CASE STUDY – INSTITUTIONAL CULTURAL CHANGE PROCESS FOR AN ANTI-BIAS AND ANTI-RACIST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

THE OAKS SCHOOL PRESENTERS:
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Anti-Bias Education

“An anti-racist person is on a life-long journey that includes forming new understanding of and ways to live her or his racial identity and then increasing commitment to and engagement in anti-racism actions”

-Louise Derman-Sparks
ABE GOAL 1

Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.

Supports outcomes connected to stage theories of development that rely upon positive early experiences to inform future identity explorations.
ABE Goal 2

Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections.

Supports safe environments with a respectful lexicon to explore difference, decrease difference and enhance human intimacy and connectivity.
ABE Goal 3

Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

Creates an equity lens where children not only recognize injustice but have language to employ tools of allyship for marginalized classmates.
Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discrimination. Children are empowered with a life-long advocacy tool box of advocacy that support healthy communities and outcomes for all groups.
Multicultural Process of Change

Assumptions and Definitions

Process of Change (at all levels)

Rejection of differences and a belief in the superiority of the dominant group at the following levels:
- Personal
- Interpersonal
- Institutional/Systematic
- Cultural

Acceptance, appreciation, utilization and celebration of similarities and differences at these levels:
- Personal
- Interpersonal
- Institutional/Systematic
- Cultural

Oppression
- Monoculturalism
- “Melting Pot”
- Assimilation
- Exclusion

Emancipatory Consciousness
- Social and Economic Justice

Equity and Inclusion
- Pluralism
- “Salad Bowl/Fruit Salad”
- Diversity

Recognize
- Understand
- Appreciate Differences and power differentials
The Oaks in 2010

School History and Context

History and Goals of Progressive Education

Aspirations and Reality

Initial Needs and Approach
2010 - 2012
‘Laying the Foundation’

- Building an understanding of the school culture
- Building capacity at the administrative level
- Building allies- ‘Diversity Committee’
- Board capacity building
- Accreditation
2013 - 2014
‘The Crisis’

- 5 students of color left the school
- Racial incident with long-serving Kindergarten Teacher
- Culture reacted in an ugly way
- Board and Head held on
- A new approach was needed
- Multicultural Leadership Committee formed and training begins
2015
‘A New Day’

● Adopted the ‘Multicultural Process of Change’ as our approach
● Leadership team formed that included faculty, staff, parents, Board and Administration
● Board approves on-going funding to support DEI work
● Consultants
● Long-Range Plan
2015 - 2018
‘Building Capacity and Changing the Culture’

- Ongoing work on the four levels
- Ongoing and frequent training and professional development around the Multicultural Process of Change
- EISJ Committee
- Anti-Bias, Anti-Racist curriculum begins
- Ongoing curricular shifts
- Evolution of traditions
- Key new hires
- Momentum builds
- Community notices the shift
2017 - Present

- Center for Civic Engagement is launched
- Director of Admissions and Civic Engagement is hired
- DEI professional
- Reports directly to the Head of School, part of senior administration team
- Push the work forward, hold institution accountable
- Ongoing changes at the four levels
- Faculty diversification reaches critical mass
- Addition of significantly more diverse families
- Growing pains and push back
2019- 2020
‘Preparing to Dive Deeper’

● Continuing to build leadership capacity on faculty and staff
● Expanded Multicultural Leadership Committee
● Courageous Conversations
● Expanding recruitment efforts for admission
● Building systems and protocols for problem-solving
● White fragility
The Oaks has made great strides over the past 10 years in their efforts to create an inclusive, progressive elementary school with an anti-racist/anti-bias education program. But there is still much work to do. And some threats are on the horizon.

With your table, please discuss how you would address some of these looming issues:

1. While the Board is onboard at the moment, due to term limits, several long time champions of the DEI work are leaving the board. Up to 5 new members may be added next year.
2. The Oaks has recruited numerous truly exceptional teachers and administrators who are well versed in anti-bias and DEI work. They are energized and excited about the work. Retention of key faculty is crucial. ‘Pushback’ from white (mostly) parents is demoralizing and could affect retention.
3. What are the risks to the business model to creating an inclusive model.
Exclusionary

- Devoted to maintaining the majority groups dominance & privilege.
- Openly hostile to concerns for social justice or social diversity.

Club

- Seeks to maintain privilege of those who have traditionally held social power.
- Develops and maintains missions, policies, norms from a singular perspective.
- Limits the numbers of people from other social identity group.
- Engages in social justice issues only when comfortable and on ‘Club’ members’ terms.

Compliance

- Commits to removing discriminatory practices by permitting access to previously excluded social identity groups without disturbing the organizational structure or culture.
- Careful not to offend or challenge bigoted attitudes of community members.
**Affirming**

- Committed to eliminating discriminatory practices and inherent advantage given to the majority group.
- Actively supports the success and development of the new and diverse community members.
Encourages community members to behave in non-oppressive ways and conducts awareness programs.

**Redefining**

- Committed to full inclusion of all social and culturally identity group perspectives as a method to enhance the organization’s growth and success potential.
- Questions the singular cultural perspective.
- Uses visioning, planning and problem-solving directed at the realization of multiculturalism.
- Commits to develop and implement policies and practices that distributes resources and opportunities to all its members.

**Multicultural**

- Reflects contributions and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, operations and services.
- Works externally to demonstrate social responsibility and eliminate all forms of social oppression.
- Educates others in the multicultural process.
Suggestions

- Get the Board on board first
- Common Language and Conflict Resolution
- Work from the inside out
- Plan, Plan and Plan some more
THANK YOU