

Grandparents and Special Friends - 11.22.2017

Welcome to Grandparents and Special Friends Visiting Day! I think many of us at Grace would agree that this morning is one of our very favorite days of the year. We love to see you in communion with your grandchildren and special friends sharing the Grace experience and a moment in time with each other. I am Jen Danish, Grace's Head of School and this is happily my second year. We hope that you will enjoy seeing our students up close inside their classrooms and on this stage behind me shortly. Before we move on with the rest of the morning, I wanted to share just a few thoughts about change and constancy at Grace. These themes are on my mind today since you - our grandparents and special friends - are one of the critical constants that ground us during what I see as a time of dizzying change in our world.

Recently, we gathered as a faculty to reflect on what should *never* change here at Grace. Even as we embrace innovation and twenty-first century skills in our approach to teaching, we want to identify the things that we must always retain as our core identity and reason for being. As I know you are aware, the world has changed more in the last ten years than in any other decade in human history. I imagine this dizzying change is as astounding to all of you as it is to me. After all, I remember attending college when there was only one building you would seek out on campus to work on a computer! And one of the jobs I held in college was converting a physical card catalogue in the library into something digital. Yet today, I can order any book I want to read and it appears on my doorstep the next morning, or in my e-reader in 2 minutes

Speaking of books, last year I picked up a compelling book about this rate of change by Thomas Friedman entitled *Thank You For Being Late: An Optimist's Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations*. It is meant to offer a road map to the dynamic world we find ourselves in. Much of Friedman's message is meant to inspire us to embrace this accelerating world as best we can. He writes:

“There is only one way to thrive now, and it's by finding and creating your own eye. The eye of a hurricane moves, along with the storm. It draws energy from it, while creating a sanctuary of stability inside it. It is both dynamic and stable—and so must we be. We can't escape these accelerations. We have to dive into them, take advantage of their energy and flows where possible, move with them, use them to learn faster, design smarter, and collaborate deeper—all so we can build our own eyes to anchor and propel ourselves and our families confidently forward.”

I really like the metaphor of the hurricane's eye as a representation of how we might approach change. And it brings me back to that faculty conversation about what must *never* change at Grace. With all of this acceleration in our world, we can find a “sanctuary of stability” in the eye by embracing what we believe are constants for children -- seeing them for who they are, teaching to their heart and their mind, and providing a school community that is truly inclusive. And as we hold onto that stability, we can also draw energy from the walls of the hurricane that is swirling around us. One small way we are making this possible at Grace is with our newly opened makerspace - recently student

named the SCIL Lab - which stands for Super Creator's Imagination Lab -down the hall. I hope you will have a chance to see it. With funds raised by the Class of 2017, we opened this space - designed and imagined by our students - for the exploration of design and the opportunity to make and build within the fields of science and technology, and for our students to see themselves as resourceful change agents who can solve big problems. It has also morphed from a space that called for individual work on personal computers to one that invites creation and collaboration, and that celebrates the *process*, rather than just the *product*, of creative thinking. We are so delighted to have this space in our building and we are letting our students lead us to new heights as they continue their explorations there.

I wish you a wonderful morning sharing Grace with your grandchild or special friend. As I mentioned earlier, you are an important anchor and constant in our changing world. The connection you share with us is also something we value and hold onto steadfastly as this hurricane of change continues its swirl. And the love of grandparents who truly see the best in us - unconditionally - well, that is the fuel children thrive on as they continue on their educational journey and soar into the exciting world that awaits them. Thank you for your love and support and for being with us today!