



June 22, 2021

Dear Brooks School Community Members,

As the 2020-2021 school year comes to an end and we begin to turn our attention to providing some time and space for restoration and renewal after what has been both a trying and deeply rewarding year, I am glad to be in touch in order to update all of you on the diversity, equity, and inclusion work the school has done and will continue to do this upcoming year and beyond. Over the past 12 months, we have worked hard and in new ways to move our commitment to this work forward. While we have made some important progress over the past year, we also appreciate that there is a great deal still to do. We do not approach diversity, equity, and inclusion work as a journey with a finish line. Instead, we see the work in front of us as a mode we need to further embed in our culture and program in order to more fully deliver on our mission. We remain committed to anti-racism and our alignment with the Black Lives Matter movement, and look forward to staying a course aiming to ensure full belonging for all members of our community.

With what follows, I would like to spend some time updating all of you with two thoughts in mind: First, a good part of what **we have shared** over the past year has been data, policy and protocol creation, and professional development steps we have taken and plan to take as a school. These are the more measurable aspects of the work we have been doing, and our hope is to provide an updated sense of where we are in this regard. Second, we appreciate that the harder-to-measure aspects of this work are every bit as important as what we can list and identify in a letter such as this one. In a number of ways, we have spent a lot of our time this year working to better position the school to realize and feel equity, inclusion, and belonging at a deeper level on our campus. While these measurable aspects of the work do increase opportunities to make progress, our challenge will be turning these opportunities into impact and outcomes felt throughout our community. In this spirit, our work continues, and we are determined to make both measurable and felt progress over the years ahead.

### **The Past Year and our Current State**

*Student Body Composition* -- One year ago, we reported that our domestic student of color number had grown from 67 to 95 over the previous nine years. This number will grow to 97 students in 2021-2022. Of the 97 students, 23 percent identify as Hispanic/Latinx; 27 percent identify as Asian-American; 20 percent identify as Black/African-American; 20 percent identify as Multi-Racial; eight percent identify as Indian-American; and two percent as Other. BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) students will make up more than 27 percent of the student body - as high as this number has ever been. In addition, we will have 33 international students representing 12 countries around the world -- just under 10 percent of the student body.

*Faculty Composition* -- At this time last year, we shared that we had hired five new faculty members of color for the 2020-2021 school year. This grew our faculty member of color percentage from nine percent to 18 percent. We have two faculty members of color leaving the school at the end of this year and have hired two new faculty members of color to join us in 2021-2022. Thus, our faculty member of color percentage will hold at 18 percent. We will be adding a second **Davis Teaching Fellow**, and are excited to continue developing and broadening this program.

*Board of Trustees and Alumni Board Composition* -- Earlier in the year, we made a commitment to add two new trustees of color to the board of trustees in 2021-2022. We are pleased to be adding three trustees of color to the group, which will increase our trustee of color percentage from 14

percent (four out of 28 members) to 24 percent (7 out of 29 members). The alumni board added six alumni of color to the 2021-2022 group, which increases BIPOC representation to more than 30 percent.

*Financial Aid* -- We noted one year ago that our financial aid budget had grown substantially over the previous decade. This allowed us to increase the number of students receiving a need-based financial aid grant from 23 percent to 32 percent. This number will grow to 35 percent in 2021-2022, and 55 percent of the total budget will support domestic students of color. Our [Davis Scholar](#) cohort will grow from 12 to 13 students in 2021-2022, with plans to expand to 16 students over the next three years. As a result of a suggestion of a returning Davis Scholar, we are pleased to be piloting a few on-campus summer internships for those in the cohort who are interested. This program continues to play a lead role in attracting exceptional students to our school who are members of the first generation in their families to go to college.

*School Leadership* -- We had very little turnover in school leadership positions this year. As a result, we will continue to have one person of color on our senior administrative team. Similarly, one of six academic department chairs and one of six endowed faculty chair holders are people of color. We anticipate more movement as we move from the coming year to 2022-2023, and will explore ways to expand the diversity of the school's leadership as opportunities to do so emerge.

*School Climate Survey* -- We administered the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism (AIM) in the late fall and are partnering with [NP Strategies](#) to assess the substantial volume of quantitative and qualitative data these surveys returned. We intend to share that data with the whole community in an abridged form, and we will conduct a comparable survey every two years to help track our progress.

*Bias and Grievance Protocols* -- We introduced bias and grievance protocols in the fall and received roughly 20 reports from community members over the course of the year. The DEI Team, including Kenya Jones (director of multicultural affairs and outreach), Ashley Johnston (dean of community life), and Michael Veit (director of DEI curriculum and programming), engaged groups of students in restorative justice circle discussions to address these grievances in educational and non-disciplinary ways. While there is still work to do in order to establish these protocols as a means of sharing and resolving micro-aggressions and bias-related incidents in our community, we were glad to get started. We will need additional training in these practices in the coming year and beyond.

*Academic Program* -- There were a range of steps we took to deepen the school's diversity, equity, and inclusion focus within the overall academic program. Here is some of what we did and are planning to do in 2021-2022:

- We designed schedules for both the 2020-2021 (pandemic) and 2021-2022 (non-pandemic) academic years that include separate and protected times for both student and employee affinity groups to meet. In so doing, we aimed to increase our focus on intersectionality and rotational scheduling in order to avoid requiring community members to have to choose between two affinity groups.
- Academic department chairs and additional faculty members attended the Association of Independent Schools of New England (AISNE) training on *Learning for Justice Teaching Standards: Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action*. While all departments are engaged in this work, here are two examples of what we are taking on: First, the history department has begun work on a *DEI Across the Curriculum Guide* in order to map the progression of DEI skills development over four years. In addition, courses in Native American Studies, Latin American History, and 21st Century American History [have been added](#). Second, the math department is working on problem-based learning to build discussion-based classrooms that empower student voices, create social justice contextual problem-solving opportunities, design individualized project-based assessments, and focus on student-centered pedagogy that will support students with diverse backgrounds.
- The academic program continues to explore and promote competency-based education as a method to grade toward equity, and for students to understand and measure their growth over six schoolwide success skills. We are planning to revise our cultural competence standard to reflect intersectional identities and systems of power, and integrate the standards from *Learning for Justice* into our competency-based education framework.
- We have added a DEI standard of our own creation to our New England Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation process and will be looking at the whole school through this lens ahead of our evaluation in October 2022.
- This spring, our DEI Team led our All Community Read selection process with a group of

students and employees over a two-month period, and we will be reading Trevor Noah's *Born A Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* over the course of the summer. We will integrate the book in our classroom and co-curricular learning in the fall.

- We introduced *Dialogues Across Difference* to our Self-In-Community (SIC) curriculum this past year and will continue to use these lessons and others as we review and evolve the DEI component of this four-year sequence for all students at Brooks.

*Professional Development* -- As we noted earlier in the year, we have engaged in a wide range of professional development steps this year. Here is some of what many of us took on over the second half of the year:

- We continued our work with the [Suffolk University Center for Restorative Justice](#) and finished the year with 25 faculty members completing Tier I training and 14 faculty members completing Tier II training. We intend to build on this progress in 2021-2022 and have high hopes for circle discussions and the many ways in which restorative justice approaches can serve our equity, inclusion, and belonging aspirations.
- All student affinity groups referenced earlier in the year met through the winter and spring, and our employee of color group continued to meet through the year with Michael Veit coordinating the meetings. In addition, faculty members Chelsea Clater, Ashley Johnston, Leigh Perkins and Babs Wheelden completed their training with Dr. Ali Michael to lead a white anti-racist group. This led to the addition of a White Anti-Racist Educators group (WARE) this spring. The group is action-oriented, and has held three initial meetings including more than 20 faculty members who identify as white. All of our affinity groups will continue their work together in 2021-2022.
- Six faculty members directly involved in our hiring process attended the [NEMNET Overcoming Obstacles to Recruiting Faculty of Color](#) workshop in the winter. In conjunction with the implicit bias training the whole faculty engaged in during the fall, this work helped us enter the hiring window in the late winter and spring with broader perspective and revised processes we used with all faculty candidates.
- Our Diversity Leadership Council includes more than 20 faculty members and both trustees who co-chair our DEI Committee. This spring, the group broke into six subcommittees (Student Wellness, Admissions, Academics: Teaching Evaluation, Hiring and Retention, Afternoon Activities/Programming, Awards and Recognition) and began research and data collection in each of these areas that will help inform next steps we will take in 2021-2022 to grow diversity, equity, and inclusion in all of these areas.
- A number of faculty members attended AISNE DEI workshops in the spring. This included: *Social Justice Standards: Anti-Bias Education*; *Gain School-Wide Systemic Equity Strategies*; *Shifts of Consciousness for White Educators*. We will also have four faculty members attending [Diversity Directions](#) this summer -- a weeklong seminar aimed at helping educators and schools sustain and further commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### **Looking Ahead**

Over the course of the past year, we have committed an enormous amount of time and effort to listening, learning, looking at both our school and ourselves through some new lenses, and implementing approaches we believe have elevated our collective consciousness about the critical importance of staying vigilant in our pursuit of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism at Brooks. While we certainly stumbled at times and wrestled with challenges that emerged over the course of the past year, these experiences have only deepened our resolve to stay fully engaged in the work.

We appreciate that all the data gathering and sharing, policy and protocol creation, and professional development we take on will mean very little if it does not contribute to an experience for BIPOC members of our community that feels increasingly equitable and inclusive. Thus, we are entirely clear about our need to be actively moving in a direction that leads to progress -- individually, collectively, and in ways we feel within the culture of our school. To this end, we are committed to continuing and are grateful for your support, engagement, and all you do to keep Brooks School pointed in the direction of being a better and better version of itself.

We will look forward to staying in touch. Have a wonderful summer.

Sincerely,

John R. Packard

