

Equity, Inclusivity, and Social Justice

I have the pleasure of writing about a dynamic, thoughtful, and critical conversation that is underway in our district. The conversation reflects a much broader one occurring at the national level. Students, faculty, community members and parents in our district are having conversations about equity. The purpose of this article is to provide highlights of the conversation organized around the following questions:

- What is the conversation?
- Why now and why does this conversation matter?
- How do we anticipate the conversation will affect our district and our schools?

The Conversation About Equity

Several students at Hopkins Academy initiated a conversation about race and diversity this fall. These students have been discussing various topics pertaining to the experiences of minority students in our district. Their leadership continues to be extraordinary. They are committed to bringing all students into a discussion about diversity in our schools and how this diversity enhances our educational community and our community at large. These students are not the only students participating in the discussion or demonstrating leadership. Students throughout Hopkins are actively engaged in a conversation that seeks to honestly appraise how well our language, attitudes, actions, policies and practices reflect our values - values that espouse respect for all members of our education community and reflect our desire to help each other succeed. The seriousness and sense of urgency students have brought to the discussion exemplify several characteristics that make Hopkins students exceptional in many ways. Students at Hopkins Academy critically consider the difficult and seemingly intractable problems of their generation and demonstrate the acuity of mind and moral courage to tackle these problems. It is clear Hadley students possess the intellect, compassion, and will to make their learning environment and their world better.

Faculty, administration, and parents are equally interested in exploring how we can ensure the best possible learning experiences and educational outcomes for all students regardless of first language, physical or cognitive ability, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation. Teachers and parents at HES and HA are interested in organizing opportunities for structured conversations about the state of equity in our schools and what we can do to ensure that Hadley provides an equitable education for all students. An equitable education is one that ensures all children have access to a high quality education free from conditions that distract from or impede learning or exacerbate unequal outcomes. We cannot achieve true equity until we are clear about our collective and individual responsibilities to achieve it.

Why Are We Having This Conversation? Why Now?

Several students and faculty throughout the district have identified equity as a critical topic. Students are interested in ensuring their schools are places where all students feel welcomed, valued and respected. Faculty are interested in discussing and learning strategies to lead student

conversations about perceived inequities and how best to address identified problems. The conversation reflects a larger conversation about equity in our society. In 2013, The Equity and Excellence Commission published a report to provide advice to the US Department of Education on how to address disparities in access to meaningful educational experiences for all children. Our students and faculty are now taking part in a national conversation.

What Next? How Will the Conversation Continue and What Will Happen As a Result?

Students and faculty will continue to discuss what we are doing well in terms of creating an environment where all students learn well, achieve at high levels, and feel valued, welcome and respected and how we can improve. School councils and parent groups have expressed an interest in supporting this work. These groups will identify ways in which they can support activities for students or professional development for teachers. I am also interested in hearing from parents, families, and community members. What are your ideas? What can we do to improve the educational experiences and outcomes for all students? How can we engage more people in a discussion that looks at what we are doing well and areas we need to improve when it comes to creating a climate where all students feel supported, encouraged, included, and appreciated?

Please [send me](#) your thoughts. I would also welcome the opportunity to sit down with you and have a conversation.