



July 1, 2020

Dear Breck Families and Colleagues,

I want to begin by thanking our community for the many responses to my recent communication regarding the Instagram account that highlights the voices of our Black, Indigenous, People of Color students, alumni, and faculty. So many of you have offered support and great hope for true change that will repair the damage done and move towards a more just, equitable, and healthy school culture. I promised you, our families, an update to our [Mustangs \(Re\)Unite](#) webpage on July 1 to share our plan for a return in the fall. I am reaching out to offer not only the COVID procedures and schedules you will find on our website, but also actions regarding how we will reunite as a culture - one that lives into our values and lives up to the fact that we belong to each other.

As our team responds to the many families who have reached out, a few things have become clear. First, **we must communicate our actions**. Our words, while appreciated, are not enough. Second, **our families want more than a voice** - you want to participate in our actions. Third, **our students matter most**. Students carry the culture of our school and must be included in any action steps as leaders and active participants. Lastly, and importantly, I have lacked transparency and open communication about our work. Today, in addition to our acknowledgement and apology for the pain our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color have endured within our school for generations, I share some of the actions we are taking. This is not an exhaustive list, rather a few highlights that have taken place in the past three years, as well as those we have planned for the near future. This work will continue to evolve as we co-construct our commitments as a community.

Based on our "Blueprint for Strategic Actions" outlined at the October 2019 State of the School Address:

- June 2019 - The Board of Trustees unanimously approved the creation of the Inclusion Committee of our Board. Chaired by Susan Bass Roberts, this committee includes a diverse group of parents, faculty, and Trustees.
- Approval, commitment of resources, and selection of consultants for a full equity audit of our policies, practices, and pedagogy to begin Fall 2020. This includes but is

not limited to a full audit of our curriculum and classroom practices that provides guidance and training to teachers.

- 2018 - present - Initiative to increase faculty diversity
  - The largest group of Breck faculty members ever attended the National Association of Independent School's People of Color Conference
  - 2019 and 2020 Breck established and hosted a Diversity Career Hiring Fair for many area independent schools. This event will continue yearly.
  - An increase from 13% to 20% of faculty of color (and assistant faculty, but excluding non-faculty staff)
  - Of the 16 full time hires/promotions for the 2020-2021 school year, 5 are people of color
- August 2019 - Trained 100% of faculty members with Teaching Tolerance, emphasizing social justice and anti-bias

**And we know this wasn't and isn't enough.**

In the coming months:

- Summer 2020 - Training for faculty and staff
  - Civil Discourse with Global Youth Leadership Initiative
  - Building Accomplices with Work Beyond the Work
  - Reflections on Racism and Privilege with Breck's Director of the Melrose Center for Servant Leadership, Heidi Kim
- Summer 2020 - A review of our discipline policies and student handbook. We commit to including faculty and student leadership in developing and including a clear system of reporting for race-based harassment
- August 2020 - Anti-racist/anti-oppression training for all school leadership: *Work Beyond the Work*
- Anti-racist training for Board of Trustees and Inclusion Committee of the Board
- August 2020 - Anti-racist training for all faculty

We will listen and co-construct future actions. To that end, we will offer listening sessions hosted by your school leadership. Know that plans are underway and we will communicate these details soon. I want to share that I am personally committed to approaching this work with the lens of Restorative Practices. I know we have much work to do. As we prepare to receive our students in the fall, we will embrace this moment in our school's long story -

together.

One demonstration of an independent school's strength is the alumni's desire for a better future for those who follow them. Our students' and alumni's call to action is commendable and I am committed to living up to their expectations.

We will harness this moment and be better - united in our care for each other.

With Mustang Pride,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Natalia Rico Hernández". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "N" and a long, sweeping underline.

Natalia Rico Hernández, Ed.D.

Head of School