

Dear Grace Community:

It is with sadness for us, but happiness for her future, that we will say goodbye to **Gail Kennedy, Director of Elementary Education** at the end of this school year. After serving Grace for 20 years, Gail has decided to join her husband, John, in retirement. She is looking forward to having more time with her granddaughter and a new grandchild who will be arriving in July. She has also become a true pickleball enthusiast and hopes to become a champion player in this next phase of her life!

Since arriving at Grace, Gail has been a Grade 4 teacher, Math Specialist, and Director of Elementary Education and Financial Aid. Her classroom was always a place of fun combined with rigorous teaching. Her leadership and hard work have been an essential part of Grace's continued mission to provide exceptional learning for our diverse community. She is a champion to the faculty she supports, always guiding them and raising the bar on their work for the benefit of Grace students. Gail's infectious laugh and warm sense of humor will be sorely missed. She is also an exceptional logistical thinker and our administrative team will have to adjust as we lose our mastermind of planning and organizing!

I am especially grateful for the guidance, support, and kindness she has shown me in my first four years at Grace. I can count on her to offer me an insight and to steer me in the right direction when faced with a thorny problem. We wish her all the best as she pursues this next phase of her life and we extend our deepest gratitude for her extraordinary service. Please stay tuned as we plan to celebrate her as a community later this month.

With Gail's retirement, we have decided to bring some new thinking to our academic leadership structure for the coming year. **Pam Yarrington** will become our **Assistant Head for Academics** in the 2020-2021 school year. She will supervise and support all teachers at Grace and lead initiatives and planning for teaching and learning. Supporting her in this work will be **Melissa Lafionatis**, who will become our **Director of Learning Support**; and **Sue Whitaker**, who will leave Preschool next year to become **Academic Assistant**. Melissa will continue her work with students and teachers as we continue to offer supportive and differentiated learning, and she will also offer strategic thinking to the academic program more broadly. Sue will assist specialists in early childhood classes and also fill in throughout the day where needs arise for a substitute, and will assist with many of the logistics required to keep our program running smoothly. Noelle McHugh will assume some of the administrative tasks that Gail carried and support Pam in her work.

Another initiative we have spearheaded for the coming year is the creation of an Academic Team that will complement the Administrative Team and focus on our academic program. This team will include Pam, Melissa, and Sue, and myself. Also joining the team will be **Luigi LaPietra**, who will add the title of **Elementary and Technology Coordinator** to his work as Grade 5 lead teacher; and **Christine Comas**, our **Director of Innovation**. The Academic Team will meet weekly and focus on topics for faculty meetings, scheduling, teaching and learning

initiatives, and ongoing growth and design in our overall program. We hope that this group can support our goal of more distributed leadership to fit our vision, our small size, and our move away from two division heads. Under Pam's direction and with her many years of experience teaching and leading, I am confident that this is the right direction for Grace.

Additionally, next year **Karen O'Connor-Floman** will become the **Assistant Head for Enrollment, Variable Tuition, and Communications**. We will not be adding more tasks to her job description but she will have a greater leadership role on the administrative team along with Pam and myself. I am grateful to Karen for her work not only in marketing Grace so effectively, but in her professionalization of our communications both internally and externally.

We are finalizing the appointment of some wonderful candidates for vacant teaching positions in Grade 4 and Preschool, and look forward to communicating with you about those as soon as possible.

If we have learned anything during our Distance Learning, it is that we will be able to create a more adaptive and innovative learning environment through more distributed leadership. Our distance learning and re-entry planning will also continue into the summer, and Melissa and Luigi will join the summer admin team in preparing and advancing our initiatives in this area. I look forward to growing into this new structure and continuing our success as a school that attends to the needs of students with compassion and a commitment to excellence. We will be in touch with regular updates on our scenarios for this fall and our re-entry to school.

All my best,

Jen Danish