

GRACE

WINTER 2018

notes

GRACE EPISCOPAL DAY SCHOOL



*Learning. Commitment.
Belonging.*



W I N T E R 2 0 1 8



GRACE

EPISCOPAL DAY SCHOOL



MISSION STATEMENT

Grace Episcopal Day School will provide every student the opportunity for academic excellence in a caring, nurturing moral environment that embraces diversity and promotes creativity, self-confidence, and service to others.

DIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT

Grace Episcopal Day School is a community of students, teachers, parents, and administrators that cares about and respects all people within and outside the walls of the school. We model and teach love for all humanity, and we value the contributions and perspectives of each individual.

Our community welcomes all who share these values regardless of differences such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, family composition, sexual orientation, disability, and socio-economic status. Grace Episcopal Day School is committed to preparing students to live, work, and thrive in a diverse America and a global society.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Grace Episcopal Day School does not discriminate on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, religion, gender, disability, or sexual orientation in the administration of its education programs, admission policies, employment practices, financial aid programs, or any other school programs or activities.

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LETTER *from the Head of School*



Welcome to our annual edition of the Grace Magazine and Annual Report of Giving, now entitled *Grace Notes*. It has been an exciting year of growth and innovation at Grace and we are delighted to share some of the highlights with you.

One thing you will surely notice immediately is our magazine's name change. The word *grace* lends itself to many a phrase, but in this case, *Grace Notes* felt like the right one, being a musical term. It highlights an increased focus on creativity here in our school -- not only thanks to our vibrant art and music programs, but throughout our curriculum, in our everyday habits, and even in our play.

Our mission statement has included a commitment to the promotion of creativity for students for close to 60 years. And as we continue to grow and evolve as an institution with an eye toward the skills most necessary for our students now and in the future, we are delighted to see an emerging emphasis on creativity as one of these necessary mindsets.

We hope you will enjoy the reading about creativity in this year's *Grace Notes*, not only in our featured article "Cultivating Creativity" (pp. 8-9) but also in other areas outside the

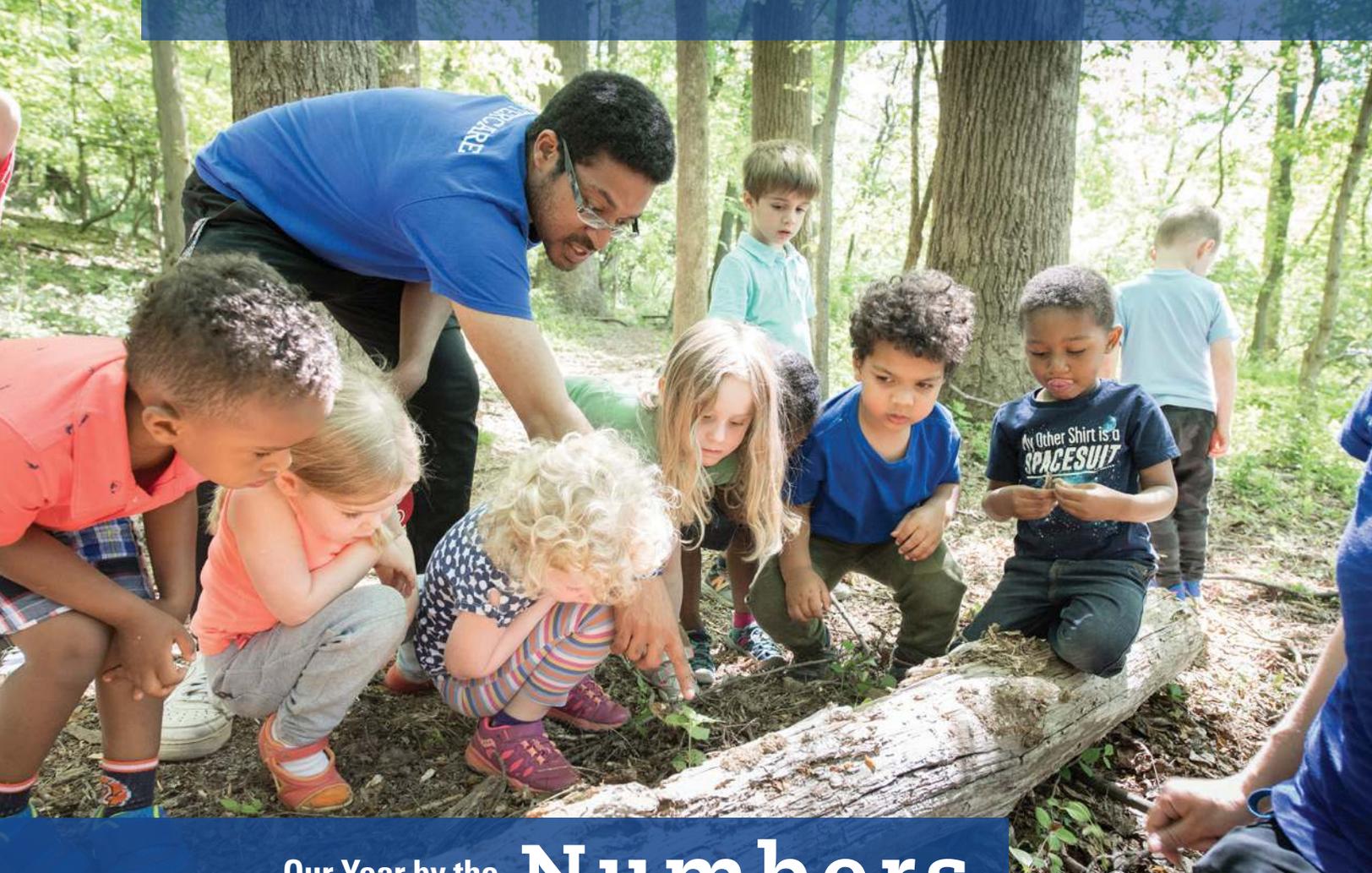


arts: the way that we are using online tools to connect with artists (p. 10), to our own poetry (p. 15), to our innovative thinking in the areas of school administration (with the introduction of our Variable Tuition program, p. 7) and marketing (as members of the inaugural cohort of NAIS Strategy Lab, p. 11).

A grace note is also an ornamentation, something that adds to the larger melody of a composition. Likewise, though this magazine is an essential part of our efforts to keep alumni engaged and informed, it is only one of the ways that we can stay connected with you. What we really want is two-way communication with our alumni!

We want to see you on campus, gathered around bonfires and making s'mores at the Pep Rally in the fall (see p. 15 to find out what you missed this year!). We want to see your best dance moves for the dance-off with Santa at our Community Christmas Tree Lighting in December, and to hear your voice at Christmas Chapel at Grace Church. We want to see the twinkle in your eyes at our Annual Auction in April. We want to hear your voices on social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, or any way you choose to engage with us. So please reach out and share your information with us at alumni@geds.org. We would love to hear from you.





Our Year by the **Numbers**

12

more students on opening day than last year

Girls on the Run 5K races run in 2017

2

89

portraits taken at Grandparents and Special Friends Day

28

years of our Grade 5 students attending Echo Hill Outdoor School

Events at Grace Church

3

3

Firepits at the Pep Rally, which was a crisp 55 degrees

Walkers' Club award recipients

4

Grace Launches Variable Tuition

Becomes the first school in the area to implement an indexed tuition program

In 2018, Grace Episcopal Day School became the first independent school in Greater Washington to launch a Variable Tuition program. This radical reinvention means that rather than offer financial aid packages to families, Grace offers a range of tuitions. Our ideal is that each family's tuition -- a figure that represents the portion of the full cost of a Grace education that a family is required to pay -- be in line with what that family can afford to contribute.

Indexed, flexible, or individualized tuition is quickly becoming a trend in the independent school world, as schools race to attract more families to enroll by addressing issues of affordability. As the first school in the area to put such a program into place, Grace has become a thought leader in this area. At the request of the Association of Independent Schools of Maryland (AIMS), Grace leadership including Head of School Jennifer Danish, Director of Admission and Variable Tuition Karen O'Connor-Floman, and CFO Kathy Murray offered a half-day seminar to other area schools interested in exploring such a program at their own schools. It was attended by over 30 leaders representing just under 20 area independent schools.

The shift from "financial aid" to Variable Tuition is more than semantic. It reflects our school's foundational commitment to building a socioeconomically diverse student body and an inclusive school community. We achieve our goals when all enrolled families know that they are making an equitable contribution to their child's education -- which makes all families equal contributors to school life.



"Grace's mission, since our founding in 1960, has been to create a school for Greater Washington where everyone feels like they belong. We believe our school community is stronger when it reflects the diversity surrounding us. We are impelled by our mission and our morals to welcome students and families of varying financial means as equal partners in the project of educating Grace students."

*– Jennifer S. Danish
Head of School*

Cultivating Creativity

“A creative life is an amplified life. It’s a bigger life, a happier life, an expanded life . . . Living in this manner -- continually and stubbornly bringing forth the jewels that are hidden within you -- is a fine art, in and of itself.”

– Elizabeth Gilbert, *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear*

Our first admission program for parents this year focused on the arts at Grace. Prospective parents had time to experience art and music as if they were students with our talented teachers, Kristin Smith and Emily Gould. We chose this focus to highlight the value of creativity as a mindset at Grace, not just in these two disciplines, but throughout our curriculum.

The World Economic Forum recently surveyed 350 executives across 9 industries in 15 of the world’s biggest economies to generate a report on the The Future of Jobs. In this report, the top three skills highlighted as important for the job market in 2020 include complex problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity. As educators, we would argue that problem solving and critical thinking skills are both amplified by a healthy dose of creativity.

At Grace, students have dedicated time to unleash their creativity as artists and musicians. Beyond these disciplines, they have time each week to enter our SCIL (Super Creator Imagination Lab) space and work with our science and technology teacher and Director of Innovation, Christine Comas, to extend their learning three-dimensionally by doing free-form tinkering and building, or participating in specific design challenges. Giving our students time and space to create allows them to see their thinking in action and observe an idea or a problem from a new angle. Many times, it requires them to work together and to extend one another’s ideas. It also ignites their curiosity about what they are learning in new and fresh ways.

Recess on our 11-acre campus is another way that creativity blossoms during open-ended play. Most days at school, you can look out to the playground and see complex games underway. Groups of students might be hard at play, structuring their own games and challenges; or they may be working together collecting natural elements for a pretend cooking project or for a natural sculpture or scene. Students collaborate creatively each day on our playground, and they require no adult direction to carry out their vision.



This play and creating -- both planned and spontaneous -- that happens at Grace brings to mind the work of artist Andy Goldsworthy. Goldsworthy uses many elements of nature to create his permanent and semi-permanent pieces. He writes: "Ideas must be put to the test. That's why we make things, otherwise they would be no more than ideas. There is often a huge difference between an idea and its realization. I've had what I thought were great ideas that just didn't work."

Giving Grace students ample time and space to explore, iterate, test, and most of all create, continues to be a worthy way to help them realize their ideas both big and small and to cultivate their creative selves. Because creating often requires courage, we are committed to practicing and allowing students to try. We want to give them opportunities to grapple with the fact that they may not realize their vision the first time, and help them develop the courage to try again. We often ask our students what they wonder about or how they can best show us what they are thinking. We will also continue to ask them what they want to create and bring into the world.



"Because creating often requires COURAGE, we are COMMITTED to PRACTICING and ALLOWING STUDENTS to TRY."

Making Artistic Connections

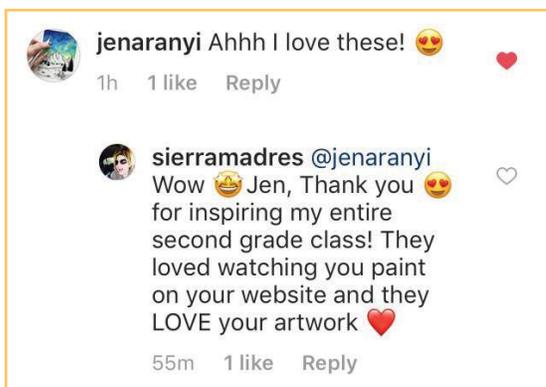
Student art fills the hallways at Grace and makes our school a gallery of beauty, discovery, and wonder. But for those who are not in our building on a regular basis -- alumni, extended family, and friends of Grace -- it can be easy to miss the beautiful work being created by our students. Grace art teacher Emily Gould has introduced an innovative solution by harnessing the power of social media to share student work and to generate conversation about it.



By using an online platform called Artsonia, which bills itself as “the largest student art museum in the world,” Ms. Gould makes sure that each Grace student has an online art gallery and portfolio. Artsonia allows family members and invited guests to view student artwork and comment on it. The Grace Artsonia address is: www.artsonia.com/schools/school.asp?id=3389. Check it out and get inspired!

Ms. Gould is also particularly great at staying in touch with living artists whose work inspires her and her students. She often tags artists directly on Instagram to let them know how inspired we are by their work, and to share our pieces with them. Sometimes, they even write back!

The art project above is inspired by the work of Maryland artist Jen Aranyi. Jen is an artist, illustrator, and graphic designer. I discovered Jen’s artwork on Instagram and I LOVE it . . . turns out, so do my Grade 2 artists. And it seems Jen loves our artwork back!



Students also drew panda bears inspired by the book *Chengdu* written by children’s book author and illustrator Barney Saltzberg. Barney has written several well-known children’s books. He saw Grace student art and commented.

Grace Chosen as Inaugural Member of NAIS Strategy Lab 2018

In the spring of 2018, Grace was selected to be part of the inaugural cohort of NAIS Strategy Lab. Hosted by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), the initiative will help drive innovation in independent schools around the country.

As key contributors to the project, leaders from Grace have had the chance to work with four other schools to develop and test strategic planning frameworks and processes. "Opportunities and challenges exist for every school," notes NAIS president Donna Orem. "The Strategy Lab Project will help independent schools identify how they can thrive in a changing landscape. This is not a one-size-fits-all approach. We selected schools willing to be bold in the creation and implementation of strategy."

"We are honored that NAIS recognized our school as a place with a well-defined identity populated by a set of flexible thinkers and the desire to grow," says Head of School Jennifer Danish.

The work of the Strategy Lab is based on the "Jobs to Be Done" theory from Harvard Business School professor and innovation guru Clayton Christensen. Jobs Theory serves to "expose the functional, social, and emotional dimensions that explain why customers make the choices they do." Applying Jobs Theory to education lets school leadership focus on innovation driven by consumer demand and also to identify, refine, and communicate their unique identities in a crowded market.

Head of School Jennifer Danish and Director of Admission and Variable Tuition Karen O'Connor-Floman spent several extended periods of time this summer and fall at NAIS headquarters in Washington, DC, working with leaders from the other schools chosen for the inaugural cohort (Allendale Columbia School, The Darrow School, Grosse Pointe Academy, and Providence Country Day School).

The mentoring that Grace has received from NAIS leaders in innovation, as well as from the Re-Wired Marketing Group, has been invaluable as we continue to move Grace forward in this very competitive market. Jobs Theory is an innovative way to look at our purpose as an independent school, to innovate our approach, and to refine our messaging to prospective families. This deep dive into disruptive innovation and Jobs Theory is sure to support Grace as we continue to define our specific niche in the competitive DC area independent school market.



NAIS President Donna Orem and Grace Head of School Jennifer Danish take time to catch up at the Fall NAIS Strategy Lab meetings.

Graduation

2018

Sending our Grade 5 Gryphons out into the world at the end of their final year at Grace is always exciting and emotional. Some of our favorite traditions are the last-day-of-school "Clap Out," when the whole school lines the halls to celebrate our Grade 5 students as they walk out of the building one last time; our Grade 5 BBQ filled with moving tributes from Mr. LaPietra to each student; and graduation itself, followed by the schoolwide picnic afterwards. We welcome family members, friends, alumni and their parents, our Board, spiritual leaders, and other friends of Grace to these festivities.



During this week, we take time to celebrate the transitions that happen in our lives -- and we encourage our graduates to move forward boldly and joyfully, knowing that they are always connected to Grace and always have a home here.

At our 2018 Graduation, we had the pleasure of welcoming the then-candidate and now-elected Montgomery County Council At-Large Member Will Jawando, who gave a moving speech about his own experiences growing up in Montgomery County, especially as a young man of color, and of his hopes and dreams for all young people (including his three young daughters). We are pleased to share some excerpts and highlights with you here:

Graduation ceremonies are special. They're fun. It marks a milestone and an achievement -- you'll be marking these special occasions today, and again at the end of middle school, then again at the end of high school, and then college.

So graduations really don't celebrate an end. They celebrate points on a journey. They celebrate opportunity and accomplishments of today, but also of tomorrow -- of opportunity and accomplishments yet to come. Because learning never ends.

Grace has a Diversity Mission Statement that focuses on preparing students for a global community -- recognizing that people come in all forms, colors and backgrounds. That's really important, especially here in Montgomery County. Of the nation's 10-most diverse cities, four of them are here in our county -- Rockville, Gaithersburg, Germantown and Silver Spring. Our diversity is a strength. But it comes with a challenge. When we all come from different cultures, it's really important we



respect and welcome differences -- even when those differences come in ways we don't anticipate or even understand.

The Montgomery County Public School district is one of the largest and most diverse in the nation. Yet only in the last year did MCPS, partnering with the teachers' union, initiate cultural sensitivity training for teachers, paraeducators and administrators. That's critical because one thing we know -- and it is embedded in the Mission Statement of Grace Episcopal Day School, I know because I did my homework -- is that given the opportunity to learn, any child can achieve. We just need to give these children the opportunity. All our children. Not just some. All. Montgomery County offers great promise. But for many, that promise was never in reach. And for others today, that promise is slipping away. We need to keep the promise to everyone.

Today I have three daughters. Like all of you in this room, I know the anxiety of caring for a child and wanting nothing but the best for them. We have many challenges ahead of us as a community of caring, principled people. Even as we give the very best to our children, those challenges prevail upon us to refrain from the instinct of pulling the ladder up behind us.

So I ask that you carry this forward from today. Rejoice in the joyful milestones of life, whether they are your own or those of your children. Celebrate the work of Grace Episcopal Day School -- a great school in the heart of our community that recognizes the promise granted to every child. Find time for community service -- either you students, or you parents -- because you can never be too busy for helping steer our community, and our country, back on the course of opportunity for all. And as our nation, our state and our county move forward through times of division, anger and distrust -- find a moment to offer someone else a kind word of love and understanding -- and grace.

Looking across these faces, I am excited for things that this group of kids is going to grow up and do. I'm excited for the opportunity to grow old in a world that will be shaped by you, by your love and grace, and the things you will accomplish.

Congratulations, thank you, and God bless you!

– Will Jawando

W E L C O M E

Melissa Lafionatis

Learning Specialist



In our ongoing work of creating a community that cultivates academic excellence for all students, we welcomed a new Learning Specialist, Melissa Lafionatis, to Grace Episcopal Day School for the 2018-2019 school year. The move from part-time content specialists in reading and math to a full-time Learning Specialist is an important one at Grace. Although we are missing the presence of Beth Frentrup and Anna Young, our content specialists and big contributors to life at Grace, we are thrilled at the way Ms. Lafionatis has jumped right in to the Grace community. She has already implemented systems and supports that help us serve the needs of our students in all areas

of their learning and across the entire spectrum of abilities, with special focus on strengthening skills in reading, math, executive functioning, social skills, and written expression. She is collaborating with teachers and administrators and serving as point person on our Child Study Teams. And she has also taken on the role of co-sponsor of Student Council and our newly-initiated student newspaper!

An experienced educator, Ms. Lafionatis is in her eighth year of teaching. She holds a B.S. in Merchandising, Apparel, and Textiles from the University of Kentucky and planned for a job in design and retail, but quickly realized that she wanted to work with children. After two years as a first grade assistant teacher at Holy Trinity, she was hooked. Her aunt, who is a reading specialist, encouraged her to look into becoming a speech and language pathologist, so she went back to school earned her M.S. in Communication Science and Disorders from James Madison University.

After five years at the Harbour School in Baltimore as a speech pathologist, Ms. Lafionatis realized that she loved collaborating with other teachers in order to create the most effective environment for everyone. When she saw the posting for the Learning Specialist job at Grace, it felt like it was meant to be. She had grown up very close to the Grace community in Chevy Chase, and had a neighbor who attended the school and loved it. "When I came for my interview," she says, "I fell in love with the community." When asked what she likes best about Grace, Ms. Lafionatis answered:

There is an incredible sense of camaraderie and joint purpose at Grace. In my role as Learning Specialist, I have a lot of flexibility in how I approach my job. I am able to use my time in a way that's most effective for everyone and to help students and teachers get what they need. I also love the fact that every classroom at Grace has its own feel, and they all positively contribute to Grace as a whole.

Recently, Grace parents had the chance to meet Ms. Lafionatis for a Q&A session and hear more about her philosophy as Learning Specialist. She says:

There are no two children who are the exact same. This is true for learning as well. Every child is a unique learner, who brings a skill set all their own to every learning experience. By embracing and supporting this notion, not only as educators and parents, but also with the children themselves, we can better provide each student with the tools they need to be successful in the classroom and beyond. Collaboration and open communication between classroom teachers and the Learning Specialist are essential parts of this process, helping to maximize learning within the classroom.

We are thrilled to have Melissa Lafionatis as part of the Grace community.

Pep Rally for Grace

We've got spirit, yes we do! The Pep Rally for Grace is our new fall tradition, an adults-only "friendraiser" that invites the entire community for fun, friends, food, and Grace spirit on a crisp October evening. For the past two years, we have welcomed current families, teachers, and staff, as well as Grace alumni students and alumni parents, for an awesome evening out back celebrating.

At the Pep Rally, we gather around fire pits to make s'mores and bask in the glow of our love for Grace. With food trucks, music, and dancing, it's a festive event designed to remind us of the connections and nurturing that not only students, but also parents and families, experience when they choose to be a part of the Grace community.

Look out for a save-the-date announcement for the Fall 2019 Pep Rally. We'd love to see you there!



Poets' Corner



Grace Librarian Anne Sheldon is a talented storyteller and poet. She recently published the following poem in the Anglican Theological Review (Spring 2018).

Seventy Years

Build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their produce, take wives and have sons and daughters. – Jeremiah 29:5-6

The walls were golden through the afternoon, the house was cool, but every Sabbath eve my mother wept for home. I marched my clay dolls up and down the courtyard till she stopped and Father gathered us for prayer.

My husband, too, was pious, and very fond of apricots. In He Hears From Afar Street we kept a spice shop. I taught my girls to weave, we prayed at home, and laid our little son where Jews are buried under palms within the curve of the canal; and Yahweh made His Name to dwell between the garlic cloves, to rise with clouds of rosemary and lamb.

Now, a widow with no memories of Zion, I help my daughters pack the chest my father brought from Judah. Parsing out my husband's linen for their big sons, they chant, Jerusalem, Jerusalem! I mend in silence. My chosen lie in Babylon.

ANNE SHELDON

Gryphon Fund

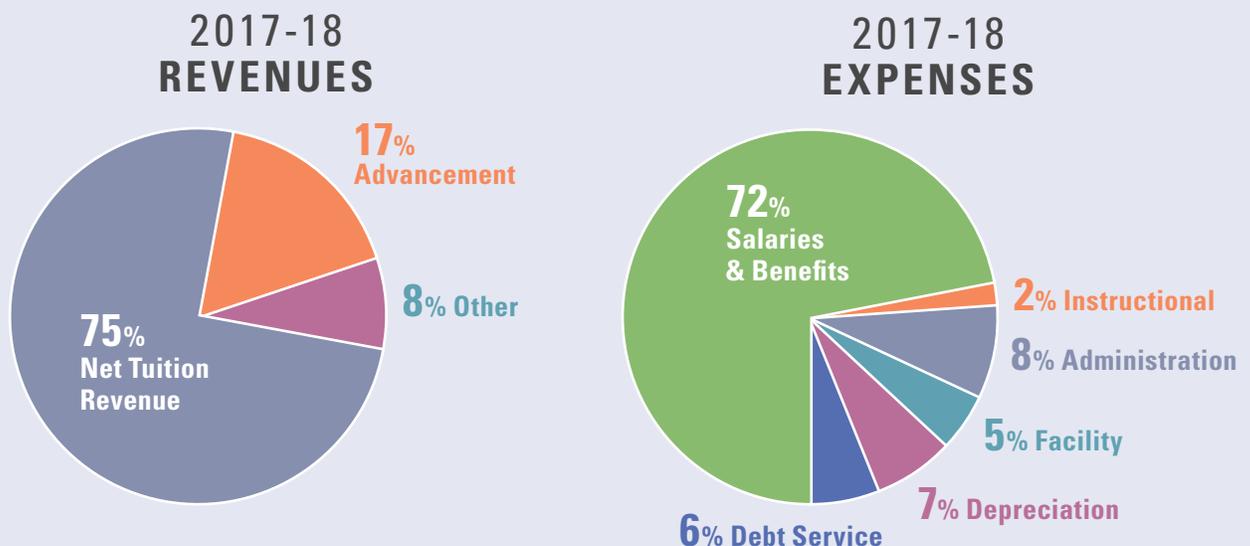
Donations to the Gryphon Fund (formerly Annual Fund) provide unrestricted monies for use during the current academic year. These gifts allow us to meet our highest priority needs inside and outside the classroom, and therefore make an immediate positive impact on the students and programs at Grace. This is the single most important gift you can make to Grace each year. We rely on every member of the Grace community to give commensurate with their financial ability. No gift is too small or too large! Your Gryphon Fund donation is an investment in the education of every Grace student, and is a vital part of the school's operating budget.

Grace Scholars Fund for Variable Tuition

In 2013, Grace's commitment to diversity on all levels, including socio-economic, inspired the creation of the Grace Scholars Fund for financial support. To further extend this commitment, in 2018, Grace Episcopal Day School became the first Metro DC independent school to launch a Variable Tuition program (see p. 7). Gifts to the Grace Scholars Fund for Variable Tuition support this robust program, and help Grace to enroll students who otherwise would not be able to attend. Your gift to the Grace Scholars Fund positively impacts the entire student body.

The Betty House Legacy Society

We invite you to consider joining the Betty House Legacy Society by including a gift to Grace Episcopal Day School as part of your estate planning. Always a warm and cheerful presence, retired Executive Assistant Mrs. House's welcoming ways exemplified those of the Grace community at large, and served as a daily reminder that at Grace we are a family. A planned gift provides long term support to the school (exactly like Mrs. House!) and gives tax benefits for the donor. We will work with you to create a giving strategy that meets your needs and achieves your charitable goals. Please contact Becky Mulholland, Director of Advancement, at bmulholland@geds.org for more information about a legacy gift to Grace.



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