



DIVERSITY

COMMITTEE

Bement's student-created diversity mural has the words **hope**, **acceptance**, **courage**, and **trust** that stand out in bright colors. The message of this mural is one that Bement takes to heart, and it is a huge part of what makes Bement such a unique school. To ensure that the richness of Bement's diverse community continues to be nurtured, a dedicated group of faculty members and administrators formed the Diversity Committee in the fall of 2010.

This volunteer committee grew out of a recommendation from Bement's 2009 strategic plan. The committee was charged with creating a diversity mission statement for the school, reviewing the school's curriculum and cultural practices, and serving as a resource to the school community regarding questions or concerns related to diversity.

Much of our work during 2011-2012 was spent researching diversity committees at other independent schools and examining surveys those schools created to assess their climate around inclusivity. Our committee then created its own school climate survey which was given first to the board of trustees, then subsequently to the faculty, staff, and administrators. The survey was designed to get a sense of how individuals at Bement feel about diversity as it relates to curriculum, teaching practices, resources, and the composition of faculty and students. Bement hired an outside consulting group to tabulate and analyze the survey information. The survey was successful in its ability to convey to us what practices are working, which areas need attention, and what steps are needed in order to make Bement a truly accepting environment for all.

As a committee, we are very excited about the work ahead, but we also want to celebrate the great successes Bement has already achieved. A framed copy of Bement's diversity mission statement now hangs in almost every room on campus and is included on Bement's website. In the upper school, teachers have helped organize a monthly lunch for students of color, an opportunity for students to connect with an affinity group. This

past January and February, the diversity committee planned an exciting lineup of events to celebrate Martin Luther King Day and Black History Month. The whole school gathered together in the barn and was treated to a rousing all-school sing-a-long to "We Shall Overcome," student-read excerpts of Martin Luther King's speeches, as well as a viewing of the complete "I Have a Dream" speech. Throughout the day, students in upper and lower school were engaged in an art project where they were asked to envision their own dream for the world and write their dream on a paper hand they traced. These 'dream hands' were exhibited all around the school, reflecting the high hopes of the next generation of leaders.

The Diversity Committee has generated many short-and-long-term goals for Bement's future. These include conducting a campus and curriculum audit, looking at all of our materials through a diversity lens, working to build a common language around issues of diversity through the sharing of articles and resources, and lastly, creating an event for parents to connect around common interests. We look forward to finding more ways to engage the wider Bement community in this important pursuit.



The Diversity Committee: (back row L to R) Kimberly Caldwell Loughlin, Jane Stewart, Sarah Marcus, Will Paulding (front row L to R) Charita Gainey, Katrina Spicer-Lindquist, Lisa Echevarria