

Training from page 32

celebrate neurodiversity because of the richness different learners bring to our classrooms, our dormitories, our teams, our studios, and our advisors.

Similarly, we ask each member of our community to bring their own story to their Proctor experience – their own family, background, culture, and life experiences. When we see each other in this light, we unlock the potential for learning in a powerful way.

Led by our Office of Equity and Belonging, faculty spent three hours in small and large groups learning about, discussing, brainstorming, and exploring gender and sexual identity. They talked about the differences between engaging in conversations for comprehension versus compassion, recognizing our work with students who are exploring their own gender and sexual identity must always, always be rooted in compassion.

The faculty asked themselves how, as adults, they can continue to explore the world of gender and sexuality to build awareness and literacy essential for a compassionate and inclusive community where everyone has a sense of belonging. Faculty do not claim to have answers, but are excited to engage in the journey alongside students.

The following day, Proctor welcomed the SEAL Foundation, whose mission it is to create and fund educational and social opportunities in both non-public and public schools and camp settings for students who learn differently in order to ensure they maximize their potential. In small groups, faculty worked their way through six simulation activities to illustrate what it feels like to learn with different learning differences.

While our faculty's learning profiles are as diverse as our students, the simulations were an incredibly powerful way to empathize with our students who have a documented learning difference (roughly half of Proctor's population).

Whether it was completing a writing exercise while only looking in a mirror (representing dysgraphia), attempting to complete a spelling test with muffled

audio (representing an auditory processing disorder), decoding a complex scientific research paper with mixed up letters (representing dyslexia), or completing a math worksheet with inverse operations (representing dyscalculia), faculty experienced first hand the frustrations, challenges, and mental energy required to engage in the learning process if one has a learning difference.

Faculty head into the start of the school year with new perspectives, increased empathy, and tools to help those in the community whose brains, bodies, and souls feel different than society says is "normal" feel more at home. Our job, at its most fundamental level, is to help adolescents understand and feel confident in who they are and how they can contribute to society.

Wilderness from page 30

will all hit an uprooted branch and go pratfalling forward, nearly losing our balance. But we right ourselves in the end.

"On everyone's mind at some point in our journey is 'I just can't. It's too hard.' Our walk in the woods is a metaphor for the gristle and the toughness of a thing. How we conquer it in our minds. In the end, a beautiful waterfall might be the balm for home- and heart-sickness for who we thought we were, all because some mantra in our head got us through. Indeed, hard things, we do."

Nature from page 32

the summer, in addition to contacting parents and teachers over the summer break to make sure that everyone was on board with his plan.

Principal Dobe added, "I absolutely have got to send shout-outs to our Grade 8 parents for their strong support of this opportunity for their children; to the kids for their positive energy and enthusiasm for their upcoming Nature's Classroom experience; and to our middle school team of teachers who supported this initiative 100% from the first moment it was proposed. As with everything else here, the magic happens at AE/MS because of our teachers and staff."

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