



# HEADLINES

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## Embracing our Differences

Last night we had a large and engaged group of parents and teachers attending our first PTA meeting of the year. After listening to me drone on for half an hour, the audience was treated to an overview of the school's on-going Diversity initiative.

Coming out of the Somersfield Strategic Plan, a task force, under the leadership of board member and former parent Romelle Warner, established a Diversity Committee of parents, administrators and teachers to tackle the complex issues of inclusivity and diversity.

At Somersfield we have defined our commitment to Diversity in the following way:

*Teaching diversity is a proactive commitment to recognizing and appreciating the variety of characteristics that make individuals unique in an atmosphere of mutual respect that promotes and celebrates individual and collective achievement.*

Under such a demonstration, it is clear that diversity goes far beyond issues of race, ethnic origin, language, or religion. The diversity of the Somersfield community includes all of those characteristics as well as issues of socio-economic diversity; learning differences; family structure; sexual orientation; and, gender.

Led by Co-Chairs, Stacey-Lee Williams and Jason Hammer, the Somersfield Diversity Committee is launching a number of initiatives including: a community climate survey; a series of Discovery (focus) groups; the establishment of Affinity support groups; and, faculty and staff training.

Perhaps the most exciting part of this process is Somersfield's participation in the upcoming National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) People of Colour Conference in December. A core team of teachers and administrators will be attending the conference along with eight of our senior students and two teacher chaperones. The students were selected through a rigorous process that included making a personal application; writing an essay on Diversity; and, being interviewed by a selection panel. There were twelve

excellent candidates and the Committee was hard pressed to narrow it down to eight. However, after much deliberation, a diverse and representative cross-section of student delegates was chosen to represent our student body. They will attend the "Student Leadership Forum" section of the conference and will return with the commitment to share their experience with their peers.

It is an exciting time for our school community! All families will receive a copy of the climate survey to complete on-line later in the year. In the interim, if you are interested in taking part in the Discovery Group process please feel free to contact Stacey-Lee Williams to volunteer.

### Second Language Learning

As many of you are aware, we have implemented the first phase of the expansion of our second language programmes at Somersfield.

This year, we have tripled the hours of French instruction in P5 and P6 and have introduced Spanish language and culture for our 3-9 students.

In December we will be bringing a second language curriculum specialist in to work with our teachers in both the elementary and MYP panels, and in the second and third terms we will be offering a French enrichment option for our 6-9 students in order to expand their facility in that language.

The second stage of our plan to increase our second language instruction will take effect next fall. Through some planned timetable adjustments, in addition to our Spanish language and culture enrichment programme we will be adding daily instruction in French as a second language for all students in the 6-9 Division. It is our hope that these changes will strengthen both the fluency of our students in French, and provide a grounding for those students who wish to pursue Spanish at the MYP level.

Bueno vacaciones and bon vacances!



### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Discovery Groups**  
November 6 and 13th

**Remembrance Day**  
November 11th

**Bio-Diversity Week**  
November 15th to 19th

**Peddler's Porch**  
November 20th

**Somersfield Golf Tournament**  
November 26th

**Holiday Spirit Week**  
6—11  
December 6 to 10th

**End of Term**  
December 17th