Parent & Community Engagement: Managing External Stakeholders

Navigating Resistance, Building Support, and Communicating Effectively

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Topics for Today

- Understanding different parent constituencies and their concerns
- Responding to pushback on DEI initiatives from parents
- Building coalitions of supportive families
- Communicating about equity work to diverse audiences
- Managing social media and public criticism
- Working with alumni and donors who resist change
- Creating transparency without creating vulnerability

Some possible concerns of external stakeholders (generated by Gemini AI)

- Perceived tradeoffs between DEI and academic rigor
- Issues with free speech and viewpoint diversity
- Allocation of resources and institutional mission
- Legal and reputational risk
- Lack of transparency and communication

Four Keys to Parent & Community Engagement

- Defining what DEJB/EJB/DEI means at your institution
- Grounding in Mission
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- Small Groups Exercise: From Mission to Mandate

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Defining DEJB work for Broad Audiences

Executive Order 14173, Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity, January 21, 2025

Illegal DEI and DEIA policies not only violate the text and spirit of our longstanding Federal civil-rights laws, they also undermine our national unity, as they deny, discredit, and undermine the traditional American values of hard work, excellence, and individual achievement in favor of an unlawful, corrosive, and pernicious identity-based spoils system. Hard-working Americans who deserve a shot at the American Dream should not be stigmatized, demeaned, or shut out of opportunities because of their race or sex."

Equity, Justice, & Belonging Approach

- Equity is about opportunities and outcomes.
- Justice is about systems.
- Belonging is about people feeling valued and appreciated for their whole selves.
- Highlights structural inequities affecting people's lives
- Emphasizes appreciation of diverse perspectives and identities
- Critically examines how existing policies, practices, budgeting, etc. may intentionally or unintentionally present barriers to entry, experience, and feelings of ease and acceptance
- Works to ensure each person's standing/voice/power (belonging) within a community

What are some of the ways we're working towards <u>equity</u>? <u>Equity</u> is about opportunities and outcomes.

- Our current academic calendar takes into account religious and culturally-specific holidays (e.g. Jewish High Holy Days, Lunar New Year, Eid) so students and employees are not penalized for time off on significant days.
- We use data across the divisions, including standardized test scores, grades, enrollment in advanced courses, and college admissions data to identify and ensure access for all students.
- The Kaesemeyer Full Access program provides our highest financial need students with resources to fully participate in a Westtown education (books, sports equipment, laptops for Upper School students, etc.)
- The Friends Schools League "affirms that transgender and gender expansive students should be fully welcomed and supported as student-athletes in the League."

What are some of the ways we're working towards <u>justice?</u> <u>Justice</u> is about systems.

- Student Support Teams in all divisions involve learning support specialists, counselors, EJB directors, and principals to provide holistic support for students who need attention due to academic, social, or behavioral concerns
- Dress codes, sports team policies, etc. have been updated in the last few years to be more gender inclusive.
- Middle School and Upper School review data on disciplinary consequences to look for potential disparities in gender/race ("discipline" looks different in Lower School)
- The vast majority of Middle School students and Upper School students exhibit a high degree of trust in the bias response systems that we've implemented.
- In 2025, the Board of Trustees completed Year 3 of working with the Dean of EJB to better understand issues of identity and how those intersect with the School's history, current happenings at the School, and their own Board work.

What are some of the ways we're working towards <u>belonging?</u>

Belonging is about feeling valued and appreciated for your whole self.

Focus Areas >

News & Events >

About V

Home / News / 'Belonging' can help keep talented female students in STEM classes

Research News

'Belonging' can help keep talented female students in STEM classes

Researcher Nilanjana Dasgupta's work has led to recommendations for schools, other organizations

August 26, 2016

Q. How significant is the idea of belonging, when it comes to STEM education?

A. For women and any other negatively stereotyped groups—whether we're talking about underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities or first-generation students—belonging really determines whether you stick it out in a field that interests you. You feel a sense of camaraderie and comfort, or you start losing interest, confidence, and start thinking about leaving for another field.

Belonging is just a way of saying "Do I fit in here? Do I feel comfortable here? Or should I start looking for another subject where there are more people like me?"

We usually think of performance as determining whether somebody pursues an academic major or profession. But an interesting observation has emerged from my research that for women in STEM, performance is not the critical ingredient that will tell me who is vulnerable to leaving. Usually, women who leave STEM perform just as well as others who stay. Poor performance is not what drives them out. Feeling that they fit in, or not, is the critical ingredient that determines retention.

What are some of the ways we're working towards <u>belonging</u>? <u>Belonging</u> is about feeling valued and appreciated for your whole self.

- Many of our pedagogical practices...community norms, emphasis on processes/skills as well as outcomes, etc.
- Westtown supports affinity groups for students (4th grade on) as well as for parents/family/caregivers (Alianza, Asian Families Community Alliance, Black Heritage Family Network, LGBTQ+ Family Ally Group), as well as a pre-orientation program to foster community and belonging for BIPOC Upper Schoolers.
- Manager-level and Upper School student leader training on restorative practices to help us restore people back to the community when they make mistakes
- Lifting up the excellence of people with marginalized identities and intersections of identities across the curriculum
- We uplift religious and cultural holidays and heritage months through assemblies, presentations, lobby displays, Middle School community periods, Upper School community dinners, Meetings for Worship, and more.



Exit interviews with seniors who participated in BIPOC Pre-orientation as 9th graders...a pretty typical response...

<u>Did the goal setting you engaged with at BIPOC Camp continue to have an impact on your time at Westtown?</u>

The notebook I still use. the folder I had with campus map I still use. I probably wouldn't have approached T. Jay otherwise. T. Jay helped me with like everyhting when I was on Full Access. The small notebook with pen.

<u>Do you feel that BIPOC Camp impacted your transition to Westtown socially?</u> How?

Yeah. Gave me an expanded opportunity to make friends and everything, gave me connections to different grades.

<u>Do you feel that BIPOC Camp impacted your transition to Westtown academically?</u> <u>How?</u>

Yeah. 100%. I feel like as a person of color, it's harder to speak up and feel like you belong in class. From my own personal bias, I was surprised when certain other students were in my advanced classes. I was raised to think I'm super smart because my mom is a private tutor. sometimes I judge other people too. [Names of two Black boys] were in my science and math classes, [Black girl] would join us in library, [another Black girl] was our tutor.

<u>"Do you feel that BIPOC Camp impacted your sense of belonging at Westtown?</u> How?"

"100% because normally when you all connect about race it's when something bad has happened or someone's said something that's kind of offensive. But this was "let's get together because there's so many of us. To have fun in the summertime." "

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Grounding DEJB work in Mission

It is incredible helpful for all purposes to ground our work in pre-2020 school documents like mission statement and philosophical treatises related to school's founding, or documents from pre- or post-2020 of respected organizations with which your school is associated, etc.

Can you use your mission as a mandate for excellent EJB work?

You'll be working on this in small groups in a little bit!

Guided by the essential Quaker calling to seek out and honor that of God in each of us, Westtown School challenges its students to realize their individual gifts while learning and living together in a diverse community. Westtown inspires and prepares its graduates to be stewards and leaders of a better world.

Why is a diverse community fundamental to a Westtown Quaker education?

Reason 1: Quaker commitment to "that of God" in each of us.

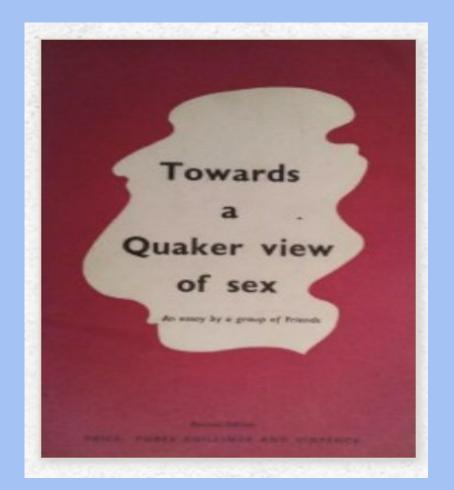
Reason 2: "Stewards and leaders of a better world"

Reason 3: Quaker peace testimony

Reason 4: The idea that Truth can come from every corner of the room.

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1941-42 Survey of Integration in Independent Schools

	Friends	Catholic	Secular
% of schools with Black students enrolled	3.5	27	24.7
% of schools that consider applications from Black students with none currently enrolled	26	41	19.5
% of schools that do not consider applications from Black students	47.6	16	44
% of schools with no policy	27.6	16	12

Friends Council on Education, 1943

"The need for [action beyond nondiscrimination] derives from the fact that discrimination is embedded in our societal patterns of education, housing, employment, social interaction, and political participation. These patterns are so pervasive that frequently neither their perpetrators nor their victims realize when and how discriminatory acts are being committed. AFSC is part of this society and has, generally unwillingly, fallen into some of the very activities and behavior patterns it seeks to avoid in itself and to change in others. In these circumstances, policies of nondiscrimination alone are inadequate to achieve inclusiveness and full participation. Special efforts and procedures to reach out to previously excluded groups are necessary...

"AFSC believes that the greater inclusiveness which is the goal of [action beyond nondiscrimination] is necessary for us to do our work effectively as a Quaker organization seeking to understand and address questions of oppression, empowerment, justice and peace. We need to understand and affirm that our organization should be strengthened and its vision broadened with the inclusion of varied backgrounds and that such diversity is a positive value worth taking special steps to achieve...The objective of the plan is to change those patterns which have not so far produced the inclusiveness we seek and to try new ways to reach long established goals."

-American Friends Service Committee Affirmative Action Plan, 1978

An example from another faith tradition...Catholicism



An example from another faith tradition...Catholicism

A few choice quotes from "Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love", from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2018

"We all need to take responsibility for correcting the injustices of racism and healing the harms it has caused."

""Racism can also be institutional, when practices or traditions are upheld that treat certain groups of people unjustly. The cumulative effects of personal sins of racism have led to social structures of injustice and violence that makes us all accomplices in racism."

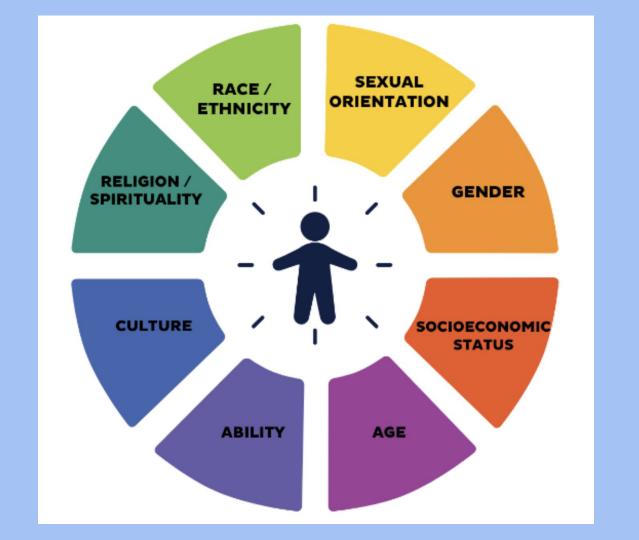
"Racism can only end if we contend with the policies and institutional barriers that perpetuate and preserve the inequality—economic and social—that we still see all around us. With renewed vigor, we call on the members of the Body of Christ to join others in advocating and promoting policies at all levels that will combat racism and its effects in our civic and social institutions."

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Being able to speak clearly about how DEJB work absolutely works to life up the voices of people with marginalized identities and intersections, EJB is for EVERYONE.



















LS/MS Faculty Professional Development on Neurodiversity



US Identity, Values, and Politics Speaker Series



Nick Thomas '02, Spring 2024



Katina Bays '01, Fall 2024



Karla Gilbride, Spring 2025

Kaesemeyer Full Access Fund

"I would be so incredibly grateful to receive a Full Access grant for the Ghana" trip. This trip is so very special to me for many reasons. The main quality of the Ghana trip that speaks to my heart and mind is the service and teaching aspect. Service work is very dear to my heart. I've experienced firsthand how service can leave a long-lasting mark on someone's life. Growing up, volunteers have always made a large impact on my life, and I am so blessed to have been supported by so many amazing organizations. Most recently, my house was built by volunteers from Habitat for Humanity, including me and my family, and my gratefulness for that is something that will always stick with me. This trip stuck out for me because it's an opportunity to have a similar impact on the lives of the students at Heritage Academy through the service project we'll be completing."

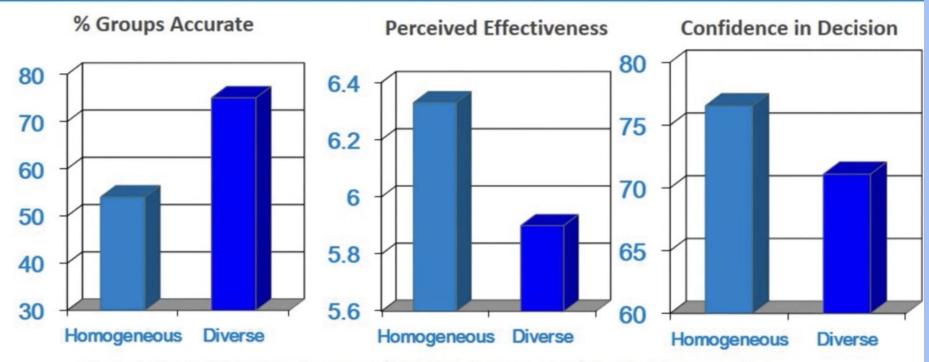
Diversity and Academic Rigor



"Diversity jolts us into cognitive action in ways homogeneity simply does not".

-Kathy Phillips

DIVERSITY MATTERS



Controls for individual performance & how well group members know one another

Some really exciting current work that incorporates <u>equity</u> and <u>justice</u> and <u>belonging</u>...embedding EJB standards in the curriculum across departments and divisions!

The Vision of Anti-Bias Education (Louise Derman-Sparks & Julie Olsen Edwards, 2010) translated into Learning for Justice's Social Justice Standards

DOMAINS

Goal 1: Each child will demonstrate self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities. **IDENTITY**

Goal 2: Each child will express comfort and joy with human diversity; accurate language for human differences; and deep, caring human connections. **DIVERSITY**

Goal 3: Each child will increasingly recognize unfairness, have language to describe unfairness, and understand that unfairness hurts.

Goal 4: Each child will demonstrate empowerment and the skills to act, with others or alone, against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions. **ACTION**



- 6. Students will express comfort with people who are both similar to and different from them and engage respectfully with all people.
- 7. Students will develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.
- 8. Students will respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and will exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.
- 9. Students will respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection.
- 10. Students will examine diversity in social, cultural, political and historical contexts rather than in ways that are superficial or oversimplified.



Implementation of Anti-Bias Curriculum Design: 4 Areas

Establish a meaningful purpose for

learning: with a students learning this material?

Plan for productive critical conversations:

<u>HOW</u> do teachers help students discuss topics that are emotionally activating? <u>Design culturally</u> responsive learning tasks:

WHAT are students doing to demonstrate their understanding?

Ensure inclusive representation in

content: perspective are students seeing/hearing?

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Professional Development with Trustees, Faculty, Staff, Admin

- Your trustees, faculty, staff, and admin need to operate with an EJB lens—this requires an investment of TIME—concrete takeaways are key (scenarios help!)
- While your students, parents, and alums are your most powerful messengers for the impact and continuing potential of EJB work...
- Your trustees, faculty, staff and admin are your most powerful co-messengers for how EJB is mandated by (not just aligned with) your school mission

DEJB Workshop Series

Overcoming Implicit Bias (2022-2023)

- 1. What is implicit bias and why should we care?
- 2. Implicit bias and structural racism
- 3. Implicit bias and ourselves
- 4. Strategies for "unlearning" implicit bias

Inclusion in Context (2023-2024)

- 1. Brief History of Identities in the United States
- 2. Considering Race at Westtown: A Historical Perspective
- 3. Getting on the Same (Rubric) Page

Identity and Society (2024-2025)

- 1. LGBTQ+ Community in Quaker/Westtown Context, Part 1
- 2. Why, When, and How to Be an Upstander
- 3. Neurodiversity
- 4. LGBTQ+ Community in Quaker/Westtown Context, Part 2

This is a working draft, subject to change according to the needs of the group.

Today's format: Simulation

- Today, in small groups, you'll be simulating a historical moment at Westtown (September, 1944). All of the documents and data that you will be engaging with are authentic. After today's simulation, I will ensure that you have access to everybody's role materials.
- 4:15-4:25 Introduction/Role Assignment
- 4:25-4:45 Individual Preparation Time with Role Materials—
- 4:45-4:55 Break
- 4:55 Please be back here to break into groups!
- 4:55-5:20 Simulation
- 5:20-5:45 De-role-ing, debrief

Small Groups Exercise: From Mission to Mandate

Review your school's mission statement.

Grouping up by school philosophy/mission.

What are the words/phrases in your school's mission, vision, or values that you can use as a mandate for your school's DEJB work? Example: "To teach students to live humanely"...values of compassion, kindness, mitigating suffering.

What founding or contemporary philosophical thinkers or organizations would be widely respected by your school's community and may have quotes that you can pull to support your school's DEJB work? If you're not sure, how can you find out?

What are some quotes by these thinkers or organizations to support your DEJB work? If you're not sure where to look, where might you begin?

We'll keep 15 minutes at close for discussion.

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