



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy

By Executive Strategist Shawn Rowley Wright

The Oldfields 2020-2021 school year was memorable for many reasons. Not only were we navigating a pandemic and determined to provide an in-person experience for our students, but we also charged ourselves with driving meaningful Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) progress and programming throughout our community. Our DEI Board Committee developed a series of priorities aiming to ensure that each student is treated with respect and can live as their authentic selves. With the full support of our administration and Board of Trustees behind us, we were able to examine each area of our campus and our culture to see how we can better serve our students. We have taken important steps, learned many lessons, and are committed to continuing this work as a priority on our campus. Here are a few of the exciting initiatives pursued as part of our DEI Action Plan.

DIRECTOR OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

We are thrilled to announce that after an extensive global search, we have welcomed **Dawn Anderson** to campus as our new Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Dawn comes to us from the Trevor Day School in New York City with an extensive background in DEI programming and curriculum. She is not only jumping into the Oldfields experience as our Director of DEI, but as a dorm parent as well. "I am excited, along with my dog, Pinot Blanca, to be at Oldfields. I am energized

to get to work with all the parents, alumni, faculty, and staff. All are welcome to reach out to me anytime." All members of our community will benefit from her expertise in the development and implementation of programs and services that will promote an environment of diversity, equity, and inclusivity.

STUDENT PROGRAMMING

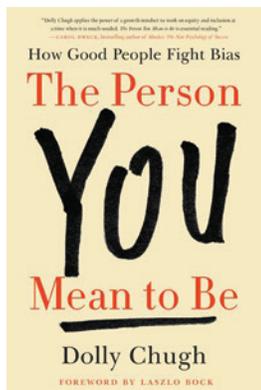
We have continued to prioritize monthly DEI Days in our student programming. Work for and by students took on many forms in an effort to reach and inspire as many as possible. Oldfields isn't just checking off boxes in this work; we know we need to build trust and enthusiasm with our students. We held monthly student-planned events corresponding with our Community Norms of Engagement. One of the student-led sessions focused on BIPOC contributions to the Arts. Another day, the community watched and discussed two powerful documentaries, *Girl Rising* and *Knock Down the House*. We hosted cultural events around food, music, and games throughout the year to help keep everyone engaged in this important work.



In addition, several speakers interacted with the community via Zoom including Mrs. Antoinette Dempsey-Waters, creator of the African American History Curriculum for Arlington Public Schools and one of the co-authors of the African American Curriculum for the state of Virginia, who spoke to our community on the importance of African American studies, the role of economics, and how the Black experience shapes American history. The information she provided was helpful in our efforts to further diversify our curriculum.

In order to understand what our current BIPOC students are experiencing on campus, we held two different forms of listening sessions. One was hosted by Dr. Tracey Durant and Dr. Lisa Williams, and another was hosted by Trustee Jennevee Crespo '01. The information gleaned from these two sessions was invaluable in furthering the action plan most beneficial for our students. We also held open forum discussions to address current events in the world and on our campus. A few of these were scheduled events with specific topics while others were more impromptu as the students took initiative to express themselves and support their community. This outreach led to many powerful and memorable moments. It was inspiring to see students standing up and speaking out on such a variety of subjects.

FACULTY AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT



Our faculty and staff continued their DEI training and work in several different areas. We continued to host small discussion groups on *White Fragility* as we moved through a series of training and sharing experiences. The smaller sessions encouraged more transparency and honesty in our discussions surrounding three key questions—Where have we come from? Where are we now? Where do we need to go? Faculty felt the

discussions were more open and meaningful in the small group format, so we decided to follow the same model in the fall when we continue training with our summer reads, *How to be an Antiracist* and *The Person You Mean to Be*. Feel free to read along, and let us know what you think.

We also continued our work with The Wells Collective, a leading group of diversity practitioners that has led us in our DEI work this past year. They guided us through informational sessions on topics from defining DEI terms and language to creating an anti-racist classroom. After students left campus, we were excited to hold our last session in June, in-person. It was wonderful to have Akailah Jenkins McIntyre and Kalea Selmon on campus. We will be continuing our partnership with these amazing women during the 2021-2022 school year.

BLACK ALUMNI TOWN HALL

We held an inaugural Black Alumni Town Hall to kick off Oldfields Alumni Weekend this past April. The goal was to listen to the lived experiences and truths of our Black Alumni, as a critical component in ensuring Oldfields is an inclusive space for all. Renowned, nationally recognized DEI practitioner, Dr. Rodney Glasgow, facilitated this event with nearly forty alumni of classes ranging from the 1960s to 2019, who spent several hours sharing stories and memories of their time here at Oldfields. The stories were poignant, powerful, and sometimes painful. The connection between the participants was immediately apparent and led to a call for a continuous series of conversations to share experiences. This town hall was one step in building trust and inviting all of our alumni home to Oldfields.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work is now an ongoing component of our Strategic Plan. We are improving in our hiring practices, student programming, employee training, and an intentional decolonization of our curriculum. One of our next goals is to develop a method of assessing our efficacy and growth in this work. We are committed to continuing in this work to ensuring a vibrant, inclusive, equitable experience for every student who steps onto the beautiful Oldfields campus.

OLDFIELDS COMMUNITY NORMS OF ENGAGEMENT

- O Open minds and hearts
- L Listen as if you might be wrong
- D Distribute what you learn (with permission)
- F Full attention to the speaker
- I It is okay to stumble
- E Everyone will remain respectful and curious
- L Lead and learn with love
- D Demonstrate compassion
- S Speak for yourself