



December 18, 2020: What a Year It's Been

Dear CDS Community,

Whew, what a year this has been for us all. In January, when I started talking about this new illness I was seeing in Asia, I do not think anyone anticipated how the original chart of closure decision making would morph into every school in the world navigating new COVID-19 policies and procedures and almost daily interactions with the Department of Public Health. It has been a year of unprecedented complexity with a pandemic, the critical engagement focused on dismantling ongoing systems of oppression, and the worst fire season we have seen with a day of surreal orange skies and pervasive bad air quality.

As a community, we have lost those we love. We have seen our life's work shift in a split second because of a business closure or disruption of an industry. We have faced fear and anxiety and seen our leaders debate the best practice of health and safety in a way that pitted opinion and science against each other. And we have watched our neighborhoods change as local businesses worked to rethink their models, with some finding success and others closing down.

Through it all, I have been proud of how our community has shown up in support of our students. Our Mission and particularly the idea that **Community Matters** has guided our work as we have focused on supporting our community in many ways. The parent community came together in generous support through our Annual Fund and the Fund-A-Need last spring. These funds supported us in many ways, including the incredibly innovative solutions our facilities team designed and built as well as significant investment in technology infrastructure and tools, plus training and support from our technology team to make those investments work. We prioritized our spending on CDS-affiliated and local businesses; you can see [a list of some of these businesses](#) if you still have shopping to do. Finally, we provided a wide range of support to individual families to ensure that our community was best positioned to come through this year intact.

Truly living our value of **Learning is Active**, our teachers worked to reimagine what

teaching and learning look like again and again, both online and in person (see the image on the right of mask self-portraits created by our students). Our extended day team worked throughout the school, first supporting essential childcare and then substituting and providing support on the yard and in classrooms. We have flexed and stretched our muscles around data collection to inform decision-making and worked to communicate with transparency in an ever-changing environment. We also spent hours evolving our health and safety protocols, staying up to date on recent science, and recommended protocols with daily webinars and scientific research.



As we look at how **Differences Lift Us**, we worked as a faculty and staff to unpack some of our experiences with the support of Dr. Manya Whitaker, and as administrative teams we looked at how we could dismantle the systems of oppression in our community. The idea of perspective was deeply embedded in our curricular work, with the 8th grade reading *Stamped* by Ibram X. Kendi and Jason Reynolds, and our middle school reads focused on the experiences of Black characters and authors. Lower school and early childhood students examined our history and how stories have been told that distort the story of indigenous people and colonization, as our faculty stopped misinformation shared by many.

We are now all familiar with the required spit and swab tests and have learned to communicate more clearly about specific health information, but we remain flexible with changes even if they upend our schedules.

Amidst the complexities, there are bright things to look forward to, including the promise of vaccines and a US Presidency that offers the opportunity for representation, inclusion, and the start of some healing.

It has been an exhausting 10 months and I am hoping that we all have wonderful things in our futures as 2021 arrives. I, for one, am looking forward to switching the calendar to next year and I cannot wait to see our entire community back online on January 4 and

then two weeks later when I can stand in the driveway or on the sidewalk to welcome much of our community back together in person.

Today's assembly offered some opportunities for us to collectively share appreciations for all members of our community. I am grateful to be part of this community and continue to be stubbornly optimistic about our world, our city, and life in general. Merry Christmas and Happy Kwanzaa to those who celebrate.

Happy New Year, and Peace, Love, and Joy to you all.

Warmly,
Shelly