



January 28, 2022: CDS Cultivates Changemakers

Dear CDS Community,

This week, I served as part of a team of educators evaluating a K-8 independent school in Oakland, Redwood Day School. The accreditation process, required as part of the membership in the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), is a critical part of a school's continual improvement process.

Observing another school in this focused way provides all members of a visiting team with an incredibly rich learning experience, and it also gives me a fresh perspective on how I view our work here at CDS. The work to support Redwood Day School began months ago when the committee received the Self-Study written by the school and began learning about the programs.

Our committee of six independent school leaders arrived on Sunday for a tour and we began the work in earnest, spending hours each day visiting classrooms (for less than 15 minutes, so we would not be in close contact), meeting with community members (all over Zoom), and working to deeply understand the opportunities in front of the school as they continue to grow. We then spent our evenings drafting responses to prompts from CAIS. This rigorous process is designed to provide structures for a school community to reflect and then have a group of "critical friends" affirm best practices and notice opportunities or blind spots.

CDS went through this same process in 2017, the year before I started here, and the recommendations framed much of the work that we embarked upon in my first year. The work of rewriting the mission was a direct result of one of the major recommendations.

At this morning's assembly, we were pleased to present this year's recipients of the annual Josef Cooper Changemaker Awards and Grants. Both of these awards were established as a way to honor the late Joe Cooper, one of the school's most important figures. Joe and his wife, Tracy Kirkham, were leaders of a group of parents, trustees, and educators who founded Children's Day School in the 1990s as a non-profit to nourish

and celebrate diversity and promote justice and respect for all people. Joe passed away in November 2018, and a short time later we created these two awards to honor Joe's deep commitment to CDS and celebrate his life of changemaking. The awards encourage our students and alumni to continue to notice where they can make a difference in the world and then create concrete plans to take action.

It's always a great joy for us to see our alumni back on campus and this morning was no exception. The assembly was virtual for most in the community, but we invited a small group of family and friends to the yard to recognize these outstanding changemakers. This year's recipients of the Josef Cooper Changemaker Award – **Gracie (Class of 2017)** and **Katharine (Class of 2019)** – truly embody the spirit that Joe and Tracy intended when creating this award.

Our current middle school students also are modeling the changemaker spirit that is on display every day here at CDS. This year's Changemaker Grants were awarded to the following projects:

- *Unhoused Care Packages (from Fifth Grade Blue)*
- *Animal Care Packages (from Fifth Grade Green)*
- *Tree Growth Fundraiser (from Fifth Grade Green)*
- *Women's Rights Fundraiser (from Sixth Grade Blue)*
- *Unhoused Care Resources (from Sixth Grade Green)*
- *Dolores Park Litter Resolution (from Seventh Grade Green)*

These students are noticing where we can take action for change in the world and serve as excellent role models to us all. Thank you to our Changemaker Selection Committee: Tracy Kirkham, Middle School Director Chris Wachsmith, High School Transition Counselor Amanda Richard, Director of Advancement Jeanna Yoo, and Middle School lead teachers Matt Goldberg, Lori Roberts, and Terry Ashkinos.

In closing, I want to remind everyone about next week's State of the School event on **Thursday, February 3** at 5:30 pm. This is an opportunity for our entire community to hear from our administrative team and the board. Please share your questions so they can be incorporated into the program. We look forward to seeing you on Zoom and hope that for this event next year we will be back in person in Founders' Hall.

Have a wonderful weekend.

Warmly,
Shelly