

Dear Grace Community,

I hope you are all well and enjoying these early days of summer with your children and families. While HoopEd camp is back on campus, it feels eerily quiet without the Gryphons. I know many of us were feeling joyful about some upcoming rest after a long year, but this was also tinged with sadness about parting from our students after feeling as if we just got them back together again. My hope for this summer is that we can all find some time to reset and refresh ourselves and return in September with renewed energy and enthusiasm for the work ahead. It is hard to know exactly where we will be with regards to Covid and its impact on our daily life at school, but I am reminded that we have many new tools and perspectives that will aid us in beginning a new school year with great success and perspective. I look forward to remaining in touch with updates and a vision for our plans. I imagine we can expect to bring back some of the gatherings and events we lost this year while remaining mindful of what a new normal will look and feel like. A core intention of our team at Grace will be to reconnect and restore our community connections and purpose. We are looking forward to re-engaging with you and your children!

Looking back to a year ago, I am filled with joy and a sense of relief and accomplishment after enduring this pandemic year and having made it back to campus for these last glorious months of spring. I sit here today in awe of our students and their stamina and persistence day to day; I am continually overwhelmed by their willingness to wear masks and keep one another safe. I am amazed by our teachers and all that they have adapted to keep learning going with love, commitment, and enthusiasm. And I am grateful for our leadership teams academically and administratively who have planned and re-planned and designed new ways to be at school and to be safe while surrounded by this challenging virus. Finally, my hat goes off to all parents and extended family members who have supported and taught and entertained their children while juggling their own work and without the support of an in-person school routine for so many months. We made it, Grace family! And we are stronger and more appreciative of our connections and our village than ever before.

One traditional event that we were able to experience in person was the graduation of our Class of 2021. With a forecast for heavy rains looming the week before, we made a last-minute decision to move the event indoors to the MPR for graduates, their families, and members of the faculty and staff. As we did last year, instead of inviting an outside speaker for the ceremony, we invited Grade 5 teacher [Luigi LaPietra](#) to share his annual written tributes to each member of the class. Normally shared at a dinner the night before, we moved this to be the centerpiece of our celebration as it makes for a very moving and fitting tribute to our Grade 5 students. Luigi is

able to capture their personalities, their triumphs, and challenges, and send them off with wisdom and care as they face the next step in their journey. It was a day to remember as we gathered with parents, grandparents, and family members we have not seen in over a year in our building. We will remember the Class of 2021 for many years to come and most importantly because of the courage and leadership they revealed during this extraordinary year.

All of us at Grace are wishing you a restorative and joyful summer. We hope some of you will plan to join us for our summer reading discussions of Nicole Lee's book, *Raising Antiracist Kids: The Power of Intentional Conversations about Race and Parenting*. The book is available on [Amazon](#). We will gather on [Zoom](#) on the following dates: June 30 at 4 pm, July 20 at 12 pm, and August 11 at 5:30 pm. Please feel free to join one session or all of them! These meetings are a continuation of our gatherings last summer to discuss the 1619 podcast. This book is also the assigned summer reading for faculty this year; we look forward to connecting as parents and faculty to grow in this area together.

As I reflect on the progress we made towards achieving benchmarks we set in our [Anti-Racist Action Plan](#), I am most proud of our ability to attract more faculty and staff of color to Grace for this coming school year. Adding these talented new teachers and staff to our roster has increased our faculty of color to 42% of all faculty and staff. These metrics matter in our striving to create an adult cohort that better reflects our very diverse student body at Grace. We want our students to feel not just included, but also to belong to their school community in deep and meaningful ways. Having adults who reflect their varying identities is one of the best ways to affirm their own sense of self and validate their experiences at school. Our work on this plan is ongoing and I look forward to making even more progress towards our goals in the coming year.

We have much to celebrate as summer officially begins. Again, I wish you and your family a wonderful summer of adventure and possibilities. Know that we are already eager to have you back in just a few months to begin a new and exciting school year.

My best to you always,

Jen