



June 18, 2020

Dear Brooks School Community Members,

I write to all of you grateful for the thoughtful replies and exchanges many of my colleagues and I have received and been in prior to and since sending my letter to the community on June 2. We are grateful for the conversations this transformational movement aimed at stamping out racial injustice has generated on our campus and amongst so many in our community who are right to expect action more than sentiment. We are grateful to those of you who shared your own stories and experiences that illuminate in powerful ways the opportunity and responsibility our school has to be actively anti-racist. I want to be explicit as I begin this letter: Black Lives Matter. We are committed to being actively aligned with this movement and all efforts seeking to achieve equity and justice for the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) community.

James Baldwin wrote, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." There is a moral imperative in front of us to face the systemic racism that has oppressed the Black community for centuries. While our immediate ability to change the country might be limited, when it comes to changing Brooks School we are only limited if we allow ourselves to be. This must be the beginning of a transformational movement on our campus.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the seen and unseen work that has been asked of employees and students of color at Brooks for many years. It is clearer than ever that there has been and continues to be additional weight for members of the BIPOC community to carry in their lives at our predominantly white school. It is also clear that the school has not adequately honored the work and helped carry the weight. We have had objectively and relatively few BIPOC faculty members over time to whom our BIPOC students could turn to for the kind of support that white students have found much more routinely. Our Black Student Union and Alianza Latina affinity groups have been critical sources of support and safety for many of our Black and Latinx students. While it has been work and weight that BIPOC members of this community have and continue to pour themselves into with love and care, it has not been voluntary. This needs to be a point in time when the school moves with all due haste in a direction of sharing this work and growing our collective ability to carry the weight.

With what follows, I would like to address some of what we have heard that underlines the critical nature of the work we need to do. From there, and with a clearer understanding than the school has perhaps ever had before about the gap between where we are and where we need to be, I would like to point to diversity, equity, and

inclusion (DEI) work that is ongoing. In addition, and more importantly, I would like to indicate what we are committed to doing over the summer and into the 2020-2021 school year. We approach all of this work intent on being honest with ourselves, committed to transparency and dynamic approaches as we move forward, accountable to goals we set, and with great humility as we continue to learn from others.

We have heard from a number of you who have shared personal accounts and encouragement over the past few weeks. These exchanges have been inspirational and motivational, and they have called for action. Some of you expressed concern that the institutional commitment to DEI work has been sporadic and inconsistent over time. Some suggested the school has not been a safe environment for BIPOC students through the years. Others have suggested that we have not been intentional or vigilant enough in our efforts to address racism in the curriculum and student life. There is some feeling that the school has been accepting of microaggressions when opportunities to engage with and learn from them have presented themselves. I want to emphasize that we hear and acknowledge these concerns. As one student put it, there are times when it feels like the school is just trying to keep everything in balance, and steers clear of pushing into important discomfort. This passage from a note I received from a younger alumna remains prominent in my mind. She wrote:

"I've occupied largely white and privileged spaces my entire life -- I attended [a public school in an affluent town] before Brooks, and [a private college] after. But what's struck me in the past few days is that it's my fellow white friends from Brooks who have been silent on this. Overwhelmingly. Students at Brooks shouldn't be allowed to graduate without ever leaving the bubble they arrive in as a third-former. I think many do."

As I think about the pride I continue to feel in our graduates who often become leaders in their communities, this perspective is the sort of call to action we must heed. To try differently in ways that ensure our graduates are upstanders and not bystanders when racial injustice is staring at us strikes me as essential if we are to be what we say we are as a school. While we are more mindful than we have ever been about our current station in this work being insufficient, many of you asked what the school has been doing and what we plan to do this summer and continuing into the 2020-2021 school year and beyond. To that end, we offer the following:

The Past Two Weeks:

- We are in the process of connecting with our BIPOC students and families in an effort to check in and emphasize our desire to support them through the summer and over the years ahead. If we can be helpful to anyone in our community during this time, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.
- On June 3, Dean of Community Life Ashley Johnston organized and invited students and employees to a virtual town hall gathering to create space for some to share and others to listen. The invitation included access to resources aimed at educating and supporting the community. We held this first town hall gathering on June 4. Our next one is scheduled for June 23.
- We opened our end-of-year faculty meetings on June 3 with our Diversity Leadership Council (DLC) sharing personal reflections on their work through the year, along with a DEI mission statement we are in the process of finalizing. This statement will be added to the [diversity page](#) on the school's website.
- The Alumni Board met and formed a DEI committee to begin some outreach to our alumni and alumnae of color in an effort to draw from the experience and wisdom in our extended community. This group also discussed organizing a

mentoring program for current BIPOC students that would connect them with alumni and alumnae of color.

- A number of faculty members have signed up for DEI workshops and seminars scheduled for this summer. We are building a required summer reading list for the whole faculty centered on understanding white privilege and a better understanding of what it means to be actively anti-racist.
- The Board of Trustees held its spring meetings and confirmed the work we have been doing through the year to form a board-level DEI committee. One board member has been attending Diversity Leadership Council meetings this spring, and many on the board expressed enthusiasm and a personal desire to be involved. We will be forming and populating this committee with a group of trustees in the weeks ahead, and the group looks forward to engaging with the community directly. Its task will be to partner with school leadership on defining goals and holding the school accountable as we aim to achieve them.

The Past Year:

- We have been focused on and committed to diversifying our faculty. We have five new full-time faculty members of color and one new trustee of color joining the school this summer.
- We have been focused for many years now on diversifying our student body. The most substantial step the school has taken in this direction of late is our [Davis Scholar program](#) in partnership with Andrew Davis '81. The program supported 10 students this past year who are all BIPOC students and members of the first generation in their families to go to college. The cohort will grow to 12 students in 2020-2021. The Davis Scholars will continue to meet as a group with Academic Dean Susanna Waters and their advisors through the year to support one another and engage in building personal portfolios centered on a school-wide success skill and a school value. We hope to continue to grow this program over the years ahead.
- We are also excited to have our first Davis Teaching Fellow joining the faculty this summer. This was a direct result of current students expressing a need for the school to add faculty members of color. Olivia Budd-Pearson '15 will be one of the five new faculty members of color joining the school, and our inaugural Davis Teaching Fellow.
- We have increased our DEI emphasis within the school's curriculum with particular attention to [humanities electives](#), and have prioritized evaluating and redesigning elements of our foundational courses across all academic departments. Furthermore, the English department's [statement on antiracist practices](#) has inspired a broader conversation among departments about how to best realize this in all disciplines.
- The fall edition of the [Brooks Bulletin](#) highlighted our affinity groups on campus, which continue to play an important role in supporting BIPOC students and building community within the larger Brooks School community.
- All department chairs and faculty members directly involved in the hiring process did implicit bias training with [Liza Talusan](#), an educator and strategic change partner who works with schools and colleges on equity and inclusion issues.
- Six faculty members and six students attended the 2019-2020 [NAIS People of Color Conference](#), and the group of students shared their experiences with the Board of Trustees at our January meetings.
- A Winter Term course studied the land upon which the school sits and learned that the Pennacook people were the first inhabitants of the physical space we are so privileged to occupy. The group developed a land acknowledgment we have

begun using at major school events: "At Brooks School, we live and learn on land once of the Pennacook people, and we acknowledge their enduring presence."

- Cultural competence continues to be a school-wide success skill. This is defined as "awareness of one's own identity and the ability to effectively interact, work, and develop meaningful relationships with people of other cultural backgrounds. This includes recognizing and respecting diversity through our words and actions in all contexts." We emphasize this as one of six skills when measuring student growth and proficiency within our competency-based learning curriculum.

Recent Years and Today's Community:

- The school's leadership is predominantly white. The senior administrative team includes one person of color. One of six academic department chairs and one of six endowed faculty chair holders are people of color.
- Over the past nine years, we have grown our domestic student of color number from 67 to 95. Of the 95 students, 27 percent identify as Hispanic/Latinx; 25 percent identify as Asian-American; 20 percent identify as Black/African-American; 15 percent identify as Multi-Racial; 11 percent identify as Indian-American, and 2 percent as other. In total, BIPOC students will make up more than 25 percent of the student body. In addition, we will have 32 international students from 12 different countries at Brooks in 2020-2021.
- In the 2019-2020 school year, our full-time faculty members of color made up 9 percent of the school's overall full-time faculty. Full-time faculty members of color in 2020-2021 will be 18 percent of the overall full-time faculty.
- We have increased our financial aid budget substantially over the past 10 years, which has allowed us to grow the percentage of students receiving a need-based grant from less than 23 percent to more than 32 percent in the coming year; 55 percent of the school's 2020-2021 financial aid budget will be used to support domestic students of color; 43 percent of students receiving a need-based financial aid grant are domestic students of color.
- We continue to partner with a range of organizations and schools in our effort to recruit some of the exceptional BIPOC students we are so fortunate to have at Brooks. These organizations and schools include: Daniel Murphy Scholarship Fund (Chicago, IL), A Better Chance (New York, NY), Prep for Prep (New York, NY), Wight Foundation (Newark, NJ), New Jersey SEEDS (Newark, NJ), Esperanza Academy (Lawrence, MA), Spark Academy (Lawrence, MA), Bellesini Academy (Lawrence, MA), Robert Treat Academy Charter School (Newark, NJ), The Boys Club of New York City.

We share where we are and what we have been trying to do in order to provide a clear and transparent snapshot of the school at this point in time. With an emphasis on school leadership, we also appreciate the need to increase these numbers over the years ahead and are committed to exploring new strategies to realize this goal. In addition, we are excited to step in the direction of what follows.

Our Initial Commitment:

- We will diversify school leadership as current positions open and as new positions are created. This will include positions on the Board of Trustees, Alumni Board, and the school's senior administration.
- We will engage the whole school community in a climate assessment in 2020-2021 and use the findings from that work to inform our DEI work in and beyond

next year. We will do this on a bi-annual basis moving forward in order to more closely monitor both the felt and measurable progress we are making. We will share the results of this work with all school constituencies.

- Our faculty members of color formed an affinity group this summer, and the school will draw a great deal from this group's experience and perspective at Brooks as we define and implement curricular and extra-curricular approaches aimed at helping the school become actively anti-racist. The school will seek the perspective of this group at every level of decision-making for school-wide initiatives.
- We will explore ways to better leverage the talent and expertise on our faculty as part of a need to expand time and resources devoted to staffing the school's DEI efforts.
- As part of that effort, we are establishing a new position dedicated to researching, implementing, and evaluating DEI practices across our curricular and co-curricular programming, with particular attention to curriculum development and teaching support.
- We will reorganize our Self in Community curriculum in order to dedicate more time and space within those courses for intentional conversation about race, white privilege, and active anti-racism.
- We will be doing implicit bias training as a whole faculty to begin the 2020-2021 school year.
- We have scheduled the aforementioned summer series of Community Conversations aimed at continuing to provide a forum for students and employees to share and listen about how we experience life at Brooks differently.
- We will engage as a full faculty in exploration and conversation about white privilege and the ways all of us who identify as white can become better allies in the fight against racial injustice.
- We will establish time and create physical space for affinity group meetings to occur more routinely in our weekly schedule.
- We will review all of our discipline and behavioral policies to ensure they are adhered to in ways that are fair and equitable.
- We will create equity grievance protocols that provide real, meaningful resolutions to micro- and macro-aggressions for employees and students.
- We will review all of our vendor relationships to better understand each vendor's commitment to active anti-racism. We will move on from relationships where that commitment is absent.
- We will pursue vendor relationships with Black-owned businesses, in particular, and businesses owned by members of the BIPOC community, in general.
- We will reach out to local police departments to better understand their anti-racist policies in an effort to have a better understanding of their commitment to ensuring the safety of our BIPOC students and employees in surrounding communities.

As we finished faculty meetings to wrap up the 2019-2020 school year last week, we did so with more resolve than I believe we have ever had about moving in an actively anti-racist direction. As an educational institution with extraordinary advantages and privileges by any objective or relative measure, we have both a responsibility and opportunity to act; to marshal the school's collective strength to combat racial injustice; to see this movement that must not pass us by as a profoundly important inflection point in American life that requires our active participation; to learn together in ways that equip past, present, and future Brooks School students to be active anti-racist leaders, upstanders, and citizens in the communities they are a part of. There is so much possibility in front of us.

I have always believed that whatever challenges Brooks School has faced in its very human journey through what are now just about 93 complete years of existence, those challenges have never been a match for what is good and right about our school. I believe this now. We have stumbled. We have made mistakes. We will likely make more. Yet, we are called at this time to try differently and with greater commitment; to do and be better. To approach the opportunity ahead in any other mindset would fail our students, our community, and a country that needs schools like ours to do their part. We are where we are. We cannot, however, continue to be here. We will face these challenges head on, and we will make changes.

Again, thank you for your engagement. We look forward to staying in touch, sharing our progress over time, and becoming the best version of ourselves we have ever been.

Sincerely,

John R. Packard
Head of School

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