

Dear Grace Community,

I have enjoyed seeing many of you at our Town Halls over the last few weeks. As I settle into a Friday before some time away from decision-making and planning for all of the leadership at Grace, I am digesting just how much has transpired in the last four weeks. It has been a dizzying experience and while I am still wishing we were beginning together in person, I am continually inspired by our faculty and the capacity and commitment they are bringing to welcoming your children back to Grace and to the year of learning ahead. It will no doubt have twists and turns, and so I am also delighted to see our new skills in flexibility, adaptability, and accepting change.

To that end, I need to update you on some additional staffing changes that will be in place in a few weeks. In late July, Matt Phelan let me know that he was accepting a new position to teach PE in Richmond where his girlfriend has also accepted a job. The timing is not ideal, and I was looking forward to many more years with Mr. Phelan. With our smaller enrollment in Preschool and Prekindergarten, we have deployed Marisa Martucci to teach mindfulness and yoga to all students beginning in September. This will be our PE offering for the current year. As many of you know, Ms. Martucci owns a thriving yoga practice, Nimaste, in Kensington, and she has been teaching yoga for years to our students and faculty on campus. In addition to this work, she is also a new member of our Wellness and Support Task Force. Stay tuned for information about an early morning meditation for parents coming this fall. We are delighted to have Marisa lead this grounding practice for all of us but particularly our students who are navigating so many challenging feelings during this pandemic.

While planning the appointment of a new music teacher and considering in-person teaching, we have been mindful of the risks involved with singing and even using shared instruments. Vocal music and performance is an integral part of our culture at Grace and, unfortunately, one that we cannot engage in during the pandemic. To that end, we have decided to focus this year's music teaching to dance and movement, under the leadership of new Grace teacher Amanda Mendez. You may remember that this spring, we announced Amanda's appointment as Preschool lead teacher. When I offered Amanda the position, I suggested that she might be asked to consider a role in music and movement; and with the consolidation of our Preschool and Prekindergarten classes into one group for the fall, that suggestion has happily become reality. 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. With Amanda's leadership, we will also consider adding guest teachers for units on African Dance and Hip Hop. We hope this can bring a new focus and some excitement to our students. Amanda will also be paired with Katelyn Labarre in Grade 3 where she will assist and support that classroom.

We are grateful to Marisa and Amanda for their many talents as teachers and their willingness to pivot into these new roles. Finally, I would like to let you know that Becky Mulholland, Director

of Advancement, has accepted a position as Director of the Annual Fund at nearby Holy Cross Academy in Kensington. Becky spent five years in her role at Grace, bringing great energy and growth to our lofty fundraising goals and creating new fun annual events, most notably our Pep Rally for Grace. We are grateful to her for her years of service. We are equally delighted that Kathy Murray, former Chief Financial Officer, has agreed to come back to Grace to lead advancement. She played a pivotal role in our strategic planning efforts last year and has many years of connection to Grace as administrator and parent.

I am looking forward to connecting with you all in late August and as we kick off our 60th year on September 8. We have so much to celebrate and honor in this anniversary year. Until then, wishing you my very best always.

-Jen Danish