

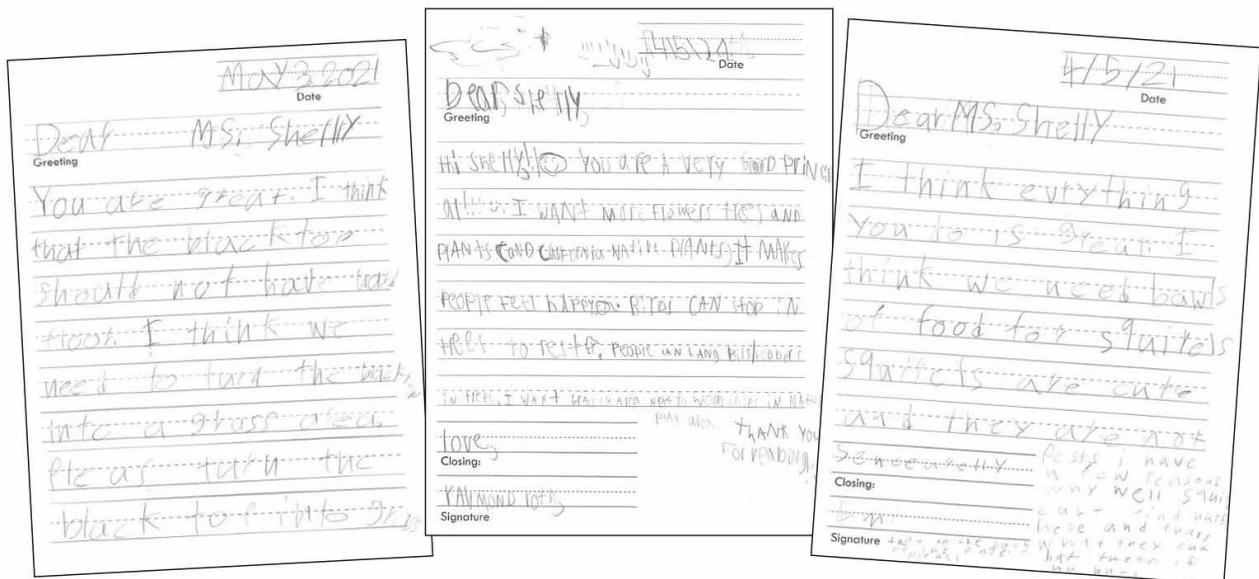


May 14, 2021: Young Advocates

Dear CDS Community,

I love mail and always have. I remember getting a card in my college mailroom and being so excited. Even opening up junk mail brings me some satisfaction as I sort and recycle it. Recently, I have been receiving some hand-delivered letters from students, and I open them up with joy and anticipation. Our first grade activists offer some opportunities to see their skill development as they demonstrate communication, self-direction, research and inquiry, and critical and creative thinking in their letters advocating for change.

Below are a few samples from my friends in first grade.



I have many other letters, but hopefully this gives you a snapshot of some of the practical and fun requests I am hearing from the students. I appreciate how they are learning to advocate for themselves – whether it’s speaking up for what they need in their classrooms or how their experience on the CDS yard can be enhanced, or demanding change in the world. A big part of what we do at CDS is to help students build the skills they need to move their dreams of change into plans they can implement.

As I read through all these letters, I reflected on our mission and values and also our learning beliefs. Learning Belief number five states that *We believe that curiosity, collaboration, and play drive learning.* This first-grade letter-writing assignment ignites curiosity in the students; to ask questions about their daily routines, their learning spaces and their play spaces, and to wonder about the world around them.

Some of the lines from the letters deserve a mention here:

“More flowers, more trees. The birds can stop in the trees to rest.”

“We would like your permission to put a ‘Stop Police Violence’ mural near the 16th Street building.”

“There’s no nuts for the squirrels.”

“We look forward to hearing back from you.”

Another of our learning beliefs came to mind this morning at Friday Assembly, when the Redwoods taught us how to raise trout. The students are learning to become environmental stewards as they make deep connections to the natural world.

And lastly, we continue to celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month with the opportunity to learn by watching the award-winning film about San Francisco Chinatown, *Chinatown Rising*. The film shows how young activists took a stand against pressure from outside their community (and in some cases from their own elders) to create a place and space they felt reflected who they wanted to be. It includes rare footage and interviews with activists who were there fighting for what they believed in. We will send out links to watch the film and to participate in a Q&A with one of its directors.

Have a great weekend.

Warmly,
Shelly