

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Report

Fall 2022

By Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Coordinator Sarah Spann

Together Saints Efforts

St. Andrew's will continue to build and sustain a diversity community, and the school will proactively address equity and belonging in policies, programming, and practices. To do this, we must: (1) connect the dots between past, current, and future concrete Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) initiatives and Together Saints objectives; and (2) continue to move strategic objectives into action items within the Saints community.

Objective 1: Enhance Curriculum

- ❖ **Ongoing:** School-wide curriculum review within each division.
 - Our five year strategic plan contains an initiative to re-evaluate programs and curriculum to ensure we are meeting the needs of a diverse student body. To this end, we are:
 - Partnering with the DEI Advisory Board to solicit lived experiences from students and faculty regarding the curriculum
 - (Beginning Spring 2023): Launching additional focus groups with upper school and middle school students so they can discuss their experiences with curriculum and teaching/learning environments.
 - (Lower School) Reviewing our literacy curriculum programming (e.g. Superkids, Happily Ever After) to ensure it meets the needs of all of our students.
 - Formulating a more systematic curriculum review protocol to ensure whole-school coherence beginning Fall of 2023.

Objective 2: Facilitate Continued Growth of Students and Faculty

- ❖ **August 2022 Workshop Week for Faculty**
 - Head of School, Kevin Lewis, presented the “anti-slur” policy to all faculty and staff at Workshop Week. An “anti-slur” policy creates an environment in which expectations about language are clear and transparent. This policy is in the current student and faculty handbook.
 - Faculty also received and discussed [DEIB Guidelines for the Learning Environment](#).
 - Special guest Von Gordon from the Alluvial Collective spoke with faculty during workshop week and helped facilitate conversation about a series of case studies (drawn from DEIB situations our community has faced) with faculty and a panel of administrators.

- We launched our teaching/learning theme this year of “High Expectations/Strong Supports” with a focus on the **learning center and inclusive teaching and learning practices**. We had a series of faculty breakout sessions ([full program here](#)), but some focal sessions related to DEIB included:
 - Learning Services at Lower School, Unlocked (Caroline Barr)
 - Q&A on ADHD, Dyslexia, and ASD with student panel and Katie Parisi from UMMC
 - Neurodiversity in the Classroom: It’s Not Personal (Caitlin King)
 - Let’s Talk: Belonging in the Classroom (Sarah Spann)
 - Practical Tips for Forming Positive Student Relationships and Classroom Culture (Thomas Risenberger)

❖ **October 2022 Professional Development Day**

- Our October PD Day centered on “High Expectations/Strong Supports” with a focus on **mental health**. We had Dr. Gabrielle Banks (‘06) speak to faculty about ways to promote autonomy rather than anxiety in the youth we work with. We also engaged in a series of case studies alongside some members of our Student Support Services Team. In the afternoon, coaches examined the intersection of athletics and mental health of youth alongside sports psychologist Josie Nicholson from University of Mississippi.

- ❖ **Ongoing:** Sarah Spann meets regularly with faculty, students, division heads, and parents to help mediate tough conversations regarding DEIB-related issues to foster a sense of mutual trust between faculty and students.

- ❖ **Ongoing:** This August we launched faculty-led, choice-driven Professional Learning Communities for faculty to meet six times throughout the school year in efforts to grow professionally in a topic of interest. Many of the topics proposed directly intersect with DEIB commitments; for example:

- [Culturize](#) book study being led by Jessie Humble
- [Power of Our Words](#) book study led by Meredith Boler
- [Uncommon Sense Teaching](#) book group led by Hollie Marjanovic
- Positive Classroom Management led by Jen Whitt and Cyndi Irons
- Critical Pedagogy group led by Margaret Clark
- Learning Differences Group led by Ashley Runnels & Kari East

- ❖ **Virtual Saints:** Virtual Saints is a collaboration between St. Andrew's, Global Online Academy, Malone Schools Online Network, and Mississippi State University. Through Virtual Saints, students from anywhere in the world can access high quality online courses that foster global competencies and collaboration.

- Courses such as 9/11 In a Global Context (GOA), Global Voices of Oppression: Literature for Social Justice (MSON), and AP Human Geography (VS) are just a few of the over 100 virtual classes students can choose from.

- Each class incorporates best practices for online learning and intentionally designs collaborative learning environments for students to experience different perspectives, cultures, and global ideas.
- ❖ **Global Studies Programming:** In the Upper and Middle School, there is a full line up of Travel Thursdays during the fall semester, including one for Hispanic Heritage Month. Emily Philpott, Director of Global Studies leads these efforts that are occurring within the school for students and faculty.
 - Additionally, some members of the Global Studies committee serve on a student leadership panel for the Global Education Benchmark Group. They meet once a month with other students from around the country to plan Global Student Dialogues.
 - Virtual Global Student dialogues provide students the opportunity for intercultural dialogue and connect thousands of students with their peers from schools across North America and more than 25 countries around the world.
 - In addition to international travel, our students have connected with our partner schools around the world, including those in Ghana and Honduras, for collaborative activities.
- ❖ **Launch of Global Voices:** Through the launch of our Global Voices Program (PK3-4th grade) led by Mayson McKey, students have gained access to more global perspectives and ideas.
 - Through panelists, speakers, and our wonderful community, Lower School friends have learned about back to school in different countries and cultures, Chinese Moon Festival, Diwali, and other important celebrations.
- ❖ **LGBTQ+ Trainings:** Members of the Senior Leadership Team and administration received training provided by Teen Health MS in two sessions. We will gather back together in Spring 2023 to determine the best next steps forward as a community.
 - **LGBTQ 101: Getting the Basics**
 - Identify opportunities and challenges when serving LGBTQ individuals and patients
 - Explore one's personal values and the range of values related to LGBTQ individuals and patients
 - Discuss terminology that supports and affirms all people
 - Learn the range of pronouns and the importance of using correct pronouns when working with LGBTQ individuals and patients.
 - **LGBTQ+ 102: A Deeper Dive!**
 - Equips participants with the difference between gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and sex assigned at birth, describes the OBI (Orientation, Behavior, and Identity)

- Why it is important for understanding sexual behaviors and how personal attitudes and behaviors impact LGBTQ opportunities to succeed.
- Identify at least 3 privileges LGBTQ are often denied as compared to students who identify as cisgender and demonstrate the ability to use at least one strategy for responding to challenging and harassing behaviors aimed at LGBTQ community members.

Objective 3: Expand and Honor Diversity Within Our Community

- ❖ **Ongoing:** Collaboration with the St. Andrew's Parents' Association (SAPA) on DEIB events to continue to recognize and bring awareness to our families through sharing their stories inside and outside of the classrooms.
- ❖ **Fall 2022:** The DEIB advisory board met and discussed issues related to DEIB and current steps where we are as a school and how to keep the needle moving forward in fulfilling the school's expectations. The board will meet with the Head of School and DEIB Coordinator twice during the school year. Sample discussion topics are below:
 - How the anti-slur policy can be effective and how it needs to be consistently communicated for all members of the community.
 - How DEIB efforts can be shared within the community, next steps will be how we communicate the information.
 - How we might utilize case studies with students moving forward to share different perspectives and values.
- ❖ **November 4, 2022:** Neurodiversity Day Assembly
 - St. Andrew's Upper School hosted a Neurodiversity Assembly on Friday, November 4 for the entire student body in grades 9-12 and faculty. The panelists at this year's event were Dr. Katie Parisi from UMMC; Sophie Lewis, Jasper Jones, Lucy McCain, and Anne Avery Boling (members of the Neurodiverse Student Union); and Mrs. Hollie Marjanovic, Upper School Learning Facilitator. The event was facilitated by the Diversity Student Committee.
 - The panel answered a series of questions from the Student Diversity Committee mainly related to managing dyslexia, ADHD and anxiety. The audience was also able to submit questions. This is an important event in that it supports our neurodiverse students, gives them an opportunity to advocate for themselves, and allows the general population of students to ask questions.
- ❖ **Upper School Student Committee and Student Affinity Groups**
 - An affinity group is a group of people who share a similar identity. Although members of the group may have a common identity, it does not mean that everyone in the group has had the same experience. Rather, the group is a place for reflection, dialogue, and support, and it ultimately strengthens ties within the

community. Facilitating positive identity exploration is central to creating an inclusive and thriving community. The following groups meet periodically throughout the year to plan and organize events for students. ***Each affinity group has expectations and standards that have to be met throughout the school year, including meetings in the fall and spring semester with the Head of Upper School.

- **Diversity Student Committee**
- **Asian Student Union**
- **Black Student Union**
- **LGBTQ+IA**
- **Latin Student Union**-Members of the Latin Student Union organized a chapel on October 14, 2022 to honor and celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. Rhen Tanaka, Latine Student Union President, spoke on the importance of HHM and the union.
- **Neurodiverse Student Union**

❖ **Cultural Heritage Month Highlights**

➤ At St. Andrew's, we recognize different cultures throughout the year with the hope of gaining a deeper understanding of the cultures and traditions represented within our community. We use a number of resources to celebrate cultural heritage months and holidays such as emails, classroom and community activities, and parent involvement.

- **Chinese Moon Festival** September 10, 2022

- The Chinese New Moon Festival, also called the Mid-Autumn Festival, Moon Cake Festival, or just Moon Festival is on Saturday, September 10 this year. It is one of the most important holidays in Chinese culture and its popularity is on par with that of the Chinese New Year. Ancient Chinese emperors worshiped the moon in autumn to thank it for the harvest. Ordinary people took the New Moon Festival to be a celebration of their hard work and harvests. Nowadays, people mainly celebrate as a time for family reunions. At St. Andrew's, the Upper School Dance and Mandarin students helped our community celebrate with a dance they performed in the Upper School Courtyard during morning break on Friday, September 9, and for the ECC on Wednesday, September 7 at 10:00. The dance incorporates movements from a Chinese Traditional Dance called "Blossom Time," and is set to a Chinese pop song.

- [Cultural Celebrations: Chinese New Year](#)

- **Rosh Hashanah** September 26-27 2022
- **Yom Kippur** October 5, 2022

- Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year and the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Eve, was September 25-27. Yom Kippur, another high holiday and the holiest day of the year in Judaism was October 4-5. In celebration of this time in the life of our school, dance students Marie Bishop and Nevie Bleck learned and performed a Jewish folk dance to Hava Nagila. The melody of the tune, translated 'Let us Rejoice!' was originally composed by Hasidic Jews in the Ukraine, and the lyrics are a nigun, or prayer.
- In October the students presented the dance at the beginning of 4 performances of the Upper School Play, The Diary of Anne Frank. This information was added to the above when introducing the dance: When oppressed or downtrodden, Rabbis would tell the people, "The best way to be close to God and to serve God is to rejoice. I may not be here tomorrow, but I will have joy today." And that's how Hava Nagila was born. The instrumental version for our performance was recorded by Leonard Bookman.
- [Cultural Celebrations: Jewish Holidays](#)
- **Hispanic Heritage Month** – September 15 – October 15, 2022
 - Hispanic Heritage Month Chapel occurred on October 14 at the Lower School. Maya Buford, Lower School Spanish Teacher, named all Spanish-speaking countries, and as she did, each class raised the flag in celebration of that country.
 - Lower School Spanish Teacher Maya Buford, visited the Upper School dance class to teach them to salsa to *Valio la Pena* (which translates "It was worth it!"). In December, the students traveled to the Lower School to perform the dance for a presentation Maya Buford did for 1st-4th grades on Christmas in Venezuela.
- **Diwali** – October 24, 2022
 - Lower School celebrated as a community on October 24. Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is the most auspicious Indian holiday symbolizing the victory of good over evil, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance. It is traditionally celebrated with “diyas” (candles), “rangolis” (colorful art made from colored rice or sand that are thought to bring good luck), song, dance, brightly colored clothes, gifts, fireworks, and a variety of foods.
 - Thank you to Mona Graham, SAPA Chair, for coordinating the Lower School celebration and to all of the parent volunteers!
 - The Middle School and Upper School celebrated on November 4, both with a Flashmob and a Dance Performance. Jasmine Sandhu ('99), mother of Roman ('28) and Remy ('31), taught a piece set to "Deep Malhi" by Yaad Teri to Upper School Dance, who in turn taught it to students that participated in each of the four events.

- [Cultural Celebrations: Diwali 2022](#)
- **Native American Heritage Month** – November 1-30, 2022
 - Nationwide, American Indians host Veterans Day Pow Wows, and St. Andrew's dance students traveled to Philadelphia for one hosted by The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians in honor of Native American Heritage Month. The students were made to feel very welcome, and St. Andrew's was recognized and acknowledged as their friend and partner in spreading Choctaw culture and heritage. The students were pulled into the social dances with a spirit call in the *Steal a Partner Dance* that continued to the *Snake Dance*. They then participated in the *Raccoon Dance*, which is the earliest form of tag, and an intertribal dance chanted by members of visiting groups and tribes. After dancing, the students were taught about Stickball and participated in a scrimmage. Finally, they tasted freshly-prepared, traditional food including fry bread, a hominy bowl, Shokka Nipi (pork bowl), and an Indian taco!
 - The 4th grade class took a field trip to the Mississippi History Museum, where they learned and participated in Native American Heritage Day activities.
 - [Cultural Celebrations: NHM](#)

Objective 4: Draw Together The Saints Community

❖ **November 2, 2022: Unity Day**

- Unity Day focuses on respect as a core St. Andrew's value and as an expression of our universal condemnation of bullying. Everyday we want to strive to respect different perspectives and viewpoints represented in our community. Faculty and students honored Unity Day by wearing orange.
- Grades 5-12, attended all school chapel for our Unity Day chapel. Members of the Diversity Student Committee read poems and gave speeches on the topics of love, respect, empowerment, and unity.
- [Unity Day 2022](#)

❖ **Ongoing: DEI Reports in Weekly Division Letters**

- Any programming and information related to DEI will be communicated in division letters for the Saints Community to be aware of what is occurring or in development throughout the 22-23 school year.