



To: Media Organizations
From: Jacqueline Silas-Butler, Executive Director of Project GRAD Akron
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Re: Project GRAD Akron's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workshop Series
Date: May 20, 2021 (FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION)

"Project GRAD Akron Hosts Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Workshops"

Akron, OH – Since January of 2021, Project GRAD Akron (PGA) has hosted a series of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) professional development virtual workshops for their Board, staff, and team members. The first three sessions were conducted by members of Project GRAD Akron's Board of Directors. On January 19th, **Dr. Fedearia Nicholson-Sweval**, Dean of Student Success at Stark State College and Vice President of PGA's Board, presented on the topic "Understanding Diversity and Inclusion: The Building Blocks to Equity." On February 16th, **Andre' Lessears**, Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer at University of Alabama Medical Center (previously with Cleveland Clinic Akron General and President-Elect of PGA's Board), presented on the topic "Implicit Bias." On March 16th, **Martin H. Belsky, Esq.**, Randolph Baxter Professor of Law at The University of Akron and PGA Board President, presented on the topic "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: The Legal Framework." All three of the sessions were interactive, thought-provoking, highly-rated, and received rave reviews and comments from the attendees.

Please join **Project GRAD Akron on Wednesday, June 9, 2021 from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m.**, for our fourth DEI professional development workshop session. **The event is free, virtual, and open to the public.** Registration is required. The presenter will be **Dr. Lisa Williams**, a national consultant on topics of equity and access in public education. She is a founder with Education in Equity Partners (EEP), a consultant with the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity (NAPE) as well as her independent company, EMCS. In her consulting work, she has provided guidance for school boards, public and private schools as well as school systems and non-profits in the areas of racial equity, gender equity in STEM, leading for equity, school transformation, and culturally responsive practices. She has served as a Subject Matter Expert with the United States Department of Education Department of Career, Technical, and Adult Education division related to equitable access in STEM/CTE. She serves as the board President for Restorative Response

Baltimore, an organization that provides guidance and support for Restorative Practices and Community Conferences to decrease violence and create inclusive environments across the Baltimore Metropolitan Area. Dr. Williams also served as an advisor to the Thurgood Marshall Alliance which is an organization working with the Baltimore City Public Schools to promote equitable access to education for all its students.

Dr. Williams is the former Executive Director of Equity and Cultural Proficiency for the Baltimore County Public School System. She has held the position of teacher, mentor, university professor, and Title I director over her career in education. She has bachelor's degrees in biology and psychology, a MA in psychology, and a doctorate in Urban Educational Leadership with an emphasis in social policy. She has presented at the local, state, and national level on topics related to improving outcomes for marginalized student populations. Her career in public education spans nearly 20 years. Her dissertation study examined Response to Intervention (RtI) and the performance of students attending Title I schools. In her work, she collaborated to create two certificate programs in educational equity and cultural proficiency with McDaniel College and Notre Dame University.

Her first book, *When Treating all the Kids the Same is the Real Problem: Educational Leadership and the 21st Century Dilemma of Difference* (co-authored with Dr. Kendra Johnson, Esq.) was published with Corwin Press in October 2014. The EEP team is in the process of writing a book on dismantling structural and systemic racism, sexism, classism and ableism to ensure access for multi-racial/multi-ethnic social service organizations. Dr. Williams is the proud mom of a son, Andrew, who is the daily inspiration for her work for all children.

Support of Project GRAD Akron's DEI professional development workshops includes a grant from the GAR Foundation and in-kind service donations from the three Board members who generously donated their professional services for their respective workshops. The GAR grant award funds learning opportunities for staff, board members, volunteers, and community partners to help further their knowledge of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The DEI professional development workshops have provided the most up-to-date resources in diversity and inclusion with the goal of creating and fostering an even more comprehensive learning environment for our students.

For additional information or to register, please contact Project GRAD Akron's Executive Director **Jacqueline A. Silas-Butler, Esq.**, at info@projectgradakron.org or call 330-761-3113. To learn more about Project GRAD Akron and its work with students and families in the Akron Public Schools, please visit our newly designed website at www.projectgradakron.org.

Photographs:

Dr. Fedearia Nicholson-Sweval

Andre' Lessears

Martin H. Belsky, Esq.

Dr. Lisa Williams



Dr. Fedearia Nicholson-Sweval



Martin H. Belsky, Esq.



Andre' Lessears



Dr. Lisa Williams