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GEORGETOWN

D A Y S

**A YEAR LIKE
NO OTHER:**

JUNE 2020–MAY 2021 AT GDS



42

**WELCOME TO THE
LOWER/MIDDLE
SCHOOL**

36

**ANTI-RACIST
JOURNEY**

71

**REPORT ON
PHILANTHROPY
2019–20**



WONDER *and* INQUIRE

OUR MISSION DRIVES ALL THAT WE DO.

Georgetown Day School honors the integrity and worth of each individual within a diverse school community. GDS is dedicated to providing a supportive educational atmosphere in which teachers challenge the intellectual, creative, and physical abilities of our students, and foster strength of character and concern for others. From the earliest grades, we encourage our students to wonder, to inquire, and to be self-reliant, laying the foundation for a lifelong love of learning.

We welcome submissions from all Georgetown Day School community members.

Please contact agrasheim@gds.org to learn more. Alumni are encouraged to send their news with photos to alumni@gds.org for inclusion in the *Georgetown Days* magazine.

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GEORGETOWN DAYS**

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**71 REPORT ON PHILANTHROPY
2019-20**

FROM WHERE I STAND



A

ll of the stars were aligned. We would celebrate Georgetown Day School's 75th anniversary in our first-ever PK-12 unified campus, a year punctuated by an array of firsts—our first Country Market Day in Tenleytown! Our first High School musical attended by Lower and Middle School students who only need to walk across the street to be in the audience! Our first sports season with an expanded fan section to accommodate our younger students! The ribbon cutting would bring together hundreds—or even thousands—of community members, past and present. Together we would take pride in our School's new home, marveling at the warm, expansive lobby, the cozy, brightly furnished library, the playground's natural wood and magnificent towers. We had it all figured out.

And then, COVID. A pandemic which demanded that we remove the new, collaborative furniture from classrooms and replace it with single desks and chairs, arrayed in rows in order to accommodate distancing requirements and reductions in classroom density. Instead of lunch in our state of the art dining facility, students would eat in the parking garage, and later, their classrooms, sitting silently at their desks. Instead of magnificent papier-mache art projects to decorate our beautiful new stairwells, there would be hand sanitizer. Lots and lots of hand sanitizer.

Somewhere Aggie, Edith, Gladys, and Peter were laughing—at least that's how I imagined it. For the first time in Georgetown



Founding head of school Aggie O'Neil



Second head of school Edith Nash



Three heads of school — Russell Shaw, Gladys Stern, and Peter Branch

Day School history, we were prepared to open a PK–12 school on a single campus. I imagine my four head of school predecessors laughing to themselves because while our new building is indeed spectacular, they know that GDS has never been about its facilities. GDS is GDS because of the people—the relationships, the magic that manifests when individuals with different life stories are brought together to form community. Or, as GDS alum and former teacher Julia Blount '08 wrote in a recent essay about GDS, quoting her grandmother who was also a teacher, “No brick ever educated a child.”

Whether as a school of 12 students in a downtown rowhouse in 1945, as our first high school in a former hardware store in 1971, or as a contemporary school of 1,075 on a single campus in Tenleytown, our institution’s “special sauce” resides in the interactions between community members and the purposeful engagement of those community members both within and beyond our School’s literal and metaphorical walls. As we celebrate 75 years and set forth on our next 75, we can take comfort in the knowledge that no matter GDS’s physical future, our mission will reside in brilliant teachers, joyful and curious students, passionate alumni, and a purpose that transcends buildings and generations.

Here’s to the next 75. Happy Birthday, GDS.

Russell

Russell Shaw, Head of School



Purely Amazing

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT-LED “EACH ONE TEACH ONE” WORKSHOPS

In the fall, Middle School students had the opportunity to teach or attend peer-to-peer workshops ranging from arts and crafts, cooking and baking, sports, and self-improvement to podcasting, gaming, magic, wellness, and advocacy.

Middle School Principal Debby Previna explained, “The term ‘Each One Teach One’ comes from the long tradition of African Americans relying on each other to learn to read and write, using education as their act of resistance and liberation.” Each “one” enslaved person who managed to learn to read—despite the dangerous obstacles to literacy—took on the community responsibility to teach the next one. Debby created “Each One Teach One” at GDS because the model speaks to “the importance of democratizing education in order to encourage meaningful, purposeful, and collaborative learning.”

Students identified their areas of expertise, many volunteered to teach a session, and all students decided for themselves which workshops they wanted to attend. The model encouraged students “to be self-reliant, laying the foundation for a lifelong love of learning,” in keeping with the final promise of our School’s mission.

Students met each other’s pets while learning about animal rights advocacy or headed into a session about DIY tie-dye. They cooked mushroom gnocchi with Alessandro Alfandari

’25; baked with Helena Seiken ’28, Ella Maas ’28, Rachel Hellman ’28, and Lara Belayachi ’28; and learned about improvisation from Liv Glendinning ’28. Marcus Waziri ’28 discussed the importance of civilized conversations across political differences, and Lexi Berzok ’25 and Lulu Tirado ’26 taught a session on embracing confidence.

The virtual workshops proved valuable for students not only due to their entertainment and educational value, but also as a way to build student connections, confidence, and leadership skills. In the yoga session, Dhilan Desai ’25 could be heard instructing participants to “inch your way over and feel the weight go all the way down—it’s OK if you can’t reach all the way,” even as he demonstrated moving through downward dog and cobra poses.

Asa Previna ’28, who attended “You Can Do Magic” with Paul Sussmann ’28, said, “I thought Paul was doing a great job teaching me magic.”

“I would be happy to do this again,” said Tyler Smallwood ’25, who enjoyed the opportunity to connect socially “as well as learn something new and exciting.”

Student feedback featured enthusiastic use of ALL CAPS and an abundance of exclamations. “I enjoyed doing the finishing yoga poses!” Tessa Lipman ’28 wrote. “It really helped me get some type of exercise in. THE BAKING ONE WAS AMAZING!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

Isaac Seiken ’25 wrote, “AMAZING PURELY AMAZING (that’s why I used caps lock).”

Charlotte Lee ’26 said, “I would like to give a shoutout to all the people who hosted a workshop! Thanks for acting with courage and helping take care of our community.”



Alessandro Alfandari '25—Making Gnocchi with Mushrooms



Helena Seiken '28—Making Easy Pie Dough from Scratch



Paul Sussmann '28—You Can Do Magic!



Dhilan Desai '25—Yogis Welcome



Luke Myre '27—The Art of the Candle



STORY-BASED JOYFUL LEARNING IN LOWER SCHOOL P.E.—AND BEYOND

“I took my kindergarten class ‘to the beach’ today,” wrote LMS P.E. teacher Peg Schultz in the waning days of summer 2020 when students were attending GDS virtually.

“We slathered on sunscreen, ran quickly on our tiptoes over hot sand, splashed our feet in cool water, jumped over small waves, swam away from sharks and jellyfish, shooed seagulls away from our snacks, and dug with shovels to make sandcastles.” The students listened to “Wipeout” by The Surfaris as they moved their bodies from



William demonstrates a core exercise as senior sprinters (l-r) Matthew Mintzer, Chandler Marshall, Pranav Sethi-Olowin, and Jalen Friday look on.

home with Peg via Zoom. GDS P.E. teachers are storytellers. Even as students are learning balance, building core strength, and developing a love of fitness, they are also taking epic, energetic trips to the beach, hunting leprechaun gold in a field of shamrocks, or popping popcorn on the sunny LMS field. Fun isn’t an addition to these lessons; it’s a core ingredient in each and every lesson plan throughout the physical education curriculum.

Physical education storytelling doesn’t end after Lower School. Just visit Varsity Track practice with coach and LMS P.E. teacher William Miezan, for example, and you’ll inevitably hear about “layovers in Denver”—perhaps a pause between repetitions—or witness hilarious dramatizations of the “agony” of winning. Many of these High School athletes have grown up with William, Peg, Cally Spero, and “JT” Trembly—our

Lower School P.E. teaching team. They have followed their lead from the earliest grades during a Lower School Dance Assembly or shrieked with laughter (and maybe just a hint of terror) when their teachers surprised them during the annual P.E. Halloween “Ghosts in the Graveyard” game. Year in and year out, GDS P.E. teachers encourage, challenge, and tell stories to students in order to make physical education fully multidimensional.

And so these teachers cheer as a kindergartener launches a ball way over the “rainbow” into a field of tennis-can shamrocks and then, just a stone’s throw away on our unified PK–12 campus, cheer again as a pair of GDS senior pitchers make a public commitment to play college ball. Perhaps it’s the stories—of squawking seagulls and piping-hot popcorn—that make the years fly by.

Senior pitchers Jeremy Jensen and Kyle White at their athletics commitment event.



TAKING STEPS TOWARD A REDUCED CARBON FOOTPRINT

GDS's unification onto a single campus provided the opportunity to recalibrate our carbon footprint as a school. The new Lower/Middle School building boasts a LEED Gold energy certification and more than 7,000 square feet of green roofing. The High School received sustainable energy upgrades, including a 609-panel, 200-plus-kilowatt solar array on the roof. The move has also made possible the mobilization of sustainable transportation resources: in spite of the pandemic, students are arriving on foot, by bike (or scooter), on public transportation, or on GDS shuttle buses, which are currently picking up from 31 sites across the region.

Still, our School's journey toward sustainability continues. This spring, High School students presented their findings from C.A. Pilling's Research in Environmental Science class to help GDS further reduce its carbon footprint. They delivered tiered proposals around three distinct areas—facilities, waste, and transportation—that ranged from immediately actionable and near-future projects to aspirational goals.

The students explained their data-backed and thoughtfully researched solutions to Head of School Russell Shaw, Chief Financial Officer Jeffrey Houser, Assistant Head of School for Curriculum and Instruction Laura Yee, Director of Strategic Programs Vinita Ahuja, Transportation Marketing Associate Noah Hansen, and Director of Facilities & Maintenance Kenny Miluk.

One might have mistaken the passionate delivery as only a persuasive tool students employed to energize their audience

toward action around their proposals. Yet even in the virtual or physical classroom—as they learned to calculate energy consumption or design sustainability surveys for various community constituencies—their collaborative study held a joyful (and dare we say sustainable?) energy.

Megna Ratnapuri '21, Ken Bailey '22, and Anoush Keinath-Esmail '22 completed a detailed inventory

of the High School building and identified 42 rooms that they thought would be good candidates for automatic dimmers, which they priced at \$40 each, to bring a significant portion of the High School lighting up to the efficiencies found in the new LMS building. They calculated potential energy savings and long-term cost reductions should the school install storm window inserts to reduce conditioned air leakage through the building's older windows.

Anya Pimenta '21, Liana Smolover-Bord '21, and Jessica Ganley '21 proposed

a detailed composting program, with pilot and future phases to be adopted over time. Their communication with director of dining services Alex Buc about food waste proved fruitful as they worked out the logistics for various composting solutions and the ways current student groups could be involved.

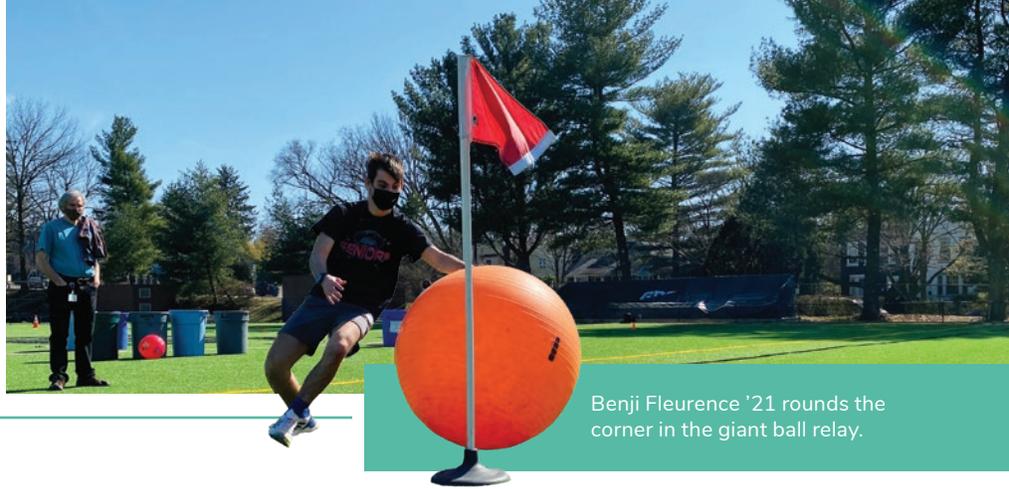
Nadine Ameer '21, Arthur Delot-Vilain '21, Noah Weitzner '21, and Isabelle Schiff '22 proposed a GDS-led coalition of schools along the Wisconsin Avenue corridor to lobby for the addition of protected bike lanes along the route.

Sadly, the bike lanes GDS constructed for public use along 42nd Street are the only protected bike lanes in all of Ward 3. Furthermore, they explained, the current map of upcoming bike lane expansions contains no proposals for Wisconsin Avenue.

Appealing to attendees' commitment to the safety of students and the fostering of a community culture around sustainable commutes, they proposed an expansion of existing bike incentive and leasing programs as well as a multipronged effort to minimize vehicle idling in the GDS carlines. These and other proposals were based on weeks of research that included surveys of several community constituent groups.

Even the seniors presenting expressed a commitment to their proposals that extended beyond graduation. They noted groups of younger students already taking up the torch—like the High School student-run Environmental Task Force or the Middle School Social Impact club. GDS is indebted to their care, leadership, and willingness to advise future student leaders.





Benji Fleurence '21 rounds the corner in the giant ball relay.

March Madness

PANDEMIC COMMUNITY-BUILDING TRADITIONS WORTH KEEPING

At the end of February, High School Assistant Principal for Student Life Quinn Killy announced plans for a weeklong blended in-person and virtual series of social events nicknamed "March Madness." The fun kicked off with a virtual trivia night hosted by the GDS Quizbowl Team. The main events, however, were the races, obstacle courses, and games that took place during the day on the High School field. Beyond the fun, "March Madness" served to remind students of the joy of being together on campus, even with distancing and other safety measures in place, and marked the beginning of a broader return to school during the ongoing pandemic.



Anoush Keinath-Esmail '22 and Megna Ratnapuri '21 work on their presentation.



Corbin Buchwald '21, Liana Smolover-Bord '21, and Anya Pimenta '21 discuss their project with HS science teacher C.A. Pilling.



Nadine Ameer '21 and Noah Weitzner '21 get ready before their presentation.



Thomas Ogada '24 makes a clean toss in trash can pong.



Senior Corbin Buchwald cracks up his classmates as he races the tricycle to the finish.



SEE THE FUN IN MOTION!



Ellie Kessler '24 tosses back for her 9th grade team.



SUMMIT ON

SEXUAL ASSAULT
AND CONSENT

At the end of **November 2020**, GDS hosted the **fifth** annual **Summit on Sexual Assault and Consent**, the largest to date and the only to be held exclusively online. GDS student leaders, under the guidance of a team of GDS faculty and staff members, created **391** personal schedules for student, faculty, parent, administrator, and counselor attendees from across the country.

The conference offered nearly **70** different workshops over **two** days plus smaller cohort meetings, facilitated by GDS students, to continue connecting and sharing experiences throughout the weekend. The **two dozen** members of the Summit leadership team provided options for attendees to learn through historical, legal, and artistic lenses; invited attendees to consider athletics cultures or the places faith traditions collide with human dignity and basic feminist principles; and offered inspiration to carry back to their communities.



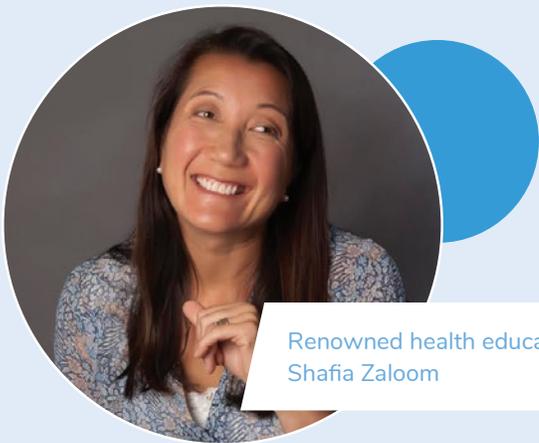
Cheyenne Tyler Jacobs

“

I hope that everything you got out of today—whether that is new information, whether that is community, whether that is a new website and new Instagram page, whatever it may be—you use it, not only for your community but for yourself because at the end of the day, community healing starts right here, with who you are.”



Consent Summit Planning Team



Renowned health educator
Shafia Zaloom

WHAT WAS YOUR CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHT?

“ [The] passion, inspiration, and commitment [of the] phenomenal student leaders....I deeply appreciate all that you are doing to make our world a better place for all.”



From the opening welcome panel through to spoken-word poet Cheyenne Tyler Jacobs’s closing keynote, the Summit made clear that broad culture change is possible through intersectional, everyday advocacy. GDS is grateful to the work of the faculty and staff advisors and presenters Amy Killy, Bobby Asher, Campbell Keyser, Gaby Grebski, Guyton Mathews, Leigh Tait, and Meg Blitzshaw as well as the student leaders, especially our seniors in their final Consent Summit as GDS students.

NOT REALLY ABOUT ROBOTS

SOLUTION-SEEKERS, INNOVATORS, AND GLOBAL COLLABORATORS



LUCASFILM

This story is not really about robots.

Instead, it's about how GDS students are changemakers—learning what matters, characterizing and quantifying it, and collaborating with others across disciplines to understand how they can change the world for the better. This story is about learning from past and current heroes, learning to do the most good, working with others, gaining new skills, and finding joy in the journey.

Yes, it does also feature a few robots.

A REVOLUTION AND A PILGRIMAGE

In 2016, Klaus Schwab, founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum, described a “Fourth Industrial Revolution” unfolding around us at an exponential rate, disrupting nearly every industry and transforming the way we live and connect. He explained that the fusion of the technologies that emerged during the Third Industrial Revolution will continue to blur the divide between “the physical, digital, and biological spheres.” According to his view, emerging technologies in artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, robotics, and more will influence how changes take shape in our global economy and granularly in daily life. Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, but driven broadly by diverse and disparate forces, this

current revolution will usher unprecedented opportunities as well as enormous inequalities, and many agree.

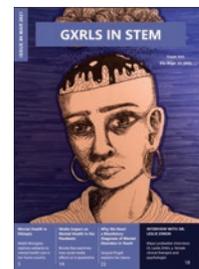
At GDS, students have the opportunity to interrupt historical patterns and to question the inevitability of those inequalities, to design and advocate for forward-thinking policies, and to build a diverse coalition of changemakers committed to thriving communities and a healthier planet.

Students engage in that kind of innovative thinking across the divisions in classrooms and in clubs like the GDS High School robotics team. GDS parents Megan Smith (Alex '23 and Louie '20 Swisher), CEO of Shift7 and former chief technology officer of the United States under President Obama, and Hayley Pivato (Matteo '22 and Leo '23) helped get the team off the ground in early 2019. Megan, who supports and communicates with changemakers around the world, explained the importance of reflecting on innovators from history, especially highlighting hidden figures, in order to inform our work today.

Megan took us on a historical reflection journey that began in the First Industrial Revolution, where Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* grappled with how to wield the tremendous power of science and technology. At the same

time, it is critical to consider the lesser-known legacy of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, who wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which posited that upending the educational access divide between men and women could usher in a new social order both in homes and in the workplace.

GDS's student-led magazine *Gxrls in STEM* is doing just what Wollstonecraft propounded: it is focused on “breaking down gender barriers



to empower all young womxn to pursue their passions in STEM fields,” cognizant of the “intersectional struggles many in our community face.” In a recent issue, contributors from GDS and around the world consider the impact of technology on mental health, advances in Alzheimer's disease research, the impact of COVID-19 on sleep, and more. Co-founded by Avani Ahuja (GDS) and Layla Dawit (Sidwell Friends), the magazine features GDS contributors Eleanor Gaugh '22, Celia Johnson '21, Lucie Johnson '23, Maya Landweber '22, and Madeleine Popofsky '22.

GDS ADVANCING

As we turn to the Second Industrial Revolution, the story of Jane Addams, the Chicago social justice pioneer who founded Hull House, a settlement house for newly arrived immigrants that drew upon collaboration within the neighborhood to best meet the needs of its residents, is essential to understanding how collaboration within and outside of traditional structures can effect change.

During that time, Ida B. Wells, who used data science and journalism to combat lynching, leveraged statistics and quantitative reporting to frame the discourse. Her data science also debunked the prevailing myth, perpetuated at least on one occasion by her contemporary Jane Addams, that White mobs only lynched Black men accused of criminal acts.

The High School Policy Institute is a present-day example of leveraging data, as students research immigration policies and advocacy efforts by community organizations in the Life Resettled track and housing, health, and income inequalities in the Waging Life in the DMV track. The other Policy Institute tracks—which work on sexual assault and consent and study environmental justice—also rely upon statistical data.

Toward the end of the year in 5th grade math, in conjunction with their yearlong Changemakers program, students used what they learned about statistical markers and graphing to present research around one of the social justice topics they worked on this year: pay equity, homelessness, food inequity, climate justice, immigration, or health care. The same students collaborated to conduct research on animal behavior, gathering as many guiding questions and wonderings as they could before starting their research and data collection.

Up next, bridging into the Third Industrial Revolution, is the legacy of Mary Jackson, NASA's first Black woman engineer, who rose to the most senior technical levels with many contributions and then turned her attention to influence hiring practices and promote women and people of color in STEM through NASA's equal opportunity and affirmative action offices. Another pioneer lending inspiration to GDS students is Nichelle Nichols, who played Lieutenant Uhura on *Star Trek* and whose presence on the show, according to Martin Luther King Jr., was as critical to the representation of African Americans (and women) in American society as the protests and marches he was leading.

Understanding the importance of seeing representation on the screen and in places of learning, teachers have posted along the hallways and stairwells of GDS images and biographies of BIPOC and women scientists and innovators, who students have been learning about in Lower School and who they mention as inspiration for ideas of their own that they are exploring.



Mary Jackson
NASA



UHURA.COM

The excitement of space exploration continued at GDS as NASA's Perseverance headed for—and later successfully landed on—Mars! Middle School students joined their teachers for a Perseverance watch party as it made



Science teacher Jon Venegas watches Perseverance approach Mars.

its final descent onto the surface. Sixth grade students also dove headlong into their annual robotics study, this year designing probes of their own to test surface conditions on Mars. They learned block coding basics and how to configure sensors, all while designing landers with individual personality—some wavy and Medusa-like, while others were bold, boxy, and played long Morse-code messages of peace.

FIND ONE THING AND GET STARTED

Even back at the cusp of the Second Industrial Revolution, the groundwork was being laid for some of the big breakthroughs anticipated in this Fourth Industrial Revolution. Ada Lovelace “wrote about our future even as Darwin wrote about our origins,” parent Megan Smith explained.

Lovelace founded the future code revolution with her 1843 publication introducing the concept of algorithms and writing humanity's first step-by-step instructions for how a machine could calculate a sequence of Bernoulli numbers. She wished to unlock the math to the human cerebrum and established the concept of AI for future generations to engineer. Lovelace lent her mathematical genius to a collaboration with mathematician Charles Babbage on his “Analytical Engine,” ultimately extending the device's conceptual computing capacity far beyond basic calculations.

One of the GDS Middle School's new enrichment programs stands

on Lovelace's shoulders in its determination to support passionate pursuit of innovative ideas. Modeled after the "Genius Hour" (one-hour blocks of passionate innovation), the "Hopper 45" club launched in winter 2021 to invite students' pursuit of a single fascination, interest, or inquiry. The process- and passion-driven innovation space—dubbed "Hopper 45" after our founding year (and that it runs three-quarters of an hour)—gave students the chance to showcase their pursuits, including a language-learning program, a confetti cake baking exploration, a study of sharks' teeth, basketball shoe branding, and edible slime (no, thank you!).

Our story belongs to the future that young people like Gitanjali Rao, *TIME*'s first Kid of the Year, are emerging into. She mentors a "community of innovators" working to change the world in ways big and small and has personally developed innovations to tackle global issues, including contaminated drinking water and cyberbullying. "I think more than anything right now, we just need to find that one thing we're passionate about and solve it," Rao told Angelina Jolie in the *TIME*'s interview. "Even

if it's something as small as, I want to find an easy way to pick up litter. Everything makes a difference. Don't feel pressured to come up with something big."

Like Rao, students in Lower School science studied pollution in waterways (several students expressed particular concern about the well-being of sea turtles). Second graders delved into our Tenleytown neighborhood to learn more about the ways contaminated stormwater reaches our waterways. Then, even before learning about how others have sought solutions to similar problems, our youngest Hoppers prototyped their own pollution solutions either to remove existing contaminants or prevent them from reaching a waterway—using recycled materials.

ROLLING INTO THE FUTURE

Now we move through this transition into the Fourth Industrial Revolution. More than 30 students are already busy learning for the future, innovating as part of GDS's High School FIRST Robotics team. The competition team of approximately two dozen students presented their work to the competition judges, representing GDS well.

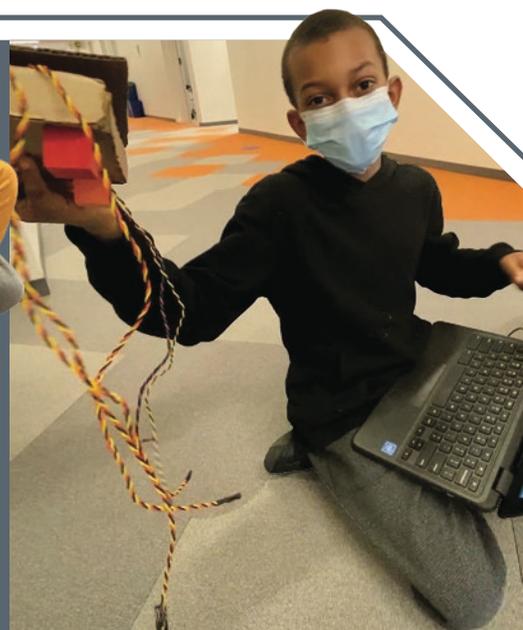
Run like a sports season, teams around the world kick into gear with their innovation challenge solutions and

robots at the start of the new year. They invent in collaboration and build to specifications in just a few weeks. What a way to learn to steer a product from concept to showcase under a deadline! Time and again students on the team talk about the skills they are developing, the collaboration, the community camaraderie; there is far less talk about robots than one might think—so much so that you'd think the Robotics Team is not really about robots. You'd be right.

Aliza Lubitz '21, club co-head with Julian Cunningham '21, said, "My favorite part of robotics during the 2020–21 build season was being able to foster new connections with a diverse group of GDS students in every grade at the High School. Because our school community is gathering in a virtual environment this year, it is difficult to get to know the new 9th grade class. For me, leading the robotics team (especially in the fall) was a way of welcoming freshmen and letting them know that we seniors are there for them! Learning how to attract new members, organizing time-efficient meetings, and working to create a sense of community among our team members was an exciting undertaking."

In fact, the format of robotics competitions demands innovative collaboration: three teams are pitted

GDS middle school students put their Mars probes through their paces.



against another three teams, groups that are remixed throughout the competition. Helping teammates in each successive group is essential. The most successful FIRST Robotics team must address the challenges of bias that will emerge and find effective ways to move forward together. GDS's team has focused on how its members engage as a team and how to form solution-oriented alliances in real time.

The notion of disparate teams aligning around a common cause is powerful and not new. One need look no further than the results of the global vaccine development effort that delivered highly effective vaccines many times faster than had ever been done before.

In fact, the competition's most prestigious award, the FIRST Robotics Chairman's Award, acknowledges teams who are helping. This award goes to the team that is "transforming the culture in ways that will inspire greater levels of respect and honor for science and technology, as well as encouraging more of today's youth to become science and technology leaders."

Mia Chévere '23 and Ian Rothfeld '23, co-leads of the "Infinite Recharge @ Home" subgroup, said, "All of our team members have contributed so much time and energy to this project, so seeing it come together was not only extremely satisfying but also encouraging, as we learned what we are capable of as a team." Students met virtually and coached each other through learning new software—such as computer-aided design and drafting (CADD)—to model their devices. The hard work and collaboration of the Infinite Recharge @ Home subgroup earned them FIRST Robotics' Rookie Game Changers award, which celebrates a rookie team's outstanding success in a season.

"We are trying to let all students know how the Robotics Team is about not just robot building, but team building, problem-solving with real-world issues, integrative technologies, and innovation, as well design, marketing, and business aspects that can be applied to any field," explained Matteo Pivato '22, one of the founding members of the two-year-old GDS team.

This year's FIRST Robotics competition included an innovation challenge to meet the physical and/or mental health needs of a far more sedentary 2020 global population. The competition website states, "Identify a problem or opportunity and design a solution to help people (or a community) keep, regain, or achieve optimum physical and/or mental health and fitness through active play or movement." GDS students designed augmented reality glasses with fitness apps to add community support and gamify working out.

LMS innovation teacher and one of the team coaches Elvin Peprah said, "The future of innovation and maker-centered learning at this school is growing. As it grows, we are looking at how our kids can take their coding skills in 2nd grade, 3D-printing skills in 5th grade, construction skills in 6th grade, and advanced Python skills in High School and direct them all toward something real-world focused. The students in FIRST Robotics are building autonomous and controlled robots and navigating rigorous courses, [and they are also] creating business plans, pitches, and designs for new games and innovative products. FIRST Robotics is one great way to get students to lead."

Team coach Matthew Bachiochi echoed Elvin's excitement: "I will say the thing that I'm most excited

about is that we have a very young team that is eager to learn. Over the course of this virtual season, we've really tried to build student leadership, which will help us to build the program in the years to come."

Matthew's work at the High School hasn't yet afforded him the lens to the lower grades that Elvin enjoys—and what he says is perhaps more true than he realizes. Even the youngest GDS students are brainstorming, collaborating, seeking solutions to problems they observe or learn about, and helping each other make a positive impact.

The school, founded upon a commitment to social justice, is advancing to lead with a public purpose. From the youngest grades, students develop the ability to innovate and create, build networks across difference, engage ethically, communicate clearly and powerfully, take risks, think critically, learn actively, advocate, and tackle problems. Science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics (STEAM) reside at the intersection of these student capacities. It's where students find joy in learning and learn together to change the world.

And that's what this is really all about.

Special thanks to GDS parents Megan Smith and Hayley Pivato (Matteo '22 and Leo '23) for their contributions to this article and their enthusiastic support of the FIRST Robotics Team. To the many pioneering students stepping into the future with us, thank you for your compassion, creativity, and courage.



**CHECK OUT THE
ROBOTIC TEAM'S FUN
INTRODUCTION VIDEO.**

The Student Action Committee Takes the Lead

Changing the world takes more than vision. The commitment to lasting change demands dedication from a coalition of changemakers who put in the hours, do the unglamorous behind-the-scenes legwork, build upon incremental gains, and foster engagement from folks who will follow in their footsteps. Founded during the 2019–20 school year by Anoushka Chander '21, the Student Action Committee (SAC) has become both the hub and the engine for High School student-led advocacy, activism, and changemaking.

During the club's inaugural year, students lobbied policymakers on Capitol Hill regarding three specific gun violence bills (known as the violence deescalation act, the assault weapons ban, and the extreme risk protection orders), took on Tenleytown-based shops selling vaping products in the school-packed Wisconsin

Avenue corridor, and gave testimony during the public hearing of DC Council's Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety potential ban of flavored e-cigarettes in the city.

Spanning two impeachment trials, a Supreme Court justice confirmation, a presidential election, a double Georgia Senate run-off, a turning point in the battle for DC statehood, the COVID-19 pandemic, the nation's reckoning with racial injustice, and the school's intentional focus on civic education, the 2020–21 school year saw significant growth in the activity of the SAC.

With support from High School faculty and staff allies and a close partnership with the Office of Community Engagement and Experiential Learning, the SAC launched a Voter Mobilization Initiative (VMI) to combat rampant voter suppression efforts and historic voter disenfranchisement. Maddie Feldman '22 and Anoushka co-led the effort, building an impressive infrastructure of subcommittees and, ultimately, a massive volunteer coalition of students from both GDS and peer schools that are literally across the country.

FREED SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY



Anoushka Chander '21



Maddie Feldman '22

Alongside Maddie and Anoushka, subcommittee leaders Ella Farr '21, Elliot Oppenheim '21, Jonah Shesol '22, Liana Smolover-Bord '21, and Nolan Sheridan '21 coordinated impactful advocacy around voter education, registration, and legislation. Interim director of community engagement and experiential learning Leigh Tait, High School civil rights and math teacher Andy Lipps, and GDS chief of staff Lauren Dickert joined and supported students in dozens of meetings as they connected virtually with congressional staff, launched a 200-student-strong force to replace poll-watching volunteers at local polling precincts who were at high risk for contracting COVID-19, disseminated DMV voter information in a year of pandemic-era voting process changes, and worked to activate voters in historically disenfranchised areas.

In December 2020, Maddie said, "Looking ahead...the Voter Mobilization Initiative hopes to focus its efforts entirely on addressing the widespread voter suppression interwoven into the fabric of this country. We hope to begin lobbying for a restoration of the Voting Rights Act and, more specifically, with the help of various voting rights organizations, lobby for DC statehood.



Maddie Feldman '22 and Leo Cooper '22 mail postcards to GDS seniors.



Thanks to widespread voter outreach these last few months, I now have contacts at schools across the country that I can use to expand this teen lobbying operation to a national level.”

As Maddie promised, the SAC’s DC statehood lobbying efforts took off this spring with training sessions for more than 20 GDS High School students, as well as for nearly a dozen Middle School students as part of the 7th and 8th grade Days of Doing action projects. After three weeks of preparation, students as young as 13 presented with the team to staffers from the offices of Representative and Lead Impeachment Manager Jamie Raskin ’79, Senator Ben Cardin, and Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton. (SAC members and student fellows from the GDS Policy Institute also coached 8th graders in advance of their Hill Day virtual visits with advocates on both sides of seven major constitutional issues.) Most recently, the SAC has turned its DC statehood efforts



Mark Orr '24 with one of the VM's posters outside a polling place.

to persuading senators in other states, whose support for the DC statehood bill S.51 will be critical for its passage.

In spite of all that has come at students this school year, it’s safe to say they have not waited passively for the world to remake itself. Instead, they’ve taken the lead. With dedicated faculty and staff partners, in collaboration with a cohort of committed peers, and using all they have learned about making positive change in the world, the SAC is facing down many of the central challenges in our city.

Its actions communicate powerfully to policymakers and other advocates what most of us at GDS already know—that the young people are paying attention and won’t tolerate inaction. Not only are GDS students learning to change the world, but they are actively doing so—in and beyond the classroom—and training future leaders to follow their lead.



High School students on a pre-lobbying call.

GDS-LED PHONE BANKING BY THE NUMBERS

More than **130 STUDENTS** from **10 STATES**, **THREE TIME ZONES**, and **18 SCHOOLS** made...

more than **10,000 CALLS** to historically disenfranchised voters in key states...

for a total of **62 HOURS** of Zoom phone banking after **26 TRAINING SESSIONS**.

(**25%** of which provided BIPOC voters in Georgia with information about casting their ballots in the Senate run-off races.)



The Center for Civic Engagement



Since he first proposed his ideas for a Center for Civic Engagement to the Board of Trustees at the start of the 2019–20 school year, Head of School Russell Shaw and school leaders have explored the ways GDS’s mission-driven work could spark a focus on public purpose with broad-reaching dialogue and advocacy beyond GDS.

With some of our most basic assumptions about democracy in America badly shaken in recent years, much of our ability to communicate across lines of political difference and find common ground in this country has eroded. Yet, today, as it did at its founding, GDS strives to train the game-changing leaders of tomorrow to wade into the great conversations of our time, reaching across racial, economic, and cultural divides, to bring much-needed change to a troubled world.

GDS’s work to educate young people to believe in—and participate in—our democracy continues so that students and alumni can do their parts to deliver on our nation’s promises of liberty, equality, and justice.

With the blessing of the Board, Russell and school leaders have now formally introduced the Center of Civic Engagement at Georgetown Day School to the GDS community, established its founding principles, hired a founding

director and program associate, launched a faculty and staff task force, hosted an event about the For the People Act, and begun to engage the community in defining all that the Center will be.



Barbara Eghan and Russell Shaw

recognize that while this work has always been in our DNA, we must scale up our efforts to meet this moment,” said the newly appointed founding executive director of the Center, Barbara Eghan, who has served for seven years as GDS’s director of enrollment management and financial aid.

“We believe that young people can be engines for positive change—and with the Center for Civic Engagement, we aim to create a new civic platform that engages community partners in the DMV and beyond to educate and inspire the next generation of civic leaders. The Center will equip them with the skills, opportunities, and networks to address the most pressing social challenges that undermine the health of our democracy.”

“Drawing on GDS’s unique history at the nexus of education and democratic engagement in the nation’s capital, we

During the 75th Anniversary Speaker Series panel discussion, “Philanthropy in a Time of Social, Economic, and Political Unrest,” Russell introduced the Center to Ford Foundation President Darren Walker, Annie E. Casey Foundation President and CEO Lisa Hamilton, and Skoll Foundation CEO Don Gips, all leaders of organizations committed to social impact. Russell said, “We want to be part of helping train changemaking leaders of tomorrow. What are the capacities or skills that changemakers are going to need? Who are you going to want to hire? What are the things they are going to need to know how to do?”

“I would suggest you engage young people in the creation of it because they are never short on great ideas about what can be,” Lisa said, before naming data analysis skills and storytelling as essential skills for changemakers.

“Teach students how to listen and not focus on trying to solve somebody’s problem but to empathize with where others are coming from,” Don said. “Starting with that opens up the doors to the real conversations we have to start having.”

Darren offered a caution and reminder that co-creation is foundational to social impact work. “Privileged institutions, even progressive ones like the Ford Foundation, have learned a lot from our

impulse to want to do good in the world and how that can actually turn to harm if the path to doing that doesn't start with the people we want to impact," he said.

The four pillars anchoring the Center's work—dialogue, equity, experiential learning, and partnership—will be guided by this caution to proceed with humility, along with an abiding commitment to empathy rather than a determination to jump in with solutions to other people's problems.

Current students expressed enthusiasm for the unveiling of plans for the Center. "I am so excited about the Center and Barbara's leadership," said Anoushka Chander '21, founder and outgoing head of the High School Student Action Committee. "I had the privilege of attending the Center's opening event...and already could tell how impactful the Center is going to be for providing GDS students with education and advocacy opportunities. I am also excited to learn that the Center will not just serve GDS students, but also other students in the area, as collaborations are super important. As I graduate, I hope to still be involved with the Center and provide advice or talk to current students about political advocacy!"

Barbara noted that the Center will also be a key partner in GDS's DC-area launch of the "Can We?" Project, an immersive student experience in civic dialogue established in Maine by Waynflete to "harness the wisdom and power inherent in the great diversity of the American people to revitalize our democracy, mend the social fabric, and live out the true meaning of the American promise of liberty and justice for all."

"For all the positive introspection that occurs at GDS, the Center provides an incentive to turn outward—to step away from what is safe and small and toward what is messy and difficult," said Nick Penniman '22, who participated in Can We. "It's exciting—and it's necessary. There's a certain appeal to the notion that all we need to do to improve the world is find more people like ourselves and work with them. As the Can We Project and the Center propose, people who are unlike ourselves have things to teach us. I couldn't be more invested in the goals of Can We and the Center, and I don't think that'll change anytime soon. Engaging in democracy is a lasting obligation, not a high school hobby."

At the Intersection of Faith and Diet



As part of the annual, yearlong Identity Project, 2nd grade turned its attention to traditions, beliefs, and religion in November 2020. The full grade joined together to welcome a panel of speakers connected to the GDS community to talk about the intersections of their faith and other aspects of their identities.

Students engaged with GDS parent Rabbi Shira Stutman (Natalia '25, Maya '22, and Caleb '20) who shared that her religion provides moments of joy, family togetherness, and help in times of sadness. Faculty spouse Khashayar Bayani (2nd grade teacher Sasha Shahidinejad) explained that he finds purpose in service to others through the Baha'i faith. Giovana Williams, who is Black and Mormon, discussed the togetherness she valued in the church community she grew up in. Students commented with connections to their own traditions or values, and they asked follow-up questions to learn more about things that were different from their own identities. "What is baptism?" some students asked. "What do you mean when you say you grew up in the church?" asked another.

Second grade teacher Azurée Harrison's homeroom spent time learning about religions that have dietary guidelines, such as eating Kosher foods (Judaism), eating Halal foods (Islam) and practicing vegetarianism/

veganism (observed by some who practice Hinduism).

After learning about these dietary guidelines, the class visited with our own Chef Khari Bell to hear about GDS partner Meriwether Godsey's intentionality in providing menus with diverse options to GDS. Chef Khari talked to the kids about food selection and preparation and then explained about all of the day's menu options and the ingredients in each.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- 1) How do students' religious and cultural backgrounds affect them at school?
- 2) What dietary rules do different religions have?
- 3) How can school cafeterias accommodate and respect students from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds?

Returning to class, the students discussed whether those who identify with each of the three religions of focus would have lunch options. They were pleased to conclude that Meriwether Godsey at GDS provided two or more options for lunch that were suitable for each faith. Much to the delight of the entire dining staff, the students delivered a signed poster as a gesture of thanks for their time and the exchange of knowledge at the intersection of faith and diet.

Around Campus

COMMUNITY COUNTS



20





20



All Class of 2020 drive-thru photography courtesy of Jason Putsche Photography

AN EVENT OF

PANDEMIC PROPORTIONS

On August 2, Georgetown Day School celebrated the Class of 2020 with an all-virtual graduation ceremony, per public health guidelines from the DC government during the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier, GDS celebrated the seniors with an in-person “Summer Send-Off Drive Thru” on June 7, during which students received diplomas, a gift basket, and the raucous cheers of faculty and staff who stood well-distanced along the sidewalks.

During the August virtual gathering, students joined their peers, families, faculty, and the six graduation speakers for a mix of live and pre-recorded content marking the occasion—a momentous one given their tumultuous senior year.



Head of School Russell Shaw was able to shake one graduate's hand live...his son Caleb Stutman-Shaw '20.

Head of School Russell Shaw (parent of Caleb '20, Maya '22, and Natalia '25), delivered his 10th graduation speech, which was not only his first virtual address but—as he noted in his closing remarks—the first graduation ceremony in which he left midway through to search for a missing diploma in his graduating son's bedroom.

In his speech, Russell spoke of “world-reshaping” events that have powerfully and painfully bookended the lives thus far of the Class of 2020. As in the long life of trees, these events and others leave indelible rings, Russell explained.

“Each of you was born in the shadow of 9/11, a world-reshaping event that taught us something about fear and fundamentalism, about hatred and hope, about interconnectedness, and more. There's a ring at the very center of your trunks formed powerfully by September 11, 2001. Your current outer ring, the one that is just under the bark, and that is coinciding with your graduation, is also being shaped by global events, in this case by two of them. Your ring for the year 2020 is being formed by a globally defining pandemic, and by a national awakening around racial justice.”

Russell noted that the Class of 2020 is connected by those rings and also by the interconnected roots of personal relationships and what seniors “carry with them” from their shared GDS experience. As he does every year, Russell elevated the voices of some of the seniors who had written to him to share what they were carrying with them.



Ethan Sze: "GDS has taught me to believe in myself. To put faith in myself. To be confident.

To be proud of who I am...I leave GDS with the same goofy smile but also with a sense of purpose. A purpose to always do better, to always be better."



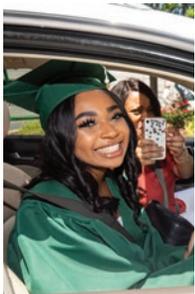
Sophie Schiff: "GDS has taught me that I have a voice and I must use it... Thank you, GDS. (I can't wait to send my kids here!)"



Julia Hay: "I think what I will take most from GDS is the spirit of never settling for just good enough...In the same way GDS is striving to be [an anti-racist institution], I have learned to strive to become a more intersectional activist who puts actions behind my words."



Berret Yuffee: "Every lesson, memory, and friendship is coming with me in the fabric of my body and mind, and when I make my mark on a world larger than my current one, however big or small that mark will be, GDS will be there too."



Nyah Mays: "I would have never become the strong and independent person I am today without the help and support of my friends and peers. I would not be as optimistic during this time if it was not for the GDS community. GDS will be a second home to me for the rest of my life."



Lila Brown: "I have learned the importance of activism for and with people who are different from me. GDS has taught me the strength in a diverse group coming together to fight against injustice...Being an advocate and a good global citizen is, more than anything, about paying attention and speaking up."



Isaiah Schuham-Anders: "I will take the ability to create safe spaces for people in order for them to talk about sensitive issues. By creating those spaces, it will allow me to find those I can trust so that they and I will not feel alone."



Sasha Freedman: "From my GDS education, I've gained core values that I will take with me for the rest of my life—to prize curiosity, to always respect and see the dignity in others, to advocate for myself, to love learning, and to be supportive of my peers."



Sami Jinich: "I will take with me a sense of purpose that has driven me throughout High School and that will continue to drive me for the rest of my life to make this world a better place by helping to amplify the voices of people from all over the world and from different cultures and backgrounds."



Talia Rodriguez: "While I don't think GDS explicitly taught me how to bear the emotions of having a pandemic end my senior year, I do believe it has taught me to think beyond that. To understand that I have a duty to heal the world that is going to be much more broken than I thought it would be a couple of months ago. And to understand you can't ever fully say goodbye to a place, a community, that is part of your being."



Noelle Sanderson: "Whether I am personally affected by an issue or not, I leave GDS with the ability to listen, understand, and strategize a plan to move forward...I cherish my ability to think critically about the world that surrounds me, and truly do not think I would be the person I am today without being able to call this community my home."



High School Principal Katie Gibson (parent of Joy '27 and Oliver '30) turned to the wisdom of the Black feminist thinker and scholar bell hooks in her address to the graduates. "In her collection of essays *Killing Rage: Ending Racism*, hooks writes: 'Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world.' hooks's words move me on multiple levels."

Katie spoke of GDS's work to create spaces where people "feel loved, heard, honored, and affirmed," and acknowledged the "vigilant self-reflection" needed in the school's work ahead. She also asked the graduates to remember "all of the ways in which this community held you, challenged you, and inspired you."

In closing, Katie invoked the late Congressman John Lewis's words: "Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year; it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in **good trouble**, necessary trouble."

Faculty speaker jon sharp, nominated by the Class of 2020, illuminated the contrast between the kind of celebration—the kind of world—they deserved and the "dumpster fire" the world has given them. He spoke of how they have been thrown headlong into a "metastasizing second American Civil War."

jon also assured the Class of 2020 of his utter confidence in them to meet the moment. The

graduates will be like entangled quantum particles, he explained: "Regardless of how much time passes, it is never possible to genuinely and definitively separate those particles again...We are all particles in this, my friends." He reminded them that this world on fire is also the world that produced them. "That world cannot be all bad," he said.

The first of two student speakers, **Margaux Van Allen**, carried the online audience through stories of her not-as-"slick"-as-she-thought 6th grade self and her current affection for the imperfect place that is GDS. "The mere *idea* of this school wanting to make us safe is immensely important," she explained. "I understand that a lot of you know that is not enough, and as a result of that, you guys have done what GDS has taught us best. Criticize! If there is something wrong about the action taking place, GDS kids are more than eager to point it out and correct it...I see people making an effort to educate themselves and others. I see people going out together and protesting. I even see people making short films about mass incarceration and the prison system. It feels so immensely impactful and motivating to see this kind of outcry. It tells me that we have a ton of work to do, but thank god I am not alone. This is where the beauty of GDS manifests: it is not just the institution, but also in the loud people within it."

"It tells me that we have a ton of work to do, but thank god I am not alone. This is where the beauty of GDS manifests: it is not just the institution, but also in the loud people within it."

Student speaker Margaux Van Allen '20





Student speaker Gigi Silla '20

Student speaker **Gigi Silla** illustrated the concept of “solastalgia,” a term she explained as “a combination of solace, desolation, and nostalgia that describes the particular emotional distress and disorientation that arises when familiar surroundings become unrecognizable.” It is an experience, she explained, inhabited by the contradictions of homesickness without leaving home and of physical separation in the midst of unprecedented camaraderie in social movements.

Gigi merged Toni Morrison’s oft-coined statement “If there’s a book that you want to read, but it hasn’t been written yet, then you must write it” with the story of Australian environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht who, along with his wife, created the term “solastalgia.” Gigi said, “I hope in the upcoming chapters of our lives, we can all take a page from Morrison and Albrecht and not only write the books we want to read but also create the languages necessary to write them.”



Parent speaker Jennifer Griffin with daughters, graduate Amelia Myre '20 and alumna Annalise Myre '19

Parent speaker **Jennifer Griffin** (parent of Amelia '20, Annalise '19, and Luke '27) has served as national security correspondent for Fox News Channel since 2007. She worked overseas as a foreign correspondent for 15 years, covering the rise of the Taliban, the transition from Boris Yeltsin to Vladimir Putin, Yasser Arafat’s funeral, and the evacuation of Jewish settlers from Gaza.

Twenty twenty, Jennifer noted to the graduating class, is “an epic number” that “implies clarity.” It has been, she said, “an unforgettable year...a year no one could have envisioned with 20/20 vision.” Jennifer shared that the graduates’ surreal senior year reminded her of her father’s Naval Academy Class of 1947, who all missed the final year at the Academy because they were needed at war in the Pacific.

She closed her remarks by describing the Hebrew term “Tikkun Olam,” meaning “repair the world.” The Jewish concept is “defined by acts of kindness performed to perfect or repair the world.” She offered “Tikkun Olam” as the next challenge for the Class of 2020, a class she called “The Phoenix Generation,” which will “rise out of the ashes of what we have left for you.”

“You missed your graduation,” she said, “but your reunions will be legendary.”

As the names of each graduate were read, some waved their diplomas (in at least one case very recently located), some were hugged by a pod of family members crushed together on a single couch, and many donned the traditional GDS Hopper green caps and gowns for graduates.

“You missed your graduation,” she said, “but your reunions will be legendary.”

Russell closed the ceremony with congratulations to the graduates and a pledge of ongoing support from him, the School, and all those assembled on this occasion. He read his traditional closing poem by Mary Oliver. “The Summer Day” is about a grasshopper flinging herself out into the world, about gratitude, and above all, about paying attention in our “one wild and precious life.” He invited the graduating class to throw their caps in celebration, and the caps ricocheted happily off of computer monitors and family members’ heads with all the pomp and circumstance that Zoom could muster. Congratulations, Class of 2020!

The full recording of the virtual graduation ceremony as well as full texts of all the speeches are available at www.gds.org/HSgraduation.

WHAT CAME NEXT FOR THE CLASS OF

2020

At the beginning of the college process, students have a world of possibility and often have a few ideas of their preferences for college. While the end of the college process looked very different for the Class of 2020 than they could have imagined when they began, they remained engaged, invested, and excited to think about their journey through the college process and next steps, even in a time of great uncertainty.

There is no class that has had to embrace that journey and all its twists and turns like the Class of 2020. Right as seniors began to receive their final college admissions decisions in March 2020, seniors found themselves at home, unable to travel and to investigate their options in person. The resilience, flexibility, and humor that the Class of 2020 showed in the quick pivot from in-person meetings to daily Zoom classes and meetings, as well as their continued thoughtful approach to decision making, was remarkable. They engaged with virtual admitted student programs, connected with GDS alums at the colleges they were considering, and more than ever, they centered their values and goals and made choices that were best for them.

At the end of the day, the Class of 2020 (128 students) enrolled at 73 different colleges and universities across the United States, Canada, and the UK. They are studying music performance, engineering, and fine art, among other academic pursuits. They have chosen colleges in small towns and in major cities. Each year, a number of students choose to delay their enrollment and take a gap year, and the Class of 2020 was no different in that regard. From cooking courses to political campaigns, students found creative ways to spend their year off.

A successful college process at Georgetown Day School is about students:

- Believing in their own ability to navigate a complex process
- Articulating who they are (in flux) and who they want to become
- Developing goals for the college experience beyond admission
- Making decisions grounded in their own values
- Building skills for success beyond high school and college, such as self-reflection, resilience, and decision making
- Celebrating good matches and each other's individual choices



WEST

Pomona College – 3
Santa Clara University – 1
Stanford University – 2
University of California, Davis – 1
University of Colorado at Boulder – 1

FACTS
ABOUT THE CLASS OF
2020

128

Students

APPLIED TO

188

Different Colleges
and Universities

MIDWEST

Carleton College – 1
Case Western Reserve University – 1
Indiana University, Bloomington – 1
Kenyon College – 1
Northwestern University – 3
Oberlin College of Arts and Sciences – 1
Purdue University – 1
The College of Wooster – 1
The Ohio State University – 1
University of Chicago – 1
University of Michigan – 4
University of Wisconsin, Madison – 5
Washington University in St. Louis – 4

NORTHEAST

Barnard College – 1
Boston College – 1
Boston University – 1
Brandeis University – 1
Brown University – 3
Bryn Mawr College – 1
Caldwell University – 1
Colby College – 1
Columbia University – 3
Cornell University – 2
Dartmouth College – 2
Fordham University – 1
George Washington University – 2
Harvard College – 5
Haverford College – 5
Lafayette College – 2
McDaniel College – 1
New York University – 6
Northeastern University – 1
Pennsylvania State University – 1
Pratt Institute – 1
Princeton University – 1
Rhode Island School of Design – 1
School of Visual Arts – 1
SUNY Binghamton – 1
Swarthmore College – 2
Syracuse University – 1
The New England Conservatory of Music – 1
Tufts University – 1
University of Pennsylvania – 1
University of Pittsburgh – 2
University of Rochester – 1
Vassar College – 2
Wellesley College – 2
Wesleyan University – 2
Williams College – 2
Yale University – 3

SOUTHEAST

Davidson College – 1
Duke University – 2
Emory University – 2
Georgetown University – 4
University of Louisville – 1
University of Maryland, Baltimore County – 1
University of Maryland, College Park – 2
University of Miami – 4
University of Virginia – 1
Vanderbilt University – 1
Virginia Commonwealth University – 1
Wake Forest University – 1
William and Mary – 1

INTERNATIONAL

University of St Andrews (SCT) – 1
University of Toronto (CA) – 1



ENROLLED AT

73

Different Schools

25

 STATES

Plus the District of Columbia, the United Kingdom, and Canada

DISTINCTIVE MATRICULATION CHOICES

Women's Colleges (4 students)
Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU) (1 student)
Art Schools – Visual and Performing (4 students)
Recruited Athletes (7 students)

2020'S 8TH GRADE GRADUATION



FREED SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY

Friends and family from across the country and even around the world—more certainly than would have fit in our gym—attended the 8th grade graduation ceremony for the Class of 2024 virtually last May.

Eighth graders appeared dressed up for the occasion in their bedrooms, on the family couch, or at the kitchen table. Middle School Principal Debby Previna and Head of School Russell Shaw spoke during the ceremony, which also included a presentation of diplomas and a virtual dance party.

It's true that in their final three months of Middle School, the Class of 2024 saw their 8th grade year veer wildly off course. Yet, as Debby explained, the students persevered to a "successful completion of 8th grade." Beyond the quantifiable measures of success, Debby spoke to the accolades that transcended the "imperfect world."

"As much as things have been challenging, we ask that you don't lose faith in humanity or in yourself," she said. "You have already been successful. You have made space for yourself and used your voice. You asked for help when you needed it, took care of the younger Middle Schoolers, and didn't use your seniority to belittle but to set a model. You have remained intellectually curious, studious, and willing to jump in and struggle productively. Even while

the grownups in your life can't protect you from everything—but only some things—we are here for you now and forever. We look forward to all the ways you are going to create a more perfect and just world for us all to live in."

Graduations, Russell explained, are a meaningful, liminal moment—positioned upon the threshold where one story is ending and the next is beginning. Even when faced with grief, the Talmud reminds us, he explained, to celebrate the fleeting moments of joy and accomplishment, like this 8th grade graduation. "Now is the time to celebrate," he urged.

In a particularly personal moment, Russell shared a piece of wisdom that has guided him since he was a teenager. After a bullying incident left him dreading school, he found a note that his mother left beside his bed. "I am not made or unmade by the things that happen to me but by my reaction to them," the message said. "Things will happen beyond your control," Russell said, "and your job is to respond in the best way you can."

As both Debby and Russell expressed, Georgetown Day School is grateful to have experienced the beauty, power, wit, competence, joy, and empathy of the Class of 2024.

"A look back at the Class of 2024 as they...hopped back into the first day of their final year in the Middle School



...and enjoyed the final Country Market Day on MacArthur Boulevard."



CRISTINA WATSON

8th graders on Hill Day in February 2020

Together We Leap

INTO MIDDLE SCHOOL: 2020 4TH & 5TH GRADE PROMOTION CEREMONY

As GDS prepared to make the move from MacArthur Boulevard to Davenport Street in Spring 2020, 4th and 5th graders were preparing to make the leap from Lower School to Middle School.

At the promotion ceremonies, Head of School Russell Shaw urged the students to bring with them to the new campus “a sense of responsibility not just for yourself, but for your grade, your school, your school community, and the world beyond our walls. The world needs you. It needs your kindness, your compassion, your voice, your care, and your courage to make a difference.”

As these rising Middle Schoolers were getting ready to say hello to new experiences in a new building, they were also saying goodbye to a place that meant so much to their early years of development.

They said goodbye to the Big Toy and hello to our incredible new playground, which will give them many new spaces to stretch their legs, climb, and be together outdoors! (See pages 44–45.)



They said goodbye to the library, but brought the books to their new home, along with their willingness to continue exploring new worlds together in Middle School and beyond.



They left behind the Blackbox and are eager to try out our new performing arts space, carrying with them the same sense of wonder and willingness to experiment and try new endeavors.



They said goodbye to familiar hallways and welcomed new gathering spaces, bringing along their commitment to community.



At the promotion ceremonies, attendees enjoyed a virtual band concert, a screening of the students’ February dance assembly performances, a reading of Peter H. Reynolds’s *Say Something*, and the sharing of favorite Lower School memories by the graduates.

The classes of 2027 and 2028 are the first group of Middle School students to call our unified campus home. Along with their many gifts, we know our promoted students have brought with them cherished memories from their Lower School years.

ALL-SCHOOL

Welcome Back Assembly



Azureé Harrison,
2ND GRADE TEACHER:

Hey, GDS Hoppers! Welcome to our first-ever all-school welcome back assembly. Hey, Greg!



Greg Dallinger,
HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE TEACHER:

Good afternoon, Azureé! It's great to join you to emcee this assembly.



Visit the online magazine to watch clips from the assembly.

GDS's first all-school assembly wasn't quite the gathering we'd been imagining since our unification process began, but with the help of dozens of community members and our two emcees, it was a joyful—albeit virtual—celebration of the new school year as a newly unified school.



We...

...inaugurated the **GDS Torch Run** and watched the Mighty Hopper take the symbolic GDS torch on a tour of the city before passing it to a member of the senior class and then down to representatives of each grade to our newest, youngest Hoppers...



...laughed as Russell sang Celine Dion's rendition of the Eric Carmen song "All By Myself" from the roof of our new Lower/Middle School building, while looking down on a unified but empty campus...

...watched our Lower, Middle, and High School principals set an example for how to ROLL with all the changes we've seen during the pandemic...



...listened to a performance of our school song by our Lower/Middle School music teachers...

...were enchanted by a virtual meeting of seniors and Pre-K and Kindergarten buddies, whose unfiltered authenticity may just make you fall in love with the school all over again...

...and watched a throwback video of the Class of 2021 when they performed as 5th graders in the 2014 Lower School Dance Assembly.

More than 800 unique devices connected, and sometimes as many as four family members connected via a single device—but who's counting?! We know it's not the numbers that count. As the first All-School Welcome Back Assembly reminded us all, it's **COMMUNITY** that **COUNTS**.

GDS PRESENTS AND THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY SPEAKER SERIES

In the spring of 2020, during the first weeks of the COVID-19 lockdown, GDS launched a series of presentations by experts in our community to inform, inspire, and entertain during our time apart. In honor of GDS's 75th anniversary, "GDS Presents" has continued with the 75th Anniversary Speaker Series this fall. The series has featured luminaries in the entertainment industry and the judicial system, in journalism and politics, and in the fight for social justice. Nearly all of our panelists have been GDS alumni, parents, alumni parents, or longtime friends of the community.

"I was a kid who was resistant to loving learning. That started changing at GDS, and I think the arts was a really important space for me...I feel grateful both for the spark at the beginning and the continued community."

– ETHAN SLATER '10,
ENTERTAINMENT IN THE
TIME OF COVID



A.J. Weissbard '91
Ahmad Jones '14, Khalil Jones '14,
and Malik Jones '14
Alisa Klein
Dr. Amanda Castel
Judge Andre Davis
Becca Roux
Cait Clarke and Malia Brink
Judge Casey Cooper
Danielle Glosser
DeMaurice Smith
Ethan Slater '10
Frank Foer '92

Gina Gionfriddo '87
Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman
Representative Jamie Raskin '79
Dr. Jennifer Joyner-Hall
Dr. Jennifer Verbese
Julie Fanburg '89
Juliet Eilperin '88
Attorney General for the District of
Columbia Karl Racine
Kate Julian
Kelly AuCoin '85
Judge Ketanji Jackson
Laura Rosberg

Dr. Lucile Adams-Campbell
Lulu Garcia-Navarro
Dr. Mark Klaiman and Adam Gershowitz
Matthew Kaminski '90
Molly Levinson
Judge Nina Pillard
Nina Totenberg
Dr. Sanjay Desai
Sashi Brown
Sean Fine '92 and Andrea Nix Fine
Terence Carter '97

"There were two great legal pioneers in the 20th century who really transformed the meaning of the equal protection clause in the 14th Amendment, as both lawyers and as Supreme Court justices, and both of them were part of the GDS family. Yes, Thurgood Marshall and Ruth Bader Ginsburg."

– REPRESENTATIVE JAMIE RASKIN '79,
THE LEGACY OF JUSTICE RUTH BADER GINSBURG





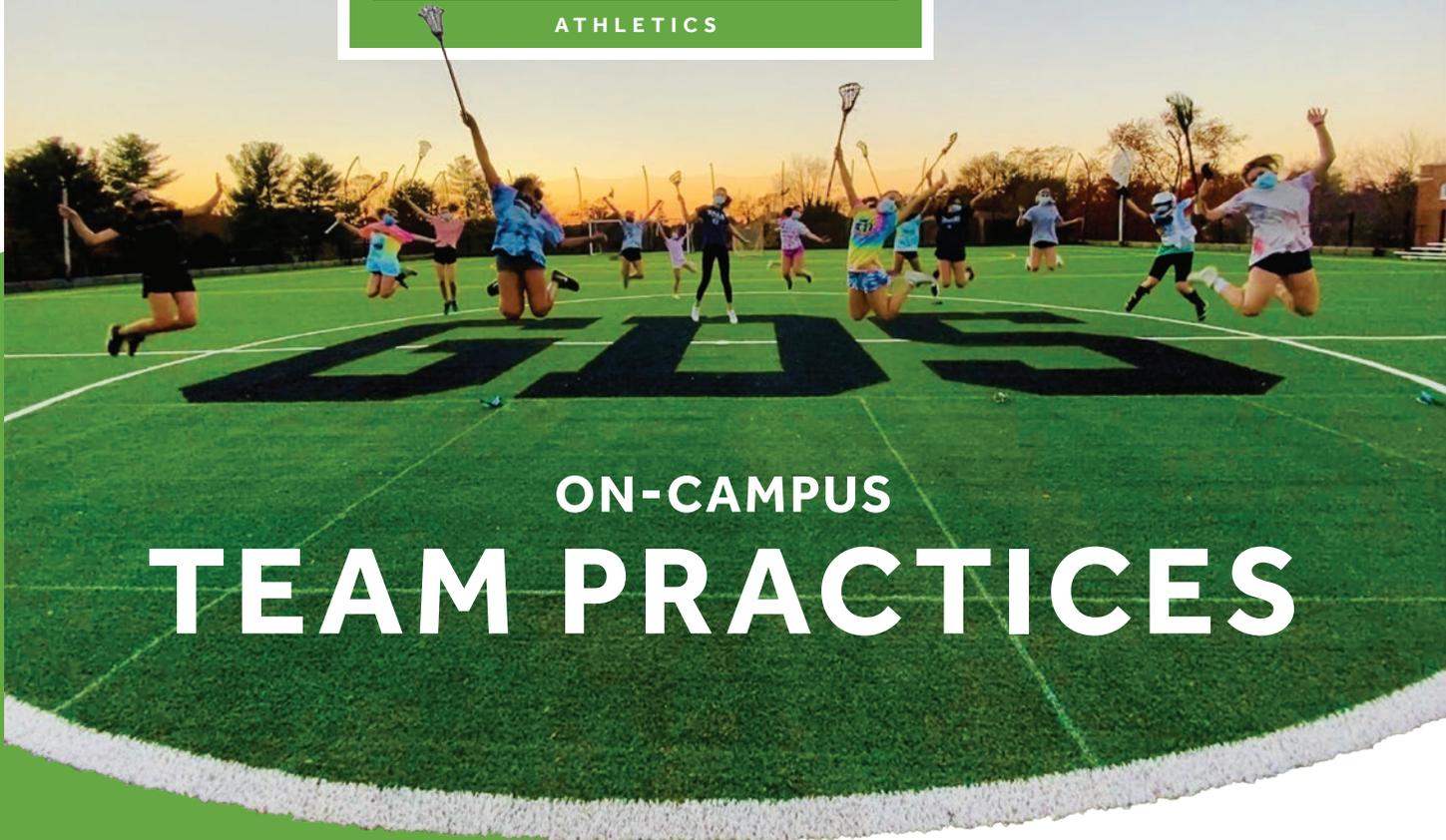
”

“Dr. King famously said, ‘The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice.’ Judge Cooper, Judge Davis, Attorney General Racine, you are three citizens who have been bending the arc...I cannot think of a better way to honor the start of Georgetown Day School’s 75th year than with this conversation, which is so at the heart of who we are and who we aspire to be as an institution.”

– HEAD OF SCHOOL RUSSELL SHAW,
RACE, JUSTICE, AND THE
AMERICAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM



ACCESS
RECORDINGS OF
ALL GDS PRESENTS
EVENTS ONLINE.



ON-CAMPUS TEAM PRACTICES

COVID regulations during the 2020–21 school year meant almost no competition for GDS's athletes. Thanks to our coaches and athletic director David Gillespie, who created ways for athletics to continue.

Practices, like the one above with Women's lacrosse, provided fitness, skill development, and community to student athletes isolated by the pandemic.



Lauren Petrilla '23 tees off on the greens of the HS field.



When women's lacrosse ran drills on the new LMS field, Delaney McDermott '24 took shots on goal.

DISTANCED

BUT

TOGETHER



The crew team held ergometer workouts on the HS field.



Men's soccer got their heads back in the game—and back on campus.



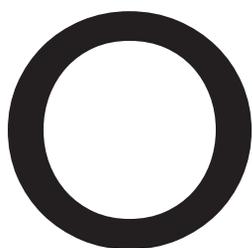
Marleigh Ausbrooks '21 and Isabelle Schiff '22 celebrated the unveiling of the 2019 ISL AA Division Women's Soccer banner.



Luke Cohen '23 and his cross country teammates ran warm-ups and drills distanced on the HS field.

Anti-Racism and Athletics

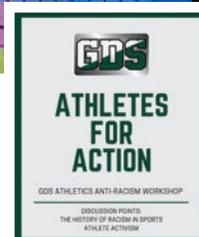
To close out their planning days, Athletic Director David Gillespie and DEI Director Marlo Thomas displayed these flags together as a visual representation of their commitment to each other, to this initiative, and to the ongoing anti-racist work of our school.



ur Athletics and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Offices have partnered to launch a workshop series for all High School student athletes around topics of anti-racism and anti-bias in athletics.

The first workshop in the series established a historical understanding of racism in sports and athlete activism primarily through small group discussions around a collection of short documentary films. The Athletics department has established an anti-racist library collection focused on sports, including Thomas Etan's *We Matter: Athletes and Activism* and Harris Duchess's *Gender & Race in Sport*. The library, and the anti-bias impact of the program, will continue to grow.

*Spring athletics highlights coming in next issue.



The Pride "Progress Flag" and the Black Lives Matter flag are proudly displayed alongside the GDS athletics banner in the High School gym.



GDS'S NEW CLIMBING WALL

GDS surprised the community with a brand new climbing wall this fall, built next to the new LMS building's garage. Cheers of delight and disbelief filled the virtual unveiling with the High School climbing team, who then had the chance to visit the wall during their first in-person club meeting this winter. The climbers helped design and install some preset routes across the traverse wall. In the not-too-distant future, Lower and Middle School students will begin using the wall for problem solving and skill building during P.E. and indoor recess.



Madeleine Popofsky '22

Liam Zeilinger '23 and Maddie Feldman '22

HAMLET: The Method in the Madness

In honor of GDS's 75th anniversary, the GDS High School theater program presented a 75-minute virtual version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Every audience member had a box seat with the best view in the house on opening night in January. Despite the isolation of that Zoom rectangle, the show was a sumptuous experience that relied upon weeks of behind-the-scenes audio and visual tinkering. Student teams designed and delivered costumes and props to the actors' homes. The sets crew created tessellated virtual backgrounds to create the illusion that all of the actors were haunting the same location. Actors prerecorded their performances, and the sound team added background audio and music for the live screening. From out of the madness of staging a virtual play, students' methods and efforts delivered a virtual masterpiece. Learn more about the show at www.GDS.org/Hamlet.



King Claudius (Elias Rodriguez '22, top center) wagers on the duel as (counterclockwise from top left) the queen's lady (Leila Jackson '22), Queen Gertrude (Jacqueline Metzger-Taylor '23), Horatio (Noah Freedman '22), Laertes (Aidan Kohn-Murphy '22), and Osric (Stella Tongour '22) look on.



In a triumph of the visual effects team, (top row, left to right) Queen Gertrude, King Claudius, and Horatio join (center row, left to right) the queen's lady, the priest (Elliot Oppenheim '21), Hamlet (Caleigh Vergeer '21), and (bottom row) Laertes in the graveyard.

“Though this be madness,
yet there is method in’t.”

– SHAKESPEARE

BOOK AS SCULPTURE

High School art teacher Nick Ryan's students explored and reimagined books, asking themselves questions to define and center value in their creative process.

What do you most value in a book?



Katherine Davies '24

What is essential to your experience of a book?



Sophie Bronner '23

Now—imagine reinventing books...



Christian Charles '24

How radically would you reimagine a book as sculpture?



Helena Dobbs '23

How will a viewer interact with it?



Stella Tongour '22

Where will your book take the viewer?



Cole Huh '24

Holding onto Peace at Christmas

As in years past, kindergarten teachers read the Christmas story aloud, High School Morris dancers skipped and smashed sticks together jubilantly, and Russell Shaw sang his GDS “Christmas Blues.”

But in 2020, Lower School arts teachers blended multiple disciplines into single virtual performances. PKK students danced to “Silent Night” with colorful scarves in our new performing arts theater while their classmates danced at home, and student artwork celebrating peace and the winter season framed the virtual stage. Fourth graders sang and played recorder on “Let Me Be a Light for Peace” over a gallery of favorite 1st- through 3rd-grade fall artwork.

Middle School honored what our first head of school Aggie O’Neil called “each others’ days of joy” through earnest recollections of favorite winter holiday traditions, reflections on peace, good wishes for each other, and a radio play of “’Twas the Night Before Christmas.”

The High School shared traditional carols and readings, a comically sanitized ribbon-wrapped Morris dance, a jazz interlude, a “Rosberg Reading” (HS performing arts chair Laura Rosberg read Susan Cooper’s “The Shortest Day”), and Russell’s quintessential blues. The 2020 rendition will likely be best remembered for surprising the HS community with news of two teachers who added a bit more love into a difficult year with their under-the-radar marriage back in March.

In one of his final blog posts for the Hopper Effect before retirement, Kevin Barr chose, in January of 2019, to write about GDS traditions like the Christmas Peace Assembly. He concluded, “In a world which can seem chaotic, we can crave something sturdy to hold onto. GDS and its celebrations are a pretty sure bet.”

While Kevin could not have imagined the changed world we are living through now, he understood then that hard times are ever present, but that moments of joy, love, gratitude—and peace—can help us thrive through them.



Morris dancers on the High School field, accompanied by Topher Dunne on fiddle



Barbara’s PK class performs to “Silent Night.”



Violet Ikenberry ’26 sings during the (virtual) Middle School Peace Assembly.

MS Music on Campus

Along with the return of migratory birds and fully vaccinated teachers, we also saw the return of Middle School music to campus in spring 2021. With outdoor distancing and instrument-specific filters, band and choral groups began to rehearse together again.



Outdoor chorus with LMS music teacher and arts chair Keith Hudspeth



Alicia Kim ’27



Jameson Shelton ’27



Evan Donath ’27

GDS

IDENTITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ART SHOW

The virtual exhibition went live on March 1 and had thousands of visitors. The paintings and drawings, photography, sculptures, and digital art showed students processing their identities as well as their perspectives on the social injustices, hostile political climate, and systemic racism that they are witnessing—or experiencing—firsthand, living in Washington, DC. Below, we spotlight six representative pieces.



COVID TEENAGER

Addie Lowenstein '22

Addie's mixed-media piece features an anxious self-portrait, a coronavirus-spangled banner, and newspaper headlines telling the story of the evolving response to the COVID-19 pandemic. She also included everyday objects—Zoom boxes, airpods, Q-tips for COVID testing, masks, and a glove—all items that “have gained a special significance in this period,” Addie said. “For the identity show I was thinking a lot about the way that COVID has influenced my identity as both an American and a teenager...we all had to find new ways to connect with each other, and continue to do the things we love, and be ourselves, all during an insanely stressful period.”

ASIA—BEHIND THE MASK

Maya Ryu '23

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Maya has become more aware of the Asian-American part of her identity “as I watched my community getting attacked and harassed,” she explained. Her piece displays the “anger and disgust that flared up every time our president called the novel disease the ‘Chinese Virus’” and as the incidence of hate crimes against Asians skyrocketed, including “getting spit on, being called racial slurs, or even being physically attacked.” Maya has represented the “countless cultures and people” of the Asian community through this mixed-media collage.





REPRESENT

Nathaniel Romine '24

Nathaniel captured several important elements of his identity, his race, and his hometown—“Chocolate City”—in this mixed-media piece. His face, stylistically inspired by contemporary artist Benny Bing and featuring the colors of the Pan-African flag, represents aspects of his racial identity and sits on his home ward on the DC map beneath. “I remember hearing old songs my dad used to play that referenced ‘Chocolate City,’” Nathaniel said. “I asked him what that meant, and he told me about how DC used to be a majority Black city and how it got to be that way.” As his title suggests, Nathaniel represents a part of that DC story.



UNTITLED

Gavin Seiden '21

Gavin’s S-shaped dollar sign puts a spotlight on the troubling influence of money in the college application process, specifically with respect to tests like the SAT. Preparation courses routinely raise test scores, but the costs of the classes also remain “an economic barrier to many,” he said. The test is “a symbol of the socio-economic issues present within the system.” Even as he and his peers navigated the process under very new circumstances, Gavin wanted to shine a light on the systemic inequities beyond the bribery scandals. The 15 geometric solids featured in this construction are made from standardized test scantrons.



THE SCARS OF AMERICA

Harold Oppenheim '22

In this digital collage, Harold superimposed imagery from the Capitol insurrection on January 6, 2021 (credit Andrew Harnik/AP) onto the Washington Monument to represent “the bigotry that runs deep in America,” which seems “inseparable from the American identity as a whole.” The strength of iconic American buildings, he went on to explain, masks rampant injustices in the country. The piece represents the conflict, hatred, greed, and “ever-present wounds” in America.



I SPEAK FOR MYSELF

Katie Young '23

Katie made this advocacy piece in support of people with disabilities, who are often “presumed to be incapable of speaking to their own needs or wants” to the point that people will turn to somebody else to speak for them. “Whether in a medical setting or even ordering food at a restaurant, too many people are treated as invisible due to differing abilities,” said Katie, who has witnessed this as a family member and friend to people with both intellectual and physical disabilities. “It’s important to recognize that all people have the right to speak for themselves.”

The High School arts team—Michelle Cobb, Adrian Loving, Tuan Nguyen, Nick Ryan, and Laura Tolliver—made this show possible through their ongoing work in support of the students and their art.

GDS 2020-21

ANTI-RACIST JOURNEY

Summer of 2020: Students, staff, and families participated in Black Lives Matter protests in person and via social media. GDS saw the stories brought to light nationally—and those shared closer to home from current and former students on the @blackatgds Instagram page—as opportunities to take a look at our work and determine what we could do better. Like at GDS, institutions and individuals across the country have interrogated their founding ideals and identified steps forward for growth and healing. GDS responded promptly with an action plan and has been engaged methodically in the work since. The disciplined approach to change has indeed been a response to @blackatgds; it has also been a commitment to holding the school accountable to the promises it has made to our families.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) team worked in partnership with the counselors and wellness staff to develop much of the 2020–21 anti-racist programming for faculty, staff, students, and parents. DEI Director Marlo Thomas and team members Guyton Mathews and Campbell Keyser collaborated with Assistant Head of School Laura Yee as well as counselors Amy Killy '90 and Gaby Grebski (HS), Gabrielle Holder (MS), and Meryl Heyliger (LS) as well as Director of Student Life and Wellness Bobby Asher. Dozens more community members contributed in meaningful ways to the ongoing work.

Track this year's journey of the various constituencies color coded below:

- STUDENTS
- FAMILIES
- FACULTY/STAFF
- COMMUNITY WIDE

10/01/20:

AFFINITY GROUP

New: HS student affinity groups started: Crowns (for Black non-male students), First Gen, and South Asian Affinity Group

EXAMPLE OF CURRICULAR INNOVATION

New in Middle School: Book talks at the start of each 6th grade English class highlighting BIPOC (and LGBTQ+) writers

READING



All GDS Faculty/Staff read *The Racial Healing Handbook: Practical Activities to Help You Challenge Privilege, Confront Systemic Racism, and Engage in Collective Healing.*

Implemented anti-racism tracker to chart progress through the strategic plan

Follow the plan online:



05/29/20:

Protests related to the death of George Floyd reach Washington, DC.



Alumnus O'Neill Cushman '90 used this original piece to fundraise for racial justice organizations. The top donor then gave the painting to GDS. It currently resides in the DEI Office of the new Lower/Middle School building.

06/01/20:

AFFINITY GROUP

A.W.A.R.E. (Alliance of White Anti-Racist Educators) continued regular meetings.

READING

Faculty book clubs sprang up within office teams and among divisional faculty in the summer of 2020.

06/26/20:

GDS @BlackatGDS Instagram created and populated with statements from current students and alumni.



10/06/20:

75TH ANNIVERSARY SPEAKER SERIES

Race, Justice, and the American Judicial System with (clockwise from top left) Honorable Andre Davis, Honorable Casey Cooper, DC Attorney General Karl Racine, and journalist Nicole Lewis '05 (moderator)



10/09/20:

KEYNOTE

Rosa Clemente, journalist, political commentator, scholar-activist, and 2008 Green Party Vice-Presidential candidate presented during LatinX Heritage month HS assembly.



10/13/20:

KEYNOTE

Dr. Bettina Love, author of *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*, on combatting anti-blackness in the educational environment



10/14/20:

DEI DINNER AND CONVERSATIONS

Jeff Johnson, MSNBC Contributor and White House Correspondent for The Grio, in conversation with Russell Shaw

09/26/20:

DEI Welcome Back Meet & Greet with more than 80 attendees

09/01/20:

STUDENT SUPPORT

Group processing spaces and individual support with the counselors, wellness staff, and members of the DEI team followed community conversations.



09/01/20:

KEYNOTE

Dr. Dena Simmons Ed.D., founder of LiberatED, presented during staff Opening Days: "Self-Care, Healing, and Equity-Responsive Practices for When the World Feels Heavy."

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION OFFICE



Marlo Thomas



Guyton Mathews



Cambell Keyser



Laura Yee
Assistant Head of School for Curriculum and Instruction

07/01/20:

AFFINITY GROUP

The Black Parent Resource Group resumed meetings.

AFFINITY GROUP

New Black Faculty/Staff Affinity Group created



New Board Chair Lisa Fairfax began to play a critical role in guiding the school's strategic approach to institutional growth around anti-racism.

08/26/20:

FACULTY/STAFF THEMES

Vigilant Self-Reflection & Action; Confronting anti-Black racism; and Support Black faculty/staff



07/23/20:

DEI DINNER AND CONVERSATIONS

Dr. Roderick Carey, Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Sciences, University of Delaware



07/20/20:

DEI DINNER AND CONVERSATIONS

Ms. Sybrina Fulton, mother of Trayvon Martin, in conversation with Marlo Thomas

JOURNEY CONTINUES FROM HERE

10/20/20:

WORKSHOP #1

Let's Get it Right: A Collaborative Approach to Ensuring that Females and Students of Color Thrive in Mathematics!

11/01/20:

Recommitted to maintaining a DEI presence in the faculty/staff hiring process



10/28/20:

ASSEMBLY

Jeff Johnson on examining civic engagement at GDS



11/09/20:

DEI DINNER AND CONVERSATIONS

Michelle Harris, of Parenting Pathfinders, presents Change Begins at Home for PK-6th grade families.

02/01/21:

EXAMPLE OF CURRICULAR INNOVATION

New in Lower School: The Great Migration unit in 3rd grade, connected to their study of migration and immigration in America.



02/09/21-02/10/21:

KEYNOTE

Dr. Bettina Love, Social Justice Teach-In Day



02/02/21:

KEYNOTE

Honoring Fred Korematsu Day with Asian-American Affinity Group-sponsored presentation by GDS parents Madhavi Sunder and Anupam Chander (Anoushka Chander '21)



02/18/20:

75TH ANNIVERSARY SPEAKER SERIES

Daughters of the Civil Rights Movement, with (L-R) GDS teachers Paula Young Shelton (author of *Child of the Civil Rights Movement*) and Toussaint Lacoste (moderator) and author/journalist Karen Gray Houston

04/01/21:

EXAMPLE OF CURRICULAR INNOVATION

New in High School: Environmental Justice (EJ) Week hosted by students from the Policy Institute EJ Track

01/28/21:

WORKSHOP #2

Let's Get it Right: A Collaborative Approach to Ensuring that Females and Students of Color Thrive in Mathematics!



03/29/21:

KEYNOTE

Dr. Anneliese A. Singh Ph.D., author of *The Racial Healing Handbook*

All-school Teaching Rubric Version 1 developed for equity centered, anti-racist, culturally responsive pedagogy. Program piloted in spring 2021. Full implementation in fall 2021.

04/07/21:

Equity audit with Alison Park of Blink Consulting began for the full community.

04/14/21:

AFFINITY GROUP
Parent Affinity Group Meet & Greet



11/11/20:

PANEL

Jeff Johnson returned for a civic engagement panel with GDS HS students.



11/16/20:

DEI DINNER AND CONVERSATIONS

Michelle Harris, of Parenting Pathfinders, presents Change Begins at Home for 7th-12th grade families.



11/30/20:

KEYNOTE

Dr. Gholdy Muhammad, author of *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*, on culturally and historically responsive teaching for the Middle School

12/09/20:

WORKSHOP

Athletics Anti-Racism (page 30)

12/17/20:

AFFINITY GROUP

Parent White Antiracism Group (WAG) launched

01/22/20:

Equity audit partnership with Alison Park of Blink Consulting announced



01/27/21:

75TH ANNIVERSARY SPEAKER SERIES

Social Justice in Sports with (counterclockwise from top right) Executive Director of the NFL Players Association DeMaurice Smith (moderator), Executive Director for the U.S. Women's National Team Players Association Becca Roux, and attorney and sports executive Sashi Brown



01/19/21:

KEYNOTE

Dr. Gholdy Muhammad returned for the High School.



Ki Gross from Woke Kindergarten on "Intersectionality and Abolitionist Teaching: Centering Queer Voices"



KEYNOTE

Dr. Eddie Moore Jr. and Dr. John Igwebuike on effective listening, a social justice imperative



WELLNESS TEAM



Bobby Asher



Gaby Grebski



Meryl Heyliger



Gabrielle Holder



Amy Killy



04/21/21:

75TH ANNIVERSARY SPEAKER SERIES

Philanthropy in a Time of Social, Economic, and Political Unrest, (clockwise from bottom right) Annie E. Casey Foundation President and CEO Lisa Hamilton, Ford Foundation President Darren Walker, and Skoll Foundation CEO Don Gips in conversation with Head of School Russell Shaw (moderator)

04/21/21:

WORKSHOP #3

Let's Get it Right: A Collaborative Approach to Ensuring that Females and Students of Color Thrive in Mathematics!

EVEN AS WE HAVE LISTENED AND LEARNED, GRAPPLED AND GROWN, AND TAKEN ACTION, THE ESSENTIAL WORK CONTINUES.

MEET THE NEW TRUSTEES

2020-21

Since its founding by seven families in 1945, Georgetown Day School has been ably served by a Board of Trustees composed of parents, alumni, and other key community members. While serving in a voluntary capacity, the Trustees work closely with the head of school to ensure the short- and long-term financial health of the School and to safeguard the School's founding purpose as a racially and religiously inclusive school whose educational

philosophy derives from the belief that diversity is the ground out of which great learning grows. The Board's focus is strategic, and board members rightly prioritize the GDS experience for all students over the singular experience of their own child or children.

We were pleased to welcome three new Board members for the 2020-21 school year—joining the Board in a year like no other. Each spring, Trustees

are elected for a regular term of three years. Board members may serve two consecutive (full or partial) terms up to a maximum of six years. These individuals join an active Board focused on strategic planning, campus planning, and financial goal-setting. All members of the Board also serve on at least one of ten Board committees. For more information about other members of our board, go to www.GDS.org/Board.



CHRIS BOREK

New Board member Chris Borek shared: "The thing I probably love the most [about GDS] is the kids' excitement for learning. There is almost always some topic from class (or debate or something) that they learned and are excited to share at dinner. [When they were] home and I overheard occasional zoom class discussions, I saw that their friends/classmates shared that excitement. Now that they are getting older, some of what they share is new for me. That I am starting to learn from them is a most welcome trend!"

Chris may have just joined the Board, but, he says, "Even in the short time I have been on the Board, I have learned quite a bit. Running a school successfully requires a lot of different skills sets and capabilities. I have been impressed with the care and deliberation the Board takes in making decisions on a breadth of topics."

Chris is currently a managing principal at Analysis Group, an economics consulting firm, where he specializes in the application of microeconomics, marketing strategy, and statistics to litigation and complex business problems.

His recent work has focused heavily on intellectual property, antitrust, and

corporate governance disputes. Chris also serves as senior policy scholar in the Center for Business and Public Policy at Georgetown University and is a member of the Analysis Group Board of Directors. He previously volunteered for the Civic Education Project, where he taught economics at Chernivtsi National University in Ukraine. Chris received a PhD and MA in economics from Cornell University, a BA in economics from the University of Arizona, and an E.U. Diploma from the Institut D'Etudes Politiques de Paris in France.

Chris and his wife, Irene Cortese, have lived in the DC metro area since 1998. They live with Milo '23 and Naomi '25 in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

JON KAPLAN

Jon Kaplan and his wife, Jill Wilkins, are active GDS parents and have two daughters at the school, Ruby '21 and Stella '28, as well as a son, Harry, in college. Joining the Board during this COVID year, Jon said, "The core elements of the GDS mission are more important and relevant than ever as we pull together to support our kids, one another, and our broader community. Jill and I love that we are part of a GDS community that cares deeply about supporting one another and advancing social justice."

Jon brings with him to the Board expertise from a variety of leadership positions in higher education, business, and government. "It's an honor to serve on a board with such a dedicated group of trustees. It's also wonderful to be able to learn so much from the board and from



As someone who describes herself as "passionate about the unique and transformative impact that education can have on our society," Kimberly Stokes couples that passion with more than 20 years in finance and investment management, specializing in corporate credit to "support GDS as we enter a more uncertain future."

Mother to Kenji '25, Kimberly said she "has watched him grow into an independent student and critical thinker; and he has found support in his artistic endeavors and exploration of social justice issues. Our family is proud to support GDS, and I truly appreciate the opportunity to serve on the GDS Board

our immensely talented and committed school leadership," he said.

As founder and managing partner of Hines Point Advisors, he works with education technology companies, universities, and private equity firms. He is also a lecturer at Georgetown University in higher education leadership and ethics.

Jon is the former CEO of Laureate Online, the digital learning division of Laureate Education, a global higher education company, where he was a senior executive for over 15 years. Earlier in his career, Jon served in the White House as special assistant to the President for economic policy and chief of staff of the National Economic Council under President Bill Clinton. He also held posts



at the Department of the Treasury and on U.S. Senator John Kerry's staff. Before his government service, he practiced law at Covington & Burling. Jon has served on a number of boards, including the Concord Hill School, the Hope for Henry Foundation, and Coursera, as well as other organizations.

Jon graduated cum laude from Harvard College with an AB in government. He received his JD from Boston University School of Law, where he was an editor of the Boston University Law Review.

KIMBERLY STOKES

during this critical moment in the history of our school and the world at large."

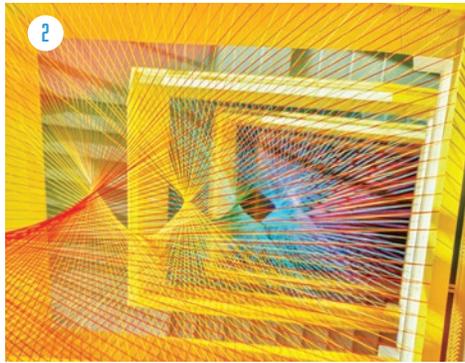
Kimberly is a vice president and corporate engagement strategist for Calvert Research and Management, a wholly owned subsidiary of Eaton Vance Management that specializes in responsible and sustainable investing across global capital markets. She has nearly \$20B in assets under her management. Kimberly is responsible for executing the firm's engagement strategy, which seeks to improve corporate environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance through direct dialogue, standard-setting exercises and partnerships, and public policy. She joined Calvert in 2019.

Prior to joining Calvert, she was a senior analyst in the fixed income division of T. Rowe Price, where she covered the

investor-owned utilities and midstream energy sectors. Kimberly also worked as a senior ratings analyst in the energy group at Standard & Poor's and as a relationship manager on the oil and gas team at the Bank of New York.

Kimberly earned an MBA from Georgetown University following a BS from Bowie State University. She is a member of the MOSAIC employee resource group at Eaton Vance, which supports firm-wide diversity and inclusion efforts; she serves on the boards of the University System of Maryland Foundation and Ready at Five. She has recently served on the boards of the Prince George's Child Resource Center and Bowie State University Foundation.

WELCOME



TO THE LOWER/MIDDLE SCHOOL!



- 1 The One GDS Donor wall, located by the garage entrance, includes the names of everyone who contributed to the campaign.
- 2 The glass-enclosed main stairwell features a woven rainbow spiral and boasts beautiful views over the fields and playgrounds.
- 3 The lobby tree weave is an intriguing, organic shape and is fantastically strong. It can support more than 34,000 lbs.
- 4 The Kamal Nashid Terrace is a peaceful outdoor gathering and learning space with gardens, picnic tables, and a live roof.
- 5 Our Pre-K and Kindergarten classrooms are spacious and sized well for small children. Each classroom has an exterior door that opens toward the playgrounds.
- 6 Science and innovation labs bookend the second, third, and fourth floor hallways. Favorite features: moveable whiteboard tables and large windows.
- 7 Window benches are in our new classrooms for reading or meeting.
- 8 Our new gym, for basketball, volleyball, P.E., community gatherings, and more, has windows that wrap around on two sides from the garage level.



Each floor features its own color scheme.



This second floor common area features our Lower/Middle School tech support desk.

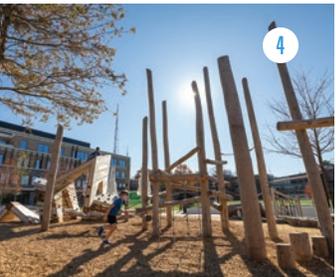


Wood-paneled lockers are available for Middle School students.

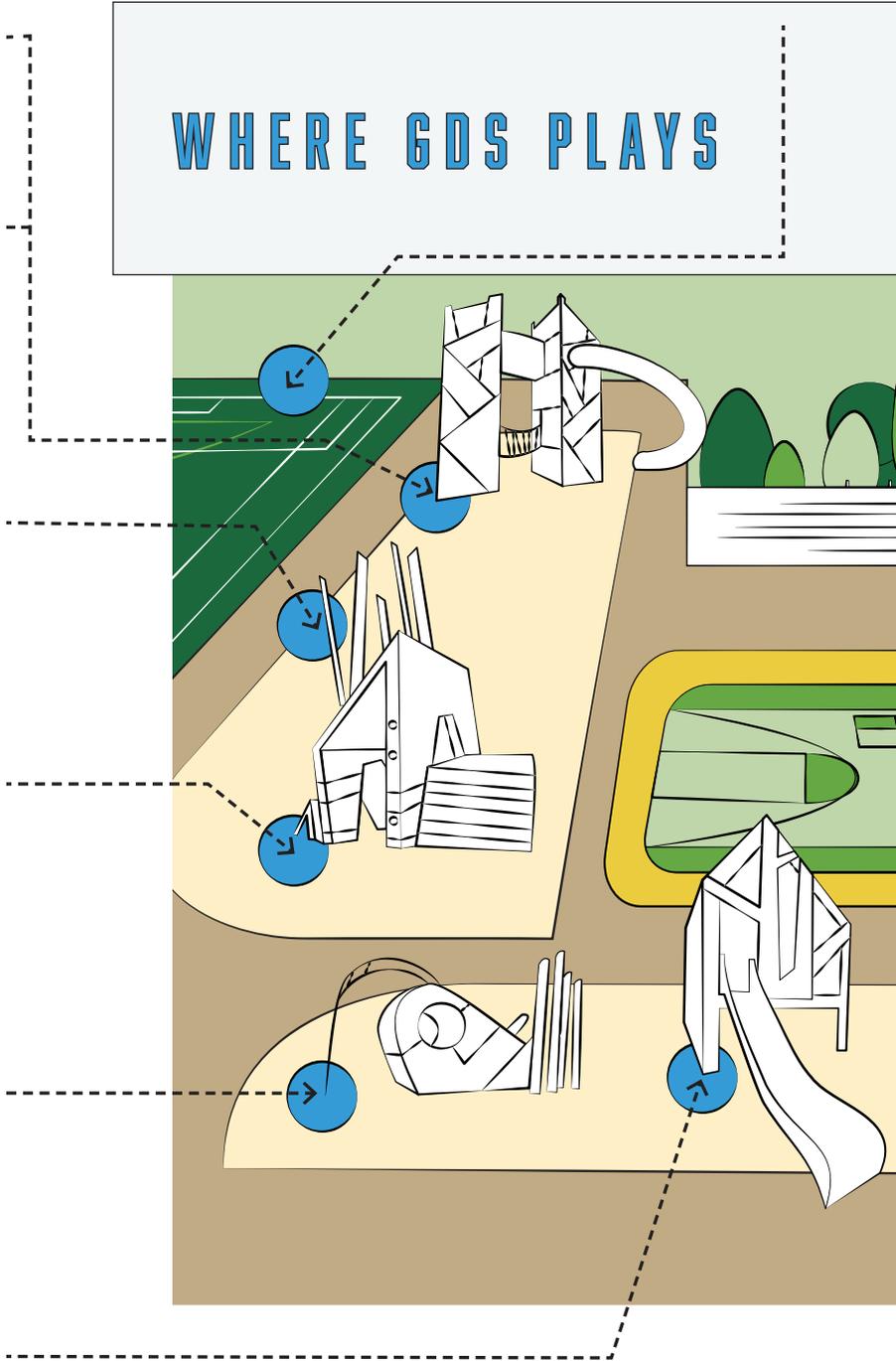


The large common areas, like this cool blue space on the fourth floor, have allowed for safely distanced collaboration.

HOPPER HABITAT



WHERE GDS PLAYS





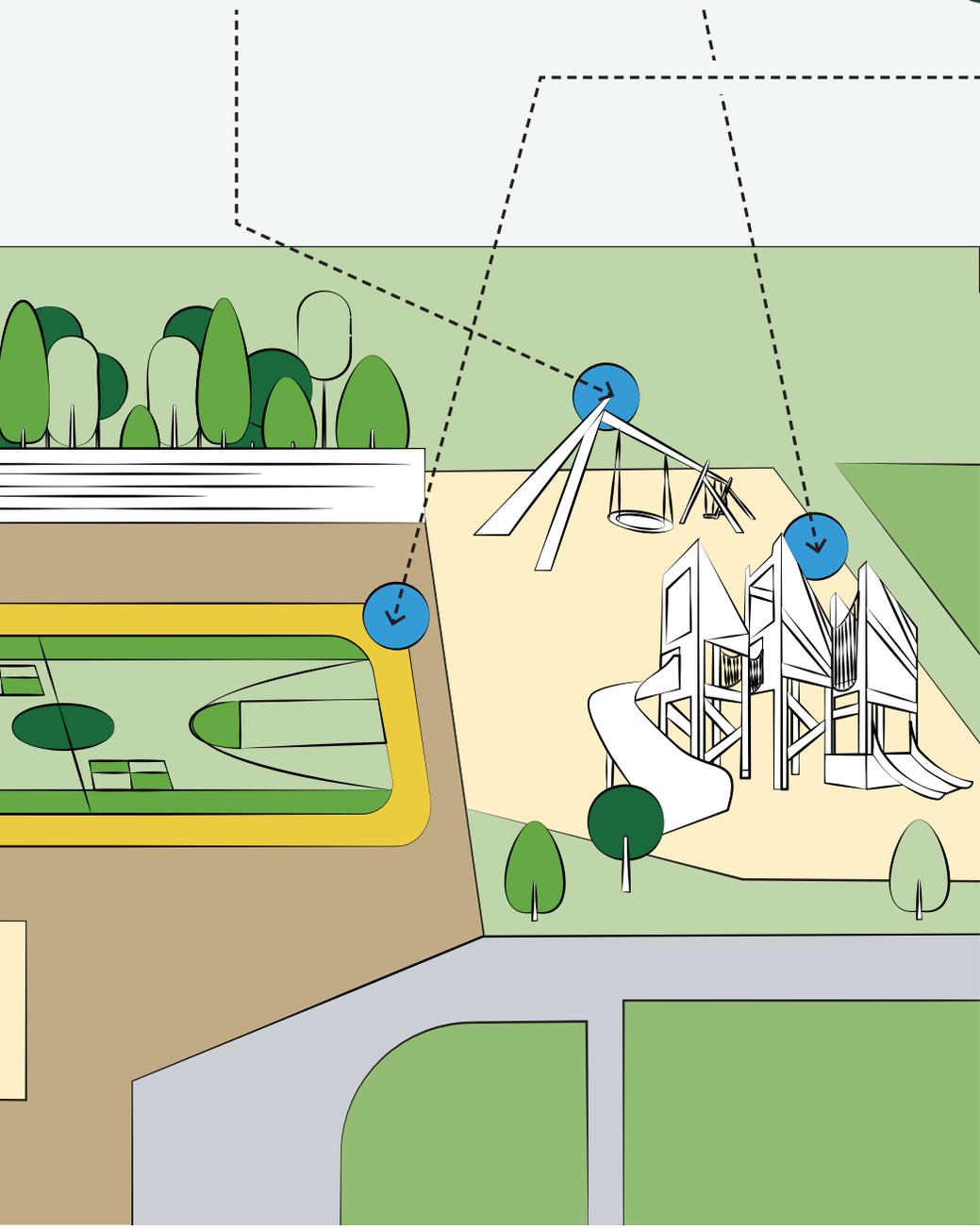
11



12



13



- 1 Oliver and Theo Perl '26 cross the bridge connecting the woodland towers.
- 2 Parker Vogelstein '30 takes in autumn in the woodlands area.
- 3 Paul Bloch-Prime '31 on the woodlands slide
- 4 Climbing Zone
- 5 Rings in the Climbing Zone
- 6 Khalen Logan '33 on the angular climbing structure
- 7 Grasshopper on the Little Toy
- 8 Zora Lawson '30 and 3rd grade teacher Todd Carter in the grasshopper eye
- 9 Trevor Head '33 on the Little Toy slide
- 10 Lower/Middle School field
- 11 Michelle Guillaume '33 enjoys the swings.
- 12 Ella Maas '28 on the Big Toy slide
- 13 Austin Sutphen '33 enjoys the multi-use sport court.

JASON PUTSCHÉ PHOTOGRAPHY (PHOTOS 4, 12)



FAREWELL, GDS

A LETTER FROM "BIO BILL" GEORGE

Dear GDS Community,

It has been my privilege, for 38 years, to teach at this extraordinary school. I've had a great run. Thank you! I'm filled with a sense of pride and gratitude. Memories are flooding in, too many to acknowledge here; however, I would be remiss if I didn't mention a few highlights from my career as I say farewell.

I was fortunate to have begun my tenure at the MacArthur Boulevard High School "campus" [on the site of what is now the River School] in 1983. I was greeted at the door by Elaine Scott. I so remember her warmth, kindness, and welcoming greetings. Yes, all that you may have heard about its colorful, off-the-wall, zany atmosphere and eccentricities are accurate.

No exaggeration, GDS was a patchwork of townhouses posing as a school; a student lounge with a trench where student pranks would unfold; a gym transforming into a theater nightly; a German shepherd roaming about; Allen Ginsberg reciting poetry; Miss Manners giving tips; and Kurt Waldheim discussing a new world order. The passageways to classrooms conjured up a subterranean fantasy like a rabbit warren, with twists and turns every few yards until you reached a secret door to your room. GDS was an innovative, creative labyrinth—thrilling, baffling, reassuring, exasperating, comforting, exciting, and just a really fun place to be. It was a school with no rules except you had to wear shoes, but also a school that promoted a true love of learning. Occupying each available

crevice was an assemblage of the best educators in the field—loving, nurturing, joyful, and brilliant; extraordinary teachers who honestly believed "Students first and all else second."

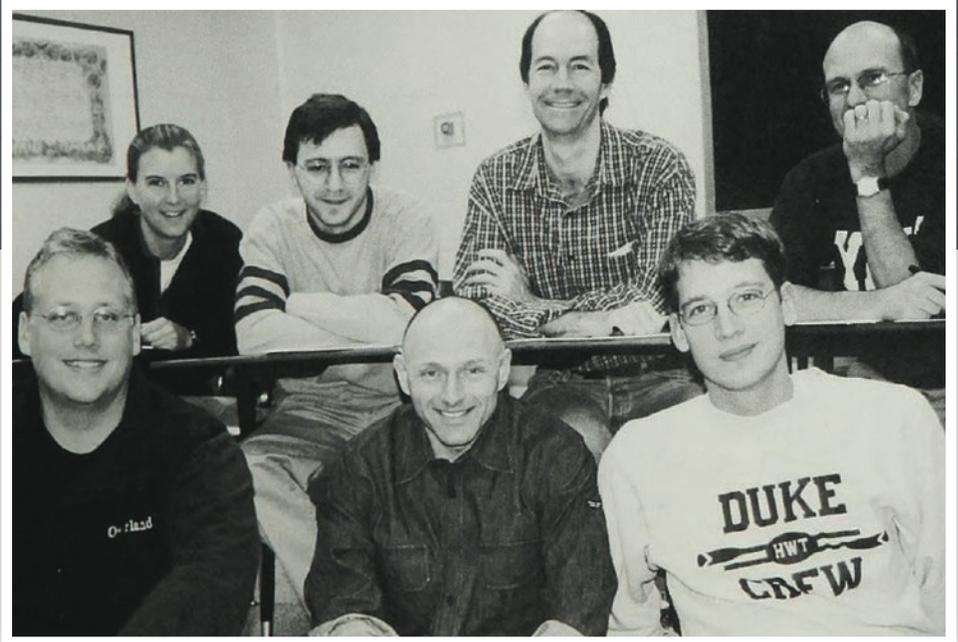
I was introduced to the GDS community not in your typical fashion—in the Big Room on opening day—but by appearing in a musical. "So, we hear you can sing and act, Bill. We're doing a staff show, *The Fantasticks*, for our fall opening of school to raise money for student scholarship. It would be great to have you in the show." I thought, "This is the only place I want to teach." Even more affirming was my interview with staff—in particular, Gladys. I was overwhelmed with emotion and gratitude for the staff's commitment to academic



Science:

C.A. Pilling, Matt Friel, Mark Noble, Bill Wallace, Michael Edgar, Bill George (head), Martin Bullock

Not Pictured: Ed Eckel



excellence, diversity, and inclusion. For the first time in my life, as an out and proud gay man, I felt accepted and safe.

It wasn't long before I realized that I was among titans in education—Laura Rosberg, Kevin Barr, John Burghardt, Bruce Ruble, Barbara Lockwood, Fran Young, Gary McCown, Janet Hahn, Mike Kirchberg, Charles Psychos, Terri Williams, and Debbie Haynes. Simply put, their passion and dedication to teaching children were and are unmatched. I listened and learned from the masters, integrating their teaching methods into my lessons. Thanks to them, my pedagogical toolbox overflowed with new ideas.

Being asked to chair the High School science department was the pinnacle of my teaching career. I worked closely with Wes Gibson, Walter Ailes, and Paul Levy—exemplary former administrators. Paul in particular was instrumental in guiding me through many facets of a department chair's responsibilities.

He was everything you wanted in a mentor—knowledgeable, empathetic, trustworthy, visionary, reliable, and willing to listen and support your needs. I will forever be grateful to him for his leadership.

My time as department chair brought an exciting innovative science curriculum to our new school on Davenport Street. I had the pleasure to work with incredible science teachers throughout those 10 years and beyond—a truly dedicated staff whose joy in teaching science was and is unequalled.

In typical GDS fashion, a teacher's interests beyond their chosen field are celebrated, too. I was able to share many of my interests with the community. This included LGBT activism, theater, classical music, weight training, and Middle Eastern cooking. I was so fortunate to be asked by performing arts chair Laura if I would like to be a guest director. I jumped at the chance to work with the best educational theater program in the country. Being

guest director in the performing arts department for over 30 years was one of my most rewarding experiences. I will be forever grateful to Laura for her mentorship and loving friendship.

My farewell would not be complete without giving thanks to all my students, past and present. You have defined me as an educator and given my life purpose. I have learned more from you than any other source; you have filled my life with such joy. Your love of learning, enthusiasm, respect, and sincerity will be held close to my heart for the rest of my days. Thank you, Mighty Hoppers!

My new chapter begins. For starters, I want to learn Italian, cook Italian, drink Italian wine, and visit Italy. To that point, "la bella vita." Grazie mille, GDS.

Arrivederci,
Bio Bill



Gracias a Todos

THANKING LARRY HOUSE FOR 34 YEARS OF DEDICATION

MOVING OUT. MOVING IN.

After 34 years of service to Georgetown Day School, High School Spanish teacher Larry House is retiring. Her gratitude for and devotion to the school has spanned the whole of her GDS career, all the way back to when she first interviewed for a teaching position in 1987, in a building packed with moving boxes on MacArthur Boulevard.

“I interviewed Larry for a teaching position in the Spanish department in the spring of 1987 at 4880 MacArthur Boulevard, just a few months before the High School relocated to 4200 Davenport Street,” said former GDS Spanish teacher Jan Braumuller. “Little did I know then that Larry and I would be colleagues for the next 27 years and how much I would benefit from her collaborative spirit. The energy and enthusiasm she brings to planning curriculum and engaging her students were outstanding, but what will endure most in my memory is her generosity of spirit and flexibility. I feel a deep sense of gratitude to her.”

Before her first visit to GDS, with the school’s third Head of School Gladys Stern and Jan, Dr. Laraine “Larry” House was an adjunct professor of Spanish literature at American University. She felt uncomfortable with the lack of job security and decided to send letters to a few independent schools in the city—“cold” letters sent even where no openings were listed. The stars seemed to align, as Larry’s letter reached GDS just after class registration revealed an increased demand for Spanish language and the need for another teacher.

“I admit I knew nothing about GDS,” Larry said. “When I learned about its history and mission, I felt doubly lucky. The school aligned with my

own values, and I felt comfortable to be in such an inclusive, welcoming environment. I soon learned that the caring, on the part of the staff, the administration, and the teachers, is extraordinary.”

Larry immediately loved the small class sizes and loved being called “Larry,” not “Professor.” She loved being part of a community that was concerned with the life of students beyond how they show up in a single class. “The student is a full human being with all kinds of talent,” Larry said. Some of those students for whom she has had the “greatest admiration and closest relationships” were “not necessarily those who excelled in my particular class.”

COMMITTED BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Throughout her time at GDS, Larry has shown her dedication to students beyond her Spanish classes, whether through her avid support of the theater and art programs or through attendance at student-staff council meetings, the Student Voices club, or It’s Academic, and elsewhere her students are involved. “I’ve loved learning about the whole range of my students, and I’ve always tried to be supportive,” she said. Her faithfulness to the performing and visual arts programs is practically unrivaled: in her 34 years, she has visited every High School art show, attended every Fata Morgana dance performance, and has only missed a single High School show out of all the fall plays and spring musicals—“I was sick that week!” she lamented.

“Larry is a teacher who has influenced me tremendously during and after my time at GDS,” said Eliza Kravitz ’19,

who is currently pursuing an advanced language certificate in Spanish at Yale and who did a yearlong independent study with Larry, focusing on the literature of the Latin American Boom of the ’60s and ’70s. “[She is] attentive, caring, and passionate. Her high expectations and expertise...inspired me to continue pursuing Spanish literature in college and to analyze historical literature in light of contemporary social and political conflicts.”

As noted above, Larry’s commitment to her students does not end at the classroom door—or even after graduation. In the midst of the global pandemic, for example, she attended “Marking a Year of Loss Behind Bars,” a virtual vigil that Eliza organized as part of her work with Mourning Our Losses, an organization that “seeks to restore dignity to the faces and stories behind the statistics of death and illness from behind bars.” “Larry has remained an inspiration and mentor to me since I’ve left GDS,” Eliza added.

THE GIFTS OF TEACHING

“For many personal reasons, I spent most of my high school years feeling lost and disconnected from the world,” said Schuyler Bailar ’14, now a nationally recognized advocate for inclusion, body positivity, and mental health awareness as well as a research assistant at Harvard University. “I found safety in Larry’s classroom and in her clear care towards me. Though many of my teachers were kind and compassionate towards me during that time, it was rare that someone advocated for me in the ways that Larry did—even when she didn’t have to—and for this, I am very grateful.”

Schuyler recalled feeling resistant to Larry’s pronouncement on the first day

of AP Spanish that the class theme would be imagination. “I far preferred rules and regulations,” Schuyler remembered. But Larry succeeded in encouraging Schuyler’s imagination, and he recalls vividly a decade later images from the course texts—of Alicia, *rubia y angelical*, of the parasite *hinchado* from *Al Almohadón de Plumas*, the title character from *El Ahogado Más Hermoso del Mundo*, and of the fire and sparks that consume Tita and Pedro in *Como Agua Para Chocolate*. “Everyone who learned from her received a gift,” Schuyler said.

For her part, Larry has often felt herself to be the recipient of great gifts from the community. “I love when a student thinks up some new ideas that I haven’t heard, taught them, or even considered; [it’s one thing] I love about teaching literature. I have also enjoyed ideas and talking about teaching with colleagues. The collegiality with my colleagues here is so different from teaching on the college level, where often, colleagues protect their turf.”



COLLABORATION AND INSPIRATION

Larry’s curiosity as a lifelong learner and her affinity for the performing and visual arts has led to collaborations with colleagues across disciplines. She used to audit former French teacher Charles Psychos’s French class, has served as a guest speaker on the Spanish Golden Age in history teacher Sue Ikenberry’s European history classes, shared her personal recollections of living through 1968 with Lisa Rauschart’s history classes, and enjoyed sitting in on English teacher Nadia Mahdi’s classes. Studio arts chair Michelle Cobb added an art history lens when she visited Larry’s class, when she was teaching about the painter El Greco. In past years, Larry and Maribel Prieto,

chair of the High School world language department, have collaborated with the history department to offer a GDS minimester course on immigration law and history called “Walls or Bridges.”

Larry has had a long career watching the school grow. She began in September 1987 in the new High School building, which she described as “messy and intimate.” She knew nearly every face and name of the approximately 80 students per grade, and while there are now more than 100 students per grade, Larry noted, “What has not changed is the warmth and closeness between the students.”

“To be a good teacher,” Larry said, “one must stay nimble and flexible. I have been given a lot of freedom to develop courses and materials, and within that autonomy, I can encourage my students to be creative, to think, and to express their philosophy of life in Spanish.”

Since first arriving at GDS, she has taught seven different levels of Spanish, prepared and developed courses, including two brand-new ones, an advanced Spanish language course based on imaginative literature and the upper-level independent study Eliza described above. In her Introduction to Spanish Literature course, she enjoys exploring philosophy through poetry. She has watched in wonder the beautiful work students have done when she has asked them to write an ode in the style of Pablo Neruda. In other courses, she has had students write an original story about a crime—or an apocalypse—to elicit the use of advanced Spanish verb tenses in their writing. And of course, she has adored when they have responded to coursework with art.

“Larry House has always been an amazing teacher,” said former department chair Gail Massot. “When she stepped into the world of magical realism, she brought her students along for the exhilarating ride to make the invisible visible and fantasy more real than reality. Her Dream House project was astounding in its power to transform the inner world of students into creative architectural portrayals of their essential

being [while building] the Spanish vocabulary necessary to express that self-exploration and discovery.”

CURTAIN CALL

“I’m not disappearing into the mist,” Larry said. “I will continue to come for the plays and the High School Identity Art Show. Maybe I will even substitute and see my colleagues from time to time.”

Larry will be spending more time with family and continuing her work with animal welfare groups, as she has done for many years. (She was the GDS faculty sponsor for PAWS, an animal welfare club at the High School).

“She has had a lasting influence on so many, and we are all grateful to her,” Gail said.

“GDS will miss Larry dearly!” Eliza added.

“I wish Larry the most relaxing and peaceful retirement, knowing that she has touched so many students’ lives,” Schuyler finished.

“She has had a lasting influence on so many, and we are all grateful to her.”

—GAIL MASSOT

Despite the chorus of GDS community voices from over the years that could surely follow, Larry gets the last word. When she teaches on Fridays, she always bids the students goodbye for the weekend with “Hoy es GDEV!(Gracias a Dios es viernes)” or, in English, “(Today is) TGIF.”

“My final word to GDS is gratitude,” Larry said. “I’m leaving with a sense of sadness but also warmth and care. Hoy es GDEV. ¡Gracias a todos!”

A GRATEFUL CHAMELEON

THANKING PERRY DEGENER FOR 20 YEARS OF HUMBLE MIMICRY



Middle School history and English teacher Perry Degener is retiring from teaching after 20 years of service to GDS. Over the course of these two decades, he has also taught High School English, coached wrestling, coached Quiz Bowl (“a true delight!”), sponsored an Ultimate Frisbee club, and chaired the Middle School history department. Newly inducted into the 20+ Club of GDS faculty and staff, Perry joins a prodigious lineage of energetic, compassionate, and expert current and former educators at GDS. Naming his peers is meaningful because what defines Perry as an educator is based on qualities he has admired in colleagues from over the years, which he developed to be uniquely his own.

Perry came to GDS from the Greenhill School, where he first cut his teeth “stealing good teaching ideas from other people,” he said. Perhaps one of the sincerest forms of admiration between educators is borrowing what works well, and Perry is skilled in that approach.

Perry began at GDS on September 11, 2001, and despite the traumatic start, he soon realized he had found himself in a community of caring, devoted teachers who made him feel at home. These new colleagues also inspired him as an educator, and in their company, he

discovered new tricks to add to his toolkit. “I wanted to be like a chameleon, as I always have,” Perry said as he described some of the GDS greats whose methods he worked to emulate.

He has a strong recollection of meeting former High School assistant principal Tom Yoder at the entrance to the High School when he first arrived. Perry observed the watchfulness as well as the casual, self-effacing manner with which Tom carried himself when interacting with students. Many a GDS community member has seen Perry standing or strolling outside his classroom door at the old MacArthur Boulevard campus, connecting with students and colleagues as they passed, “pretending to be Tom Yoder.”

Then there is the trio of other MS teachers—former math teacher Coy Dailey, former English teacher Charles Edwards, and science teacher Michael Desautels—whom he felt were cool and confident. Perry nicknamed them “the plastics posse” after the doctors on *Grey’s Anatomy*. He began to analyze Coy’s charisma and his use of magical props—though never adopting Coy’s lucky Dallas Cowboys helmet—to foster engagement. Michael and Charles offered something quieter that Perry noted to develop in himself: depths of attentiveness to the needs of students. Middle School assistant principal Mayra Diaz, too, offered an

important complement to the trio with her quiet assurance and dedication to the daily lived experiences of Middle Schoolers.

Despite Perry’s painting himself as the borrower, others have looked to him as the model. “No one is as dedicated and giving of their time as Perry,” Michael said. “He is a true role model for students and teachers alike. He would bend over backward if he thought it would help a student understand better. Before the pandemic, Perry met with kids before and after school, printed outlines of his notes for students to annotate, and connected with students outside of the classroom as their wrestling coach or through Quiz Bowl. As we’ve had to adapt this year, Perry has too. One day, during virtual learning, Perry was in the building early, decorating chairs and portable whiteboards with student names and shirts to look like soldiers fighting in the Revolutionary War. The commons area on the fourth floor looked like a life-sized chessboard. Later, he brought the students onto Zoom and immersed them in this experience, because he knew it would help the students connect with the material. That’s the kind of teacher Perry is: always willing to put our students first.”

Other colleagues have expressed gratitude for the quality of Perry’s presence in Middle School as well as the extraordinary lengths he has gone to for

teachers and students. Middle School History department chair Kate Maloney said, “Dedication, passion, and empathy are just a few of the indispensable gifts Perry has shared so willingly with the GDS community. He has used his genuine talent for listening—deeply and actively—to students and colleagues to forge strong relationships. Perry has used these connections to advocate fiercely for his students and uplift and celebrate his colleagues. He has been everyone’s greatest supporter. Quick to cover a lesson or offer extra help outside of the classroom, Perry has always gone the extra mile to sustain and invest in those around him. His joy and passion for his work has been palpable: whistling as he moves into his classroom, with a bounce in his step. Perry has been the definition of someone who puts others before himself, with great success. We have all been better for it.”

Some of what Perry describes as his “attention surplus” has given him the ability to hone in on the good teaching practices going on around him in his GDS environment. He blends what he observes in others into a form that works for him. Perhaps his most impactful models, he said, were former history and English teacher Kathy Shollenberger and former Middle School principal Barbara Bitner. From them, Perry learned to think always about the student’s vantage point and, especially for the Middle School-aged child, the kind of guiding influence required. Perry applied the care and perspective-taking he learned from Kathy and High School English teacher John Burghardt, whom Perry observed, on occasion, diving deeply into an unfathomable student essay. Surfacing later, John might declare, “Ah, this is a homily!” and then proceed to guide the student’s revisions around that ambitious framework.

These teachers intuitively knew how to do this, Perry would say, but he claims he had to work at it. Yet, even as Perry felt himself blending himself into the decades of brilliant teaching he’d observed like a grateful chameleon, Perry’s teaching has always been his own. One would be hard pressed to find a teacher as excited as

Perry about each learning opportunity in the history classroom, on the wrestling mat, or even while traversing the long hallways of 4530 MacArthur Boulevard. Even now, as he feels the obligation to step away to care for his ailing mother, he can’t stop thinking about lessons he would love to teach.

“I want to teach *Caste*,” he said, of Isabel Wilkerson’s book on disenfranchised groups. “As I read it, I kept thinking, ‘Oh I could use this!’ Then I’d remember, ‘Oh, I’m not going to be teaching.’ Now I’m reading Ta-Nehisi Coates’s *The Water Dancer*, and the connections to Faulkner—there’s just so much I could bring into our history and English classes, where we are reading Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Chains*. And I have some years left in me to explore Boxer from *Animal Farm*. All that will be so hard to let go.”

“It’s been a blessing to be a part of a place where the students are invariably scholars already [in Middle School],” Perry said. “GDS is a school that truly values the power of collaboration within and beyond the community.” Perry pointed to the great guests he’s had the privilege of hosting in history classes and the wrestling room, including former speech writer for Hubert Humphrey Marty Nemirow and Georgetown University wrestlers, respectively. “It’s a school where unusual connections are welcomed.”

In Perry’s mind, nothing can match the daily fascination he experiences teaching and learning in Middle School. “There is nothing like teaching—no job more interesting than teaching,” Perry said. “Catching students in Middle School, at that point when they are really beginning to connect things—it’s a thrill. You have students who are different in each class, new content every class, and you can always apply something you explored during the previous week, something you are reading, or something that fascinates

you or the kids. Everything I read and experience is possible grist for class. That’s what I’m really going to miss. I won’t have the forum to explore these things with students.”

“I will really miss Perry,” Michael said, citing “his kindness, unflappable patience, and [being one] who always thinks of others before himself. I hope in retirement, he can enjoy his time off and reflect on the contributions he made to countless young lives, not just in terms of academics but also in the way he exemplifies how we should all strive to be—honest and kind.”



As grateful as Perry has been for the many educators who preceded him and who inspired his teaching, many more will follow in his footsteps, echoing his enthusiasm, his boundless curiosity, and his enduring commitment to each student who set foot in the hallways of GDS.

“Best of luck, Perry,” Michael said. “You will be missed.”

Georgetown Day School has much to celebrate!

GDS could not have supported our students and faculty in this remarkable year without the support of the entire Hopper family. Through it all, student health, success, and wellbeing remained our highest priority.



Key to providing for the success of each student is investment in faculty professional growth, social and emotional learning initiatives, and school-wide DEI efforts. We must fulfill our renewed commitment to live into our mission and increase access through financial aid, all while ensuring our teachers have the tools they require to meet the individual needs of every student in their care.

The Hopper Fund provides flexible resources to address urgent needs while furthering mission-driven priorities. Many of you in our community have already made GDS a philanthropic priority and for that **we are deeply grateful**. If you have not yet contributed to The Hopper Fund, we hope you will join us by making a gift TODAY!

Your gift of any size makes a difference and demonstrates your commitment to our mission and students.

Please join us with a gift to The Hopper Fund.



Make your gift online at www.gds.org/Giving



GDS Alumni In The Literary World

REQUIRED READING

PULITZER

PRIDE

PUBLISHING

PROLIFIC

DRAMA

BEST ADVICE



REQUIRED READING

Artist of Life: Award-winning author of *Black Bottom Saints* (2020) and *The Wind Done Gone* (2001) **Alice Randall '77** on storytelling, *Black Camelot*, and her GDS education.

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PUBLISHING

Not by the Book: Publisher **Johnny Temple '84** on books, his band, and reverse-gentrification in the literary world.

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MARIEXXME

PRIDE

Writing Herself Visible: **Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore '91** wrote the book on isolation and alienation before the COVID-19 pandemic was a thing.

65



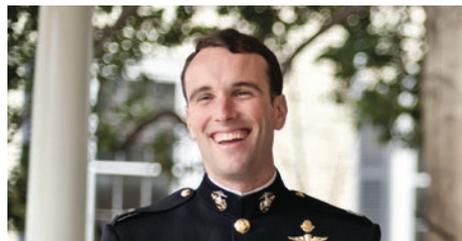
JESSE MANN



PSYCHOLOGY OF DRAMA

Screenwriter, novelist, and psychotherapist **Suha Al-Khalifa '95** is breaking barriers and bridging cultures with her storytelling.

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PROLIFIC

Portrait of the Author in *Scarlet and Gold*: U.S. Marine Corps veteran, journalist, and novelist **Elliot Ackerman '95** on rigor, calamity, and GDS's ethical core.

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PULITZER

Back on the Grid: Pulitzer-Prize winning author **Andrew Sean Greer '88**, in the tradition of Sankofa, contributes to *Fight of the Century: Writers Reflect on 100 Years of Landmark ACLU Cases*.

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BEST ADVICE

The Education of Miss Manners: Columnist and GDS alumna **Judith Martin** and her children **Nick '84** and **Bina '88** on the history of GDS and the future of civility.

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ARTIST OF LIFE

ALICE RANDALL '77, award-winning author of *Black Bottom Saints* (2020) and *The Wind Done Gone* (2001), on storytelling, Black Camelot, and her GDS education.

Black Bottom Saints, the latest from the New York Times bestselling novelist, songwriter, and professor Alice Randall '77, is part fictional memoir, part Saints Day Book, and entirely “Motown music and Black girl magic.” The book offers 52 biographies of Black brilliance as told through the prolific pen of Joseph “Ziggy” Johnson, the legendary nightclub emcee, educator, and columnist of Motor City. Ziggy’s 52 “Saints” are “artists of life”—like the incomparable Maxine Powell, and the fearless Lynette Dobbins Taylor—who inspired and uplifted generations of Black girls at the Ziggy Johnson School of the Theatre in Detroit City.

Alice conjures “caramel Camelot” in a staggeringly beautiful study of “fifty-two paths from trauma to transcendence,” that she pairs with signature cocktail recipes concocted by the author for each saint as “feast day libations.” For those searching for the splendor and not only the struggle in Black history—in American history—Alice’s innovative tour de force is required reading.

Alice is writer-in-residence and professor of African American and Diaspora Studies at Vanderbilt

University, where she teaches courses at the intersections of African American culture, literature, art, music, food, and film. She is the author of four novels—the New York Times best seller *The Wind Done Gone* (2001), *Pushkin and the Queen of Spades* (2005), *Rebel Yell* (2009), *Ada’s Rules* (2012), and *Black Bottom Saints* (2020)—and coauthor (with her daughter Caroline Randall Williams) of the acclaimed cookbook *Soul Food Love* (2015) and the young adult novel *The Diary of B.B. Bright, Possible Princess* (2012). She is also the songwriter of more than 30 country songs, including the #1 hit “XXX’s and OOO’s,” recorded by Trisha Yearwood in 1994, and the screenwriter of Reba McEntire’s “Is There Life Out There?” music video, which won the Academy of Country Music’s Video of the Year in 1991. She and her daughter are the corecipients of the 2016 NAACP Image Award and the Phillis Wheatley Award for *Soul Food Love*.

Joy in the Work

Mari-Alice, as she was known during her GDS days, holds a deep affection for the school, its origin story, its lived mission, and the enduring relationships she has maintained with her extraordinary teachers.

“GDS prepared me to be a writer,” Alice said. “It made me intellectually and prepared me to ask good questions, to read, and write, and pace myself. GDS was not about answering the questions that were asked of me. I was invited to ask good questions and learn for learning’s sake. That practice has been with me all of my life.”

The research for *Black Bottom Saints* spanned “50 years of living and four years of writing,” Alice explained. She tracked down nearly 1,000 columns written by Ziggy for *The Michigan Chronicle*—columns she remembers her father reading to her in Detroit when she was a youth dancer in Ziggy’s real-life School of the Theatre before moving to Washington, DC. She conducted interviews with many in Ziggy’s orbit, a colossal galaxy of artists, activists, athletes, business people, and stars. From her prodigious research, she constructed her narrator: the complex, larger-than-life, queer Black man who writes a Saints Day Book as he is dying, celebrating the influential artists and ancestors of Black Bottom, Detroit. True to life, he opines on everything and knows everyone whom the beating heart of Black Bottom has touched. “This research is a testament to the



academic skills I learned at GDS,” she said. “My ability to research *Black Bottom Saints* in particular, to chase down [these stories] over the years, independently working without a contract (I did not try to sell this book until it was written) is a testament to what GDS taught me about being content driven. To bring my best self. To ask important questions and to do work that matters, regardless of what I was paid. And to have joy in the doing of it.”

“Black Polished Right”

GDS readers will see their school in *Black Bottom Saints*, the mission-driven work of Ziggy’s School of the Theatre.

“It was the summer between 6th and 7th grades,” Alice writes about a girl named Mari called Colored Girl, whose third-person narratives at the start of each chapter lend an autobiographical arc to the novel. “She had completed three years at Paliprep, a progressive private school, integrated and innovative, that proudly refused to field the football team, grade student work, or ask students to call their teachers by their last name, but rewarded daily reading of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*.”

Alice’s Ziggy wrote his Saints Day Book on his deathbed, pledging to do the work of his School of the Theatre in its pages: to make the descendants of now-mythic Black neighborhoods like Black Bottom stand tall from hearing the stories of the brightest stars in his orbit. “Nothing shines brighter than Black polished right,” he began. “Too often we are too tired to get out the rag. Our brightest people and places get quickly forgotten and tarnished.” Alice, through Ziggy and

Colored Girl in 52 tributes, never tires of polishing.

Charm and Self-Love

Ziggy Johnson’s School of the Theatre and Georgetown Day School were carved from a common vision. Each aspires and strives—against a racist world—to make students see their own beauty and brilliance. At GDS we talk of nurturing passionate pursuit in our future graduates and “launching lives of purpose.” In the novel, Ziggy writes, “You walked out of my school, if my magic worked, onto a path that connected a dance studio to a courtroom, to a surgical operating Theatre, to the Rose Room in the Algonquin Hotel, to someplace where you can change a few things. You walk out toward being a lawyer, a doctor, a writer, a labor leader. But not if you don’t walk in. All kinds of ways and all kinds of folks tried to interfere with me turning a ghetto dancing school into a launchpad that propels young sepian citizens into John Glenn’s sky and into any other place they dream of being.”

In a world that tells Black girls in particular that they are not beautiful or worthy, Ziggy endeavored to “find a way to help my brown and Black audiences love themselves,” Ziggy wrote. His tenth saints instructed wisely, “Find a way to let your audience love you...and you’ll help them find a way to love themselves.”

Generations of well-loved GDS teachers have endeavored, like Ziggy, to foster joy through inspired, purpose-driven learning. Alice’s experiences bear witness to receiving that attention, finding as much delight in reading Proust with former French teacher Charles Psychos and Call

of the *Wild* in Middle School with former English teacher Walter Ailes as she did in the arts. The teachers she loved—through their care, skillful instruction, and loyal attention—allowed Alice to love herself and reflect self-love onto others.

In a touching tribute to veteran GDS French teacher Debby Butterworth, Alice illustrated the way enchanting, excellent teachers can have this kind of lasting impact on students. She wrote, “Debby Butterworth was in every inch and in every sense a chic and cosmopolitan woman and educator. We first met when I was nine-years-old and walked into what I was told was the fourth grade French classroom and found myself in Debby’s world of French dialogues, meringues, chocolate mousse, crepes, musical rounds, and wonderful French lullabies—a francophile circus of delights, with Debby in the center as ringmaster and innovator...A decade later I would test out of French at Harvard and think: thank you Debby. A decade after that I would sing my child to sleep with Debby’s lullabies and think: thank you Debby. Whenever I was charmed by a perfectly tied scarf, perky optimism, or an unwavering belief that no matter where you started, no matter how small and rude the place, or large and crude the place, you too could become, like Debby, a citizen of the world...whenever I fell under the spell of that particular charm, I thanked Debby, who had taught me the power of being delighted by being delightful.”

Alice recalled the dedicated cultivation of joy and art at GDS as an essential part of that salve for a world that too often stung. “We knew that life was hard but that joy was real,” she said. “We knew that friendship and art were

the compensations—songs, paintings, plays...That was the message of Ziggy's and what was totally congruent between Ziggy's and GDS. GDS was my weird little outpost of Ziggy's—except that they didn't understand the Temptations."

Radical and Uplifting

The blend of fiction in *Black Bottom Saints*, Alice said, leverages another "important tool of the anti-racist tool kit." She layers text within text, like oral histories retold in cookbooks,



Alice with her daughter, Caroline Randall Williams

and engages memory steeped in art to validate, raise consciousness, and burnish tarnished stories. It is something she has done since 4th grade at GDS, when she concocted a barley soup for a project on ancient Viking civilization long before foodways was a respected social science discipline. Or when she painstakingly baked cakes representing *Gatsby* and Nick in 9th grade rather than write a standard essay about *The Great Gatsby*. She translated her understanding and experience of the texts—like the performance art of her grandmother's cooking—into taste and visual metaphor.

"What is interesting about GDS is instead of thinking I was shirking, they understood that I was engaging the text of the book with the new text of the cakes," Alice explained. "They accepted the seriousness of my project, and that validated what my grandmother had done. I found the validation of non-verbal intelligence radical and uplifting. I got to work in an environment that took an interest in what the past tasted like. That was my GDS."

Ethical Education

Alice remembers GDS as a place that shared the best of its diverse community members' traditions. She continues to be an ardent supporter of the school's commitment to a progressive, principled education. "GDS gave me an ethical education and a principled world view that we didn't have to agree," she said. "I may even change my idea of what right is. [To this day,] I have no trouble voting against my own self-interest because of a sense of common cause. I think those are values I learned at GDS."

Like Ziggy, she has always gathered people around her, collected their stories, and cultivated joy in creativity and food and friendship. She is fiercely faithful to purpose and principle. In Middle School, Alice broke with the Lutheran Church because she learned that it would not offer salvation to her Jewish friend and classmate Leslie Weisberg '77. "I did

not accept that any heaven that could exclude Leslie would be somewhere I wanted to go."

Leslie and addiction psychiatry specialist Dr. Marc Fishman '78 both appear in the book's acknowledgments among Alice's "fictive kin" and adopted family.

"Alice—my best and lifelong friend—was always a storyteller, an aggregator of people, a community builder, a leader in the creation of social groups and networks long before there were social networks," Leslie said. "There was never a question that Alice would be a writer, an intellectual, and a great success on the world stage. She was and is both brilliant and driven...a bright charismatic light, creating magic and infusing every experience with joy and delight."

A Bright Beacon

Alice manifests the notions of radical joy, lifting and gifting all kinds of beauty through her writing and in every conversation—encounters that will leave one dazed with the sheer scope of topics explored.

Readers and listeners may exclaim, following an Alice Randall monologue, with the same words Ziggy selected for his incomparable 44th saint Dr. Shirley McNeil, PhD: "Sometimes listening to her was like trying to drink water from a fire hydrant. She had so many big ideas and talked so fast."

Still, there is not a moment to spare. Hers is anti-racist art, bright as a beacon through the smog of racist refrains.

Ziggy Johnson's School of the Theatre was not a dance school. It was a school of empowered citizenship for Black girls that drew stars like Aretha Franklin and Sammy Davis Jr. to show up in *Black Bottom* each year for its students. Ziggy's School and his *Saints Day Book*—Alice's book—center Black brilliance in a moveable feast of delicious characters who send their sparkle forward from the traditions of Ziggy's "Youth Colossals" onto those who emulate their shine today. The school created, as Ziggy writes in the book, "a powerful fun house, a place where all the mirrors are without distortion. A place where Black girls reflect and reflect upon each other." Alice sees it reflected in the Black women of current day Philadelphia and Atlanta and Detroit, who mobilized great swaths of traditionally disenfranchised voters to the polls. She sees it in the promise of a GDS education, of those discovering a lifelong love of learning and learning to change the world.

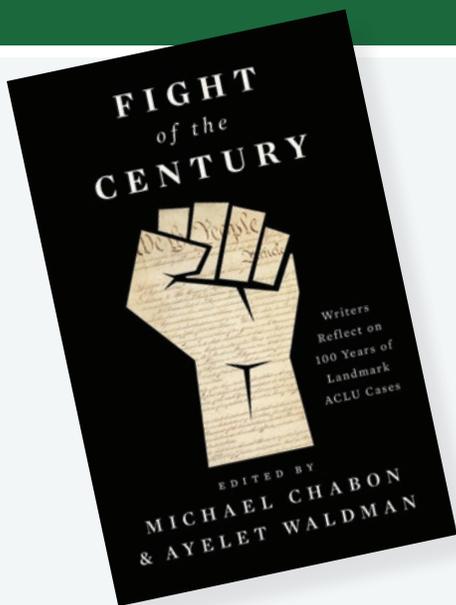
"Alice creates family and community everywhere she goes, championing and including those she loves, weaving those family circles into iterative expressions of nuanced creativity through words, food, poetry, and song," Leslie said. "Like her life, her books are artful, carefully crafted expressions of her family stories. She embodies brilliance, excellence, leadership, goodness, fairness, kindness, compassion, and a desire to do good in the world."

Alice embodies GDS and Black brilliance, through and through.

Back on the Grid



ANDREW SEAN GREER '88



OFF THE GRID

We caught up with Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Andrew (Andy) Sean Greer '88 one day, two martinis, and a bottle of wine later than planned. An hour before our scheduled interview on November 7, the Associated Press called the presidential election. Andy's twin brother Mike Greer '88 pinged the news across the Atlantic Ocean to Liguria, Italy, where Andy, his boyfriend, and a large rescue dog were safely locked down—due to COVID-19—in a rented hillside cottage. Needless to say, the interview was rescheduled for the next day, following a large plate of thick, hand-cut, hangover-recovery bigoli pasta splashed with roasted red pepper sauce and ricotta cheese.

"I'm feeling relief that that particular nightmare is over," Andy said via Zoom from the cottage kitchen, reflecting on the 24-hour sea change. Despite his "Off the grid" auto-response emails, he managed to connect virtually to discuss his books, his recollections of GDS, and what's next in his writing life. Given the significance of the moment, he began with the presidential election.

"The Trump administration was actively litigating to remove civil rights from queer people, trans people, soldiers with HIV... This administration was quietly trying to undo everything [we'd fought for], policy-wise. All that stops. We no longer have a

Justice Department that will be trying to undo justice actively in Federal Court...This isn't about marriage or 'some lesbians who couldn't buy flowers.' This is about human rights and sexual freedom for all people. It's just a huge relief."

The topic of sexual freedom and marriage equality is the subject of Andy's recent chapter for *Fight of the Century: Writers Reflect on 100 Years of Landmark ACLU Cases* edited by Michael Chabon and published in January 2020. In the chapter, he reflects on the 2013 Supreme Court case *United States v. Windsor*, which declared the Defense of Marriage Act unconstitutional, and his subsequent rage to see the notion of freedom behind the ruling subverted in the intervening years. He wrote, "I'm enraged at myself right now, for still believing, despite all evidence, that the fairy dust magic of marriage somehow dispels the smaller pernicious evils of our country, when in fact those evils are the only ones that count."

Within those pages and again now, Andy makes the case to stay in the fight for justice—however hampered and however long-delayed. "History is going to tell this story so differently. They may say, 'It was only four years!' But we didn't know that! We were so close to going over the edge and losing our democracy. So I want everyone to remember the details of what it felt like just two days ago [compared to] today."





Andy and his twin brother Mike, pictured celebrating their birthday in Japan last year, arrived at GDS in 1984 from a school that prohibited the use of computers, because it viewed them as devices for cheating. GDS, by contrast, insisted students learn to program and encouraged students to explore what computers could do, Andy recalled. Mike is now the director of engineering at Discord, a digital service that values “original, reliable, playful, and relatable” community-building communication and garners more than 100 million monthly active users globally. Not only is Mike highly adept technically, he is also the go-to person at the company to guide difficult political conversations around race and gender. Andy said, “You can trace a lot of that back to GDS’s ethos.”

In his chapter he wrote, “I almost wished my middle-aged self could transport one message back to the 19-year-old Andy Greer marching across from the White House and tell him, ‘It’s worth it! We won!’”

RETURNING TO LEAD

A few short years before 19-year-old Andy started marching, he was a closeted gay high school student during the AIDS crisis. LGBTQ teachers were not out at GDS, and the school administration had not yet shown the kind of leadership in LGBTQ+ inclusion that it has since or that one might have expected it to follow given its founding mission. Andy’s recollections paint a mixed experience. To this day, he reports having been “really happy” in High School. Yet, upon graduating from Brown University in 1992, he asked to come back to speak to the High School administration, faculty, and students about some of the more painful experiences he endured being gay at GDS.

Former French teacher Charles Psychos explained: “Andy told the administration that though we had perceived him as a happy and successful student, he had, in fact, felt alone and unsupported as a gay student. His courageous gesture inspired a number of gay faculty to undertake an

effort to educate our colleagues about the needs of their sexual minority colleagues and of sexual minority students. He is singularly responsible for jump-starting what is now GDS’s exemplary affirmation of the value of the LGBTQ+ members of our community, including parents. We owe it all to Andy!”

Andy recalls Charles and former Spanish teacher Jan Braumuller supporting him through that visit. Afterward, Laura Rosberg brought him to her English class because she wanted her students to continue the conversation. “I was so moved by that,” he said.

During the visit in 1992 and since, Andy learned that “a quiet group of teachers [had known] who the queer students were, and they were worried about me.” Behind the scenes, these teachers were working to keep students safe emotionally during the AIDS crisis that ultimately claimed the lives of at least two alumni not long after High School. Despite how grim things seemed, because of caring teacher allies or because, as Andy said, the “school culture was oriented around students excelling” rather than social status or identity, he recalls having a good time and feeling successful during those years.

STORYTELLING

“GDS set me up to be, I think, a warm, empathetic person and set me up to be accepting of myself when I did come out, even though none of that was talked about. It was a welcoming environment, and I was encouraged at every level. I was well prepared for the world.”

And now we come to it—Andy always wanted to be a writer. During his senior year, he secretly wrote and edited a 240-page novel, two pages a night, after seeing a contest poster from publisher Avon Flare that someone put up on a school wall. Ultimately, the joke is on the publisher, of course, for not selecting Andy’s book to win that competition. That year, for his American Literature final, he wrote “a pastiche of Faulknerian purple prose,” as he recalls it, that so mimicked the style of the author that his teacher Alison (Fastov) Taylor held onto the blue exam booklet and has kept in touch to this day. She knew from Andy’s nimble use of language that he was going to be a writer of renown.

“We were writing in every [course] at GDS so that when I arrived at Brown, it felt so easy, and I knew how to write papers. I knew how to take my time and write—a week ahead of time—and revise.”

Part of what prepared him well, perhaps, was that at GDS, he involved himself in just about every aspect of storytelling. He performed in every play and musical: *The King and I*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *South Pacific*, *Bringing It All Home* (One Acts), and *Noises Off*. He tried and “was terrible at” fast-paced debate, sang in a cappella and choir “with all the same people from theater,” and worked on Yearbook, “which I feel like is a notoriously nerdy thing to do in high school, but I felt like I had control [of people’s stories].”

“Nerdy” or not, his old classmate and current San Francisco downstairs neighbor Eve Cohen ’88, who has now known him for almost 40 years, pointed out that Andy is actually “the guy you would want at a party.” They “podded” together this spring during the early months of the pandemic, before Andy decamped to Liguria, meeting

up every Friday for socially distant cocktails delivered in mason jars from The Alembic, their favorite Upper Haight bar-and-bookstore. “He was always a storyteller,” she said. “He always had the perfect line to sum up any interaction, story, or event. I always knew he was quite brilliant.”

“In college, he wrote a musical, and I traveled to Brown to see it,” Eve recalled. “It was unbelievably creative and wonderful! However, it wasn’t until I read *The Confessions of Max Tivoli* that I really understood his talent. What is amazing for me, knowing Andy so well, is I can hear his voice [in my head] when I read his books, like my own personal audiobook.”

LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

Next door to The Alembic is The Bindery, the book shop and event space that has hosted Andy for readings over the years. Among others, he has read from the aforementioned bestseller *The Confessions of Max Tivoli* (2003), *The Story of a Marriage* (2008), *The Impossible Lives of Greta Wells* (2013), and *Less* (2017), which won the Pulitzer Prize in 2018—the same year Andy was awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship.

Less, the peripatetic novel that good-naturedly skewered the literary world then won one of its most coveted prizes, was also named one of the best books of the year by more than a half dozen national and international news organizations. At each stumbling turn for his protagonist—the failed, almost-was novelist Arthur Less—Andy chose the most comedic, humane, and joyful path forward. “I wanted to write a book about joy because I wanted to read one,” he said.

Andy wrote *Less* before the 2016 presidential election but published in a different political climate—a climate, it turns out, that was even more in need of a novel like *Less*. In the aftermath of that 2016 election, he rented an RV and drove to small towns in the Southwest and the Deep South to listen and engage empathetically at diners and bars, where he could seek out the stories of those he’d been told he didn’t understand as a liberal

coast-dweller. “People are so ready to tell you their life stories,” Andy remarked. “You just need to give permission.” They gave their stories generously.

Now, with the 2020 presidential election behind him, Andy feels ready to get back to his next novel, thrilled to be able to wake up in the morning and not have the raging compulsion to check the news. The new book will integrate those stories gathered in small Southern towns and touch on topics of politics and race. It’s certain to contain the pain of Americans hemmed in by unfortunate circumstances, but, if *Less* and his essay in *Fight of the Century* are any indications, it’s also certain to deliver a complementary set of emotions. Where the essay, seethes—“If I had a pen in my hand, it would be shaking with rage”—it also ends with hope. “... We’d survived it all, we’re still totally queer, making queer art in the world...I did not feel afraid because I knew the people around me would protect me,” Andy writes. “And oh—because, love.”

“ We’d survived it all, we’re still totally queer, making queer art in the world... I did not feel afraid because I knew the people around me would protect me.”

Quo, the rescue dog, trotted into the kitchen to check on dinner and catch another scratch behind the ears, a novel delight after nine years of neglect in a kennel cage. Andy seemed to delight, too, at the request for affection from an animal who until recently didn’t know love from humans. Life had turned a corner and was back on the grid for the pair of them.

Andy lifted his hand from the dog’s scruff to pull nostalgically at his own lazy curls. “I’m trying to grow my same hairdo from 1988 (see photo at right) as my COVID-19 hairdo,” he said. “You can tell people that my yearbook photo is what I’m going for—that curly 1980s look.” Sometimes we all need to look backward to move forward.



“Over the years, I have had the pleasure of attending readings that Andy has given,” said former Spanish teacher Jan Braumuller (left). “The most memorable of these took place at Politics and Prose on June 5, 2018, when he was in conversation with Ron Charles about his novel *Less*. This was after he had won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and a Guggenheim fellowship so it was not surprising that there was a ‘standing room only’ crowd that included several GDS teachers.”



Andy as pictured in the 1988 GDS High School yearbook *Ménagérie*

BRIDGING CULTURES AND BREAKING BARRIERS



SUHA AL-KHALIFA '95

Suha in 2007 at a book signing for her first novel *Existence*

Screenwriter, novelist, and psychotherapist Suha Al-Khalifa '95 was deeply impacted by her time at GDS despite attending only the 9th and 10th grades. She said at GDS she learned to value her own voice, women's perspectives, and authentic storytelling. In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 saw the publication of her historical romantic vampire fantasy *Heir of Darkness*, cowritten with husband, Richard Bellamy. The pair also cowrote *Rashash*, an eight-episode crime drama for the Middle East Broadcasting Center's (MBC) 140 million daily viewers. *Rashash*, which began airing on January 21, 2021, is inspired by the true story of a group of young criminals who became notorious for their escapades in the Saudi Arabian deserts.

Culture Shock

Suha and her sisters Sala '93 and Noora, daughters of the Bahraini ambassador, arrived at the GDS High School just after the Gulf War ended in 1991. With little English, their first semester in High School was "incredibly grueling," Suha recalled. In addition to

the language barrier—imagine grappling with Shakespeare when your previous exposure to English was imported American television—Suha and Sala experienced culture shock at GDS.

"My Arabic school [in Bahrain] was very authoritarian with teaching based on intimidation and fear," Suha said. "Students were not being recognized or praised for being individuals, nor were they allowed to think freely and independently."

She remembers her disbelief at being greeted upon her arrival by the GDS High School principal with the mind boggling, "Hi, I'm Paul."

A Dream Deferred

"GDS was the place that taught me the importance of having a unique, individual voice," she said. "The teachers spoke to me with dignity and cared to see me perform at my best."

Suha recalled drama class with former teacher Andrea Oram, 9th grade English with John Burghardt, and 10th grade World History with Sue Ikenberry and



GDS was the place that taught me the importance of having a unique, individual voice [...]"

credited those experiences with helping her to become a writer. "Drama class got me out of my shell, English opened my mind to literature, and World History offered me an expansive view of culture and insight," she wrote. She recalled speaking in class about her familiarity with the kind of scheming and family rivalries they were reading in *Macbeth*. "Being listened to wasn't something I was used to," she said.

Though Suha had to return to Bahrain in 1993 to finish high school, she successfully lobbied her family to send her to an American Department of Defense Dependents School (DoDDS) in Bahrain rather than back to a Bahraini school. She also wanted to attend



Suha and husband, Richard Bellamy



Suha storyboarding *Rashash*



Suha with husband, Richard Bellamy, at *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*

college but was denied a scholarship in Bahrain because she is female. Her family was pressured not to send the girls abroad for college.

“That broke my spirit,” she said. “I ended up battling depression for years, then cancer, and I had Hodgkin’s disease.” Her recovery took years, partly aided by attending whatever psychology and literature courses the University of Maryland offered on the Bahraini naval base. “My psychotherapy learning [in college] was my therapist.”

After graduating, her mother told her that if she paid her own way, she could attend the New York Film Academy in London. Suha worked two jobs—one in TV and radio airtime sales and the other for a salon with a distant cousin—and raised enough to leave for London. When she returned to Bahrain with a film diploma, she carried with her the dream of being a filmmaker—something practically unheard of in the country. “It’s a profession for women with no shame,” Suha recalled being told.

Trailblazing

Eventually Bahrain TV approached her with a job, and during her time with the network, Suha was able to change

perceptions through her film expertise and the respect with which she treated her production team members. Over time, she became more aware of the immense need for psychotherapeutic services in Bahrain, where staggering and crippling incongruencies persisted between people’s public and private selves. After a few years, she left television to continue her studies and be of service to families in need. Even while practicing, she continued in her chosen creative career. She wanted her person-centered therapy, and later her writing, to explore and ultimately broaden tribal mentality.

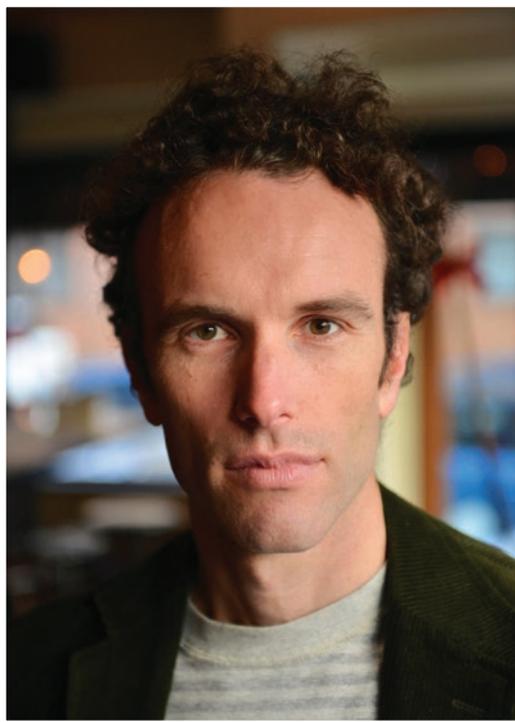
Heir of Darkness and *Rashash* are both tribal stories that focus on individuals who transcend barriers between distinct groups and find acceptance across lines of difference. MBC values the way her storytelling emphasizes the strength of women, the legitimacy of good husbands, and the worthiness of loving families. Her upcoming barrier-breaking work for MBC includes new episodes for a female-centric Saudi Arabian detective show, currently on hold due to COVID, and a new historical drama about a female Muslim warrior almost written out of history. Perhaps the most exciting of her near future projects, Suha was also asked to write

the first female superhero film in the Middle East, her first international-level feature film.

Indebted

“I think of GDS a lot,” she said. “I wish I had appreciated it more when I was a student...Ultimately, GDS gave me a growth mindset rather than a fixed one. I learned strategy and planning within an ethos of ‘hard work but come to me if you need help anytime.’ I am indebted to GDS, so if there is anything the school needs, I’ll happily do it. I cherish my two years at GDS.”

Suha lives in London with her husband and three young children. Her sisters Sala and Noora, who also attended GDS, both work in education in Bahrain. Sala has served as the principal of a primary school and Noora is a high school principal.



ELLIOT ACKERMAN '98

A Portrait of the Author in Scarlet and Gold

Twenty-six years ago, Elliot Ackerman '98—prolific novelist, journalist, and recipient of the Silver Star, the Bronze Star for Valor, and the Purple Heart—splashed a bright scarlet Slurpee into the face of his GDS classmate at the start of anthropology class. His teacher Topher Dunne handed the newly arrived British-American sophomore a trip to the principal. More than a dozen years later, when Elliot returned to talk to the students about his multiple tours of duty in the Middle East and his relief efforts in post-Katrina New Orleans with the United States Marine Corps, Topher handed him a Slurpee. It was a playful poke, sweet and prophetic: as his novels would show half a dozen years later, the past is never far afield.

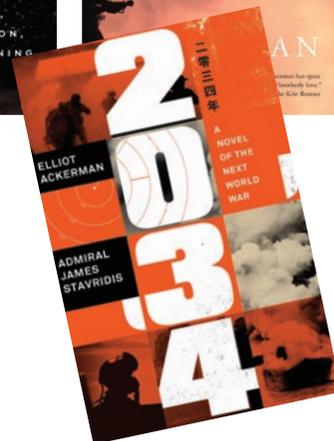
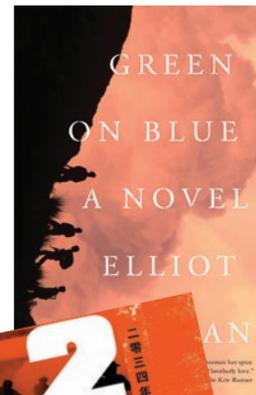
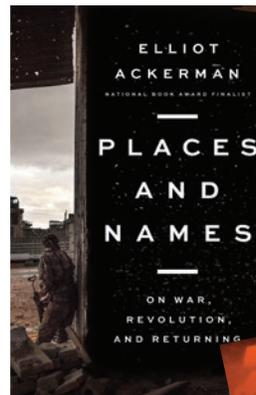
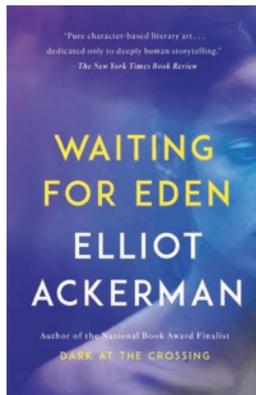
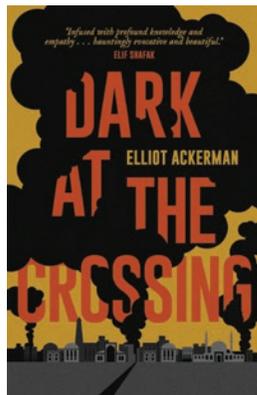
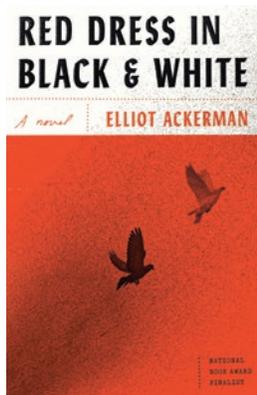
MORAL CENTER

By the end of High School and in the intervening years that followed, Elliot



Elliot upon his arrival at GDS

reinvented himself from long-haired, cavalier skater punk to clean-cut, disciplined writer intent on being of service internationally. Former P.E. teacher Karen Epstein drilled him into shape with lunchtime wind sprints and a workout plan. Former English teacher Gary McCown tore his writing apart and with tough attentive care built it up again. Elliot keyed into the rigor and the moral center of the school and headed off to Tufts.



“Once he decided on the military, Elliot worked incredibly hard to attain physical and academic excellence,” Karen said. “He set high and precise goals for himself and made those goals public. This took courage. His empathy for others and his drive to understand even the people that he fought against on the battlefield make him a true model of excellence for our school.”

Elliot went on to serve as a U.S. Marine Corps Captain and Special Operations Commander in Afghanistan and Iraq. He also served in Southwest Asia.

“GDS teaches kids to stand in the shoes of other people,” Elliot said. “There is a desire to understand and occupy the experiences of others that is wired into the school’s DNA. Combined with academic excellence, that is powerful. That’s why you see this critical mass of alumni who have gone on to be successful in the arts and as writers. They experienced rigor combined with a moral center.”

Waiting for Eden (2018), *Dark at the Crossing* (2017), and *Green on Blue* (2015), as well as the memoir *Places and Names: On War, Revolution and Returning* (2019). On March 9, 2021, Penguin Press released *2034: A Novel of the Next World War*, Elliot’s sixth book and first collaboration.

Cowritten with retired four-star Admiral and former NATO Supreme Allied Commander of Europe James Stavridis, the geopolitical thriller imagines in horrifying detail the global conflagration ignited when China and the United States go to war.

Elliot’s books have been nominated for the National Book Award, the Andrew Carnegie Medal in both fiction and nonfiction, and the Dayton Literary Peace Prize among others. His writing often appears in *Esquire*, the *New Yorker*, and the *New York Times*, where he is a contributing opinion writer, and his stories have been included in the *Best American Short Stories* and the *Best American Travel Writing*.

THE POWER OF GOOD WRITING

“One of the things I really credit GDS with is that it taught me the mechanics of how to write,” Elliot said. “Teachers like Gary McCown were really focused on making sure the students got it right, something I came to appreciate when I graduated GDS and saw the level of skill that they had given me through their incredible diligence. Gary really cared that I knew how to write an essay.”

Elliot finished reading Drew Gilpin Faust’s *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* this fall

and, though it is a nonfiction academic text, recalled being “totally floored by the beautiful writing.” Elliot’s palpable emotional response to the book speaks to something he identifies beyond the storytelling. “That’s the power of really great writing,” he noted. “That’s what I am always aspiring to do: to write a book that will elicit that type of reaction from the reader.”

The fictional expat artist Peter from Elliot’s *Red Dress in Black and White* calls this “emotional transference.” It’s the ability of an artist to gift empathy and understanding to an audience so they might share in that intimate experience. Book critics often point to the grounded, empathetic storytelling in Elliot’s novels, as well as the diverse cast of narrators. The *New York Times*’ Anthony Swofford wrote, “He makes pure character-based literary art, free of irony, free of authorial self-aggrandizement, dedicated only to deeply human storytelling. *Waiting for Eden* is a journey through the traumas,

“

One thing that a novel allows you to do is to really occupy the interior lives of other people and find access points to people who might seem totally different to you [...]”



Elliot just after GDS graduation



U.S. Marine Corps Hopper alumni Elliot Ackerman '98 (left) and Rajai Haqi '99 (right)

betrayals and ecstasies of contemporary warfare and the multiple lives touched and sometimes shattered by one combat injury or death.”

“One thing that a novel allows you to do is to really occupy the interior lives of other people and find access points to people who might seem totally different to you,” Elliot explained. “Often through a novel’s characters, we all make uncommon connections, developing intimacy with characters who, on face value, seem so different and yet with whom we find we can relate deeply. In that way, a novel can be a very powerful assertion of our common humanity and an inherently optimistic action. In a world where there is plenty of division, GDS is a school that makes the constant assertion that in all of the difference, we are also all the same.”

POSSIBILITIES

It’s one of the reasons Elliot sends his children to GDS. He’s experienced firsthand the impact of academic rigor coupled with an ethical, empathetic core. Elliot’s three years at GDS were the most challenging academic years of his life and “laid the foundation for everything else [I’ve done] academically...I

want my kids to walk out the door and have those same tools. I want them to have those experiences with teachers, even if it’s bumpy along the way.”

Elliot’s next novel, *Bloomfield*, takes place around the 2016–2017 London terror attacks and is slated for a 2022 release. As elsewhere in Elliot’s works, the narrator holds an optimistic worldview—often a cautionary hopefulness. The opening line: “Alexis Bloomfield looked out his window, and he could see nothing but possibilities.”

Populated with scarlet Slurpees and combat zones, Elliot’s past is never far afield in his storytelling. And it blooms gold with possibility.

WRITING HERSELF VISIBLE

MATTILDA BERNSTEIN SYCAMORE '91



KEN LAMBERT

“As a kid, I was told that most great writers never got published, and this was meant to scare me away from pursuing writing in a serious way. But actually, this freed me to write on my own terms, without worrying about publishing.”

Prolific author Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore '91 joined GDS as a precocious and voracious reader in 2nd grade in 1980. She was competitive and excelled academically with GDS's fostering of independence and self-reliance. At the same time, Mattilda arrived from an abusive home life and recalls continuing to experience gender-based oppression, particularly from peers, in a GDS that had yet to address explicitly valuing and or making visible gender and sexual orientation diversity. “Queerness wasn't in the values yet,” she said. She is as unflinchingly honest and as critical in her recollections of GDS as she is about the subjects of her three novels, five

anthologies (as editor), two memoirs, and her other assorted works of art and film. “The foundation for me as a writer, in storytelling, and even in math, was experiential at GDS,” Mattilda said. “One of the reasons I loved math was a teacher I had in 4th grade who would do these elaborate projects. We talked about Buckminster Fuller, the dymaxion, and the geodesic dome, so it was kind of like art.”

She described art classes as her “salvation” and recalled spinning long sheets of paper off the studio rollers to more than twice her height to make a large-scale skyscraper with watercolors. “We were always given independence at GDS, and they taught us to stand up for ourselves and our creative integrity,” she said.

“THE OPPOSITE OF NOSTALGIA”

Around Middle School, she began to realize that “I had to start expressing myself in order to find people, otherwise they would just see the trauma,” she said. “I wanted to give other kids who were invisible to everyone the strength not to care about the people who wanted us to disappear.”

Mattilda was part of the first class to attend school in the new High School building, where she was the editor of

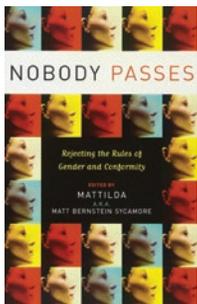
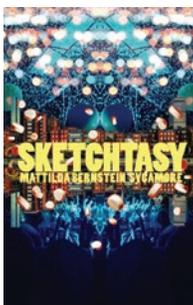
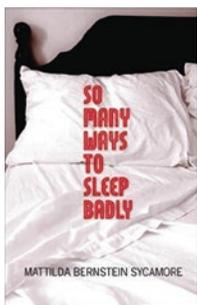
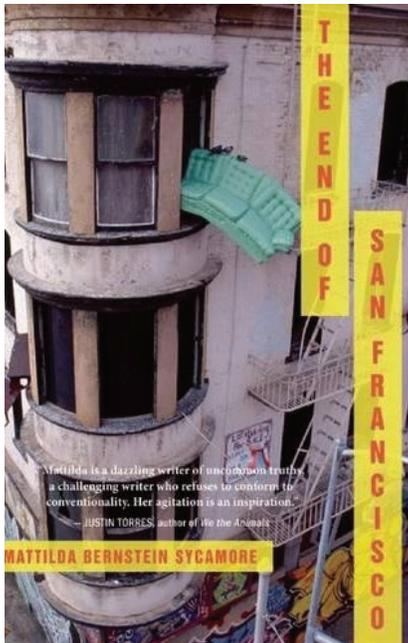
the yearbook and coeditor of the literary magazine *Brandywine*. She described the space as “bigger and more alienating,” a theme not altogether unfamiliar to those who have read her Baldwin-esque nonfiction *The End of San Francisco* (2013) and *The Freezer Door* (2020), both of which despair the social disintegration of San Francisco and Seattle, the latter of which she currently calls home.

“*The End of San Francisco* is the opposite of nostalgia,” wrote Jessica Hoffmann of the *Los Angeles Review of Books* in 2013.

“In a happy paradox common to great literature, [*The Freezer Door*] is a book about not belonging that made me feel deeply less alone,” wrote Maggie Nelson, author of *The Argonauts*.

Now, more than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, Mattilda's quest for authentic connection and belonging continues even more urgently. Of *The Freezer Door*, she said, “I wrote a book about alienation, and then everything got worse.”

From the start, Mattilda has centered her work on finding strength even from the depths of trauma, first for herself and then for other people, “the ones everyone refuses to see.”



Mattilda '91 (far right) with (left-right) Alexandra Gerber '91, Sarah Butler '90, and Natasha Leland '91 in 1989

Author Michelle Tea wrote of 2008's *So Many Ways to Sleep Badly*, "Life is hard, I'm in tears, Mattilda's book is simultaneously the cause and the comfort."

NOT UNDISCOVERED

Mattilda's work first started getting published in her early 20s in anthologies. "Don't even bother sending to literary magazines—anthologies are the way to go," she advised young Hoppers. She thought she was "going to be that undiscovered author," but as it turns out, she found her audience. Her novel *Sketchtasy* was named one of NPR's Best Books of 2018 and her following has continued to grow since. Her latest memoir, *The Freezer Door*, garnered an honor as one of *Oprah Magazine's* Best LGBTQ Books of 2020 and received rave reviews from the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* immediately upon its release in November 2020.

"The *Freezer Door* is an aching, playful memoir of vivid desire amid the desperation of midlife disconnection," wrote Kristen Millares Young in *Washington Post Book World*.

"There is much to love here," echoed Kristen Arnett of the *New York Times Book Review*. "The pacing of the work, with its often fragmentary form, allows

readers to sit with poignant moments for a beat, unpacking a sentence only to return later to unpack it again."

Ultimately, Mattilda writes "to survive." While connections with readers bring her a deep sense of satisfaction, she said they are an "extra"—albeit a truly meaningful one. "[Writing] is how I process the world. It's how I go on living."

Still, in her books she offers readers what she herself has always sought: to be seen, to matter, and to be worthy of care and compassion. While Mattilda will be the first to tell you that students didn't always treat each other with compassion at GDS, her work—however devastating—carries on the compassionate principles of the school's mission. "[At GDS,] we were taught a compassionate way of interacting with the world," she said.

Learn more about Mattilda's books at www.mattildabernsteinsycamore.com. Her contact information is available on her website, including her landline in Seattle, which is (206) 325-5029 (Pacific Time).

NOT BY THE BOOK

PUBLISHER JOHNNY TEMPLE '84 DEFIES GENRES

Genre-busting alumnus Johnny Temple '84 has found success as both a musician and a prominent independent literary publisher. On the one hand, he is the bassist for the band Fake Names, a transatlantic collaboration that dropped its self-titled debut album to positive international reviews in May 2020 (see sidebar). At the same time, he is the publisher and editor-in-chief of the Brooklyn-based independent publishing company Akashic Books, whose relevance in the literary world has grown in light of our current national anti-racist reckoning.

While it is not unusual for GDS alumni to bridge multiple fields in their personal and professional lives, Johnny's story is particularly compelling for the way he defies tradition.

REVERSE-GENTRIFICATION OF THE LITERARY WORLD

In his literary life, Johnny's Akashic Books began leading a recalibration of publishing practices in 1997. The goal was to cultivate content from a broader demographic of authors and illustrators and reach a more diverse readership. The company website bears the somewhat tongue-in-cheek tagline "Reverse-Gentrification of the Literary World" that is based on Johnny's premise that the publishing industry has, to a great extent, targeted a white demographic of book buyers.

"The publishing business is not even particularly trying to sell books to huge swathes of the population,"



Johnny explained. "There are ethnic groups that are just ignored. People in the business should spend less time talking about how no one reads anymore and more time trying to build readership and develop readers. [At Akashic], we're trying to publish books in a way that appeals to lots of different people—and across the socioeconomic spectrum, too."

As stated on the company website, Akashic is "dedicated to publishing urban literary fiction and political nonfiction by authors who are either ignored by the mainstream, or who have no interest in working within the ever-consolidating ranks of the major corporate publishers."



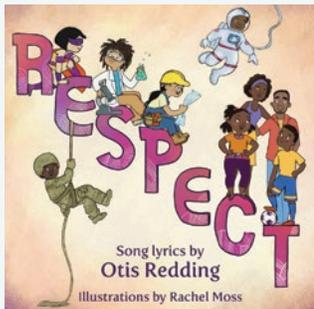
KARA GILMOUR

Mirroring his efforts at Akashic, Johnny is also the proud cofounder of the Brooklyn Book Festival, New York City's largest. Book festivals, Johnny explained, demystify books and make them more accessible for more groups of people. "Book festivals are a good vehicle for reverse gentrifying the literary world as well, because when you go to a really big, well-organized book festival, you'll find books for just about everybody."

Johnny, who attended GDS from Kindergarten through 10th grade—"I fell two years short of being a lifer!"—locates the roots of his creative and critical thinking in the teachers at the school. "I feel that there was a great emphasis on humanity among the teachers at GDS, and I happen to like this idea, [for example], of calling teachers by their first names," Johnny said. "Unlike a lot of schools, GDS wasn't focusing on obedience to authority. And I think that, combined with an education that focuses on critical thinking without being beholden or subservient to authority figures, has the makings of a good, progressive, powerful education."

Among his beloved GDS teachers, Johnny speaks particularly fondly of former Lower/Middle School arts department chair Jackie Marlin,* who was also the mother of his best friend at GDS, Jacob Marlin '84. "Jackie Marlin really conveyed a love of music and a love of art," he remembered. "She placed art on an equal playing field with commerce. That's a hugely valid, valuable lesson. I think that [respect] was reflected in the attitudes of the teachers."

JOHNNY'S RECOMMENDATION



"We have a great new children's picture book series based around the lyrics of famous songs like 'Respect,' which was written by Otis Redding and most famously performed by Aretha Franklin," Johnny said. "We've licensed the lyrics of the songs, hired an

illustrator, and turned them into children's books. I have two kids, and I know parents want to turn kids on to the music that they love. This is a great way for parents and grandparents to start exposing kids to great music without having them rebel against it."

Shop: www.akashicbooks.com

*Jackie Marlin also served as President of the Board of Trustees, Assistant Principal of the Middle School, Chair of the Lower/Middle School Arts Department, a member of the admissions team, and leader of the Lower School Martin Luther King Jr. Assembly's "We Shall Overcome" community sing for decades.



The four-member supergroup Fake Names features three former GDS students—each with a storied history in the punk rock world—and their album straddles catchy pop, garage indie, and old school punk. Brian Baker (far left; GDS 1st-6th and 9th-11th) of the band Bad Religion previously played with GDS alum Lyle Preslar '81 in Minor Threat. The band also includes former classmates Johnny (second from right) and Michael Hampton '83 (far right; S.O.A., Embrace, One Last Wish) as well as Swedish rockstar Dennis Lyxzen of Refused (second from left).

"Fake Names is a blast!" Brian said. "I must admit we spend a disproportionate amount of time at rehearsals talking about high school instead of working, but when you have a band this grasshopper-heavy what can you expect? It's been really great reconnecting with friends from so long ago and creating new music. Playing in the band feels a bit like time travel!"

"As a whole, this album is a work of maturity and precision," wrote music critic *Emmaline Jeansonne* of entertainment magazine *mxdwn.com*. "It runs with a nearly soundtrack-like essence, and viewers can easily imagine Fake Names playing on the car radio in '80s classics like *Pretty in Pink* or *The Breakfast Club*. However, nothing about this album is cheesy." The critic went on to note Johnny's powerful bass lines and the album's lingering "angsty but sincere" punk sentiment.

WATCH
FAKE NAMES



The Education of Miss Manners

In 2013, nationally syndicated advice writer, novelist, and GDS alumna Judith Martin welcomed two cowriters to join her as she expanded the Miss Manners universe to six weekly installments and several new books. These two “well brought up” collaborators, also GDS alumni, were Judith’s own children Nick ’84 and Bina ’88.

“The reason I chose these two people as colleagues,” Judith said, “is not only because they were extremely well brought up, but because they had discovered—both of them, at a very early age—that if their father and I were angry at them for some reason, if they could make us laugh, we would forget about it.”

Humor runs through the Miss Manners books and columns and through the affectionate banter between coauthors. Whether it’s the sharp wit, the clever tone-matching in a response to a tone-deaf reader, or the sometimes hilarious descriptions (“the spork is the tanktop of silverware”), etiquette advice from Miss Manners continues to be as delightful and instructive now as it was at its conception.

In 1978, when the Miss Manners column first began doling out advice on etiquette—“a system of voluntary restraint to avoid antagonizing others unnecessarily”—Nick and Bina were in Middle and Lower School respectively at GDS. As their mother’s fame grew, they began fielding antagonizing questions of their own.

“What’s it like to be Miss Manners’s daughter?”

“I didn’t have anything to compare it to!” Bina laughed, thinking back to how she handled those questions.

“Are you going to correct my manners?”

“No, that would be rude,” Nick remembers thinking. “The family expectation that one would treat others with civility was always there [even before the column].”

“You never associate any kind of formality with Georgetown Day School, but it’s a mistake to think that manners are only about formal occasions,” Judith said. “Manners are about everyday life. Civility is very much a Georgetown Day School value. We’re all three of us very GDS-reared.”

Judith began attending GDS starting in 2nd grade, just a few years after the founding of the school. Years later, Judith’s mother, Mrs. Helen Perlman, joined the teaching staff. Nick, Bina, and three Perlman cousins—Penny (now Blank) ’86, Sarah (now Paulsen) ’90, and Jake ’94—are GDS graduates.

The founders were all big family friends, Judith explained, and carried on calling each other by first names, as was their habit, even as the school began. And while the use of first name informality caught on and spread as more families joined, Mrs. Perlman wasn’t having it for



Judith with her daughter, Bina Martin

herself as a parent or later as a teacher. She was always Mrs. Perlman.

GDS had the “flexibility to tolerate eccentrics,” Judith explained, speaking of her mother. In fact, it was the flexibility of the school in contrast to the rigidity Mrs. Perlman had experienced in public schools that drew her to teach at GDS. The attitude of the school, Judith described, allowed for effective teaching to look different for different teachers to meet the needs of the learners in their classroom; everyone did not have to get on board with “the latest fad” in education. That flexibility and commitment to students and faculty remains a cornerstone of the GDS community today, beautifully articulated in the opening lines of our mission statement: “Georgetown Day School honors the integrity and worth of each individual within a diverse school community.” The notion of using first names to signify equal access to each other was solidified later, though still years before Bina and Nick arrived.

GDS comes up quite often in their family conversations, and they speak fondly of formative experiences there. Bina, for example, thinks especially about performing arts director Laura Rosberg and English teacher John Burghardt, who



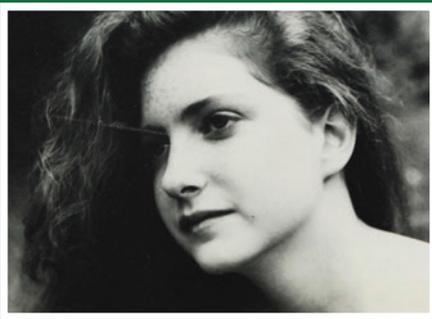
Robert, Judith, Bina, and Nick



Judith (first row, third from right, with pigtails) and her GDS class



Judith Martin with her son, Nick



Bina Martin in the GDS High School yearbook

influenced her love of theater, writing, and literature. As a 9th grader, Bina costarred in *The Diviners* opposite senior (now Drama Desk Award-winning actor) Kelly Aucoin '85. During her sophomore year, Bina wrote a winning play for a contest at the Folger Theatre called *Romeo and Rosaline*, a pre-Juliet story of woe with Shakespeare's own words. Classmate (now world-renowned playwright and screenwriter) Gina Gionfriddo '87 played Rosaline. Bina and Nick remember Laura and John as more than just extraordinary teachers; they were intellectual partners in the same kind of intentional dialogue that was encouraged in their home life at social gatherings hosted by Judith and their father, Robert Martin.

They've each carried with them lifelong lessons about challenge (Nick: "That *Wuthering Heights* essay for John!"), love of literature, and meaningful, intellectual relationships from their GDS years. After a career following his passion as the head of operations at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Nick is now a consultant on labor relations. "After 25 years with the opera, labor negotiations was one of the things I was most passionate about," he said. Some of his personal and now professional expertise in etiquette—"always being civil" and "not returning kind for kind"—have been helpful in those negotiations. And his sense of humor? "If you are funny at the wrong moment, people think that you're not taking them seriously," he said. "My sense of humor allows me to remember how to be gracious and balanced in life."

Bina continues her work with Second City, a comedy club and school of improv, where she also does corporate training. More recently, she has begun coaching for Radical Candor, an organization that takes its name and mission from a book by Kim Scott, which in the same Miss Manners spirit of civility urged professionals to "care personally" and "challenge directly." Bina helps participants improve

their professional relationships and leadership skills.

The Miss Manners trio just released two new books in 2020: *Minding Miss Manners: In an Era of Fake Etiquette*, with Bina brilliantly performing the audiobook, and the ebook *Miss Manners' Guide to Contagious Etiquette*, which addresses many of the COVID-era-related questions readers have been sending in.

They are still kicking around the title for a sports manners book, capturing everything from the misbehaving parent to the sports figure who fails to understand that "what they've just said on national television has horrified a nation," as Nick described it.

The column continues as actively as ever. "We're living with the consequences of a lot of people feeling that they're not responsible for the effect of their behavior on other people," Judith said. Readers continue writing for advice on how to be "really, really rude back" to someone or for permission to be awful at home. "Ticking people off in your own home when that's your entire social life right now? Good luck!" Bina said. And Miss Manners, of course, isn't having any of it.

The National Humanities Medal winner and author of approximately 70 gazillion advice columns and more than a dozen books still has plenty of advice to give. When she decides to step away, she can be sure she's left Miss Manners in capable, wise and witty Hopper hands.

Judith lives in Washington, DC, with her husband, Robert, a scientist and playwright. Nick and Bina both live in Chicago.

REPORT ON PHILANTHROPY

2019-20

GEORGETOWN DAY SCHOOL



2019–20 • Treasurer's Report

I am pleased to report that, even though this has been the most challenging of years, Georgetown Day School's financial position remains strong. The commitment and hard work of our faculty and staff, the careful fiscal stewardship of the Board of Trustees, and the continued support and generosity of our community have allowed the School to respond to these extraordinary times from a position of financial strength.

At the onset of the pandemic, it became clear to GDS leadership and to the Board of Trustees that some members of our community—faculty, staff, and families—would need financial help through the crisis. The Board of Trustees established the One GDS Community Crisis Fund in response. Soon after the announcement of the Fund, nearly \$1,000,000 was raised in an extraordinary show of generosity and support for the community. Since then, the Crisis Fund has helped with expanding access to technology for Virtual Campus, fulfilled emergency financial aid needs, and more. The Crisis Fund will continue to help beyond the immediate public health emergency, as financial hardships will likely persist in our community. Thanks to all of you who gave to the One GDS Community Crisis Fund—what an inspiring act of caring for each other in a difficult time.

On the operations front, GDS finished the 2019–20 school year within its operating budget and expects to do the same for 2020–21. The Business Office reallocated funds from areas with some savings (dining and transportation, for example) to areas of need, including additional staff, upgraded ventilation, added classroom technology, student iPads and Chromebooks, COVID-19 testing, PPE, and, of course, lots of hand sanitizer! For next year, the Board

has approved another balanced budget that makes good on our commitment to financial sustainability and keeping tuition increases as low as possible.

The Board prioritizes financial aid to support and expand access to GDS by students across a wide range of socioeconomic means. Today, 24% of our students receive financial aid with an average award of nearly \$28,000. In all, GDS awarded \$7,100,000 in financial aid in our 2019–20 school year. Providing this level of financial aid takes a real commitment, since tuition covers just 87% of the cost of educating each student. The difference is largely funded by generous donations to The Hopper Fund, gifts to financial aid, and an annual draw on GDS's modest endowment.

Despite challenges imposed by the pandemic, construction of our beautiful, new Lower/Middle School building was completed within budget, and, because of the generosity of all who gave to the One GDS Campaign, the school's long-term finances are in order. Campaign funds designated for Campus Unification will allow the school's debt to ultimately return to preunification levels. This is a testament to earlier GDS Boards that set in place a bold plan to unify the School without mortgaging the future—and also to all of you for stepping forward to help with the largest philanthropic endeavor ever undertaken by the School.

Finally, GDS continues to make steady progress in strengthening its endowment. While still undersized by independent school standards, the endowment supports the annual operating budget and helps control tuition increases. A larger endowment would allow us to decrease our reliance on tuition revenue and further support our founding mission as a school accessible to a diverse group of learners. Though GDS's investments have performed well, growing the endowment is a focus of our long-term



Jeff Blum (right) with his husband, Mike Reilly, and their daughters Della '28 and Eva '30

strategy to maintain financial stability and broad access to a GDS education.

It is an extraordinary pleasure to work with the talented and dedicated professionals who guide the operations of Georgetown Day School. Together with the full Board of Trustees, we are committed to ensuring the health, efficiency, and mission-alignment of the institution's finances.

A sincere thank you to each and every one of you for your generous support in that effort.

Sincerely,

Jeff Blum
Board Treasurer



Russell Shaw in front of the GDS logo moss wall

The Impact of Philanthropy

AT GEORGETOWN DAY SCHOOL, 2019-20

When our community comes together, we make extraordinary things happen. In this, our 75th year, we have seen that proven again and again—though not in the way any of us imagined. Thanks to the support of our GDS community and the diligent fiscal stewardship by our Board of Trustees, GDS was in a position of strength when COVID-19 struck, allowing us to quickly transition to a fully virtual experience. As the pandemic has continued, your support of The Hopper Fund and the One GDS Community Crisis Fund has allowed GDS to navigate the uncertain times in which we find ourselves and make our way through it together.

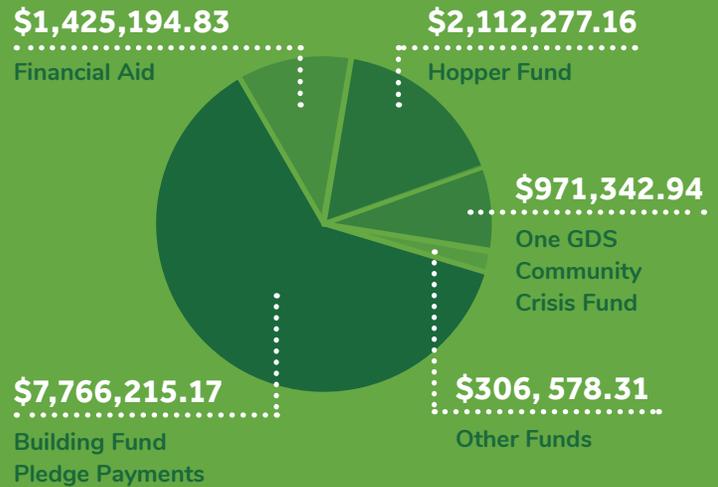
We are proud to present this Report on Philanthropy for the 2019-20 school year. If this past year has taught us anything, it is that your gift truly makes a meaningful difference in the lives of our students, faculty, and staff, and we are grateful for your support.

Russell

Russell Shaw
Head of School

\$12,581,608.41

TOTAL CASH RECEIVED 19-20



1,761

TOTAL NUMBER OF DONORS

517 Total number of donors to the **One GDS Community Crisis Fund**

294 Total number of donors to the Crisis Fund for whom that was their **second gift of the year**

233 Number of Hopper Fund leadership gifts at **\$2,500+**

210 Number of new donors/ donors who made their **first gift**

99%

PLEDGES THAT WERE PAID



SUPPORT OUR MISSION IN ACTION

The Hopper Fund provided vital support for GDS in 2019–20. Representing more than 5% of the GDS operating budget, a strong Hopper Fund supports ongoing institutional priorities while allowing maximum flexibility to meet urgent needs. The Hopper Fund is more important than ever in the environment in which we find ourselves, allowing us to be nimble, flexible, and responsive to the evolving needs of our students and teachers.

The Hopper Fund supports GDS’s ability to provide students with an innovative education grounded in social justice and human connection. Importantly, the unparalleled connections between our exceptional faculty and students are possible because of the smallest student/teacher ratios in the DC area and a robust team of counselors, learning specialists, health staff, advisors, coaches, librarians, and technology educators who come together to support the whole child and make GDS such a special place.

THE HOPPER FUND ALSO PROVIDES CRUCIAL RESOURCES FOR:

1) Professional development and course materials required to evolve our curriculum. In the 2019–20 school year, GDS adopted a new mathematics anchor text in the Lower School and supported teachers through the transition, including five summer professional development days, followed by more than 10 in-person coaching days across the year.

The enVision program is reflective of our belief in all students seeing themselves as mathematicians, supports different types of thinkers by providing multiple ways to find an answer, encourages 21st century skills such as collaboration and communication, and fosters a growth mindset. The elements of each daily lesson provide opportunities to strengthen student competencies with essential

mathematical practices. At its core, enVision focuses not only on procedural knowledge, but also uses current research-based best practices in mathematics education by balancing procedural mastery with conceptual understanding; this focus provides our youngest learners with a strong foundation upon which they will develop deep understandings to prepare them for the most challenging mathematics in their futures.

A year into the program, math teacher Holly Balshem says, “Thank goodness for the digital components of this program! It has smoothed the transition to virtual learning in math and enabled us to continue offering a rich and engaging experience for our students even from a distance.”

2) Spurring innovation within existing programs. With our decision to phase out Advanced Placement courses at the High School, our faculty were afforded the freedom to creatively design new, GDS-unique courses while maintaining a rigorous level of learning. Here are a few examples across the disciplines of new courses—many including our “Upper Level” or ^{UL} designation representing our AP-replacement courses designed to challenge students at the highest levels—being offered in the High School in the 19–20 and 20–21 school years:

- Music and Power
- Identity, Art & Resistance
- The Empire Writes Back: Hybridity Within the Postcolonial World ^{UL}
- Philosophy and Literature ^{UL}
- International Relations ^{UL}
- Topics in Contemporary Psychology ^{UL}
- Developers in Training ^{UL}
- Mathematics Seminar ^{UL}
- Energy and Resources: Science, Technology, and Culture; Research in Biology (Grade 12) ^{UL}
- Electricity and Magnetism ^{UL}
- Advanced Spanish Literature ^{UL}

In addition, the High School’s minimester (a multiday dive into topics designed to be immersive, experiential learning experiences outside the confines of traditional schooling) expanded from two to four days, with each course leaving campus for an experiential learning component.



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Black Broadway and the Artistic History of DC's U Street minimester group stopped for lunch at Ben's Chili Bowl. Pictured with owner and GDS alumni parent Virginia Ali (center), HS teacher Nicole Gainyard, and Black Broadway on U St.'s Shellée Haynesworth.

At the Middle School, our service learning program evolved to become “GDS Corps,” with each grade engaging with our surrounding community across the year. We also further developed the standards-referenced grading system, allowing more equitable feedback for students on their progress toward transparent learning goals.

GDS SIMPLY WOULDN'T BE GDS WITHOUT THE HOPPER FUND.



As part of GDS Corps, 7th graders cleaned up around Tenleytown in 2019.



“As a parent, I appreciate the special mix of rigor and support that is the hallmark of a GDS education. Our children love their teachers and feel known and loved back. I simply can't think of a better way to spend my volunteer time and philanthropic resources than in support of GDS.”

— **Michael Korn**, Co-Chair of The Hopper Fund 2019–2020



Rashida Holman-Jones (Zuri '34, Zynn '34, and Ziyah '20) at the GDS

event celebrating Ziyah's announcement of her athletic commitment to Michigan

“GDS is a place that develops the whole child. We are partners in this work, and GDS pushes me to become a deeper advocate for equity. I would not have that lens without GDS. I have a responsibility to grow because my children are leading the way!”

— **Rashida Holman-Jones**, current and alumni parent

MICHAEL DESAUTELS



Bryan Williams (Mackenzie '23 and Morgan '15) at the 2020 Middle School Fall Jubilee

“GDS is continuously looking for ways to support the immediate and surrounding community. This has helped generations of students learn to grow and strengthen any community that they become a part of. GDS was not, is not, and never will be just a school, but it is a community.”

— **Bryan Williams**, MS math faculty and alumni parent



Toni Jackson with her children Christian '28 and Brooklyn '33

“There are so many reasons to support GDS through The Hopper Fund. The education our children get is unbelievable. They are taught to be kind, to strive for justice, and to advocate for themselves and others at a very young age. The quality of the education is outstanding and it's a worthy investment. Add to that GDS's goal of making sure that people from all economic backgrounds can afford to go to GDS through financial aid and how diverse the school is, not just racially, but from an economic standpoint—that is what makes it so important to support. That's why I give as much as I can afford to give. Finally, knowing that our tuition doesn't cover everything that GDS costs means that The Hopper Fund is needed to support our incredible teachers and bridge that gap so we can give teachers the pay they deserve.”

— **Toni Jackson**, current parent



Financial Aid

Our founding mission calls on us to be a School accessible to a diverse range of students, and your support of financial aid helps make that possible. Your gift to financial aid provides resources to ensure that all students and families can be full participants in the life of the School and make certain all students are provided with an equitable opportunity to thrive, both socially and academically.

Our financial aid budget for the 2019–20 school year was \$7.1 million, with an award range from \$500 to full tuition. In 2019–20, the average award increased to \$26,000. Twenty-four percent of our students receive financial aid, and with your help,

we are working steadily toward our goal of supporting at least 25% of GDS students each year.

In the last 10 years, we have increased our financial aid budget from \$3.7 to \$7.1 million, and that is largely thanks to the philanthropic support of our community. Thank you for your support of financial aid; it has truly been transformational for GDS. A gift to financial aid goes beyond the students receiving it to strengthen the GDS experience for our entire student body—and for that, we thank you.



“I believe in the school’s mission to provide students with

a rich program of social justice education, particularly through the ‘A GDS Student Will...’ skills. My willingness to donate to the school’s financial aid campaign is shared in this quote by Helen Keller: ‘Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.’”

— **Judy Brown**, Middle School history faculty



Judy Brown with several current students

“An English teacher who is so adept at constructive criticism that she summons the precise words to encourage our daughter’s creativity but also shows her the next step forward in developing her voice. A history teacher and a GDS bus driver who take any interested students on a day trip to a former Philadelphia prison to discuss prison reform with the tour guides; most of the class eagerly volunteers even though it is winter break. A language teacher who shares her lunchtime with our daughter once a week to converse in Chinese. These exceptional High School teachers, and many more like them, are at the heart of GDS, uplifting students. Who would not want one of these educational moments for every student? Financial aid allows GDS to extend the reach of those dedicated teachers to as many students as possible. And the GDS community receives in return. Diversity of economic circumstance, diversity of thought, diversity of culture or race, enriched our daughter’s classroom education and grounded her in shared values. It honed her ideas, strengthened her empathy, and equipped her to both navigate and appreciate our diverse world.”



Tom and Cathy Strong with their daughters Kate '20 and Cayla

“We support financial aid so that other children may obtain the tremendous educational foundation that our own children have received, and because education suffers if children do not learn alongside peers whose experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds differ from their own.”

— **Betsy Keeley**, current and alumni parent, Former Trustee



Betsy and Mike Keeley



24%
OF STUDENTS
RECEIVING
AID IN '20



8%
OF LEGACY
STUDENTS
RECEIVING AID



FINANCIAL AID BUDGET

\$500
to full tuition

AWARD RANGE

ONE GDS Community Crisis Fund

In April 2020, when GDS was adjusting to the new landscape in the face of COVID-19, the Board of Trustees made the decision to create a new fund to support our community through the pandemic and help those affected by the economic fallout. Launched with 100% support from members of the Board of Trustees and the Alumni Board, the One GDS Community Crisis Fund raised nearly \$1,000,000 in eight short weeks as the GDS community rallied to support each other.

In 2019–20, the Fund supported:

- **Families** by providing additional financial aid resources to help meet unanticipated needs. Your gift helped our Tech Team deliver hot spots to provide Wi-Fi for students without access and provided short-term financial aid for families who were struggling because of the economic fallout of the pandemic. It provided laptops and tablets for all students to ensure they could participate fully in Virtual Campus.
- **Our School's talented and committed faculty and staff** by providing increased support for distance learning and other curriculum development needs, including professional development in support of online learning and technology upgrades and expansion to keep our community connected and working together.
- **The unexpected.** We set aside a portion of the funds for use at the Head of School's discretion, recognizing that the nature of the pandemic and its impact on GDS would change as we moved through the year and into the future. Those funds are helping put in place the necessary mitigants, from testing to PPE, that helped us bring faculty and students safely back to campus.



Leah Fitzpayne '22 and Amira Rampersaud '32 connect online as part of the cross-divisional buddy program.



THANK YOU

Thank you for continuing to make GDS a philanthropic priority. Each and every gift, especially yours, makes an impact and a meaningful difference in the lives of our students, faculty, and staff and puts us in a position of strength as we celebrate our 75th year. We are deeply grateful for your generosity.

If you have questions about this report or how your gift makes a difference, please be in touch. We look forward to hearing from you.

"The Board of Trustees started the One GDS Community Crisis Fund at a moment of real uncertainty and fear among many in our community—families struggling with job loss,



Jenny Abramson '95 with Jeff Blum at the new Little Toy

teachers seeing new costs and COVID-related challenges at home, and a reliance on tech for learning in ways we never envisioned necessary. Raising \$1,000,000 so quickly, even so soon after the success of the One GDS Campus campaign, was a true testament to the best of our GDS family. This Fund is an expression of our solidarity in crisis, our commitment to treat others as we would hope to be treated, and our ability to weave a net together so that no one is able to fall through during a time when they need it most. I am grateful to the 100% of Trustees and so many others in our community who made this happen with ease and speed."

— Jenny Abramson '95, Chair of the Board of Trustees during the spring of 2020 when the Fund was launched

"I've never felt like my family is going through this year alone. The parent community has been an incredible source of support, and I couldn't imagine a better distance learning program for my son. There is nothing normal about what we are going through, and nothing will replace in-person activities, but the faculty have gone above and beyond to make my son and his classmates feel engaged and connected. They haven't simply moved lessons to a new platform, they really thought about what it means to learn and do these activities at a distance. My son communicates with his teacher throughout the school day, and he always feels engaged with her even if they are physically apart."

— Jessica Falkowitz, current parent



"I am so grateful for GDS's care of its community right now—from the thoughtful transition to and adjustments of online teaching, to the emphasis both on learning and caring, to the support being provided for families in all sorts of ways. Thank you for making school one thing that is not stressful right now!"

— Sarah Werner, current parent



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