



SAINT ANN'S SCHOOL

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Head of School

June 23, 2020

Dear Faculty, Staff, Students, Parents and Alumni,

Racism is systemic. It is endemic. It is pervasive, and it exists at Saint Ann's School. It is perpetuated by unequal distribution of power and privilege along racial lines in ways that uphold white supremacy. Anti-Black racism in the United States manifests itself—as it has for four hundred years—in ways too numerous to count, most grievously in centuries of enslavement, physical violence, murder and brutality systematically targeting Black people in our country. It exists in and has been perpetuated by corporations, colleges and universities, civic and judicial institutions, churches, and schools. Including this one. Over the past several weeks I have heard from many of our alumni who care deeply about our school but who experienced racism in many forms that we must acknowledge and confront as the first step towards immediate and lasting change to benefit all current and future Saint Ann's students.

We believe that Black Lives Matter. What will we do at Saint Ann's to face the history and reality of anti-Black racism and protect today's Saint Ann's students from it? How can I and our faculty and staff make changes and decisions right now that will ensure that all students, from our preschoolers to our seniors, will experience a different school in September 2020? First, I acknowledge that racism exists and has been sustained within our walls. It has caused and is causing pain and trauma to our students, teachers, and staff of color. Second, we must make clear commitments whose ultimate aim—however hard it may be to achieve or however long it may take—is to dismantle racism by understanding and overturning the systematic ways in which it has persisted in our school. To do so requires clearly stated commitments from me and everyone else in positions of leadership at Saint Ann's in every facet of what we do, as well as action born of those commitments. Third, to our Black alumni, students, faculty and staff in particular I apologize that I have not more swiftly, transparently and directly addressed racism and acts of bias on the part of members of our community. Acknowledging that we failed you, that I failed you, is for me an important step towards meaningful change. Your voices, raised in the hope that today's Saint Ann's students will not experience what you did, will make a difference.

I am outlining here a first set of commitments and actions that we will undertake now and throughout the 2020-21 school year. What ties them all together is the recognition that if we are to fulfill one of Saint Ann's most basic and solemn commitments—to see every child flourish—then we must enact change across every dimension of the school, and we must keep the experience of every student at the center of our vision and decision-making. The past several weeks have revealed broad enthusiasm from teachers, administrators and staff across all of our divisions and departments for undertaking this work, and the Board of Trustees has reaffirmed its commitment as the school's governing body to support these efforts. Communication, transparency, and accountability through periodic progress reports, the school website, and other means will be central to every step I describe below. In one way or another everyone who cares about Saint Ann's, everyone who has joined me in celebrating what is powerfully good about our school, must and should participate in making our school more just, inclusive and equitable so that our students can learn in an environment that embodies these fundamental values of our community.



Culture and Community

- Create designated time in our schedule for regular workshops and facilitated conversations around race and racism in which every middle and high school student will participate. (Those who are interested will find information about what is already underway at Saint Ann's here: <https://saintannsny.org/diversity>. School-year specific information on these pages will be updated over the summer to reflect the 20–21 school year.)
- With the goal of eliminating peer-to-peer bias incidents ensure that every student has engaged in anti-bias work that is age and developmentally appropriate in grades K-12.
- Review and where necessary revise student disciplinary policies to ensure that pathways for reporting bias incidents are clear and train administrators in implementing restorative justice practices when incidents of racialized community or individual harm occur.

Curriculum and Faculty

- To further the school's goal of fostering a racially diverse faculty and staff we will require open, advertised searches for all teaching and staff positions so that hires are made from the broadest and most diverse pools of candidates.
- Undertake department- and division-wide curriculum reviews in 2020–21 to ensure that curricula reflect a robust diversity of texts, perspectives, topics, and authors, to critically examine ways in which whiteness can be decentered and openly discussed, and to ensure that every student develops fluency, knowledge, and deep understanding of the role of race in American society.
- To continue to support faculty efforts to create new curricula and respond appropriately to bias incidents, and to ensure an equitable learning environment for every student we will undertake ongoing professional development opportunities and training in which all teachers will engage, including workshops in curriculum redesign, culturally responsive pedagogy, decentering whiteness, mandatory anti-bias training, and others.
- Beginning in 2021–22, after school-wide professional development and training opportunities have been provided in 2020–21, teacher evaluations will include assessment of each teacher's ability to address bias incidents when they occur and their effectiveness in creating equitable classroom environments.
- Undertake review of *Faculty and Staff Handbook* to ensure that equitable and explicit policies are in place and consistently followed to provide mentoring and to address incidents of bias on the part of faculty and staff.

Resources

- Increase funding for diversity and equity work (workshops, training, professional development, etc.) by \$100,000 in the 2020–21 school year.
- Sustain the school's commitment to need-based financial aid (more than \$9 million in 2020-21) in the face of financial constraints related to Covid-19. In addition to this, the school has already allocated more than \$800,000 in emergency financial aid for the coming year to Saint Ann's families impacted by the current financial crisis.
- Sustain and if possible expand on the school's current commitment (\$250,000 annually) to non-tuition scholarship support in order to promote equitable access to all of the school's academic and extracurricular programs, academic and student support services, and an equitable college application process.



- Continue recruitment and outreach efforts in admissions to build on the progress already made in achieving greater racial diversity in all major admissions entry grades.
- Compensate faculty and staff who serve as ongoing facilitators of equity work with colleagues and students, recognizing that this burden and others often fall disproportionately on faculty and staff of color.

Reconciliation and Dialogue

- Through the recently created Alumni Advisory Committee, facilitate dialogue with and solicit ongoing advice from graduates of Saint Ann's on behalf of the school administration and Board of Trustees.
- Organize conversations among Black alumni, trustees, faculty and administrators as an affinity space for Black people affiliated with Saint Ann's to build community with each other and to carve out space for healing, reflection, dialogue and support.
- Through Monday Symposium, White Anti-Racist Educators, racial affinity spaces for faculty and staff, and other external and internal programming continue to support school-wide dialogue on race, identity, and equity and deepen faculty-wide familiarity with anti-racist practices.
- Develop workshops for parents to provide information and resources that will enable all parents to support the equity work of the school.

Leadership and Governance

- Review and revise our Mission Statement and Statement of Purposes and Objectives to explicitly embed principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion in these guiding documents.
- Create designated young alumni seats on the Board of Trustees to ensure that the perspectives, and votes, of young alumni are included in the school's governing body.
- In the criteria used by the Nominating and Governance Committee of the Board of Trustees, include experience in diversity practices among the skills sought in identifying and recruiting new members of the board.
- Ensure that the composition of the Board of Trustees reflects the increasing racial diversity of our school community; currently five of nineteen trustees are people of color, four of whom are Black.
- Strengthen Board training on diversity, equity and inclusion work in schools.
- Continued training and professional development for all Core administrators, department chairs and others in positions of leadership in effective strategies to dismantle racism in schools, bias-incident response protocols, implicit bias, and culturally responsive curricula.
- Continue to make racial diversity a central consideration in any searches to fill leadership positions at Saint Ann's.

Because systemic racism is pervasive and deeply rooted, it will not be eliminated from our school in the year ahead, and indeed can never fully be extirpated so long as it thrives in the society around us and in the structures and practices of our institutions. It is my hope that these initial steps, and others to be developed this fall, will set our feet upon a path we must follow, and follow urgently. The journey towards equity will not be over soon, and we will make mistakes along the way. We will take up this challenge with characteristic passion and creativity; with unswerving attention to the voices of all of our students; with our belief in the power of deep, meaningful and respectful relationships between teachers and students; and with a recognition that the problems we face may be universal but the way is open for us to overcome them that embodies the



best of Saint Ann's traditions, values and beliefs. The enthusiasm and commitment demonstrated by hundreds of faculty and staff in the past several weeks gives me confidence that our school can and will fulfill its obligation to see every child flourish, to make every family a true partner in our work, and to be a place where every teacher and staff is a full and equal member of the community.

Love,

Vince