



October 16, 2020: A Friday Note

Dear CDS Community,

Life continues to offer complexity in the midst of a complex political climate, continued life in the pandemic, and the exhaustion BIPOC community members face in dealing with systemic structures of racism.

All three of these are at play at CDS and we are engaging in problem-solving that is consistent with our values, but this does not mean that we are solving more than we are uncovering. In fact, it feels that there is so much unrest and uncertainty that the second one stops to ask a question, there is a flood of feedback and information. We are all working through this flood of information and misinformation. It is important to step back and look upward. I use the analogy that we have all been forced to look at our shoes and we need to remember to look up and see who we are bumping into (virtually and with six feet of space) as we navigate life.

A few years ago, I had the great privilege to observe a group of students in an experiential lesson on migration and displacement. Students were forced out of their classrooms with only a few belongings and expected to migrate around the school while still learning and being students. The first step in the migration led from the classroom down the stairs to the yard and a shady corner. As students left, they held doors for each other, offered to help classmates carry things, and looked for ways they could support each other. It was absolutely fascinating to me what happened over the course of a few hours of discomfort. Students were no longer looking for ways to help but were jostling to get in front of each other, pushing and cutting off classmates who just an hour prior were being helped and supported. Instead of sharing a load, they were turning their backs on each other. During the debrief at the end of the day, they all were able to pause, look back, and see what happened and why. A true scarcity of resources and lack of clarity of the future forced them to prioritize themselves, their needs, and their feelings over those of their friends.

We have been in survival mode since mid-March, and anxiety, fear, loneliness, lack of

control, sadness, overwhelm, and exhaustion are taking over the generous, kind spirits we are in normal times. We are all in it; no one is immune and it is not going to go away anytime soon. Settling into discomfort is hard and settling certainly does not mean that we stop looking for solutions or ways we can collaboratively problem-solve. It does require conscious effort.

As many of you know, I write a very brief journal entry each day. I noticed that I was finding myself stuck in the negative space in my journal and in some ways it will be an excellent reminder of what this time was for us in the moment when I look back years from now. However, I realized that for my survival, I need to double down on gratitude and practice reflecting on the moments of kindness and joy that I can certainly find if I look up from my own feet. I invite you and your families to celebrate and notice these moments as much as possible as I really do think it will help us get through the journey ahead. Today's moments will certainly be the joy and excitement shared by some of our youngest learners as they celebrated letters in the costumes of Letterland characters and the informed and earnest learning that our seventh graders provided us this morning at assembly.

Some relevant resources that may support you include this [list of mental health resources](#) sourced by our employee community.

A peer school has shared [this video](#) by a parent who is a doctor speaking about COVID and returning to school. It offers some perspective that might be helpful.

In my note last Friday, I mentioned the anti-racism work we had started with [Dr. Manya Whitaker](#), who is hosting a number of listening sessions with our faculty on a variety of topics related to these efforts. Dr. Whitaker is also holding an **open session with families next Wednesday, October 21 at 5 pm**. The Zoom info is available now on the ParentSquare calendar and we will include it in next week's Coop as well.

Enjoy the weekend.

Warmly,
Shelly