



May 10, 2019: Leaving the Nest

Dear CDS Community,

For those of you who drop off students at our 333 campus, there has been a lot of excitement about babies: two specific babies whom the community has watched from eggs with much anticipation. Over a few weeks, if you knew where to watch and took a few extra minutes on the walk, you were rewarded with a glimpse of life emerging. I have to say that, from the first moment I saw the nest, briefly exposed when the parent flew away, I was invested and felt a lovely mix of curiosity and worry.

I love hummingbirds and have always seen them as a symbol of good things to come. We had an overgrown vine in our yard when the boys were small, and the darting movement of a hummingbird would bring loud, active play to a halt as we all watched with awe and strained our eyes to see the wings. We were visited by many hummingbirds, but I never got to see a nest, smaller than a preschool palm holding two tiny eggs that looked more like candy than the start of life.

Our CDS nest is perfectly placed, out of the way enough that it is safe and close and low enough that we could check on the progress. Over the weeks as I observed the eggs with the parent keeping watch and then the TINY baby birds, scrawny and without feathers, I worried about them. Were they warm enough? Was it too windy for the nest to be stable? Was the parent nearby, or did our proximity make them leave? Luckily, it was easy to find relief for my worries – I would peek in on my way to 601 or to a meeting in the 16th Street building and take a few moments to check progress, take photos, or just breathe a quick sigh of relief that they were still there in the bush – growing and SAFE!

A couple of weeks ago, I checked and they were so big that I had trouble making sure that both were still in the nest. Again, I felt relief that they were both there when the one closest to the sidewalk moved and I glimpsed the second head.



Interestingly, around the same time that my eighth grader was taking leave of his nest for a week of learning in Washington, D.C., the birds were gone. In both cases, I had to talk myself through the idea that things were okay. There had been such relief in the past of being able to confirm that the hummingbirds were safe as I walked by the nest, but now I just had to trust. The same is true with our children: at some point we just have to trust.

Watching the hummingbirds build a nest, lay eggs, hatch, and then take flight is a much-condensed version of what parents experience as their children take flight.

As we look to the end of the year, I know that, like you, I will have to trust more as our birds take flight and demonstrate more independence as they move to high school or maybe simply want to walk into preschool alone. Like the hummingbirds, they are ready. We just need to trust that we have done our job and these signs of independence are part of life as we give them space for growth. At CDS, we believe in the wisdom of slowing down and celebrating childhood, adolescence, and lifelong learning. These milestones of independence are critical to growing and learning.

Learning at CDS

This year, the academic leadership team and our faculty have worked to articulate what learning looks like at CDS and what we value as a learning community. We expect that all members of our community – students and adults – will find inspiration in these learning beliefs and frame our own learning through these

lenses. Next year, we will take time to focus on specific beliefs individually as we build shared understandings of how this looks in practice. We encourage you to help us by sharing your observations as we explore and expand our understanding next year. You will hear from us again soon about these eleven Learning Beliefs when we share more about our process in developing them and how they will guide us in our work.

For now, I will reference the first learning belief: ***We believe in the wisdom of slowing down and celebrating childhood, adolescence, and lifelong learning***, which came to mind as I reflected upon our newest baby hummingbirds.

I look forward to continuing to learn with you and your children.

Warmly,
Shelly