

# Action Means Always Doing the Work

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As we fully settle into this new year and we begin to look toward Spring, I have been reflecting on all that we have accomplished together so far this school year. I want to take a moment to say how proud I am to lead this school, how proud I am of our children, our teachers, and our families. As I think about this year's Diversity and Equity Fair, I see a beautiful snapshot of so many things we do right: celebrating our school's diversity in all its facets, facilitating ways for our students and parents to see The Country School's mission from a whole-school perspective, and connecting the work we do here with its counterpart conversations in the larger world. We have every right to be proud of the ways in which our community looks like the city it's housed in. This is a home for families of any race, gender, religion, family structure, and socioeconomic background.



We are skilled at helping students of all learning styles and strengths find personal, academic, and social success. It would be all too easy to pat ourselves on the back for a job well done and call it a day. This is exactly what we must not do. Contentment all too easily slides into complacency. Education is rooted in inquiry, and inquiry means asking the hard questions.

***Are we doing all we can to foster inclusivity in every corner of this campus?*** No, not yet.

***Do we make mistakes?*** Yes, every day.

***Are we sometimes blinded by unconscious bias?*** Yes, all too often.

***Are we staying informed of equity and inclusion best practices?*** We're getting better, but there's more work to do.



Most of us came to The Country School precisely because it is a respite from the noise of modern life, and a safe and nurturing place for children to grow and learn. We may be in danger, however, of allowing our small TCS oasis to be a shield against the outside world when it should be a lens for examining it closely. When we build walls to keep the outside out, we move toward an "us versus them" narrative, when what the world needs is for everyone to come together. All of us. Every race, every ability, every worldview, in all our beauty and all our struggle, together.



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This is very hard work. For this to happen, we have to not only stand together, but stand up together. We must use our voices to speak out against injustice, to bear witness to the ways in which the world tries to keep our friends and neighbors down. We must look into our own privilege and recognize that we can't hide behind it anymore.

In 1963, at the heart of the burgeoning Civil Rights movement, Martin Luther King Jr. recognized the tendency of what he called the "white moderate," which can easily be translated as the "comfortable middle class," to sit back and watch events unfold. Their access to money, power, and social acceptability allowed them to insulate themselves from the messy business of ensuring that human rights were accessible to all. In Letter from Birmingham Jail, Dr. King wrote, "Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection."

When the Country School was founded in 1948, Martin Luther King Jr. was only 19 years old. We were already here when he took his first steps into a career that would change our nation for the better. The Country School is no stranger to bearing witness to history, and our commitment to educating the whole child is the bedrock of all we do here.

Diversity is only successful, however, when it is paired with equity. Our curriculum must reach beyond "lukewarm acceptance" into active inclusion. It must also be current, relevant, and thought-provoking. While we are already doing many of these things well, we will not let fear of disrupting our "order" prevent us from making changes in order to work actively toward "positive peace."

We must remember that our children are the architects of our future. The next Martin Luther King, Jr. may very well be spending his days in the Green Room right now. The next Malala Yousafzai could be on our playground. The next Greta Thunberg could be in our garden.

We must be vigilant in helping our students carve their paths forward, not just in the small, safe, and nurturing world of this campus, but in the loud, messy, unpredictable world outside our fence. They must see us using our voices and our bodies to make things better for our collective future. They must see us always doing the work.

