





BROOKWOOD
SCHOOL

Gender & Identity Parent Meeting



April 26, 2022

Brookwood's mission is to foster a **joyful** community of lifelong learners and upstanding **global citizens** who embrace a culture of **curiosity, kindness,** and academic **accomplishment.**

BROOKWOOD'S CODE OF CONDUCT

The values we wish to nurture in our students are:

- **Respect for Self**
- **Respect for Others**
- **Respect for School Property and our Learning Environment**
- **Honesty**
- **Integrity**

The attitudes we wish to encourage in our students are:

- **Respect**
- **Cooperation**
- **Friendliness**
- **Pride**
- **Acceptance of Others**
- **Fair Play**
- **Responsibility to One's Communities**

We believe that parents, faculty, and staff together can nurture these values in students by treating all constituents with respect, by setting a consistent example of these values and attitudes, by exercising good judgment, and by demonstrating common sense. Therefore, trust between parents and school is essential.



Guiding Principles



Massachusetts
Department of
Elementary &
Secondary
Education



NAIS
Principles of
Good Practice



AISNE
Accreditation
Recommendations



DEEP ROOTS, BRIGHT FUTURE
STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024

Brookwood's
Strategic Plan

Guided by Experts



Dr. Jennifer Bryan

Education and
Psychology
Consultant

re-setschool.com



Erica Pernell

Educator and
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Deb Roffman

Human Sexuality
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Dr. Liza Talusan

Diversity and
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Educator & Writer

lizatalusan.com

IDENTITY

DIVERSITY

Our Pedagogy

Learning for Justice
Social Justice Standards

JUSTICE

ACTION



Gender identity typically develops in stages:



Around age two: Children become conscious of the physical differences between boys and girls.

Before their third birthday: Most children can easily label their gender.

By age four: Most children have a stable sense of their gender identity.

* Gender Identity Development in Children, American Academy of Pediatrics



During this same time of life, children learn gender role behavior. All children tend to develop a clearer view of themselves and their gender over time.

Gender Identity Development in Children

Lower School Overview



Our identity work lives across all aspects of our teaching and learning, and aims to:

- help each child **understand who they are**
- empower them to share that genuine version of themselves with a **community that embraces them**

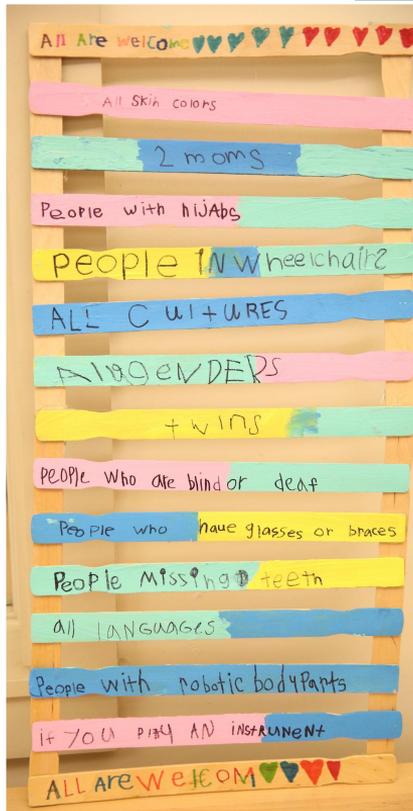
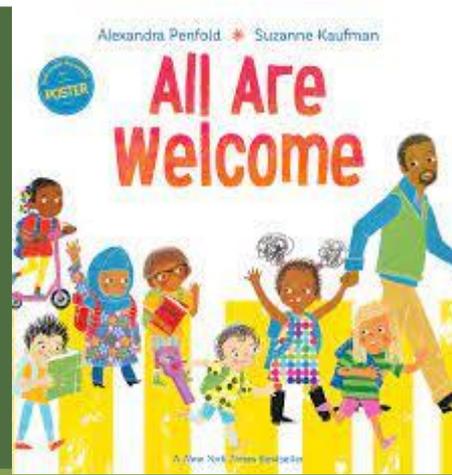




Responsive Classroom Discussions

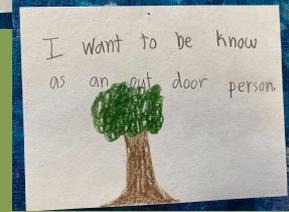
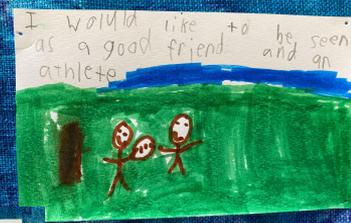


Windows & Mirrors



- Mirrors are books, photos, materials and artifacts that **reflect one's own identity**.
- Windows offer a view into **someone else's perspective and experiences**.
- Creating an environment that provides both windows and mirrors helps promote a **sense of comfort, belonging, safety, curiosity and compassion**.
- Children learn to be allies for others as they support and champion different forms of diversity.

How Do You Want to be Known?



- 9 and 10 year-olds developmentally tend to:
 - Try out different personas – hairstyles, clothing
 - Focus on **fairness**
 - Be industrious and intellectually **curious**
 - **Appreciate** others' perspectives*
- "Compelling Questions" driving our Social Studies curriculum include:
 - Who am I in the world/**how do I want to be seen or known** by myself or others?
 - How do we **evaluate and reflect** on the actions of people in the past? How can we take action to **make a better world**?
 - **What makes a good leader** and how can I use my leadership skills to enrich my community?

*from *Yardsticks: Child and Adolescent Development Ages 4-14*, 4th edition, by Chip Wood



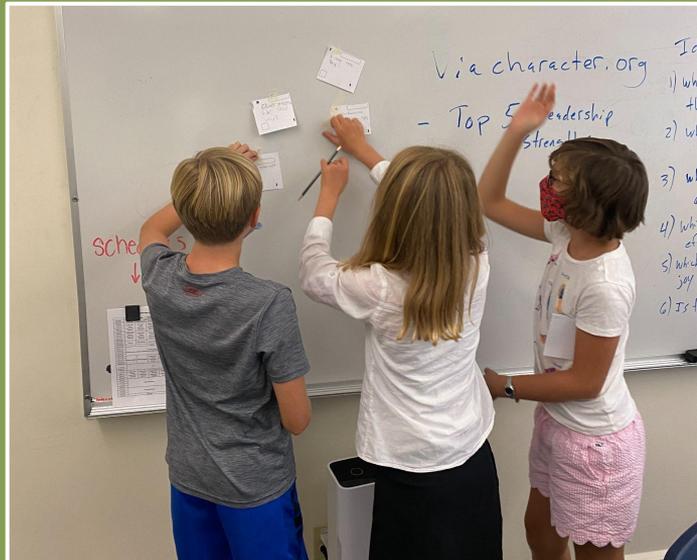
Upper School Overview



Identity work is an essential part of Brookwood's Upper School as our students continue their process of identity formation and figuring who they are as an individual.

In addition to Identity, The Upper School integrates Diversity, Justice, and Action into our curriculum so our students are well versed in the world they are living in, and the world beyond Brookwood.

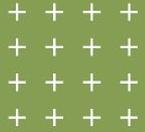
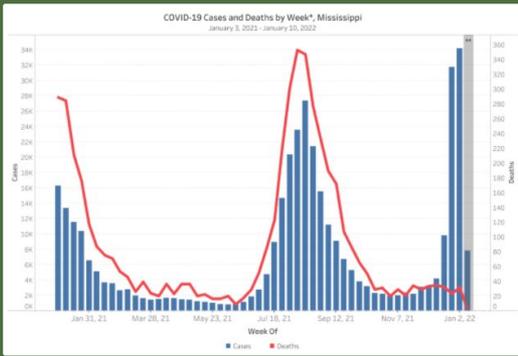
Grade 6 Geography and World Cultures



Students discussed the connection between poverty and unemployment and how these two things do not impact all groups within society equally.

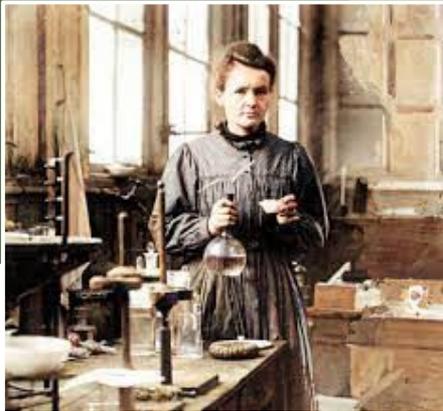
Students first participated in a game of musical chairs to simulate the job market, helping them see that one reason for poverty is that there are not enough jobs for people who want one.



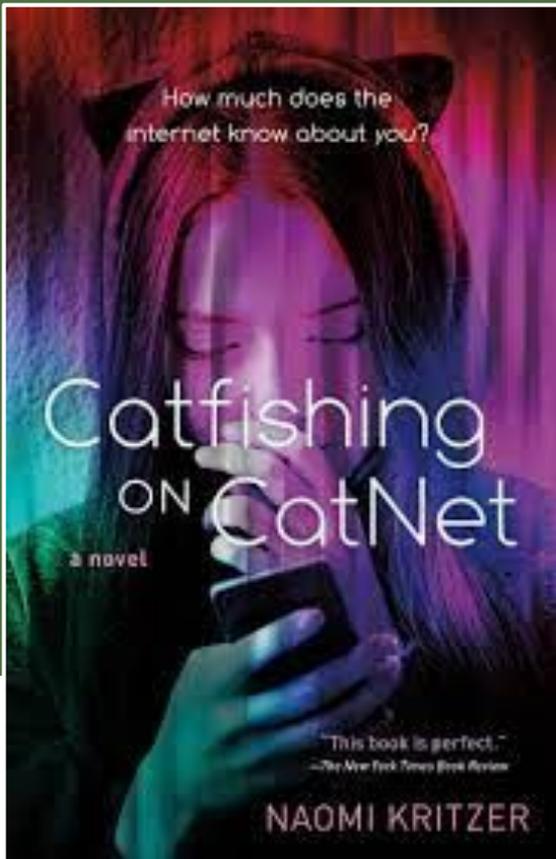


Discussions intentionally or organically center around:

- History of mathematics
- Demographic data
- Gender wage gap
- Women in STEM
- Diversity in city planning in early America
- Implicit bias



Grade 8 Math



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In 8th Grade English, there are a wide range of learning styles, personalities, and what is most exciting and important, a wide range of identity markers. On top of that there are students that love to read. Mr. Falconer felt it was important to try and find a book to start the year together that would be engaging for all kinds of readers and welcoming to multiple identities.

Grade 8 English



Calling on Yale's RULER curriculum to develop the 8th Grade Class Charter, which outlines how members of the 8th grade community want to feel at school, and the actions and behaviors that we must follow to foster those feelings.

Grade 8 Advisory



Affinity groups



Affinity Groups at Peer Institutions



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- Affinity groups exist at many AISNE schools
 - Other area K-8 schools with affinity groups:
 - Glen Urquhart School
 - Pike School
 - BB&N
 - Nashoba Brooks School
 - Meadowbrook School
 - Shady Hill School
 - Park School
 - Gordon School
 - Shore Country Day School
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- People who have a shared interest or connection.
- Often organized around under-represented identity: race, gender, religion, ability, and more.
- Multi-grade or multi-age.
- Affinity Groups provide opportunities for students who are in a minority to be with others with whom they share commonalities.
- Affinity Groups are crucial in affirming these individuals and allowing them to find connections within the larger school community.



What are Affinity Groups?



Affinity Groups at Brookwood

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- Student Affinity Group gatherings are optional and casual.
- Lower & Upper School
 - LGBTQ+ and allies (Grades 2 - 4 and Grades 5 - 8)
 - Students of Color (Grades 2 - 4 and Grades 5 - 8)
- 30 minutes every other week during non-academic time
- Students across grade levels meet and get to know other students with whom they share a special connection.
- Training provided to our facilitators
 - AISNE DEI conference
 - Consulting with Erica Pernell
- Affinity groups at Brookwood have been a response to students request to administrators, the results of the AIM survey in May 2021, and listening sessions families and students of color with Erica Pernell.





Q&A



**Will I be informed
and/or able to grant
permission for my child
to join Lower School
Affinity Groups?**



Q&A



Will I be able to be informed / be able to grant permission for my child to join Lower School Affinity Groups?



- At any time if parents do not wish for students to participate they may contact the affinity group leaders or division heads and share their request.
- For the 2022-23 school year, in addition to written parent communication in advance of the first meeting of affinity groups, Brookwood will communicate with parents of Lower School students that have expressed interest in any affinity group prior to the first group meeting for parent permission.



Q&A



**How does Brookwood's
DEI Curriculum compare
to other independent
schools?**



Q&A



How does Brookwood's DEI Curriculum compare to other independent schools?



Q&A



As an AISNE accredited school, Brookwood is held to the following accreditation standards:

Standard 1, Indicator 5: As a core part of its mission, The school values the quality of life of all members of its community and takes actions to create a safe, inclusive, equitable, and just environment.

Standard 4, Indicator 3: The school's teaching practices, curriculum, and co-curriculum reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Standard 5, Indicator 3: The school recognizes differences within the student body -- including gender, ability/disability, race, age, ethnicity, family background, family structure, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and religious practice -- and understands how aspects of student identity impact well-being.



**How does Brookwood's
DEI Curriculum compare
to public schools?**



Q&A



How does Brookwood's DEI Curriculum compare to public schools?



Public schools in Massachusetts must follow state and federal law. All public school systems shall, through their curricula, encourage respect for the human and civil rights of all individuals regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation. This includes encouraging respect for the human and civil rights of all individuals, including LGBTQ individuals, through the dissemination of age-appropriate information.



Q&A



**I worry the discussions
happening at school
don't align with the
values we are instilling
in my child at home.**



Q&A



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Q&A



- Our children encounter people with different beliefs when they join any community. One aim for learning about diversity is to become more accepting of those around us, so they can get along and learn together.
- DEI education is about teaching students to live and work with others. You do not need to fully understand another person's experience to treat them appropriately. It comes down to the simple agreement that all children must be treated with kindness and respect.



**If you are talking about
gender, aren't you
discussing reproduction
and sexuality?**



Q&A



If you are talking about gender, aren't you discussing reproduction and sexuality?

Q&A

Gender Identity



- When we discuss gender, we talk about what people like to wear, the activities they engage in, and how they feel about themselves. **This is not sexuality.**
- Gender is about self-identity. Gender identity is a person's internal sense of where they fit on the gender spectrum. This includes all kids, "typically" gendered or not.
- While as adults, we struggle to separate the ideas of gender and sexuality (primarily because many of us were taught that they are one and the same), children have an ability to grasp the complexity of gender diversity because sexuality does not factor in to complicate their understanding.

Physically Attracted to



Won't my child get confused if we speak about more than two genders?



Q&A



Won't my child get confused if we speak about more than two genders?



- Experience shows that, with developmentally appropriate information, children of any age are able to understand that there are more than the two gender categories frequently recognized by our society. When it is explained to them in a simple, age appropriate manner, gender diversity is an easy concept for children to grasp.
- When we help children see that various aspects of gender – whether one's identity, expression or body – is different for different people, it does not confuse them. Far from creating confusion, this reality allows them to take pride and honor their own as well as others' gender experiences.



Q&A



**I don't really feel like I
know how to answer my
child's questions.**



Q&A



I don't really feel like I know how to answer my child's questions.



- Answer children's questions simply, and let them take the lead in how deep the conversation goes. Most children are satisfied with this approach. They will guide the conversation from there and rarely ask the complex questions that occur to adults. You may be surprised at how simply children navigate this terrain.
- Some parents have found responses such as, "Hmmm, I am just learning about that myself. Let me tell you what I know, and then if you would like to learn more, maybe we could do that together," to be helpful in opening up pathways for further discussion.



Q&A



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Thank **you!**

