

## Community Connections 365

*Community Connections 365 (CC365)*, engages MCDS in working to understand how diversity of thought, people and behaviors helps us learn about others, become more receptive to differing points of view, and connects our mission and core values of respect, responsibility and compassion to daily living, curriculum and program. Our *Statement of Community and Inclusion* provides a roadmap (click [here](#)).

### What, Why, How & Who:

1. **What** do we mean by *Diversity* and *Cultural Competency*?

We define diversity to include the individual characteristics and differences in social experiences that come together to help shape our identity and perspectives. Cultural Competency is a skill set that incorporates knowledge and awareness of self, knowledge and awareness of others, and cross-cultural effectiveness skills to facilitate connections across differences – in order to create a better world through inclusion.

2. **Why** are Diversity and Cultural Competency important to MCDS?

Quite simply, we cannot fulfill our mission without nurturing and sustaining the promise in our *Statement of Community and Inclusion*. We are preparing students to be critical, collaborative, creative thinkers, problem definers, and problem solvers in order to become engaged participants in sustaining their communities. Bringing together a community of diverse identities generates diversity of thought, and so constructs an environment rich with creative possibility. When our relationships are based on respect, inclusivity and equity, we can effectively work together to build sustainable communities. We cannot become our fullest selves until our neighbors do the same (this is the spirit of *ubuntu*).

3. **How** can we move along this *Path to Inclusion* and achieve these goals?

Six committees of Trustees, administrators, faculty, staff and parents are working with consultants from Jones & Associates and The Cloud Institute for Sustainability Education to produce tangible goals and benefits that include:

- Development of cultural competency skills throughout the community.
- Recruitment and retention of diverse families, faculty and staff.
- Myriad efforts to examine, create and sustain an inclusive community.
- Enhanced multicultural teaching and learning in the K-8 curriculum, building on synergies between Community Connections and Education for Sustainability (EfS).
- Development of auxiliary and after-school programs that extend the educational experience, enhance community and meet diverse family needs.
- Engaged, broad-based, participation through clear, consistent, courageous, transparent and reciprocal communication that is accessible to all without regard to background.

4. **Who** will be doing this work?

We must all undertake this work together as a community of learners. In the words of our *Statement of Community and Inclusion*, in living our mission and values, each of us must be willing to take intellectual and emotional risks; learn from mistakes; improve upon successes; show persistence, integrity, flexibility and courage in solving problems and, through it all, maintain a sense of wonder and of fun. Along this journey, each of us has much to offer and much to learn.

## Essential Messages<sup>1</sup>

The goal of Community Connections 365 is to enhance teaching and learning and move the MCDS community along the *Path to Inclusion*, in fulfillment of our mission. Our work will be intentional and strategic, with tangible goals and benefits. Throughout the journey, clear, consistent and courageous communication will be essential to our success.

1. Diversity of experience and perspective generates creative, innovative, flexible problem definers and solvers.
2. Cultural competence is foundational to working toward a better world.
3. An inclusive community based on respectful and equitable relationships is inherently stable and will thrive over time.
4. All of us must do this work together, learning and adjusting along the way.

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<sup>1</sup> Our work in this area is informed by the work of many people including Judith Katz & Frederick Miller; Scott Page; Allison Park at Blink Consulting; Dr. Steven Jones at Jones & Associates Consulting; Martin Luther King; Desmond Tutu. For a list of sources please visit the MCDS website, [www.mcds.org](http://www.mcds.org).

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## The Path from Exclusive Club to Inclusive Organization

