

ST. MARK'S SCHOOL

A large, stylized, light gray lion's head logo is positioned on the left side of the page. The lion has a thick, textured mane and a serious expression with its eyes looking slightly to the right.

# Community & Equity

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023



## OUR VISION

St. Mark's strives to create a community where each and every member feels fully understood, accepted for all aspects of who they are, and that they truly belong.





**St. Mark's School provides an exemplary education in an intentionally small residential setting defined and enriched by our Episcopal values.** Those values include an emphasis on self-reflection, continual communal examination, and respect for all. If we are to embody these values, we must empower our students to embrace and express their individual identities fully and without fear of bias—because it's the best way to prepare students to succeed in our global world, because it enhances students' social and critical thinking skills, and because it's the right thing to do.

As a school community, we have not yet lived up to this promise. The racial reckoning of 2020 reverberated strongly within the St. Mark's community, with many students and alumni of color describing deeply negative experiences at the school. Over the past two years, we undertook a concerted, institution-wide effort to strengthen our community and equity programming and develop a strategic plan that will advance the goal of achieving a truly inclusive community.

While this effort was catalyzed by instances of anti-Black racism, our commitment to inclusion must encompass all the identities and lived experiences of our community members: Black, Asian, Hispanic, LGBTQIA+, Muslim, Jewish, and more. This plan provides specific action steps aimed at increasing the diversity of our community, supporting students of all identities, and providing adult community members with the skills needed to educate, mentor, and prepare students for success in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world.





As part of this process, we also identified the need to embrace the principles of antiracism, which is defined as “the policy or practice of opposing racism and promoting racial tolerance.” We are now intentionally applying an antiracist lens to our community and equity efforts. For example, rather than simply avoiding or removing racially insensitive material from our curriculum, we must also examine the context that caused these materials to proliferate in the first place so that students better understand the ongoing ramifications of historic injustices. This reflects the philosophy that guides our Global Citizenship program, which helps students see and appreciate the value of intercultural competency.

Engaging in this essential, worthwhile—and sometimes difficult—process will help us support students of all identities and ensure that everyone who comes to our school receives the same exceptional experience inside and outside of the classroom. In doing so, St. Mark’s will do a better job of preparing students to lead lives of consequence.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO Diversity

St. Mark's School seeks to reflect the increasingly diverse world in which our students presently live and will live in the future. We intend to provide our students with a superior education in a community of students, parents, faculty, and staff that represents a variety of racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. We strive to ensure respect for all regardless of sex, gender, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, ability, family structure, or economic background.





## IN SUPPORT OF OUR OBJECTIVE,

St. Mark's School:

- *will* continue to give special importance to the inclusion within our student body, our faculty, and our staff of persons from all groups within our society—particularly those that have experienced prejudice and disadvantage.
- *will* provide all members of the school with a range of appropriate opportunities to develop skills for living in a diverse community and integrate diversity initiatives throughout the school program.
- *will* empower all members of the St. Mark's community to share their differences as well as their common experiences to enhance their education.

St. Mark's promotes awareness around cultural difference and provides affinity opportunities for students whose social or identity needs are not reflected in the dominant culture at St. Mark's through Community and Equity Affairs.

## STATEMENT FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES PRESIDENT

# THE GOAL OF OUR COMMUNITY AND EQUITY STRATEGIC PLAN IS TO ENSURE THAT EVERY STUDENT HAS ACCESS TO THE BEST OF WHAT ST. MARK'S HAS TO OFFER.

As president of the St. Mark's School Board of Trustees, I regard this work as essential to the fulfillment of our mission and the health and vitality of our community.

The plan reflects the extensive participation of students, parents, faculty members, trustees, administrators, staff, and alumni. Participants were motivated by a shared goal: giving every student and community member access to the full spectrum of opportunities that distinguish the St. Mark's experience.

Our Community and Equity Strategic Plan provides a blueprint for advancing that essential work through a series of clearly articulated action steps. The plan's emphasis on creating a universally inclusive school community constitutes the latest chapter in our ongoing community and equity work, and honors our tradition of preparing students to lead lives of consequence.

Through our sustained commitment to the plan, we will reaffirm our core values—providing an environment where every individual can achieve their potential, be fully themselves, and graduate with a positive, lifelong connection to this extraordinary place. I hope we can count on your participation and support as we work together to build an ever-more equitable and inclusive St. Mark's School.



Michael Boulware Moore '80  
President, Board of Trustees

# THE WAY Forward

**In recent years, we have begun the challenging, essential work of reimagining who we are as a School community.** St. Mark's encourages creativity, self-expression, service, and active engagement with the world. We will foster these strengths in our community members by working collectively to understand how people of diverse backgrounds, races, and cultures experience the world.

We have outlined six strategic goals that will help us to create the community we envision. Each encompasses a range of activities that we will accomplish in the coming years. This type of transformation is never easy, but we are confident that together we can make St. Mark's a place where everyone feels fully accepted for who they are and has equal access to the best of what the school offers.

1. Increase the diversity of our faculty, staff, and administrators.
2. Broaden professional development activities focused on community and equity for faculty, staff, and administrators.
3. Increase the diversity of our student body.
4. Enhance support for students of all identities.
5. Integrate principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the curriculum.
6. Build on existing engagement with parents, alumni, and other members of the St. Mark's community.



## DEFINING OUR VISION

The language we use matters. Here are some important terms and what we at St. Mark's mean when we use them.

- **EQUITY** - Equity refers to a form of proactive justice that recognizes that equal treatment does not guarantee equal opportunity. For example, the school is committed to ensuring that all students—regardless of financial ability—experience the best of St. Mark's.
- **INCLUSION** - Inclusion is the process of ensuring that everyone in a community feels welcomed, respected, and supported for all aspects of who they are. A diverse community is one with members who have a breadth of identities and experiences; an inclusive community is one where those differences are celebrated and where everyone feels comfortable being themselves.
- **ANTIRACISM** - Antiracism is the policy or practice of opposing racism and promoting racial tolerance. An antiracist institution or person not only actively opposes racism, prejudice, and discrimination but also seeks to identify instances of discrimination and racism in their community.
- **PEOPLE OF COLOR** - People of color is an inclusive term that encompasses all non-white racial and ethnic groups and that emphasizes the shared—but distinct—experiences they may encounter of individual and systemic racism within the United States.
- **BIPOC** - BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. This term places special emphasis on the unique experiences of Black and Indigenous individuals and communities within the United States.

## GUIDING OUR Work

These strategic goals are guided by our collective responsibility to establish an authentically inclusive community that prepares students for lifelong success. The goals set forth in this document were established by the St. Mark's Antiracism Task Force and the Board of Trustees' Community & Equity Committee.

In early 2022, St. Mark's also engaged Promise54, a leading firm specializing in inclusivity consulting for nonprofit organizations, and Dr. Heather Sanders, a DEI leadership coach and strategist, to conduct a robust equity audit of our institution. The audit will help all St. Markers understand the challenges and opportunities that exist within our community—for themselves individually and the School as a whole. We intend to use the findings of this audit to specifically target areas of our programming and school life where we can further promote inclusivity and equity.



## EVALUATING OUR Progress

For each strategic goal, we are listing a series of action steps and an associated timeline. We hope these charts will help clarify where we began this work, where we are now, and our objectives for the future.

We will monitor our progress toward completing these action steps and achieving our strategic goals and provide an annual update on our progress. Additionally, we will continue to fine-tune activities associated with the goals as needed—for example, by adding new action steps that reflect the community’s evolving needs and concerns.










## INCREASE THE DIVERSITY OF OUR FACULTY, STAFF, AND ADMINISTRATORS.

Staff members and educators from different backgrounds offer unique and valuable perspectives, no matter their role or what they teach. They forge strong bonds of mentorship with students. They also help foster deeper interpersonal and intercultural understanding by shaping a community that better reflects the increasing diversity of our country and world.

We are taking specific steps to both increase the diversity of our faculty and staff and ensure they are fully supported as individuals and professionals. St. Mark's has committed to a diversity hiring plan that includes specific strategies for enhancing our recruiting and hiring processes. A critical step that will further enhance these efforts is hiring an associate dean of faculty for equity and inclusion—a new role that focuses heavily on faculty recruitment, hiring, and retention—to enhance support for faculty members of all identities.




ACTION STEPS	In Progress	Complete	Ongoing
Forge mentoring relationships with young, diverse educators through participation in programs such as the UPenn Independent School Teaching residency program.			
Revamp our hiring strategy to diversify our applicant pool and minimize conscious and unconscious bias within our candidate sourcing, selection criteria, and interview processes.			
Reinforce our diverse faculty recruitment, hiring, and retention strategy through the newly-established associate dean of faculty for equity and inclusion role.			
Develop a process for measuring and increasing diversity among the St. Mark's adult community with the goal of building a faculty and staff that best represents our student population.			
Achieve 20 percent faculty of color by 2025, up from 14 percent in 2021-2022.			

## **BROADEN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOCUSED ON COMMUNITY AND EQUITY FOR FACULTY, STAFF, AND ADMINISTRATORS.**

In many ways, students at a boarding school live in a world created by the adults around them. A robust professional development program will help ensure that the adults in our community are well-versed in issues of equity and better prepared to meet our students where they are and educate them in ways that are healthy, culturally responsive, and inclusive. Learning to appreciate their own identities and perspectives as adults and educators is a critical step in understanding the lived realities of their colleagues and students—helping them become more knowledgeable, empathetic, and effective as teachers and mentors.

These opportunities will benefit community members individually and collectively. Each faculty member will work with their department head to set individual goals that support the broader DEI goals of their department. For example, in August 2021, all faculty set a professional growth goal in the area of antiracism and met at the mid-year point with their department head and the dean of faculty to review their progress.






Additionally, during late 2022, we will launch the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) for all faculty, staff, and administrators. The IDI is used to assess and promote intercultural competence, which the organization defines as “the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities.” Following the assessment, the IDI provides participants with an individualized action plan to enhance their cultural competence.

ACTION STEPS	In Progress	Complete	Ongoing
Administer the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and conduct individual coaching based on the results			
Introduce social justice literacy principles and practices to the school community through activities that include faculty professional development and on-campus events			
Support programming and training for faculty, staff, and students on the emotional, social, and psychological aspects of social identity development experiences			
Conduct routine conversations about individual social identity development/antiracist teaching principles and practices as part of faculty professional development			

### INCREASE THE DIVERSITY OF OUR STUDENT BODY.

In order for our students to be admitted and accepted at St. Mark's, we must perform intentional outreach and form new bonds with diverse communities, both nationally and globally. This represents an opportunity to both increase awareness of the School and to inspire new families to join our community. Creating a diverse class—racially, culturally, and demographically—helps foster a community that reflects the vibrancy of the outside world, and ensures that St. Mark's is authentically welcoming to talented students no matter their financial circumstances.

However, it's not enough to get students in the door: We also need to provide wraparound support during their time on campus. This includes math, reading, and writing support to ensure students operate from a consistent baseline regardless of academic background, as well as programming that supports the transition for families with first-generation boarding school students. In addition, we must provide the support students need to engage fully in out-of-class activities such as student organizations, athletics, and field trips—many of which involve expenses beyond the cost of attendance.




ACTION STEPS	In Progress	Complete	Ongoing
Enhance our admissions staff to increasingly reflect the diversity of the students we desire to attract			
Increase the diversity of our applicant pool by collaborating with programs that promote access both nationally and internationally			
Eliminate unconscious bias in admissions through specialized training and related initiatives			
Increase funding for student financial aid to enhance our demographic diversity			
Provide robust wraparound support so that students can fully engage with the life of our community			



## ENHANCE SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS OF ALL IDENTITIES.

Everyone should feel like they belong in our community and are fully supported for who they are. However, we have heard loud and clear that our students are not receiving the support they need—whether they are students of color, including Black, Asian, Asian-American, or Latinx; members of the LGBTQIA+ community; or Jewish, Muslim, or practitioners of another non-Christian faith tradition. We must do more to ensure every student's perspective is respected as an authentic dimension of our community. We must also ensure resources are in place that are targeted to all types of social identities, including counseling, orientation, and more.




An ongoing strategy that has had great success at St. Mark's is our Pathways program. Pathways are student affinity groups; they play an important role in helping students build meaningful peer relationships, respectfully discuss complex issues related to their identities and experiences, and find their footing early in their St. Mark's career.

ACTION STEPS	In Progress	Complete	Ongoing
Increase health and wellness support for all students by hiring a community wellness educator			
Implement a confidential process for reporting on and vigorously addressing incidences of insensitivity, bias, and discrimination that occur on campus			
Integrate principles of inclusion and cultural awareness into the School's summer onboarding program			

## INTEGRATE PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION THROUGHOUT THE CURRICULUM.

Becoming a more inclusive community involves more than supporting students outside the classroom; it's an important part of how we teach and which topics we focus on in our courses. Historically, curricula in American schools have underemphasized the contributions of thinkers, authors, activists, and leaders of color.

We will continue to examine our curriculum to ensure we are teaching material that's accurate, engaging, and informed by our best understanding of how that subject matter intersects with issues of identity and diversity. For example, our Global Citizenship program encourages students to engage with peers and communities around the world to build perspective-taking skills and cross-cultural understanding. This emphasis on prioritizing intercultural competence within the curriculum is a hallmark of a St. Mark's education.

ACTION STEPS	In Progress	Complete	Ongoing
Provide every new student the opportunity to engage in an orientation program steeped in community and equity work that not only introduces the concept and value of identity but also prepares students for understanding belonging at St. Mark's			
Ensure that students read texts by authors of marginalized identities—for example, texts by BIPOC authors, women, and LGBTQIA+ authors—at every grade level			
Evolve our curriculum to celebrate diversity and examine how the power dynamics of race, religion, and sexual identity have shaped our society and culture			

## ENGAGE AND LEARN FROM PARENTS, ALUMNI, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE ST. MARK'S COMMUNITY.

We must do a better job of engaging parents, alumni, friends, and community members both on and off the St. Mark's campus to learn from their perspectives and to share the latest updates regarding what's happening in Southborough.

ACTION STEPS	In Progress	Complete	Ongoing
Deepen engagement with alumni from our underrepresented communities, including people of color and our LGBTQIA+ community			
Support community and equity engagement through ongoing activities that involve parents and families			
Engage with parents throughout the academic year through a combination of virtual and in-person events			





**The steps outlined in this document represent the beginning of a process that we will continue to refine and strengthen.** Transformative change requires a substantive investment of time, energy, and resources. That's why we're devoting the necessary attention to these issues over a period of years rather than introducing surface-level changes that will fail to dramatically improve conditions for our community members in the long term.

We fully anticipate that there will be moments of discomfort and challenge as we undergo this work. This is not only expected but encouraged: We must collectively escape our comfort zone to create a new vision for our school and community. We hope you will continue to engage with these ideas as you develop your own toolbox of skills and strategies for understanding equity and inclusion, and we hope you will help to hold our community accountable throughout this process.

We welcome your questions and recommendations as we work together to build the community we desire and that our students deserve. Please contact us at **[cestrategic@stmarksschool.org](mailto:cestrategic@stmarksschool.org)**.

YOU CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR INITIATIVES RELATED TO COMMUNITY, EQUITY, AND ANTIRACISM BY VISITING THE COMMUNITY & EQUITY AREA OF OUR WEBSITE AT **[WWW.STMARKSSCHOOL.ORG/EQUITY](http://WWW.STMARKSSCHOOL.ORG/EQUITY)**.

### **Mission Statement:**

St. Mark's School educates young people for lives of leadership and service. Founded in 1865 as an intentionally small residential community, the School challenges its students to develop their particular analytic and creative capabilities by both inspiring their academic and spiritual curiosity and kindling their passion for discovery. We value cooperation over self-interest, and we encourage all members of our community to explore their place in the larger world beyond our campus.



**ST. MARK'S SCHOOL**  
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INTENTIONALLY SMALL, THINKING BIG.