

As I begin writing this, I find myself peering out my office windows at all of the students enjoying their final hours of recess together at the end of what has been a busy and exciting year together at Grace. What I see from where I sit today are the rewards of a year spent together learning the value of collaboration and connection. Our students know each other well and understand each of their friends' likes and dislikes. They are settled into a comfortable pattern of play that allows them to be happy and content with one another. Much of their play is in small groups where they are working together to carry out an elaborate game or build some wonderful new creation with twigs or flowers or found treasures. This open-ended time outside on the playground is some of the best evidence of our community and its norms and of the rich outcomes that play provides in helping students to grow and develop even as they reach Grade 5. In having time to navigate friendships each day, our students are growing into confident and capable members of a community with an ability to communicate their own needs and understand the needs of their peers.

This final week of school is often an emotional one as all of us are anticipating the transition to summer. Students and teachers alike look forward to the open-ended months ahead at the same time that they are processing a new change about to unfold. Especially for our Grade 5 students, this is a time of many mixed emotions. There will be so many exciting changes to come in Grade 6, but it is not always easy to leave what has been a school home for many years. The Class of 2018 has contributed much in their time here as students, and all of us will miss their extraordinary warmth, their sense of humor, their creativity, and their leadership. We will be delighted to see them return when they can with stories of their new destinations. There is no doubt that they leave behind a legacy of "grace" to their younger classmates who now move into the grade above them with new expectations and new promise.

Deep learning in the intention of academic excellence has unfolded this last year at Grace. Our Super Creator Imagination Lab (SCIL) has been a wonderful new hub of creative exploration and problem solving for our students. We want to thank the many of you that contributed items for us to make and create with in the Lab! We are eager to build on the work that this space has ignited and we thank Ms. Comas for her leadership in making it come to life. We have enjoyed our usual wonderful traditions but also welcomed some new additions, including an arts grant from Don and Ann Hague that brought us visiting performers from Artivate in Silver Spring and allowed us to learn more about Latin and South African cultures. Each of these performances engaged our students through song and movement, and we are so delighted to have had these connections with artists in our local community.

This week, when you have all begun your summers, we will gather as a faculty and staff to wrap up a year of exciting work while we also look ahead to September. As I often do this time of year, I am particularly grateful for our stellar faculty and all of the care and attention they devote to your children each and every day. There isn't a day that goes by when I don't witness some small and very meaningful interactions transpire between teachers and their students at Grace. They bring creativity and passion to their work and they strive to offer their students great agency in their learning. When we see them present a prayer in chapel, make an

announcement in assembly, perform in a show like Seussical, or talk at length about the state they researched for the State Fair, we get to witness their growth in powerful ways. So much care and encouragement from our faculty goes into these moments of public engagement for our students. Our teachers work hard each year to discover the interests and curiosities in their students so that they can help them stretch, grow, and deepen their thinking.

As we prepare to break for a well-deserved summer vacation, I want to thank all of you for sharing your children with us, for your presence and contributions to our community, and your trust and faith in our faculty and our program. My gratitude goes especially to the PTO for all of your hard work this year. Your persistent commitment to building our community and strengthening Grace is so appreciated and a large reason for the wonderful spirit of togetherness we can share as a school. My personal thanks to Jennifer Bonaguide who has been a chair for the last two years and an enormous support to me in my beginnings as Head of School. We will miss her in this role tremendously, but can surely count on her continued presence in the school as an engaged parent and volunteer!

Finally, I do hope you enjoy some days off of your own with your children reading great books, being outside in the sun, and soaking up some time for restoration and reflection. I know I will be taking in some precious time with my two children now that both will be in college beginning this fall. Some of the greatest growth your child experiences in life is likely to happen in the summer when they have time to try new things or dig into a passion or interest. Be sure to give them space to wonder and be lazy while also listening for a new interest or path they may want to pursue. Wherever summer takes you, know that we look forward to seeing you again the fall. I am grateful we have had another year to grow in grace together.