



March 19, 2021: A Long, Strange Year

Dear CDS Community,

What a long, strange year it's been. When we held that very small Friday assembly on the yard on March 13 last year, who could have imagined then what was still ahead of us? Many of those days are a blur, but I do recall that Friday gathering was only for the families of those who were presenting, the Kindergarten Sequoias. We also heard from a resident expert parent about the new virus that would soon bring turmoil to all of our lives.

As I reflect back on these past twelve months, I feel many things; but above all I'm grateful and I'm proud. Grateful for a community that remained flexible, allowing us to have seven months of real learning for our students. And proud because of the many ways that we continued to prioritize students and how we have reimaged learning while navigating tremendous unknowns and all the anxiety that comes with it. We now have the promise of spring and vaccines, and hopes of more of San Francisco reopening.

As difficult as this year has been, there are many examples of ways that our community has come together.

- Families caring for each other in large and small ways from offering childcare/drop-offs and pick-ups to giving up spaces in aftercare to others with less flexible schedules.
- Teachers prioritizing their students over fear and logistical constraints.
- Community members who partnered to make sense of complex and evolving science and provided guidance to us about best practices.
- Students who showed up in online learning environments with the same enthusiasm we are used to seeing when they walk into campus.
- Parents and caregivers who followed our guidelines and prioritized community safety over fun and recreation.

- Aftercare teachers and other staff who became back-up for just about everything, with daily duties shifting and evolving throughout the year.
- Our facilities team, who created truly innovative solutions to problems we have never seen before and then evolved them as our testing crew of hundreds of students gave them a workout.

There have been other highlights along the way, too many to list here. I will reiterate something I said back in the fall: that our students, above all, have demonstrated resilience and flexibility. These skills have proven to be so useful and will continue to be so in the years to come, for all of us.

This year we have continued to learn about a wide range of individual stories as we celebrated cultural events and reminded ourselves of the various ways history is told. Students taught us about the importance of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the Ohlone and Taino as well as other Indigenous cultures. Black History Month Forever provided a lens through which we can all learn about the important work of Black history and the future. We celebrated Lunar New Year, Diwali, and Grandparents & Special Friends Day together with even more of our community able to participate. It was a joy to see families separated by great distances seeing each other on the screen. We have taken new opportunities to learn about the important cultural events of our community and invite you to share yours with us. These many faces are reflective of our own community here at CDS, reminding us that changemakers and future leaders are among us.

All of these reflections are framed by a year of complexity for our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, AND People of Color) community members. As we wrote about in [last Friday's letter](#), there has been a surge recently in anti-Asian racism. And then came the events this week in Atlanta, which make me sad and angry. To have a horrific tragedy compounded by the lack of appropriate or equivalent response from the officials demonstrated again that we must prioritize the safety of the BIPOC community.

Even in my anger and sadness, I am grateful for the commitment of our teachers and community as we continue our work to build a more inclusive, compassionate, and kind world. Please do refer back to the note from last week, as it includes many resources. I encourage everyone in our community to join our educators and students in this work, and please **get involved**. We are stronger together.

Warmly,
Shelly