



June 11, 2021: The Finish Line

Dear CDS Community,

Some of you know that I am a former marathon runner. Now, I do not even consider myself a runner, so this was in my distant past before children filled my free time. Years of marathon training and running was perfect preparation for the past 18 months. One can only successfully run a marathon if there are a few things in place: a good support team, proper planning, training and nutrition, the ability to change paths at a moment's notice, and cheering fans. I saw parallels to all of these essentials as we negotiated the past year and a half together.

In the early stages of the pandemic, adrenaline and fresh legs kept us going through long hours of meetings with intense perspectives and competing needs. Later, we moved into the routine part – we were in a rhythm and had our plan in place – the focus was on putting one step in front of the other, water station to water station. In our pandemic scenario, the water stations were updates from the department of public health and emerging science around COVID and best practices.

Toward the winter of this year and the start of the calendar year of 2021, we entered into the hardest part of the race: miles 22-24. We were tired and the finish line was still farther away than we hoped. At this point in a marathon, the crowds and the team are the most important – the students and families served as the reason we came to school each day and having the majority of our students in our physical classrooms gave the faculty and staff the motivation to keep putting one foot in front of the other. As we finished the year today with our Passing the Torch assembly and graduation, we are now at mile 26. We see the finish line, we hear the crowd cheering, and we are ready to celebrate.

For the Class of 2021, graduation represents a waypoint in their academic journey. They are finishing their time at CDS – some students have never had another academic experience and there is excitement and trepidation as they look to a few short years of high school and then what is beyond.

I have had the privilege of running with them for the last three years and I have been touched by the way they care for each other and look for opportunities to learn and grow together. In some ways they feel more mature than other groups of 8th graders I have worked with and I think some of that came from the months of reflection and independence they were forced to navigate this year.

Collectively and individually, they are true examples of the CDS Mission as they “leave CDS confident, with the humility to listen and the resolve to speak up for what they see as right.” Class of 2021, I pass the baton to you as you take off in the next leg of your journey.

I use marathon analogies for all challenges; it just makes sense to me based upon how marathon training took over my life and taught me so much. Typically, I used to take just a few weeks off before setting my sights on the next race. Who knows what the course will be when we start next year, but I am excited to line up at the starting line again with the CDS community. Have a wonderful summer!

Warmly,
Shelly