

The Northwest School Board Diversity Plan

June 6, 2016

Purpose

For the Northwest School Board of Trustees to become and remain more diverse, equitable, and inclusive by governing with culturally responsive leadership.

Leadership

A vital leadership role of the Board of Trustees is to delineate and support key priorities to ensure that the school community embraces and embodies the school's longstanding commitment to the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This includes undertaking measures to ensure understanding of these concepts and to assess our progress towards these goals.

The Case for Board Diversity

A heterogeneous board—one composed of individuals with a variety of skills, perspectives, backgrounds, interest, and resources—promotes creativity and innovation and yields differing voices that can improve the governance of the school so that it can better meet its mission. Creating and sustaining an inclusive, equitable, and just school community requires commitment, reflection, conscious and deliberate action, and constant vigilance by the school's leadership, including the Board of Trustees.

Definitions

Since its founding in 1980, The Northwest School has embraced diversity, equity, and inclusion as essential to a robust and quality education. The Northwest School cultivates an inclusive, authentic, and positive experience for its students, faculty, and extended family. In doing so, we provide a home for academic, social, and personal growth and model our values for the larger community.

Diversity – A Variety of Identities

Diversity is our commitment to build and maintain a mission-congruent community that includes individuals and families who represent a wide variety of identities. Characteristics by which individuals or families may identify include dimensions of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status and family structure, national origin, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religion, age, political perspectives, learning differences, ability, and more.

Equity – Fair Treatment, Full Access

Equity is our commitment to acknowledge and overcome the barriers, both historical and contemporary, that prevent individuals and groups from full agency and achievement. Equity requires the fair treatment of all members of our community, including full access to school programs and opportunities.

Inclusion – A Sense of Belonging and Empowerment

Inclusion is our commitment to enable and encourage the participation and contribution of all members of our community. Inclusion is the intentional, ongoing practice of creating conditions where all individuals are valued and all voices heard, and where each member of our community feels a sense of belonging, respect, support, and empowerment.

Culturally Responsive Board Leadership

Culturally responsive board leadership is a governance model whereby the Board of Trustees and its individual members are:

- 1) becoming aware of their own assumptions and perspectives;
- 2) actively attempting to understand the worldview of diverse populations;
- 3) striving to understand and address institutional and individual biases and oppression of marginalized identities and the impact these have on fulfilling the board's mission; and
- 4) developing appropriate, relevant, and sensitive strategies to create diversity and to govern in a culture of equity and inclusion.

Board Education

The Governance Committee will develop and implement an ongoing Board Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Education Program designed to strengthen the Board's governance and its understanding of effective policies and practices. This education program will be based on the principles of awareness, knowledge, self-reflection, skills, and action.

Board Selection Process

The cultivation, recruitment, and retention of new trustees is led by the Governance Committee but the full Board is vested in vetting and approving all new members. The Governance Committee seeks candidates who offer a generosity of their time, talent, and resources to further the school and its mission. In its selection process, the Governance Committee and the Board will proactively apply the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Goals

The Board is committed to the following goals:

1. Increasing awareness and understanding within its membership of the policies and practices that marginalize individuals and groups and of the barriers to achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion in a school setting in general and at The Northwest School in particular.
2. Applying the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion to all Board activities and decision-making.
3. Increasing and maintaining diversity within its membership, with the understanding that diversity is the foundation for deepening the work towards equity and inclusion, and not an end in itself.
4. Enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion on the Board and throughout the school.

Timeline

The Governance Committee will include in its Annual Work Plan specific targeted timelines to implement and achieve the goals of its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan.

Measuring and Monitoring

The Board's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan will only be successful if it is specific, monitored, and measured. The Governance Committee will measure and monitor implementation of the plan as follows:

- New Trustee Orientation will include a presentation on the Board Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan and the Board's progress on implementing that plan.
- The Head of School, or his designated representative, will provide an annual "state of the school" presentation on diversity, equity, and inclusion to the full Board.
- In its annual check-in with new Trustees and the annual Board self-evaluation, the Governance Committee will solicit feedback on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- The Governance Committee will provide an annual report to the full Board on the implementation and outcomes of this plan.