



*A Joint Message from*

**Head of School Dan Paradis and Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Courtney Rollins**

*September 9, 2020*

Park School Students, Families, Alumni, and Employees —

We write to you today in order to share the foundation of Park’s commitment to becoming an anti-racist school. We do this with full knowledge and acceptance that *words are not enough*. We embrace truth, optimism, and the belief that, together as a united community, we will make lasting change. Further, we disavow apathy, passivity, and denial. We welcome support, illumination, discomfort, and criticism. We invite, and expect, your committed engagement in the work ahead.

We believe that intentional efforts to upend racist systems must be identified and acted upon at the personal, cultural, and institutional levels. Park was founded as a progressive school — a school that believes in the potential of each individual student and with the faith that our students would make the world better. And it was founded as a school with a broader sense of inclusion (initially, religious inclusion) that, with each successive generation, has been further challenged and expanded. As a predominantly white institution throughout our history, our school community must come to terms with individual and collective failures to create a safe and fully inclusive community for all — in particular, its Black students, families, and employees.

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*I believe each of us has a role to play in creating a community where every child feels known, valued, and loved. For me, I can’t separate my personal feelings — as a fellow human being, as a parent of a young Park graduate, as someone whose friends and loved ones are impacted by racism — with my responsibilities as Head of School. As I love and care about my own child, how can I not love and care about each and every child whose well-being is entrusted to me and to all of us adults at Park? — Dan Paradis*

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### **Anti-Racism Builds Capacity**

We believe that specifically focusing on anti-racism increases our capacity to learn and live together.

#### **Anti-racism and anti-bias education...**

**...makes us smarter.** Being culturally competent requires critical thinking and promotes cognitive development.

**...makes us better people.** Understanding oneself and others speaks to the entire child — *every* child — and the community.

**...reflects our values.** Park School’s guiding documents, including our Philosophy and Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, express our commitment to inclusiveness and the preparation of students to live in an egalitarian and pluralistic society.

**...prepares our students for the world.** The colleges, institutes of higher learning, jobs, and careers our students will enter and create demand culturally competent citizens.

**...creates a strong learning environment for all.** Research demonstrates that a safe environment is a necessary aspect of effective learning at every phase of development. When our students experience a genuine sense of belonging, they are more inclined to thrive.

Our work is not only aspirational, but it is also restorative. It acknowledges past failings, confronts ongoing struggles, and challenges all community members to engage fully. Only when we join together in acknowledging and confronting racism in our society and in ourselves, can we move forward towards greater reconciliation and healing.

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[\*\*Park School's Anti-Racism Action Plan \(click here\)\*\*](#)

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The ideas and approaches that make up our Anti-Racism Action Plan have been shaped by student voices, alumni, parents, employees, and the broader Park community; our work together will be critically assessed and consistently updated. Through the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), the community will be engaged and informed regarding existing priorities and progress. The Office of DEI continues to serve as a resource that supports the entire Pre-K through Grade 12 community — students, teachers, and parents — and the office will communicate regularly with opportunities for engagement, including workshops, listening sessions, community gatherings, and other ways to facilitate our development as an anti-racist community.

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*I occupy a unique space in my role as a Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, a father of an amazing 11th Grader, and as an unapologetic Black man in this country. I often feel the tension of different perspectives and expectations — some feeling that race is my only focus and others feeling that the office does not do enough when addressing race. Yet, I am filled with hope and optimism as I and we step into this unique time in our history as a society — and as a school. I believe the collective will is to move forward, and our students, families, employees, and alumni can lead the way in creating a school where everyone feels a sense of unconditional belonging. — Courtney Rollins*

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We look forward to creating opportunities for community members to come together and to learn and grow. We also plan to share updates with the full community, including specific metrics and programming details, as part of our commitment to sustain this work over time.

We will not be deterred in our efforts to ensure our community is safe for all identities. We move forward with our commitment to create an anti-racist school and combat prejudices with moral certainty; and, in doing so, we will leave no one behind.

Sincerely,

Dan Paradis, Head of School & Courtney Rollins, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion