

AIM Report

(Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism)

National Association of Independent Schools

November 2009

Community School

Grades Nursery-Sixth Grade

900 Lay Road

Saint Louis, MO 63124

AIM Steering Committee:

Sandra Cirrito (Lower School Learning Specialist) Co-Chair
Suzanne Keefe (Fourth Grade Teacher) Co-Chair
Dana Saulsberry (Admission Director and Diversity Coordinator)
Debbie Barmeier (First Grade)
Judy Fisher (Upper School Learning Specialist)
Sara Forrester (Third Grade)
Shannon Galfi (Third Grade)
Matthew Gould (Head of School)
Rob Knight (Woodshop)
Stephanie Oteng (Sixth Grade)
Shilpa Thornton (Trustee)

Introduction

Community School's ongoing commitment to diversity is a collaborative effort. The partnership of faculty, administration, students, and parents is committed to nurturing the mind, body and spirit of each child regardless of race, nationality, religion, or socioeconomic status.

During the 1990s, the Community School Board of Trustees created specific enrollment and hiring goals to increase the number of minority students and teachers. The goals helped Community School measure its progress from year to year and insure that diversifying the community remained a priority. Although minority enrollment grew, the goals were not attained, and in 2002-2003, the Board set new enrollment goals and renewed its commitment to diversity.

As part of the ISACS re-accreditation process in 2006, there was an in-depth self-study of all aspects of the School. Diversity at the School was evaluated and challenges were seen. These challenges included: increasing socioeconomic diversity among families, attracting and retaining diverse families and teachers of color, meeting diversity enrollment goals, and clarifying the direction for the faculty Diversity Committee and the School Culture Committee.

In response to the Self-Study, the Board decided to use the NAIS AIM (Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism) tool as a means to obtain benchmarks for diversity at Community School and also to give direction for future initiatives in diversity. The responsibility for the assessment was given to the faculty Diversity Committee. Under the direction of the Diversity Coordinator, the chairs of the faculty Diversity Committee were named as chairs of the AIM steering committee. The remaining nine Diversity Committee members and Head of School were also named to the AIM Steering Committee

Process and Outreach

The Steering Committee began the AIM process in fall of 2008. The AIM process included two main components: Discovery Committees (or focus groups) and the online community survey. Each Discovery Committee was led by a member of the AIM Steering Committee. Faculty members were placed in Discovery Committees with careful consideration to having various ages, grade levels and years of employment included in each committee. Parents, Trustees, and Alumni/ae were contacted by the Head of School and also asked to participate in certain Discovery Committees. So as to be sure the environment felt safe to participants, the committee avoided staffing the Head of School and Division Directors on committees comprised of employees.

During the months of October and November 2008, the committee focused only on Discovery Committee meetings. Most meetings containing faculty members were held on the October faculty professional day. Other groups met during a time convenient for participants. Once all Discovery Committees had met, the members of the steering committee held a meeting to debrief and conclude whether more information was needed from individual Discovery Committees. Written reports from the Discovery Committees were submitted to the Chairs by the end of November 2008.

The online survey opened to the community on January 19, 2009. In mid-January, the Head of School sent out a community-wide letter to announce the launch of the online survey. Communication increased in order to keep the community apprised of the survey. Regular blast emails and announcements in the weekly Friday Folder kept the community informed. Corrugated signs that said, "Ready, Set, Take AIM!" were also placed in the carpool line as a reminder to parents to take the online survey. To make it easier for the faculty and staff to complete the survey, time was allotted on the January professional day. Members of the Steering Committee remained available during the time allotted to assist faculty and staff in using the survey.

On March 12th, the Steering Committee began processing the data. This data included nearly 25 hours of transcripts from the Discovery Committees, 211 pages of statistical data from the online survey, and verbatim comments taken from the constituent responses in the online survey. Approximately 49% of the invited Community School constituency participated in the online portion of the process. InsightLink provided the Steering Committee with a broad summary of the survey trends. In early April, NAIS provided the committee with additional statistical criteria for identifying areas of health, priority concern, and high priority concern in the community.

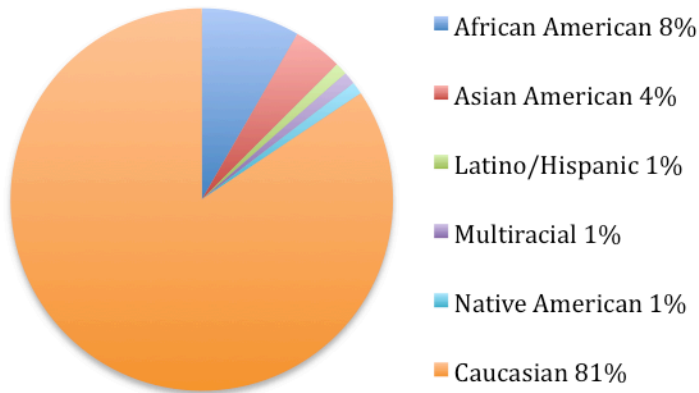
In May of 2009, the committee reported preliminary findings of the AIM survey to the Board of Trustees and faculty. The Steering Committee will deliver the Final Report to the Board of Trustees in fall of 2009.

Overall Summary Findings

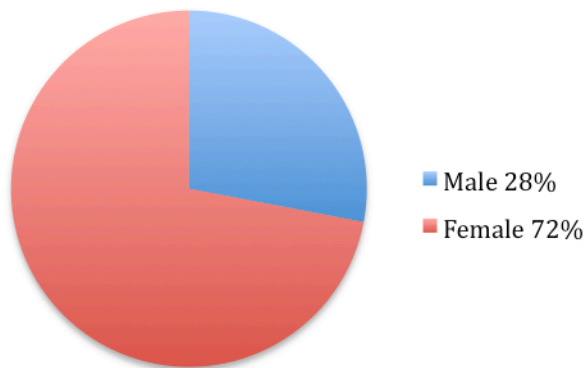
1. There is a positive spirit that exists within the Community School community among all constituent groups.
2. The School is seen as having a commitment to ethical values and character development in a caring environment.
3. Constituent groups consider the Diversity Coordinator as an important resource for the parents, faculty, staff, and students.
4. The parent constituency would appreciate more communication regarding school policy and decision making procedures from the Board of Trustees.
5. While administration and faculty see themselves as leaders in the promotion and advancement of diversity, multiculturalism and inclusivity, parents do not see themselves as instrumental in promoting these areas.
6. The Faculty and Administration do not reflect the diversity of the student body.
7. The parent community struggles most with the ways in which socioeconomic status impacts the degrees to which people feel included by the School, in addition to ways in which parents relate to one another.
8. The School needs to define multiculturalism in order to integrate it into the curriculum.

Online Survey Respondent Data: All Respondents

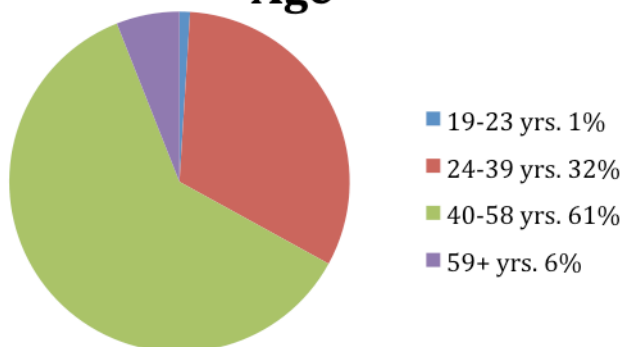
Race Ethnicity



Gender



Age



A. School Governance and Leadership

The Board of Trustees reports current membership to be 10 females and 11 males with 24% people of color. Although there is no formal goal of diversity in board membership, the Committee on Trustees feels that diversity on the Board is important to excellence in the education provided by Community School; therefore, they are committed to maintaining diversity among board members. According to current survey results, the parent population is not aware that the diversity within the Board reflects similar diversity within the student body (19%).

In the most recent strategic plan, the Board of Trustees included a strand on Diversity/Inclusivity. There are specific goals in the area of creating and sustaining a diverse, inclusive school community. These goals include: increasing student and faculty of color, creating a School Culture Committee, providing diversity/inclusivity training for teachers and parents, and seeking opportunities to help students see themselves as part of a global community. In addition, the Board supports implementing the AIM process and conducting an ongoing evaluation of diversity/inclusivity in all aspects of school life in order to assess school diversity and continue making improvements in this area.

The Board of Trustees is committed to improving inclusivity. The Board feels strongly that work should be done to improve inclusiveness in the area of socioeconomic diversity. Members feel that they work hard to create a forum where all opinions and perspectives are heard. However, 10% of parents surveyed do not feel that this is so. There is some concern on the part of the Board that parents do not press for improvement in diversity and/or multiculturalism at Community School.

Diversity and multiculturalism are a Board priority and members feel that they are instrumental in promoting this at the School. In 2007, the Board established the School Culture Committee, comprised of board members, parents and administrators, as a standing committee of the Board. This committee updated the diversity statement, which is included in the admission brochure and on the website. They also oversee an annual review of diversity in admissions and financial aid. The Board of Trustees does not see diversity, multiculturalism or socioeconomic diversity as being important goals in fundraising.

The Board of Trustees devotes time during regularly scheduled meetings for diversity and multiculturalism. Both the Head of School and the Culture Committee Chair report on diversity initiatives to the Board three to four times per year.

The AIM process commends:

- The Board of Trustees for having diversity as a key element of the five-year Strategic Plan.

- The Board of Trustees for establishing the School Culture Committee as a standing board committee.
- The Board of Trustees for its commitment to have representation of racial/ethnic/religious/socioeconomic diversity in its members that reflects the diversity of the student population.

The AIM process recommends:

- That the Board of Trustees explores and implements formal diversity training for its members.
- That the Board of Trustees considers ways to communicate to the broader community that the Board does in fact represent the diversity of the student body.
- The Board of Trustees and the administration develop a communication plan to convey information to parents regarding decisions about program and policy.
- That the School considers ways to foster and create an inclusive environment especially around issues of socioeconomic diversity.

B. Policy and Administration

Community School's philosophy statement, created in 1997 and approved by the Board in 2005, explicitly describes the School's emphasis on diversity and inclusivity. "Community School prepares children for life in a global community by instilling greater understanding and respect for individual and group similarities and differences within a diverse school population." There is also an implicit understanding that the School's mission statement "Nurturing the Gifts of Mind, Body and Spirit" cannot be accomplished without honoring the great diversity of the community.

Raising awareness as to the importance of diversity and inclusivity at Community School is a priority. The administration strives to facilitate dialogue and growth in diversity and inclusivity by repeatedly emphasizing its importance for the institution and for the children who attend. The Head of School routinely discusses Community School diversity efforts with various constituent groups, including prospective parents during the interview process, board members and faculty and staff during regularly scheduled meetings, and the parent population in the beginning of the year at Grade Night as well as the culmination of the year at Annual Meeting. There have been many efforts in recent years led by the Faculty Diversity Committee to promote diversity awareness among the faculty and staff. Activities included guest speakers, focus group discussions and time allotted during faculty meetings for stories concerning diversity in the classroom.

The administration, faculty and staff feel that they are instrumental in promoting diversity and inclusivity in the School. However, parents do not feel as strongly about their own role, nor do they feel that they press for school improvement in these areas. It is the perception of some parents that a few vocal parents are able to influence school policy. There is a feeling of need for more formal processes and/or policies to explicitly review and address issues of diversity, inclusivity and/or multiculturalism in the School. All constituent groups agree that the diversity of administration and faculty does not reflect that of the student population.

There is concern on the part of all constituents that the School is challenged when it comes to working effectively with individual differences in the area of socioeconomic status. According to the survey, there is a perception that parents who have contributed significantly to the School have more access to the Administration and Board when it comes to decision making.

The AIM process commends:

- The Board of Trustees, administration, and faculty for its commitment to creating an atmosphere in which members of the community feel valued and respected.
- The Faculty Diversity Committee and administration for initiating various trainings and exposures on topics of diversity for the faculty and staff.

- Community School's commitment to ethical values and character development.

The AIM process recommends:

- That the administration creates a targeted approach (with measurable criteria) to recruit and support faculty so that they more accurately reflect the diversity of the student body.
- That the Board of Trustees and the administration create more formal processes and/or policies to explicitly review and address issues of diversity, inclusivity and/or multiculturalism in the School.
- The Board of Trustees and administration research ways to address challenges faced by an independent school concerning socioeconomic diversity.

C. Admission and Financial Aid

According to the most recent Strategic Plan, Community School is working toward a goal of maintaining at least 20% students of color each year. In the past four years, enrollment of students of color has plateaued at 18-19%. When reviewing applicants, diversity is given serious consideration. The admission panel actively considers diversity and tries to select candidates who will be successful. Meetings such as the fall gathering of Parents of Students of Color (POSOC) and the gathering of accepted families of students of color with current parents of students of color helps with recruitment and promotes inclusivity. The School also takes out advertisements and articles in targeted newspapers to assist in recruitment. The School is committed to open discussions, which help advance these efforts.

All constituents believe that the School takes action to create a diverse enrollment. However, 23% of the parent respondents feel that the admissions standards are not equal for all students regardless of ability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, or socioeconomic status.

Admissions decisions are made on a need-blind basis. Once admitted, families are awarded financial aid based on financial need. Non-need, merit based financial aid is not offered.

Community School has two emergency funds that can only be used for financial aid. One fund accumulates on a year-to-year basis and is used for tuition assistance. The second fund, called the Community Chest, assists families in affording tutoring, supplies, field trip expenses, and extracurricular activities. These funds are disbursed on an as-need basis. Faculty and administrators are aware of this fund and can make a request on behalf of a child. The Head of School or Division Directors approve requests for funds.

The AIM process commends:

- Community School for its commitment to the goal of retaining a student body of at least 20% diversity.
- Community School for having emergency funds such as the Community Chest available to help meet the needs of students in order for them to participate fully and benefit from all the School has to offer.
- The Admission Department for its commitment to an intimate and thorough admission process that leaves prospective families feeling positive and supportive of the School.

The AIM process recommends:

- The administration establishes a process for clear communication of the admission policy of equal opportunity for all applicants.
- The Board of Trustees and administration develop an equitable plan for recruiting socioeconomic diversity at the School.

D. Faculty and Teachers

There is a strong consensus among faculty members that Community School is a caring, cooperative environment where teachers help and support each other daily. The faculty feels proud to be associated with the School. Most teachers report that they feel respected by school leaders and are comfortable approaching them with concerns that arise. Teachers do not report bias based on race, gender, or religion. However, there is a sense that the more seasoned faculty members receive greater respect than the younger, less experienced teachers.

Community School assigns a mentor to each new faculty member. Mentors are asked to read *How to Thrive as a Teacher Leader* by John Gabriel and meet with the Division Directors two to three times during the year. A mentor is seen as someone who can offer guidance to new teachers and also discuss the culture and traditions that make up Community School. In addition to having a mentor, new teachers meet as a group approximately once a month with the Division Directors. These meetings are used to help new teachers become familiar with "Community School Ways" and also to prepare new teachers for upcoming events. Overall, teachers are pleased with the mentor program and feel it is helpful.

Since 2000-2001, the Admission Director has held part-time responsibilities as Diversity Coordinator. The Diversity Coordinator helps families, teachers, the Board of Trustees and students with issues related to diversity. Teachers are encouraged to contact the Diversity Coordinator if they have questions or need guidance related to class curriculum. Teachers of color consult the Diversity Coordinator for support and guidance.

There is a concern among teachers that differences based on ability/disability, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation are not addressed as well as they should be. According to the faculty, the School is not seen as being proactive in eliminating inequalities and barriers for differently abled members of the school community. They also feel that the current school environment would not be supportive of a teacher, administrator, or staff member identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or trans-gendered.

Three faculty members and one administrator at Community School are of diverse ethnicity. There is concern that this does not reflect the diversity of the student body and therefore places expectations on these faculty members to provide guidance and leadership in diversity and multicultural initiatives above and beyond the Caucasian faculty members. Most teachers are concerned that teachers from underrepresented groups are asked more often than others to serve on committees for multicultural events and therefore are overburdened working at Community School.

Faculty members agree that they are provided with ample resources to create and provide multicultural learning experiences. However, there is a feeling among faculty that they do not have enough time to explore these resources as in depth as they would like. Guest speakers and small group discussions overseen by the Diversity Committee often provide professional development in the area of diversity to the entire faculty. There is a feeling from the faculty that Community School focuses a majority of time on diversity of race and much less time on socioeconomic, age, gender, and sexuality. There is a growing concern among faculty that as the School continues to admit more students of various religious, socioeconomic and uncommon family structure backgrounds, the faculty will have a hard time addressing their needs without proper training in these various areas.

While communication within the community is largely effective and teachers feel that their concerns, ideas and opinions are valued, many faculty members do not feel comfortable being open and honest with some parents/guardians. Teachers see the administration as the impetus for change in the area of improvement of diversity and multiculturalism. They do not see parents as being concerned with the school's diversity initiatives.

The AIM process commends:

- Community School for creating a caring and supportive environment where teachers feel respected and listened to.
- The administration for establishing a mentor program for new teachers and the faculty for serving as mentors.
- Community School for providing the faculty with support and funds to create and provide multicultural learning experiences.
- The faculty for intervening when incidences of bias or injustice are observed and the administration for supporting intervention.

The AIM process recommends:

- That the administration develops a more formalized plan/support system for addressing conflict resolution from divergent opinions.
- That the administration considers ways to implement and institutionalize diversity/sensitivity training for faculty that is designed to develop skills, knowledge, and sensitivity to diversity of race, socioeconomic background, and sexual orientation.
- That administration monitors the extra amount of duties given to teachers of diverse ethnicities so that they are not overwhelmed.

E. Teaching and Learning

There is consensus among constituents that diversity in the curriculum is important to the excellence in education provided by Community School. Teachers include multiculturalism within lessons and every grade focuses on a specific country throughout the academic year to give both breadth and depth of understanding. Parents have been informed about the School's mission and policies with regard to diversity, multiculturalism, and multicultural education. Overall parents are satisfied with the School's approach to multiculturalism and inclusiveness. All constituents agree that Community School does a great job of teaching good sportsmanship and the importance of community.

Parents and teachers report concern about multiculturalism not being integrated into every aspect of the curriculum. Although Community School teachers teach many lessons/units with multicultural points of view, there are no formal documents defining multicultural education for the School and furthermore no written curriculum to oversee that multiculturalism is integrated into all aspects of the curriculum. There is a consensus among parents and teachers that most multicultural lessons are part of the Social Studies Curriculum but absent from other curriculums. Students are provided with various opportunities to learn about and appreciate the different culture and way of life from the individual country they study in each grade level. According to the Discovery Committees, teachers are interested in creating a definition for what multicultural education should look like at Community School. They are also interested in adding multicultural education goals to the school curriculum.

Ninety percent of teachers surveyed feel that they have access to resources needed in order to create and provide multicultural experiences. However, there is concern among the teachers that only a few colleagues use these resources or take advantage of the professional development opportunities needed to help create and provide multicultural learning experiences for students.

A majority of parents are in agreement that Community School maintains the same academic standards for all students. However, there seems to be a disagreement between parents and teachers in the way in which Community School supports children who learn differently. Parents do not feel as though the School does enough to support these children nor do they feel that other students respect those who learn differently. Teachers feel that Community School works hard to create a supportive environment for children who learn differently through differentiation of lessons and Learning Center support. Teachers also feel that all students are respected, those who perform at a high academic level as well as those who learn differently.

The AIM process commends:

- The faculty and staff for their commitment to making all individual students feel valued and included.
- Community School for providing teachers with access to resources needed to create and provide multicultural experiences.
- The faculty for teaching an in-depth study of a country in the world through the social studies curriculum.
- The faculty for the ways in which they promote the importance of good sportsmanship.

The AIM process recommends:

- That the administration and faculty work together to create a definition for multicultural education that will fit with the mission and philosophy of Community School.
- That the administration and the faculty work together to set achievable grade-level goals with regard to multicultural education.
- That the teachers are made more aware of the importance of and encouraged to attend multicultural professional development opportunities in order to create and provide multicultural learning experiences other than the ones driven by the social studies curriculum.

F. Student Life

(NOTE: The AIM process requires student respondents to be in 7th grade or above. Given that the oldest Community School students are only in 6th grade, there were no student respondents. This means that all data regarding student life reflects only the views of adult constituent groups.)

The Community School environment is caring and students benefit from the School's commitment to ethical values and character development. All constituents agree that an atmosphere of inclusiveness exists in the School. Activities such as family-style lunches, family groupings and the buddy program build relations and connections between students and faculty. Students feel cared for and listened to by the teachers at Community School

A majority of parents feel that their family is respected regardless of socioeconomic status or class. With funds available through the Community Chest, students are able to participate in educational programs and activities regardless of their family's ability to afford the costs.

Constituents agree that there is still need for improvement with respect to the community's approach to differences in sexual orientation, socioeconomic status and ability/disability. There is concern from 15% of the parents surveyed that staff and/or teachers may not intervene as often as they should when students are teased, harassed or discriminated against. Teachers feel that this is an area in which they would like more professional development in order to teach them how to better deal with these types of situations.

Parents of color are encouraged to contact the Diversity Coordinator to discuss social and classroom concerns related to diversity.

The AIM process commends:

- Community School for establishing the Community Chest fund so that all students have equal access to educational programs and activities.
- The School's programs such as family-style lunch, family grouping and the buddy program, which build connections between students and teachers.
- Community School for providing a Diversity Coordinator who is available to assist parents of color whose children may have social or classroom concerns pertaining to diversity.

The AIM process recommends:

- That the administration provides professional development opportunities for the faculty in the area of conflict management (e.g., teasing, bullying, discrimination).

G. School Publications and Environment

All constituents agree that Community School has a caring community environment. There is a positive school spirit present and all members feel proud to be associated with the School. The campus is located on 16 wooded acres in an affluent residential area. The beautifully manicured grounds and home-like feel of the classrooms draws people in. A nature trail, butterfly garden and outdoor classroom space exemplifies Community School's mission of "Nurturing the gifts of mind, body and spirit." There is some concern about the safety of the campus. Being located at the end of a dead-end road with woods surrounding all sides, some members wonder about strangers entering the School unannounced.

Currently, the School is undergoing construction to create more space for classrooms, a larger kitchen to better serve lunches, and a two-lane road that will make the carpool line work more efficiently. Many respondents are concerned about accessibility for those with physical challenges or who are in wheelchairs. The School is multi-leveled and currently does not include an elevator for access to the upper and lower levels.

Various activities throughout the year promote positive interactions between Community School and the local community. The School hosts an annual flower sale, a Circle of Learning Speaker Series, and teacher workshops through the Independent Schools of Saint Louis Association. The local community and teachers from other schools are invited to attend. The Character Education through Outreach Committee oversees many events for students to participate in giving back to the community. A clothing drive, making placemats for nursing homes, a collection of mittens and hats for a shelter, and creating valentines for troops are just a few of the many outreach activities throughout the year. The School also continues to work on building positive relationships with its neighbors that live in the area.

The school website and publications such as the open house postcards, Oakleaf newsletters, newspaper advertisements, and annual giving reports have a look that reflects the diversity of students at Community School. Currently the School is in the process of updating the Open House video in order to better represent the diversity of the School. Some members of the school community think that these publications do not accurately represent the current diversity of the School. They believe a higher ratio of students from underrepresented groups appear than actually attend the school. However, most agree that school publications portray a welcoming and inclusive school environment for prospective families.

The AIM process commends:

- The administration, faculty, and staff for portraying an inclusive and welcoming environment to current families as well as prospective families.
- The administration and Character Education Committee for promoting community outreach through various activities all year long.

The AIM process recommends:

- That the administration monitors closely and standardizes communication in all publications ensuring that they accurately reflect the School's approach to multiculturalism.
- That Community School considers the possibility of putting in an elevator to assist disabled constituents to better maneuver in the School.
- That the administration applies the definition of multiculturalism to all external communications.

H. Staff Involvement and Life

There is a strong feeling among staff that an atmosphere of inclusiveness exists at Community School. They appreciate being included in various faculty meetings as well as personnel appreciation events such as the holiday gift assembly and the holiday faculty/staff lunch celebration. Some of the staff members mentioned that they enjoyed the holiday luncheon when it was not on campus and they did not have to work to set up or break down the party.

Currently, most non-teaching staff members are not introduced to the student body until the winter holiday assembly. Some staff members expressed interest in creating more opportunities where they could interact with the students by bringing their personal experience and abilities into the classroom.

With regard to diversity and inclusivity efforts, staff members feel that unlike the faculty, there are no measures in place for them to have discussions or meetings that relate to diversity, multiculturalism or inclusivity. According to the survey, the staff does not feel instrumental in promoting multiculturalism in the School. Staff members report that they have not received diversity training nor are there activities undertaken to communicate the School's inclusivity and multiculturalism vision and goals to the non-teaching administrative staff. Several members of the group expressed an interest in participating in diversity training or at least given articles to read.

Community School administration expresses an open door policy with regards to communication; however, the group felt that the School could strengthen and improve these lines of communication. A few staff members feel that there are some grey areas across departments and that they occasionally are left to work without guidelines or directions as to who is in charge. The staff members made several suggestions that the School could employ in an effort to strengthen feelings of respect and inclusiveness such as being informed of changes before they occur.

The AIM process commends:

- The Board of Trustees and the administration for insuring that all staff members are included in all school events and personnel appreciation.
- The administration for maintaining an open door policy for all employees where faculty and staff are welcome to discuss issues or concerns that are either work or personal.

The AIM process recommends:

- That the administration considers ways in which to implement and utilize diversity/sensitivity training for staff members.
- That the administration and faculty explore ways to allow staff to continue bringing their life experiences into classrooms in order to help students connect with all of the people present in their own school.

- That the administration continues to strengthen and improve communication with staff including clarification of duties and informal contact.

I. Parent/Guardian Involvement

The parent/guardian constituent group raises several key themes in the AIM process. Among underrepresented groups, the issues of socioeconomic status, ability/disability and sexual orientation are important. Other major points of discussion are the parent's role in multiculturalism in the School, staff/faculty intervention, the School's transparency in communication between the Board and the parent population and admission standards.

Most parents who participated in the survey feel that they are respected regardless of their socioeconomic status or class. Eighty percent of parents also agree that socioeconomic diversity is an important element of an inclusive school climate. In the online survey rating, the parent population rated Community School's ability to work effectively with the individual differences of its various stakeholder groups based on socioeconomic status as a priority concern. There is a feeling that parents who can afford higher monetary contributions have more of an influence at the School and that the wealthy are more accepted. Parents who commented in the survey mention that the School needs to encourage other parents to be more inclusive across socioeconomic status.

There is concern from the parent population in terms of how Community School works with individual differences of its stakeholder group based on ability and disability. One thing that visitors notice when they enter the School is that classrooms are located on multiple levels where there is no access for people with physical disabilities to get to the various levels. This inaccessibility hinders a person's ability to go certain places in the School unless assisted. In terms of ability/disability of learning, parents express concern that before Senior Kindergarten, there is no in-house support for students who have been identified as having learning differences. There is also concern that some students do not respect others who learn differently. Likewise, parents feel that staff and teachers do not intervene as often or as quickly as they should when students are teased, harassed, or discriminated against. Teachers noted in their survey that this is an area where they could use more professional development.

According to the online survey, a majority of parents are satisfied with Community School's approach to multiculturalism. Forty-three percent of the group feels strongly that incorporating multiculturalism into all aspects of the School's educational and social programs is essential to their child's education. However, according to the survey, parents do not see themselves as instrumental in promoting multiculturalism nor do they press for School improvement in diversity and multiculturalism.

A priority concern of parents is whether or not the admissions standards for Community School are the same for students regardless of ability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, or socioeconomic status. Anecdotal comments suggest that Community School is trying to compensate for past weaknesses and therefore gives

special treatment to diverse students during the admission process and also when difficulties occur in the classroom.

The notion of parental cliques appears to be a concern among some parents. Anecdotally, it is hard to separate frustrations with socioeconomic status bias from this issue. While a majority of parents agree that there is a positive spirit at the School and that an atmosphere of inclusiveness exists, comments from the survey as well as Discovery Committees suggest that it is very difficult for new families, diverse and otherwise, to gain acceptance by the community at large. Overall, parents do not see themselves as being instrumental in promoting inclusiveness at the School. Certain parents feel that some students are not taught to be inclusive by their families and this makes other children feel left out as well. The feedback suggests that this issue also correlates with frustration of the dual-working and single parents' inability to attend school-related events. In discussion, many suggest that working parents feel excluded because they are unable to attend CPA meetings or school functions held during the day. There is a thought that the committees for the CPA are formed through friendships with people who can be available to meet during the day.

The parent/guardian group desires improved communication and access to the Board of Trustees. Currently parents do not feel that the Board works hard enough to create a forum where all opinions and perspectives can be considered. Parents express concern that the School allows a few vocal parents to change school policy. There is also a misunderstanding on the part of parent population that the Board of Trustees does not reflect the diversity of the student body. In fact, the Board makes it a point to reflect the diversity of the student body and currently has a greater percentage of diverse members than the student body.

There does not seem to be a stakeholder group based on sexual orientation at Community School. The results from the Discovery Committee suggest that the parent/guardian group does not know why this group is not represented in the school population. In the survey, fifty-nine percent of the parent population answers were "do not know" when rating whether or not the School is working effectively with this stakeholder group. Anecdotal notes suggest that this is a group that the School either does not have yet or that the School chooses to ignore. Parents involved in the Discovery Committee suggest that developing an environment that is open and accepting to everyone, including those differing in sexual orientation, is essential for the School to continue to grow.

Despite the areas of concern, eighty percent of the group feels strongly that inclusivity is essential to their child's education. Many parents feel the School does well in its attempt to support multicultural efforts by welcoming the sharing of different cultures in the classroom.

The AIM process commends:

- Community School for having an inclusive atmosphere to all parents and children during school hours.
- The Admission Office for being welcoming and open to applicants and new families.
- The Board of Trustees and administration for hosting events and having funds available that support all types of diversity.

The AIM process recommends:

- That the Board of Trustees works on providing opportunities for parents to communicate and express concerns in a supportive environment.
- That the Board of Trustees and administration clarify candidate selection process for the CPA as well as the Board of Trustees.
- That the administration considers annual parent commitment to the School's diversity and inclusivity mission statements.
- That the Board of Trustees and administration consider ways to include parents/guardians on the efforts to improve multiculturalism and diversity in the School.
- That the CPA schedules at least a subset of meetings at times of the day when more parents can attend.

I. Alumni/ae Involvement and Investment

The alumni/ae constituent group represents a challenge due to the small sample that responded to the online survey (only 16 respondents) and the small number of alumnae included in the Discovery Committee. Based on the small sample of alumni/ae included in the Discovery Committee and who took the online survey, there is an urgent need for the School to improve its outdated alumni/ae database and come up with a more accurate way to contact them.

According to the survey, alumni feel proud of being associated with the School and would or do send their children to Community School. The alumni also feel that adults who work in the School are responsive to the needs of others in the school community. All alumni present in the Discovery Committee are actively involved with the School and discuss their involvement in a positive way.

Those alumni who took the survey feel that the School could do more to seek out alumni involvement in diversity issues. They also feel that the School could do more to make alumni familiar with its mission, policies and programs for facilitating multicultural education and inclusiveness. Sixty percent of those surveyed feel that the School has not made substantial progress on diversity and multicultural issues over the years since graduation. However, alumni involved in the Discovery Committee did not agree with those surveyed and do feel as though Community School has made steady progress in increasing diversity in the student body over time. Due to the discrepancy between the survey and the Discovery Committee, it is evident that communication with this constituency is lacking. There is a great need for improved communication between the School and its alumni.

The AIM process commends:

- The Board of Trustees for having a goal of reconnecting with alumni/ae.

The AIM process recommends:

- That the administration takes appropriate steps to improve the communication and the connection with the alumni/ae constituent group including a more updated database of alumni/ae contact information.

Major Recommendations:

The AIM process recommends:

1. That the School provides opportunities for training relative to issues of diversity and inclusivity for all constituent groups.
2. That the administration and faculty work together to create a definition for multicultural education, set grade level goals with regard to multicultural education, and provide professional development opportunities in this area.
3. That the School considers ways to foster and create an inclusive environment especially around issues of socioeconomic diversity.
4. That the administration creates a targeted approach (with measurable criteria) to recruit and support faculty so that they more accurately reflect the diversity of the student body.
5. That the Board of Trustees works on providing opportunities for parents to communicate and express concerns in a supportive environment.
6. That the administration continues to monitor closely and standardize communication in all publications ensuring that they accurately reflect the school's approach to multiculturalism.

I. Early January Community Letter

Dear Community School Families and Friends,

As many of you know, Community School has been engaged in a diversity survey tool called the Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism (AIM). This tool was designed by the National Association of Independent Schools as a means for schools to collect information about their institutions in order to plan for the future in building and sustaining inclusive school communities.

AIM includes two modes of data collection: discovery (or focus) groups and an online climate survey. This fall, the Steering Committee convened twelve discovery committees that included parents, staff, teachers, administrators, and trustees. The composition of the groups reflected diversity of gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, and family make-up consistent with our school community.

The School plans to launch the online climate survey on **Tuesday, January 20**. It is our hope that everyone in our school community will participate in this online survey. On the 20th you will receive an email with link to the survey. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and is totally confidential. Please take the time to thoughtfully and thoroughly complete the survey, as a high participation rate will ensure the most reliable results. It is my hope that we can use the results to build and sustain an increasingly inclusive school.

Community has installed an ad hoc Steering Committee for the purpose of implementing the AIM tool, managing the process, gathering and consolidating the data, and presenting the data to the Board of Trustees. We will complete this process by the end of the school year and are committed to sharing our findings with you by fall of next year. Each and every voice must be heard in order for us to gather the most accurate picture of both the strengths and challenges of our community.

The AIM Steering Committee is being chaired by Sandra Cirrito (Lower School Learning Specialist) and Suzanne Keefe (Fourth Grade Teacher) with oversight by Dana Saulsberry (Admission Director and Diversity Coordinator). Other members of the Steering Committee include Debbie Barmeier (First Grade), Judy Fisher (Upper School Learning Specialist), Sara Forrester (Third Grade), Shannon Galfi (Third Grade), Matthew Gould (Head of School), Rob Knight (Woodshop), Stephanie Oteng (Sixth Grade), and Shilpa Thornton (Trustee).

Please join us in our pursuit of a Community School community that continues to have the warmth and inclusion that serves all of our students well. Thank you in advance for your continuing support of the guiding principles of our community. Feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,
Matthew A. Gould, Ph.D. Head of School

II. Late January Parent Letter to launch online survey

Dear Community Parents,

Our AIM Survey is up and running! As you know, Community School is currently engaged in an assessment process using a tool called AIM (Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism). The online survey is an important part of this process and we are hoping for widespread participation so that we can be sure that EVERY voice is heard. Below is some information that may be of interest:

How do I access the survey?	The survey is accessible online at: http://www.insightlink.net/AIM-Communityschool/
How much time will it take to complete?	15-20 minutes
Who should take the survey?	Every current or former parent/guardian in the home, current faculty, staff, board, administration, and alum (18 and above)
What is the deadline?	Monday, February 9
Are my results confidential?	Absolutely! The AIM Steering Committee will not have access to specific data. The survey company will provide only a compiled report with no identifying information attached.
How will the results be shared?	We look forward to sharing highlights in Fall 2009.

Please join us in this important project! If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact a member of the Diversity Committee. Thank you for your willingness to participate as we strive to make Community the best school it can be!

Sincerely,

Sandra Cirrito

Suzie Keefe

Diversity Committee Co-Chair

Diversity Committee Co-Chair

scirrito@communityschool.com

skeefe@communityschool.com

Committee Members

Debbie Barmeier

Judy Fisher

Sara Forrester

Shannon Galfi

Rob Knight

Stephanie Oteng

Dana Saulsberry

III. Example of Discovery Committee Intro Packet

October 13, 2008

Ready Set AIM!

Dear Teachers,

Your Discovery Committee and meeting location are noted on the front of this folder. We will **not** be meeting as a whole group, so please proceed directly to your meeting at 9:00.

Enclosed you will find a list of questions that your group will be discussing as well as any background information to aid in the discussion. In addition, we have provided you a list of definitions of important terms from NAIS. This will provide us with a common language during our discussions. Please read through your packet and be prepared to discuss by 9:00am on Friday, October 17th.

We look forward to having great discussions and appreciate your help and enthusiasm.

Sandra and Suzie

IV. Online Survey Data: Categories of Health and Concern

(NOTE: This is only one of three sources of data for the AIM process. Conclusions cannot be drawn based on this data alone. The steering committee provides this data as only a reference point. Data is organized based on questions in the survey answered either by all respondents or by a particular constituent group.)

Criteria: **Healthy** (mean score of 4.0 or higher)—These are issues on which the school is doing comparatively well but where programs and initiatives should be continued or expanded to provide support.

Priority Concern (mean score of 3.5-3.99)—These issues are not considered immediately critical but are in need of improvement and should be addressed in future plans and initiatives.

High Priority Concern (mean score of 3.49 or lower)—These issues should be addressed as soon as possible.

All Constituents

Areas of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride in school affiliation • School’s commitment to ethical values and character development • Equal opportunity for boys and girls • The School’s caring community environment • School leaders treat administrators, faculty, and staff with respect, are approachable, and willing to make changes • Positive spirit and high morale • Teachers help and support each other • Interactions between faculty members are cooperative • Ability to work effectively with stakeholder groups based on gender, age, religion, or race/ethnicity • School takes action to create a diverse enrollment • Adults are responsive to the needs of others in the school community • Diversity in the curriculum is important to the excellence in the education provided by the School • Students build on previous work • Teachers listen well to students • Socioeconomic diversity is an important element to an inclusive school climate • Athletic programs provide equal opportunity • Diversity in the faculty, administration, and student
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> body is important • Respect of students who perform at a high level • School's support of single-parent families • Staff or teachers intervene when students are teased harassed or discriminated against • School's commitment to diversifying faculty and staff • School's approach to multiculturalism • School's approach to inclusiveness • Board works to create forum where all opinions and perspectives can be considered • Student's respect for others that learn differently • Adult belief that they are instrumental to promoting inclusiveness
Areas of Priority Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers do not feel that they can be open and honest with parents • School's ability to work effectively with sexual orientation differences • Existence of multiculturalism in curriculum • Few vocal parents change school policy • School's ability to work effectively with socioeconomic status differences • Adult belief that they are instrumental in promoting multiculturalism • Parents/guardians press for improvement in diversity and multiculturalism • Board of Trustees does not reflect the diversity of the student body • School's ability to work effectively with ability/disability differences
Area of High Priority Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty and administration do not reflect the diversity of the student body

Parents

Areas of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A school community where all members feel included and affirmed is essential to their child's education • Informed about School's mission, policies, and/or programs regarding diversity and multiculturalism • Feel students on financial aid are treated the same as all other students • Have opportunities to learn about and appreciate
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	<p>different cultures and ways of life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See the same academic standards for all students • Comfortable attending/participating in school activities • The School takes appropriate steps to affirm the religious differences and/or observances among students • Informed about schools policies, mission, and educational/social approach to multicultural education • Feel families are respected regardless of socioeconomic status or class • Concerns are heard and valued by the school • Fully informed about child’s progress • Ability to participate in most school-affiliated parent activities outside of school • Feel the School is taking appropriate steps to ensure that single parent families can participate in school activities • Feel an atmosphere of inclusiveness exists in the School • Multiculturalism is essential to education • School takes action to create diverse faculty and staff • Opportunity to share perspective/opinion regarding important school changes
<p>Areas of Priority Concern</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions standards are not the same for all students • Multiculturalism is not integrated into every aspect of the curriculum • Students do not respect others who learn differently • Staff or teachers do not intervene when students are teased, harassed, or discriminated against • Parents are not instrumental in promoting inclusiveness at the school • Few vocal parents change policy • School’s ability to work effectively with socioeconomic, ability, or disability differences • Faculty and administration does not reflect the diversity of the student body
<p>Areas of High Priority Concern</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/guardians do not press for multiculturalism • Parents/guardians are not instrumental in promoting multiculturalism at the school

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Trustees does not reflect the diversity of the student body
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Board of Trustees

Areas of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The School is making consistent progress in building an inclusive community • The School is making consistent progress in sustaining a multicultural community • The School seeks trustee input on multicultural initiatives • Diversity and multiculturalism are a board priority • The school’s mission statement regarding diversity and multiculturalism is clear • The School’s policies with regard to diversity and multiculturalism are up-to-date • The Board holds the administration of this school accountable for diversity and multicultural initiatives • My concerns, ideas, and opinions are heard and valued • The Board of Trustees works hard to create a forum where all opinions and perspectives can be considered • School is reluctant to address certain aspects of diversity including age, religion, gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or ability/disability (score reversed) • The administration and faculty are actively engaged in removing bias from the curriculum • The Committee on Trustees establishes regularly scheduled sessions on diversity and multiculturalism • The School’s annual budget adequately supports diversity and multicultural initiatives • The School’s curriculum fully incorporates a multicultural perspective • The School’s mission statement regarding diversity and multiculturalism is measurable
Areas of Priority Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and multiculturalism are important to fundraising at Community School • Socioeconomic diversity is important to fundraising efforts at Community School

Area of High Priority Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty and administrators reflect the diversity of the school
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Faculty and Staff

Areas of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school leaders treat all faculty with respect • I feel comfortable working in this school • It is my responsibility to intervene when I observe incidents of bias or injustice • Treated equally in salary regardless of religion, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, (dis) ability, gender or age • Comfortable being open with the Division Head • Equal opportunity for advancement at the School regardless of religion, gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, sexual orientation, or (dis) ability • Community School actively takes appropriate steps to ensure that parents/guardians feel comfortable attending/participating in school activities • Comfortable being open with the Department Chair • Comfortable being open with the other administrators • Comfortable being open with school leaders • The School is making consistent progress in building an inclusive school community • The School is making consistent progress in sustaining an inclusive school community • Faculty members have access to the resources and professional development needed to create and provide multicultural learning experiences for students • My concerns, ideas, and opinions are heard and valued • The School respects the cultural diversity of its administration • The School respects the cultural diversity of its staff • Communication is effective in this school • Diversity and multicultural initiatives get done at my school • As part of our regular agenda, we set aside time in our meetings to discuss our progress on multicultural goals and initiatives
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues openly discuss issues of diversity and multiculturalism • The School seeks my involvement in multicultural initiatives
Areas of Priority Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is easier for men who work at my school to get selected for career enhancing opportunities than it is for women who work at my school (score reversed) • Faculty members use resources and take advantage of professional development opportunities needed to help them create and provide multicultural learning experiences for students • Socioeconomic status does not limit the ability of any student to participate fully in the educational (curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular) programs available at the school
Areas of High Priority Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people who work at my school get more respect than younger people • The School is proactive in eliminating inequalities and barriers for the differently-abled members of the school community including staff, faculty, students, families, administrators, and alumni/ae • The current school environment is supportive of a teacher, administrator, or staff member identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender • Gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender teachers are comfortable working in this school

Alumni/ae

Area of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will, would, or do send my child/children to the school
Areas of Priority Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School is reluctant to address certain aspects of diversity including ability/disability and gender (score reversed) • I feel comfortable staying connected because the School makes an effort to maintain a relationship with me
Areas of High Priority Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My concerns, ideas, and opinions are heard and valued by the School • The School has made substantial progress on diversity and multicultural issues since my graduation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I am highly motivated to help my school• The School prepared me to take an active role in addressing issues of inequality in our society• I am familiar with the School's mission, policies, and/or programs for facilitating inclusiveness• I am familiar with the School's mission, policies, and/or programs for facilitating multicultural education• The School seeks to involve alumni/ae in diversity initiatives• The School is reluctant to address certain aspects of diversity including age, race, religion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status (score reversed)
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V. Online Survey Data: Summary of Verbatim Comments By Constituency

The following charts should serve as a summary of the verbatim comments recorded during the online survey. In order to protect the anonymity of respondents, the committee has recorded only themes that emerged. *(NOTE: This is only one of three sources of data for the AIM process. Conclusions cannot be drawn based on this data alone. The Steering Committee provides this data as only a reference point.)*

Board of Trustees

- Making efforts to improve inclusivity and multiculturalism
- Administrators, faculty and staff do a wonderful job creating a warm, safe and inclusive environment
- The school is taking a strategic approach to make positive changes and the school has the right people in place to get the job done

Faculty/Teachers/Staff

- Community is working hard to be aware of and proactive in addressing any current issues pertaining to the school community and the community at large
- The faculty and administration are caring and supportive
- Teachers are committed to the school mission statement
- Sexual orientation is not addressed at the school
- Communication between faculty and administrators is excellent

Parent/Guardian

- Diversity regarding both race and socioeconomic status are the two areas needing improvement
- Appreciative of the efforts made to accommodate single-working and dual-working parents but more could be done
- Faculty members are professional and caring
- Over emphasis on Jewish Holidays
- There is perception of parent cliques
- Not all parents support diversity
- Faculty should be more diverse
- The school feels exclusive to some
- Sexual orientation is not addressed at the school