

THE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION MAGAZINE FOR INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

DIVERSITYIS™

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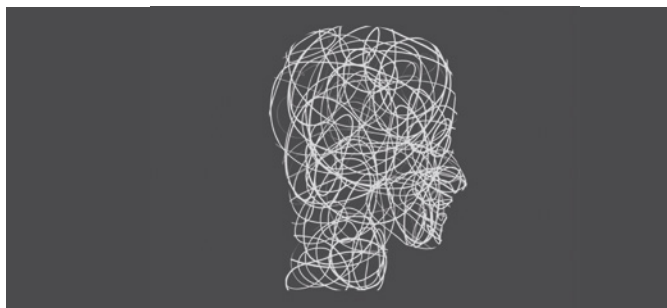
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A Letter to *DiversityIS* Readers

Dear Readers,

We are excited to introduce you to the inaugural issue of *DiversityIS*, the only publication dedicated solely to diversity and inclusion in K-12 independent schools. Our company, Potomac Publishing, Inc., also publishes *INSIGHT Into Diversity*, the oldest, largest, and most well-regarded diversity and inclusion magazine in higher education.

Published quarterly, *DiversityIS* will highlight the programs and initiatives of independent schools dedicated to increasing diversity, inclusion, equity, and access in K-12 education in order to create inclusive and welcoming environments for all students and employees. We will equip educators, leaders, and administrators with practical classroom tools, information on the latest trends in diversity and inclusion, connections to preeminent experts in the field, and much more.

Be sure to follow us on social media and on our website at diversityIS.com to read the latest and most up-to-date news in the field. If you are interested in searching for new job opportunities, visit our online Career Center to view thousands of current open positions.

Join us in our commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion throughout each and every independent school across the country.

We look forward to our partnership,

Lenore Pearlstein
Holly Mendelson
Publishers of *DiversityIS* magazine

DIVERSITYIS™

In Review:

***The Hate U Give* Explores Code-Switching, Racial Tension in Private Schools**

By Mariah Bohanon

Thousands of copies of the acclaimed young adult novel *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas have been purchased or donated to schools across the United States since its February 2017 debut. Social justice-centered lesson plans on the book abound, as well. Now, the film version of this #1 *New York Times* Bestseller, which earned the author a Coretta Scott King Honor, provides a new platform for introducing this powerful story to the classroom.

Released in theaters in October 2018 and now available on DVD and for online streaming, *The Hate U Give* movie has been hailed as a “must-see” by critics, educators, and parents. Of prominence in the film is the tension between the two worlds occupied by protagonist Starr Carter, a 16-year-old African American girl who lives in a low-income, majority-black neighborhood but attends an elite, predominantly white prep school. Acclaimed African American director George Tillman has been hailed for presenting the stark contrast between these spaces and the nuances evident in Starr’s ability to move between the two. Actress Amandla Stenberg’s portrayal of Starr’s struggle to navigate her identity in the face of rising racial tensions has earned her widespread critical acclaim. The film also brings new perspectives to the book’s take on the Black Lives Matter movement and the tragic police shooting that spurs Starr to find her voice.

For lesson plans to accompany classroom screenings of *The Hate U Give*, including information on how to use the movie as a teaching tool for visual learners, visit donorschoose.org/blog/teaching-the-hate-u-give. ■

SUPPORT ACHIEVES SUCCESS

Becoming Head of School

“...men of color feel more supported by their schools than white women and women of color in both their professional development goals and their desire to become a head.”
(2016 NAIS study)



66% ▶ men of color who say they are highly confident in their ability to become head of school

43% ▶ women overall who say they feel confident in their ability to become head

Source: *On Teacher Quality in Independent Schools* by Matt Balossi and Natalia Hernandez

WHAT MAKES A GREAT TEACHER?

Top 4 Characteristics that Independent Schools Use to Describe High-Quality Teachers

- Strong relationships with students
- Strong pedagogical knowledge and content expertise
- Growth mind-set
- Ability to fit well within the school’s culture



ON THE RISE

The share of teachers of color in the nonsectarian private and independent school workforce has seen an increase of

456%

between 1987-1988 and 2011-2012 (NCES Report 2017)

Introducing the *DiversityIS* Editorial Board

The *DiversityIS* team is proud to introduce the initial members of our Editorial Board.

This distinct group includes independent school leaders, diversity and inclusion experts, activists, counselors, and more, all dedicated to ensuring that diversity, inclusion, social justice, and equity play integral roles in independent schools for all.

Please help us welcome:



Loris N. Adams
Director of Community
and Equity Affairs at
St. Mark's School in
Southborough, Mass.



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Director of College
Counseling and Director of
Diversity and Inclusion at
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in Windsor, Conn.



Max Strickberger
Freshman at University
of Pennsylvania and
co-founder of *InLight*,
a student-led diversity
and identity magazine



Sam Strickberger
Freshman at University
of Pennsylvania and
co-founder of *InLight*,
a student-led diversity
and identity magazine

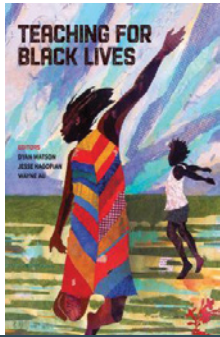


Jeff Suzik
Director, Fanny Edel Falk
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University of Pittsburgh

For more information about the *DiversityIS* Editorial Board, visit diversityIS.com.

The Race Factor

Three Handbooks Address Race in the Classroom | By Ginger O'Donnell



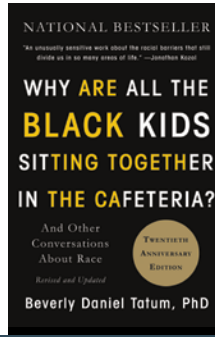
Teaching for Black Lives

Released in April 2018 by the nonprofit education publisher Rethinking Schools, *Teaching for Black Lives* provides K-12 teachers with a brief history of the Black Lives Matter movement and offers strategies for transforming classrooms and schools “into sites of resistance against white supremacy.”

Essays in the book help readers develop critical perspectives on how biased curriculum materials historically dehumanized African American students. One section encourages history teachers to emphasize African American self-empowerment during the Civil War and the civil rights movement. Another on “Loving Blackness” supports the importance of celebrating black identity.

The editors make clear that *Teaching for Black Lives* will not eradicate racial injustice in U.S. schools and communities, but the “ferocity of racism” demands that teachers actively resist it.

The book is co-edited by Dyan Watson, EdD, associate professor at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Ore.; Jesse Hagopian, history teacher at Garfield High School in Seattle, Wash.; and Wayne Au, PhD, professor at the University of Washington at Bothell. ■



Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race

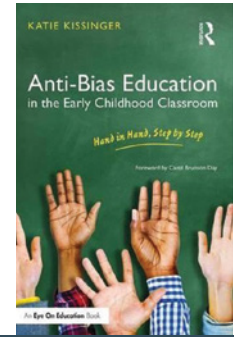
Award-winning psychologist Beverly Daniel Tatum, PhD, has updated and reissued her classic 1997 bestselling book on the psychology of racism.

The new version includes an additional 100 pages analyzing the U.S. social and political context of the past two decades. Tatum also explores school and neighborhood segregation, the nation's changing demographics, and the history of affirmative action policies and racial progress in the era of President Donald Trump.

Tatum's answer to the title question remains unchanged. Students of color self-segregate in U.S. schools, she says, because doing so helps them cope with being part of a targeted racial group. These students find solace in developing an “oppositional identity,” she explains.

In calling for a more open dialogue about race, she encourages white teachers to form support groups to help them process feelings they have about their own unconscious biases and about learning to be culturally sensitive.

The issues Tatum explores in the revised edition of her book are essential reading for educators seeking to broaden their perspectives amid America's rapidly shifting race dynamics. ■



Anti-Bias Education in the Early Childhood Classroom: Hand in Hand, Step by Step

The latest book by author, educator, and social justice activist Katie Kissingner serves as a guide for teachers on fostering inclusive and equitable early childhood classrooms.

Kissingner outlines three different levels of commitment toward anti-bias education and encourages readers to identify the level at which they feel most comfortable participating.

“Beginners” are passionate about creating inclusive spaces for every child but may not be familiar with “anti-bias” or “anti-oppression.” “Allies” are familiar with such terminology and want to challenge themselves to do more to support social justice in the classroom. “Activists” put principles of social justice at the forefront of both their personal and professional lives, “constantly working to dismantle the dynamics of oppression” in personal relationships and as part of formal institutions.

Kissingner provides concrete anti-bias steps that beginners, allies, and activists alike can take to improve their classrooms. Drawing on more than 30 years of classroom experience, she shows adults how to consider their own personal biases, a requirement in committing to anti-bias education. ■



Tips to Help Students Pursue Activism

By Romana Mrzljak

Young adults are fueling change

around the nation. Most recently, they've dominated conversations on gun control, climate change, sexual assault, and immigration rights. If your students want to use their voices to make an impact in their communities, you can offer these tips to help them get started.

Find Your Passion

The first step toward effecting positive change is identifying issues important to you. Find inspiration in personal experiences, local and national conversations, and trending social media movements. Pinpoint one or two topics you are passionate about and commit to leading the change you want to see.

Stay Informed

Advocating for social change starts with knowing the facts. Conduct research on the political and social history of the issue and use reliable news sources to stay up to date and informed. You don't need to know everything about a topic to be an advocate. Strive to understand more about the issue.

Create Goals and Develop a Strategy

Creating a list of short- and long-term goals will help you organize and develop a detailed action plan. For example, if your objective is to hold a panel discussion on homelessness, you will need to devise a strategy to first raise awareness about the cause.

Take Action

Constant, positive, everyday actions are a fundamental part of creating sustainable change. You don't have to lead a national protest to stand up for a cause you believe in. Dedicate your time to small forms of activism, such as the following:

Six Social Justice Issues Americans Face

- Gun Control
- Diversity and Racial Discrimination
- Poverty
- Women's Rights
- Mental Health
- LGBTQ+ Rights

TIP: Many national organizations have step-by-step toolkits and educational material on their websites that you can download and customize to fit your goals. Here are just a few that are available:

- Amnesty International:
<https://bit.ly/2SYMgpx>
- The Sierra Club:
<https://bit.ly/2VUGaIG>
- MoveOn.org:
<https://bit.ly/2DbjoVu>
- Global Justice Now:
<https://bit.ly/2MfALYr>

- Contacting political representatives
- Signing petitions
- Writing op-eds for school and local newspapers
- Participating in meetings and rallies
- Volunteering
- Creating a club or organization at school
- Posting reliable, accurate information on social media

TIP: Use your experience as an activist to become an organizer and build a community of activists who can work together on important issues.

Today's Independent Schools Are More Diverse, but There's Still Work to Be Done

By Alice Pettway

When **Gina Parker Collins** visited the Civil Rights Museum in Birmingham, Ala., she was struck by a replica of two 1953 classrooms: one for black children, one for white. "It was the tables, the desks and the chairs, the technology or the lack thereof, the lighting, the books. ... There is still separation and there is still inequality in the classroom," she says. "It's a system of oppression that threads itself not only through our public and charter schools, but certainly through our independent schools."

Collins is the founder of Resources In Independent School Education (RIISE), an organization that supports families of color whose children attend independent schools. It also helps independent schools with diversity, inclusion, social justice, and equity initiatives. Given the lack of diversity in the independent school system, organizations like RIISE are necessary, Collins says.

In 2015, black and Latino students accounted for 15.4 percent and 25.9 percent of public elementary and secondary school students, respectively, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. In independent schools, these students made up only 6.5 percent and 5.3 percent of the student population, according to the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

As concerning as these numbers are, they represent an improvement in independent school student diversity, according to NAIS. Historically, independent schools have catered



Gina Parker Collins with participants of the nonprofit organization she leads, Resources in Independent School Education (RIISE). (Photo courtesy Jane Feldman)

to socio-economically privileged white students. In the wake of *Brown v. Board of Education*, according to the Southern Education Foundation, new independent schools were founded to accommodate white families who were unwilling to send their children to integrated public schools.

Jessica Perez del Toro examined this legacy of racial privilege in independent schools in a 2017 study of three Southern California member schools of the NAIS. Her findings suggest independent schools are making efforts to increase diversity but a lingering unwillingness among some administrators, parents, and students to address issues of racial inequity is slowing progress.

Collins has experienced a similar lack

of engagement from white families in the schools RIISE works with. "I think if you don't have skin in the game, it's kind of hard," she says. "However, there are many families of the numerical majority, white families, who understand that part of their investment in an independent school is to prepare their child to be able to compete in a global market."

That global market is racially and ethnically diverse and the United States is on track to become a majority-minority country by 2044, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Those realities have motivated independent schools to address white overrepresentation, Collins says.

But both Perez del Toro and Collins

warn numerical diversity is not the same as equity and inclusion. Some schools, in a quest for what Perez del Toro refers to as “easy diversity” in her report, focus on recruitment and enrollment without putting in place policies that support students of color once they arrive.

In the absence of strategic direction, these children find themselves learning from curricula that aren’t inclusive, taught by faculty who aren’t diverse, and often subjected to racial microaggressions they may not be able to name, let alone feel comfortable telling an adult about, Perez del Toro concludes in her report.

One of the students Perez del Toro

like, ‘Well, maybe I’m not as deserving, Maybe I’m here to check a box,’ and there’s nothing further from the truth.” Collins also warns that a lack of diversity in numbers can aggravate racial stereotypes among both white students and students of color.

With thoughtful planning, however, independent schools can create diverse, inclusive learning environments where students of color are both welcomed and supported. Much of the responsibility for creating that environment lies with school leadership, according to Perez del Toro. Modeling commitment to equity and inclusion is important, she writes in her report, as are allocating resources to programs that offer

What kind of support systems are in place for families of color that are currently enrolled,” Collins suggests parents ask. “And again, what’s that outreach?”

NAIS is also taking action. For three decades, they have hosted the People of Color Conference, an annual event where independent school educators of color and allies work to ensure their schools are increasing equity and justice. Additionally, NAIS hosts the Student Diversity Leadership Conference, an annual event that gives students the opportunity to “develop cross-cultural communication skills, design effective strategies for social justice practice through dialogue and the arts, and learn the foundations of

“Why are we doing the work that we’re doing if we know our schools will continue to struggle along racial and socio-economic lines? How do we have hope and inspiration?

I’m telling you, when you’re doing the work, you’re not isolated. You jump in, and you’re part of the solution.”

Gina Parker Collins



interviewed in her case study described “jokes” her classmates told after the 2017 presidential inauguration. She said people would “come up to me and make deportation jokes because I’m Mexican. And, like, ‘Oh, let’s just send you across the border! Let’s build that wall!’”

The consequences of this type of environment for students of color are severe. They experience loneliness, racial visibility and social invisibility, and class and cultural discomfort, Perez Del Toro found.

“[It can be] a debilitating feeling if you feel like you don’t belong because there are so few of you,” she says. “And then also, that whole idea of being an imposter, the stress of shouldering a lot of that on your own may make you feel

support and active recruitment of faculty and students of color.

But Collins says she isn’t sitting around and waiting patiently for change. RIISE takes the approach that families of color — both those interested in sending their children to an independent school and those who already have children enrolled — should always be pushing for change. “We have to engage, we have to advocate, and we have to have agency,” says Collins.

For RIISE, equity and inclusion are less about photos in a school’s brochure or the numbers on its enrollment charts. They’re about what the school is doing for its students and families. “What is being done around curriculum to create equitable and inclusive curriculum?

allyship and networking principles,” according to the organization’s website.

From recruitment and enrollment to curriculum design and faculty diversity, independent schools still have a long way to go, Collins says. But both educators and families are trying to make positive change. “Why are we doing the work that we’re doing if we know our schools will continue to struggle along racial and socio-economic lines? How do we have hope and inspiration?” asks Collins. “I’m telling you, when you’re doing the work, you’re not isolated. You jump in, and you’re part of the solution.” For more information visit 4RIISE.org. ■

Alice Pettway is a contributing writer for *DiversityIS*.



Creating and Guiding Opportunities for Civil Discourse in K-12 Classrooms

By Lauren Calig

“Where wise actions are the fruit of life, wise discourse is the pollination.”

– Bryant H. McGill

Every year, a different idea becomes the new shiny penny in our schools. As educators, we are at risk of becoming skeptical, even jaded. We throw ourselves into the next new thing. We have been trained to think that new ideas are temporary, lasting only a year or two. If we are lucky, maybe we can get five years out of a practice.

Though some methods seem temporary, the importance of learning to participate in civil discourse is anything but fleeting. Retired National Public Radio talk show host Diane Rehm defined the skill as “our ability to have conversations about topics about which we disagree, and our ability to listen to each other’s perspectives.” It is a skill that when used effectively will enable students to be citizens of our global world.

By starting the practice of civil discourse with our youngest learners, we are teaching them how to respectfully disagree. We are also teaching them there is value in another’s point of view and that we can learn and grow from viewpoints different from our own.

Laurel School, an all-girls school in northeast Ohio, uses an evidence-based approach to education called “Responsive Classroom.” This approach focuses on the relationship between academic success and social-emotional learning. What can children do to be fair? What is good listening? Why is understanding how each person feels important? How can an early intervention with civil discourse prompt and help children grow into better humans?

Laurel’s primary division — kindergarten through fourth grade — follows the Responsive Classroom model. Students assemble every morning for a community greeting and a question-sharing session. They are urged to be thoughtful and deliberate in their answers, and if not ready to speak, they can pass. The girls have the opportunity to appreciate other voices while being able to respectfully disagree with one another.

Pre-primary and primary Laurel classes learn civil discourse through monthly Civility Conversations. Laurel uses key texts to guide discourse, including:

- *Roots and Wings* (York)
- *Anti-Bias Education in Early Childhood Classrooms* (Kissinger)
- *Other People’s Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* (Delpit)

The open dialogue and questioning during the lessons cover issues including social identity, race, racism, ethnicity, gender, ableism, religion, socioeconomics, human rights,



Lauren Calig instructs a class at Laurel School. (Photo courtesy Laurel School)

social justice, and family structure. Participants discover the way to learn is by asking respectfully.

Laurel also uses safe spaces for engaging in civil discourse where students select the topics and follow respectful discussion guidelines. These discussions — called Common Ground — are optional, open to all middle and upper school students, and are scheduled around a meal. Students anonymously suggest topics for the discourse that takes place in Common Ground.

Laurel School’s Center for Research on Girls (LCRG) puts research to work by integrating the best available information into the curriculum.

LCRG’s most recent research brief, “Engaging in Civil Discourse,” identifies six key, teachable building blocks of civil discourse. These are divided into the emotional skills of extending empathy, accepting discomfort, and braving controversy and the cognitive skills of cultivating curiosity, taking perspective, and engaging effectively.

Using these, we practice what we preach. We teach what is necessary for molding girls into compassionate human beings who will go out into the world knowing how to engage in civil discourse. ■

Lauren Calig is director of multi-cultural curriculum and 10th grade level leader at Laurel School.

Laying the Groundwork for Courageous Conversations: A Beginner's Guide to Socratic Seminars

BY GINGER O'DONNELL

The Socratic teaching method — a rigorous dialogue with one question leading to another — originated with the Greek philosopher Socrates circa 400 BCE. Despite being one of the oldest pedagogical strategies, Socratic seminars are still one of the best ways to engage modern-day diverse learners with a variety of skills and personal experiences.

For Amber Murphy, a veteran high school teacher and development assistant at Marian Middle School in St. Louis, Mo., Socratic seminars allow her to give her students, especially those from marginalized groups, the most prominent voice in her classroom.

"I think in an English classroom, particularly, the questions the teacher asks are the questions that really frame the way everything is analyzed and viewed," she says. "If I'm the one leading classroom discussions, I'm leading the conversation from the perspective of a white [woman] in ways that I'm not even aware of."



Amber Murphy

The Socratic format empowers students to make their voices heard, teaches young people to actively listen to opposing viewpoints, and shows them how to respectfully engage in courageous conversations. Students learn to make connections between different ideas and arrive at new, more complex insights rather than prove the merits of one particular argument over another.

Introducing Socratic Seminars to High School Freshmen

A fundamental characteristic of Socratic seminars is that they are dialogues, not debates, says Meg Arbeiter, a National Board-certified educator who teaches English at The Chicago High School for the Arts (ChiArts).



English teacher Meg Arbeiter's students participate in a Socratic seminar at ChiArts in Chicago, Ill.

She emphasizes the distinction between the two when she introduces Socratic seminars to younger students. It's a concept worth repeating, she says. Even with seniors, Arbeiter reiterates the idea that "in dialogue we're listening to understand, not debating one another's ideas to win."

Arbeiter gives students "sentence starters" to use during the seminar, such as, "I hear what you're saying, [classmate's name], but I'm not sure," or, "I respectfully disagree with that because" She requires them to refer to each other by name throughout the discussion and encourages them to paraphrase their classmates' ideas before launching into their own comments.

Another crucial part of preparing students for their first seminar is teaching them how to ask meaningful questions. Arbeiter instructs them to ask clarifying questions with a specific answer as well as broader and more provocative open-ended questions.



Meg Arbeiter

Creating A Safe Space

Working to make the classroom a safe space is essential to laying the groundwork for Socratic seminars. One way to do this, Arbeiter says, is to have students respond in writing to some simple prompts during the first few days of school: What does safe space sound like? What does it look like? What does it feel like? Through discussion, the class can then collectively answer each question.

Murphy found it was a good idea to post the collective responses for the remainder of the school year because "students' sense of safety has a lot to do with what's hanging on the walls in your classroom," she says.

When students are ready to discuss controversial or culturally sensitive topics, reminding them of the group's norms prepares them for potential emotional triggers. To do this, Arbeiter asks them to write independently about what they feel when speaking about race or other sensitive topics. Then her class collectively discusses what they think are "some feelings that might

What Exactly Is the Socratic Method?

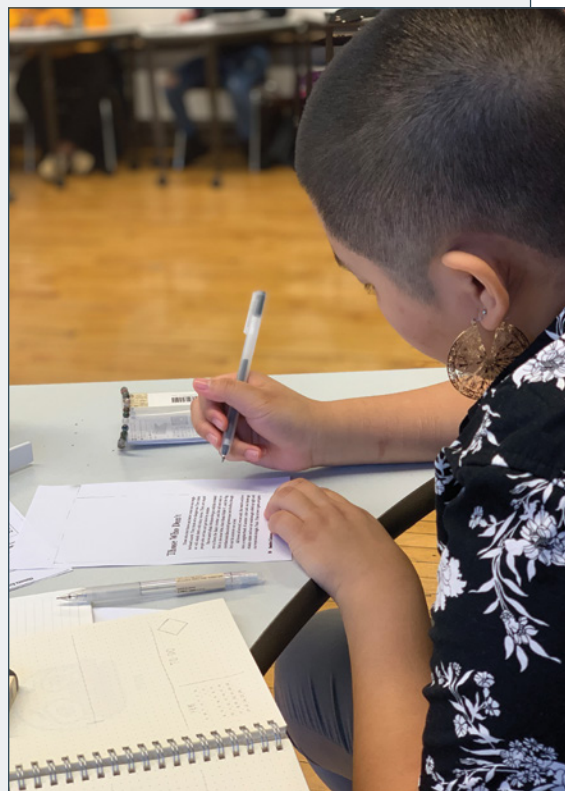
The Socratic Method is a structured dialogue meant to develop critical thinking skills through developing and responding to questions about a text. The goal is to construct new insights through cooperative discussion, unlike a debate where only one participant wins.

Why Is This Method of Teaching Important?

The method cultivates reasoning skills and respect for diverse viewpoints in a disciplined manner. It puts students at the center of the learning process and requires them to practice all four language arts skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Additional Resources for Effective Socratic Seminars:

- Inside an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Socratic Seminar: <http://bit.ly/2CLtegL>
- AVID Socratic Seminar Info Sheet, Guided Notes, and Rubric: <http://bit.ly/2ABYWAv>
- Socratic Seminar Guidelines in Grant Wiggins' book *Authentic Education*
- Socratic Seminar info on Facing History and Ourselves: <http://bit.ly/2BSCzle>
- More about the Question Formulation Technique: <http://bit.ly/2SEzX1i>



be in the room.” This short activity can ease the tension and create an atmosphere where everyone can feel safe participating in an open dialogue about race, she says.

Supporting Students Who Struggle with Public Speaking

Another consideration during Socratic seminars is supporting those who are uncomfortable speaking up in class, including introverts, English language learners, hearing-impaired students, and students with speech impediments.

Arbeiter says she never grades Socratic seminars. Not attaching a grade helps the participants understand that it's not a “points game,” says Arbeiter. “They know that you don't win or lose points based on the number of times that you talk,” she adds.

A more specific strategy Arbeiter uses is to set a timer for 15 to 20 minutes at the beginning of the seminar. When the timer goes off, she reminds the class to think about who has already spoken and who hasn't. If

anyone seems nervous about jumping in, Arbeiter pauses for a one-minute quick write. “When students have the chance to get some ideas on paper, then it happens in a magical way that the next person who speaks is someone who hasn't contributed yet to the conversation,” she says.

In addition, Murphy sometimes deliberately selects an introverted student to be the discussion leader. “It sounds counterintuitive,” she says, “but it gives them a chance to get their ideas out right at the beginning. Or they can just start the seminar with a question.”

Witnessing Courageous Conversations

The result is that students have powerful and respectful conversations about topics many adults either avoid or fight over. Murphy recalls a Socratic seminar about *To Kill a Mockingbird* in which her freshmen English class got into an enthusiastic dialogue about poverty and race.

Initially, African American students were discussing what it means to be

black and poor versus what it means to be white and wealthy. Then a white student who had just moved to St. Louis from rural Virginia spoke about his experiences with poor people who were white.

“They connected it back to the book and talked about how the black poor versus the white poor were represented and whether that was a [fair] portrayal,” she says. “It led to a really rich discussion about the book, but more importantly it was a good discussion about society, and it really was an ‘aha’ moment for some kids.”

“Socratic seminars are really so much for me why I teach and why I am so passionate about teaching,” Arbeiter says. “Ultimately the most important skill we're teaching isn't speaking. The most important skill we're teaching is listening — how do we really listen to understand one another?” ■

Ginger O'Donnell is a senior staff writer for *DiversityIS*.



Embracing Smart Devices in the Classroom with Nearpod

By Kelsey Landis

Nearpod is a useful app for teachers looking to harness their students' smart devices as tools for participation in the classroom. With access to smart devices among students becoming nearly ubiquitous, educators say the app can turn distracting technology into an interactive teaching solution. Tech-savvy pupils can engage in interactive lesson plans streamed directly to their devices, the company says on its website. Teachers can create their own presentations or draw from a library of prepared lesson plans. Educators can also join a network of Nearpod Certified Educators to collaborate with other professionals.

Nonprofit education group Common Sense Media gives Nearpod four out of five stars with more than one-hundred positive user reviews, but the quality has a cost. The free version of the software comes with limited storage space, some free lesson plans, and access to a selection of lessons ranging from \$2.99 to \$24.99 each. The free version does allow teachers to transform their existing files into interactive presentations.

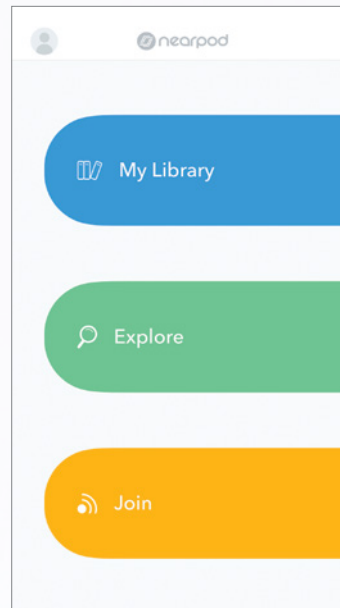
The least expensive paid membership is \$120 annually with more storage but, again, includes limited access to pre-made lesson plans. The \$349 annual membership comes with access to more than 6,500 lesson plans and other features. Entire schools can also buy content packages that produce reports for administrators along with in-person training and customer support.

Nearpod In the Classroom

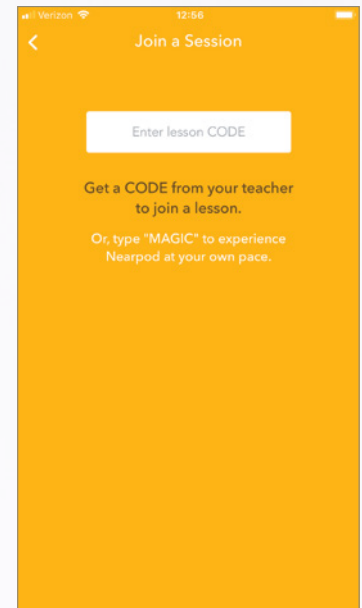
Despite the cost, Nearpod offers beneficial learning tools:

- Add polls, quizzes, and fill-in-the-blank questions to presentations
- Use the real-time assessment tool to generate post-lesson reports on individual and classroom performance
- Guide students through 360-degree adventures of landmarks such as the Taj Mahal with the VR Field Trip tool
- Launch student-paced lessons that can be completed outside the classroom and at any time

Online teacher reviews show that even the free version of Nearpod can be useful for converting students' personal devices into tools for classroom participation by turning a traditional slideshow presentation into an interactive experience. ■



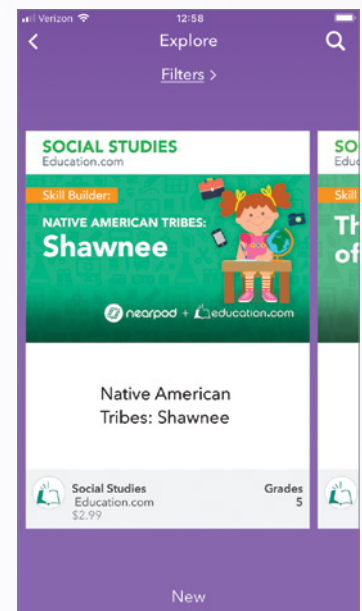
The landing page for the Nearpod app is simply designed.



Students can enter a lesson code to join their teacher's presentation.



Nearpod offers a limited selection of free "VR Lesson" plans to take students on a virtual field trip.



Teachers can browse a selection of free and low-cost lesson plans.



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Math Anxiety and Strategies for Making Numbers Fun

BY GINGER O'DONNELL

Math anxiety, a feeling of discomfort or even panic when working with numbers, doesn't just affect performance on exams. It can prevent students from putting effort into classes and from pursuing opportunities and careers involving math, Johns Hopkins University professor Lisa Feigenson, PhD, found in her 2018 study.

This issue has a significant impact on efforts to develop STEM programs across the United States, according to Gina Picha, an instructional coach in Austin, Texas. The success of such programs is contingent upon being interested and confident in math, Education Week reports.

Children as young as 5 years old can suffer from math anxiety, Feigenson reported. The phenomenon does not correlate with reading level, socioeconomic status, or overall intelligence, according to Sian Beilock, a cognitive scientist and president of Barnard College. Rather, math anxiety is often a consequence of repeated exposure to timed tests, says Jo Boaler, PhD, a math education professor at Stanford University.

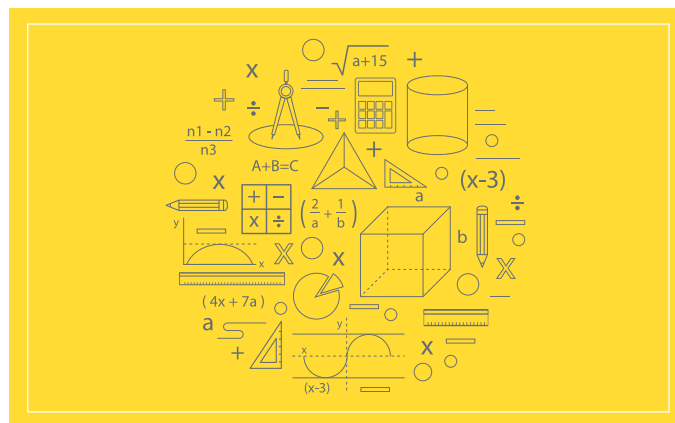
When students experience math anxiety, it impedes their working memory where math facts are stored. Even high achievers with a robust working memory – and therefore strong mathematic potential – tend to display some of the most acute levels of math anxiety.

The good news is educators can take

steps to mitigate this apprehension. Here are two research-backed activities teachers can pursue to make math less scary and more fun:

After-School Clubs Focused on Math Games

- An eight-week extracurricular math enrichment program offered to elementary children can significantly reduce their levels of math anxiety, according to



Feigenson's research. Encouraging children to associate math with experiences outside the classroom helps them see it as a fun activity. High-energy, hands-on activities with friends resulted in reduced math anxiety, the study shows. For more information on this approach, visit [BedTimeMath.org](https://www.bedtimemath.org).

Number Talks

- Instead of tasks oriented around worksheets and textbooks, an increasingly popular pedagogical method called “number talks”

helps develop mental math skills in a fun and intellectually stimulating way. The approach also improves “number sense,” a broad skillset that includes the ability to efficiently compare numbers and to understand number symbols, among other abilities. Boaler encourages teachers to use number talks to help alleviate math anxiety. For more information, explore her book, *What’s Math Got to Do With It? How Parents and Teachers Can Help Children Learn to Love Their Least Favorite Subject*.

Number talks can be used as warm-ups or as full-length lessons within themselves. Visit <http://bit.ly/2sdNnG5> to see how Katy Arrillaga, a second grade math teacher at Ruus Elementary School in Hayward, Calif., leads her class in a number talk about the addition problem $59 + 37$. Students

perform mental calculations and then discuss their answers to the problem, analyzing individual methods they used to arrive at a solution. The link also contains a pre- and post-talk in which Arrillaga and the school's math coach Mia Buljan discuss best practices for facilitating this teaching method.

These innovative approaches are proven methods for incorporating play and participation to reduce anxiety and make math education more fun, both for teachers and students. ■



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A Leader with a Direct Line of Impact

AN INTERVIEW WITH RODNEY GLASGOW

By Alexandra Vollman

As head of middle school and chief diversity officer at St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Potomac, Md., Rodney Glasgow knows diversity and inclusion are critical components of discerning leadership.

Also a noted author, speaker, trainer, and social justice activist, Glasgow is himself a graduate of an independent school and has dedicated nearly 20 years of his life to working in K-12 education. He recently spoke with *DiversityIS* about his dual roles at St. Andrews, best practices for creating inclusive campuses, the challenges faced by independent schools in this work, and more.

As both head of middle school and chief diversity officer (CDO), you are uniquely positioned within the administration at St. Andrews. Do you find that fulfilling the duties of both positions is difficult or taxing? How does each role inform the other? Both of those roles in and of themselves are hard jobs and very taxing. Just one of them is a lot to carry, and to carry both ... can be almost a Herculean task. I will say, however, that I enjoy the synergy of those roles.

Certainly, I feel like every principal — whether in elementary, middle, or high school — is or should be a diversity director. So much of what I am charged with in terms of creating a school culture that supports the academic, social, and emotional growth of kids is also my goal as a CDO for the whole institution. Recruiting faculty members, and ensuring their ability to bring their full selves and ... give their all to the school for the betterment of the educational and social environment, is also a goal of mine as CDO. I don't feel like I am ever wearing two different hats. I'm wearing one big hat, and I rather like it.

It makes my CDO role easier having that level [of authority] because I am in such direct leadership around things like curricula, special events, assemblies, and all those things that diversity officers are trying to affect. I'm already in the direct line of impact.

So many independent schools seem to focus on diversity and inclusion. In your opinion, are independent schools ahead of the curve in these areas compared with public K-12 schools? I think we are ahead of the curve in that we tend to have the financial resources, the permission, and lack of red tape. We can really delve into these issues in a much deeper and more resourced way than most of our public school counterparts can. In that way, we're ahead of the curve. We can talk about pretty much what we want to talk about, and anything that we want to do, within reason, we either have or can raise the money to do it. That is a powerful place to be in.

At the same time, the history of independent schools is the history of elitism and white flight, and retreating from these issues. We began way behind. Public schools began much more ahead of the curve, and private schools came out of that motion in the 1990s.

In what areas do independent schools struggle the most with creating diverse and inclusive environments? At St. Andrews, what are the most significant challenges you face along this journey? I think the biggest area that independent schools struggle with in creating diverse and inclusive school communities is that we actually are quite selective and elite even though we're not elitist. Because we have highly selective admissions and a big price tag, we have to be what we strive to create — diverse communities — because there are folks who can't afford to come to the school, and we can't afford [to fund everyone]. Private schools are not that wealthy that we are able to do that. One of our biggest barriers is the financial model of private schools.

The other big barrier is that private schools through history tend to be physically located in places that are not accessible to the common person. We tend to often take up residence in elite and suburban neighborhoods. Even in urban neighborhoods, we tend to be in those areas that are somewhat culturally exclusive.

Then there is the push and pull. Even though we came to the other side in the '90s, independent schools are still places where a lot of people want to be sheltered and that shelter kids from the diversity of the world as well as places where parents want their kids to have a global experience. How do you balance all of that political, social, and economic diversity in one small, intentional community? I think that's probably the most significant challenge we face.

We're always talking about how we can push forward our commitment to equity and justice and not leave behind or isolate those parents for whom this is new and who are not quite sure that those values align with their own. We don't have many of those, but we [have some]. We're a microcosm of the country in that way. How do we live our values of diversity and not just say that all voices are welcome as long as those voices agree with us?

St. Andrew's is an Episcopal school, and some might think, "Does the religious aspect of your school get in the way?" and actually, it's quite the opposite. Our Episcopal identity gives us permission and almost a mission of being equitable and inclusive across a broad spectrum of identities. We use our religion to hold up our intentions. But we're still part of an elite group of schools, and we have to balance that image as we do this.

One of the ways we do this is through affinity groups. Those help take care of the members of our community who are big in voice yet small in number. We also have a diversity team and ... a divisional coordinator who just focuses on diversity issues. And we create time for that in the curriculum and, in the lower grades, through the homeroom structure.

How can K-12 schools convey the message and value of diversity and inclusion to young children who may not yet understand what these words mean? I love that question because I often hear people say, "They're too young to understand this," or, "We don't want to introduce them to that." What I know about young people now, having worked in K-12 schools for almost 20

years, is that little kids can understand pretty much everything big kids can. The words may need to be different, but the concepts they get.

They understand diversity very instinctively, they understand inclusion and exclusion very instinctively, and more importantly, they are cultural detectives in that they know what we're talking about and what we're not talking about. The things we choose not to talk about with them in an age-appropriate way become messages that we're sending just as much as the things that we are talking to them about. I could speak with a kindergartener about anything I could talk to a 12th-grader about, but the ways in which I talk to them, the language I use, may be very different.

With all kids, especially those who are younger, I like to understand the question they're asking or the conversation they want to have as distinct from the question I'm afraid they're asking or the conversation I don't

want to have. If a kindergartener asks me "What is gay?", there are a million things I'm not going to talk to them about. My response is, "Tell me where you've heard that word, and what do you already know about it?" I want to know what they already know. I don't want to presume any knowledge or lack thereof. I find that the most concrete thing I can say to educators of young people is you have to pause and assess what they are coming into the conversation with — never assume it's nothing. From there, fill them in [by asking.] "What do you want to know about that? Why are you asking that question?"

How does St. Andrews prepare its students to be culturally competent so they can succeed in the even more diverse and rigorous world of higher education? The first thing we do is give them a culturally diverse environment in K-12. For a lot of students, they go off to college and that's the first time they have really had to live with people of all

different cultures, and it's a shock.

But our independent school folks, and definitely St. Andrew's kids, are used to being around a broad range of diversity, so the diversity of college is not a shock for them. It's actually a comfort. It's home for them, and in that space, they're set up for academic success because they have been exposed to a diversity of teachers, a diversity of teaching styles, and they've been encouraged to see that their teachers are human beings who have their own stories and who they can connect with.

Through your work as founder of the National Diversity Practitioners Institute and Diversity in the Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia area, what have you learned from other educators and administrators regarding best practices for creating diverse, equitable, and inclusive K-12 campuses? For me, the number one best practice, at least for private schools, ... is you need to have someone in [a

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diversity] role who is responsible for making sure that you are moving along strategically on all fronts and who has that long view across the school.

Some schools like to say it should be everybody's responsibility, and I absolutely agree with that. Everybody — the parents, educators, and administrators — should be engaged in this work. But it must also be somebody's job, at least one person. I am blessed to have a team, and I think the team approach is right.

I talked earlier about private schools being well-resourced, but it's also about where you are allocating those resources. You have to make sure you're allotting a healthy budget for financial aid if you want to have cultural and economic diversity. You want to make sure that if you have a diversity office, that office comes with a budget that is robust enough to support programming, special speakers, and training. And you want to be looking at how much money you're spending on the professional development of faculty, administrators, and staff around cultural competency skills.

The third thing I would say is you want to have some kind of systematic assessment every couple of years on where your school is on a couple of key diversity measures. We think of this work as anecdotal, but you really want to dig down to what the major student outcomes [are], like who is on the honor role, who's getting into highly selective colleges, what does that look like across sections of students, how are students of color fairing. ... You also want to look at your attrition and retention rates.

You should do the same for faculty: How is faculty diversity spanning over time? Are we retaining folks well? Are we promoting a diverse faculty base? What does our leadership look like? There are a number of things that should be measured and tracked over the life of a school.

You also need a bold and accurate statement of your school's commitment to equity and inclusion, and you want people to know what it is in the admissions and hiring processes. You want it to be in your handbooks so that when people join your school, they know they're joining a community that cares about these things.

The one thing I would add is that every school is in competition with itself on this. No school has made it, because you could always be more inclusive, you could always be more equitable, more diverse, than you were before.

Any final thoughts? The only thing I would add is that, in this political climate, we can question how far we should go, [but these times] show the kids the value of the skills we're teaching them. These are life skills. ... They are going to have to untangle the challenges of living in a diverse national and global community. The thing I'm really echoing to people is that no matter how inhuman somebody seems, work hard to find the piece of humanity in them, and let that be your starting point. The base level for this work is that there is a piece of humanity in everybody, and we have to start there. ■

Alexandra Vollman is a contributing writer for *DiversityIS*.
Rodney Glasgow is a member of the *DiversityIS* Editorial Board.



The 2019 *DiversityIS* Leadership in Diversity Award is a recognition of individual leaders at independent schools who encourage and support the recruitment and retention of underrepresented students and employees. Each award recipient will be profiled in the Summer 2019 issue of *DiversityIS* magazine.

The deadline to submit nominations is February 28. Nominate someone today at diversityIS.com/leadershipaward.

If you have any questions about the 2019 *DiversityIS* Leadership in Diversity Award, contact Lenore Pearlstein at lpearlstein@diversityIS.com.

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‘Feminism is for Everybody’

Celebrating Women’s History Month and How Gender Intersects with Other Identities

By Ginger O’Donnell

The Lesson Plan below suggests learning activities that honor and celebrate diverse perspectives. It can be used as a blueprint for an actual lesson or serve as a more general source of inspiration for teachers and administrators.

Lesson Objective: Construct definitions of “feminism” and “intersectionality” and connect them to both Women’s History Month and students’ lives.

Total Time: 50-90 minutes

Grade level: High school

Introduction

Tell your students that they will be reflecting on the word “feminism” and what it means to them today in honor of Women’s History Month. Explain that it is a word that can bring up varying emotions and associations depending on the individual, and that the classroom is a safe place to discuss their thoughts.

Reflect



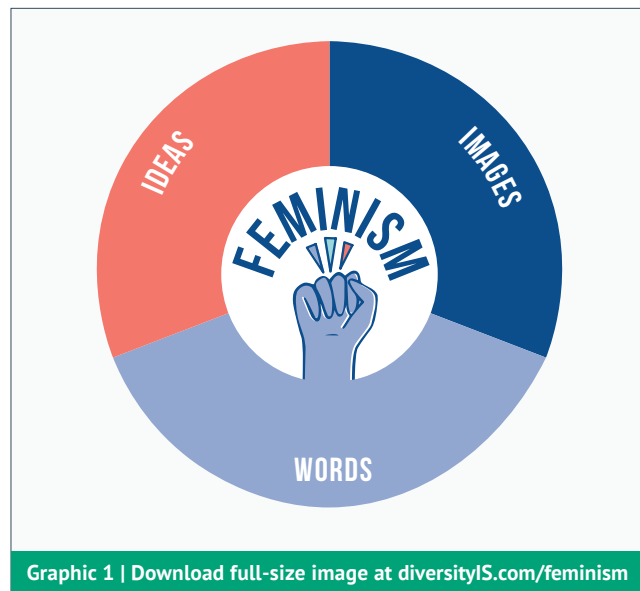
Distribute Graphic 1. Instruct the class to use it to brainstorm images, words, and ideas they associate with the word “feminism,” either independently or in pairs (your choice).



Idea: Encourage the class to be open and talk about what they’ve heard, not only what they believe or personally agree with. The conversation should be a place where they can share everything, whether positive or negative.



Note: Discuss actual definitions of the word “feminism” later in the lesson.



Graphic 1 | Download full-size image at diversityIS.com/feminism

Share



Invite them to share what they’ve written on the graphic with the class. As they share, project the graphic organizer on the board and compile their collective responses.

Reflect



Summarize some of the patterns you notice on the board, including images, words, and ideas. Ask them to complete the following prompt in as

many words or sentences as they see fit, either independently or in pairs.

- Feminism is...
- Feminism is not...



Note: What's the definition of "feminism"?

- *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*: "The theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes."
- **bell hooks**: "Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression."

Share



5 MIN

Select a few students to share what they wrote. As they share, write their responses on the board or type them into a computer connected to a projector so the class can also see the responses.

- **Resource:** Help destigmatize the word "feminism" by saying men can be feminists, too. See [Feminist.com](https://bit.ly/2TqEdSd) for a list of columns about men as allies at <https://bit.ly/2TqEdSd>

Introduce bell hooks



7 MIN

Explain that bell hooks (who does not capitalize her name) is a well-respected feminist who wrote a book attempting to debunk myths about feminism and clarify what feminism is and what it is not. Tell the class they're going to read the introduction to her book *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*, (available online at <https://bit.ly/1NSE4jx>) which contains her definition of feminism. Give students some background information from bellhooksInstitute.com.



"hooks was born Gloria Jean Watkins in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. She adopted the pen name of her grandmother, a woman known for speaking her mind. She received her B.A. from Stanford University, her M.A. from the University of Wisconsin, and her PhD from the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is ..."

- An acclaimed intellectual
- Feminist theorist
- Cultural Critic
- Artist
- Writer

She has authored over three dozen books covering topics such as gender, race, class, spirituality, and teaching spanning several genres, including:

- Cultural criticism
- Personal memoirs
- Poetry collections
- Children's books

Her books include the following:

- *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*
- *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*
- *Rock My Soul: Black People and Self-Esteem*
- *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*
- *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*
- *Where We Stand: Class Matters*
- *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*

Read and Reflect



5-10 MIN

Instruct the class to silently read pages vii-x of *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*, titled "Introduction: Come Closer to Feminism." Instruct them to highlight or underline hooks' one-sentence definition of feminism as well as anything that stands out to them as true or important.

Share



5-10 MIN

Select a student to share hooks' one-sentence definition of feminism. Project or write it on the board and tie it into students' own ideas of what feminism means. Invite students to share what they underlined as true and important, then discuss their reactions to the reading.

Introduce Kimberlé Crenshaw



7 MIN

Explain that in her writings, hooks writes about the intersection of gender and race — not only what it means to be a woman, but what it means to be a woman of color. Talk about another woman of color and well-known feminist, Kimberlé Crenshaw, who created a term for the way in which gender interacts with a person's multiple identities, building on hooks' ideas. Give students some brief background information on Crenshaw from aapf.org/kimberle-crenshaw/.



"Crenshaw is a professor of law at UCLA and Columbia Law School. She is ..."

- A leading authority in the area of Civil Rights
- Black feminist legal theory
- Race, racism, and the law

She has coined two terms:

- Intersectionality
- Critical Race Theory

Explain

Crenshaw created the term “intersectional” for when people are members of one or more underrepresented groups, sometimes known as minorities or underrepresented groups.



Note: What is the definition of “intersectionality”?

- *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*: “The complex, cumulative manner in which the effects of different forms of discrimination combine, overlap, or intersect.”
- **Kimberlé Crenshaw**: “Intersectionality is a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood within conventional ways of thinking.”

Brainstorm



5 MIN

Invite students to create their own list of underrepresented groups individually.

- **Time-saver:** Hold an open discussion without writing first.



5 MIN

Ask the class to share what they wrote. Encourage them to think expansively (first-generation college student, person with disabilities, LGBTQ+, etc.)



7 MIN

Provide Graphic 2 and ask them to individually write the different ways they might personally have intersectional status. Tell them this exercise is for them and they don't have to share it with the group.

Ask the class to share some of the identities they think are in the classroom.

Write

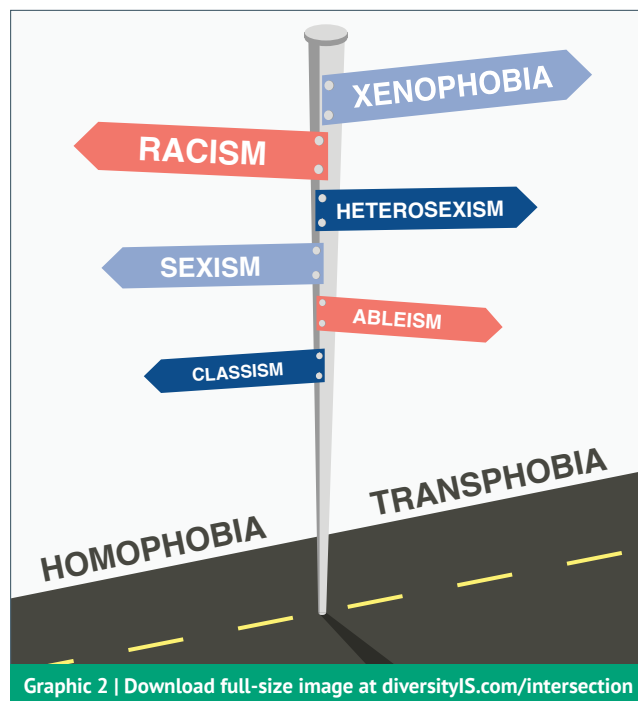


2 MIN

Ask students to silently jot down some of their feelings and reactions. You can also ask them to write about feelings they think might be in the room if they don't want to share their own reactions.



Idea: Consider telling the class that if an individual doesn't want to address the group but wants to talk about their feelings and ideas, they can come see you privately.



Graphic 2 | Download full-size image at diversityIS.com/intersection

Tell students, “Now that we are beginning to understand this concept of intersectionality and how it relates to us, we're going to connect it more directly to Women's History Month.”

For Research or Homework

Instruct students to spend some class time researching and taking notes on one of the following individuals online who embody intersectional feminism. Here is a sample list of individuals:

- Kimberlé Crenshaw, scholar and civil rights advocate
- Laverne Cox, transgender actress and LGBTQ+ activist
- Chrystos, Native American writer who identifies as “two spirit,” the Native American concept of a third gender role
- Lizzo, female rapper, flutist, and activist
- Audre Lorde, African American poet and writer
- Gloria Anzaldua, a poet who identified as Mexican-American and queer
- Frederick Douglass, preacher, abolitionist, feminist
- Sharice Davids, freshman Congresswoman who is LGBTQ+ and Native American

For more information and resources on feminism, visit Feminist.com. To learn more about intersectionality, watch the National Association of Independent School's interview with Crenshaw on YouTube at youtu.be/ViDtnfQ9FHc.

The following handout provides further insight into intersectionality through the stories of three young women who embody different intersectional identities.

CELEBRATING INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY

Three Women Share Their Experiences | By Ginger O'Donnell

Q: Do you consider yourself to be a member of multiple underrepresented groups?

Pacheco: I am Afro-Latina. The “Afro” pertains to my African-American heritage, my mother’s side, while “Latina” ties me to Central America — specifically Mexico — where my father was born. I’ve been using this term to describe my ethnicity since sixth grade. It usually confuses people, but I always refer to myself this way. Generally speaking, I am a person of color and a woman.

Brown: I have the experiences of being a biracial Asian American person, and I experience being a person of color, and at the same time I also experience my womanhood and my sexual identity—I am bisexual. I see what it means to be a woman in the world through the intersection of my queerness and transgender status. People could see each of those things as separate factions, but they come together to create my [individual] experience.

Connell: I identify as a black woman, which is already an intersection, and I’m also queer.

Q: When were you first introduced to the concept of intersectionality? How did the concept make you feel initially?

Connell: I was introduced to it through reading *Feminism is for Everybody and Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* by bell hooks, during an independent project for a critical sociology class my sophomore year of high school. I was really excited to learn about it because it made a lot of sense to me.

Pacheco: The first time I heard the word “intersectionality” and truly understood it was at the (Jan. 21, 2017) Women’s March in D.C. Practically everyone who spoke that day used the



Kumari Pacheco, 18



Jorja Angel Brown, 22



Emma Connell, 18

word, and gradually, as I looked around and noticed how the people in the crowd contrasted and complemented each other in terms of gender, sexuality, race. I came to understand what the word really meant.

Brown: I first started learning about it in an academic way when I was a senior in high school. It was in a theater class and we were writing a musical together. The teacher wanted us to talk about our identities and social issues we faced and things like family and culture, upbringing and environment, things that related to our socioeconomic status and our experiences with racism, our experiences with misogyny ... living in a patriarchal society.

Q: Looking back, when were you first introduced to the concept of intersectionality through experience? In other words, how did your intersectional status affect you growing up?

Pacheco: As a kid, I wasn’t allowed to watch Disney princess movies where the princesses were white. Similarly, all my dolls were of color, not necessarily black, but none of them were white. I wasn’t overly bothered by this. I hated Barbies and watched movies like *Balto* and *Bolt*, but I didn’t understand the reason behind this decision. Much later, my mother explained to me that she

hadn’t wanted me to grow up with white women as my idols.

Connell: I don’t think I thought about it when I was a kid. In middle school I started getting push-back from white kids and black kids. White kids being like, “You’re too black, you’re not actually white,” and then black kids being like, “You’re not black enough to sit here.”

Brown: I was pretty popular in school, but everyone saw me as a very sexual person, and I was not, but people were always talking about it. People always felt entitled to grab or grope my body. ... It was a pretty regular part of my experience whether it was boys or girls. I think that comes from my queerness or my gender nonconformity.

Pacheco is a graduate of Bryant Writers Workshop and Fort Greene Youth Writers Program in New York, currently finishing her gap year and applying to colleges. After studying acting at the University of Illinois in Chicago, Brown is currently a professional actress and dog walker in New York City. Connell is a freshman at Columbia College in Chicago working on her bachelor’s degree in photography with a minor in Cultural Studies. ■

Ginger O'Donnell is a senior staff writer for *DiversityIS*.



Faculty and Administrators Are the Front Line to Providing Mental Health Services

By Sarah Edwards

The United States saw a startling increase between 2005 and 2014 in the number of young people aged 12 to 20 who reported experiencing a major depressive episode, according to a study by the American Academy of Pediatrics. In addition to depression, anxiety affects one in eight students, says clinical psychologist Deborah Offner, PhD.

The rise in mental health concerns among young people often positions teachers and school administrators as first responders. In an effort to address these growing issues, independent schools are increasingly adopting innovative wellness and mental health programs that promote mindfulness, self-awareness, and multicultural understanding. Such programs proactively address mental health by giving students the tools to cope with difficult feelings and experiences.

Offner attributes the increase to a number of factors, including widening economic disparities and instability, which create stressors for adults as well as children. Escalating racial tensions and growing academic pressure also contribute to feelings of anxiety and depression.

At St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Austin, Texas, mindfulness practices are a key part of the curriculum. In the four years since the program's launch, mindfulness has become a valued aspect of the school's culture and community, with training extended to faculty and parents, and lessons offered both inside and outside the classroom.

Adam Ortman, mindfulness director at St. Andrew's, says the prevalence of technology can have a negative impact on self-esteem.

"One source for a lot of [students] is the disembodiment that arrives from consistent use of technology," says Ortman. "which is to say the loss of (a), an ability to feel anchored in

their own embodied experience and feel comfortable in their bodies and (b), having to experience challenging emotions without recourse to an immediate technological distraction."

As young people turn increasingly to technology to avoid feelings of loneliness, boredom, and anxiety, the harder it is to learn to cope with unhealthy aspects of their lives, Ortman says.

Four years ago, teachers at St. Andrew's requested mindfulness training after seeing modest success with informal practices in their classrooms. Ortman launched a pilot program that has since become an integral part of the curriculum across the Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools.

"One of the most natural things we do is breathe and relax in our bodies," Ortman says. "If we can offer these sorts of tools to young people, I think that it makes them feel more empowered to take care of themselves and work with their own experiences."

Over the next year, Ortman plans to develop programming at the intersection of mindfulness, diversity, and inclusion. The lessons will focus on mindful communication practices to reduce bias and tribalism and enable students, their families, and faculty to "speak and listen with a sense of compassion, openness, authenticity and presence," Ortman says.

Providing the tools is only half of the equation. Charisse Minerva Spencer, mindfulness coordinator at the Friends

School of Virginia Beach in Virginia Beach, Va., says it is also important for instructors to use cultural competency when teaching mindfulness. Earning students' trust is key, she says.

"That is where the cultural competency comes into play," Spencer says. By making students of all backgrounds and identities feel seen and heard in the classroom, instructors create a sense of equanimity that builds respect and openness, she says.

Like Ortman, Spencer says the most successful programs engage the entire school community and earn buy-in for "the long haul."

"It's not a quick fix. It's a process of transformation," she says.

Independent schools also adopt multicultural and anti-bias programs to promote a positive sense of self and well-being.

"Educators cannot ignore student identity development and the momentous impact the intersections of these identities have for each student in the classroom," says Julie Parsons, kindergarten teacher at the Gordon School in East Providence, R.I.

The Gordon School started the Common Ground affinity group 12 years ago for students of color in the Lower School to "recognize shared experiences and promote cross-cultural dialogue," according to its website. The group "facilitates positive racial identity exploration, self-awareness, and connection for students whose racial group is

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underrepresented in the school.”

Common Ground now welcomes more than 50 students who “meet after school to play, deepen relationships and engage in positive social identity work,” Parsons says.

The Middle School at Gordon is home to the Gender Sexuality Alliance and a student group committed to exploring equity and justice outside of the classroom, Parsons says.

In her work with children, Parsons uses four anti-bias goals outlined in *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves* by Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards. The goals touch on self-awareness and confidence, comfort with diversity, understanding

“Educators cannot ignore student identity development and the momentous impact the intersections of these identities have for each student in the classroom.”

Julie Parsons

of unfairness, and feeling empowered to act against prejudice. The lessons allow pupils to build connections and learn to respect themselves and others, Parsons says.

“Time and time again in the safe space setting that an affinity group can provide for young children of color, I have witnessed children sharing feelings and experiences that may have gone unsaid in the classroom environment,” Parsons says.

Mindfulness, self-awareness, and multicultural understanding help students address mental health issues, but clinical psychologist Offner says independent schools hire counselors and other mental health professionals to provide them with real-time support.

“Kids are going to look to [teachers and staff]. Parents are going to them, as experts not just in academics, but in life and emotional well-being,” Offner says. “The most important thing they can learn to do is listen.” ■

Sarah Edwards is a contributing writer for *DiversityIS*.

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Pushing the Boundaries of Traditional Classrooms Can Benefit Diverse Learners

BY SARAH EDWARDS



Georgetown Day School

Building inclusive campus

communities has led independent schools to structurally and symbolically modernize the classroom experience. Two independent K-12 schools in particular have pushed the limits of traditional classrooms to promote student learning, diversity, and inclusion.

The Galloway School in Atlanta, Ga., uses an immersion program to introduce diverse cultures and

communities. Georgetown Day School in Washington, D.C., challenges students to expand their thinking within the boundaries of their own campus. The end goals of both schools are similar: Cultivate empathy, curiosity, and critical thinking.

The Galloway School

The classroom at The Galloway School is considered a space for learning that can and should exist beyond the walls

of the buildings on campus.

“The world is not a single narrative,” says Anthony Miller, diversity and inclusion specialist at Galloway. “It is much more dynamic. That’s why it is so important for kids to have meaningful experiences [by] going out into the world.”

This type of learning is known as experiential education, defined by The Independent Schools Experiential Education Network as a “pedagogical

process by which educators engage students through a cycle of direct experience, reflection, analysis, and experimentation.”

Independent schools such as Galloway embrace experiential education as a tool to promote diversity and inclusion throughout their curricula and school communities. One aspect of Galloway’s programming is “Immersion and Excursion,” which connects children to the world outside by taking them on field trips to places where they can learn about diverse populations, Miller says.

In the Immersion portion of the program, each grade level in Middle Learning, grades five through eight,

“The world is not a single narrative. It is much more dynamic. That’s why it is so important for kids to have meaningful experiences [by] going out into the world.”

Anthony Miller

is assigned a theme — compassion, belonging, advocacy, or courage — that drives the selection of activities and field trips throughout the academic year. Trips can include a spinal cord and brain injury rehabilitation center, an apartment complex home to a large population of refugees, or a citywide scavenger hunt that traverses the diverse neighborhoods of Atlanta.

Upper Learning students in grades nine through 12 participate in Excursion, a 12-day period every January when they dig into a topic of their choosing. Some shadow mentors in industries such as botany, fashion design, or public interest law, while others travel outside the country to study culture and language.

“The purpose of [Immersion and Excursion] in many ways is to have meaningful learning,” Miller says.

“Students are going out into the world, interacting with people, and learning skills and how to do a deep dive in something, which is especially important in a time when attention spans can be short.”

Galloway brought Miller on board in July 2018 as the first full-time diversity and inclusion staff member. The transition reflected the next phase in the school’s commitment to fostering community and shared values on

tune with it. Excursions shouldn’t be some sort of traveling museum.”

Georgetown Day School

Experiential learning does not always require a trek across town or international borders. Georgetown Day School (GDS) invites students to study and solve problems on their own campus.

Through a program called Youth-Led Participatory Action Research,



The Galloway School (Photo by Erin Crews)

campus, Miller says.

“Everybody needs exposure,” Miller says. “We so often develop our own narratives about people, groups, and places, and that narrative might be based on reality or might be steeped in uninformed perspectives.”

Miller adds that faculty and staff are careful to ensure experiential learning programs do not devolve into exploitative cultural tourism.

“Students are encouraged to learn from and listen to the people they meet,” Miller says. “They are also asked to do significant reflection on what they’re experiencing to make sure they are in

high school students explore topics like diversity and inclusion inside the walls of GDS. Last year, they chose to investigate the intersection of socioeconomic and student athletics, says Marlo Thomas, director of diversity and inclusion at GDS.

Students considered the outside costs of school sports in which the participants experience the most financial inequity. They then studied the allocation of school funds to sports teams by gender.

Upon viewing the results, Thomas says, “There was an immediate feeling and thought that there needed to be

some action put in place to address financial strain and costs related to student athletics participation.”

They then presented a proposal to the head of school, Russell Shaw, and the Board of Trustees. At the behest of school leadership, Thomas took up the proposal and partnered with the athletic department to develop an implementation plan.

“In the meantime, the head of school has been fully supportive of families and teams that need the support,” Thomas says. “We opened the door for them to come in. Now, all students who would like to fully participate in athletics have the means to do so. Short-term action steps have been taken while we develop our longer-term plan.”

Thomas says when students analyze systemic challenges within the school, they develop the scaffolding and build the skillsets necessary to talk

across their differences and engage in difficult conversations about identity and privilege.

This approach prepares them to confront challenges that arise both at school and in the world outside, she says.

“Because of technology, all of our students have a level of exposure, witnessing certain things and hearing certain language,” Thomas says. “None of us are immune to that seeping into our environments. We try to take a proactive stance in getting ahead of those situations as much as possible.”

GDS’ curriculum is infused with diversity and inclusion programming across divisions. From school policies to the spatial layout on campus, diversity and inclusion strengthen the student enrollee’s experience, Thomas says.

“At our high school and lower-middle school locations, we have

offices that are central hubs, community spaces,” Thomas says. “They are filled with positive energy every single day.”

Students can use the space as a point of connection to be seen and heard, to build community, and to receive academic and personal support. Providing the physical space for diversity and inclusion offices, as well as dedicated staff to manage the program, provides psychological and emotional reinforcement for them, Thomas says.

“Outside my door,” Thomas says. “is the infectious laughter of a large group of students who represent all aspects of identity, which is a strong indication that they are feeling safe right now at school.” ■

Sarah Edwards is a contributing writer for *DiversityIS*.

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Print publication: November 11



Ellie Ford and her mother, Vanessa (Photo courtesy Jill Promoli)

The Urgency for Gender Inclusivity

CULTIVATING GENDER-EXPANSIVE SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS FROM ELEMENTARY ON

By Ginger O'Donnell

"I hope you had the very best birthday, my sweet princess boy," Vanessa Ford told her child, following a lavish birthday party. Upon hearing this, the 4-year-old looked Ford in the eye and said, "Mom, I'm not a boy. I'm a girl."

"The cork popped out of our young son, and out flew our young daughter," Ford explains in a spoken piece called "Listen to Your Child."

That was the day Ford and her husband, JR, found out their child was a "girl in her heart and her brain."

Within three months of the birthday party, their child "socially transitioned" to girlhood and became their daughter. A social transition allows transgender or gender nonconforming youth to express their gender identity through their outward appearance (e.g., clothing, hairstyle) and does not involve any medical interventions.

The girl then chose a new name, Ellie. The couple's eldest child, Ronnie, "was the first person to start to flip the pronouns and call her his sister ... He was right on track before the adults were," their father says.

To protect the psychological and emotional health of children like Ellie, experts say educators need to take the same approach as the Fords in accepting transgender and nonconforming youth by establishing gender-expansive classrooms and school climates.

Creating safe spaces in which all students are given equal access to all

colors, toys, and activities promotes that well-being, according to Aidan Key. Key is founder and executive director of Gender Diversity, a nonprofit organization that provides support and education to parents and teachers on gender issues.

There are obstacles to creating a safe space for all children — such as adults who don't understand this underrepresented group, bullying, and questions about which bathroom a child uses — but simple acts and changes on the part of faculty and administrators can make all the difference. It did for Ellie, her father says.

Ensuring Ellie is supported both at home and at school "is a life and death situation," JR Ford says.

Experts from schools around the country agree. They shared their ideas for creating safe spaces and tackling the obstacles school leaders might encounter.

Quelling Adults' Anxiety

The first step toward creating gender-inclusive environments for children, Key says, is to address adults' fears and misconceptions about transgender and gender nonconforming individuals. Societal representations of this underrepresented group are "caricatured and deeply inaccurate," Key says, perpetuating themes of "mental illness, sexual deviancy, and deception."

For over a decade, Key has led trainings in hundreds of schools throughout the United States. Across

the map, he found that fears and questions are consistent. Thus, the initial work he does with teachers and administrators involves identifying and deconstructing misinformation and sharing the latest science about the relationship between gender identity and the brain.

Like Key, Ellie's mother also leads workshops for pre-service teachers, principals, and superintendents.



How do you define "transgender" and "gender nonconforming"?

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and so on. (The Human Rights Campaign)

Gender nonconforming: A term some people use to describe themselves when they do not dress, behave, or otherwise "fit in" with gender expectations (MyKidsIsGay.com)

“The big piece that a lot of people are missing is ‘trans 101.’ What does transgender mean? Who are transgender people? What are the words that we’re talking about?”

Vanessa Ford



The Ford family at an event

Ford says adults usually don’t know the basics. “The big piece that a lot of people are missing is ‘trans 101.’ What does transgender mean? Who are transgender people? What are the words that we’re talking about?” she says.

In Key’s trainings, he invites educators to suggest scenarios that raise concerns for them. “I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard somebody say, ‘Well what about the bathroom?’ ... I think that’s a conversation starter ... ‘What about the bathrooms? What do you think might happen?’” he says.

Another misconception Key works to counteract is that gender and sexuality are connected. As Ford puts it, “Sexuality is who you love and go to bed with, and gender is who you go to bed as.”

“I need that kindergarten teacher and every other teacher to recognize that they’re not looking at a gay child,” Key says. “They’re looking at a child whose gender expression might be different than what is expected. That might be a boy who prefers the company of girls, or who would love to wear a skirt to school, whose favorite color is pink, ... the girl who wishes to get a short haircut and loves to play soccer. Those are things that fall into the category of gender expression, not sexuality.”

Key suggests several more tips to alleviate other fears:

- Administrators could invite anxious parents to campus for in-person conversations to address their questions and concerns.

- School leaders could explicitly thank parents for bringing their concerns to the table and let them know they are not alone — school personnel are aware of them and are working to educate themselves.
- School principals could communicate to parents that establishing a gender-inclusive school climate is not about changing people’s faith values or advancing liberal cultural norms. Rather, it is part of the school’s responsibility to create a safe and inclusive environment for all children.

Creating a Gender-Inclusive School Climate

Initiating conversations with children about gender inclusivity is often less complicated than it can be with adults, experts say. “When a transgender or non-binary student comes out to their peers during a social transition, sharing their name and preferred pronouns, classmates often respond with, ‘OK, can we still play dinosaurs together at recess?’” says Johanna Eager, director of Welcoming Schools, a professional development program for elementary school educators with a focus on supporting LGBTQ+ students.

Eager says setting gender-inclusive norms begins at home. Here are some practical ways she and other educators incorporate gender inclusivity in their classrooms.

Johanna Eager

Mix or rearrange traditionally gendered toys and learning materials so all students can play and learn together free of gender stereotypes.



Highlight posters, books, and work examples in your classroom that show people of many genders and gender expressions engaging in activities that transcend gender stereotypes.

Vanessa Ford

Build a classroom that contains both “windows” into other people’s lives and “mirrors” of the students in the classroom, including picture books of transgender children.



Aidan Key

Teach students to embrace each other’s gender expression within the first few days of school.



Have teachers write their own names on the board alongside their preferred pronoun. Explain the word “pronoun.” For elementary school children, explain by saying, “Pronouns are words that include he and him, she and her, they and them.”

Some other cultures have different pronouns. Those are the ones that we tend to use. I use the terms he and him.” Ask students to share their preferred pronouns. This allows a teacher to convey the message that people don’t automatically know another person’s gender, Key says.

Jennifer Herdina,
grade school teacher,
Welcoming Schools
lead teacher for the
Madison Metropolitan
School District in
Wisconsin



*Encourage students to celebrate the different parts of themselves by first reading the book *Looking Like Me* by Walter Dean Myers.*

Instruct students to brainstorm a list of their different identities — e.g., daughter, brother, athlete, gamer — which they use to decorate locker tags.

Instead of referring to students as “boys and girls,” *address the class* as third-graders, students, scholars, mathematicians, or even by the name of the school mascot. When asking them to line up, have students arrange themselves according to a non-gender specific difference, for example, whether they are wearing tie or Velcro shoes.

Use non-gender-binary bathroom passes.

Ensure all rosters and substitute teacher lists are up-to-date with students’ preferred names and pronouns.

“Some of these [actions] sound so little but make a big difference,” Herdina says. “And when you add up a bunch of little things, it makes an even bigger difference.”

Interrupting Biased-Based Bullying

The California Safe Schools Coalition issued a research brief in 2007 after a decade of study, reporting that almost one-fourth of students in California are bullied because they are not “as masculine as other boys” or “as

feminine as other girls.” Approximately one in six students who had expressed their gender in a way that was different from their sex assigned at birth stopped going to school for a period of time due to harassment, according to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey.

Despite these statistics, Herdina says bullying does not have a clear definition. “A lot of people don’t have a common understanding of what bullying really is and how it’s different from conflict, and how conflict is different from teasing and joking around,” she says.

“Biased-based bullying” constitutes

bullying, a follower, or a bystander,” she says. She encourages teachers to address the students who are behaving as followers and supporters and help them become defenders.

Targeted lesson plans can help prevent bullying before it begins. Herdina wrote one based on the book *Jacob’s New Dress* about a boy who likes to wear dresses to school, prompting his classmates to make fun of him.

The lesson asks students to talk about some of the things they like, such as their favorite colors. This leads to a conversation about stereotypes. Then the teacher reads the story, stopping at different points and



Ronnie and Ellie Ford

the majority of bullying behavior in schools and is based on some perceived aspect of a student’s identity, such as race, disability status, sexual orientation, religion, gender identity or gender expression, says Eager.

To prevent this, adults should focus on different roles students play in bullying situations rather than only directing attention to the bully and the person who is being victimized, Herdina says. “Everybody is playing some sort of role whether it’s a defender, a possible defender, a supporter of the student who’s

discussing the way Jacob is being treated and how students would respond if they were Jacob’s friend. The teacher explains to the class they have choices if they witness bullying behavior. They can say “stop” and speak up, or they can tell an adult.

Eager says teachers should immediately try to stop bullying when they see it. “We help [them] to understand that LGBTQ+ bullying is just as bad as any other type of bullying and it’s absolutely the educator’s responsibility to address it,” she says.



Helpful Resources for Cultivating a Gender-Inclusive School

- An “Introduction to Transgender People” video by the National Center for Transgender Equality: <http://bit.ly/2TgRYCS>
- Welcoming Schools lesson plan on biased-based bullying (suggested for grades 3-8) in which students can choose the role that feels most comfortable for them: <http://bit.ly/2BSCcXO>
- Welcoming Schools recommended book list to teach students about bullying and bias: <http://bit.ly/2SCMLoU>
- Welcoming Schools gender support checklist for transgender and non-binary students: <http://bit.ly/2R1hnDP>
- “Be Who You Are” poster by Todd Parr: <http://bit.ly/2VLT9Tk>
- Frequently Used Resources from genderspectrum.org including a gender support plan template and video and frequently asked questions about bathrooms and transgender students: <http://bit.ly/2VLT9Tk>
- National Center for Transgender Equality School Action Center resources for parents and educators: <http://bit.ly/2QfMUg1>
- GLSEN 2017 National School Climate Survey about the school experiences of LGBTQ+ youth, including the challenges they face and the school-based resources that support their well-being: <http://bit.ly/2RwcWRe>

Navigating the Bathroom Issue

Helping children feel safe using the bathroom that corresponds to their gender identity is another crucial part of supporting health and well-being.

According to [GenderSpectrum.org](http://Genderspectrum.org), 63 percent of transgender students avoid using the bathroom at school because they are afraid that others will bully them physically or emotionally. This may cause them to avoid drinking or eating during the day at school, impairing their ability to concentrate in class.

The American School Counselor Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, as well as other professional organizations have endorsed allowing children to use

one could send the message that their gender identity is not legitimate.

The Urgency of This Work

Individuals who don’t receive support grow up to face formidable challenges. Those rejected by their families are nearly three times as likely than the average person to be homeless, 73 percent more likely to be incarcerated, and 59 percent more likely to attempt suicide, according to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey. A 2013 report by the New York City Anti-Violence Project found transgender people — specifically trans women of color — experience some of the highest rates of hate violence and murder in the U.S.

Simply calling a transgender child by their preferred name and pronouns can have a life-changing impact on that individual.

their bathroom of choice. Despite widespread support, bathroom use for transgender and gender nonconforming youth provokes questions and strong emotions among educators, parents, and students.

The main focus should be the cultivation of a safe and respectful school climate, according to [GenderSpectrum](http://Genderspectrum.org). This involves explicitly teaching appropriate bathroom etiquette and supervising school bathrooms to prevent bullying.

Another important step is making private bathrooms available to anyone with special needs — including those who desire more privacy due to a health issue or for cultural or religious reasons. Using private bathrooms should be optional, [GenderSpectrum](http://Genderspectrum.org) says, because mandating transgender students use

Elementary school administrators, teachers, and staff have the potential to change the course of these grim statistics. Simply calling a transgender child by their preferred name and pronouns can have a life-changing impact on that individual, Ellie’s parents say.

The act of affirming a child’s identity motivates the Fords to pursue public advocacy on behalf of their daughter. They say it’s “pretty cool” that when Ellie turns eight this year, she will have already lived half her life as the gender she identifies with.

“This has really shed a light on how much we can love a person,” JR says. “It has blown the roof off of our expectations.” ■

Ginger O’Donnell is a senior staff writer for *DiversityIS*.

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The Importance of Honest Discussions

AN INTERVIEW WITH KHADIJA FREDERICKS

By Mariah Bohanon

Just one percent of heads of independent schools in the United States are women of color. In July 2018, Khadija Fredericks joined this elite group when she became head of Saint Andrew's Episcopal School in Saratoga, Calif.

Fredericks has worked as a teacher and administrator in independent schools for nearly 24 years, 17 of which were spent at St. Paul's Episcopal School in Oakland, Calif. She has participated in the National Association of Independent School (NAIS) Fellowship for Aspiring School Heads program and holds a master's degree in elementary education from Teachers College at Columbia University.

Fredericks recently spoke with *DiversityIS* about her experiences as a woman of color in independent schools, how these institutions can support underrepresented faculty, and the importance of diverse leadership for students and faculty of color.

You began your career as a Pre-K teacher in independent schools. What drew you to this unique sector?

I found out that independent schools in the New York City area were hiring assistant teachers and interns so I thought I would just do that while working towards my degree at Columbia. I couldn't think of a better opportunity that would have allowed me to get teaching experience, pay, and benefits while in graduate school, so I just kind of fell into it.

What's interesting, though, is that I thought I would graduate and save the world by teaching in underserved public schools. But when I became part of the independent school network, I saw the level of support teachers received, saw parents who cared about their children's education, and children who were happy to come to school and do the work. I don't knock public education because I was a public education kid myself, but I just felt so supported in independent schools that I stayed the course.

In independent schools, as in America's teaching workforce more broadly, teachers of color tend to be extremely underrepresented.

Do you think hiring faculty of color is something more independent schools have begun striving for?

Yes and no. It depends on the institution, the leadership, and the school's history and mission. There are some schools who are satisfied with just having a few teachers of color so they can just check that box, but there are others pushing as hard as they can to improve faculty diversity. There are some schools where a teacher of color may feel very isolated in their work and like they don't have an outlet or cohort. At others you'll find people [of color] who are really happy with their work and feel very supported.

Being heard and believed are different, and it can be a big thing if you're the only or one of very few people of color in a school.

However, as a whole, I can't say independent schools are moving that direction because there are so many different factors at play.

What can schools do to help a faculty member of color feel supported and included?

The board chair at Saint Andrew's asked me this question when I was hired, in light of the fact that I'm the first person of color and the first woman to serve as head in the school's 61-year history. ... I said, "What I need from you is to believe me." Being heard and believed are different, and it can be a big thing if you're the only or one of very few people of color in a school. If I experience something negative like a microaggression and want to share that with you, please don't make excuses for that behavior or try to explain to me what

you think the person actually meant.

Oftentimes that happens when people [of color] tell others about microaggressions or something negative they've experienced. For example, people have told me I remind them of Michelle Obama, which is kind of a compliment, but then you have to wonder why I don't remind them of Hillary Clinton or Laura or Barbara Bush. Or, people have asked me if I have a nickname because they say my actual name is too hard for them to remember. If I tell [my school] about those experiences, I don't want them to make excuses for that behavior. I want them to show empathy and ask how they can help me when these things happen. How are you going to support me? How are we as a community going to collaborate on addressing these different types of microaggressions — whether it's directed at a person's gender, race, religion, or sexual identity?

How can a school help an employee of color feel supported when they experience something like a microaggression? What are the next steps?

I think it requires staying in the conversation, not just saying, "We're sorry that happened." It's a process that requires listening, gaining understanding, and working together to figure out the next steps. I'm a big fan of asking people directly what they need to feel safe, appreciated, and included. You can come to them with some ideas for how to address the situation but be sure that you hear from them what they need to feel successful and not marginalized in the [school] community. There are a lot of different routes this could take. It may require facilitating a conversation with a parent or providing some faculty professional development to help the other person gain a better understanding of the impact of the words they used. It's important that it's a two-way conversation, though, so real understanding can happen.

How do you think having a woman of color in a leadership position like head of school affects students, faculty, and the independent school community in general? I think what

this does for this community is exposes them to someone I don't think they would otherwise have regular contact with. I'm a black woman, and they're interacting with me on a daily basis.

My daughter is black, and she was here on [college] break walking around and visiting classrooms. My husband is an African American man and he coaches football and one of the basketball teams now. So, I think the exposure to my family in general has been something that has been really well-received, and I expected nothing less than that. The community has enjoyed having the chance to get to know us.

As far as the national platform, I had so many people come up to me at the [NAIS] People of Color Conference just to get my card and ask if we could talk or if they could email me sometime. I always say, "Absolutely, let's talk," about whatever is on their mind. I want to get to know them and be a mentor to whoever wants to share and collaborate with me.

I'm very open to that because I realize I'm in a unique position and I don't take that lightly. It's heavy armor to wear, and I'm humbled to have the opportunity.

What impact does it have for a student of color, particularly one who is female, to see someone like themselves be in the top leadership position of their school? It has a huge impact. Some parents have shared with me that they love that I'm here and that their children get to interact with me because in seeing me, they see themselves. It's so important that students have that influence and that opportunity to see themselves in their teachers and the adults in every area of their lives.

It also has an impact because I get to share part of my culture with the students and with the whole school. Growing up, I could count the number of teachers of color I had on one hand throughout my entire K-12 education. Now, I read books to students that

feature a variety of cultures and backgrounds. I love being able to do that. It's very important to me.

Is there a similar positive effect for faculty of color who see someone who looks like them in a top leadership position? Yes, I think it means a lot for them just to have that connection point on campus. I speak very candidly and with intention and I think that indicates to our employees and faculty of color that I truly want to come together to have honest discussions. I was afforded the opportunity to have a lot of people support me, take the time just to listen and talk with me, and show me the way to success. I certainly did not get here by myself, so that is why I want to be that same source of support for others. ■

Mariah Bohanan is the associate editor of *DiversityIS*. Khadija Fredericks is a member of the *DiversityIS* Editorial Board.

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ADMITTED, BUT NOT ACCEPTED

The Imposter Syndrome in the College Admissions Process | By Lawrence Alexander



“Why did you give me this name?” I demanded, letting my books fall loudly on the table next to us.

“Austin, your father and I had a really hard time coming up with a name we both liked ... We knew that anyone who saw it before meeting you would assume you are a white man. One day you will have to apply for jobs. We just wanted to make sure you could make it to the interview.”

She didn’t know a name like Austin could be stretched wide enough to cloak a little black girl.

This is an excerpt from *I’m Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*, by Austin Channing Brown. I recently read this penetrating book, which simultaneously comforted and disturbed me.

For the last decade, I’ve worked as a college counselor in public and independent schools where I’ve encountered several first-generation college students, students who identify as female, and students of color. I’d like to think that I’ve been their guide, counselor, and advocate. Yet as I reflect on Brown’s memoir, I wonder if I have unwittingly contributed to the “stretching of the cloak” over my students’ authenticity for fear that the predominantly white world of college admissions wouldn’t see them as legitimate or viable.

In what ways am I like Austin’s parents? I say, “I recommended these colleges because ...,” or, “You should write your essay about this topic because ...,” or “During your admissions interview, you should highlight this because”

I just wanted to make sure you could make it to the interview.

Brown’s book deals with what we commonly refer to as “imposter syndrome,” where people from underrepresented groups assimilate to the dominant culture — most commonly white, male, Christian, heterosexual, upper-class — while haunted by the

fear that one day they’ll be exposed as fraudulent, pretending to be something or someone they are not.

So, what about the college counselor? From the creation of the college list to the day of paying the enrollment deposit, am I helping students find their best fit? Or am I helping them find their best compromise?

Here are some practical considerations I’ve wrestled with:

1. The college list: What kinds of communities am I recommending to my students? College counselors need to do more than recommend colleges. We need to accept responsibility for the communities those colleges create as well. There’s a difference between asking a student to employ a growth mindset and asking a student to deny their personhood. If we took responsibility for the community list and not just the college list, we’d stand a better chance at helping our students meet with success.

2. The true cost of attendance: How much does college really cost for underrepresented students? When affording college is a consideration, we could center the individual’s financial need and not their emotional, social, and psychological needs. I have been guilty of pushing colleges that give the best aid, but after reading this book I have to ask myself, “At what cost?” What does “demonstrated need even mean?” If I ensure that my student has no debt but no mentorship or cultural capital on campus, what good have I done? I know it can feel like an “add-on” to ask colleges and universities who provide generous financial aid to do more, but perhaps the issue at hand is that financial aid alone is never enough. Even free rides can be bumpy.

3. Creating opportunities to “unpack the sack”: For many, college counseling

is not enough. They need mental health counseling as well. Underrepresented students inevitably encounter experiences around the “imposter syndrome” that go ignored. The “sack” refers to the issues underrepresented students carry around that never gets addressed so it becomes a heavy burden they’re forced to bear. Unpacking it means talking with peers, mentors, and counselors about these issues in spaces that are safe and supportive. As a college counselor, how can I work closely with a female student of color, place her at a predominantly white science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) school and not help her prepare for the psychological and emotional impact that will have on her? How can I work closely with a poor white student from a homogenous, rural setting and not expect them to struggle at a highly competitive liberal arts school in an urban setting? We need to see the college counseling profession as more than admission and May 1 — the admissions deposit due date — as a beginning and not an end. Do students have space at our schools and their future colleges to unpack their cultural sack?

Brown’s confrontational conversation with her mother unearths a relevant question for college counselors everywhere. Are we stretching a cloak of cultural deniability over our students’ ability to be their authentic selves in the name of admissions and financial aid? I submit that our field is about acceptance — self-acceptance. I am personally re-dedicating myself to being a more culturally considerate, environmentally conscious, and socially responsible counselor. I look forward to seeing you at the desk. ■

Lawrence Alexander is the director of College Counseling at White Mountain School in Bethlehem, N.H. He is also a member of the *DiversityIS* Editorial Board.



Teacher candidates and independent schools connect at Carney Sandoe & Associates 2018 FORUM/Diversity conference in Philadelphia.

Recruit and **Retain**

Independent School Community Addresses
Shortage of Teachers, Faculty of Color

BY MARIAH BOHANON

The benefits of a diverse teacher workforce are varied and well-documented, yet many U.S. schools struggle to recruit, hire, and retain educators of color. This is a problem that has become increasingly dire as the K-12 student population grows more diverse. Federal data show nonwhite students have outnumbered white students at public schools since 2015. At independent schools, 32 percent of students are now nonwhite, representing a 9 percent rise over the past decade, according to the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

In both sectors, however, only two out of every 10 teachers are people of color.

While addressing this disparity may seem daunting, creating a teacher workforce that more closely represents students' sociocultural identities is imperative for their success. A recent analysis by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that having at least two African American teachers in elementary school increases college enrollment rates for black students by 32 percent. Exposing all students to a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds and fulfilling institutional goals to be truly inclusive communities necessitates proactive recruitment of underrepresented faculty. Fortunately, the autonomous structure of independent schools grants them the ability to create innovative solutions for recruiting underrepresented teachers and providing them with supportive, inclusive work environments.

Research shows a majority of African American and Latino K-12 teachers prefer to work in underserved public and charter schools where student populations reflect their own race or ethnicity, according to a 2018 University of Pennsylvania study. Teacher turnover rates at these schools, however, are high, and attrition rates for faculty of color in public schools has increased more than 45 percent since the mid-1980s.

Working conditions, a lack of autonomy and independent discretion, and little influence on school-wide decisions are major factors for educators of color in deciding to leave a job, the study found.

The fact that independent schools provide solutions for these issues is what attracts teachers to work in them, according to research by the Klingenstein Center at Teachers College, Columbia University, which found that these instructors cite autonomy and empowerment as some of their most important values. Yet these advantages are hardly common knowledge, and increasing public awareness

is difficult at a time when fewer people are interested in becoming educators, says Jonathan K. Ball, managing associate of development and communications placement for the teacher placement firm Carney Sandoe & Associates (CS&A).

"A lot of our work is putting education as an option in the job marketplace," Ball says. In recent years, there has been a noticeable decline in the number of college students interested in becoming teachers. CS&A has had to increase outreach efforts to make sure education majors and non-education majors know that there are "career channels and opportunities available" besides teaching in public and conventional private schools, he says.



Jonathan K. Ball

"Without a doubt, the strategy around campus recruiting has continued to evolve and change with the shrinking demographic of students interested in this work," Ball says. Recruitment has become more cost- and time-intensive, requiring multiple campus visits to do outreach, participate in career fairs, and speak on panels about the teaching profession in general and at independent schools specifically.

In addition to increasing college recruitment, the company started hosting FORUM/Diversity conferences to attract more potential candidates of color. Now in its fifth year, the conference offers candidates and schools the opportunity to network and features professional development opportunities to help hiring professionals better understand how to attract, support, and retain underrepresented teachers. Other conferences, such as the NAIS People of Color Conference, have provided these opportunities as well.



Left: Natalia Hernandez, head of Breck School in Golden Valley, Minn. **Right:** Independent school employees attend a professional development seminar at the 2018 Carney Sandoe & Associates FORUM/Diversity conference.

Smaller regional events are another way to raise awareness of what independent schools have to offer and why they can be ideal workplaces for underrepresented educators. Natalia Hernandez, EdD, head of Breck School in Golden Valley, Minn., and a former teacher, says she hopes to organize an independent school fair where area teachers and potential job candidates can learn about these institutions in the Minneapolis region along with their diversity-driven missions. This type of public outreach is key to dispelling a misconception that independent schools do not value diversity and equitable education, she says.

"If you go into teaching because you believe in public education as a cornerstone of our democracy and want to give access to students who need the kind of support that they don't otherwise get in a school setting, and if you have that idealism as a teacher, you might think that ... an independent school isn't for you," Hernandez says. "Yet diversity, equity, and social justice are priorities for many independent schools." Breck, she adds, provides \$6 million in financial aid annually to ensure accessibility for students regardless of socioeconomic status, and 30 percent of the students at the school self-identify as people of color. Hernandez says growing faculty diversity is a major goal of the school's strategic plan.

Ensuring an inclusive campus climate is key to developing and retaining underrepresented teachers. New hires should align with diversity- and equity-driven values at institutions where racial and ethnic disparities still exist. Hernandez and research partner Matt Balossi, EdD — a former teacher and current dean of faculty and curriculum at Sage Hill School, an



Matt Balossi

independent institution in Orange County, Calif. — conducted a study in 2015 which found that "fit with school culture" was one of four major characteristics independent schools desire in teacher candidates.

For institutions with a mission based on diversity and equity, establishing a good "fit" requires creating processes to ensure new

"If you go into teaching because you believe in public education as a cornerstone of our democracy and want to give access to students who need the kind of support that they don't otherwise get in a school setting, and if you have that idealism as a teacher, you might think that ... an independent school isn't for you. Yet diversity, equity, and social justice are priorities for many independent schools."

Natalia Hernandez

hires are an asset for developing and maintaining an inclusive climate, Balossi says. They both agree a teacher workforce that aligns with a school's unique mission is an advantage for independent schools seeking to increase or retain diverse faculty.

At Sage Hill School, where diversity and cross-cultural competency are major goals, Balossi has a standard set

of interview questions that “serve as a litmus test” for evaluating candidates’ commitment to these values. Hernandez says when she speaks with teacher candidates, she is sure to explain that, as an episcopal institution, Breck School holds chapel every week and celebrates different faiths as one way to ensure that a candidate is aware of and comfortable with the school’s inclusive culture.

St. Paul’s School in Oakland, Calif., is an example of success, with 60 percent students of color and multiple constituents of color in the faculty, staff, administration, and board of trustees. Head of School Josh Stern attributes this success to the founding mission of the school. “Diversity, inclusion, and equity are built into St. Paul’s DNA, so it’s woven into everything we do,” Stern says.

Maintaining an inclusive campus climate and multicultural campus community is self-perpetuating,



Josh Stern

of time, so it’s always part of the conversation for us,” Stern says. The school discusses and evaluates possible bias on an ongoing basis in its recruitment and decision-making processes to ensure continued success.

St. Paul’s also prioritizes professional development opportunities that focus on diversity and inclusion, and teachers themselves often work with outside experts to lead these programs for the rest of the school. Professional development is one way that the school provides mentorship and leadership opportunities for its instructors, thus building a pipeline for diverse teachers to advance to administrative roles, Stern says.

This type of proactive support is key to ensuring teachers of color have the resources “that help them feel safe and comfortable at a school,” he says.

As Stern and others point out, however, there is no one-size-fits-all solution for independent schools to grow their diverse teacher workforce. The differences in each institution’s mission, culture, and resources — in addition to



Left: Breck School, an independent Pre-K-12th grade institution in Golden Valley, Minn. **Right:** Sage Hill School, an independent high school in Newport Coast, Calif.



Stern says. Having diverse faculty members, administrators, and staff allows for creating diverse hiring committees, which demonstrates to candidates of color that the institution values people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Furthermore, when potential teachers tour St. Paul’s, they see that it lives up to its commitment through its students and employees, he says. This type of inclusive community, however, “doesn’t happen overnight. It builds upon itself and can happen over a very long period

factors like location and school size — mean that independent schools are uniquely positioned to develop creative methods for cultivating inclusive, welcoming workplaces for underrepresented educators.

For more information on best practices for recruiting and retaining underrepresented teachers, visit the NAIS Diversity and Inclusion webpage at <https://bit.ly/2ASDaDT>. ■

Mariah Bohanon is the associate editor of *DiversityIS*.

Hiring for Diversity and the Challenges Involved

An interview with Antonio Williams

By Lisa Lovering

Editor's note: Lisa Lovering is president of Educator's Ally, an educators' recruitment and placement agency based in New York City. She interviewed Antonio Williams, director of diversity, equity, and inclusion at William Penn Charter School in Philadelphia. They talked about the hiring process at Penn Charter and how the school increases diversity among its faculty and staff. Below are some highlights from their conversation.

Who is involved in the hiring process at your school? It really depends on the level. If it's a senior administrative position, generally the assistant head of school runs the search. If it's a faculty search, the department chair along with the academic dean conduct the search.

As the institution's director of diversity, equity, and inclusion, do you participate in every search? It's not necessarily me but someone from our office, absolutely. When determining who on our team will be involved in a search, the goal is to really look at the office itself because in addition to me, there are five diversity coordinators. I think we do a good job of creating a diverse search committee. That's really important. And when I say diversity, it's a broad range of considerations. In addition to race, we look at gender, sexual orientation, age, and experience. We try to look at a variety of different things to ensure that everything is covered. When

considering candidates, my job and the job of the diversity coordinators is to consistently view things through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Because while others on the committee may think about this issue, it's not their main focus.

At the end of the day, if you focus on the candidate's skill set, you're going to end up with the more qualified candidate.

For a particular search, once you've identified the candidates, how do you ensure against implicit bias? Obviously, implicit bias is challenging. At the outset of a search, it's important for the department to identify its specific needs and the skill set that they're looking for with a particular hire, so we as a committee can remain focused on that throughout the process.

For example, say you're looking for a teacher who can teach high-level math, calculus, and AP calculus. When reviewing résumés, it's very easy to get excited about someone who went to

U Penn (University of Pennsylvania). This candidate took some math classes, so they should be able to handle the position because they went to U Penn, right? Meanwhile, you have another candidate, say a Howard University alum and someone who graduated with a degree in applied math. Clearly, they have a much more robust math background than the individual that took some math classes at U Penn, and they're likely the better hire. At the end of the day, if you focus on the candidate's skill set, you're going to end up with the more qualified candidate.

How are you connecting to a pool of diverse candidates? You often hear people involved with hiring say that they just can't find people of color. As a person of color, when I hear this or when my friends who are persons of color in the independent school world hear this, we laugh. We can immediately rattle off the names of 500 highly qualified individuals. Having said that, I do agree that there's a problem in terms of the pool feeling limited. It's sort of like you have a deck of cards, but there are only so many cards in the deck. You can shuffle the cards all you want, but at some point, you're still just getting the same cards. At Penn Charter, we're trying to combat that. I did a presentation recently with a few of our other school administrators, and one of the points I made was that we needed to

start looking at different sources rather than the same old outlets. ... The point is to be open to new sources, including new and untried search firms, so your pool can be as diverse as possible.

What about retention? You bring a new educator of color on board but how do you ensure that they're happy, feel supported, and want to stay? Bottom line, you can recruit and recruit, and then hire ... but what's the point if you can't keep these new hires on board for the long term? If you don't allow people the opportunity to grow professionally, or make sure that they feel part of the community, you'll lose them. Conversely, if you do all those things, there's a greater likelihood that your new hire will stay. There's residual benefit if that happens because that leads into your recruitment. The conversation becomes, "Hey, this is a great place to work."

If you don't allow people the opportunity to grow professionally, or make sure that they feel part of the community, you'll lose them.

What advice would you have for schools who aren't as far along on these issues, or who don't have the staffing? How can they move the needle as far as doing a better job of diversifying their faculty and staff? I would say the first thing to do is to really address and identify where you are as a school. What I mean by that is take a look in the mirror and make an honest appraisal. Is your school set up to support faculty members of color? Because if you're just starting out, and you've only got one or two educators of color, that's going to be tough. It's a lonely place to be. But if you do move forward, what are you doing to do to support these new hires? Are your students prepared to support them? Is your board prepared? How are you going to address microaggressions? Your school community needs to be prepared to be supportive.

Is there anything else you would like to share? A conversation on this topic would be incomplete without a mention of the National Association of Independent Schools People of Color Conference (PoCC) and the importance of schools sending their educators of color. But schools shouldn't make the mistake of making their educators of color feel like they have to fight, beg, and borrow to attend. PoCC was created and designed by and for people of color, so send them, and send them all. ■



Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development congratulates the inaugural 2017-2018 cohort of Faculty First-Look (FFL) scholars. FFL provides professional development opportunities for current doctoral/terminal degree students from historically under-represented groups who are preparing for faculty or related scholarly careers. FFL provides on-site and virtual instructional and social engagement with Steinhardt faculty, deans, and administrators, to help participants successfully launch their career. Steinhardt is proud to announce this year's scholars:

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Preparing Students with Learning Disabilities for College

Independent Schools Help Strengthen Social and Soft Skills to Complement Academic Ability

By Sheryl S. Jackson

Students with learning disabilities

are increasingly prepared in high school to complete college coursework, but not all of them attend or graduate from college at the same rate as their peers, according to a study by the National Center for Special Education Research.

Only 15 percent of young adults with learning disabilities enrolled in a four-year institution within six years of leaving high school compared with 37 percent of their peers, the study reports. Students with learning disabilities were more likely than their peers to attend a community college, but their graduation rates overall were lower at 38 percent compared with 51 percent.

Although learning disabilities represent an obstacle, experts say they should not prevent students from attending and completing college. Rather, individuals facing those obstacles need extra help learning soft skills such as time management or self-advocacy to overcome their challenges.

Experts from three independent schools that focus on students with learning disabilities shared their messages for college success.

Brehm Preparatory School Carbondale, Ill.

At Brehm Preparatory School, a day and boarding school for students with learning disabilities, faculty focus on teaching skills most college attendees take for granted, says Michael Bradley Sims, director of student outcomes.

These skills include learning how to ask for help, organize, plan, and prepare for challenges. Others relate to negotiating social situations and asking for access to resources and support, Sims says.

Brehm's faculty use a software program Sims created to identify and



track student progress. Teachers rate students on a four-point scale for ability in soft skills.

At the start of the academic year, Sims evaluates each child to create a baseline score and identifies two major areas in need of improvement. That assessment helps teachers and residence hall leaders know which areas each person is looking to strengthen. For instance, if a student is working to improve their ability to transition from one situation to another, a teacher might measure how long it takes the student to go from class to class, Sims says.

Brehm offers a semester-long class devoted to college strategies, covering topics such as how to apply for college, using a syllabus to plan, what the expectations are for behavior and performance on campus, and how and when to ask a professor for assistance. "We also help students develop a transition support card, which is a self-awareness rubric that identifies how each student learns and includes

an advocacy worksheet that defines the specific supports they can request for their learning difference," Sims says.

The Franklin Learning Institute East Haddam, Conn.

The Franklin Learning Institute, a program of the Franklin Academy, offers high school seniors and postgraduates an opportunity to experience secondary education in a supportive environment.

Franklin Academy is a college preparatory boarding school that focuses exclusively on serving children with nonverbal learning disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorders. The Learning Institute focuses on preparing those who need extra support in developing college skills.

With a total enrollment of 88 day and boarding students, Academy classes usually average five to six students, but the Learning Institute classes are larger with 12 to 15 pupils. Larger classes help students transition to the college classroom, says Mary Murphy, director of development.

“Seniors and postgraduates take more responsibility for themselves and their studies in the Institute program,” she says. Much like in college, classes follow a syllabus, faculty have set office hours, counselors require an appointment to be seen, and class periods are longer than in typical high schools. Students also have more free time to manage, are expected to plan ahead, and need to set more frequent deadlines for larger projects.

The Institute offers a seminar to students that provides opportunities to review their progress during the year and ask questions. The original seminar led to the creation of another one that focuses on social activities, Murphy says.

“Students told us that they were unsure about how to manage parties on a college campus, so we developed a two-day seminar on college parties,” she says. Faculty and students talked about how the medications they take interact with alcohol, alcohol’s effect on the brain, and the definition of a serving size.

Approximately 90 percent of Franklin’s students enroll in colleges or universities, Murphy says. “We counsel them to take a reduced class load the first year to give them time to become accustomed to college life,” she says. “We also teach them that college counselors don’t come looking for them. The students are responsible for seeking help and for advocating for themselves, such as asking professors for written lecture notes if their learning difference requires it.”

Darlington School in Rome, Ga.

Darlington School is a co-ed day and boarding school where a special learning center provides individualized assistance to college-bound students.

Of the 400 pupils enrolled in the Upper School, 60 with learning disabilities receive individual academic support through the Teaching and Learning Center. Each is assigned a learning specialist who serves as an academic coach and meet with that person daily, says Scott Greene, EdD, director of the Center.

“Learning specialists assist students in developing goals, identifying action steps and planning for accountability

Learning disabilities vs. learning differences

Rather than use the term “learning disabilities,” some prefer to say “learning differences” or “learning challenges” because those phrases sound gentler, says Julia Frost, director of the Jones Learning Center at the University of the Ozarks, in Clarksville, Ark. “I’ve seen parents and schools wanting to say ‘learning difference’ because it doesn’t sound maybe as serious or as life-altering as a disability,” Frost says.

However, there are no legal protections for students with learning differences or challenges, unlike the laws that exist to ensure equity for people with qualifying disabilities — the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. These laws make no mention of learning challenges or differences and therefore the terms do not carry any legal or diagnostic weight, nor do they have a concrete definition.

“That’s my big concern,” Frost says. “A parent might say, ‘Oh, we don’t ever say he has a disability because we don’t want to limit him,’ but in order for a student to receive accommodations of any sort in college it has to be (defined as) a disability. You can’t get accommodations because you have a difference. Everyone learns differently. ... That’s why if you want any legal protection, any accommodation, you’ve got to say yes, I have a learning disability.”

Regardless of what they call it, students with learning disabilities should meet their challenges head-on, Frost says. “In the long run we want them to know what their strengths are and what their challenges are,” Frost says. “[A learning disability] only limits you if you decide it’s going to limit you. ... If you say the words, then you have to acknowledge that there’s a problem. That doesn’t mean anybody is less intelligent.”

—Kelsey Landis

while also helping them become better self-advocates,” Greene says. “Coaching sessions keep students on track and allow them to quickly address obstacles that interfere with progress.”

Learning Center support is especially helpful because the entire Upper School operates on a challenging college-type schedule with three 70-minute classes on some days and two 70-minute classes on others.

“This schedule gives Center students the advantage of having learning specialists who can teach them to evaluate assignments and make the best use of their free time, which often includes sports or after-school activities,” Greene says. “All of our information is online, similar to colleges and universities, so students learn how to find assignments, review grades, and understand a syllabus.”

The Center also addresses the need for self-advocacy with the requirement that these 60 Upper School students visit teachers during their office hours each month to ask questions about classwork or discuss needed accommodations. “This is difficult for most students with learning differences, and we sometimes have to step in and set a schedule for them, but once they start meeting with teachers regularly to discuss their needs, it becomes less awkward,” Greene says. “In fact, we find that once students get in the habit of meeting with teachers, they do so more often than we require because they’ve learned when and how to ask for help or clarification, an important skill that they will need in college.” ■

Sheryl S. Jackson is a contributing writer for *DiversityIS*.

As More International Students Enroll, Independent Schools Find Ways to Welcome Them

By Dale Singer

Jenny Wells wanted to help her six Chinese students who were studying English improve their skills, so she turned to an unlikely source — the magazine *Businessweek*.

The students at White Mountain School in Bethlehem, N.H., were active gamers, Wells says. The *Businessweek* article discussed how China might limit players on online gaming platforms to no more than two hours of play a day, a hot topic among gamers.

That discussion flashpoint, she says, helped make a useful connection between their homeland and their language studies. “In that action,” Wells says, “they can learn how to structure and support arguments, and it will come out in a debate that will allow them to practice speaking in a public and academic way.”

Finding ways to sharpen such skills is a key priority for independent schools that are enrolling an increasing number of students whose primary language is not English. Data from the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), which has 1,600 member institutions, shows a sharp growth in students with F-1 student visas, from 13,881 in 2005 to 31,122 in 2015.

Leading the way were students from China, numbering 14,579 in 2015 from just 348 in 2005, followed by students from Mexico, Canada, Vietnam, Spain, Russia, and Brazil.

Myra McGovern, vice president of media at NAIS, says as the number of international students ballooned,

programs helping students to improve their English grew as well. These programs are known as English as a second language (ESL), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and English language learner programs (ELL).

“Most of the independent schools that offer ESL are doing so to attract foreign boarding students who have some English proficiency but need to hone their skills and improve their chances to get into college,” she says.

A diverse student body also helps schools provide a richer experience for everyone who is enrolled, McGovern added. “It helps all students acquire cultural competency,” she says, “and it provides different perspectives to different parts of the world.”

With so many students from so many countries, no single template governs ESL programs at independent schools or the supporting services that help international students feel comfortable. Holidays, performances, and native foods are typical ways to help bridge the international culture gap, but McGovern says those basics can show up in a variety of approaches. “I think it really depends on the community and how it’s structured,” she says, “and how the school works to integrate students from all different backgrounds and perspectives into a larger whole. It’s something that schools talk about and work on, but there’s no one right answer.”

The following are solutions that some schools have found.

Atlanta International School Atlanta, Ga.

An International Baccalaureate school enrolling students from preschool through 12th grade, Atlanta International has students from 94 different countries who speak 60 different languages. International students comprise half the 1,280 total enrollment, coming primarily from Europe, followed by South America and the Middle East. They are typically children of business executives, diplomats, doctors, or university faculty.

Reid Mizell, the school’s head of admission, marketing, and financial aid, says all students are required to take at least two languages, so for those who come speaking no English, it becomes their second language, or maybe even their third or more.

The youngest students may be in a full immersion preschool program, but when they get to kindergarten, it becomes partial immersion — part in English and part in their native language.

Mizell says students’ aptitude at learning a new language can be surprising. “Some kids may need a couple of years of more support,” she says, “but it’s amazing when you’re in an environment where everyone speaks more than one language. It becomes a very normal thing.”

Learning another language is not the only advantage of going to class in an international environment, she adds.

“There’s a difference in perspective,” Mizell says, “and the ability to be in a

learning environment where there are multiple viewpoints — the way you look at history, the way you look at politics and art and literature. It can change depending on what country you come from. It's a very rich environment to learn in. When they get out into the world, the students feel confident to step forward into opportunities they might not have had if they had not been in a school like this."

To help make the atmosphere more welcoming, the school hosts a United Nations day in the primary school; visitors share the food and culture of their country and talk about inclusion and belonging, Mizell says. "We work hard to figure out ways to make sure that [the students] feel they belong, and their families too," she says. "We're always up for a party."

The Athenian School Danville, Calif.

Michelle Park, international student coordinator and ESL department chair at The Athenian School, says enrollment of international students has been steady over the past five years. They now make up approximately 10 percent of the student body of 500, coming primarily from Asia but also from countries such as Ukraine, Germany, and Mexico.

With limits on how many students the school will take from any one country, they try to diversify enrollment. "We want to serve the whole child," Park says, "and multicultural understanding and international relations help do that."

The school's three ESL teachers place students according to an assessment of their English skills. The curriculum focuses on reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Park says the classes use outside resources — ranging from magazine articles to TED Talks to YouTube videos — to supplement their texts, plus novels and short stories in literature class along with composition and essay writing. Because student ability can vary, the school tries to match the material to individual skill levels. At the end of the two-year ESL program, Park says, "they should be good to go to study

with native English speakers."

"It's more of a pacing issue," Park adds. "We want to make sure we're moving at a comfortable pace for them to master the material. They're all pretty proficient. Some of them don't even need ESL because they studied so much English in their home countries."

Sarah Freedman, director of communication, says the school's emphasis on values like equity and inclusion help students maintain their native culture while learning American customs in the classroom and in other activities. "Humanities classes are multilingual," she says. "They're watching, they're listening, they're writing, they're going out and practicing things. They're encouraged to practice their English as much as possible during the day."

White Mountain School Bethlehem, N.H.

Of the 138 students at White Mountain, 29 are international, according to Mike Peller, assistant head of teaching and learning. Most are from China, with others from places such as Kenya, the Czech Republic, and the Dominican Republic.

Peller says the school doesn't have a requirement for English proficiency to be admitted, although students do take


the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) when they arrive to see where they should be placed.

Peller says they try to leverage students' curiosity and the pride they have in their native country to help them learn as much and as deeply as they can.

Because White Mountain is a boarding school, its programs tend to be an immersion experience. Jenny Wells, the ESL teacher, says small classes help create a better connection between students and the world outside in what can be an isolated New England atmosphere. "We use language to talk about and explore everything," she says. "I find out about their interests and contact their other teachers, and we create curriculum that allows them to work with the skills they have."

"The world is a big and amazing place," Wells adds, "and there are real people who make that trip and tell you about their experiences and their life. It opens doors that are impossible to close. It's important to know what's out there, and one way of knowing what's out there is to bring it in." ■

Dale Singer is a contributing writer for *DiversityIS*.



"We use language to talk about and explore everything ... I find out about their interests and contact their other teachers, and we create curriculum that allows them to work with the skills they have."

Jenny Wells, White Mountain School

Clemson University Creates Inclusive Community for Underrepresented, High-Achieving Students

By Mariah Bohanon



Faculty, graduate students, and Senior Associate Director for Hispanic Outreach Julio Hernandez (center), attend Clemson University's inaugural Hispanic and Latinx Voices in Academia conference on Oct. 13, 2018.

Clemson University in South Carolina may be well-known for its championship sports teams, but its success as an academic institution extends far beyond athletics. Clemson's acceptance rate is 51 percent and its first-year retention rate, at 93 percent, surpasses the national average by 15 percentage points.

Perhaps most impressive about this university, however, is its commitment to uplifting students and communities sometimes relegated to the sidelines of higher education. Through extensive programming, campus-wide support, and the dedication of Clemson's faculty and staff, the university has become a place of opportunity for marginalized populations and a role model for other institutions.

Highlighted below are just a few of the university's diversity and inclusion efforts that make it a welcoming place for students looking for a college where they can feel included.

Clemson Career Workshop

One of the longest-running diversity programs is the Clemson Career Workshop, a weeklong summer experience for high school seniors. Originating in the late 1970s, the workshop was designed to increase the number of incoming African American students who wanted to pursue an engineering degree. Its purpose has since broadened to introduce underrepresented individuals from all backgrounds to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) careers.

"We have a lot of alumni across the country who attribute their coming to Clemson to this program," says Cherese Fine, PhD, program coordinator for the university's Charles H. Houston Center for the Study of the Black Experience in Education, which operates the workshop.

The program accepts 50 high school students annually to spend a week living

on campus, attending introductory courses, and learning how to prepare for the rigors of college.

"We look for students who are first-generation or socioeconomically disadvantaged, but we don't deny applicants who don't fit those categories," Fine says, adding that the program also accepts out-of-state students. "We mainly look for those who are high-achieving and who have a greater chance of being accepted here."

While Clemson defines itself as a "science- and engineering-oriented" institution, according to its website, the career workshop also introduces majors outside the STEM fields. Introductory classes in the social sciences, marketing, communications, and business are just a few of the options offered. In keeping with the program's diversity-oriented mission, the workshop strives to attract soon-to-be college freshmen interested in a variety of disciplines and encourages exploring multiple future careers, Fine says.

Fine's goal is to ensure the rising high school seniors accepted into the Clemson Career Workshop are prepared for the college application and enrollment process and equipped with the tools necessary to succeed as postsecondary students.

The workshop's impact is also evident in how many of the attendees end up enrolling at Clemson. Out of the 100 students who attended in 2017 and 2018, 38 now proudly call themselves Clemson Tigers, Fine says.

Hispanic and Latino Outreach

As the Hispanic and Latino populations in the United States continue to grow, equity-minded institutions like Clemson are working to promote cultural inclusion and educational opportunities for these often-marginalized communities. In spring

2017, Clemson hired Julio Hernandez to guide these efforts as the college's inaugural associate director for Hispanic outreach. His role includes recruiting and supporting Hispanic students in underserved high schools, building community connections, and increasing the number of Hispanic faculty and staff.

Having a staff member dedicated solely to Hispanic outreach has been successful. Over the past two years, the number of Latino students applying to Clemson rose 108 percent, while the number of Latinos applying for open jobs at Clemson increased by 50 percent, according to Hernandez.

"The more [Hispanic] professors and employees we have on campus, the more places we have where Hispanic students can make connections with someone who may understand where they're coming from," says Hernandez, adding that many of these students are first-generation college attendees. "When you're faced with something you've never had to do before, like creating a résumé, it's encouraging to have someone to turn to in the career services office who looks like you or may share your background."

Men of Color Summit

One of Hernandez's biggest goals is to increase enrollment and success for Hispanic male students. As co-chair of Clemson's annual Men of Color Summit, he helps organize and lead a conference of more than 2,000 attendees — including educators, business leaders, and high school and college students from across the country — all dedicated to promoting bright futures for young African American and Hispanic men. Both groups have the lowest high school and college graduation rates of any other demographic and in many ways "can relate to one another through



Left: High school students conduct hands-on experiments in a university lab during the 2018 Clemson Career Workshop. **Right:** Clemson's Multicultural Center promotes LGBTQ pride and allyship during a campus outreach event.

shared experiences," Hernandez says.

"The Men of Color Summit breaks down [these similarities] and shows these young men that they can dream big," he says, "but in order to do that, they need champions and people to advocate for them, which is why we invite educators, community leaders, parents, and more. It's an all-hands-on-deck approach."

Lee A. Gill, JD, chief diversity officer for the university, proposed the idea of hosting the summit when he started at Clemson in 2016. Having helped organize a similar event in his previous position with University of Akron in Ohio, Gill says the university leadership and the surrounding community of Greenville, S.C., gave the idea immediate approval. In the context of the Black Lives Matter movement, the city realized that the summit "sends a powerful message by our community standing up for young men of color," he says.

Sponsors for the summit include the city of Greenville and large corporate partners such as BMW, Boeing, and Michelin Tire. These organizations want a more diverse workforce, Gill says, and

they realize achieving that goal requires closing achievement gaps for this underserved population.

The third annual Men of Color Summit will take place in April 2019. Gill says the university is looking forward to the program's continuing success in bringing thought leaders from across the country to give presentations and lead workshops on best practices for supporting young men of color and to inspire the young men in attendance by serving as role models.

LGBTQ Programs

As with many of its diversity and inclusion focus areas, Clemson's efforts to support and celebrate its LGBTQ population are robust. Located in the Harvey and Lucinda Gantt Multicultural Center, the university's LGBTQ Programs division offers advocacy and educational opportunities, social programs and services, and a full calendar of campus events designed to celebrate and support this community.

The decision to house its LGBTQ office in the campus' Multicultural Center — rather than in a separate center — was inspired by the university's intersectional approach to diversity and identity. "We

know that our students don't just bring one identity to the table," says Kendra Stewart-Tillman, PhD, director of the center. "If you're an LGBTQ student of color, you shouldn't have to choose whether to find support at a multicultural center or at a LGBTQ center. Here, we serve all students and all identities."

The university trains students and employees to advocate for and support the LGBTQ community. While Clemson has offered safe zone ally training for more than 15 years, the recent hiring of a full-time employee to oversee LGBTQ programs has enabled the center to host multiple training sessions for any student, faculty, or staff member who wishes to become an LGBTQ ally.

Whether students are looking for a safe space, faculty who reflect their identities, or help in their future careers, those attending Clemson can be sure the university will offer them a welcoming and inclusive campus community for people from all backgrounds.

For more information about Clemson's diversity programs, visit clemson.edu/inclusion. ■



Lee Gill

Mariah Bohanan is the associate editor of *DiversityIS*. Clemson University is a 2018 *INSIGHT Into Diversity* Diversity Champion.

Mendez v. Westminster School District of Orange County

By Alexandra Vollman



Clockwise from top left: Sylvia Mendez, daughter of Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez, speaks at an Oct. 12, 2011, event in Los Angeles about how she and her brother were denied entry to a public school in Orange County, Calif. in 1943. (Photo courtesy U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/Richard Rivera); Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez; Justice Thurgood Marshall; Sylvia Mendez accepts an award at the event in Los Angeles. (Photo courtesy U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/Richard Rivera); Schoolchildren eating hot school lunches made up primarily of food from the surplus commodities program. Taken at a school in Penasco, N.M.



Eight years before the United States Supreme Court made its landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Felicitas Mendez of Puerto Rico and her husband Gonzalo, a Mexican immigrant, argued against the legitimacy of racial segregation in schools. Led by then attorney Thurgood Marshall, the couple sued the Westminster School District in Orange County, Calif. in 1946 after their children were denied admittance based on their ethnicity. They were instead forced, like thousands of other children of Mexican immigrants, to attend separate schools.

On April 14, 1947, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the forced segregation of students into separate “Mexican schools” was unconstitutional and unlawful, effectively laying the foundation for *Brown*. Not only did *Mendez v. Westminster* help Marshall form some of the arguments he later used in the *Brown* case, but it also represented the first unification of different racial and ethnic groups to make the argument for desegregation.



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