

August 25, 2020

Dear Villa Parents, Guardians, Caregivers, Alumni, Former Villa Parents, Faculty, and Staff,

Villa's Board of Directors, administration, teachers and staff share the same goal stated in the letter received on August 20, 2020, which was sent to the school and signed by several current and former members of Villa's community: "Our children deserve nothing less than everything we can do to make the world more fair, just, honest and equitable." We agree and believe this expectation of ourselves is consistent with the Montessori philosophy and Villa's continuing purpose to develop the unique greatness of each community member.

We recognize that change starts with leadership and we are committed to growing in our diversity. And we too believe that engaging with anti-racism and anti-bias training will advance our community towards this standard to which we hold ourselves. We commit to taking that action and continuing to engage with this very real issue.

While imperfect, learning and growing, we want you to know that Villa's work has already begun. In a presentation to staff on August 7, 2020, Margo announced that, as one of the major initiatives for the 2020-21 school year, Villa would "begin implementing anti-bias and anti-racism practices so that equity is advanced." As a start, components of that plan included the following:

- Professional development for staff, administration and the Board of Directors
  - The four key areas of anti-bias education: identity, diversity, justice and activism
  - How to lead meaningful race conversations in the classroom
  - The teaching of historical events in forthright, factual and age-appropriate ways
  - Participation in [Crossroads Antiracism Organizing & Training](#)
- The development of a staff advisory committee to explore, identify and remove any potential explicit and implicit bias at Villa.
- The development of a parent advisory committee (which has already begun meeting) to kick start honest conversations around unconscious bias and to develop ways the Villa parent community can actively engage with and support the school's efforts in this area.
- Purchase and implement the productive use of additional age-appropriate resources for all levels with Black, Indigenous and people of color, or BIPOC, as heroes and protagonists.
- Provide parents with resources on ways to discuss and address issues of racism and bias at home.

Maria Montessori said, "Education is the best weapon for peace." To that end, we will evaluate additional and necessary steps to ensure Villa remains a community jewel where everyone is respected and important so that all members of the community feel welcomed and a strong sense of belonging. There is no doubt that we all have room to grow in this important area. We all acknowledge that learning about anti-bias and anti-racism is big work that will take perseverance, stamina and the will to push through potential discomfort and pain along the way. Villa is fully committed to taking on this work

through collaboration, with open ears and open hearts. Every member of Villa Montessori's Board is fully committed to addressing these complex and pressing issues of our day.

Thank you for wanting a better educational environment for every child. We are eager to work together to grow an even greater school.

Onward together,

The Villa Montessori Board of Directors

Tom Jankowski, Chair

Jen Bookspan

Marilyn Burbach

Eddie Demosthenes

Sasha Glassman

Cindy Jones

John McDonald

Margo O'Neill

Doug Reid