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## Education includes Equity and Inclusion at Providence Day School

By PROVIDENCE DAY SCHOOL October 18, 2020 11:41PM



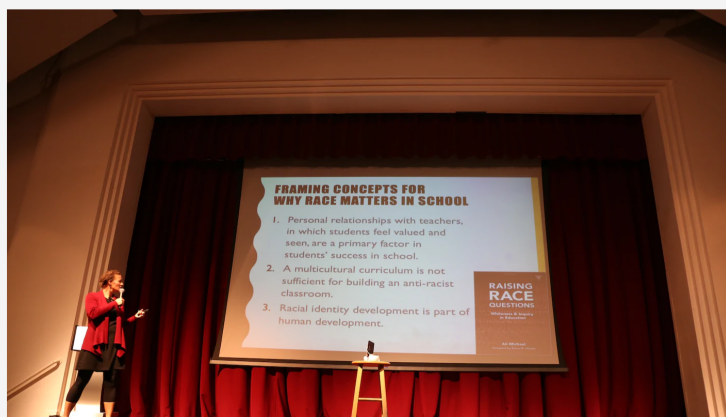
Amid national dialogue about racial equity and justice, Providence Day School is redoubling its work to live up to its pledge to be a leader in the arenas of diversity, equity and inclusion.

At Providence Day, one of Charlotte's premier TK-12 college preparatory independent schools, efforts have long been underway to increase the community's vitality through promoting equity, inclusion and emotional safety.

Founded 50 years ago, Providence Day School's student body represents more than 70 countries of origin, with Black, indigenous and people of color making up 30 percent of the school's students and 25 percent of faculty.

This year, with Black Lives Matter protests surging across the nation and frank criticism of racial bias and inequities filling social media feeds, school administrators sought feedback from students, parents, faculty and staff. In response to the comments received, Providence Day further increased its efforts to address systemic bias and racism.

"It is so important that we continue to move forward with the diversity, equity and inclusion work that the school has had as part of its strategic vision for the last decade," says Dr. Glyn Cowlshaw, Head of School at Providence Day. "We also acknowledge that we are still a work in progress. And it is not one person's job alone to keep us moving in the right direction. This is everyone's work."



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## Intensive curriculum review

In addition to creating an anti-racism task force, the school is implementing a major curriculum review from transitional kindergarten to 12th grade. As part of the review, the school plans to focus on:

- Teaching the history, culture and experiences of marginalized and oppressed groups
- Addressing Black experience, culture and history
- Teaching from multiple perspectives
- Utilizing culturally appropriate instructional methods

The school has been focusing on culturally-responsive classrooms for several years, explains Nadia Johnson, Ph.D., director of Equity and Inclusion at Providence Day. “But we recognized that there were some gaps regarding the Black experience as well as that of other marginalized groups on campus.”

Implementation of, and adjustments to, the new curriculum will be completed by the end of the 2020-21 school year.

## Bias and racism training for faculty, staff and administration

As part of a five-year plan that began last year, faculty are undergoing intensive training about bias and racism, based on their self-assessed strengths and skill levels in the areas of equity and inclusion. Among the areas of focus are:

- Implicit bias and analyzing internal beliefs
- Emotional intelligence
- Cultural competence awareness and sensitivity
- Maintaining culturally responsive classrooms



“Racial identity development training is another area that we have been working on for the past two or three years,” Johnson said. “This year, we’re really doing a deep dive into understanding how people’s racial identities are formed.”

Also, faculty will be participating in a school-wide study of “The Racial Healing Handbook: Practical Activities to Help You Challenge Privilege, Confront Systemic Racism & Engage in Collective Healing,” by Anneliese A. Singh. Groups will meet throughout the year to discuss what they’ve learned.



## Alumni efforts and more

Other initiatives are deepening both across campus and beyond. The school has launched a system to allow incidents of hate or bias to be reported to the Office of Equity and Inclusion without fear of retribution, and to allow for the identification of trends and patterns. A form is now available online to all students, parents and alumni.

The school's network of 4000 alumni are being tapped, too. Alumni are involved in the school's anti-racism task force as well as launching a new group, AFIRM (Alumni Fostering Inclusion, Respect, & Multiculturalism). The group has been in the works for the past year and is rolling out its mission statement to the school's full community later this fall.



## Equity and Inclusion includes everybody

Because of racial unrest and protests across the country this summer, Providence Day School has been offering support to Black students and other marginalized communities.

"We must be decisive in our actions to become an anti-racist school," says Cowlshaw. "Our goal is to create an equitable and inclusive environment where all who attend and work here feel that they are welcome and they truly belong."

To that end, Providence Day has continued to invest time, energy and funding in programs to address inequities. Over the past 15 years, for example, the office of Equity and Inclusion has grown from a single, full-time person to a team of 11.

"That alone shows how important this issue is to us, how we prioritize it," Johnson said. "It goes beyond what we say, to how we choose to invest our money."

Far from resting on its laurels, Providence Day School's administration, faculty and staff continue to strive toward measurable progress.

"We know our efforts will not be perfect or above reproach, but we understand that not trying would be far worse," says Cowlshaw. "There will always be more to be done. But we will never abandon our charge to always pursue excellence."

*Learn more about Providence Day School, one of Charlotte's premier TK – 12 college preparatory independent schools.*

