



December 3, 2019: Engaging with Our Neighborhood

Dear CDS Community,

At last week's Grandparents & Special Friends Day performance, I remarked that the members of our audience are critical to our community and truly connected to our value of *Community Matters*. Seeing and hearing our students perform with such joy and then witnessing them engage with their grandparents and special friends in various classroom activities was a wonderful experience.

Other ways that we thoughtfully and intentionally engage with our broader community have taken place in the last few months. As we celebrated the opening of the Community Library and Center for Inquiry, I was able to witness our communities connecting with author and illustrator Yangsook Choi. A few days after her visit, students from the Boys & Girls Club came up to me to share that they had finished their storyboards and could not wait to come back to the library. We truly are creating new ground as we think thoughtfully and critically about how to connect our communities in meaningful ways.

Another ongoing relationship is with our neighbors experiencing homelessness. Around our Middle School campus in particular, we have been connecting with local initiatives to support the systemic challenges of the unhoused. Ed and I attend monthly task force meetings with SF Supervisor Rafael Mandelman that include coordinated efforts of multiple agencies at the city and neighborhood level. We work to identify resources, individuals needing the most immediate support, and trends in the area. Additionally, we are engaging daily with the folks in our immediate vicinity. We also have reached out in an effort to get to know those who stay around the park; we have provided care kits for them, while also reminding them of our expectations for the safety of our students.

Recently, folks from the Dolores Park area were staying on the corner of Dolores and 16th. We have started to reach out to them and we have also connected with city services to help with safety and the management of waste. We continue to

connect directly with folks to make clear the safety expectations for our community and to provide outreach, depending on the needs of the individuals. We provide outreach knowing that the safety of our students is the primary focus, and occasionally have had to engage the SFPD in particularly unsafe situations.

Our students are living and engaging in an urban environment, and in the same way that I taught my boys to stop at corners so I could catch up with them, there are ways that adults can model and support student safety. We can all remind our students not to pick up items on the street or sidewalk without having an adult check first. We make this expectation clear to our MS students as they play and eat in the park each day and also to students on field trips and walks around the neighborhood. Sometimes what we find on these walks can be treasures – and can turn into moments of magic. At the same time, let's remind our children about a quick check-in as you explore the city together.

We know that *community matters* not just here at CDS, but beyond our campuses. If you have thoughts on how we can be better citizens here in the neighborhood, I would love to hear from you. Our newly-revised mission also includes the following language: "CDS is an advocate for responsibility to others...an independent school with down-to-earth values, always asking how we can do this better." We look forward to hearing your feedback as we continue to partner together to "do this better."

Warmly,
Shelly