

Bridge School | Middlebury, VT

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Justice Newsletter

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As we approach the end of the academic year, we are reflecting on the work we've done so far and what we want to do next. In this newsletter, we'd like to share with you some of the DEIJ-themed accomplishments that Bridge staff, board members, and committee members have achieved this year.

As always, we welcome your honest feedback, as well as your participation!

Bridge DEIJ Work Completed in 2022-2023

- Drafted and finalized DEIJ Mission Statement; passed it with the board; shared it with the community and online.
- Formalized the relationship of the DEIJ committee to the board; put two committee members on the board who reported regularly to the board and worked to center DEIJ issues.
- Identified and completed multiple DEIJ-oriented trainings for Bridge staff.
- DEIJ committee members regularly engaged in their own ongoing education to raise their awareness regarding issues pertinent to the committee's work.
- Began a conversation with a DEIJ consultant about engaging them in ongoing training for staff and committee members.
- DEIJ committee members researched DEIJ curricula and best practices; researched funding opportunities.
- Worked with New Haven librarian, Katie Riordan, to update and diversify the Bridge library collection.
- Secured a grant of \$1000 from Ben and Jerry's Foundation in order to purchase new books that affirm DEIJ values and the mission of the school.

- Applied for United Way of Addison County grant to fund DEIJ staff training and development as well as community outreach.
- Published regular DEIJ newsletters to increase communication with families.
- Continued the school's commitment to restorative practices.
- Brought in outside educators (such as WomenSafe or Ibiyinka Alao) that support DEIJ-oriented learning goals.
- And, of course, teachers did a lot of their own work. You can read about some highlights below!

DEIJ Highlights from Teachers



Youngest Language Arts Class, we are finishing the year reading picture book biographies about “real people who did real things.” The stories reflect diversity in race, gender, and background circumstances, but all shared determination and perseverance through obstacles. Subjects included Malala, Margaret Hamilton who worked for NASA, Dr. Suess, Ada Lovelace the first computer programmer, Frida Kahlo, Frank Lloyd Wright, Itzhak Perelman, and more. We also read books about a girl who fought for people with disabilities and a young civil rights activist. Students were engaged and inspired by these stories as we talked about how each one of us can create change to make the world a better place.

Digital arts class explored making 'avatars', a digital representation of themselves, or another person. We discussed how the website, ['avatarmaker.com'](https://avatarmaker.com) allows for certain human styles and features to be separated by only male and female genders and how a characteristic that one of us may have, may not necessarily be reflected in the websites options. Students explored representing their unique facial features and learning vocabulary for skin tone colors.

The Oldest Language Arts Class recently completed a novel study of *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan. The story follows a young girl that grows up wealthy in Mexico. When her family immigrated to a farm camp in California after her father is murdered, they faced challenges that might tear the family apart. The book's themes include racism, discrimination, class, immigration, family, hope and determination.

The Oldest Math Class has been analyzing data and graphs about name length. The unit began

with students researching and sharing the story of their own name and learning more about the significance of names in different cultures around the world.

Biographical research and poetry provide opportunities for the students in **Diane' language arts class** to discuss issues of diversity, equality, inclusion and justice in our world. During her unit on biographies, she reads biographies and poems about Rosa Parks, Ruby Bridges, Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Lincoln, and Henry Box Brown. This year she also read a biography about Mae Jemison, a doctor and engineer, who was the first African American woman to travel in space. In the last two years, Diane has purchased new biographies for kids to read, including Barack Obama, Michelle Obama, Simon Biles, and Malala Yousafzai. Every Friday, students have an opportunity to read a poem aloud with a partner and frequently, one of the poems from our biography unit will be read, which gives the class another opportunity to discuss the fact that even though laws have changed, it doesn't mean minds have changed, and it is important to continue to talk about and work on issues of racism and discrimination in our country.

Angus's Home Center discussions during Circle centered on restorative justice practices, and how we can advocate individual viewpoints while remaining sensitive to other communities and ideas. We also discussed what it means for something to "not be our news" and how sharing personal information that we are aware of is not a fair or respectful way to represent other members of the community, particularly when

relating to matters of identity.

In the fall, **Angus's Explorations Class** embarked on group research projects on some of our shared countries or origin. Students discussed how stereotypes about countries can tell inaccurate stories and how important it is to study the facts when learning about places we have not been. We also covered the importance of traditional food and how what can be considered a delicacy in one place may be very unappealing to others. Students connected this to our common phrase "please don't yuck my yum."

Have a wonderful summer everyone and

congratulations to our 6th grade

graduates & 5th graders moving on!