12/7/18
Furthering Our Anti-Bias Work

In fulfillment of the priorities set out in the Strategic Plan, we as a school are furthering our work in the areas of diversity and equity. We are applying an "anti-bias" lens to our curriculum and practices as we work to support all members of our current and future community. We have been doing this work as a staff and will soon be more directly involving parents in more of these conversations.

Our staff's Professional Development work is focused on anti-bias this year. We began with a presentation and discussion on "Anti-Bias Education" with Tiffany Jewel ([Anti-BiasMontessori.com](Anti-BiasMontessori.com)) as part of the preparation for the school year. **We embraced the goals of:**

1.  Gaining a deeper awareness of who we are (as individuals) and understand our own social identity and cultural context.
2.  Reflecting on and examining our own biases (and those that our school might have).
3.  Identifying how we have been advantaged and disadvantaged by biases, stereotypes, or prejudices about ourself and others.
4.  Reflecting on and examining our ideas, feelings, and experiences of advocacy and social justice activism.
5.  Connecting, dialoguing, and collaborating with others.

**As a staff, we've done many readings and activities in support of these goals:**

A group of staff have been meeting weekly to discuss anti-bias topics including making ourselves vulnerable as part of our personal exploration, readings and discussion about the broader topic, and identifying areas for Hilltop to further grow regarding this work. The initial focus has been on race bias and is now moving to other areas. Some of the discussions have been around reading from "*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria And Other Conversations About Race*" by Beverly Daniel Tatum. The group has also found selections from "[Building Anti-Racist White Educators (BAR WE)](Building Anti-Racist White Educators (BAR WE))" to be valuable resources.

For the In-Service Day on November 12th, our staff read "[What is White Privilege Really?](What is White Privilege Really?)" in preparation for our discussion to identify and consider areas of bias at our school and in our curriculum. We examined possible bias in any areas including gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion, and socio-economic status. A lively small group discussion with a whole staff sharing resulted in identifying many areas to consider including some covered in this chart:

| Questions/assumptions to consider | What we have done recently to address this: | What more we could do to address this |
|---|---|---|
| Families will apply to the school and apply for financial aid if they can't afford to pay full tuition, knowing that there is state funding and school support to help reduce their portion of tuition. | Present the school tuition as "Indexed Tuition" so they see more realistic numbers of what families pay for tuition. | Further this initiative. |
| AfterCare, BeforeCare and After School Enrichment Programs usually have only one charge level, while tuition has reductions. | Consider how to apply reductions to the other charges and maintain a balanced budget. | Continue working on it . . . |
| The Winter Sports of Skating and Cross-Country Skiing are included in tuition, but people need to pay more to do Mt Snow. | Consider how this increases stratification of economic status vs. is a choice about an expensive sport. | Develop a long term plan that is consistent with the mission of the school. |
| Do we need more diversity (of skin color, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, economic status, etc.) represented in the crayons, dolls, books, and other materials in our classroom? | Added to our Lower El book collection to include books with students with atypical gender identification, heroes of more racial and socio economic background.<br>Added to our Toddler and CH book collection to include books with children with atypical family structure and a variety of skin colors.<br>Evaluating our curriculum content towards a more diverse set of primary source materials (especially in MS). | Continue to add more diverse hero books for Upper El.<br>Add more books with families/children experiencing poverty.<br>Continue to add more diverse materials across all programs. |
| Annual fund 100% participation goal | Emphasize participation not amount of gift, no levels of giving recognized publicly. | Be more careful of language such as "even if it's $5". |
| Montessori works for all types of learners. | Added a learning specialist to better address learners with reading challenges.<br>Better articulating what types of learners we can serve. | Better communicating our admissions process for different learners. |
| All families have high speed internet and can get emails and website information quickly and students in Middle School can work on computers at home. | Continue to notify radio stations of school closings too, even though we have added the email notification.<br>Facilitate other ways for students to complete work. | |

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| It is appropriate to use "Ladies and Gentleman" or "boys" and "girls" to address large groups of children. | Reduce use of language that assumes binary gender identification. Want to rename/resolve the gendered bathrooms in the Arts Barn. | Eliminate language that assumes binary gender identification. |
| Campus is ADA accessible. | Moved the shelving in the Arts Barn bathrooms that blocked use for wheelchairs. | Make Arts Barn bathrooms accessible. |
| Public school holidays meet the needs of all families. | Non-dominant culture holidays may be taken and not count as absences (students and staff). | |
| Majority of families are Middle or Upper Middle Class<br>- can afford extra shoes or specific clothes<br>- can afford extra cold weather clothing | Provide extras from a school stash or facilitate a hand-me-down relationship. | Edit out the dress code language "Ripped, torn, or tattered clothes may not be worn" as it was not intended to apply to worn clothes. |
| Families should be organized, make health lunches, be on time to school. | Try to support families by asking what we can do to help them with these parenting and financial challenges. | |
| We are all "privileged". | Consider that the diverse population includes people who do not have "white privilege" or "class privilege", etc. | |

The recent All School Gathering with a presentation about "Feed the Thousands" sparked further staff discussion at this week's staff meeting. How can we show ourselves and our students the face of poverty in a real and empowering way? We shared an article with staff from Teaching Tolerance, "Poverty is NO Laughing Matter" and came up with ideas for furthering the current food donations program our school is a part of.

**We always welcome discussions with parents about supporting diversity at Hilltop.** We have had further discussions at the Board level and we are now reconvening the Diversity/Equity Task Force of parents (dormant since the Strategic Planning process in 2015). Because tuition and the "sticker shock" potential families could have when they see our full tuition price, we'd like to initially have this Task Force help us consider "Indexed Tuition". The first meeting will be on Tuesday, December 11th at 8:30 a.m. to review and give comments on our draft materials on "Indexed Tuition". This new presentation of our "financial aid" program is an attempt to better reflect what we are already doing to support families coming to Hilltop. Instead of publishing only the full tuition and assuming that people will know that there are state programs and school

fundraising and an endowment that reduces the amount of tuition that families pay, we'd like to present more realistic tiers of "indexed" tuition that better reflect what families pay.

While this initial meeting of the reconvened group will focus on Indexed Tuition, future meetings are likely to discuss other areas of bias to address in our school and other opportunities to support economic diversity within our school. If you are interested in this and haven't contacted me yet, please [email me](mailto:)!

-Tamara