

Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism (AIM) Action Plan - Year One Report

Understanding this report: The AIM Action Plan is built around seven STRIDES (S~~ystemically~~ Tracking and R~~ealizing~~ Inclusion, D~~iversity~~ and E~~quity~~ Strategies). Year one goals are underlined under each stride and then narratives follow that describe the work that has occurred.



AIM Stride #1
Addressing teasing and bullying



***Defining the difference between teasing and bullying:** Through the SEL curriculum, students engaged in mini lessons and discussions connected to teasing and bullying.

- In the lower grades we read books and practiced **role plays** about how to be a **caring friend** and **kind member** of our community and also how to **solve problems with friends** in healthy ways;
- In 3rd/4th, 5th and 6th grades we concentrated on **inclusion versus exclusion**;
- In 7th and 8th grade we explored identity, prejudice, and group dynamics. The 7th graders hosted a panel discussion on microaggressions including faculty and staff and also welcomed 5th graders into their classroom and worked in pairs to take a closer look at current events and have a conversation on intent vs. impact.

Our school counselors also ran small lunch groups to promote friendship building and **conflict resolution**. There are also lunch groups for **new students** to **build relationships** and help students feel welcome.

In October 2019 we participated in **National Unity Day** displaying posters and encouraged everyone to wear orange that day. We also participated in **National Kindness Week** in January where students engaged in acts of kindness throughout the week; created kindness walls and attended a special assembly to hear from one another. While we do not always celebrate these “days of” and “months of” we felt it **underpinned the deeper the work** and was a visual demonstration of our ongoing commitment to **minimize teasing and bullying**. (**Mykee Fowlin special middle school anti-bullying assembly had to be postponed and will be rescheduled when school resumes*)

***River Street pilot protocol** - River St. has continued to evolve in **managing conflict** resolution at their campus. At this time, they are translating these resolution strategies to the home so they can continue to carry on with helping students resolve conflicts. Melynda recorded a video for families that includes **strategies**: five finger breathing; naming the feelings; ask open-ended questions in a nonjudgmental way; role play taking on the perspective of another family member; take breaks to complete goals and use a timer; be silly, take a brain break (use GoNoodle); reach out to the counselor to connect.

***PD workshops** - Responsive Classroom *Strategies to Prevent Bullying* (sent 2 faculty); Facing History *Teaching Civility in an age of conflict*.

***Middle school common lunch for student initiated affinity/alliance/interest based groups** - This began at the start of the year and we worked with students to **identify groups of need and interest** and launched in February 2020. We have been **gathering student feedback** and responding to this to shape the program (more on this in Strides 6 and 7).

AIM Stride #2

Recognizing Unique Identities



***ADL Calendar** - this has become **internalized** and whenever discussions ensue about events, we cross reference this. We had scheduled the International Festival on the same night as Chinese New Year (the calendar was planned out about a year ago and thus ADL was not at the forefront of our minds then). We are pleased that a family felt able to bring this to our attention and we took the decision to move the event. Since then, discussions about not scheduling Fun and Fitness and overnight trips during Ramadan have occurred, for example - it has become a **habit of mind**.

We have also **overlaid the ADL calendar into our own 20-21 school calendar** for reference and this will become standard practice.

We have continued the practice of **inviting families to share their culture, traditions** etc with their peers and have a consistent practice of sharing these on our social media accounts to demonstrate our commitment to diversity in this way. Examples include Diwali, Sikh Awareness Month, Holi and Lunar New Year to name a few.

At the beginning of the school year, we launched two **faculty and staff affinity groups**: PoC (People of Color) and WARE (White Anti-Racist Educators). Both groups were able to meet at least 6 times. Two **alliance groups** also formed: LGBTQ+ and Interfaith, and one **interest-based group** formed - Intersection Feminism. Groups met regularly to connect, examine readings, and explore how our intersecting identities inform and impact our classroom practice, relationships, and community at large.

In response to **student feedback**, we began the year engaging in dialogue and mini lessons with middle school students about identity and groups they wished to see form. In February we launched **Student Choices; Student Voices - affinity, alliance and interest-based groups** including Students of Color, White Students, LGBTQ+, and Gender Roles and Stereotypes groups. Providing opportunities for students to engage in dialogue about different aspects of their identity in smaller groups and with different peers helps build skills that can then transfer to cross talk among diverse groups of students and ultimately builds greater understanding of self and others.

AIM Stride #3

Marketing our core value



***Begin discussions with the leadership team, board, and faculty/staff about the relationship between our strategic vision/pillars and the school's core values in order to clearly identify our core values related to the student experience** - discussions have been ongoing and while the leadership team and communications committee continue to discuss core values, we have used the **four strategic pillars** to guide our marketing and communications. A

social media calendar maps the school's planned posts, and each one is connected back to one of our strategic pillars (Diversity & Equity; Community; Progressive Teaching & Learning; Innovation/Continuous Improvement).

Similarly, with publications such as Mini Scoop, Scoop Magazine and the Annual Fund Report, representing our four strategic pillars goes into all thinking and planning around these.

AIM Stride #4
Understanding and appreciating neurodiversity



***Discuss and further clarify a working definition of "neurodiversity"** - We have engaged in dialogue with a variety of experts in the field. Neurodiversity used to be synonymous with Autism and Aspergers and now it refers to a much **wider** and more **inclusive** reference to learning differences (see graphic below).

We are going to facilitate a **faculty workshop** in collaboration with the learning support and counseling teams. This was slated by the end of the year but has been **postponed** to ensure adequate planning and consideration is given to this complex topic.

***Identify professional development opportunities for faculty and have at least one member from each building attend a workshop or webinar connected to neurodiversity** - As we will see on the next slide, there are several different schools of thought and so we are in discussions with the Perception Institute and Rethinked.

CELEBRATING NEURODIVERSITY



ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF THINKING - ADAPTIVE - ADVENTUROUS - AMBITIOUS - ARTISTIC - CREATES CONNECTIONS - CELEBRATES DIFFERENCES - COURAGEOUS - CREATIVE - DEDICATED - DIFFERENT, NOT LESS - GIFTED - GREAT SENSE OF HUMOR - IMAGINATIVE - INTELLIGENT - INTUITIVE - LOTS OF INTERESTS - MOTIVATED - PASSIONATE - PERSISTENT - PHILOSOPHICAL - PRODUCTIVE - QUIRKY - RESILIENT - PROBLEM SOLVER - SPECIAL GIFTS - RESOURCEFUL - SPONTANEOUS - STRAIGHTFORWARD - SUCCESSFUL - TAKES INITIATIVE - TENACIOUS - THINKS OUTSIDE THE BOX - THINKS BIG - DREAMS BIG - UNCONVENTIONAL - UNIQUE - VERSATILE - VISIONARY - WILLING TO EXPLORE - WILLINGNESS TO TAKE RISKS

AIM Stride #5
Understanding and appreciating socioeconomic diversity



***Take group to *Widening the Lens* conference** - this year's theme is *Class in the Classroom: Exploring Socioeconomic Diversity in Our Schools* - A pod of 14 constituents including faculty, families, students, alum and administrators attended which this year focused on socioeconomic diversity. This conference was outstanding and provided a lot to consider. As a direct result of the conference, we saw a **bank study in PreK/K** that was attuned to socio-economic diversity and in 6th grade discussions about **gentrification** led to a planned neighborhood trip to Harrison (which had to be postponed).

Following this, we attended Widening the Lens follow up on May 8 and also joined a NJAIS Practitioners group that met regularly throughout the year. What schools are thinking and talking about:

- Policies and procedures for supporting students with **cost of attendance beyond tuition** and emerging financial challenges in light of Covid-19 pandemic.
- An audit of the **hidden costs** of attending our school.
- This pandemic has highlighted the **disparity in income between many of our students** on campus. We have families who are facing food insecurity and lack access to healthcare, while others retreated to their summer homes early.
- We need a curriculum that addresses socioeconomics from a **social justice standpoint**. How money is viewed in our culture. Why it is taboo. The value and dignity of work. The silencing of people who do not have wealth, etc.

Questions that we (and our peer schools) continue to grapple with as a result include:

- Do we have a curriculum that addresses socioeconomic diversity/social justice?
- Is there ongoing dialogue about class in America? Or is it taboo?
- Have we been successful in pushing for a review of school traditions?
- Are there important activities held during the school/work day?
- What is your policy on exclusive events? (Ticketed/invitation only)
- Do you offer childcare on early-dismissal/professional days? Camps for spring break?
- What issues are present in your financial aid/tuition assistance program? Have you had conversations about sliding scale models?
- What are the hidden costs of attending your institution?

AIM Stride #6
Hiring and Retaining faculty and staff of color



*Expand Diversity Recruitment Fair to include at least 6 schools in the Hoboken and Jersey City area and partner with NJAIS for more localized event - we did actually add two schools (Oak Knoll and Elisabeth Morrow) but unfortunately we had to cancel due to the pandemic.

*Launch a Faculty and Staff of Color Affinity group that will meet periodically (at least twice per trimester) to explore the experiences of faculty of color and develop retention strategies - we **launched** at the beginning of the school year and the group has met twice per trimester*. The group works on a shared leadership model so different faculty/staff have been taking on the role of facilitator.

**The people of color faculty affinity group has been going well in spite of our meetings going virtual. The affinity meetings have been well attended with faculty and staff from all*

campuses. Our first virtual meeting from spring break was a time to call everyone in and reconnect and remind staff the importance for us to keep the work going during this time even if it has to happen on a virtual platform. There were a few diverse tops discussed around COVID 19 and how the minority community has been affected by the disease. In our next two upcoming meetings we are doing a mind body session and to close out the school year there will be a virtual closing social hour to gather feedback and to talk about next year.

- *Shanecka Frazier, co-facilitator*

***Work with current faculty of color on retention as well as finding out what attracted them to Stevens** - We have identified new professional development opportunities including **The Interschool Leadership Institute (ILI)**, a program designed to support the next generation of leaders of color in independent schools (by the same organizers as CARLE) and **Common Threads: An Educators Retreat for Women of Color** which we had registered someone for but it had to be canceled.

***Report back to the Board twice per year on hiring and retention data** - we are currently finalizing hiring season. Academic team members attended the **Carney Sandoe Diversity Forum** in Philadelphia; we attended the **Carney Sandoe Interrupting Bias in Interviewing webinar**; HR Manager and Director of Student Services and Equity delivered **training** on hiring practices for **Leadership Team**; we are **centralizing hiring documentation** in order to collect more **accurate data**; we **increased** number of faculty who attended **People of Color Conference (PoCC)** and brought last year and this year's cohorts together to debrief and discuss future retention strategies.

AIM Stride #7 *Building student community*



***Establish common times for cross grade interactions including common lunch times and elective period for middle school students** - Common lunches began at the very start of the school year and we initiated conversations with students about affinity, alliance and interest based groups. We hosted family coffees and shared a Screencastify for families prior to launching; we then launched **Student Choices; Student Voices** (SCSV) in February. Already some key moments of learning and we were taking real time **feedback from students** so that we can continue to respond to needs and interest levels. **Electives** were also offered to all 5th-8th grade students across campuses (Ethics Bowl, Creative Writing, Upcycling, Technology, Theatre, Coaching, Debate etc.).

***During regularly scheduled campus meetings, Newport faculty will have opportunities to discuss ways to continue to build students' sense of community outside of their individual classrooms and share progress in this area** - Conversations have occurred at humanities team meetings at both campuses with teacher teams together with the Principals and Counselors.

*Gather feedback from students about their experiences (e.g. through focus groups, surveys, student council etc) - So far, we have conducted **surveys** and gathered feedback from students that continues to shape the program.

As we enter year two of the AIM Strategic Action Plan, we intend to:

- Evaluate year one goals
- Set year two goals
- Launch an Equity handbook for faculty, staff and families

More to follow!

We hope this provides insight into some of the work that has been underway in service of our AIM Action Plan. We will continue to provide regular updates. If you have any questions, please contact Rhiannon at rhiannon@stevenscoop.org.