



Why is DEI work critical?

In 2020 we are faced with the demand to follow-through on our stated goals of meeting the needs of all community members. Constituents will accept nothing less. Many institutions have made bold statements for change, but lack the understanding and how and why to deliver for their students, families, customers and constituents. Diversity, equity and inclusion work lies at the heart of what makes communities succeed. When done well, DEI work allows us to analyse and address the formal and informal structures that limit the participation and development of all community members. Institutions rely on being nice, friendly or well-intentioned to create thriving students and families, which leads to failure. All of us believe in equal access, but rarely acknowledge the structures within our institutions that limit success. Effective equity and inclusion work allows us to acknowledge blinds spots and fears and learn critical skills to create better experiences and outcomes for all. DEI work calls us to be honest and brave under the direction of skilled practitioners with experience, training, emotional intelligence and tested-processes that lead to meaningful change.

My work is attentive to the reality DEI work challenges each of us to grow through bravery and mutual struggle and can make us proud to be members of inclusive and diverse communities. That work is not easy. It requires courage and a willingness to dialogue with the most marginal, most frustrated and most privileged members of our community. A skilled guide is required in this work. As a practitioner with two decades of experience in a range of environments, I am well positioned to partner with staff, community partners and board members to attain goals that seemed out of reach. The fruits of such collaboration can lead to lasting, tangible and meaningful change.

Clarke Weatherspoon is the Middle School Head at San Francisco Friends School. He has 20 years of experience as an independent school educator, diversity equity and inclusion practitioner, educator and consultant. Clarke previously served as the Dean of Equity and Inclusion at the Urban School of San Francisco. He coached club water polo at the Stanford Water Polo Club from 2006-2019 and was awarded Development Coach of the Year by USA Water Polo in 2014. Clarke currently serves as a board member of POCIS Northern California, an equity and inclusion advocacy group for educators of color in Northern California independent schools and is a teacher trainer with the California Teacher Development Collaborative. Clarke was recently appointed to the USA Water Polo Racial Equity and Reform Task Force. He is a graduate of Phillips Exeter Academy and holds degrees in History and Black Studies from the University of California, Santa Barbara and a Masters of Education from Teachers College at Columbia University. Clarke resides in San Francisco with his family.