



## October 11, 2018: Reflections from a Month on the Yard

Dear CDS Families,

Today marks a month of daily life with students at CDS. I already have a nickname, courtesy of the TK class, so I guess I am officially part of the community. As I walked through classrooms this week, I reflected on what I have noticed about this extraordinary community over the last month.

- Students feel safe and connected to the adults in their CDS lives and are engaged as much socially as academically throughout the day.
- The classrooms, hallways, yard, and social spaces are filled with joy. Students (even older ones) are eager to get to school each day and arrive with smiles on their faces.
- We all make mistakes - I have heard from a number of students and adults about the freedom that mistake-making permission has granted them. Remember to please be forgiving to yourself. For when we take away the self-punishment that often comes with making mistakes, it allows us all to be more actively engaged with our lives.
- Reading is a way to enter places familiar and unimagined. I have seen students enter into stories in classes all over the school, from deep reflection and discussion on Dave Eggers' *What Is the What* in eighth grade to various picture books read in the preschool yard by Greg while eager students crowd around him.
- Life can have hard moments when students need to step back to regroup, and even adults benefit from a quick moment of reflection. I recommend adults also get into the practice of "taking a break" once in a while.
- Learning is active with experiments, manipulatives, and movement helping to support students to go deeper in their understanding.
- Teachers are working to make learning constructivist as they support students to wrestle with big concepts.

- Athletics are another reflection of our inclusive practices as so many students are playing MS sports. I know this may be the last time students are able to play on their school teams, and it is wonderful to see so many coaches supporting their athletic development.
- Play is important all over the CDS campus, and the most fun to watch has been the connections being made between our older students and their younger buddies.

All in all, I have been in every classroom multiple times and have connected with so many of you through back to school nights, the welcome potluck, the PTTA meeting, and other adult events. Thank you to all of you who have already volunteered your time to support CDS and those of you who have already contributed to the Annual Fund. Your commitment to CDS is deeply felt in so many ways.

Thank you for the warmth and generous way you have welcomed me, from the morning smiles and high fives to the thoughtful emails. As I continue to learn and get to know you and the community, I want to make sure I am as accessible as possible. Please feel free to reach out to me or Patricia if you want to set up a time to talk in person or over the phone. If it is easier, I have set up a **CDS Suggestion, Question, or Concern Box** for any ideas you may want to share. If you leave your contact details, I will respond to you directly; if you prefer to remain anonymous, I will be tracking any responses or follow up actions to keep us all accountable.

And, in case you didn't know...Halloween is coming!

Fondly,  
Shelly AKA Shel Shel

A few thoughtful articles I have recently enjoyed include:

- [How I Know You Wrote Your Kid's College Essay](#) - I wonder how this connects to the work our current 8th graders are doing as they apply to high school. I confess I still sometimes have the habit of double spaces after a period.
- [Six Things Parents Can Do to Raise Kids to be Confident Decision Makers](#) - I am going to use the “seems like” and “sounds like” language this week.

- [Five Proven Benefits of Play](#) - Enough said - this is something we all should prioritize.
- Not an article, but a series of podcasts that have been provoking conversations among the adults at CDS by [Carvell Wallace](#) that are worth a listen.