

COLLEGIATE EMBRACES DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



Throughout the school year, Collegiate has strived to foster conversation, self-reflection and meaningful action around diversity and inclusion. During the month of November, students, faculty and staff explored how to understand diversity and embrace inclusion at the School.

Collegiate faculty and staff heard from Jonathan Zur, President and CEO of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, during a professional development session. He spoke about the how and why of creating an inclusive environment, including following these four steps: build community, center diversity and inclusion in lessons, address issues quickly and seek input regularly.

In the Middle School, the first Tuesday of the month is designated Inclusion Tuesday, during which advisors lead students through an activity designed to foster understanding. Middle School Advisories participated in #500Friends, where they mix 5th and 7th Grade and 6th and 8th Grade students. The goal of #500Friends is to allow the different age groups to get acquainted and have the older students take on leadership roles in the discussion.

Ten Collegiate Middle Schoolers were among the 175 students from schools in Maryland, D.C. and Virginia who attended the fourth annual Student Diversity Conference entitled, *Do You See What I See? Examining Bias to Embrace Differences*, at the St. Stephen's & St. Agnes School in Alexandria, Virginia.

Liz Jackson, Upper School Counselor and Associate Director of College Counseling, accompanied six 10th and 11th Graders to Richmond Diversity Dialogue Day, a one-day youth leadership conference held at the University of Richmond. This year's theme was Breaking Down Bullying and students left the program with the tools to create school and community environments without prejudice, stereotypes and bigotry.

Kate Ayers, Executive Director of ReEstablish Richmond, spoke to 4th Graders about the work her organization does in helping refugees transition to their new lives in Richmond and become more self-sufficient. Later in the month, the 4th Graders hosted guests from ReEstablish Richmond for a potluck dinner, a culminating service learning event as part of their immigration studies.

Seven faculty members traveled to Anaheim, California, to attend the 2017 National Association of Independent Schools People of Color Conference, *Voices for Equity and Justice Now and in Every Generation: Lead, Learn, Rededicate, and Deliver*. Six Upper Schoolers accompanied the faculty and attended the NAIS Student Diversity Leadership Conference, which is part of the PoCC.

In mid-January, the School hosted the Virginia Diversity Network's annual student diversity conference. Collegiate's Director of Global Engagement and Inclusion Erica Coffey is also the president of VDN and was delighted that 70 students from across the state participated, including 21 Collegiate Upper Schoolers. The conference is unique in that workshops conducted are student-designed and student-led. Prior to the conference, students submitted proposals for the workshops.

Beyond the efforts undertaken this semester, conversations, helpful exercises and lessons will continue, said Head of School Steve Hickman.

"Our Board of Trustees has made it is explicitly clear that we have the responsibility to help educate Collegiate students about the great benefits of diversity, to offer an inclusive environment that fosters empathy in our young people and to help them develop the skills to better negotiate the world that they will one day lead."