

Recommendation:

A core responsibility that GDS should articulate, with guidance regarding baseline and ongoing expectations, is developing fluency in DEI, which Blink defines as “understanding and applying DEI in your own practice.” Rather than always knowing the “correct” terms, DEI fluency is the ability to put concepts into practice, lean into one’s growth and

continuously “learn, unlearn, and relearn” (AEA) how to engage and enact the values of equity and inclusion. GDS’ *Mission, Philosophy* and *Statement of Inclusion* all indicate the need for DEI fluency, in both the process and outcomes of a GDS education. Thus, DEI fluency is essential for each employee and volunteer to own the school’s commitment and their respective roles and responsibilities in realizing safety, dignity, belonging and thriving for themselves, each other and the students and families whom they serve, while engaging in their essential work together in GDS’s classrooms, offices and entire campus.

Guidance:

- Among the essential skills of DEI fluency, Blink advises intentionally cultivating the capacity to **think diversely**, which is not the same as “thought diversity.” (“Thought diversity” mistakenly equates what you *think* with who you *are*, and suggests that you can only think what is “in line” with your identities (e.g. if you identify as liberal, then you are only capable of thinking opinions that are conventionally accepted as “liberal”), thereby discouraging divergent thinking for everyone, and problematically tokenizing and placing the burden of representation on anyone who holds a non-dominant perspective.)
- Thinking diversely comprises cultivating an informed basis; recognizing positionality; being curious; engaging head, heart and gut (Singleton); and discerning how thought may inform speech and action.
- Rather than just expecting that people already think diversely in a broader social and political climate that aggressively discourages it, GDS should actively teach and consciously practice habits and skills as a community, including:
 - discerning one’s positionality;
 - considering multiple perspectives without requiring others to represent them;
 - recognizing that all thoughts are not equally informed;
 - navigating what’s uncomfortable to consider; and
 - striving for mutual safety, access, dignity, belonging and thriving in vital conversations that don’t always feel safe to have.

5. Build a system and culture of restorative practice.

Findings:

- The need to build and, in some cases, restore trust and respect was a throughline in survey and focus group feedback, specifically regarding:

- Trust, across all stakeholder groups, in how GDS responds to incidents of discrimination;
- Employee trust in leadership regarding support with personal and professional issues;
- Perceptions of respect *from* others across differences of viewpoint (that, while indicated at moderate to moderately high levels across all stakeholder groups, was consistently lower than self-perceptions of respect accorded *to* others across differences of viewpoint);
- Trust regarding the audit itself—whether it was safe to share honestly in the survey and focus groups, and whether the audit would actually catalyze change; and
- Trust in the audit as a proxy for DEI initiatives generally—whether GDS’s efforts are more performative than transformative, and also whether GDS’s commitment is heading in the wrong direction.

Recommendation:

Blink recommends that GDS engage in restorative practice comprehensively: as an approach to building community, rather than the circumstantial use of discrete tools and practices that are limited to addressing incidents of harm in community. Indicated as a need by community, restorative practice is also indicated in GDS’s commitments to “honor the integrity and worth of each individual” (*Mission*) and “continuously build an inclusive community” (*Statement of Inclusion*).

Guidance:

While incident reporting and documentation are potential steps toward a restorative system and culture, they will not, on their own, cause restorative justice to take root and thrive. Planning strategically to develop a *culture* of restorative justice, that is a living contract undergirding everyday practice and engagement, is an essential foundation for building a *system* to advance restorative justice, that will include GDS’s protocol for incident reporting in a constellation of practices (e.g. SEL for equity, dialogue and restorative circles, peer mediation, etc.)

6. Build a robust internal system to track *vital* data about DEI in design *and* demonstration.

Findings:

- While GDS has done and continues to do much programmatically in its commitment to DEI, evidence of the transformative impacts and outcomes of these efforts (e.g. equity in student grades, employee retention and family engagement) is not currently available, beyond *perceptions* of impacts and outcomes.

- While GDS tracks some demographic information, and a few offices have used this information to conduct some preliminary ethnoraical disaggregation (e.g. of GPAs and test scores), the school:
 - Does not currently track all of its audit priorities (ethnoraical, gender, political viewpoint, religious, sexual orientation and socioeconomic) for all constituent groups systematically, centrally and accessibly;
 - Currently tracks some but not all additional key equity and inclusion data (e.g. student discipline, employee growth, family engagement); and
 - Is not currently set up with an integrated database that can disaggregate key equity and inclusion data demographically, in order to illuminate any group-level disparities.

Recommendation:

A principal finding of this audit is the need for GDS to track vital data about DEI systemically. Blink advises that GDS build an internal, institutionally coordinated and integrated data tracking system to formatively inventory design for DEI; assess DEI demonstrations; illuminate correlations and causalities between what GDS is doing, and the outcomes and impacts the school is realizing; inform strategic planning and more immediate operational decisions; and create accountability for progress at the institution and program levels.

Guidance:

- The data system should capture design *and* demonstration data. Data on outcomes alone, without insight into the design (including implementation) that yielded those results, is more passively observational than actionable. GDS’s data system should include a process for using that data to inform decision-making.
- Developing a consistent database system requires cultivating an informed culture about DEI data and a professional capacity to integrate (not just gather) that data, and building and earning the trust of the community to request, hold and act on the information and insights that GDS will have access to.
- Regarding demographic information, GDS will need to consider that all self-identifications are not equal: there isn’t an identical institutional or cultural precedent for requesting all self-identifications, nor is there an equal level of anticipated safety in disclosure, or even established options/shared language with which to self-identify.
- An example of vital information that GDS will need to build systems *and* trust to track is “academic support outside of class time with teachers” (queried anonymously via survey in this audit): without this self-reported information about learning, GDS will not be able to assess its teaching, including corollary inequities in student outcomes.

- Establishing DEI priorities will require that GDS decide *whether* to request the personal information that correlates with its priorities (and if not, reconsider having a priority that it will not be able to assess), and then develop policies and practices, so that data collection, usage and protection are themselves equitable and inclusive—i.e. that these processes respect the safety, dignity, belonging and thriving of community members, while striving to advance DEI efforts and outcomes.
- Data tracking and publishing should be coordinated institutionally: to identify what is vital for GDS to know, to establish equitable and inclusive practices for requesting demographic information from community members, to ensure that data is protected, and to discern *what* information to share and *how* (e.g. a central DEI dashboard with a few tiers of visibility: an operational view for all employees, a higher level for the board and a more general externally-facing version for current and prospective community members).
- GDS should share data as it is *vital, mutually inclusive and actionable* for each constituent group, balancing institutional access and transparency with the safety, dignity, belonging and thriving of the community whose information is being shared.

E. Conclusion

Blink advises **identifying priorities** that are fundamental to GDS’s DEI vision and “achievable, aspirational *and* impactful” (30 Percent Coalition)—i.e. GDS should strive for progress that is not just readily accomplishable, but also necessarily audacious and consequential in the experiences of GDS’s current and future communities. Whatever subset of recommendations from Blink and GDS’s employees, students and families GDS decides to own, Blink advises approaching this work **as a series of strategic phases** (because this will take more than one strategic plan), with timeframes and measurable goals, in order for GDS to be accountable for progress over the long arc of its commitment.

Moving forward from this audit, GDS should:

- Decide what recommendations and takeaways the school will own.
- Affirm GDS’s institutional DEI priorities, noting that priorities may be standing or phasic/developmental (i.e. for the near-term and anticipated to transition to subsequent priorities). While GDS may be inclined to accept all or many of the recommendations, the school will need to prioritize, in order to make progress.
- Identify what is “achievable, impactful” and *actionable* with strategic planning, and in the interim. A critical question at the institutional, program and individual levels is: What can we/I own and advance while the school develops a strategic plan? What is a goal that matters in our/my arena of agency, toward which we/I can make progress?
- Discern GDS’s current capacity (e.g. knowledge, time, funding, etc.) to advance these priorities, and what capacity the school leadership will need to build (e.g. professional growth for all employees; leadership coaching; information technology, institutional research and/or DEI consulting, etc.) Regarding any anticipated professional growth and consulting needs, GDS does not need to—and should not— wait to be “ready” to undertake its next phase of DEI work; rather, it should plan to *learn by doing*, and thus choose its resources for the dual purposes of accomplishing its scope of work and building internal capacity.