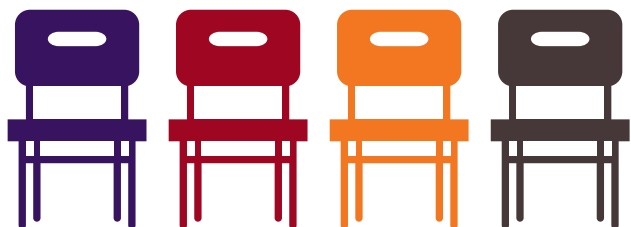
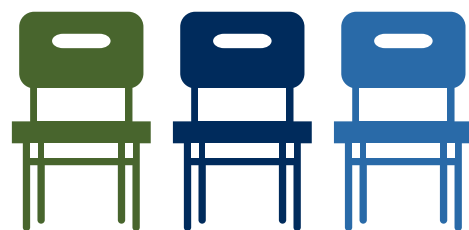


*Potomac's Focus on
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*

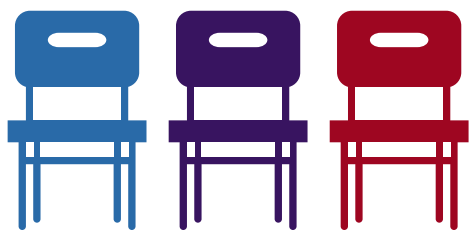
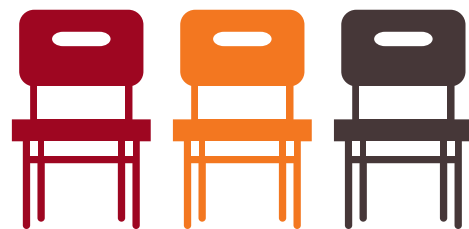
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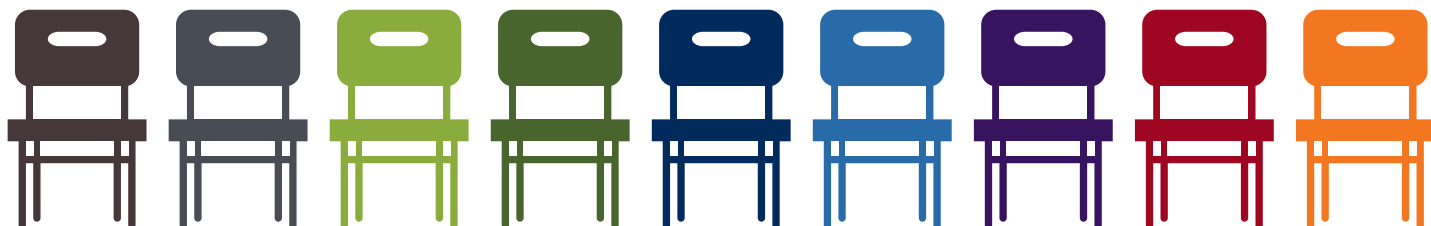
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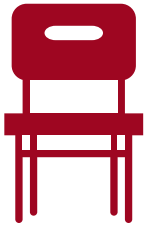


has a seat



at the TABLE





“DIVERSITY IS THE ESSENCE of what catapults us toward higher levels of achievement. It’s by challenging our views and engaging with those

who have different perspectives that we learn who we really are.” This is how Potomac trustee Michael Davis, who last year chaired a board-level committee focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at the school, explains the importance of embracing diversity in an educational setting and in the world at large.

Striving to understand and fully respect others is certainly not a new idea at Potomac, where an emphasis on diversity and inclusion has long been an integral part of the culture. So why was a board-level committee needed now? Michael explains, “In recent years, the board has undertaken a number of initiatives to ensure that Potomac has a firm foundation for the long term. We recognize diversity as a key strength of the school and an essential asset for achieving its mission today and in the future, so it was an appropriate part of our overall strategic review. Potomac has been doing great work in this domain, and our goal was to fortify these efforts with full support from the board.” To achieve this, the committee – which

included trustees, administrators, and faculty – focused on creating a compelling statement of the school’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and bolstering efforts to support this commitment in enrollment and in hiring.

The committee members worked collaboratively to develop a formal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement for Potomac. Draft versions were shared with student, parent, and alumni leaders, as well as the full faculty and staff, and the feedback from these groups was incorporated in successive revisions. The finalized document was presented to the Board of Trustees and adopted in June 2019.

Head of School John Kowalik reflects, “The statement is powerful because it expresses our beliefs and intentions. It not only articulates our commitment but also outlines specific areas in which we will work to more fully realize it. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement will take its place alongside Potomac’s Mission Statement and other foundational documents as both an expression of our principles and a practical guide for decision making.”

In the area of enrollment, the committee began its work by looking at where Potomac is now. Director of Admission and Financial Aid Carson Roy notes, “The word ‘diversity’ has so

many applications. In terms of racial and ethnic diversity, 40% of our students today identify as non-Caucasian. As we focus on that aspect of diversity, we also need to think about socioeconomic diversity, geographic diversity within our service area, religious diversity, diversity of family structure, and more. Our goal is to enroll bright, talented students who represent a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives. This achieves two underlying goals: It makes the benefits of a Potomac education broadly available to qualified students, and it helps to ensure that our learning community is strong and vibrant.”

He continues, “For some families, cost is a barrier to a Potomac education. So financial aid is an important tool for fostering socioeconomic diversity. Potomac currently directs \$5.8 million a year to need-based scholarships, benefiting approximately 20% of our students. This program makes our school accessible for families who would not otherwise be able to be part of this community.”

“Seeing beyond Potomac’s immediate surroundings is another important strategy for ensuring diversity,” Carson adds. “In this regard, our admission outreach efforts are an obvious place to start: Are we reaching out to families in areas that are underrepresented in our student body? Interestingly, though,

“Diversity is the essence of what catapults us toward higher levels of achievement.

It’s by challenging our views and engaging with those who have different perspectives that we learn who we really are.” – Potomac Trustee Michael Davis

transportation is also part of the equation. Due to our traffic mitigation agreements with Fairfax County and the neighborhoods adjacent to campus, students in grades 1 through 11 are required to ride a Potomac bus to and from school. As a result of the committee's discussions, we're now planning a transportation audit to assess the reach and efficiency of our bus service. Looking at the demographics of our current students and our applicant pool, we will consider questions like, 'Is our bus service equitable? Do current students from particular areas experience longer-than-necessary commutes (which might discourage attendance) and, if so, what can we do about that? Also, are we failing to provide bus service to any communities from which we might otherwise draw students?' Clearly, there are limits to the bus service we can provide; but transportation is key to making Potomac accessible, so it merits a thoughtful look."

In general, Carson says, "Getting the word out about Potomac to a variety of different groups is one of our major focuses. This fall, our admission staff will visit potential feeder schools in neighborhoods throughout the DMV and participate in programs sponsored by community organizations that serve specific target populations. We are also seeking opportunities to partner with these organizations. For example, this September Potomac hosted a Latino Student Fund program on educational access; in February, we will host a similar program for A Better Chance."

He concludes, "The committee's leadership has spurred us to reexamine some longstanding initiatives and explore new ways to build on our existing efforts. We will continue working to diversify our applicant pool and, ultimately, our student body because we know that everyone benefits when many voices are represented."

Similarly, Potomac continues to focus on increasing the diversity of

its workforce. Director of Human Resources Danyel O'Farrell notes, "Today, 22% of our faculty and staff identify as non-Caucasian; this, of course, doesn't take into consideration other aspects of identity that contribute to the diversity of our community."

Hiring excellent teachers – the kind of teachers who define a Potomac education – is no easy task. Danyel says, "In recent years, the pool of teacher candidates has shrunk, with fewer people entering the education field, so competition for the best teachers is fierce. And highly skilled non-majority teachers are in especially high demand, as schools look to bolster faculty diversity."

She continues, "At Potomac, we're working to ensure that we are reaching out to the widest possible pool of candidates. In recent years, we've discovered additional avenues for sharing information about career opportunities. One idea that grew out of the committee's discussions was for us to leverage Potomac's existing relationships with community organizations to extend our recruitment outreach. Also, this fall we established a relationship with a national diversity recruitment and consulting firm focused on the education sector."

In fact, Potomac has been leading the way in developing a diverse pool of employment candidates for independent schools in the DMV region. This February, the school will host its eighth annual Diversity Hiring Fair. Danyel explains, "Each year, this event brings together representatives from 37 independent schools and at least 250 job candidates. There are informative panel presentations and opportunities for candidates to interview. By organizing and hosting this annual event, we're helping to develop a diverse pool of candidates, not just for Potomac but for our peer schools as well. I think the Diversity Hiring Fair reflects our school's character, values, and aspirations."

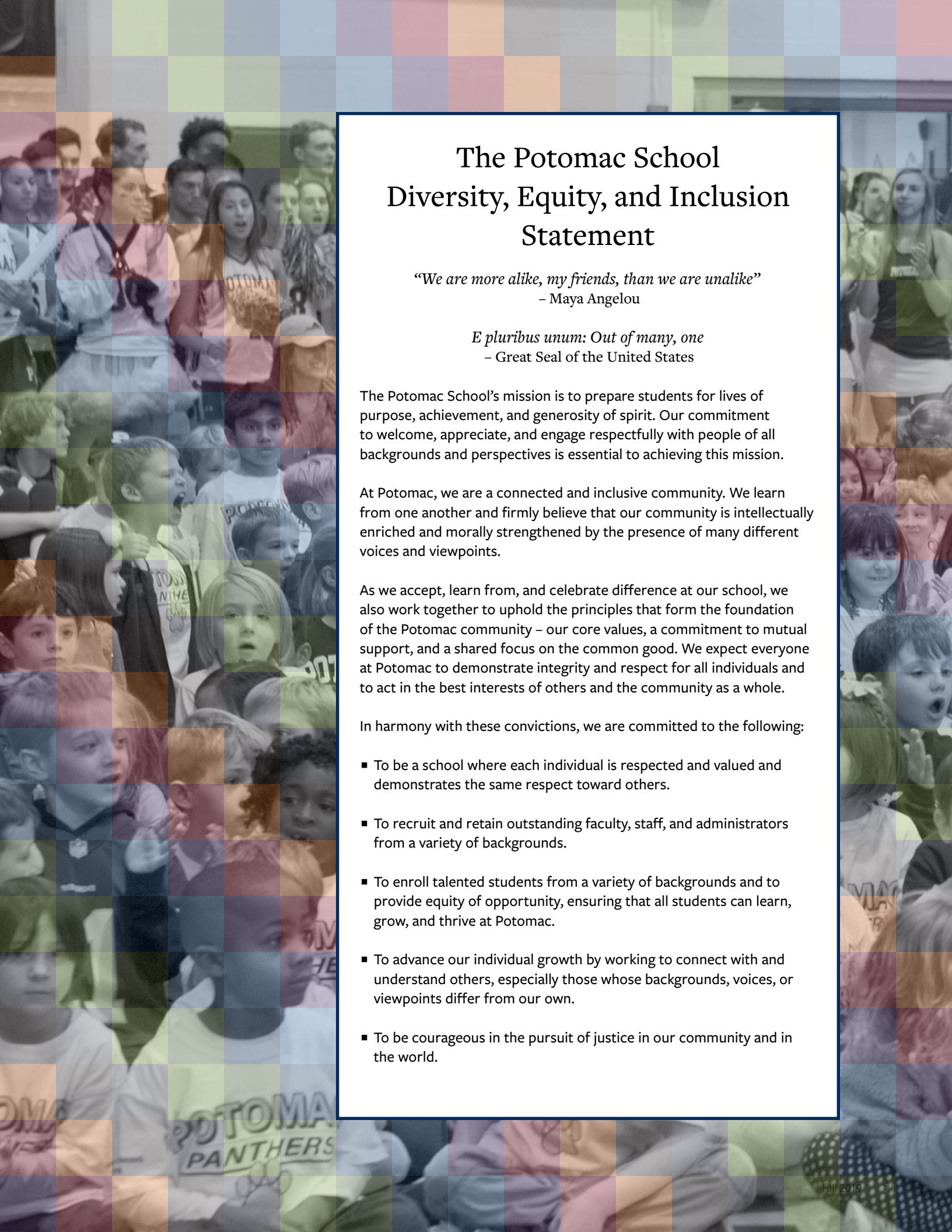
Summing it all up, David Grant, Potomac's director of diversity and

inclusion, notes, "There's a curriculum produced by an organization called Teaching Tolerance that Potomac is drawing upon as our faculty work to weave content related to diversity, equity, and inclusion into our educational program. It's a fabulous curriculum, but I think that the organization's name feels a little dated, as the goals today extend far beyond 'tolerance.' Merely tolerating differences isn't enough; we want our students to welcome and celebrate differences because they recognize the tremendous value that diverse ideas and perspectives bring to any situation."

He continues, "Alison Park, a noted speaker on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, came to Potomac a couple of years ago to speak to our community. Alison defines 'cultural competence' as 'the ability to work effectively across differences, with curiosity, humility, and non-judgment.' In today's world, being culturally competent is a critical life skill. To achieve it – to embrace diversity and leverage it as a source of strength – we have to leave preconceptions behind. We have to approach others with genuine curiosity and interest, with respect, and with the humility that says, 'There is always something that I can learn.' That's what our efforts at Potomac are focused on."

Michael Davis concurs: "This work goes to the very core of education – and of living a fuller, more examined life. Challenging our ideas through the lens of others, becoming immersed in the crucible of discussion and potentially coming out with new insights and a broader perspective – this is what education is all about. And that kind of learning and growth can only take place in an environment where differences are respected and everyone has a seat at the table. I'm proud to say that The Potomac School is committed to being that kind of place."





The Potomac School Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

"We are more alike, my friends, than we are unlike"
– Maya Angelou

E pluribus unum: Out of many, one
– Great Seal of the United States

The Potomac School's mission is to prepare students for lives of purpose, achievement, and generosity of spirit. Our commitment to welcome, appreciate, and engage respectfully with people of all backgrounds and perspectives is essential to achieving this mission.

At Potomac, we are a connected and inclusive community. We learn from one another and firmly believe that our community is intellectually enriched and morally strengthened by the presence of many different voices and viewpoints.

As we accept, learn from, and celebrate difference at our school, we also work together to uphold the principles that form the foundation of the Potomac community – our core values, a commitment to mutual support, and a shared focus on the common good. We expect everyone at Potomac to demonstrate integrity and respect for all individuals and to act in the best interests of others and the community as a whole.

In harmony with these convictions, we are committed to the following:

- To be a school where each individual is respected and valued and demonstrates the same respect toward others.
- To recruit and retain outstanding faculty, staff, and administrators from a variety of backgrounds.
- To enroll talented students from a variety of backgrounds and to provide equity of opportunity, ensuring that all students can learn, grow, and thrive at Potomac.
- To advance our individual growth by working to connect with and understand others, especially those whose backgrounds, voices, or viewpoints differ from our own.
- To be courageous in the pursuit of justice in our community and in the world.