



International-Mindedness, Diversity, and Inclusion

AN OVERVIEW

## INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY

In the mid-1960s Washington International School's founder Dorothy Goodman aspired to create a school where students would graduate with the capability to communicate in more than one language and a propensity to engage with others to better understand a complex world. Her vision was for WIS to serve not only the international community, but also the local Washington community—regardless of socio-economic status.

Concurrent with her efforts to establish WIS, Dorothy participated in meetings to create what is now known as the International Baccalaureate (IB). WIS became one of the first schools to offer the IB's Diploma Program. WIS remains true to a concept central to the IB: fostering international-mindedness.

Dorothy's vision for WIS, WIS's alignment with the IB's beliefs, and the School's position as Washington, DC's premier international school have informed WIS's unique approach to creating a diverse and welcoming community. We call it International-Mindedness, Diversity, and Inclusion (IDI).

## DEFINITIONS

Here's how WIS defines the three pillars of IDI:

### **International-Mindedness**

*A view of the world in which people see themselves connected to the global community and assume a sense of responsibility to its members. It is an awareness of the inter-relatedness of all nations and peoples, and a recognition of the complexity of these relationships. Internationally-minded people understand and value the diversity of cultures in the world and make an effort to engage with them.<sup>1</sup>*

As a disposition, international-mindedness is a gateway to creating a diverse and inclusive community. In a world where global issues can profoundly impact our local environment, and where local issues can similarly become global ones, the cultural fluency and international competency obtained through a WIS education are especially relevant. Being open to new and unfamiliar ideas and investigating varied sources to inspire critical thinking are true differentiators of a WIS education.

### **Diversity**

*The full range of differences and similarities—visible and non-visible—that make each individual unique.*

The diversity WIS seeks is defined in many ways. The [School community](#) includes numerous nationalities, ethnicities, and racial identities. And on an ongoing basis, we strive to create a community that better reflects the multi-faceted demographics and socio-economic

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<sup>1</sup> Based on a definition adopted by the International Baccalaureate Organization.

diversity of our home city. Central to the [WIS Mission](#) is being a “community—enriched by differences.”

**Inclusion**

*The process of recognizing, valuing, and maximizing the opportunities that arise from having different perspectives and backgrounds.*

WIS is committed to being a place where no one is made to feel “less than” because of any aspect of identity or belief. We strive to be a place where individuals are confident in standing up for themselves and for others; where healthy, informed dialogue is ongoing; and where everyone feels included in the community. WIS is the sum of the individuals in its community; the identities and beliefs form part of the fabric of who we are.

**WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM WIS**

We will implement policies and programs that enable everyone in the community to answer “yes” to the following question: Is WIS a place where you feel as though you belong and where you are embraced for who you are? To achieve this, WIS commits to the following:

- We will create an inclusive atmosphere that demonstrates respect for diversity in its many forms.
- We will ask our faculty, staff, and students to uphold our IDI expectations and hold them accountable when they do not. As with all matters relating to a WIS education, we expect parents and guardians to partner with the School in these efforts.
- We will be vigilant in enforcing our non-discrimination<sup>2</sup> policy.
- We will not allow intolerance that originates within our community, and in our classrooms and other on-campus activities, we will provide a supportive environment for individuals who experience intolerance from outside our community.
- We will actively educate our community members so they can improve their understanding and implementation of our IDI objectives.
- We will regularly update our community on IDI-related progress. We invite you to visit our [IDI page](#) to learn more.

WIS believes that IDI serves universal values. It is not dependent upon the acceptance—or the teaching—of a particular ideology or political program. Consistent with this, WIS places a high value on critical thinking, civil discourse, and student agency. We want our students—regardless of identity or status—to be empowered to engage constructively and to understand the impact of action. In line with our approach to education, we try to avoid pre-empting

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<sup>2</sup> The School admits qualified students without regard to race, color, national and ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, mental or physical disability, age, or any other status protected by applicable law, including the DC Human Rights Act, to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the School. The School likewise complies with all applicable laws in the selection of its Board of Trustees and in the administration of its educational, admissions, scholarship and loan, athletic, and other School-administered policies and programs.

inquiry—to the contrary, we encourage it. We believe the ultimate choice about whether and what to say about an issue is an individual decision, not an institutional mandate. Thus, as outlined in our [Communications Policy](#), the School rarely takes an institutional stance on societal and political issues.

We believe that creating an environment where community members are free from intolerance and can explore and express their opinions is the best way to help them form the character and ethics needed to navigate their lives.

### **WHAT CAN YOU DO TO SUPPORT WIS'S WORK?**

We encourage you to contact us at [IDI@wis.edu](mailto:IDI@wis.edu) with questions or comments. Each year, we sponsor numerous IDI-related events for our community and invite you to participate. We value diverse perspectives and encourage discourse that will lead to institutional improvement.