

AIM Survey Takeaways and Next Steps

From the
CHIEF OF INSTITUTIONAL EQUITY, DIVERSITY,
INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

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Last May, Menlo administered the Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism (AIM) survey to stakeholders across our entire community—students, parents, alumni, faculty, staff, leaders, and trustees. Over the past few months, I've spent a substantial amount of time alone and with the Senior Administrative Team and Board of Trustees analyzing and reflecting on the overall AIM results and our community's experience with the survey. Today, I'm writing to share some of my observations.



The AIM survey is administered on a five-year cycle and is used by hundreds of schools across the country. It's a reliable, research-based survey that asks stakeholders from across the School to provide specific reflections on various topics such as diversity, equity, cultural competency and awareness, inclusivity, multiculturalism, and belonging. The survey results are anonymous, but the data is compiled based on how each participant from a constituent group (e.g., parent, student, etc.) identify themselves. Once the survey closes, we produce an executive summary, highlighting the most important takeaways. We last administered the AIM survey in 2016 and now enjoy the ability to measure growth and change over time. These patterns are exceedingly helpful in drawing conclusions about our efforts, and we use these findings to enhance our work as a school and develop and advance the strategic priorities found in our [2022-2023 EDIB Strategic Plan](#).

As the point person for interpreting and prioritizing the information from the survey, I've taken advantage of long, thoughtful pauses in order to appreciate the authentic engagement from our entire community. This was my first time administering this survey during my tenure at Menlo, so I leaned on the voices of every member of our community to elevate the clear points of success as well as the opportunities for growth. I am deeply inspired by the tremendous amount of enthusiasm on our campus. From a personal vantage point, the most salient takeaway from this process for me was the fact that our constituents indisputably care about this work, and trust that the School will select personnel and priorities that will lead to sustained transformation.

Here is a summary of takeaways from our AIM results, as well as some thoughts on our continued efforts.

Takeaways from the AIM Survey

There is a unified consensus from all Menlo stakeholders that equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging (EDIB) work is essential to educational excellence, and that Menlo has made progress in this area and remains deeply committed to amplifying this work.

From the Board of Trustees, Senior Administrative Team, staff, students, faculty, and families, the voice of Menlo, by way of the AIM survey results, expressed a profound desire to continue to deepen and refine our strategic priorities, while creating a one-school ethos where everyone can feel seen, welcomed, valued, and affirmed.

The AIM data further demonstrated our abilities to develop and implement strategic priorities and apply disproportionate energy in order to move the proverbial needle of the collective experience at Menlo. The EDIB strategic plan, which is now in its second multi-year iteration, ensures that EDIB work is a priority. It allows us to generate and emphasize diverse best practices for EDIB across the School with short and long-term goals. In this process, we are not only creating our roadmap for change, we are also developing a culture of accountability that shapes and informs our efforts (more on this below).



Student belonging is an essential part of education.

Our AIM data indicated Menlo has done a good job of providing multiple opportunities for all students to voice their diverse perspectives, whether it be through in-class interactions, assemblies, panel discussions, or advocacy sessions. Our students have a voice, they care about our EDIB work, and they want to elevate belonging at Menlo. To them, this means moving beyond aspirational language toward more actionable initiatives. With this in mind, we've increased EDIB student officer positions this year. Maya Debnath '23 is serving as the Student Council representative and is a key member of the EDIB Strategic Plan Leadership Team. Sonia Dholakia '25, Jacqueline Larden '25, Andre Lombera Gonzales '24, Allie Bernstein '27, Wanis Moutri '28, Zoya Prabhakar '27, and Naina Nimaiyar '28 are also members at large, representing the Middle and Upper School. These positions are secured by annual interviews from faculty, and these students are pivotal in terms of adding student voice into our design principles. Each of the abovementioned students is passionate about this work and they approach their role with a high degree of integrity and compassion—fully aware of the impact they are charged to make. This expansion has helped us have a deeper impact across the School and amplify our students' voices.

Our family support programs are needed, and the work we have been doing in this area is promising and strong.

Our AIM results highlighted that our community understands and values the importance of the work we are doing to support families and ensure all Menlo families can fully participate in the life of the School. Under the direction of our Director of Family Support, Miriam Magaña, we have expanded important services to create opportunities, connections, and support systems designed to strengthen parents' ability to navigate the many nuanced aspects of the

School, including athletics, academics, affinity groups, and college counseling, to name a few. Miriam has developed a School-wide translation and interpretation process that serves everything from athletics and college counseling to Middle and Upper School curricular and co-curricular programs. Also, at the start of the school year, she conducted detailed-oriented field scans, and through this self-study, she created a Middle School homework club. Upper School students serve as tutors, but what's magical about this space is the deep sense of belonging that it has inspired.

Faculty and staff diversity is a crucial element of this work—we've made strides here and yet we have more to do.

On multiple occasions throughout my tenure, our constituents have shared how beneficial and critical it is to have faculty, staff, and student diversity, and this theme was substantiated in our AIM results. From gender, gender expression, sex, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, indigeneity, nativity, country of origin, and language, all of the aforementioned identity markers have decades of research supporting why schools should prioritize recruitment and retention strategies that secure top talent representing a multitude of perspectives, identities, and lived experiences. Menlo has been strong in this area, especially with the addition of our most recent cohort of faculty.

Additionally, the AIM results highlighted that the faculty affinity groups have created a safe space for faculty of color, and the new faculty mentorship program has been successful, which signals that the School is curating very intentional, collaborative, and identity-safe spaces in order to support, welcome, affirm, and care for new faculty.

And while we have much to be proud of in this area, it continues to be an area of focus. Specifically, through

AIM, we heard from faculty stakeholders that there is no consensus on the meaning of diversity, especially in the Upper School. Faculty of color, especially in the upper division, bear a heavier load in providing guidance and leadership in multicultural and cross-cultural competencies. There is also some tension amongst faculty members, particularly in the Upper School, in discussing issues of diversity. As part of our efforts to address this, we have dedicated this year's professional development to understanding the research from Dr. Claude Steele's research, "Stereotype Threat." We have increased sensitivity training in both the Middle and Upper School, as well as in Athletics and Student Council. However, training is just one way to develop, as we all strive to build and strengthen our school with empathy and grace both serving as cornerstones.

Looking Ahead

As a school, we are working hard to continue to advance our impact, and in doing so, we are continually reflecting and assessing our work as we determine our next steps. The current iteration of our EDIB strategic plan has been influenced heavily by stakeholder feedback from our AIM data as well as the most recent recommendations from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). This fall, with the AIM results top of mind, we seized the opportunity to further streamline our strategic plan to prioritize the following four focus areas:

- Recruit and retain a diverse faculty
- Ensure access and belonging for all students
- Deliver impactful learning for all
- Implement strong, effective family support programs

When looking at our work in these four areas, we've already made some significant accomplishments that I'm pleased to share with you:

Recruit and retain a diverse faculty

- Faculty of color representation is **30.21%**, a **5% increase** since 2019;
- All job descriptions are written with EDIB values;
- EDIB-related interview questions are universally used for all candidates (since 2020);
- **150+ posting agencies** are used to specifically target historically underrepresented teaching candidates, and we proactively seek new platforms to post vacancies;
- EDIB metrics are part of faculty and staff evaluations (since 2021).



Ensure access and belonging for all students

- Since 2018, **100% of students** who participated in Menlo's Kickstart summer program say they feel "academically prepared" and a sense of belonging after the program experience.

Deliver impactful learning for all

- Over **626 hours** of EDIB-related professional development (PD) offered since 2018;
- All PD sessions received a **97% approval** rating from participants in 2020-2021.

Implement strong, effective family support programs

- Since 2018, the School has translated over **956 documents** for Spanish-speaking families.

We are very proud of all we've accomplished, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to continuing to advance these efforts. When looking at the national landscape of EDIB, Menlo is considered an industry leader by many of our peer schools, and we believe that we are leading the way with a simple approach: remain humble, and always realize that our labor(s) is shared, and always embrace the idea that this work is ongoing. EDIB is excellence. Successful implementation comes when there is a communal understanding and commitment to this work, both of which are continuing to build daily on our campus.

Over the past five years, I've seen Menlo grow and develop to where I can palpably see, feel, and appreciate vulnerability and responsible risk-taking by every member of our community. I'm extremely proud of what we have accomplished together, and I look forward to our work to come.

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