



# Mercy Montessori

## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Strategic Plan 2022 - 2024

*“An education capable of saving humanity is no small undertaking; it involves the spiritual development of [humans], the enhancement of [their] value as an individual, and the preparation of young people to understand the times in which they live.”*

Dr. Maria Montessori Education and Peace -Address in Copenhagen May 1937, pg. 30

At Mercy Montessori (“Mercy”), we believe in a diverse, equitable, and inclusive school where all those who are part of our community feel a sense of belonging.

<p>“Diversity” refers to our visible and invisible similarities and differences, which can take many forms, for example: gender, race, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, geographic location, physical and cognitive abilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, family structure, and political beliefs, among others.</p>	<p>When we tout the importance of diversity, we honor human dignity in every form, since the human person is created in God's own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26), cherishing the innate goodness of each person who is "wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). This means we seek to better understand our differences and celebrate all the ways our diversity enriches the human family (1 Corinthians 12:12-26).</p>
<p>“Equity” means fair and equitable access to opportunities in the school’s systems, policies, and procedures.</p>	<p>When we stress equity, we seek to be more attentive and responsive to the beliefs and practices that impair fair access and equal participation in our community and in our society. Equity is the fruit of mutual respect, equal rights, and full participation in community; it is the vision of justice commanded in Scripture (e.g., Deuteronomy 15:8; Micah 6:8; Luke 4:18-21).</p>
<p>“Inclusion” means welcoming, respecting, and valuing our differences and developing a culture where all teachers, administrative staff, students, parents, and community leaders can show up as themselves and “Belong.”</p>	<p>When we highlight inclusion, it describes our dedication to ensure that everyone feels seen, heard, and valued in our community. Inclusion is marked by the exercise of people's agency in the spirit of interdependence; it responds to the biblical call to promote solidarity in the world (e.g., Genesis 9:9; John 15:1-12; Romans 12:4-6).</p>
<p>“Belonging” implies a sense of value - that everyone present is needed and wanted and that their perspective is valued and adds something useful.</p>	<p>These DEI efforts begin and end with a more robust sense of belonging. Belonging is a gift and task for all of us, the work of peace that inspired Maria Montessori's philosophy of education and repeated again and again in the Bible (e.g., Psalm 122:8-9; Luke 10:25-37; Galatians 3:28). Mercy aims to create a culture of belonging that excludes no one in the spirit of reconciliation, the very heart of Christian discipleship (Matthew 5:3-12; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).</p>

Mercy Montessori's commitment to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging stems from its Catholic identity, aiming to emulate Jesus' teaching and healing ministry. In his words and actions, Jesus stressed the inherent value of each person, the duty to love your neighbor as yourself, and a preferential obligation to the marginalized. Drawing from Scripture and Tradition, the Catholic Church has developed a comprehensive vision for human flourishing, called "Catholic Social Teaching" ([you can learn more about this here](#)).

These principles orbit around the dignity of the human person, our rights and responsibilities to the community, and the promotion of justice. The Sisters of Mercy, our sponsoring religious order, have outlined how they put these principles into practice by focusing on [five critical concerns](#), which include prayer, education, and advocacy concentrating on anti-racism, gender parity, humane immigration policies, care of the earth, and nonviolence.

Our ever evolving commitment to anti bias and antiracist education, programs, and protocol is how Mercy Montessori strives to live up to Dr. Montessori's mandate that adults commit to a systematic study of self. The times in which we live requires truth telling and critically conscious educators involved in their own spiritual development while preparing young minds to flourish.

We believe that the work outlined in our DEIB Strategic Plan is necessary to support our educational team, our students, and our parents. It is part of our mission to educate each child to become a contributing member of society.

Our outcomes will be measured at least two times a year to determine whether we are achieving "continuous improvement" against our DEIB Strategic Plan.

## Goals and Actions

**Goal #1:**                    **Recruit and Retain Teachers, Administration, Staff, Students, and Families that Better Represent "A Microcosm of Society"**

**Action:**                    Increase the diversity of our students and staff by:

- (a) Creating and institutionalizing a formal recruitment plan that will result in a more diverse teacher and staff applicant pool for consideration for all open positions in 2023 and beyond. The plan will be developed and approved by the board no later than December 1, 2022 and will include short-term and long-term action items; and
- (b) Improving Mercy's recruiting, hiring, retention, evaluation, and compensation systems to promote equity by: (i) reviewing interview questions, and proposing improvements to administration; and (ii) creating a rubric used to evaluate candidates; and (iii) reviewing the compensation systems and processes and proposing improvements to the Board;

- (c) Conducting an independent and impartial assessment to determine why students of color leave Mercy at a disproportionate rate (as compared to their white peers relative to each group's representation in the overall Mercy student population.) This assessment will be presented to the DEIB Committee and board; and
- (d) Designing a dashboard of our student enrollment and retention statistics that includes demographic data. The purpose of the dashboard is to evaluate our student enrollment and retention rates over time and across grade levels. This will allow Mercy to focus future DEIB work at Mercy where there is the most need; and
- (e) Developing a Mercy DEIB Director job description and interview process to employ a full-time DEIB Director at Mercy. The skills and competencies necessary for the position will be evaluated in early 2023 with a goal to hire a Director by May 2023.

**Goal #2:**                    **Support our Teachers, Leadership Team, Students, and Parents with Practical DEIB Guidance and Support in order to ensure that students and families are included and experience an integral sense of belonging in our school community.**

**Action:**                    Use best practices to:

- (a) Provide DEIB training, education, and support to our teachers by annually assessing needs and:
  - (i) Providing opportunities to work through real-life DEIB-related scenarios that could occur at Mercy; (ii) Scheduling DEIB education, that is focused on:
    - The development of cultural self-awareness and gaining knowledge of other cultures
    - An ongoing practice of self-evaluation and self-critique of one's own biases and privileges
    - A recognition of the need to equalize both interpersonal and institutional power dynamics and imbalances.
  - (b) Research and provide classroom resources to improve the representation of all of our students in the classroom:
    - During the 22-23 school year, the subcommittee will provide a tool to support teachers in assessing the representation of diversity in their classrooms.
    - During the 23-24 school year, teachers will self-identify areas of growth and set measurable goals to work towards including "windows and mirrors" for

all students. This sub-committee will support teachers in researching and providing classroom resources to meet their goals.

(c) Encourage dialogue about DEIB in a safe place with the Fractional CDO and administrative leadership; and

(d) Continue to provide annual opportunities for staff, parents, and members of the community to come together in dialogue around DEIB topics, with a focus on how to discuss these issues with children.

**Goal #3:**            **Create transparency through communication of Mercy’s DEIB Work so that all of the Mercy community is aware of the values, goals, and action steps of this plan, as well as the progress that is being made toward our goals.**

**Action:**            Develop and actively tell the Mercy DEIB story internally and externally by:

(a) Improving communication internally and externally about how Mercy’s DEIB work is consistent with our ties to the Sisters of Mercy, Mercy Education, and the Archdiocese; and The American Montessori Society.

(b) Improving communication internally at Mercy by: (i) providing updates and progress of DEIB work to the Mercy board at least twice a year; (ii) providing updates to the teachers and administrative staff at regular meetings and in staff notes at least four times a year; and (iii) providing regular updates to the parents in the Weekly Notes at least four times a year through written and/or video messaging; and

(c) Communicating Mercy’s DEIB strategy, plan, and activities externally by: (i) finding opportunities to share Mercy’s story among the broader Mercy Education system; and (ii) finding opportunities to share Mercy’s story within the Cincinnati community through promotional and marketing materials including recruiting and admission materials.; and

(d) Updating the description of Mercy’s DEIB strategy, plan, and activities to the school website and including this information in admissions, recruiting and marketing materials.