

**I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change.
I am changing the things I cannot accept.
- Angela Davis**

Dear Heads of AISNE Member Schools,

We are reaching out to our institutional leaders with a call to action. This is a critical time to respond to the tragic events that led to the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless People of Color, and acknowledge the reality that systemic racism and white supremacy plague our country and must be challenged. As a coalition of heads of school, you hold immense power to frame collaborative cultural transformation in our region.

As a coalition of diversity practitioners, we write today to acknowledge that independent schools have historically not done enough to root out racism and to actively engage in antiracism. We also write today to acknowledge our hope for positive and lasting change.

Our independent schools are developing the next generation of national and world leaders. As one of the largest regional associations in the country, AISNE member schools have the potential to make immeasurable impacts on the fight against racism nationwide. We call on you to partner with us and with each other in the hard work that lies ahead so that we may develop true racial equity and embed antiracism into all that we do at our institutions. We know that this strategic work will only make our institutions and our society stronger. In the spirit of partnership, we have developed a series of action steps for strategic antiracism aligned with several of [NAIS's Principles of Good Practice for Equity and Justice](#). Our hope is that you will discuss the implementation of a racial equity strategy with your Board of Trustees and administrative teams. We also hope you will join the AISNE Diversity Practitioners group for collaboration and conversation about racial equity strategy and the action steps on this list later this summer. This isn't a checklist - these are strategic actions that we encourage you to keep front and center on an ongoing basis, even if you believe that your school is already taking some of these steps.

PGP #3: The Board of Trustees and the Head of School articulate strategic goals and objectives that promote diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice in the life of the school.

- Diversify the racial and socioeconomic composition of the board to broaden perspective and understanding of the societal context in which the school exists.
- Create a strategy to racially and socioeconomically diversify the student body and employees.
- Use racial equity as a lens through which to view the whole institution and to make decisions.
- Provide the ongoing education and support to Board members and administrators so they can better integrate DEI and antiracist principles into their decision making.
- Embed antiracism into the fabric of the institution through creating a strategic plan for racial equity.
- Adopt an antiracism statement in addition to a nondiscrimination and diversity statement as part of the larger racial equity strategic plan.
- Provide the fiscal support to make racial equity strategy real.

PGP #2: The school respects, affirms, and protects the dignity and worth of each member of its community.

- Develop, communicate, and implement school policies that affirm and support the protection of underrepresented identities.
- Create affinity spaces for members of underrepresented groups to foster support and connection.
- Create a racial equity communications strategy that includes community-wide messages from the Head of School to respond to national racial and social inequities, such as the recent killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and Breonna Taylor.

PGP #4: The school develops meaningful requirements for cross-cultural competency and provides training and support for all members of its community, including the board of trustees, parents, students, and all school personnel.

- Create a plan for how the school will build skills and knowledge about race, white supremacy, and antiracism with all members of its community, including the board of trustees, parents, students, and all school personnel.
- Create a requirement for ongoing employee professional development on the topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion with a focus on developing antiracist teachers and curriculum.
- Commit financial resources and time to full employee antiracism training.
- Commit to curricular change to uplift antiracist teaching in all subjects and with all age levels.
- Ensure all community members understand the complex interdependence of racism, privilege, and economic systems of oppression in the ongoing history of our institutions.
- Create accountability for diversity, equity, and inclusion growth and performance within employee and program evaluation systems.

PGP #7: The head of school ensures that diversity initiatives are coordinated and led by a designated individual who is a member of one of the school leadership teams, with the training, authority, and support needed to influence key areas of policy development, decision making, budget, and management.

- Designate a full-time DEI practitioner with the authority and the team to lead strategic change and programming.
- Formalize DEI work by moving from a model of volunteerism to one that provides equitable compensation comparable to other administrative leaders.
- Include the DEI practitioner as a member of the senior administrative team and in all senior admin meetings and uplift the voices of diversity practitioners.
- Involve the DEI practitioner in employee recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and retention and in governance processes with the Board of Trustees.

As a collective of diversity practitioners we recognize the difficulty of shifting the culture of our schools. We know that Heads have myriad responsibilities to a variety of stakeholders which makes school governance and leadership complex. We also recognize that there are

institutions among us who have already taken some strategic actions, and there are valuable lessons to be learned from those leaders and their experiences. We have found in our roles and work that we do best when we share our energy, ideas, and insights. We want heads and diversity leaders to creatively collaborate within and across schools to ensure that students receive the support and the skills they need to challenge white supremacy and racism.

Now is the time for all of our institutions to be active, bold, innovative, and strategic in our commitment to pursuing racial justice and equity. It is both a moral and practical imperative to prepare the next generation of leaders with an education based in antiracism, inclusivity, and equity. We believe AISNE Heads have the opportunity, capacity, and responsibility to lead through this challenging yet critical time in order to bring about the needed radical change to end the perpetuation of systemic racism in our schools.

The Diversity Practitioners Planning Committee will facilitate a conversation hosted by AISNE later this summer about creating communities that are more equitable and inclusive. We also encourage you and your senior administrative team to consider [these Key Questions for Heads](#) related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, published by NAIS. We are confident that together we can create strategic and lasting institutional change.

Sincerely,

AISNE Member School Diversity Practitioners

Facilitated by the AISNE Diversity Practitioners Planning Committee:

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