

Dear Echo Horizon community,

My daughter Sidney loves sports, baseball, and the LA Dodgers. She idolizes many of the players for their talent, hard work, teamwork, and passion for the game. And, now, she idolizes them for another more powerful reason—their willingness to stand up against injustice, systemic racism, and police brutality. As professional athletes across the nation joined in protest, Jacob Blake, a Black man, remained in the hospital, paralyzed and unlikely to walk again, after being shot seven times in front of his children by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

The MLB stated, “Given the pain in the communities of Wisconsin and beyond following the shooting of Jacob Blake, we respect the decisions of players not to play tonight. Major League Baseball remains united for change in our society and we will be allies in the fight to end racism and injustice.”

Right now, we suffer from two devastating pandemics—COVID-19 AND systemic racism in our nation. I have spoken to you before about Echo Horizon’s commitment to stand up against this horrific, over 400-year-old pandemic of systemic racism. An NPR poll recently found that “36 percent of Americans have taken steps to better understand racial issues after George Floyd’s murder.” I will not accept 36 percent. As a school whose mission commits to “actively promote mutual respect, individual responsibility, and ethical action” and whose DEI mission statement commits to “actively seek to understand the complex and rich identities of self and others, and to lean into difficult topics related to diversity and inclusion,” we should not accept anything less than 100 percent efforts to better understand, confront, and combat racial issues. Each day I remind myself, my Leadership team, and our faculty and staff that we cannot allow the COVID-19 pandemic to get in the way of the vital work that needs to be done in educating our children to be responsible, informed, caring citizens of a just, equitable, and peaceful world.

I would like to give you a quick update on the new and ongoing work that we are doing in the area of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion at Echo Horizon.

### Hiring Practices

We are proud that our efforts to continue to diversify our faculty and staff continue to flourish. First and foremost, our new faculty and staff members were interviewed and hired with our diversity, equity, and inclusion values at the forefront. Over 60 percent of our new faculty and staff members identify as people of color. Sixty-two and a half percent of our Leadership Team identify as people of color; I challenge you to find any independent school with such a diverse leadership team. We have also successfully grown our numbers of faculty/staff members who identify as male—from four when I arrived, to ten today, ensuring more gender diversity on our campus. Last but not least, in the past two years, we have gone from having one employee who

identified as DHH to five, which includes one employee who is hearing but who identifies as a child of deaf adults (CODA) and is fluent in sign language.

### Faculty Training

We continue our requirement that all faculty and staff members at Echo Horizon are dedicated and trained to teach and work in a diversity responsive environment where social justice and anti-bias teaching and practices are the norm. In our new faculty orientation, Mr. Bridges conducted training around the NAIS cultural identifiers for equity and justice, multicultural, and diversity initiatives. Leadership Team members provided multiple opportunities for storytelling around our new faculty's background, traditions, and personal and family identity. In full faculty and staff planning weeks, our team, led by the dynamic DEI duo of Roger Bridges and Isabel Sanchez, participated in summer reading book clubs involving two books—*So You Want To Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo, and *Tears We Cannot Stop* by Michael Eric Dyson. We also participated in a half-day workshop led by multicultural practitioner Monique Marshall on the topic of anti-racist and anti-bias teaching.

### Community DEI efforts

There are two exciting new initiatives for our community at present. First, we have formed a white anti-racist think tank, a small founding group that includes members of the parent community, the Leadership Team, and faculty to explore and discuss issues of white identity, privilege and fragility, white supremacist culture, and systemic racism. The goal is to expand to include other community members who identify as white and partner with our JEDI community committee to combat racism. Secondly, we are expanding our Board Diversity Committee and focusing on diversity training for our Board of Trustees. At our summer retreat, the Board participated in a training that was facilitated by Dr. Donald E. Grant, psychologist, professor and Director of the Center for Community and Social Impact at Pacific Oaks College, and Executive Director of Mindful Training Solutions.

In closing, I want you to know that we are aware of the stress and anxiety that many are feeling due to both of these pandemics. We are here to support, listen, and learn from all of our community members as we endeavor to create a safe, inclusive, connected, and caring community, committed to equity and justice for all.

Best,  
Peggy