



Dear Church Street School Families and Friends,

This summer we at Church Street took on the challenge of examining our work in the area of social justice. Our team, which included teachers, staff members and administrators, met weekly in a collective effort to deeply scrutinize our practices. We then established priorities, goals and actions to take to ensure that we are an antiracist, multicultural institution. We are writing today to share our work with you.

We began with candid discussions about the culture of communication at the school, hiring practices, experiences of microaggressions in the workplace, leadership accountability and power sharing. This was not an easy process, but we all agreed, crucial. We then examined whether we were doing everything we could to achieve our core mission – accessibility to the arts for all. We renewed our commitments to our scholarship program, outreach programs and free programs and discussed ways we could be more effective in supporting and expanding those aspects of our work. We ended the summer in breakout groups, each of which focused on particular areas that we all agreed were the most important. Those were 1) policies 2) communication 3) curriculum 4) community engagement.

As a result, we developed priorities for each of these areas that we would like to share with you today.

**Policies** – All policies reflected on our website and in our employee handbook have been reviewed and recommendations made for changes in language to reflect Church Street School’s commitment to being an antiracist institution, to embrace diversity, to radiate inclusivity and mutual respect.

**Communication** – This group focused on opening up lines of communication between staff, faculty, leadership and the community. In the near future you will see the implementation of physical suggestion boxes and signage regarding our prioritizing of social justice in our school. Moderated Facebook groups for faculty and for the community are being developed to discuss issues and share resources.

**Curriculum** – Multicultural resources have been cultivated to share with faculty and made available in the classroom. This group has suggested the implementation of student “Rules of Cool”, a code of conduct that is a collective effort between students and teachers, to give students an active voice in the classroom while prioritizing mutual respect and embracing difference. We will also ask teachers to bring their own backgrounds and ideas into their work, as well as provide opportunities for guest teachers to share multiple perspectives.

**Community Engagement** – This group is reassessing what community is: not just a transactional place for lessons and classes, but rather a lifelong holistic engagement spanning childhood to adulthood. We will build a culture of giving back through volunteer opportunities, story sharing, and pooling resources with local businesses. We are a community of rich backgrounds and experiences to share.

As the school year unfolds you will see this work actualized in various ways. As part of our ongoing effort, in the next month we will widen the circle of this discussion of social justice within our school community through professionally facilitated, schoolwide workshops which will include our faculty and board of directors. You, the wider community, will also be invited to take part in this discussion in a town hall meeting later in the Fall where you can voice your own experience, share your resources and help create a collective roadmap for social justice at Church Street School.

We all believe that diversity and inclusivity are of paramount importance. We all believe in the transformative power of the arts, and that all people should have access to the arts. We believe that through art-making and music-making we

become more grounded, connections are made with others, and communities are built. Especially now—when community feels so scattered—we aim to create and support a bright, artistic future.

Make more Music. Make more Art.

Sincerely,

Sage Baisden  
Marketing Manager

Lisa Ecklund-Flores  
Executive Director

Abby Levin  
Director of Development

Stacy Werdin  
Program Coordinator

Z Behl  
Teaching Artist, Artist Council

Betsy Kerlin  
Associate Director

Dennis Li  
Office Manager

Toby Wine  
Director of Programs

Natalie Casagran Lopez  
Teaching Artist

Angela Jaeger  
Teaching Artist

Azikiwe Mohammed  
Teaching Artist, Artist Council