



## **August 12, 2019: A Note to the Community Before the New School Year**

Dear CDS Community,

Last week, I was both drawn to and repelled by the news of events impacting our country. Drawn in looking for answers, understanding, and solutions. Repelled by the actual facts and the deep sadness and anxiety they bring up in me. In talking with a colleague, we both acknowledged the overwhelming feeling of stress that the current state of affairs brings up in us. We talked about how it was a shared experience — a deep and profound confusion about why someone would take another life in such a violent and intense way or why some feel the need to define belonging. At the end of our conversation, we were both close to tears and had to shake our heads and just sit with the unknown.

We then focused on what we could do — connect with people, know our neighbors, and take action where we can: write a letter, voice an opinion, offer a hand, make a donation. The importance is not what we do, but that we do something. Action can help give purpose and a sense of control. We cannot fix things alone. However, we can take small steps that make a difference every day. I try to always be additive to situations, asking myself how my presence can be a positive influence and not a negative one. No one is perfect, but this question has helped me to remember that even small things I do have an impact and that impact matters. Only I get to determine the direction in which I head. I challenge each of us to think about our impact, small or large, and ensure that we are intentional about what we are doing.

Very soon, we will share our new Mission, Values, and Beliefs with you. This language will serve as a guidepost for how we interact in the community, and I think you will all find something tangible to use as you think about your individual impact and that of our collective community. Each perspective is unique and VALUED, and each person has the opportunity to share their value to amplify our community.

The only way we can really make change in the complex and overwhelming problems that face us is to really listen to each other — not to share quips on social media, not to obsess on certain news stories, but to look within ourselves and ask what we know and what we want to know and then to look for places where we can engage in authentic discourse. Our middle school students spend time in Socratic dialogue, a structure that asks questions and respectfully makes space for ideas and opinions. As often is the case, we can learn a lot from our children.

This week, faculty will be back at school preparing their classes to welcome students. Part of this work will be reflecting and planning for how each class will create community, and some of the work will be practical, including some practice with a consultant on how to best prepare for a disaster. As always, the emotional and physical safety of your children is our collective focus.

Warmly,  
Shelly