

GRACE

WINTER 2019-2020

notes

GRACE EPISCOPAL DAY SCHOOL



*Learning. Commitment.
Belonging.*



WINTER 2019-2020



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.



BOARD OF GOVERNORS 2018-2019

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WELCOME TO

Grace Notes

Welcome to Grace Notes, our annual magazine and report of giving. We are excited to share some of the ways that our school and students have taken flight this year!

At Grace, we often speak about the four Cs that are considered essential student skills in 21st century education: Creativity, Communication, Critical Thinking, and Collaboration. Last year's Grace Notes was focused on Creativity with a capital "C." This year's highlight article "Finding Your Voice" (pp. 8-9) brings focus to Communication and offers schoolwide examples of the way that Grace is infusing expression and oracy into our curriculum. The moving artwork that accompanies this article showcases the dreams of our small but mighty Grade 5 class, and shows the way that children see themselves when given the chance to imagine their futures.

We continue to be surprised and delighted by the way that creativity and student-led learning enriches the experience of our students. One recent example has had me smiling all fall and spring. On many a day, I have glanced out my window to see students in Grade 1 flying paper airplanes. I have noted more than once that some of the flight patterns of these homemade crafts are long and loopy and filled with glide. On other occasions, I have been at recess, dismissal, or aftercare when there is not only flying, but also building, going on.

In talking with Grade 1 teacher Belkis Aponte about this new excitement amongst her students, I learned a few things. First, our students are engaged in some exciting design work through play. Given some time and space on our wonderful open campus, they can spend an entire recess perfecting their creations. What if the flaps are folded down? Or what if the plane is a little heavier? Does the kind of paper we use matter? Second, we are seeing evidence of persistence and unbridled joy born out of a commitment of time and thinking about how to build the most aerodynamic and long-flying planes. Try and try and try again is what is occurring without any structure to the activity. Third, this enthusiasm is spilling out into the entire school as more classes get in on the action of building and flying.

Finally, as a Maryland Green School (article on pp. 10-11), we are seeing our students continue to become more thoughtful about their impact on the environment. Our most enthusiastic builders are not just blindly barging forward; they have stopped and thought about the resources they are using, and are very focused on not wasting paper. They've approached students in Grade 4 -- Grace's official recycling captains -- for weekly recycled paper loads they can use for planes. I can't think of a better example of the four Cs -- Creativity, Communication, Critical Thinking, and Collaboration -- coming together more beautifully.



All of this has me thinking about a concept that Christine Comas, our Director of Innovation, and I have been circling around recently, which is the notion of fearless learning. As an aspiration and an outcome of the work we do with students at Grace, I hope that they will gain more resilience and lean into their frustration when something does not go as planned the first, second, or even third time.

We hope you enjoy the rest of our magazine this year, which offers wonderful examples of the ways the four Cs continue to enrich our school. We thank our newspaper club for their Creativity in writing “Echo Hill By the Numbers” on p. 6. You can read about some other Cs in this issue: Community (pp. 12-13), where we highlight some of the refreshed traditions that unite our current and alumni students and parents; and Compassion (p. 15), which was our schoolwide theme for 2018-2019 and which Jen Danish and Congressman Jamie Raskin emphasized in their speeches at graduation in June. And we humbly think there’s no better example of artistic creativity than our new mascot Gray Gryphon -- designed by Chris Marlow and given a gender-neutral name by popular student and parent vote (p. 7).

In our own commitment to being a Green School, we will not produce hard copies of the magazine this year, but instead make it available as a PDF on our website. We thank you for reading, and welcome your thoughts and feedback.

Jennifer Danish, Head of School
Karen O’Connor-Floman, Editor in Chief





ECHO HILL 2019

By The Numbers

0

the amount of times they told us what time it was

9

delicious, divine, scrumptious meals eaten

2

bald eagles spotted flying majestically through the air

10,000

stinkbugs in the tents



3

original songs created and performed by Grade 5

4

hydrangea bushes planted

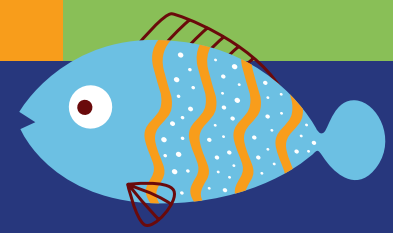


7

salads made in the garden out of herbs

8

fish caught and named, including 4 catfish named Medium Mole, Sir Gills, Lemon Jr., and Bob



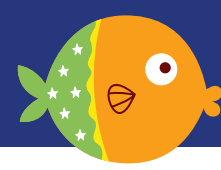
3

very aggressive goats



40 ft. maximum

the height of the big swing



6

fish kissed



INTRODUCING Gray Gryphon

Our return to school this fall was even more joyous than usual. As we kicked off the year at our traditional opening ceremony for parents and students, we met our new Gryphon mascot.

While Grace has had an official logo with our shield and school name for many years, we've never had a proper representation of our Gryphon mascot. Talented graphic artist Chris Marlow worked together with Head of School Jen Danish to design a mascot that would embody the spirit and values of our school: optimistic, fun, proud, inclusive, and equal parts friendly and brave. We wanted to create a Gryphon that our elementary school

students would be proud to call their own. The next step was to choose a name for our Gryphon. In keeping with our commitment to inclusion, our school leadership decided to propose four gender-neutral names for the Gryphon. Students were offered the chance to vote by secret ballot at school, and parents, alumni, and friends of Grace had the opportunity to weigh in via Facebook and Instagram. The winner -- by a hair -- was Gray.

Please join us in welcoming Gray Gryphon, and get ready to show your Gryphon pride! Look for our mascot on tote bags and car magnets, and stay tuned for more spirit items.

FINDING

Your Voice

by Head of School Jen Danish

“Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with deeper meaning.”

– Maya Angelou

I can remember with great clarity the moments in my young life when I had to speak in front of a group for the first time. It took so much courage to stand before adults and peers and play a witch in third grade. I can barely remember the “before” of that moment, however, and how scared I must have been. What has stayed with me is the exhilaration I felt when it was over and I heard from my parents and friends that I was convincing as a mean and terrible witch! I felt a kind of power that I would work to cultivate and hold in my growing self over many more years.

In the fall, students in Grades 4 and 5 prepared speeches as part of their campaigns to hold offices in our student government at Grace. The lead-up to this time of year often takes me back to my own moments as a student when I too had to find the courage to speak. Each year more than a dozen students prepare posters and work on written remarks that will be shared in an assembly with their classmates in Grades 2-5. They are all quite remarkable to hear. Each student offers ideas for making Grace a stronger school, and bake sales tend to be a common initiative. But what you also hear in these testimonies is a reflection of what matters at Grace: kindness, helping others, and offering leadership that is thoughtful, representative, and compassionate. It is one of the most mission-affirming days of the year.

This year, we had one candidate for secretary who has been a student at Grace since Kindergarten. Limited in speech and mobility but not spirit, Ali delivered her remarks with the assistance of her iPad and a voice device which we were able to connect to our sound system. While the voice is automated, Ali’s facial expressions when she listens to her own words convey her emotion behind the

sentences. She can even be seen laughing at some of her own jokes. In her student council speech, Ali shared, “I am strong. I am powerful. I am smart. That is why I want to be secretary.” A core message of her speech was: “Do not underestimate me because of my disability.” Our community was overjoyed when Ali was announced as the winner for secretary. She had delivered her message and been heard.

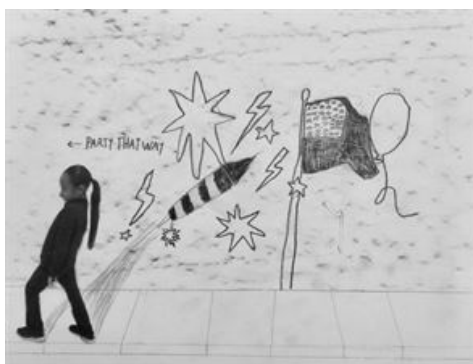
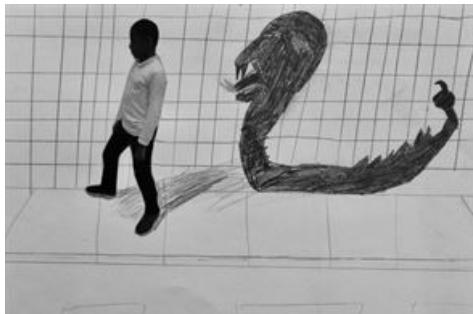
“As a school that welcomes children for their first real school experience and takes seriously the project of preparing them for a future we cannot predict, we value the time we invest in helping our students to build their confidence and agency through speaking and presenting their ideas and their prayers.”

Listening to Ali and her peers, it struck me that Grace is committed to making spoken communication a central learning focus for students when they are at Grace. Called “oracy” in Great Britain, it’s the art of spoken expression. We recognize that communication, as one of the four Cs of 21st century teaching and learning, will be increasingly central to the success of our young students when they go on to have speaking opportunities in secondary school, when they interview for colleges, and ultimately when they are seeking jobs in the workforce. Beyond that, strong oracy allows us to be heard and understood, and there is no greater need as humans than to feel like others know and understand what we are saying.

At Grace, we work to create a trajectory of opportunities that encourage and teach children to speak and communicate effectively — with each other, with adults, to a crowd. Beginning when students are in Kindergarten at Grace, each class is invited to offer personal prayers in connection to the week’s homily in Chapel. Gathered in the company of their close-knit community, Grace students put their hearts into these prayers. They are a chance to offer up an intention to God at the same time that they create space for practicing using a microphone and delivering a message. As an Episcopal School, we often talk about our “calling” in life, and we hope that praying in chapel is a time when our students can feel called to speak their hearts to their community.



The process of finding our voices, of course, starts much earlier than Kindergarten -- as anyone who has ever met a preschooler knows. Our early childhood curriculum is designed to give our youngest students practice in expressing their needs, thoughts, and feelings in clear ways within a supportive classroom. Through daily circle time, and in structured and unstructured play, our talented teachers work with our three and four year olds as they learn how to ask for what they need, to share out loud during circle time, and to play collaboratively and even resolve conflicts with friends.



The parent of a Prekindergarten student recently shared her experience during a parent-teacher conference about her daughter. The teachers, she wrote,

“... talked about raising strong girls who are not only smart but courageous enough to be smart as well as voice their needs and wants with authority. Their goal for [our daughter] had nothing to do with what she can do with a pencil and paper but 100% on how to mold her for the world to not just thrive but really excel. I was floored. Their goal wasn’t just for the 180 days of the school year; it was 180 days plus 30 years. This is family. They care beyond their jobs.”



As a school that welcomes children for their first real school experience and takes seriously the project of preparing them for a future we cannot predict, we value the time we invest in helping our students to build their confidence and agency through speaking and presenting their ideas and their prayers. We want to make space and create an ongoing practice where they can speak their truth and gain comfort with their oracy skills. Just as student council speeches are a testament to our students’ growing “voices,” so is the final chapel of the year when our Grade 5 students pray their prayers of gratitude for the school that has shown them grace, and helped them to find purpose and self in that moment of truth telling. These prayers are a final and proud realization of their journey to finding a voice.

Maryland Green School

The feeling of being connected to something larger than yourself: as Episcopal schools, this is an experience that we hope all of our students have, and a guiding force for us as we think about our curriculum, schedule, and school spaces. Time spent in nature is one of the most wonderful ways to help young children awaken their connection to a bigger whole. Here at Grace, we have the pleasure of being situated on 11 acres of green space in Kensington, MD, with a large piece of Rock Creek Park literally in our backyard. Hawks and deer are frequent visitors to our backyard, especially on any days when students are not at school; and the diversity of plant and animal life surrounding us is breathtaking. Now more than ever, we believe that it is our sacred duty to play a part in preserving that beauty for generations to come.

To that end, the community here at Grace decided several years ago to pursue the designation of “Green School” from the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education. Maryland Green Schools are part of a national and international community of sustainable green schools. Receiving this designation means that, over the past two to four years, Grace has demonstrated and documented a continuous effort to integrate sustainable environmental management practices, environmental education curriculum, professional development opportunities, and community engagement into our daily operations. It signifies that our school has made a commitment to developing stewards of the earth and reducing our environmental impact.

Under the leadership of teachers Marisa Martucci and Gavin Hymes, we completed an application that catalogued our many sustainable and environmental education practices over the last two to four years. From our recycling, to our compost, to our gardens, Grace is living into a mission of teaching children about the importance of caring for the earth. Our students have embraced this call and taken up the responsibility of guiding our whole community in this work.

Several student-led assemblies this year explained our recycling and composting procedures. Our Girls on the Run team wrote a mission statement that included the intention of “caring for the earth and the world around us.” Each time our students write Chapel prayers, at least one child asks for guidance and help in caring for the earth and God’s creation. Design Thinking projects in Grades 4 and 5 invariably include elements of sustainability, and Grade 1 students’ Project-Based Learning this year focused almost exclusively on environmental responsibility. Over the course of several months, early childhood and Kindergarten students planted, harvested, and sold produce at a Farmers’ Market. These ongoing, hands-on experiences are creating lasting connections for our students.



“Time spent in nature is one of the most wonderful ways to help young children awaken their connection to a bigger whole.”



NEW TRADITIONS, Old Favorites

Grace has always been a community that loves to welcome back former students and parents. Our events are not only for our current students and families, but also a chance to check in with former Gryphons who still count these celebrations as beloved moments in their year.

Over the past four years, we've worked hard to make sure that we preserve our traditions while keeping things fresh and introducing new events. Allow us to highlight some of our favorite new and reimagined Grace happenings:

OCTOBER: Pep Rally For Grace

What started as a fundraiser in an office building in downtown DC has now moved back to campus and become one of our most enjoyable adult parties of the year, with food trucks, beer and wine, fire pits, and s'mores.

We've had the good fortune of being under clear fall skies the past few years, which means we get to be dazzled by both our string lights AND by the happiness and energy of our guests. Current parents, teachers, alumni parents, relatives -- everyone is welcome as we enjoy an outdoor fundraiser to kick off our year of support.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Friday, October 16, 2020

DECEMBER: Christmas Tree Lighting

After assertive student lobbying, Ms. Danish agreed to bring back the Christmas Tree Lighting when she arrived as Head in 2016. This event has steadily grown since then, becoming a party for the whole Kensington community and featuring a bake sale for charity organized by our Student Council and Girls on the Run team.

Probably the most wonderful part of the evening is welcoming Craig Kirby, Grace alumni parent and former board member who has served as our Santa for the past 4 years. As Ms. Danish wrote in her winter message,

"I cannot express just how moving it is to see the looks on our students' faces when Craig makes his entrance [as Santa] every year. The joy and the thrill comes from the way that he is so authentic and loving, but also because he doesn't look like the Santa they see in movies, in picture books, or on TV. That first year,



a student came up to me and asked, "Are you sure that's Santa? Isn't he supposed to be white?" When I answered back that I wasn't sure but that this Santa -- our Santa -- was black, this student looked back up to me and said, "Okay, cool."

It is no accident that Craig agreed to be our Santa, because he possesses so many of the qualities we associate with St. Nick: kindness, charity, magic, optimism, and love. And also, because he looks like the majority of our students here at Grace. His ebullient entrance at the Tree Lighting interrupts their thinking about what this famous figure is supposed to look like. It's a small but perhaps critical moment of inclusion for our students and our wider community."



MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Friday, December 4, 2020

JANUARY: PTO MLK Jr. Day of Service

For the last two years, PTO volunteers have organized a morning of hands-on service at Grace. Students and their families come together to honor the legacy of Dr. King and work to improve their community. Recent projects have included making care bags for individuals experiencing homelessness and putting together meal kits for students experiencing food insecurity. We are so thankful for the PTO's organizational ability and talent in choosing projects that engage our elementary schoolers.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

Monday, January 18, 2021

FEBRUARY: Student Art Show

Art teacher Ms. Gould is tireless in her passion for making sure our days are filled with beautiful artwork here at Grace. She believes that art shows are an essential part of art education, and has started a new tradition of a "Fine Arts Afternoon" in February. She works with the company Artome to create an exciting art show experience in which every child has a professionally framed piece on display, and families are able to purchase that piece of their child's art.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THIS YEAR:

Wednesday, February 26, 2020 from 3:00-6:00 pm.



This is only a small selection of our fun events that happen each year. We still celebrate Family Fun Day in September, Grandparents and Special Friends' Day in November, Christmas Chapel in December, Founders Day in February, the Auction in April, our High School Reunion in May, and many more.

And speaking of traditions, our special 60th anniversary Founders' Day Chapel will be on Wednesday, February 24, 2021. Please plan to join us as we celebrate our big birthday!

NEW

Faculty and Staff

and Fond Farewells

With great excitement, we welcomed three new teachers to the Grace team this school year. All of them are already wonderful additions to our community. Let's let them introduce themselves!



Katelyn Labarre, Grade 3 teacher: I'm from Southborough, Massachusetts, which is about 20 miles west of Boston. This is my fifth year teaching. I really love the small community here. It's a tight-knit place where everyone knows everyone, but always welcomes newcomers. I feel at home in a school where you can recognize all the faces and can name every child. Grace also seems like a place where everyone's happy to be.



Matthew Phelan, PE, Health, and Athletics: I'm from Saranac Lake, NY. I love to play sports -- I played baseball (pitcher) and football (wide receiver) in college at St. Lawrence University in New York. This will be my third year teaching. I love how small Grace is. I am from a small town, and went to a small college, so I'm used to environments where everyone knows everyone. Grace makes me feel at home that way.



Renee Stewart, School Counselor: I grew up in Prince George's County, Maryland. I've been working with children since 2005, first as a preschool teacher and later in counseling and school services after I received my MSW. Diversity is really important to me, and I want to help expand that diversity in our educational spaces. I really appreciate the diversity and inclusion initiatives at Grace, and respect how we are committed to both increasing that diversity and working with what we already have.

In June 2019, we said goodbye to Librarian and Former Lay Chaplain Anne Sheldon. We miss her wonderful storytelling but still get to see her at Grace Church on Sundays. Grade 3 teacher Gloria Green retired to spend more time with her new grandchild. And we had a fond farewell Field Day celebration for PE Teacher Ms. Rutledge, who moved to be closer to her own family after 15 years of fun and games with her Grace Gryphons family.

GRADUATION 2019

Friday, June 7 was a truly “bright and beautiful” morning as we celebrated the graduation of the Class of 2019. We welcomed classmates, parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, friends, and more to Grace Episcopal Church to mark the end of our graduates’ time at Grace and to inspire them in their journey forward. Thoughtful words from our Grade 4 and 5 students, from Head of School Jennifer Danish, and from Congressman Jamie Raskin buoyed our spirits.

In her remarks to the graduates, Head of School Jennifer Danish reflected on the ways they had embodied our schoolwide theme of compassion, and encouraged them to spread that compassion to others -- and themselves -- as they move into middle school and beyond.

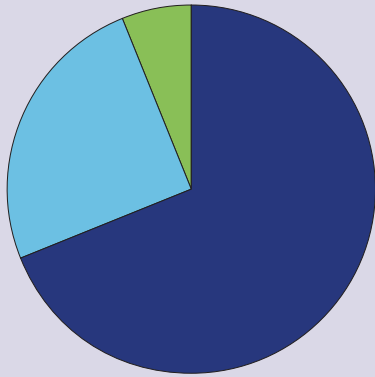
“I love the tradition of hearing from our Grade 5 students at our last chapel about what Grace has meant to them. What moves me most about your memories of Grace is the common theme of belonging that you all felt on your first days at Grace. You were shown kindness and compassion in this place from the very beginning and it has allowed you to flourish and thrive. Many of you also described the kindness of your teachers and fellow Gryphons. This community has shown you compassion and kindness, and that has stayed with you. As you prepare to leave and move onto a new community, please know that you will find that kindness again wherever you go. Your willingness to be open to new experiences will allow you to access new compassion in the world around you.

I also want to offer one piece of advice as you make this step. That advice is to show compassion to a very important person in your life. To always be gentle when you can. To believe that this person is doing their best; that mistakes are the building blocks to our greatest growth. And that person is you. You deserve kindness and compassion most of all. And if you can offer that loving kindness to yourself -- the way I know Mr. L has taught you in mindfulness practice -- you will be a kinder and gentler person for all of the world. I hope that as you graduate from Grace you remember this most of all.”



ANNUAL Report

2018-19 REVENUES

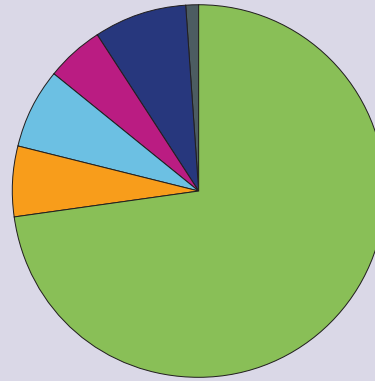


69%
Net Tuition
Revenue

25%
Advancement

6% Other

2018-19 EXPENSES



73%
Salaries & Benefits

1% Instructional

8% Administration

5% Facility

7% Depreciation

6% Debt Service

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. 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.

Grace Scholars Fund Donors 2018-2019

GS SUMMA CUM LAUDE \$15,000+

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GS TEACHER'S HELPER \$5,000 – \$9,999

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GS LINE LEADERS \$1,000 – \$4,999

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David and Michelle Taylor

*Angels of Grace

Angel of Grace donors make a multi-year commitment to the Grace Scholars Fund for Variable Tuition. These multi-year commitments help us to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our families during their child's tenure at Grace, and are an integral part of our mission of diversity of all kinds, including socio-economic diversity.

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.

Gryphon Fund Donors 2018-2019

Head of School Circle \$5,000+

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Founders' Circle \$2,000 - \$4,999

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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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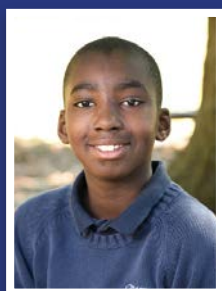
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