

ANTI-RACISM

at HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL



JULY 24, 2020

Dear Harvard-Westlake Community,

When considering our most important aims and values, we look to our mission statement, which was rewritten in 2014 and has been our guide and inspiration since. The current national reckoning with systemic racism and injustice has led our community to its own self-examination, and it is clear that we still have a long way to go in our efforts to make our community as inclusive as it ought to be. In discussions with students, alumni, parents, faculty, and staff, we have heard stories of inexcusable experiences of bias, microaggression, and outright racism, and we have read similar accounts in letters and emails from people of color in our community and in postings on social media. These stories have pained us and galvanized us in equal measure.

We must first acknowledge that Harvard-Westlake's own practices have contributed, however unintentionally, to the racism and injustice that people of color have experienced at our school. Furthermore, we cannot be content with gradually reducing the number and intensity of these experiences and gradually improving the quality of the experience of people of color at Harvard-Westlake. Instead, we must recognize that this is an urgent crisis that demands immediate adjustments as well as long-term strategic plans to ensure that Harvard-Westlake becomes an anti-racist institution.

We define anti-racism as the active opposition to systemic racism through intentional actions, policies, or practices. This opposition must be present at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels, with understanding and commitment from all in the Harvard-Westlake community, as we all bear responsibility for the fulfillment of our mission.

The development of the new mission back in 2014 brought increased attention to the persistent inequities in our community and led us to identify as one of our six strategic "Visions for 2020" the ambition "to enable every member of our community to feel an equal sense of belonging." We engaged

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an outside expert to conduct a school-wide climate assessment, which led to the appointment of Harvard-Westlake's first Director of DEI in 2017 and subsequent changes to our curriculum, hiring practices, student programs, and professional training. In addition, in the fall of 2019, in partnership with our Board of Trustees, we formulated Harvard-Westlake's fundamental "DEI Commitments," which headline the attached document.

The steps we have taken in the last several years provide an important foundation for the urgent work before us, but they are far from being enough. In keeping with our DEI Commitments, and in response to the forceful call to action from students, alumni, parents, faculty, and staff, we are redoubling our efforts to improve our current practices, to make our DEI work more integrated and far-reaching, and to make anti-racism an essential element of our curriculum and culture.

The attached document outlines our initial plans to improve our curriculum, educate our community, strengthen our admission and hiring practices, and contribute to DEI and anti-racism work beyond Harvard-Westlake. We are grateful to those who have courageously shared their stories and helped us to understand more deeply the experiences of people of color in our community. We look forward to partnering with all of you and communicating regularly about our progress as we strive to fulfill our mission, live up to our values, and ensure that everyone at Harvard-Westlake can truly feel an equal sense of belonging.

Sincerely,

Rick Commons, *President and Head of School*

Laura Ross, *Associate Head of School*

Janine Hancock Jones, *Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*

**Harvard-Westlake
strives to be a
diverse and inclusive
community, united by
the joyful pursuit of
educational excellence,
living and learning with
integrity, and purpose
beyond ourselves.**

**HARVARD-WESTLAKE
MISSION STATEMENT**

Adopted 2014

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

AT HARVARD-WESTLAKE

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are integral to Harvard-Westlake's mission in both our pursuit of excellence and our development of character. Abundant research demonstrates that diversity improves educational outcomes for all students. Furthermore, we aim to instill empathy and humanity, encourage curiosity and openness to different perspectives, and enable our students and all members of our community to discover and express their full selves. Stated most simply, DEI commitments at Harvard-Westlake help us to learn from others, care for others, and understand ourselves.

DEI Commitments

STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND CURRICULUM

Harvard-Westlake is committed to:

- Enrolling and supporting a diverse student community in which all are treated equitably.
- Instilling empathy for others and appreciation for differences of background and perspective.
- Evaluating and improving our curriculum to ensure cultural representation and responsiveness.
- Recognizing the educational value of ideas that are challenging.
- Supporting each student's sense and expression of self in accordance with the following values:
 - Respect for the dignity and worth of all members of the school community.
 - Respect for differing points of view that are offered appropriately and in good faith.
 - Respect for the agreements of "courageous conversations."
(see next page)

DEI Commitments

FACULTY AND STAFF

Harvard-Westlake is committed to:

- Recruiting and supporting a diverse faculty and staff in which all are treated equitably.
- Requiring DEI training for all employees.
- Fostering authentic and inclusive professional relationships.
- Supporting each employee's sense and expression of self in accordance with the following values:
 - Respect for the dignity and worth of all members of the school community.
 - Respect for differing points of view that are offered appropriately and in good faith.
 - Respect for the agreements of “courageous conversations.”

CULTURE AND IMPACT

Harvard-Westlake is committed to:

- Celebrating diversity within and beyond our community.
- Understanding and enhancing community culture through regular self-examination.
- Evaluating and improving our systems, processes, and traditions.
- Sharing our DEI work and resources to make a difference beyond Harvard-Westlake.

Courageous Conversations*

Harvard-Westlake believes in the following “agreements of courageous conversations,” by which we strive to learn from others, care for others, and understand ourselves.

- 1 Stay Engaged
- 2 Experience Discomfort
- 3 Speak Your Truth
- 4 Expect & Accept Non-Closure
- 5 Keep an Open Mind
- 6 Assume Good Intentions
- 7 Always Be Respectful

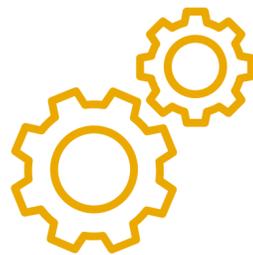
**Adapted with permission from the work of Glenn Singleton*



Curriculum Evaluation and Improvement

“Harvard-Westlake is committed to evaluating and improving our curriculum to ensure cultural representation and responsiveness.”

Recent / Ongoing Work



MIDDLE SCHOOL

- **Examining the Civil Rights Movement** in 7th grade American History and Government by tracing its roots all the way back to slavery compromises, Civil War and Reconstruction.
- **Focusing on DEI-related source materials** to teach various topics in 7th grade Library and Technology including:
 - **Media Literacy Unit** examines the role of Ida B. Wells and her coverage of lynching.
 - **Data & Statistics Unit** reads excerpts from *Black Stats: African-American by the Numbers in the Twenty-first Century* by Monique Morris.
 - **Images & Video Unit** explores implicit bias and “What is Race?” from the Pollyanna Racial Literacy Curriculum.
- **Redesigning the 8th grade World Civilizations course** in 2017-2018 to center a non-European perspective on 19th and 20th century world history, focusing on political, social, and cultural

history of Africa, Latin America, East Asia, South Asia, and the Muslim World. The course explores the impact of colonialism and imperialism on the non-European world and is attentive to inequities of power, wealth, and privilege in every unit.

- **Exploring stereotypes**, unconscious bias, and identity through direct instruction, activities, and personal reflection in 8th grade Human Development.
- **Addressing conscious and unconscious bias** and their effect on science in 9th grade Biology.
- **Assessing word problems in Math** and rewriting the problems to be more representative and culturally sensitive.
- Reading **texts by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) authors** at every grade level of middle school English, all introduced with historical context and

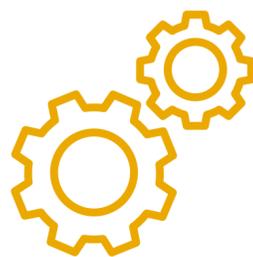
discussed under the parameters of a classroom agreement that addresses the power of language and the way we discuss sensitive topics. Topics during these units include identity, bias, systemic racism, restorative justice, and othering/marginalization.

- **Welcoming Basil Kincaid and Janna Ireland**, two prominent Black artists, to display their work, speak at all school assemblies, and teach master classes with students in Visual Arts.

Curriculum Evaluation and Improvement

at HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL

Recent / Ongoing Work



Curriculum Evaluation and Improvement

at HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL

UPPER SCHOOL

- **Examining inequity** in modern-day France and non-white Francophone countries around the world in upper school French classes.
- **Covering a diverse range of Latin American countries**, spanning Central and South America in upper school Spanish classes. Within these countries, great attention is given to inequity, for example, between indigenous peoples and European colonizers.
- **Redesigning the 11th grade history course** to examine the role of power dynamics in shaping history. While the first semester runs chronologically, the underlying framing seeks out voices, motives, and actions of those absent from power. The second semester consists of thematic units, the most extensive of which traces the African-American experience from Reconstruction to modern day.
- **Teaching popular upper school courses** such as Assimilation and Difference in Modern America; Race, Identity, and Law in American Society; The Aesthetics of Resistance; Human Conflict: From Intolerance to Genocide; and Cross-Cultural Engagement Through Film-making.
- **Implementing a school-wide policy** in 2018-19 that no student or teacher will say the n-word, even when reading aloud from a literary text that includes the word. (Also applies to middle school.)





Curriculum Evaluation and Improvement

at HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL

New Initiatives



- **Engaging The Glasgow Group consulting firm for a full DEI curricular review of our program**, grades 7-12, including both an examination of “core” courses as well as other required courses such as the 7th grade KITS (formerly known as LT7) course, 8th grade Human Development, and 10th grade Life Lab (formerly known as Choices

and Challenges). Recommendations from this audit will be taken to ensure that our curriculum in grades 7 through 12 advances our efforts to become an anti-racist institution.

- **Teaching about the intersection of identity and racism** within the criminal justice system while learning about data and statistics in the redesigned 7th grade KITS.
- **Exploring cultural appreciation and representation** vs. cultural appropriation at an in-depth level in Performing Arts.
- **Redesigning the 10th grade World and Europe II course** including using a new text book “Forging the Modern World,” which is not a Western or European history text but instead is grounded in a macro and global perspective. The course’s initial unit engages students to consider history as a subjective field, rife with biases, open to alternative voices and perspectives, and subject to power dynamics in the creation of history. This course will be renamed “Modern Global Issues” for the 2021-22 school year to better reflect its content.

- Creating **two new 11th grade English courses** centering on questions of racial inequities. Living America Revolutions focuses on exploring complexities of African-American experiences, and Living America Odysseys focuses on the experiences of immigrants.
- Creating **two new 12th grade English courses** (What’s New and Senior Seminar) organized around themes of justice, fairness, and the current cultural conversation around whose stories get told, how, and why.
- **Redesigning all upper school courses** for the implementation of the new schedule with explicit attention to equity and inclusion in the redesign process.



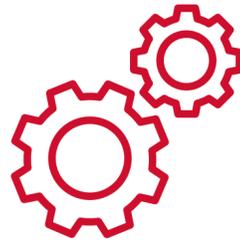


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Additional Education and Engagement **FOR STUDENTS**

“Harvard-Westlake is committed to instilling empathy for others and appreciation for differences of background and perspective.”

Recent / Ongoing Work

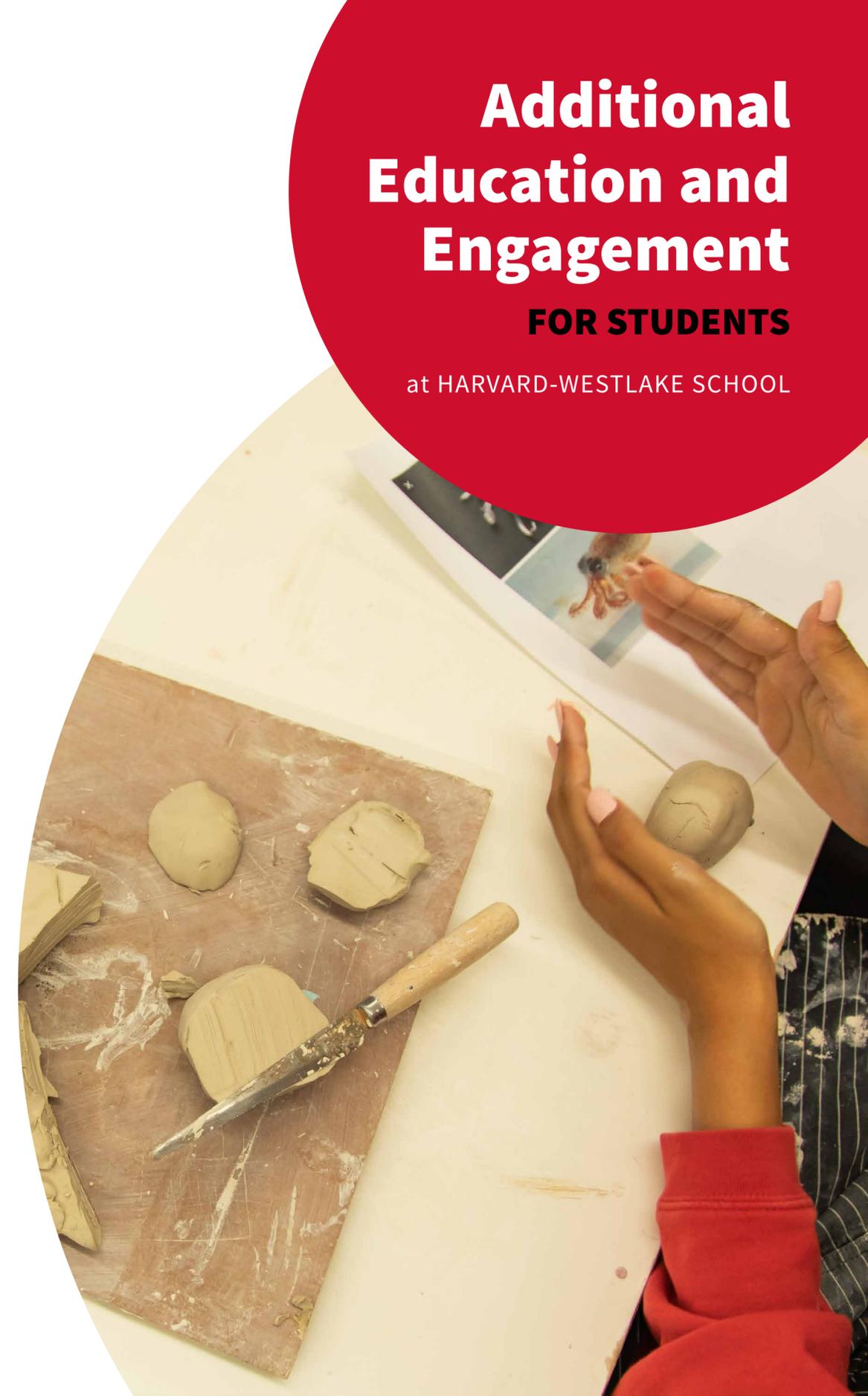


- Conducting a **diversity, equity, and inclusion climate survey** for all students in grades 7-12 organized by Student Leaders for Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (SLIDE).
- Creating and leading a **Civil Rights Trip** over Spring Break in 2019 (and slated for 2020 but canceled due to Covid-19), which included sitting where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached at Ebenezer Baptist Church, standing where Rosa Parks boarded the bus beginning the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and visiting the National Civil Rights Museum, the Lorraine Motel, and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice.
- Inviting **prominent speakers** to the school:
 - **Rosetta Lee**, national DEI expert, addressed all students, faculty, staff, and parents on microaggressions.
 - **Ibtihaj Muhammad**, Olympic medalist and the first American woman to compete in the Olympics in hijab, addressed all middle school students.
 - **Yara Shahidi**, actress and activist, spoke about Black history and identity with all middle school students.
 - **Ava DuVernay**, award-winning American filmmaker of 13th and When They See Us, addressed all upper school students.

- **Glenn Singleton**, author of *Courageous Conversations About Race*, addressed all upper school students.
- Supporting **nine affinity groups** at the middle school and twelve at the upper school. Affinity groups at Harvard-Westlake are open groups regardless of cultural background or identification.
- Facilitating the **RISE with the Rams program**, a 9-session racial equity workshop with the varsity football team.
- Hosting a **town hall** organized by SLIDE to address the killings of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd.
- Sending Harvard-Westlake attendees to the **Student Diversity Leadership Conference (SDLC)** annually. Attendees address faculty/staff following SDLC and present at the Student Voices event hosted by the Southern California People of Color in Independent Schools.
- Hosting a 2-hour **discussion on systemic racism** for upper school students, faculty, and staff, led by the upper school History department.

Additional Education and Engagement FOR STUDENTS

at HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL





New Initiatives



Additional Education and Engagement FOR STUDENTS

at HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL

- Hiring a **part-time counselor** with training in support for students of color.
- Requiring **anti-bias training**, beginning with members of the Upper School Prefect Council and Middle School Student Council.
- Exploring **new methods for student discipline proceedings**, including professional development work in summer of 2020 on Restorative Justice processes.
- Ensuring **DEI office participation** in all disciplinary proceedings.
- Creating a **Middle School Summer 2020 Read and Discussion** of *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Dr. Ibram X. Kendi.
- Facilitating an **Upper School Student Activism Seminar** led by Dr. Jon Carroll discussing key social movements that were led or heavily influenced by youth.
- Hosting a **fall teach-in**, during which each course in the Interdisciplinary Studies and Independent Research department will make anti-racism the subject of their course on one day to demonstrate the relevance of anti-racism work in every discipline.



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Education and Engagement

**FOR FACULTY, STAFF,
PARENTS, AND ALUMNI**

Harvard-Westlake is committed to requiring DEI training for all employees.

Harvard-Westlake is committed to understanding and enhancing community culture through regular self-examination.

Recent / Ongoing Work



- Mandating **cultural competency training** for all new faculty and staff members beginning in 2018.
- Facilitating **implicit bias training** for all faculty/staff in the 2017-18 school year.
- Creating and leading **mandatory professional development** for all faculty and staff on a variety of issues such as structural racism, implicit bias, and issues facing LGBTQ+ members of our community.
- Organizing **brown bag lunches** for faculty and staff on each campus to address topics such as stereotype threat, student perceptions of bias in curriculum, the experiences of students of color, inclusive pedagogy, and culturally relevant teaching practices.
- Offering **DEI Summer Reads** for faculty and staff: *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* by Dr. Mahzarin Banaji and Dr.

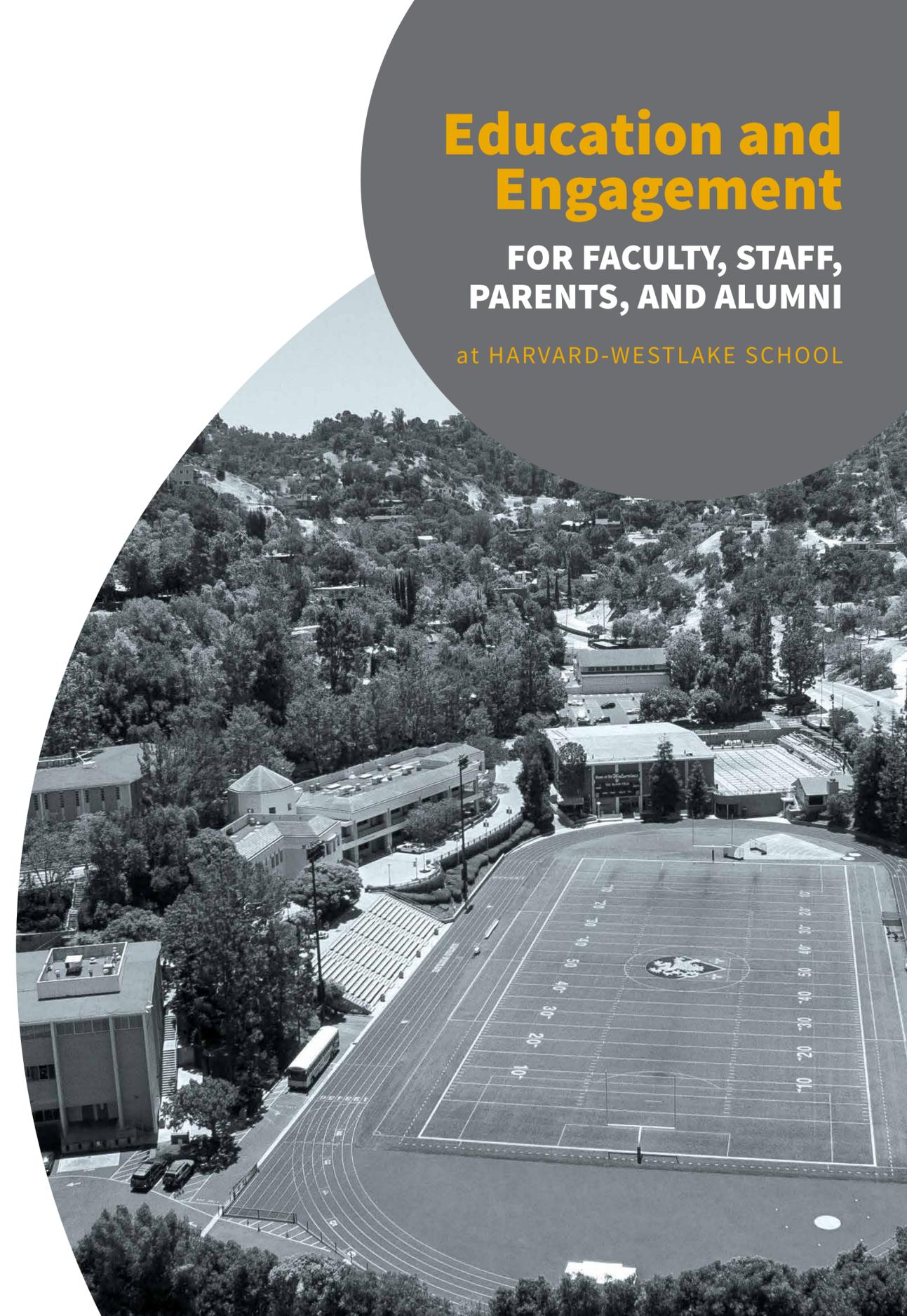
Anthony Greenwald; *Whistling Vivaldi* by Dr. Claude Steele; *Independent Queers: LGBTQ Educators in Independent Schools Speak Out* by Dr. Philip McAdoo; *Fierce Conversations: Achieving Success at Work and in Life One Conversation at a Time* by Susan Scott.

- Forming the **Harvard-Westlake Black Caucus (HWBC)**, which is hosting Black Village Talks with students, alumni, and parents.
- Supporting and promoting the work of **six active parent affinity groups and three alumni affinity groups**. Affinity groups at Harvard-Westlake are open to anyone, regardless of cultural background or identification.
- Increasing our participation at national conferences such as the **People of Color Conference**, where HW sends one of the largest school contingents.

Education and Engagement

FOR FACULTY, STAFF,
PARENTS, AND ALUMNI

at HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL





New Initiatives



- **Training in DEI and anti-racism** for school leadership in August/September 2020 with Alison Park of Blink Consulting and Dr. Steven Jones of Jones Inclusive. Trainings included the Board of Trustees, the School Leadership Team, and middle and upper School department chairs.
- Increasing the **training for all faculty and staff members** through offerings such as work with Joe Feldman and the Grading for Equity Project.
- **Reconfiguring the Diversity Council**, which is now comprised of representatives from every department on both campuses and led by the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
- Creating a **faculty working group** on anti-racist curricula.
- Sponsoring the **National Anti-Racism Teach-In** in August 2020.
- Creating a standing **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee** within the parents association to ensure equity in all HW Parents events and offerings. In its inaugural year this committee is chaired by Gabe Ramirez P'18 '22 and Stacy Messaye P'22 '23.
- **Increasing communication** between administrators and parents of students of color.
- Creating a standing **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee** within the Harvard-Westlake Alumni Association.

Education and Engagement

FOR FACULTY, STAFF,
PARENTS, AND ALUMNI

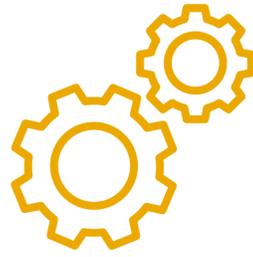
at HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL



Faculty and Staff Hiring and Evaluation

Harvard-Westlake is committed to recruiting and supporting a diverse faculty and staff in which all are treated equitably.

Recent / Ongoing Work



- **Revamping our hiring process**, including the use of search firms focused on diversity in hiring, ensuring DEI representation in interviewing, and bringing strong candidates of color to campus as finalists for open positions.
- **Increasing representation of faculty and staff of color** across all areas of school life, with a specific focus on teaching positions.
- Creating and hosting southern **California's first diversity hiring fair**, three years running.
- Conducting full faculty and staff **diversity, equity, and inclusion survey** in October 2019.
- Conducting **evaluations of Division Heads and Head of School**, including gathering feedback from faculty and staff on commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion.



New Initiatives

- Creating a **new evaluation process** for department chairs with a focus on equitable leadership.
- **Revising the faculty and staff evaluation process**, incorporating student feedback and requiring individualized DEI work for all faculty and staff.
- Examining new ways to **increase the number of faculty members of color**, such as a possible Teaching Fellows internship program.

Faculty and Staff Hiring and Evaluation

at HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL



Student Admissions

“Harvard-Westlake is committed to enrolling and supporting a diverse student community in which all are treated equitably.”

WELCOME



¡Bienvenidos!

خوش آمدی

환영

добро пожаловать!

أهلاً وسهلاً

歡迎

Bienvenue

स्वागत हे

בְּדוֹכִים הַבָּאִים!

Recent / Ongoing Work



- **Examining admissions processes** to increase access and equity in recruitment and evaluation.
- **Increasing the percentage of students of color** in our community, with 55% self-identified students of color enrolled in 2020-21.
- **Deepening relationships** with community-based organizations.
- **Revising admission committee process** to operate from a “need-blind” perspective.
- **Holding intentional admission events** to exhibit the ongoing work being done in diversity, equity, and inclusion, including the annual Multicultural Reception.
- **Adding specific questions about inclusivity** to the application for admission.



New Initiatives

- **Requiring implicit bias training** in August 2020 for 60+ members of the HW community involved in the admission process, conducted by Lawrence Alexander, Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Carney, Sandoe and Associates.

Student Admissions

at HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL





Purpose Beyond Ourselves

“Harvard-Westlake is committed to sharing our DEI work and resources to make a difference beyond Harvard-Westlake.”

Recent / Ongoing Work



- **Hosting Southern California's first Pollyanna conference** in 2018 and continuing annually, bringing together teams of faculty, students, staff, alumni and trustees from peer schools to address equity issues in independent schools.
- Creating the **HW Bridge Program** in 2017, serving middle school students from Bright Star Charter Schools in after-school enrichment programs.
- Continuing the **HW Summer Enrichment Program**, working with underserved students in 4th and 5th grade who have shown academic potential and financial need.



New Initiatives

- Exploring **new professional development partnerships** with teachers and administrators from KIPP & Bright Star Charter Schools.
- Creating **tutoring programs for under-resourced schools** offered by Harvard-Westlake students.

**Purpose
Beyond
Ourselves**

at HARVARD-WESTLAKE SCHOOL

