



A Place to Belong: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

At the heart of SPA's diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) work is the belief that an educational community is at its best when it includes and values all voices, perspectives, and experiences. Maintaining an inclusive environment is inherent to our mission and evident in our community: 38% of children enrolled at SPA in 2023-24 are students of color. Our faculty and staff also represent a broad range of diverse identities with regard to race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, and sexual orientation. Everyone's voice is essential here, and we work hard to ensure that all students have the opportunity to thrive, and every family finds a place to belong.

We use the Courageous Conversations protocols for effectively engaging, sustaining, and deepening interracial dialogue. All faculty and staff receive training and ongoing professional development in using these protocols in the classroom and in their professional lives at school.

THE CURRICULUM

Our goal is to foster a sense of belonging for all students. We know that academic growth, identity development, and identity validation are interlinked to make a student's learning journey possible. Multicultural perspectives are woven throughout the K-12 curriculum, preparing SPA students to be thoughtful, curious, and engaged citizens of our increasingly global and interconnected world.

Lower School Affinity Groups and Intercultural Clubs meet twice a month, and all faculty and students participate. These groups provide a space for all students to explore, share, and build an understanding of their own and others' identities. Intercultural Clubs are open to all students; Affinity Groups are formed around one aspect of a student's identity, such as race, religion, or gender, and give participants a sense of belonging in order to better learn, grow, and thrive at the Lower School. Families select the group that will best serve their student.

The Middle School program considers DEIB as a central focus in building community and moving students from exploration and awareness to advocacy and belonging. Positive identity development for each student is central to the Advisory curriculum and is an academic goal in coursework. Affinity groups in 2023-24 include Black and Brown Males, Common Ground, Herspace/Ourspace, Mishpacha, and Muslim Student Affinity Group. Special interest groups include Gender and Sexuality Alliance, Intercultural Club, Neurodiversity, and the Antiracism Group. Mixed grade advisories meet concurrently with affinity groups and provide opportunities for students to reflect on different aspects of identity. The curriculum for these mixed-grade advisories is built on the Learning for Justice Social Justice Standards, the Courageous Conversations protocols framework, and the Developmental Designs pedagogy.

The Upper School program reflects students' growing sophistication and interest in complex issues of diversity and identity. Courses addressing these issues include History of Race, Gender In the Americas, History of the Refugee Community, and World Religions. Student organizations include both affinity and student interest groups with a focus on social justice. Upper School affinity groups include the Black Student Union, Sexuality and Gender Equity, Common Ground, Mishpacha, Muslim Student Affinity Group, HerSpace/Ourspace, and the Antiracism Group. These groups provide a safe space for students to explore and engage in meaningful dialogue around race, gender and other aspects of identity. Every year, SPA sends students to participate in the Student Diversity Leadership Conference, a student conference held in conjunction with the National Association of Independent Schools' People of Color Conference.

Diversity FAQs

How does St. Paul Academy and Summit School define “diversity”?

The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), of which SPA is a member, defines diversity as a community of people of different races, ethnicities, socioeconomic classes, sexual orientations, and religions. It is difficult to determine exact percentages for many of these categories, but we do know that in 2023-24, 38% of the SPA student body is African American, Asian American, Latino, Middle Eastern American, Native American, and/or multiracial, well above the NAIS national average of 30.9%. At SPA, however, the concept of diversity goes much deeper than numbers: we are committed to creating and maintaining a welcoming, safe, and inclusive environment for all our community members.

Does SPA have official policies that relate to diversity?

SPA’s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) is reflected in institutional policies that include the Diversity and Inclusion Policy (2017) and the Guidelines in Support of Gender Diversity (2018). In addition, the school’s Defining Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion task force was created in 2020 and culminated in the creation of the school’s Strategic Action Plan for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, which launched in 2022 with six areas of focus:

- Student Experience and Programming
- Recruiting, Retaining, and Supporting BIPOC Faculty and Staff
- Curriculum and Academic Programming
- Board of Trustee Leadership, Vision, and Accountability
- Training and DEIB Professional Development
- Community Engagement

What is the Office of Intercultural Life?

The Office of Intercultural Life is a K-12 administrative unit with two full-time staff members who oversee the school’s DEIB programs and initiatives. The Director of Intercultural Life reports to the Head of School and Assistant Head of School for Student Development and Community Engagement, and is charged with defining and directing institutional DEIB initiatives and policies. The Director oversees the student experience at school with a lens of equity and inclusion, and engages in community outreach to support initiatives in student and family programming, professional development, admissions, recruiting/hiring and retention, and community partnerships.

The Intercultural Life Program Specialist (ILPS) partners with the Director of Intercultural Life to support DEIB student and community programming in the Middle and Upper Schools. The ILPS works with students and faculty on issues of identity development and a shared language and understanding related to anti-bias education and culturally responsive practices. The ILPS also advises Middle and Upper School affinity and special interest groups, teaches Middle School wellness units, serves as an Upper School advisor, and leads cultural programming and professional development.

Both Intercultural Life staff members partner with SPA’s full-time BIPOC Recruiting and Hiring Specialist, a member of the Office of Human Resources staff with a focus on the recruitment, retention, and support of BIPOC faculty and staff.

To learn more about DEIB at SPA and how you and your family can be involved, we invite you to contact Dr. Naomi Taylor, Director of Intercultural Life, at 651-696-1378 or ntaylor@spa.edu.



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