

Office of Institutional Equity & Belonging Newsletter

◆ October 2024



Dear Friends,

As I enter my second year at San Francisco Friends School, I've been reflecting on the work and accomplishments of the past year and looking ahead to the exciting opportunities before us as we continue advancing equity, inclusion and belonging at SFFS. I spent much of the first year listening, learning and building relationships with our faculty, staff, students and families, and laying the groundwork for the strategic priorities my office will focus on this year.

Last year's work focused on a few key areas including broadening the scope of student and family affinity groups, aligning our institutional DEI work across committees and constituent groups, hosting our first multi-school diversity conference, updating policies for respectful academic discourse, creating community guidelines for religious and cultural celebrations at school, and strengthening recruiting and hiring practices with an eye towards equity.

Through many conversations, observations and learnings from the past year, we've identified the following priorities for our diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging work for the 2024 - 25 school year:

- **Curriculum Audit:** In collaboration with the Director of Teaching and Learning, Division Heads and teachers, we will lay the groundwork for auditing curriculum with a focus on equity, inclusion and our Quaker values.
- **Evolving Our Affinity Program:** With the goal of creating a robust program that is responsive to the needs of students, faculty, staff and families, we will review our current program to enhance areas that are working well and change aspects of the program so that it better serves the needs of our community.
- **Enhancing Systems & Processes:** We will continue building and enhancing systems and processes across the school to ensure our institutional work cultivates belonging for all members of our community.

I look forward to continuing to partner with you and I am available to connect should you wish to share anything about you or your child's experience of belonging at Friends.

In friendship,



Patrice Wakeley

Director of Institutional Equity & Belonging



Professional Development at Friends

Creating meaningful professional development opportunities for faculty and staff has always been core to our work at San Francisco Friends School. This year, we are creating opportunities for our professional community to enhance their pedagogical practices, with a focus on anti-bias education and culturally responsive teaching, to better serve and support our diverse students in their learning and development. We began this year's series in August with presentations from Facing History and Project Shema, followed by Islamic Networks Group (ING) in October, with additional workshops to be held in the spring.



Celebrating Cultural Heritage and Religious Holidays

At San Francisco Friends School we believe in developing strong relationships with our families and partnering with them to create a community where everyone feels seen, supported, and valued. This includes the opportunity to express one's cultural and religious beliefs.

We held many cultural celebrations last school year, ranging from parent-led classroom activities, all school assemblies, table and digital displays, and bulletin boards. These celebrations were created in collaboration with student and family affinity groups. We look forward to collaborating on more celebrations this year and for years to come. In order to ensure an equitable and systematized process, we have created guidelines for holding institutional celebrations. Click [here](#) to read more about the updated process.

Additionally, we have created guidelines for faculty regarding homework, administering tests and scheduling field trips when specific cultural and religious holidays occur during school days. Click here for [2024-25 calendar](#).



Student Affinity, Alliance and Justice Groups

One of our greatest strengths at Friends is our community. In alignment with our mission and Quaker identity, we are intentionally working to create a diverse and inclusive environment where all members experience a deep sense of belonging.

One way we work to foster that belonging is through affinity, alliance and justice groups. These groups provide an opportunity for students to celebrate and explore issues of shared identity as well as affirm each of their experiences as part of a distinct group amidst the larger SFFS community. These groups are important in reducing feelings of isolation, discomfort and marginalization that can happen even in the most diverse school communities. Students participation in affinity, alliance and justice groups can help them feel more seen, supported and valued while enhancing their connection to the greater SFFS community.

To learn more about the affinity, alliance and justice groups, click [here](#).

In addition to student affinity groups, SFFS currently offers family affinity-alliance groups which are run through the Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Parent Guardian Association (EI&B PGA) committee. Family Affinity Groups are facilitated by parent and guardian volunteers and provide a space for families who share a common identifier to come together in community alongside allies. They have served as spaces that provide support, social outlets, resources, and opportunities for activism around shared aspects of identity. If you are interested in joining a family affinity group, please complete [this form](#).

Click [here](#) to see a full list of 2024-2025 school year affinity, alliance and justice offerings for students and families.



Our Commitment to Equity, Inclusion & Belonging

Last year, the school convened a committee that included members of our faculty and staff, the Parent Guardian Association (PGA) and the Board of Trustees's Equity, Inclusion & Belonging (EI&B) Committee to update the school's Equity, Inclusion and Belonging commitment to better reflect the active and ongoing work of building an equitable, inclusive community. Before finalizing the commitment, we are asking families and faculty/staff to provide feedback using [this link](#).

San Francisco Friends School Commitment to Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging

In service of our mission, we commit to nurturing a diverse, inclusive, and equitable community. Our Quaker testimonies and practices guide us to reflect and deepen our understanding and appreciation for one another's differences while acknowledging we each possess distinct power, privilege, and responsibility to advance equity. SFFS commits to fostering belonging and connection among its members within and beyond our school community. This ongoing, essential work is furthered and sustained through dialogue, reciprocal learning, and engagement.





Ways to Get Involved

These are just a few of the ways you can get involved in the school's equity and inclusion work.

- Join and/or clerk a Family Affinity Group
- Join the Equity, Inclusion & Belonging PGA Committee
- Lead a classroom culture share or create a cultural or religious display

Question? Email me or our PGA EI&B committee co-clerks [Alex Scotta](#), [Cassia Van Der Hoof Holstein](#) and [Mark Ishimaru](#).



Let's Meet!

Building relationships is one of the most rewarding aspects of my role at Friends. As I did last year, I will be holding time to meet with parents and guardians. If you'd like to learn more about the DEIB work at SFFS, share your child(s) and/or your family's experience with belonging at SFFS, please email me to schedule a time to meet.



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