



March 5, 2021: Staying Calm

Dear CDS Community,

Recently, I was reading [an article](#) from *Popular Science*. Yes, I still get the actual hard copy magazine delivered to my door as one of my guilty pleasures is reading a few magazines a month. I do not keep the back issues, as my father did with stacks of *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics* plus a few *Whole Earth Catalogs* filling the corner behind his chair.

The article, “Stay Calm Under Pressure with Lessons Learned in the World’s Most Stressful Careers,” seemed to resonate with me, although I would not consider my work and my role to be among the most stressful.

Some lessons that I am thinking about:

- **Rely on the team around you** - My Heads of School group has met weekly for a year and has served as therapy, inspiration, and a sounding board as we navigated the unknowns. I feel supported by the CDS senior administrators, our board, and the teachers, parents, and students who make up our community.
- **A careful balance of focusing on executing the task at hand without freaking out about every future possibility** - This lesson really hit home as I have spent the last year making decisions and moving forward, never having the full picture. We have had to look at data and manage emerging complexities while making the best decisions possible in the moment, and then making the next best decision as more information emerged.
- **Join forces and work for a common goal and identify the source of the stress** - Success this year would not be possible without the entire community working together to respect the guidelines and each other. The stressors are clear and even being able to name them has helped focus on what we can control and what we cannot.
- **Make the uncertainties more certain by planning responses to scenarios** - As a team, we have worked together to imagine and define as many scenarios as

possible as we worked to identify what was possible at each stage of our transition. These scenarios helped ground us in what we could control and what we needed to manage and gave us options as we navigated through the uncertainties.

The idea that **control, acceptance, planning, support, and teamwork** can all set one up not just for survival, but potentially for a better future. Right now in a moment of relative calm (I just crossed my fingers), we are looking at lessons learned so that when we return next year we will not lose the incredible amount of learning that was unexpectedly given to us. We are more nimble, adaptive, and creative than we might have been last year.

Not surprisingly, one job that is listed in the article is that of air traffic controller. There are times when I think that what I'm doing is just that. Helping those on our team figure out the best path forward. How often have we heard the phrase "We're not saving lives here," but everyone at CDS is doing critical work and as educators we are *making* lives. Allowing lives to blossom. And helping all those in our community – students, teachers, families, EVERYONE – find their path.

I would also like to acknowledge that we kicked off International Women's History Month this week, with many of the activities and celebrations taking place around the world this weekend and continuing throughout the month of March. As I shared this morning during the assembly, I am proud that the CDS community includes many women in many different roles – caregivers, parents, teachers, administrators, and board members.

I am so appreciative that our young people – he, she, and they – have role models in all aspects of our world where women are making a difference. I never imagined as a young person that we would have a woman Vice President. And here we are! This weekend, look for ways to celebrate and honor the women in your life.

Warmly,
Shelly

"Stay Calm Under Pressure with Lessons Learned in the World's Most Stressful Careers"
by Rob Verger, from *Popular Science*, January 8, 2021