



We can work it out

DEI Doubts: Respecting & Addressing Questions & Concerns about Inclusive Education

Tuesday, January 31, 2023

6:30 pm – 8:00pm

Inspiring, challenging, & supporting all students to discover, & pursue their full potential

We can work it out



DEI Doubts: Is it safe to say I that have apprehensions?

An Open Honest Compassionate Constructive Discussion

Can the DS community be one in which folks who have questions, concerns, and maybe even disagreements about inclusive pedagogy can express themselves civilly and safely?

Might it be possible to find/create common ground among people who seem to and might actually disagree about aspects of inclusivity work?

The answer to both of these questions has to be YES, ABSOLUTELY!

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If we are to be truly inclusive in our inclusivity work, we must provide a safe space for folks who experience DEI doubts to express their feelings and find ways to increase their readiness to understand and support this important work.

Our DEI Consultant, Dr. Carlos Hoyt, DS '78, will facilitate this workshop. He'll make sure we keep it real, keep it safe, and keep it real safe for folks to interact with the following goals in mind:



1. Share empathic, compassionate, and constructive questions, concerns, etc. about inclusivity work.
2. Explore forms of support that might help to decrease doubts and increase readiness to understand and support DEI work
3. Discuss what might be useful following the gathering to sustain a culture of candor and constructive interaction, and increase everyone's capacity to make DS an optimally inclusive community.

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Special Note about your participation in this program

In order to create a space in which will be able to interact with each other as empathically, connectively, and constructively as possible, please observe the following guidelines during the program.

- We are counting on everyone to engage in a manner consistent with the focus and purpose of this gathering, which is to recognize and honor that there are aspects of inclusive pedagogy that are challenging to some DS parents, and to collaborate in finding or improving ways for parents who experience such challenges – and all DS parents – to nevertheless engage constructively with inclusive education.

It's crucial to bear in mind that inclusivity is a requirement of public education. We are providing this program as an opportunity for parents who have questions, apprehensions, concerns, or objections to collaboratively explore ways to both preserve their personal views and at the same time partner in fulfilling our collective obligation as a public school to create and maintain a tolerant educational environment.

- We have provided the agenda and material for the program in advance so that everyone can have a clear sense of the purpose, parameters, and spirit of this opportunity. If you have questions, please feel encouraged to contact Carlos at hojt.carlos@gmail.com.

Agenda

6:30 pm – Welcome & Overview

6:35 pm – Preparing for constructive conversation

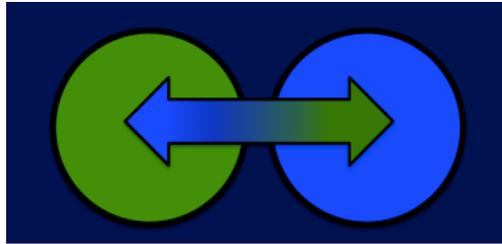
6:40 pm – Settling the *WHY* question so that we can focus on the *HOW & WHAT*

6:55 pm – Towards reconciliation - Individual work time

7:05 pm – Towards reconciliation - Small group discussion

7:40 pm – Share-out/Whole group discussion

8:00 pm – Where should we go from here input & Close



My Diversity-Equity-Inclusion Ally Pact

I know I have **blind** spots

- the inability to see that what I'm doing might be harmful to someone -

I know I have **tough** spots

- the natural resistance to input that suggests
my behavior conflicts with my intention-

I know I have **blank** spots

- a lack of data and knowledge about crucial differences
in social advantages and disadvantages between myself and others -

I know **I have work to do**

I promise to do the work I need to do to see my biases, spare you my defensiveness, and educate myself in order to be the most effective teacher/student/parent/family member/employer/employee/colleague/partner/friend/citizen I can be.

I hope you will always feel entitled to let me know if my blind, tough, or blank spots ever cause you to feel anything less than respected, included, and well-served by me. I promise to always do my best to receive your notice of my mistakes with humility and gratitude.

Settling the *WHY* Question



Upshot

We are obliged by various sources of law, guidance, and our own mission and anti-discrimination statements to welcome students from the wide range of human identities, cultures, beliefs, and background. We are obliged to create a learning environment in which ***the right to personal beliefs can co-exist with the right to safety from intolerance***. In light of these facts, debate about whether or not we must provide inclusive education is ultimately fruitless. As noted in the several sources references in [Equity Update to Joint School Committee. January 17, 2023](#), the ***WHY*** is clear and incontrovertible.

What we can and should discuss is ***HOW*** we can go about our inclusivity practices and ***WHAT*** forms our practices take in order to **make the peaceful interaction of personal beliefs and public tolerance possible**.

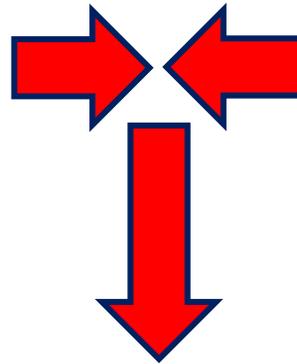
Our Challenge & Opportunity

Optimal Inclusivity Requires a Strong School-Parent Partnership

Working together, schools and parents can create a community that celebrates diversity and promotes understanding and respect for all students. It's crucial that parents are partners in this effort. This means supporting and advocating for inclusivity, **even if it conflicts with personal beliefs.**

Partnering regarding Inclusive Education is Challenging for some Parents

The thought of having to support forms of education that conflict with one's personal convictions, values, or morals can create feelings of ***cognitive dissonance*** and associated reactions.



Cognitive Dissonance

When someone holds a strong belief about a particular topic and is exposed to information or ideas that contradict that belief, it can create a sense of ***cognitive dissonance***.

Towards Reconciliation: Honoring & Managing the Tension – Keeping it as Healthy as Possible

“Take a deep breath and say, ‘hey, both of these things can be true’. And that energy that we create holding opposite things (in tension) is the birthplace of transformation.” - Brené Brown

Please think through and note your responses to the items on this worksheet, discuss them with your small group, and give someone in your group the honor of sharing the themes of your discussion during the whole group share-out 😊

We have an opportunity and obligation to support ALL of our parents, including those whose personal bearing on aspects of inclusive education results in feelings of cognitive dissonance, disappointment, or distress. How can we best work together to maintain a healthy tension between the inclusivity mandate and the personal worldviews and ideologies of some parents in our community in order to ensure that ALL students are inspired, challenged, and supported in discovering and pursuing their full potential?

1. We can clear up a false dichotomy:

The limited time, resources, and energy of teachers and DS are either going to get spent on academics or on inclusivity.

The idea that teachers must either attend to good academic instruction or to creating an inclusive school environment is a false dichotomy because it presents these two goals as mutually exclusive when in fact they can be mutually reinforcing. Good academic instruction and an inclusive school environment are not mutually exclusive and both are important for the overall success of students.

Creating an inclusive school environment is essential for providing all students with the opportunity to learn and succeed. When students feel safe and respected in their learning environment, they are more likely to engage in their education and achieve academic success. This can be achieved through a variety of practices such as classroom management, cultural responsiveness, and social-emotional learning.

At the same time, good academic instruction is also crucial for student success. Teachers must provide high-quality instruction that is aligned with standards and that is tailored to the diverse needs of their students. This includes using evidence-based instructional strategies, providing opportunities for students to practice and apply new skills, and providing timely and specific feedback to help students improve.

In other words, both good academic instruction and creating an inclusive school environment are necessary for student success, and they are not mutually exclusive. Teachers can and should strive to provide both in their classrooms.

2. We can call on our well-practiced ability to let private beliefs and public tolerance coexist in public spaces and transfer that competency to the context of inclusive education in our public school.

Examples of public spaces in which a healthy tension between private belief and tolerance for diversity is almost always on display include parks, theaters, malls, public libraries, museums and art galleries, public beaches, religious institutions, government buildings, sports arenas and stadiums, public beaches and parks, shopping centers and markets, street fairs and festivals, restaurants and cafes, recreation sites (ski slopes, tennis courts, soccer fields...), and restaurant, amusement parks, cruise ships, and many others. Public schools are one such space.

3. We can try to determine the particular topics/aspects of inclusive pedagogy that are most challenging for some parents, and co-create methods to foster confidence and comfort about how DS approaches inclusive education regarding these aspects of identity.

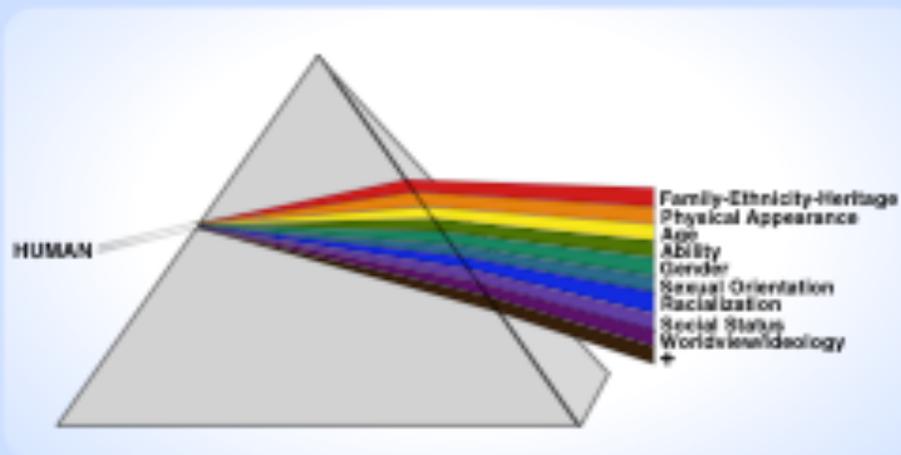
Please refer to the *Social Identity Prism* below and note which social identity categories raise questions or concerns for you. For each category that concerns you, what could DS teachers do help you feel confident that we are **providing education that empowers a diverse group of students/friends to get along and avoid actions that might be hurtful, not telling students what their personal, family, cultural, religious, etc. beliefs should be.**

Please think about things such as what you'd like to know ahead time, how much of a window into actual materials and lesson plans you'd benefit from, what kinds of opportunities to talk with teachers, administrators, or Carlos about DS inclusive education practices you'd like, etc.

In your discussion of this crucial topic, if you choose to refer to things that have happened in your child's experience at DS, please do so only to provide an example, not to disparage anyone. Thanks.

Please remember to honor someone with the role of reporter for your group!

The Social Identity Prism



Our brains tend to sort, simplify, and rank everything, including personhood.

This or that, good or bad, us or them. It's hard for us to hold the multiple, intersecting aspects of personhood at once in our minds. Instead, like a **prism**, we often **refract** our complex whole selves into narrow categories.

Recognizing the full spectrum of social identity and resisting the tendency to reduce people to one or another restrictive category enables us to think critically and inclusively, engage empathically, reduce social bias, and thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Family-Ethnicity-Heritage

where you and your relatives come from, your family composition, the languages you speak, and the values and culture associated with your background.

Physical Appearance

how you look, your body shape and features (skin color, hair type and color, eye color, height, weight, etc.), the way you dress, etc.

Age

how old you are in actual age and as a stage of maturity (e.g. baby, toddler, child, teen, young adult, adult, senior citizen).

Ability

how able you are to do something that matters in society (e.g. seeing, hearing, academics, athletic, etc.).

Gender

feeling male or female or both or neither or unsure.

Sexual Orientation

the types of people you are sexually attracted to (e.g. heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, asexual, unsure or other terms that describe a person's sexual attraction).

Racialization

how you self-identify or are identified by others in terms of these categories of human differences based on vague and variable mixes of appearance and ancestry.

Social Status

the status and power you have based on your wealth, education, job, etc.

Worldview/Ideology

how you make sense of the big questions about life (e.g. religious, spiritual, atheist, agnostic, deist, democrat, republican, socialist, capitalist, environmentalist, etc.,).

The "+" strand

is meant to acknowledge any other social identity important to you.

**Whoever you are, however you are,
YOU ARE SAFE HERE**

Please see [Equity Update to Joint School Committee. January 17, 2023](#) for further information about the inclusivity mandate, the interaction between academic excellence and inclusivity, etc.

And please feel free to reach to Carlos if a discussion about anything related to our inclusivity work might be helpful.
hoyt.carlos@gmail.com