

Dear Grace Family:

I am writing with another spring staffing update for the 2020-2021 school year. Every spring sees faculty and staff comings and goings, and it is with a mixture of excitement and sadness that we send a third update about the 2020-2021 school year. What is hardest at present is not having the usual proximity to each other for our traditional celebrations and farewells. We are grateful to all of our departing teachers and staff for their extraordinary service to Grace.

In my last letter, I let you know that Preschool Teacher **Sue Whitaker** will be stepping into an administrative role at Grace in the coming year. She will become our Academic Assistant and will be active all across the school in helping support our programs and students. That leaves a big, energetic, tough-to-fill absence in our Preschool teaching team. We are thrilled to announce that **Amanda Mendez** will be stepping into the role of Preschool lead teacher for the 2020-2021 school year.

Amanda comes to Grace from Gates of Discovery Preschool in Olney, where she has been the Preschool teacher for the last year. Gates of Discovery has an emergent, Reggio-inspired approach much like ours at Grace. Amanda has a strong background in working with children in performance, music, and dance, with nearly 10 years of working in hands-on programs with young children at Imagination Stage in Bethesda. She holds a BA in Theater Performance from the University of Maryland and an Early Childhood Certification from Montgomery College. When asked what she loves about working with young children, Amanda answers: "Encouraging children to explore and discover the world around them through interest-based research projects, stimulating environments, and the belief that the child is capable." Amanda and husband Javier are also the parents of two children who will be joining the Gryphon community, and we are very excited to welcome the whole family.

With these extraordinary times come extraordinary pressures, and so Kindergarten lead teacher **Rose Morrison** has made the difficult decision to step away from her role nurturing children in order to have more time to be of service to her family, in particular her mother-in-law. Anyone who has had the pleasure of knowing Rose knows that service is a vital part of her life. She is an active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints community and has not only participated in but actively organized numerous service projects. Among other things, she has sponsored a number of charitable organizations in her home country of the Philippines, worked with vulnerable populations here in the DC area, and also mentored Grace students in their service identities through Student Council and Girls on the Run. You would be hard-pressed to find a more giving, service-oriented human being than Rose Morrison!

Rose came to Grace in 2004 and worked at first in Aftercare as an assistant before becoming Aftercare Director. She then stepped into the role of Prekindergarten assistant teacher, Prekindergarten lead teacher, and finally Kindergarten lead teacher, where she has been since 2016. She has lovingly guided some of our youngest students in their important formative years of school. She deeply loves her students and their parents, as well as her colleagues. We look forward to celebrating Rose's service to Grace on May 29 at our final chapel of the year.

Stepping into the role of Kindergarten lead teacher at Grace in the fall of 2020 is **Jeanna Meyer**. Jeanna comes to Grace from Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, where she has taught Kindergarten at Freeport Elementary School in Walton County since 2011. Jeanna is not only a dedicated teacher but has also worked with her school and district in choosing and implementing curriculum, and leading other teachers in extensive professional development. She is described by her references as a true "teacher leader."

Jeanna holds a BA in Child Development from Maryville College. She was also chosen as her school's Teacher of the Year for the 2014-2015 school year and nominated again for the award in 2017-2018. Of her educational philosophy, Jeanna writes: "I believe every child is unique and I want to provide them the opportunity to play, explore, experience, and grow in an inclusive environment. My goal in achieving this is to provide a foundation of developmentally appropriate experiences where all children can succeed in a safe and nurturing atmosphere." Jeanna and her husband Garrett also have two children who will be joining the Gryphon community. We are extremely happy to welcome the whole family to Grace.

As we welcome Amanda Mendez and Jeanna Meyer to our Early Childhood team, we bid a bittersweet farewell to Rose Morrison who truly sees the best in every child. She is the epitome of a compassionate educator and we are grateful for her service.

-Jen Danish