June 19, 2020

Greetings, my friends,

I write today to affirm our commitment to inclusion, diversity and equity within the WMA community. While we are in the midst of a national and international movement, I want to reiterate, as I said in my May 29 letter, that WMA - a family of all skin colors - is your home, and it always will be. We are also a learning community, and as such, committed to learning ourselves.

While we have made progress in recent years regarding diversity, equity and inclusion - with a recent example of last Friday’s first of many monthly student Town Hall meetings - we still have work to do and we are committed to doing it with intention, honesty and openness. Following is a summary of the goals we have set for the 2020-21 school year in order to further diversity, equity and inclusion on campus and for us to learn, as we always should, in the continuous pursuit of improvement.

* The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Team (DEI, made up of Ms. Squindo, Ms. Douglas, Mr. Whitcomb, Ms. Mahoney, Mrs. Hsiao, Mr. Brown and Mr. Dziura) is meeting throughout this summer to plan programming and events during the coming school year. While we have traditionally celebrated Black History Month, as well as global equity issues through venues such as our all-school Crossing Borders day, we want to keep the education and dialogue of equity in all categories at the forefront of our Student Life Programming and we will continue to work toward this goal.
* We will continue to support the work of our student affinity groups - the Black Student Union, the Asian Student Alliance, the Stone Society and the Gay-Straight Alliance - and we will support students’ creation of new affinity and alliance groups.
* The English department, chaired by Ms. Hutcheson, has done extensive work this past school year to bring more culturally relevant content to the curriculum. Working with the BSU, English faculty members will be implementing new texts, poems, speeches and other works to their coursework for 2020-21 that include more diverse voices and perspectives. This work will serve as an example for other departments to follow through with similar self-assessment and analysis and to expand the breadth of the WMA curriculum.
* Through our cyclic, departmental self-assessment and peer review process, we will integrate DEI-specific indicators in order to highlight areas of potential improvement to the diversity of voices and the commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in each subject area.
* We will review the Academy's admission process to identify potential barriers to application and access to a WMA education, and we will seek solutions to any that we may find.
* With the assistance of the DEI Team, we will develop a protocol for students and employees to report incidents of racism and/or bias. This protocol will be shared with all community members and will include ways for the school to evaluate and respond to all incidents reported. Data collected through this protocol will help monitor the climate as a school and a workplace.

* We intend to participate in a doctoral pilot research project through a major university that will investigate areas of implicit bias in secondary schools. Our participation in this study will allow us the opportunity for self-improvement and to contribute to systemic change.
* We will continue the gender identity training we have recently begun, in an effort to more broadly educate WMA’s faculty and staff on issues of gender identity and inclusion.
* The Administrative Team will participate in training around diversity, equity and inclusion issues this summer.

I hope these goals demonstrate the seriousness with which we take this area of education and our willingness to walk the talk as an institution of learning. Even after this coming year, having completed these steps, we will all still have much to learn, and we will continue to do so.

As always, if you have ideas or feedback to share with us, we would love to hear from you. We will continue to learn and grow together. It may be difficult at times, good learning opportunities usually are, but it will make us stronger and better as a WMA family and we embrace it as an opportunity for us all.

In solidarity,

Brian P. Easler

Head of School