

## End-of-Year Letter to the Kehilla School Community

May 2023

Dear families in the Kehilla School community,

We are a group of parents of Kehilla kids, parents of kids of color, Kehilla teachers, board members, and school administrators, who first came together in March of 2021. Dubbed the Youth Education Working Group, we went on a journey through Kehilla's [Arc of Change](#) process to start building the structures for racial equity and decentering whiteness in Kehilla School. Our journey through the Arc of Change began with internal work and relationship building within our group, and over the past year we have begun to think more deeply about how to bring this work into Kehilla School. We are excited to write to you today to share more about the progression of our work over the last two years as well as our present goals and questions.

### **The Roots of this Work**

Recognizing that racial equity work is fundamentally about belonging, we have been practicing relationship-based work that moves at the speed of trust. (That framing comes to us from author adrienne maree brown.) This is why our work the first year was a personal exploration of how we've each been impacted by and perpetuate white supremacy, as well as building deep relationships with each other as we processed what we were learning about ourselves. Throughout the year of the Arc of Change (2021-22), we moved through the four pillars of Reflect, Discover, Plan, and Act to guide our reflections. Since then, our group has continued to meet monthly to continue to build racial equity into the central structures of Kehilla School.

### **Our Vision**

Kehilla's Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) leadership council, another of Kehilla's working group in the Arc of Change, has offered a vision of Kehilla as a magnet for Jews of Color as the guiding force behind all of the racial equity work happening at Kehilla. Wholeheartedly taking up this goal, we hold the vision of Kehilla School as a magnet for Jewish families and kids of Color, and a place of belonging for all kids who come.

We want to raise children who are out making change in the world, and part of how we do that is offering a solid home base. We want Kehilla to be a place of belonging, where every kid feels that they belong: a place where each student feels welcomed home.

### **Our Questions**

Here are some of the many questions that have arisen through our process so far:

- 1) How do we teach about Jewishness and race, and the multiracial/multiethnic backgrounds of Jewish people, history, and practice?
- 2) What are our practices, intentional and unintentional, when harm - especially exclusion, othering, or racism - happens among students? Between students and adults? Among adults? What are our preventative approaches to not just preventing harm, but facilitating inclusion?
- 3) How do we decenter whiteness and Ashkenazi Jewish practices in our curriculum, our social practices, our holiday celebrations, and our community practices?

- 4) What do we teach explicitly about race and racism? What do we teach implicitly?
- 5) How are we modeling multi-racial Jewish identity through our teachers and leadership? How can we bridge the gap between our current reality and our vision?

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Our work continues, and we invite you to stay tuned for future opportunities to become involved with this group, and with the larger work of racial equity at Kehilla School.

The work of this committee so far has been about nurturing a seedling. Now that it has stronger roots, we are in the process of transplanting the seedling into the soil of the larger community. As we solidify the relationship of the Youth Education Work Group to Kehilla's internal structures, we also look forward to broadening connections through the larger school community. We will reach out again in the fall with more updates and opportunities for connection, and we welcome ideas and collaborations.

Don't hesitate to reach out with any questions!

Until then,

Red Karpman, third grade teacher

Yael Platt, fourth grade teacher

Ann Finkelstein, Kehilla School parent

Andrea Lee, Kehilla School parent

Aviva Wilcox, Kehilla community member and prospective parent

Lia Barrow, parent of Kehilla School alums

Jaime Jenett, parent of Kehilla School alum and Board of Trustees member

Aaron Vanderwerff, parent of Kehilla School alum

Maria Lewis, Kehilla School Administrator

Natalie Boskin, Assistant Director of Youth Programs and Kehilla School alum

Rabbi Gray Myrseth, outgoing Director of Kehilla School (stepping down from committee as they leave Kehilla School)