

wouldn't need SEED anymore. This is a hope we hold out for a future of equity. It is hard for me to imagine, however, that genuine equity will be achieved in our lifetimes, and even if this miracle were to happen, would we really want to forsake programs such as SEED? It strengthens our humanity and our community, and these two outcomes seem too good to pass up, no matter how evolved we become. Even though we will probably always be addressing some of the same subjects, how we talk about them will be different."

The chief difference — returning to the words of Tim Wise — would be an innate sense of how race shapes a life, and how that shape can change when "whiteness" is no longer assumed to be the norm.

As the circle of influence spreads, it gathers individuals from all corners of the school. "Our group," Polly says, "reflects our community. . . ."

—Polly Vanasse, Co-Facilitator of SEED

MARY MODAHL SPEAKS TO THE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

Why Join SEED?

I've been asked to speak today about the school's educational program for parents called SEED. SEED stands for Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity. Now, I have to say that I personally didn't come to Nashoba Brooks seeking either equity or diversity. I came here to give my kids an excellent education. And while they certainly got that, what I didn't realize is that I would, too — thanks to SEED.

There's an old Native American saying most of you probably know which goes like this: "Before you can judge a man, you must walk a mile in his moccasins." Yet, we seldom have a chance to walk that mile. Understanding how the world looks when you're black or white, Latino or Asian, Jewish or Muslim or gay isn't very easy for those

who aren't. This lack of understanding is compounded by the fact that, in our culture, it is considered rude to talk about such issues other than in the most politically correct way.

This is where SEED comes in. SEED is a series of eight meetings, where parents and teachers gather to talk about the "verboten" topics — such as why all the black kids sit together in the cafeteria, what it's like to be an Asian kid with adoptive American parents, or to be white and Protestant growing less and less comfortable in an increasingly diverse world.

Probably there are several of you who've looked at the SEED flyers and thought to yourself, as I did — *hmmn . . .*

that's interesting, but... should I commit to this? It seems like a big step. I cannot tell you why you will decide to take that step and join SEED, but I would like to share with you why I did:

FIRST, my kids' world is not the world I grew up in. In their lifetimes, Spanish will become a majority language in many parts of the United States – China and India will become as large, maybe even larger economies than the U.S. – the right role of Islam and its teaching about women will become a major debate – the legacy of the African slave trade both here and in Africa will bear its full fruit for better or worse – and gay marriage, whether I agree with it or not, could become commonplace. As a parent, I needed to think deeply about these issues before being called upon to discuss them with my children.

SECOND, I wanted to walk in another's moccasins. When I joined SEED, I asked my friend, who is from Taiwan, to participate with me – I felt comfortable asking her because we'd known each other for more than fifteen years. She did, and I have to tell you I learned more about her true experience of the world in those eight sessions than I had in all our years of friendship, because, for once, it wasn't rude to ask about what was really happening through her eyes.

FINALLY, I felt that I needed to understand the role of diversity in the school's mission. As a trustee, and as a parent, I could see that diversity played a major role in the curriculum of the school. Yet, to be honest, I wasn't sure to what degree I supported diversity as part of the mission. Part of me saw a trade-off: you could either focus on diversity as a school, or you could focus on educational excellence. Another part was worried about censorship – were we in danger of becoming too politically correct? After quite a bit of thought, I began to see that excellence in education means preparing children for their world – the world of 20 years from now. And the biggest difference between our world and theirs is the diversity that will characterize their future. To understand my children's education and their world, I needed to make time for SEED.

Educational excellence, diversity, and equity are adult issues, and SEED is an adult learning experience, with challenging reading, thoughtful discussion, and dissent. I didn't agree with every point of view presented – but I had the chance to hear it. I learned a lot, and I am a much better prepared

parent. So, I offer you this chance – the chance to learn again as you did when you were young, a chance to get your act together before your kids start asking tough questions – but above all, the chance to walk in another man's moccasins.

Mary Modahl is a trustee and former parent at Nashoba Brooks School. She works as an independent consultant in the Boston area, assisting healthcare and technology companies in marketing and strategic planning. Prior to this, she spent 15 years at Forrester Research as VP of Research and later VP of Marketing. She resides in Concord with her husband Richard; daughter Rebecca '05 (now at Middlesex); and son William TG '02 (now at Fenn).

