

Widening the Lens

The Far Brook School Diversity Conference

DIVERSITY PRACTITIONER CONSTITUENT GROUP CONVERSATION STARTERS

QUOTES FOR DISCUSSION

"Since the wider sense of community for all students and adults is compromised when racism is left unexamined, conversations on race and racism should be held across and among the various constituencies in the school community. Talking about race and racism is not something only black people and other people of color should do. While interracial dialogue that directly addresses race, racism, and privilege may be difficult to engage in, it is necessary that these conversations take place."

- Edith G. Arrington, Diane M. Hall, and Howard C. Stevenson
"The Success of African American Students in Independent Schools"

"Diversity practitioners at independent schools are responsible for addressing diversity and equity at institutions with longstanding histories of privileging sameness. We are charged with actively engaging in comprehensive, encompassing, and relevant initiatives that present diversity and inclusion as extensions of the school's sustained identity of excellence in education. But in independent schools with long-established cultures, there are often very different perceptions of diversity and inclusion than the social issues that impact the lives of students.

A basic tenet of diversity is to build value into our differences and sustain those values throughout our educational practices. The overarching goal should be to produce students who have a better understanding of the complexities of an ever-changing world.

Independent schools sing the praises of diversity and inclusion, but not all of them actually do the work of making their schools diverse and inclusive. For many schools, the first step toward action is recognizing how a history of exclusion has contributed to the school's culture—and then doing the work of changing that culture.

...After almost 10 years of leading institutions' diversity and inclusion efforts, I wonder if it is possible to push back against a school's history and create an environment that is open to the work needed to transform and transcend past injustices and create an authentic learning institution. What does that process look like? What does that administrative team look like? And what type of leader would it take to deconstruct the values and traditions that have been established? These are the questions we need to continue to ponder as we explore and confront issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion."

Phillip McAdoo, *Independent School Magazine*,
"What Does It Take to Be Truly Inclusive"

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"According to the NAIS study "2019 State of the Diversity Practice," diversity practitioners in independent schools are experienced, highly educated, and racially and ethnically diverse. Their role has grown more complex as emerging issues and increased diversity within the school community require practitioners' assistance and strategic thinking. However, weak strategic alignment, unclear job responsibilities, and the risk of practitioner burnout threaten the success of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in independent schools. Practitioners report that they need more strategic actions and overall support to serve their students, families, and workforces well."

"In addition, diversity practice operates as a business driver. It supports institutional practices that help mitigate workplace risk (such as discriminatory practices in hiring, compensation, and other benefits) while contributing to a culture of inclusion that allows all employees to perform optimally."

NAIS Trendbook, 2020-2021

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#Blackat INSTAGRAM POSTS

“Sitting in _____’s (Diversity Director) office and taking off the “mask”. ” (before COVID)

#codeswitching

#beingoneself

#representation

“So I had the chance to be introduced (via Zoom) to _____ the new Director of DEI during the spring. She seems downright amazing, enthusiastic, and powerful. That being said, I have somewhat lost hope that a few powerful black people (admin and faculty) are able to fight effectively for change against this institution. This place and its admin wear even the best BIPOC out. But I am hoping for the best. And to _____, know that I am so grateful for you and your work. We are standing and fighting with you, even if we aren’t always in the room.”

#losinghope

#fightingstill

#fatigue

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QUESTIONS

Question 1: What new pathways have opened since the catalytic events of the spring and summer? New obstacles?

Question 2: Do you have the support and resources (human, financial, and other, such as time) needed to lead your school in an effort toward anti-racism?

Question 3: If you have the title of Diversity Director (or its equivalent), do you sit on the administrative team? If not, do you think that this role should be represented there? What are the obstacles?

Question 4: Do your efforts reach all constituents in the community- students, faculty, administrators, parents/families? If not, is it possible to extend your reach?

Question 5: Are independent schools ready to be resolute in their support of anti-racism? If not, what obstacles exist and how can they be dismantled?

Question 6: How exhausting has this year been? What are you doing for self-care?