

— SPRING/SUMMER 2025 —

# GEORGETOWN **DAYS**



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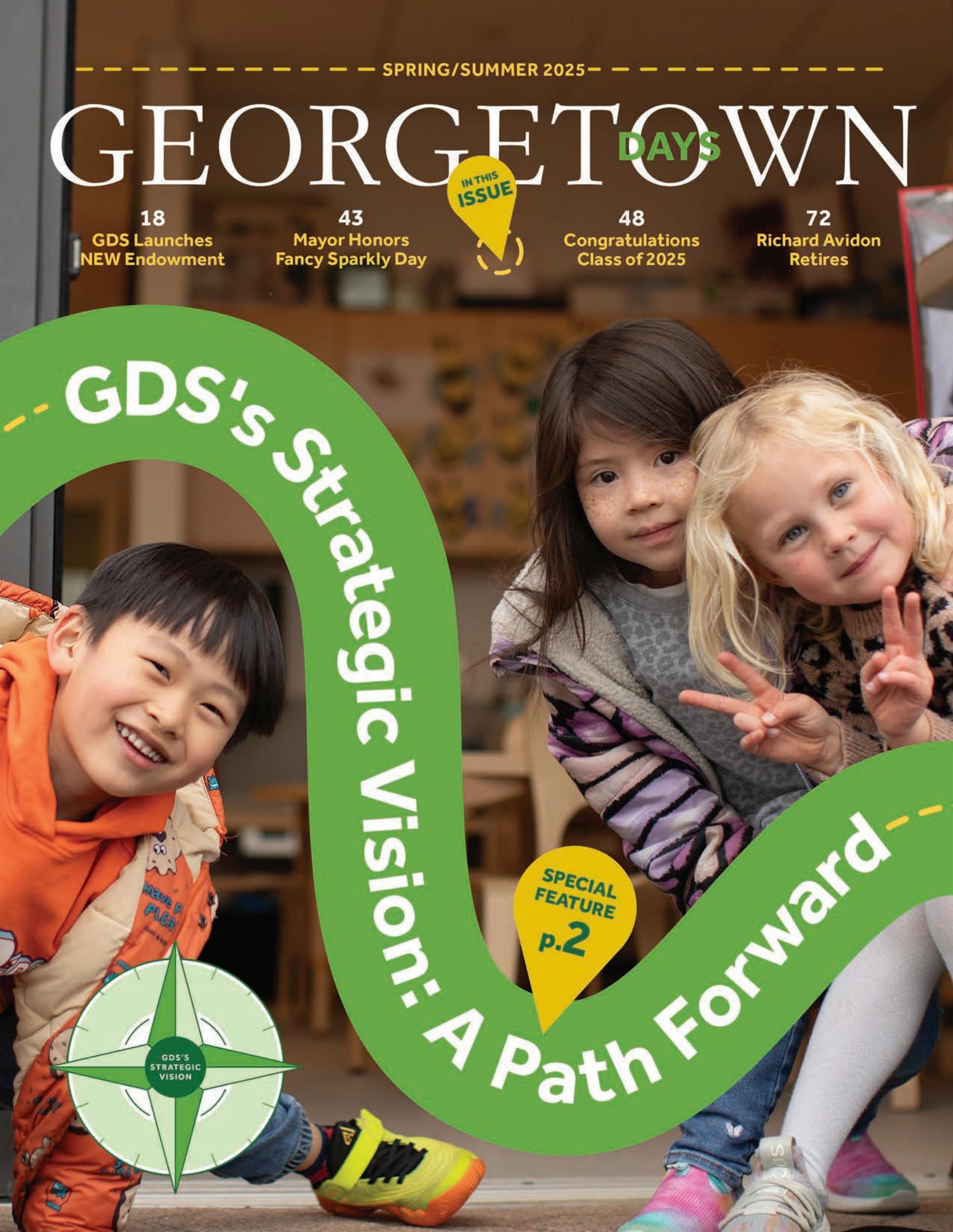
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# OUR MISSION DRIVES ALL THAT WE DO

**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 for Georgetown Days magazine from all GDS community members.**

Please contact [dina@gds.org](mailto:dina@gds.org) to learn more.

Alumni are encouraged to send their news with photos to [alumni@gds.org](mailto:alumni@gds.org).

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WHERE STUDENTS  
LOVE TO LEARN  
AND  
LEARN TO CHANGE  
THE WORLD

SPRING/SUMMER 2025

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# From Where I Stand



## ONE OF MY FAVORITE GDS TRADITIONS

is Grandparents' and Special Friends' Day. I love the joy on our students' faces as they walk a little taller, eager to show off the spaces and people that shape their daily lives.

I'm struck each year by how many of our current grandparents were once GDS parents themselves—their children now entrusting the next generation to the same values-rich, joyful, purposeful education. And I'm moved by the distances our visitors travel—from New York, Florida, California, London, India—reminding us that love for this School (and for grandchildren!) stretches far beyond our campus.

Grandparents offer a valuable gift to young people: perspective. They've lived long enough to see how challenges pass and seasons turn. They remind us that winter does, in fact, become spring. At this moment in the world—marked by rapid change, uncertainty, and disruption—GDS, too, finds strength and clarity by turning to its roots.

That's why our current Strategic Vision is anchored in our founding. "Audacious Beginnings, Bold Futures" draws on the wisdom of our charter from nearly 80 years ago: that a school can challenge the norms of its day, envision a more just and humane world, and prepare young people to help build it. That founding idea—that education should be animated by ethics, inquiry, courage, and joy—continues to guide us.

In this issue of *Georgetown Days*, you'll see some of the ways our Strategic plan is coming to life.

You'll read about three High school students—Mac Penniman '25, Oliver Wolin '26, and Sam Pastreich '25—who collaborated with GDS administrators to help our campus secure Renewable Energy Credits from wind farms. Combined with rooftop solar panels on our buildings, these efforts ensure that the School now offsets its electricity usage with clean, renewable energy. This is student leadership in action: not abstract ideals, but real change.

Teachers Foun Tang (LS) and Nadia Mahdi (HS) found common ground in their love of "thinking routines," tools that encourage deeper reflection and engagement. Their collaboration sparked a joint lesson that brought their youngest and oldest students together, modeling how curiosity and critical thinking transcend age—and reminding us of our aspiration to be "One GDS."

And in a High School Historical Research Seminar, students explored how race, place, and real estate have shaped the trajectory of their families over generations. With archival research, guest speakers, and site visits to DC and Baltimore, students not only unearthed personal histories—they began to understand the broader forces that shape access and opportunity.

These stories are not isolated sparks. They are waypoints leading toward the kind of school—and the kind of world—we're building: a place where sustainability is more than a talking point; where collaboration bridges classrooms and generations; where students investigate the past to inform the future.

This magazine issue also looks ahead to a major milestone: GDS's 80th Anniversary. During the 2025–26 school year, we will celebrate eight decades of principled disruption, courageous teaching, and joyful learning. It will be a moment to honor those who came before us and to recommit ourselves to the mission they set in motion.

As GDS honors its 80th, I will be savoring every moment of my last year at the School. In March, I announced that I will be leaving GDS in June 2026 to join my wife in Colorado. I look forward to seeing many of you during this celebratory year—and to writing the next chapter of GDS history together.

Russell

# GDS Strategic Vision

Nearly 80 years ago, Georgetown Day School was founded on a simple yet powerful idea: a school could challenge the norms of its day, envision the world as it could be, and manifest that optimistic vision. Our founders were courageous, visionary, and countercultural. They believed in young people, their goodness, and their capacity to see the good in each other.

GDS's Strategic Vision is grounded in our School's rich history, responsive to contemporary realities, and cognizant of the future our graduates will inherit. It is not, by design, a roadmap. Rather, it serves as a compass, mindful that the terrain our students will travel is ever-evolving and that GDS will need to course correct along the way. We are excited to travel this journey together, embracing the promise of continued growth and paving the way for future generations.

## Waypoints at a Glance

The Strategic Vision outlines four distinct waypoints that will serve as navigational guides for GDS in the years ahead. Together, these waypoints provide a framework that connects the School's founding values with its long-term goals. GDS is committed to regularly reviewing and refining each waypoint through annual evaluation and reflection—ensuring a resilient, adaptive, and forward-looking educational environment for all members of our community.

1

### Purposeful, Joyful, and Integrated Education

Fundamental to everything we do is educational excellence. Through interdisciplinary learning, civil discourse, and real-world experiences, students will develop as critical thinkers, compassionate collaborators, and active citizens. This approach nurtures both intellectual growth and emotional well-being, informed by contemporary advances in research on brain science, human development, and culturally relevant pedagogy.

2

### Thriving Educators

Our diverse faculty is the heart of GDS, and their empowerment and growth are paramount to our success. We will seek to ensure that our faculty experiences the joy, belonging, sense of purpose, and agency that we ask them to cultivate in our young people. Our plan focuses on fostering a culture where collaboration thrives, and teachers find joy in learning, refine their practice, and are celebrated for their accomplishments.

3

### Access and Sustainability that Honors Our Roots

It is incumbent on the GDS leadership to re-examine the sustainability of our financial model. In this next chapter, we will double down on our commitment to slow tuition growth, increase faculty salaries, and expand access through financial aid. We will simultaneously seek out resources to invest in programmatic innovation while transforming our campus into a beacon of environmental sustainability.

4

### Innovation, Evolution, and Reinvention

All healthy ecosystems depend on renewal—bold creation, thoughtful evolution, and the clearing away of what has run its course. As we launch new initiatives, we will rigorously assess which programs should be refined, reimaged, or sunsetted to create space for innovation. Our responsibility is clear: to grow wisely, within our means, and with intention.



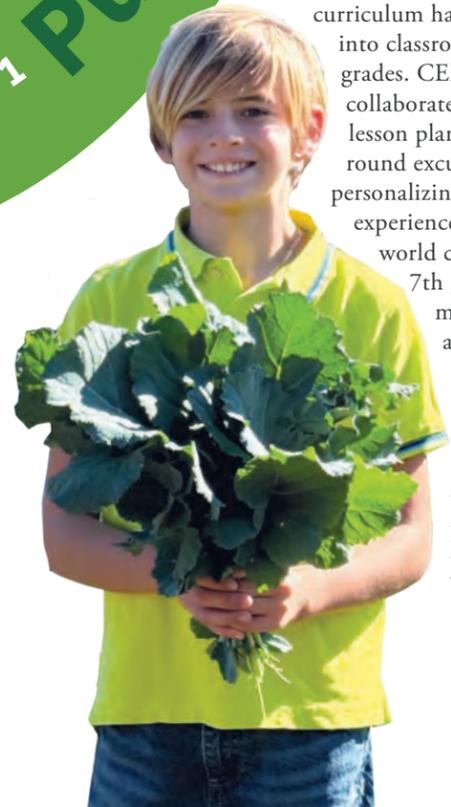
**6TH GRADE ATHLETICS**  
 The 2024-25 pilot project that created athletics teams for sixth graders was a success. The project launched a girls volleyball team and a boys soccer team in the fall, and basketball teams for girls and boys in the winter. While sixth graders play intramural versions of these sports in PE, anyone who wanted to compete against other schools could join a team. Teams practiced during PE classes, in conjunction with long-standing volleyball, soccer, and basketball units. Students in each sport played two home games as their classmates cheered them on. The experience instilled school pride and served as an on-ramp for the 7th grade athletics program.



**COMMUNICATING TO CONNECT**  
 As part of their studies on how the brain processes social interactions, HS Neuroscience students spent a class period seeking out and speaking to peers and adults they did not know. They first practiced the art of crafting and asking “deep questions” that emphasize feelings versus facts, such as “How was middle school for you?” instead of “Where did you go to middle school?” The exercise brought the classroom concepts of social cognition and neural entrainment to life. Bobby Asher, the Neuroscience teacher and Director of Student Community Programming, hopes to introduce a similar exercise to freshman orientation gatherings.

**LIFE-SAVING TRAINING**  
 The HS Physical Education Department revived a program that requires all GDS sophomores to get certified in First Aid, CPR, and AED. The program, which went dormant during the COVID-19 pandemic, provides five classes over two weeks during school hours. In 2024-25, GDS bought new equipment and provided training for staffers interested in teaching the courses.

**CELL PHONES**  
 GDS is launching Wait Through 8th, a spin-off of a national initiative in which parents voluntarily commit to wait until at least the end of 8th grade before giving their children smartphones. Smartphone use is known to negatively affect focus, mental health, and peer relationships, so GDS does not allow in-school phone use across campus. Though the concept was previously embraced in parts of the GDS community, Wait Through 8th is now a school-sponsored initiative led by Health Education Department Chair Caitlin Hutcheon. Stay tuned for more information!



**EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**  
 In the Middle School, the Community Engagement & Experiential Learning (CEEL) curriculum has been fully integrated into classroom learning across all grades. CEEL staff and MS teachers collaborated closely to align lesson plans with CEEL’s year-round excursions and activities, personalizing each student’s learning experience and highlighting real-world connections. For instance, 7th graders visited local mental health practitioners after learning to gather and analyze mental health statistics in math class, and 5th graders studied food and farming vocabulary in their chosen world language class before visiting Miller Farms.

**LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**  
 Fourth grade students are learning to be community leaders and role models through Leading with Empathy, Acceptance, and Demonstrations of Care (LEAD). Recess assistants help ensure student safety, suggest fun activities, and serve as mediators. Lunchtime announcers share updates, while assembly leaders welcome the community, introduce the programming, and give closing remarks.

**Waypoint 1 Purposeful, Joyful, and Integrated Education**

# Family Perspectives

**IN THE UPPER LEVEL** Historical Research Seminar, High School students investigated how race, place, and real estate intersect and influence access to opportunities for their respective families across generations.

During the seminar, led by HS history teacher Lisa Rauschart, students tapped into archival records—everything from U.S. Census Bureau data to birth certificates and old newspaper articles—to reconstruct their families’ roots. Historian Mara Cherkasky, a guest lecturer, also helped them pull property deeds, which often revealed restrictive covenants that barred certain racial groups from purchasing homes or living in specific areas, denying them access to a key wealth-building tool: homeownership.

As they dug into their family histories, students also learned how to view the material through a broader historical lens with input from guest speakers, readings, interviews, and site visits to Baltimore or DC (depending on the semester).

“Many of the students found that their families’ stories intertwined with larger currents that swirled throughout the U.S. and indeed the world, during the last three hundred years,” Lisa said. “We’ve seen stories of immigration and migration and some difficult choices, as individuals responded to the pushes and pulls of their own experiences.”

Here are a few of the narratives that students shared:

## FINDING COMMUNITY

Jhet Bond ’25 gained a deeper understanding of what “community” means when she documented her maternal grandmother’s experience in River Terrace, a neighborhood in the southernmost tip of Northeast DC.

Using census data and birth certificates, Jhet traced her grandmother’s story back to Greensboro, South Carolina, where Jhet’s great-great-grandfather, Joel Wims, owned a farm in the early 1900s near the “Promised Land,” a community founded by freed slaves. To provide a better life for his children, Wims used his savings from the farm to move his two grown daughters to the District. One daughter, Ethel, and her husband, Caleb Chiles, arrived in DC in 1939 amid the Great Migration, which saw millions of Black Southerners move to the North and West seeking better opportunities.

Soon thereafter, Ethel and Caleb settled in a two-story brick rowhouse in River Terrace—where they raised Jhet’s grandmother, Annette Chiles Wilson.

Jhet said her grandmother described a joyful childhood in River Terrace, which became a predominantly Black neighborhood after exclusionary covenants were declared unconstitutional in 1948. It was a place where residents left doors unlocked and children drifted into Mrs. Peters’ kitchen when they smelled her Apple Stickers baking.

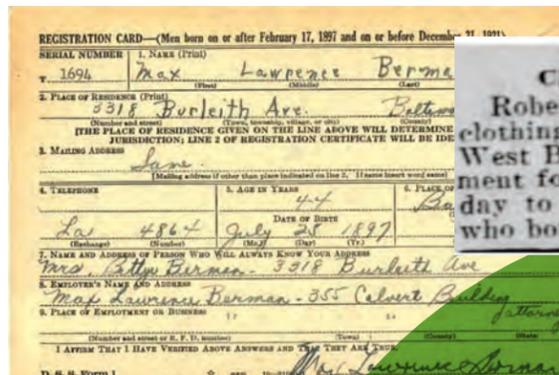
“[According to my grandmother,] there was an unspoken agreement there that everyone would look after each other,” Jhet said. “Neighbors would sit on their porches and wave or play chess at the local park. They’d make sure the kids got to school okay, or that someone was home when they returned. ... It was a community built out of a sense of alliance, just like the Promised Land.”

## DIGGING INTO THEIR JEWISH ROOTS

Twins Bryan and Lauren Berman knew their parents were born and raised in the Baltimore area, but they did not appreciate the depths of their Jewish roots there until they started this project during their senior year.

Bryan ’25 researched their father’s side of the family and Lauren ’25 their mother’s. They discovered that both sides had immigrated from Russia in the late 19th century and worked in Baltimore’s garment industry, which was largely dominated by Eastern European Jews fleeing persecution and economic hardships.

2.



“A strong and thriving Jewish presence in Baltimore helped my family assimilate and succeed because they immediately found a culture they recognized when they arrived in this country,” Bryan said.

Using Ancestry.com, Lauren found a 1903 *Sun* notice about the arrest of a Wabash railroad laborer who stole a \$12 overcoat from the shop of Robert Diamond—the twins’ maternal great-great-grandfather. Bryan discovered that their paternal great-great-grandfather, Hyman Berman, and his wife were taken to court for working at their tailor shop on a Sunday—a violation of the state’s Blue Laws. Their son Max, a World War I naval aviator who later opened a law firm with his son, used to meet with some of his clients in a small satellite office adjacent to the tailor shop near Lombard Street. On a trip to Baltimore, Bryan located the site where the shop once stood.

After World War II, many Jewish families, including both sets of Bryan and Lauren’s grandparents, moved out of Baltimore City in search of more green space and single-family homes in the suburbs. They left their rowhouses behind and settled in the Pikeville section of Baltimore County. Many Jewish institutions, including synagogues and community centers, moved there as well. Bryan and Lauren’s parents lived in the Pikesville area until they left for college.

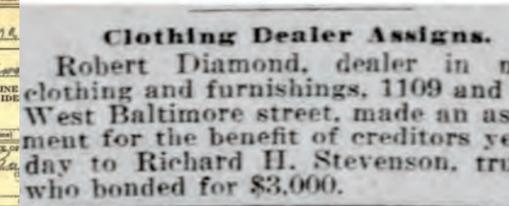
“While the once-thriving Jewish neighborhoods in Baltimore City have faded, I still see traces of their legacy in landmarks like the synagogues they built,” Lauren wrote in her report. “...My family’s story remains deeply connected to the city’s evolving identity.”

## FROM PAKISTAN TO AMERICA

Through interviews, Sabrina Sandhu ’26 documented her grandfather’s journey from his chaotic childhood in Pakistan to the United States, where he established himself as an inventor and corporate leader at the behemoth Eastman Kodak of Rochester, New York.

“I concluded that the privilege I have today, the very fact that I can even be doing this project at this school, is rooted in my grandfather’s drive to leave his country to seek new

3.



possibilities,” said Sabrina, who lacked access to historical archives, as her grandfather’s small Pakistani village did not have the resources for record-keeping.

Sabrina’s grandfather, Mohammad Akram Sandhu, was a studious 11-year-old during the Partition of India in 1947, which led to the independent states of Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. While his Pakistani village was not at the center of the violence that ensued, he witnessed his share of bloodshed.



The trauma did not deter his academic ambitions. He went on to earn a BS and an MS in chemical technologies in Pakistan, where he patented his first invention, an anticoagulant. His work gained notice and led him to Scotland

for his PhD. Though Dr. Sandhu planned on returning to Pakistan, he followed a trusted mentor’s advice and left for the U.S., where he completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Minnesota.

Soon after, he was hired as a chemical researcher at Kodak and climbed the ranks, amassing nearly a dozen patents along the way. “I think people make a sacrifice when they leave their country and their culture. It’s like leaving parts of yourself behind,” Sabrina said. “But my grandfather valued the opportunities that came from leaving and made a special life for his family.”

1. Senior Jhet Bond’s great-grandparents, Caleb and Ethel Chiles, arrived in DC in 1939 amid the Great Migration. Courtesy of Jhet Bond ’25. 2. Bryan Berman ’25 found the registration card of his great-grandfather Max Berman, who was a U.S. naval aviator in World War I. 3. Lauren Berman ’25 spotted a 1916 legal notice, published in *The Sun*, showing that her maternal great-great-grandfather, Robert Diamond, paid off his debt to his business creditors. 4. Sabrina’s grandfather (right), Mohammad Akram Sandhu, receiving his PhD at Strathclyde University in Glasgow, Scotland. Courtesy of Sabrina Sandhu.



# MAKING Space TO Feel

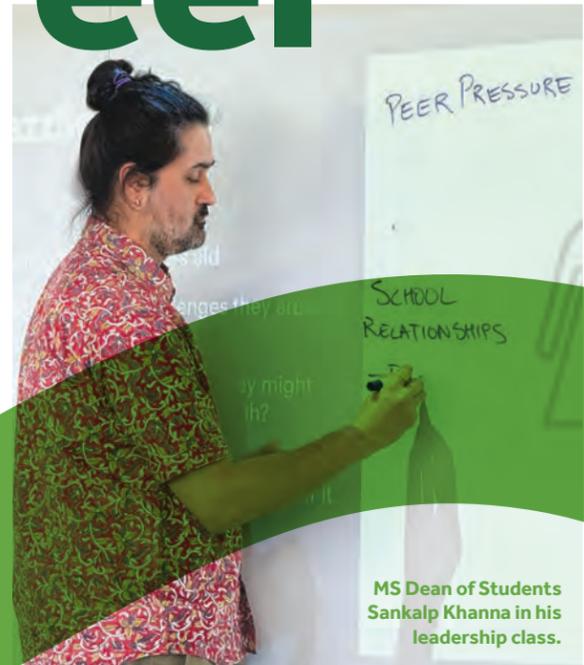
**AFTER THE 8TH GRADERS** settled into their seats, Sankalp Khanna opened his Navigating Self: Leadership Class with a prompt: What are the ingredients of a core memory you have formed? He explained the memories could be linked to relationships with family, friends, teachers, or anyone else.

One student mentioned “food” because it connects people. “Yes, it’s about culture, sharing, and conversation,” Sankalp said as he jotted “food” on the whiteboard. Another offered that deep emotions anchor memories. “Depending on the emotion, the memory can provide a lot of energy or it can feel depleting, right?” Sankalp added. One chimed in that being “open-minded,” without judgment or rigid expectations, creates fertile ground for meaningful memories to form.

These are the kinds of reflective practices that Sankalp, the first Middle School Dean of Students, builds into his leadership course. His classes, added to the health curriculum in the 2024-25 school year, are taught once a week to all seventh and eighth grade students.

Before joining GDS, Sankalp taught math and designed social-emotional learning courses, first at schools in his native India and more recently at The Barrie School in Silver Spring. He brought with him this extensive experience and a commitment to help students navigate their individual and shared challenges.

“I try to teach kids that leadership is not about titles or positions,” Sankalp said. “It’s about being conscious of the factors that influence their decisions when they need to make tough choices. ... They need to recognize that they have agency in deciding how they respond, and the choices they make shape the memories and stories they carry forward.”



MS Dean of Students  
Sankalp Khanna in his  
leadership class.

## NAMING WHAT WE FEEL

The memory exercise might have fallen flat if not for previous lessons that helped students build their emotional vocabulary. One of the activities in his first leadership class had students map aspects of themselves onto a tree drawing, with the trunk symbolizing their skills and abilities. This visual metaphor is designed to encourage them to see themselves as a set of living interdependent systems and decode their individual parts.

Another lesson introduced students to the Mood Meter, a tool from the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence that groups emotions into four quadrants, such as yellow (high-energy/pleasant) and blue (low-energy/unpleasant). Sankalp explained that a similar experience can land in different quadrants for different people. The emotions can show up physically, which is why he encouraged students to notice what anxiety, joy, or tension *feels like* in their bodies. The body, he says, can signal emotions before the mind registers them.

“Middle Schoolers often think in binaries, which is why they give vague responses like ‘good’ or ‘sad’ when asked how they’re doing,” Sankalp said. “It’s important for them to recognize that life isn’t always lived in the ‘yellow’ happy, positive zone and that emotions like ‘sad’ can have many different layers: exhaustion, discouragement, apathy.”

Every emotion, across all four quadrants, has value and provides important information about a person’s needs, he said. Even emotions within the same quadrant can signal different needs. For example, loneliness might signal a need for connection, while feeling disheartened could indicate a need for hope or encouragement.

“Students learn to check in with themselves, name what they’re feeling, and reflect on the need underneath,” he said. “I then help them explore what strategies they’re using to meet that need, and whether those strategies are helping or getting in the way.”

## DIFFERENT BUT THE SAME, EVERYWHERE

After a recent class, Ella Jeffress ’29 said the course offers a rare opportunity. “We normally don’t get a lot of time to stop and think about our emotions because we’re busy with a lot of stuff, even when we’re outside of school,” Ella said. “This is a designated time in our day to slow down and think about how we’re feeling and why we’re feeling it.”

For instance, during the core memories exercise, Ella started wondering why her older brother figures so prominently into her memories of late. “He’s in college now, and it made me realize how much I miss him,” Ella said. “Certain memories that were kind of distant, I now remember them a lot.”

Lawson Friedman ’29 said he appreciates the open discussions in class. “You get to hear everyone’s point of view,” Lawson said. “It’s a sign that even though we’re not all the same, a lot of time, we’re dealing with the same stuff.”

Sankalp was drawn to this work while teaching in Delhi, India, especially in 2014 when a right-wing party’s rise and its promotion of Hindu nationalism began influencing education. The shift unsettled him, having grown up in a secular society. In response, he and a colleague (now his wife) researched and co-authored a curriculum that helped students in their high school unpack their socialization using several themes, including inter-faith dialogue and ethics formation.

His experience with students across different continents has deepened his understanding of a universal truth: no matter where they are in the world, middle schoolers share a need

for belonging. This need arises during a period of rapid growth and transition. Their brains are developing, their academic demands increasing, and their emotional and social challenges intensifying. Missteps are both inevitable and essential to their development. While many adults assume that belonging comes from harmony, Sankalp explains that it’s actually built by learning to navigate conflict—not by avoiding it.

“It’s about knowing how to show up when things don’t go as planned; how to take responsibility, repair relationships, and reconnect after things have gone off track,” he added. “...In a world that often prioritizes comfort and ease, giving students the space and tools to work through discomfort is one of the most meaningful ways to prepare them for adulthood.”

Ella Jeffress ’29 discussing an assignment with Sankalp





### CIVIL DISCOURSE STATEMENT

During the 2024-25 school year, GDS staff and the Board of Trustees worked to create a Civil Discourse Statement that provides clear guidance for navigating difficult conversations, and sometimes disagreements, with respect and integrity. This summer, a faculty working group led by Assistant Head for Equity and Inclusion Marlo Thomas will develop a plan to engage the GDS community and turn the statement into meaningful action. The Civil Discourse Statement and the action plan will be unveiled in the fall.



### PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Off-campus professional learning experiences are a powerful way to enhance instructional practices and improve student outcomes. Just like their students, teachers thrive when they engage as lifelong learners. GDS supports opportunities for educators to reflect on their practice and learn from experts and innovators in their field. The School is prioritizing team-based professional development to foster a shared mission, common language, and a connected working environment that brings new ideas into the classroom.



### READING & WRITING

Starting this summer, teachers in grades K-4 will be trained in *The Writing Revolution*. This evidence-based approach begins with explicit, sequenced instruction in writing strong, grammatically correct sentences and builds toward full compositions. The method will be embedded across all subject areas and adapted to each classroom's content. This work builds on previous training in Orton-Gillingham (a structured, multisensory approach to reading instruction) and stems from the efforts of a Lower School literacy committee that explored best practices in writing, thinking, and language comprehension.



## Thriving Educators



### ESSENTIAL EXPECTATIONS

GDS adopted a shared evaluation process for all its teachers—regardless of division and/or discipline—that outlines essential expectations and provides regular and consistent feedback. This approach fosters a predictable culture of support and accountability, ensuring that all faculty members have what they need to grow and excel in their roles.



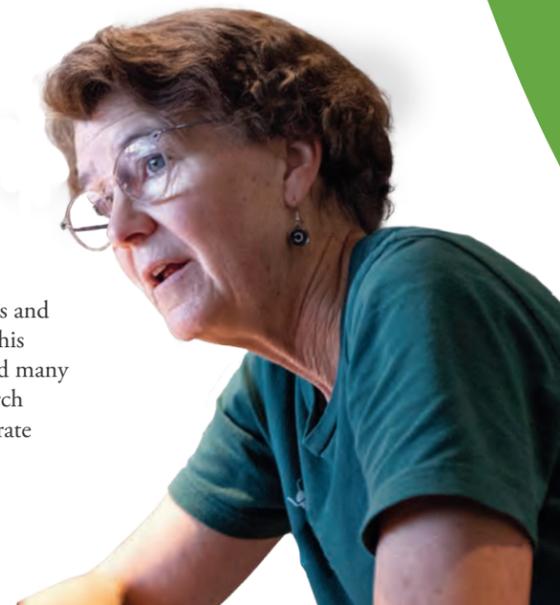
### CURRICULUM WORK

As part of a periodic review of our curriculum, this year all PreK-12 teachers documented their class curriculum, articulated learning goals, and shared their work across divisions. This summer, a cross-divisional and cross-disciplinary team of nearly two dozen teachers will analyze the documented curricula to identify trends, themes, and gaps. Next fall, the full faculty will use the findings to refine programming, intentionally build skills across grade levels, and ensure alignment with the School's learning goals. The aim is to systematize the curriculum to serve all students, not just some.



### COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY

Unifying GDS on one campus has opened up new opportunities for collaboration among teachers across divisions and within disciplines. On professional development days this year, faculty met in cross-divisional pods, which sparked many organic, self-initiated partnerships (see page 14). Research shows that teachers are more effective when they collaborate with colleagues and use student data to inform instruction.



# A “Meeting of the Minds”

Teachers collaborate on project that supports learning and retention

## THIRD-GRADE TEACHER FOUN TANG AND HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER NADIA MAHDI bonded over their shared appreciation of

“thinking routines” during a faculty meeting designed to foster collaboration across the School’s divisions. A few months later, they brought their students together to work on cultivating those routines and deepening each age group’s reading, writing, and analytical skills.

“What we saw when those students interacted gave me goosebumps,” Foun said.

Thinking routines are practices and sequenced steps that reveal a student’s thought process, primarily by using prompts and visual aids. The routines are a core element of Harvard University’s Project Zero, a decades-long research initiative that initially studied artists’ cognitive development but expanded to include dozens of projects worldwide that more broadly explore intelligence, thinking, and learning.

Project Zero’s premise is that information alone does not guarantee comprehension or long-term understanding.

1.



Rather, true learning happens through active engagement and meaningful connections that help students make sense of ideas and retain information. That’s in keeping with other educational research, including Hermann Ebbinghaus’s “forgetting curve” experiments, which found that up to 90 percent of new information is forgotten within a month if it is not reinforced.

### CONCEPT MAPPING RESONATES

When Foun and Nadia joined forces, they drew on many of these research-based findings to design a joint lesson plan. The rollout was in October, when Nadia’s Creative Writing students visited Foun’s class. They listened to Foun read *A Different Pond*, a children’s book about a Vietnamese father and his young American-born son reflecting on their family’s heritage during an early morning fishing trip.

Afterward, Foun introduced the students to “concept mapping,” a visual tool they used to organize the story’s main themes and related words or phrases. The students broke out into small mixed-age groups and started brainstorming, using markers, post-its, and conversation to structure their thoughts.

“[The High School students] were very supportive of us even though they were much older,” said Zachary Netter ’34. “They let us have our ideas, and they had their ideas, and we wrote everything down on a big piece of paper. . . . It is very good deep thinking because it makes you focus on what words mean.”

No two concept maps looked the same, though similar themes emerged. Stella Fahrenthold ’34 said the exercise helped her understand how some themes—such as family, hope, and memories—are linked. “Sometimes, these things are connected in more than one way,” she said. “When you write it down and connect all the lines, you remember it better than if you were just trying to think about everything in your head.”

Foun, who has participated in Project Zero’s professional development courses for years, said making the students’ thinking process visible to themselves and others helps



2.

them retain information. “Together, they found a common learning language,” she added.

Hazel Tarloff ’34 said she was amazed that the groups had different takeaways from the same story. “When I listened to all the different ideas that other people had, I was thinking: ‘Oh my gosh. I like the way that they thought about this,’” Hazel said. “It taught me to think in many different ways about something. There are so many ways to explain yourself and how you think of the story and what it meant.”

### LIFE LESSONS FOR ALL

For Nadia’s Creative Writing class, the work was just beginning. Nadia wanted her students to write their own short stories for a young audience using *A Different Pond* as a template. “I wanted them to use the thinking routines and concept mapping as a starting point to understand the responses and reactions of third graders,” Nadia said. “I was also looking for ways to create community through writing. In my experience, some of the best writing is done in collaboration with others.”

Nadia came to GDS with an acting and directing background. Earlier in her career, as an artist-in-residence and mentor at Brown University’s Arts Literacy Project, she collaborated with public school teachers to design lessons that used performance, poetry, and playwriting to explore the meaning of a text. This approach, which reinforces thinking from different angles, aligns with Project Zero’s principles and sparked her interest in working with Foun’s class.

Nadia asked her students to lean into generational connection by interviewing an older relative and creating a story based on what they learned. Sadie Boyle ’25

wrote about a Passover Seder celebration her mother remembered from childhood to convey her mother’s relationship with her parents.

Sadie said she decided to write the story from her mother’s point of view as a child based on what she learned during her time with the third graders. “Hearing the way they responded and reacted to [*A Different Pond*] gave me insights into how they process a story,” she said. “They noticed things in a picture that I didn’t notice or pointed out words that didn’t stand out to me. I took that to heart when I was writing.”

By December, the students had written their stories, illustrated them, and bound them into handcrafted books. They then invited the third graders to a High School classroom (personally decorated by the writers) and read some of the stories aloud.

Richard Evans ’25 wrote about his family’s homemade ice cream recipe after interviewing his maternal grandmother. He said he would have dumbed down his story if not for the quality time spent with the third graders. “From working on the concept maps, it was clear they understood a lot about family dynamics,” Richard said. “I realized how smart they are, so I included a lot more information than I would have otherwise.”

Nadia said the project offered insights into how to better guide student learning. “It provided an analytical framework that they could share as equals, a meeting of the minds,” she said. “They came together as listeners and responders. They made connections between the text and themselves, between the text and each other, and between what they were reading and how it applied to larger issues in the world.”

1. HS English teacher Nadia Mahdi (left) and third grade teacher Foun Tang collaborated on thinking routine exercises.  
2. HS and third grade students working on “concept maps”  
3. Spike Cooper ’34 organized on paper key concepts from *A Different Pond*.



3.



# WAYPOINT 3 Access and

**EXPENSE REPORTING**  
GDS has codified a new procurement policy that stipulates guidelines for how money is spent at the school and streamlines the expense approval process. This shared understanding provides clarity for our 300+ faculty and staff, allowing us to collectively protect our mission.



**CLIMATE ACTION**  
In the 2024-25 academic year, the School joined the Climate Action Accelerator Program (CAAP), thanks to a GDS Innovation Fund grant. This three-year program enables a committee of GDS teachers, students, and administrators to create an action plan that helps the School reduce its carbon footprint. The committee works with peer schools and climate experts (for 30 hours annually) to develop strategies for addressing climate change and protecting natural ecosystems. The committee's work has resulted in developing cross-divisional assemblies and lunchtime activities to educate students on environmental stewardship as well as experimenting with new types of waste bins at the High School that clearly designate where recyclables, compostables, and other trash should go.



**CENTRALIZED HELP DESK**  
The facilities, security, transportation, and IT teams are adopting a software platform that will serve as a one-stop shop for all internal requests. The platform will handle everything from asking for tech help to reserving buses for field trips to renting out GDS spaces. Handling school operations more efficiently will help optimize GDS resources and make life simpler for everyone in our community.



**ENERGY CREDITS**  
In addition to the green energy generated by the rooftop solar panels on both the HS and LMS buildings, the School has negotiated an electricity supply contract that enables GDS to acquire Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) from electricity-generating wind farms. In effect, the amount of energy the School uses is now offset by energy that's generated sustainably, enabling GDS to maintain a carbon-neutral electricity supply. (See page 20)



**CAMPUS MASTER PLANNING**  
After years of research and self-study, GDS is starting to craft a long-term master plan to expand and enhance its learning spaces while maximizing the value of the various properties it owns. As part of this process, GDS is also finalizing a report that charts a timeline for repairs, upgrades, and maintenance of the School's infrastructure. The report—the first of its kind for the unified campus—will serve as a roadmap for facilities management during the next 15 years and guide financial planning and long-term sustainability efforts.



JASON PUTSCHE

# Sustainability that Honors our Roots

# WAYPOINT 3

## Endowment honors Founders' Vision



**IN THE 2024-25 SCHOOL YEAR**, GDS raised nearly \$12 million to launch the GDS Scholars Financial Aid Endowment, which will fund a four-year High School education for at least two new GDS scholars every academic year starting next fall.

The endeavor marks a major milestone in the School's commitment to educational equity and access, honoring the vision of the seven founding families who established GDS in 1945 as a racially integrated, multi-cultural school that mirrors the demographic make-up of the DC area.

The new funding, which will be awarded to students from historically marginalized groups, is made possible by an extraordinary circle of donors who have each prioritized this cause with a commitment of at least \$250,000 to the endowment. Collectively, they agreed that the Scholars should be academically high-achieving students from DC middle schools who have a demonstrated need for full tuition coverage.

The idea for the endowment took shape when a family foundation (which asked to remain anonymous) pledged \$4

	2013-14	2025-26
<b>Total financial aid distributed</b>	<b>\$5.2 million</b>	<b>\$9.6 million</b>
<b>Average award</b>	<b>\$26,000</b>	<b>\$37,000</b>
<b>Number of students receiving aid</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>259</b>

million in seed funding, contingent on the School making significant progress toward raising an additional \$8 million by June 30. As of publication time, \$7.4 million had been raised toward the \$8 million goal, thanks to the generosity of families who stepped forward to help bring the School's mission to life for future scholars.

Beginning with the 2025-26 academic year, the endowment will make it possible for at least two additional students to attend GDS with full support. Assuming a 3.5 percent annual draw from the endowment's total value, the School will generate enough funding to cover tuition as well as equitable participation costs, such as college admission testing fees and athletic equipment.

"Georgetown Day School was founded as an act of access," said Head of School Russell Shaw. "I am delighted that this program will broaden access to our School for generations to come, enriching our student body and providing a launching pad for remarkable young people to pursue lives of purpose."

The new scholarships are modeled after two previous successful philanthropic initiatives at GDS that fund a high school education for individual incoming students.

What makes this effort different is the endowment piece. By frontloading the investment, GDS now has a consistent, reliable source of financial aid for every school year into the future.

"This endowed fund empowers Georgetown Day School to fully support exceptional students with the greatest need—allowing our annual financial aid dollars to go further and assist even more families who require partial support," said Jeffrey Delozier, Director of Development. "It's a remarkable step toward making a GDS education today accessible to a broader, more diverse range of students. We are tremendously grateful to the benefactors who made this historic achievement possible—for the School and, most importantly, for our students."

GDS has increased its financial aid funds annually, thanks to community philanthropy and a robust organizational commitment, emphasizing the importance of meeting as many families as we can at their most acute point of need. In the past decade, our financial aid budget has increased by 68%. Still, those dollars can only go so far, and every year, we must turn away talented students for whom a GDS education is out of reach.

WAYPOINT  
3

# GDS Adopts Student-backed Green Energy Plan



JASON PUTSCHE

**THEY MET MORE THAN TWO DOZEN** times with various GDS administrators, worked on a cost-benefit analysis, conducted a high-school-wide survey to gauge student interest, and penned an appeal to Head of School Russell Shaw in a bid to make their “green dream” a reality.

The students—Mac Penniman '25, Oliver Wolin '26, and Sam Pastreich '25—sustained their push across two academic years. Finally, their hard work paid off. In August 2024, GDS negotiated an electricity supply contract that includes Renewable Energy Credits (RECs)

from electricity-generating wind farms. In effect, the School’s fossil fuel energy sources—such as coal and natural gas—are now offset by sustainably generated electricity, allowing GDS to maintain a carbon-neutral electricity supply.

Mac learned about the new contract in early September after meeting with GDS Director of Operations and Innovation Tim Lyons. “It was a surreal moment,” Mac said. “It shows that if you work hard and navigate the bureaucracy, you can make real change.”

The students gave a shout-out to Tim and Chris Oster, who manages environmental stewardship and campus commuting at GDS. “Tim and Chris took a lot of time to work with us,” Oliver said. “We pushed it along, but they deserve a lot of credit because in the end, they’re the ones that got [the contract] done.”

### TEAMING UP FOR CHANGE

Mac, Oliver, and Sam embarked on their clean energy mission as part of their work for the student-led Enviro Club, which promotes environmental awareness and sustainability within the GDS community. While the School took a major step by installing solar panels on both the HS and LMS buildings in 2019, the trio was eager to explore more green energy alternatives with Chris and Tim.

They started regularly meeting with them and HS Science teacher C.A. Pilling, the Enviro Club faculty advisor. Together, they gathered data to frame the scope of the issue. Chris’s expertise and number-crunching helped contextualize the data by showing, for instance, that the 3.65 million pounds of carbon dioxide emitted annually at GDS is equivalent to about 2,000 transatlantic flights.

It wasn’t long before the students (who co-head the Enviro Club) decided that acquiring Renewable Energy Credits was the most viable path, and they researched the options. But the process was slow-going. The students thought they’d lost traction. While switching to a clean power plan is a simple opt-in procedure for residential properties, it’s far more complicated for a school. Entities with large power needs face more considerations and logistical hurdles, in part because their electricity contracts can be spread across multiple accounts, as was the case with GDS.

### A “HAIL MARY” MOVE

Mac said he and his peers were just about to give up when he made a last-ditch “Hail Mary” move and wrote to Russell on August 18, 2024, urging him to help move the “green dream” forward.

“It’s time to reroute GDS’s energy bill to green-energy producers to minimize our carbon footprint and fulfill our sustainability aspirations,” Mac wrote. “It’s the highest impact move we can make to reduce climate change and live up to our values. Doing so would not just make the students (and parents) happy, it would also put GDS in a leadership role among its peers, and provide a great bragging point for the school.”

All the stars aligned, for the letter coincided with the end of the School’s existing electricity supply contract, Tim said. “In a great display of advocacy and youthful impatience, they went over our heads and talked to the big guy, and that was a catalyst,” Tim added. “They taught us how to keep pushing for the things you’re passionate about, and we taught them that sometimes it takes a minute to negotiate.”

Chris said he hopes this successful collaboration serves as a decision-making model for the School. “Hopefully, working on plans with students will become part of the GDS fabric,” Chris said. “It makes sense for them to have some influence because they are our main users.”

**1. (from left) Mac Penniman '25, Oliver Wolin '26, and Sam Pastreich '25 successfully pushed GDS to make the switch to green energy. 2. Chris Oster (left) and Tim Lyons helped negotiate GDS’s new electric supply contract.**



JASON PUTSCHE



WAYPOINT 4

# Innovation,



## LEARNING AND EVOLVING

In the past year, different groups of LS teachers visited nearly a half dozen schools to connect with peers and explore innovative classroom practices. At the Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning at St. Andrews Episcopal School, they examined how emerging brain research can support students' academic, social, and emotional growth. They also spent time at School-Within-School at Capitol Hill's Peabody Elementary, a PK-K program inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy, rooted in the idea that children can guide their own learning within a teacher-supported framework. Another stop: New York City's Living City Project for an immersive workshop that helped the teachers reimagine the LS units on immigration and other topics. These field visits, led by Lower School Coach Sarah Tiamiyu, are just one example of GDS's commitment to engage with and respond to evolving educational practices.



## SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW

GDS will conduct a comprehensive review of its operations, budgets, programs, and Board governance to ensure that its resources are directed to the efforts most essential to the School's mission. The review will start by revisiting data collected through the 2021 Equity Audit, a third-party review of the School's DEI practices. It will also build on the action plan developed by GDS administrators after the 2024 accreditation process—a once-per-decade review that included a year-long self-study, a visit by educators from the Association of Independent Maryland and DC Schools (AIMS), and a detailed report of AIMS' recommendations.

## ANOTHER 80 YEARS

Planning is underway for GDS's 80th anniversary celebration! The programming will kick off with a picnic in August, and there's much more to come in the year ahead. The School's founders, who established GDS in October 1945, challenged the norms of their time, envisioning the world as it could be and then manifesting that optimistic vision. In the spirit of our founders' boldness and vision, we embark on this next chapter with gratitude, determination, and a steadfast belief in the power of education to shape a better world. (See page 24)



## STRATEGIC VISION COMMITTEE

Thank you to the Strategic Vision Committee for working with the Board of Trustees and the GDS leadership team to create a plan for the School that incorporates comprehensive feedback and active participation from all our stakeholders.

### Acknowledgments:

Co-Chair Lauren Dickert, Co-Chair Debby Previna, Jenny Abramson '95, Bobby Asher, Khalid Bashir, Anthony Belber, GDS Trustee Jeff Blum, Kathy Chery, Barbara Eghan, David Gillespie, Meg Goldner Rabinowitz, GDS Trustee Maria Gomez, Keith Hudspeth, Branden Isaac '08, GDS Trustee Simon Johnson, GDS Trustee Cecilia Kang, GDS Trustee Marc Lindsey, Emily Livelli, Tim Lyons, Kim Palombo, Jana Rupp, Head of School Russell Shaw, Foun Tang, Jon Vanegas, Leadership+Design representatives Carla Silver and Antonio Viva

# Evolution, and Reinvention



# 80 Years and Counting!



Since 1945, GDS has called eight locations home: a rented rowhouse in what is now Chinatown; the Grassland campus on Nebraska Avenue (currently occupied by NBC) in 1946; several spots along MacArthur Blvd.; and, since 2020, the unified campus on Davenport Street.



Grasslands campus



G PLACE  
1945-1946

**COMMEMORATING 80 YEARS** together as a school begins in August 2025, when GDS kicks off a year-long celebration filled with activities and events designed to honor our rich history, embrace the vitality of our present, and imagine the promise of our future.

Some may wonder why we are celebrating 80 years, a milestone that is not generally considered traditional for institutions. To answer that, we take you back to March 2020, as GDS was gearing up for our 75th year, set to be celebrated during the 2020-21 school year. COVID-19

had other plans for all of us. While we were disappointed to put aside our 75th plans, we are determined to make up for it next year.

As we approach the 80th anniversary, we are called to reflect on our School's audacious beginnings. The seven families who founded GDS acted in response to the injustices of their time—the segregation of DC-area schools and the global horrors of World War II, which exposed the devastating consequences of failing to see one another's humanity. Their mission was radical: to build a racially

integrated, multicultural school that honors differences, fosters understanding, and cultivates a deep sense of community through shared experiences. Our founders' vision challenged the status quo and planted the seeds for a hopeful and more just future.

As we look ahead, we recognize that GDS students will inherit a world marked by complexity and uncertainty—from climate change and global unrest to growing inequality and threats to democracy. In the spirit of our founders, we remain steadfast in our commitment to preparing students for lives of purpose, empathy, and engaged citizenship. The charge is as urgent and essential today as it was when our first twelve students gathered in a DC row house decades ago.

Our anniversary will shine a spotlight on the people, values, and milestones that have shaped the School—and those that will guide our path forward. A dedicated group of faculty, administrators, alumni, and parents is working diligently to craft a series of inspiring events and gatherings as well as multimedia displays and presentations geared toward bringing together our community and celebrating our School. From a distinguished speaker series to community-wide celebrations, each moment will offer an opportunity to gather in joy, reflect with gratitude, and reaffirm our shared vision for the next 80 years of GDS.



GDS Peace Assembly, a tradition that endures.

Here are just a few of the events that are on the books. Be sure to save the dates! And keep an eye on your mail and email for more information about these and other events, as well as all the ways you can participate.

**AUGUST 23, 2025**

**KICKOFF PICNIC**

A festive start on campus to the 2025-26 school year and the anniversary celebration.

**OCTOBER 18, 2025**

**COUNTRY MARKET DAY**

GDS's annual fall festival serves as the perfect occasion for a fun "birthday moment" commemorating the School's official opening on October 22, 1945.

**NOVEMBER 19, 2025**

**BENJAMIN COOPER MEMORIAL LECTURE**

This signature event, part of a year-long speaker series, will feature a not-to-be-missed guest—though we're keeping the speaker a surprise for now!

**MAY 2, 2026**

**CULMINATING CELEBRATION BIG, community party!**

# HOPPER TANK COMPETITION DELIVERS SURPRISES

(from left) Didi Pathiyal '27, Lulu Wachs '27, Charlotte Lee '26, and Henry Wachs '26 of ThriveSpace won a \$1,000 prize, as did CraftGenius.



JENNY ABRAMSON



JENNY ABRAMSON

Ella Maas '28 (at the podium) pitches Middle School students on her team's prize-winning CraftGenius proposal. To her right are teammates Eila Priestap '28 and Ellie Snyder '28 (holding CraftGenius art kit).

**TWO TEAMS TIED** for the \$1,000 grand prize at the annual GDS Hopper Tank competition in February—a first in the event's four-year history. The deadlock presented the event's funders with a dilemma: Split the prize? Ask for another vote? Break the tie themselves?

"This has never happened," said Jenny Abramson '95, who created the *Shark Tank*-style competition, which had four teams of budding GDS entrepreneurs pitching their business ideas at a Middle School Assembly this year. "We re-counted about four times!"

Standing on stage, under the glare of the spotlight in the LMS Flex Space, before all the MS students who had just cast votes for their teams of choice, Jenny made an executive decision. She turned to the GDS community leaders who helped fund the prize and asked if they would kick in another \$1,000. They erupted in cheers, marking their approval.

And so it was that CraftGenius and ThriveSpace secured checks for their start-ups.

CraftGenius—led by Ellie Snyder '28, Ella Maas '28, and Eila Priestap '28—proposed providing kid-tested art kits for families in preschools that are struggling to fund art classes. For every kit sold at full price, another would be donated to an under-resourced family. ThriveSpace—led by Charlotte Lee '26, Henry Wachs '26, Didi Pathiyal '27, and Lulu Wachs '27—pitched an app that would award students points for completing mental health activities (such as meditation). Students would be able to redeem the points for coupons at select local businesses.

The final competition marked the culmination of a weeks-long extracurricular project supported by the Patty Abramson Venture Lab, named in honor of Jenny's mother, a former GDS Trustee and nationally renowned venture capitalist known for investing exclusively in women-owned businesses. GDS-connected business leaders regularly advised the participants, and former Hopper Tank participants organized the event and helped coach the contestants. Laila Bapna '25, Nora Sachse '25, and Grace Zia '25 co-led the event. But Middle Schoolers had the final say, and they took the job seriously, rigorously grilling each team.

When Hopper Tank initially launched during the 2021-22 school year, it featured four High School students competing individually. Over time, the competition evolved to include teams, and it gained popularity. This year, 43 students on eight teams participated, leading to an expanded format with two rounds of judging. In the first round, a panel of 10 GDS faculty members heard all the pitches and narrowed the field to the final four. Jenny, a GDS parent and former Board Chair, has since held a follow-up meeting with the other teams to provide them with feedback.

Jenny is also the founder of Rethink Impact, a venture capital firm that backs women and non-binary leaders. She said she's always dazzled by the competition. "Every year, I'm not sure if I'm more impressed by the High Schoolers' understanding of how to harness the private sector for good," she added, "or by the insightful questions the Middle Schoolers ask."



# NOT JUST ANOTHER DAY AT THE MARKET



**AMAZING WEATHER AND A TURNOUT** of more than 1,000 people made for a memorable Country Market Day in October. The School's annual fall festival, held on campus, featured train rides, bounce houses, games, crafts, and food trucks. Students and faculty alike joined a flag football game. Volunteers manned the Haunted House, the used book store, and a huge sweet shop that featured a build-your-own caramel apple station. Another highlight: a visit from the DC Power Football Club, Washington DC's newest women's professional sports team, which provided a youth football training clinic and autograph signing by midfielder Alex Kirnos. LMS students raised over \$5,800 through raffle ticket sales, with one grand prize winner receiving two tickets to a Washington Nationals game that included parking and a batting practice session. Special thanks to co-chairs and GDS parents Kelli Barron and Ateesha Lacoste for their hard work and planning.



DC Power Football Club midfielder Alex Kirnos



(from left) First grade teacher Unushi Walker, MS science teacher Louise Micallef, and first grade teachers Danielle Goldart and Andrew Berman in "out of this world" costumes



# THE HALLOWEEN PARADE



## GHOULS, GOBLINS, AND MANY FAR LESS TERRIFYING CREATURES

fanned out across the LMS field for October's Halloween parade. Faculty, also dressed in their Halloween finest, circled the field with their Lower/Middle School students as parents, HS students, and other onlookers gathered to snap photos, cheer, and bask in the afternoon sun.



The characters from Jory John's Food Group series personified, from left: The Good Egg (LMS librarian Lisa Fall), The Bad Seed (LMS Chinese teacher Yi-Na Chung), and The Smart Cookie (LMS librarian Jenny Perinovic).



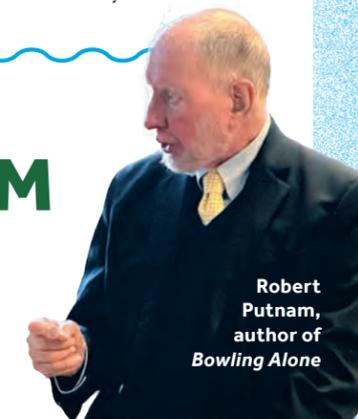
## 27<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BENJAMIN COOPER LECTURE SERIES



Eric Liu, CEO of Citizen University

IN NOVEMBER, author and civic activist Eric Liu delivered the 27th Annual Benjamin Cooper Lecture at GDS, where he spoke with High School students and the greater GDS community about the importance of engaged citizenship. The lecture series is endowed by the Cooper-Areen family in memory of Ben Cooper, who was a rising GDS senior when he died in a tragic accident on August 12, 1997. The lecture fund enables GDS to bring renowned speakers to campus, including Liu, who is the co-founder and CEO of Citizen University, a nonprofit devoted to building a culture of responsible citizenship. Liu, who served in the Clinton administration, has written several books, including *You're More Powerful Than You Think*. At GDS, he shared strategies on how we can each exercise power and sustain hope in democracy.

## HARVARD PROFESSOR ROBERT PUTNAM ON THE POWER OF SOCIAL CAPITAL



Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone*

HARVARD PROFESSOR ROBERT PUTNAM, author of the groundbreaking book *Bowling Alone*, visited GDS in April to discuss how civic engagement and social connection are the basis of a strong democracy. Putnam started the day in HS history teacher Lisa Rauschart's class, where he spoke with students about his research. The renowned political scientist is best known for his work on the value of social capital and how small groups of committed individuals can spark meaningful change by choosing to show up, connect, and organize. Putnam argues that even joining informal social networks, such as community sports teams or neighborhood associations, fosters the trust and collaboration essential to a healthy democracy.

GDS hosted an afternoon screening at the HS library of *Join or Die*, a 2023 documentary about Putnam's work. In the afternoon, Putnam met with GDS community members at the LMS library and signed books. He was joined by Peter Davis, who co-directed and co-produced the documentary with his sister Rebecca Davis. Putnam and Davis ended the visit with a moderated discussion in the LMS Flexible Performance Space. Journalist and GDS parent Lulu Navarro-Garcia kicked off the event. Anjali Martin-Shanker '26, Cheyenne Freeman '25, and Hannah Wiener '25 moderated the discussion and a Q&A session. Putnam inspired the audience to think about the power of possibility, said HS Principal Yom Fox. "He reminded us that it doesn't take millions," Yom said. "It takes *enough*—enough of us willing to act when we are called."



## FORMER BOARD OF TRUSTEES LUNCHEON

IN FEBRUARY, nearly two dozen former GDS Trustees gathered in the High School library to enjoy lunch and reconnect with each other and GDS. These stewards of the School, who served on the Board across six different decades, cumulatively represent 145 years of service. Head of School Russell Shaw updated them about life on campus, the School's financial health, and GDS's new strategic vision.

Top  
Front row (L-R): Sandy Ungar, Marcia Greenberger, Jackie Marlin, Judith Perlman Martin '70, Betsy Keeley, Anu Tate, Annie Whatley, Susie Gelman, Marc Fisher, Jen Klein, and Carolyn Martin

Back row (L-R): Nancy Bernstine, Joel Kanter, Kamal Ali '80, Jeffrey Blount, Josh Wachs, Adam Wegner '83, Ralph Cunningham '79, and Leroy Nesbitt '78



MS students sing "The 12 Days of Christmas" led by Santa.



Head of School Russell Shaw shares his traditional GDS Christmas blues song.



Pre-K and kindergarten angels depart the stage.

# ASSEMBLIES SHINING JOY, LOVE, AND PEACE

MS assembly organizers and performers



Reenacting the Passover Seder tradition



**GDS'S CHRISTMAS PEACE ASSEMBLY**—held in each division—is among the original traditions that grew out of the School's commitment to celebrate the diverse holidays of our community members. As Aggie O'Neil, our first director, stated, "It is most important that we should try in every way to understand each other. One of the best ways [to do so] is through participation in each other's days of joy." This year's divisional celebrations were full of singing, dancing, and joy. Santa made surprise visits across campus, and the storied GDS traditions—kindergarten angels entering the assembly jingling their bells, middle schoolers shouting out the 12 days of Christmas, and the High School Morris Dancers—made their usual appearances, anchoring the holiday season.

LS students prepare to perform at their Passover Assembly



**PASSOVER ASSEMBLIES** are also among GDS's foundational traditions, connecting today's students with those from the School's founding. Lower School students retold the Passover story through song and dance, with the PreK and kindergarten students dressed as frogs to represent the second of the 10 plagues. In the Middle School, students also presented the Passover story and explained the symbolism of the holiday meal, then shared performances of traditional and contemporary music. At the High School, students and faculty collaborated on an instrumental ensemble, followed by student solo performances, a Seder narrative, and a reflection on freedom and inclusion.

Plague #2: Frogs!



CARTER KUNZ '26

LS students watched the joyful shenanigans of the MS and HS students.

# HOLI CELEBRATION

**ON A GORGEOUS MARCH DAY**, GDS celebrated the Hindu festival of Holi, marked by the playful throwing of colored powders in a symbolic triumph of good over evil, with support from the High School's South Asian Affinity Group and the DEI office. Middle Schoolers joined in the celebration for the first time.

LS students flocked to the lion during the Lion Dance.



# HAPPY YEAR OF THE SNAKE!

**LUNAR NEW YEAR 2025** began January 29, and GDS celebrated across divisions with everything from dumpling-making at the High School to a festive Lower School assembly. During the assembly, LS students enjoyed watching Chua Martial Arts perform the Lion Dance, a tradition that welcomes prosperity and good luck for the new year. Meanwhile, members of the Asian American Affinity (AAA) group joined High School librarian Rhona Campbell to decorate the HS library.

Asian American Affinity group members decorated the HS library.



DAVID GILLESPIE

# MLK JR. ASSEMBLY



First graders gave speeches with powerful voices



Former LS Arts Department chair Jackie Marlin (left) and LMS music teacher Heather Philips led the traditional closing sing-along, *We Shall Overcome*.

**IN JANUARY**, GDS 1st and 4th Grade students shared a heartfelt and emotional MLK Jr. Justice assembly performance with their parents, fellow students, faculty, and staff. The assembly honors the work and memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with a focus on the theme of social justice, tying it closely to the GDS mission. Powerful, young voices came together in speeches and song capturing the lessons of history and an overarching message of hope.

Sixth graders Ari Arora (left) and Benjamin Kligerman led a workshop on climate change.



HS students created mini collages to honor social justice changemakers.



# SOCIAL JUSTICE TEACH-IN

**EVERY FEBRUARY**, GDS holds Social Justice Teach-in Days for HS and MS students with two days of workshops tied to a related theme. This year's theme was "Cultivating Curiosity and Respect: Unlocking the Power of Civil Discourse in Education." In lieu of classes, students attended and/or led seminars on a range of topics, from reproductive rights in the post-*Dobbs* era to the impact of race in our legal system to LGBTQ+ representation in the media. Each division heard from keynote speaker Allan Carey, Director of Sphere Education Initiatives, who shared critical thinking and listening tools that encourage meaningful conversations across differences.



Keynote speaker Allan Carey, Director of Sphere Education Initiatives, gave a presentation on civil discourse in the LMS Flexible Performance Space.

# PRIDE WEEK

**IN APRIL**, GDS celebrated Pride Week, which honors all kinds of families, LGBTQ+ pride, inclusion, belonging, and self-determination. Lower School students gathered for the annual *Free to Be Me Assembly*, a beloved GDS tradition that recognizes key milestones in LGBTQ+ history and explores what it means to be an ally. The 4th graders led the program with a slideshow presentation of individuals and families within the GDS community who identify as LGBTQ+ or as allies.



# FIRST GRADE AUTHOR'S BRUNCH

**AT THE AUTHOR'S BRUNCH**, first graders shared personal narratives they had written with an audience of family members and classmates. The annual event is the culmination of a year-long Writers' Workshop in which the students learn about storytelling and the writing process and then write first-person accounts based on one of their life experiences. The readings are followed by a brunch in the Lower/Middle School cafeteria for students, faculty, and families.



# A MINIMESTER TO REMEMBER



In *Art Behind the Scenes*, students explored museum curation during visits to New York and DC museums.

**HS STUDENTS** selected from nearly three dozen offerings in February's Minimester, a three-day stretch of experiential learning opportunities arranged by the Community Engagement and Experiential Learning (CEEL) office. The immersive experiences are curated and led by faculty, staff, and sometimes, students based on their passions and expertise. This year, Minimester debuted 13 new offerings, including a beginner's guide to skateboarding and an exploration of meditation. Also new this year was *Go Y2K in PA*, a limited-tech retreat in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in which students abandoned their cell phones and other modern devices, engaged with Y2K-era technology (DVDs and CDs, anyone?), and visited the local Amish community, where technology use is limited for religious reasons.



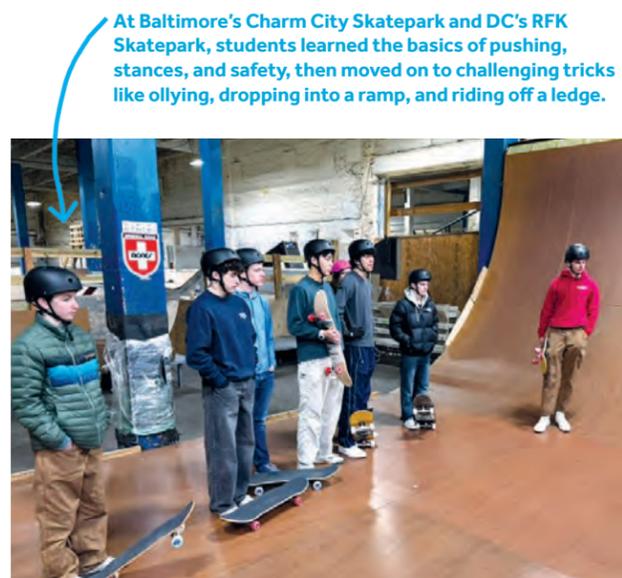
Finding moments of bliss at the three-day meditation retreat



Students traipsed the trails at Sugarloaf Mountain and other locations during Day Hiking in the DMV.



Students with their binoculars for *The Birdwatcher's Guide to the Galaxy: An Introduction to Ornithology*



At Baltimore's Charm City Skatepark and DC's RFK Skatepark, students learned the basics of pushing, stances, and safety, then moved on to challenging tricks like ollieing, dropping into a ramp, and riding off a ledge.



Students learned about draws, guards, and take-outs in *Curling 101*.

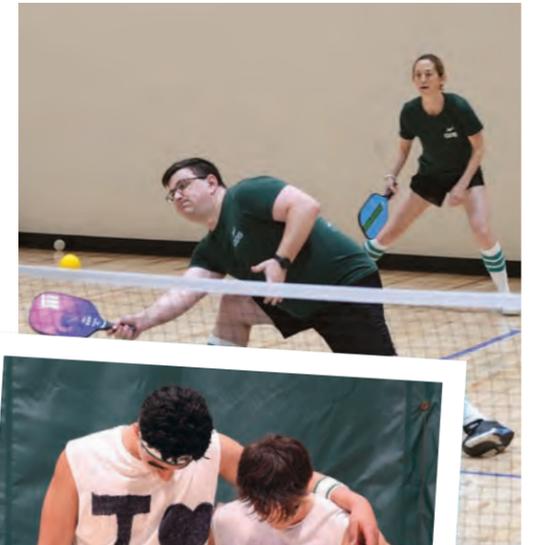
# PICKLEBALL TOURNAMENT



**AFTER DOZENS OF HARD-FOUGHT MATCHES** over a six-week stretch this spring, the field of 89 teams was whittled down to 64, then 32, then the Sweet Sixteen, the Elite Eight, the Final Four, and finally, an epic showdown between the Terrific Twos.

With the final point played and the paddles down, GDS crowned its first-ever GDS Pickleball Champions: Ahren Sidhu '27 and Evan Donath '27. The duo had faced off against Hudson Reynolds '25 and Sam Pastreich '25, who proved to be worthy adversaries.

Bobby Asher, Director of Student Community Programming, said the tournament took on a life of its own. He expected maybe two dozen students to show up when he organized the event, but 159 wanted in—plus 19 faculty members. Bobby teamed up with HS history teacher Anthony Belber, but didn't even make it to the Sweet Sixteen. That's okay because he was plenty busy ginning up promotional materials, bogus pickleball articles for *The Washington Post*, and a rabble-rousing event in the HS Forum that involved spinning a virtual roulette wheel to place the initial 89 teams into brackets.



The tournament winners: Evan Donath '27 (left) and Ahren Sidhu '27



The duo of Sam Pastreich '25 (left) and Hudson Reynolds '25 battled their way to the final two in a crowded field.



Director of Student Community Programming Bobby Asher (right) organized the tournament and teamed up with HS history teacher Anthony Belber to play.

COMMUNITY COUNTS

(from left) HS Assistant Principal Khalid Bashir, Natalia Freedman '25, HS Principal Yom Fox, and HS science teacher Greg Dallinger handed out duckies in the morning.



# DAY FOR THE DUCKY

**SPREADING RANDOM MOMENTS OF JOY** is a thing at the High School. That's why unsuspecting students rolling into the morning carpool line on January 13 were greeted with cheers and handed rubber duckies. Why? Because it was National Rubber Duck Day, of course! Duckies were hidden throughout the HS building, and the lucky few who found the ones marked with a heart scored prizes. The rest were left with nothing more than a colorful BFF (Bathtub Friend Forever)!



Grace Khuzami '26 and Izzy Hsu '25 show off their duckies.

# JUICE BOX DAY

**JUICE BOXES** for all and an all-day petting zoo! The third annual Juice Box Day brought big energy to GDS, with HS students and faculty—decked out in playful attire—handing out juice boxes and playing tunes during the morning carpool line. Twenty-five-dollar gift certificates donated by Satay Club and Call Your Mother were hidden inside foil-wrapped juice boxes throughout the High School. And the petting zoo was simply cuteness overload. A shout-out to the Community Leadership Corps' juniors and seniors, who made the magic happen!



# GROWN UPS NIGHT OUT

**THIS ANNUAL THEMED EVENT** launched in Spring of 2024 to give adults in the greater GDS community a chance to connect and have fun. This year's theme, Celebration in Bloom!, featured the cherry blossoms of Washington with a mini-replica of the Washington Monument, cherry trees, food, sake tasting, live music, and dancing!

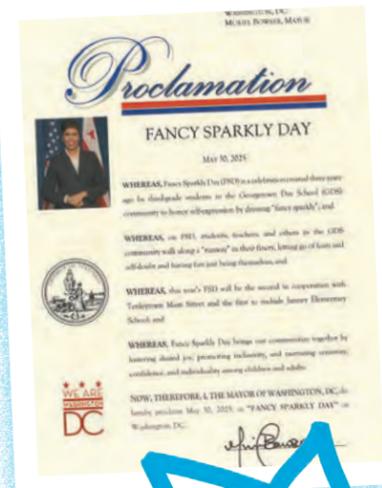


# GRANDPARENTS' AND SPECIAL FRIENDS' DAY

ON APRIL 25, the LMS classrooms and hallways buzzed with excitement as more than 500 grandparents and special friends arrived on campus for a glimpse into the daily life of GDS's younger learners. The visitors sat in on lessons, joined classroom activities, and shared smiles and stories along the way. They mingled with one another at the LMS gym, watched performances from each grade, and created special memories.



# FANCY SPARKLY DAY



**IT'S OFFICIAL!** Mayor Muriel Bowser proclaimed May 30, 2025, as Fancy Sparkly Day in the city honoring a GDS parade that invites students, and faculty to dress in something that glitters and makes them feel beautiful.

At GDS, the relatively new tradition started in the spring of 2023, the idea of two GDS third graders in Todd Carter's class. It was such a hit that Todd applied to the mayor's office for special recognition, resulting in this year's proclamation and an especially spirited parade just outside the LMS building at the corner of 42nd and Ellicott. Aside from the sunny weather, the morning was particularly delightful because Janney Elementary School joined the fun and the event at its campus. Tenleytown Main Street made the day extra special by arranging discounts for GDS and Janney families with two local retailers, Steak 'n Egg and Tenley II Nails Spa.

Third grade teacher Todd Carner, organizer of Fancy Sparkly Day, with LS Assistant Principal Denise Jones



Before and after at the planetarium.

# STEAM DAY

**ON APRIL 23,** LMS students engaged in interactive workshops that exposed them to the many ways in which their everyday lives are connected to science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics. This annual STEAM Day event, hosted by the LMS science departments, was designed to enhance students' problem-solving skills and unleash their creativity. The workshop offerings included opportunities to design race car prototypes and drones, make and play crossword puzzles, create bath bombs, and so much more.



# FOURTH GRADE PROMOTION



JASON PUTSCHE

**IN EARLY JUNE**, families, friends, and Lower School faculty gathered to celebrate the promotion of the Class of 2033 from 4th grade. During the ceremony, Head of School Russell Shaw spoke to the students about embracing change with curiosity, strong values, kindness, and care. As they look ahead to the challenges and opportunities of Middle School, he encouraged them to approach each experience with an open mind and to ask themselves: "What can I learn from this?"



JASON PUTSCHE

# EIGHTH GRADE CLOSING CEREMONY



JASON PUTSCHE

**IN A HEARTFELT CEREMONY** marking a major milestone, the Class of 2029 celebrated their closing ceremony in June, joined by proud families, faculty, and staff. Middle School Principal Kelsey Twist Schroeder encouraged the students to move forward with grace, curiosity, courage, compassion, and authenticity—and above all, with love and gratitude. She assured them that if they ever felt uncertain or adrift, their Middle School mentors and teachers would remain a source of support and guidance. She concluded with the reminder that, "You are not just going, you are going together." Four members of the Class of 2029—Max Goldman, Sophia Sailau, Lexi Carpenter, and Aliana Cromer—took to the stage to share personal reflections on their Middle School journeys, highlighting the value of community and the power of staying present in each moment. Congratulations to the Class of 2029!





# SENIOR WALK

**CHEERS RANG OUT** as seniors paraded around the GDS campus, high-fiving students and waving to onlookers in a vibrant celebration of their journey. Led by the Mighty Hopper mascot and dressed in t-shirts repping their future colleges, the Class of 2025 kicked off the beloved Senior Walk—an annual tradition that began in 2021 with the unification of the GDS campus. They stopped in the Lower School, where the students lined the halls with handmade signs and big smiles. From there, they continued across the LMS field, welcomed by Middle Schoolers, before returning home to the High School. Awaiting them were bubbles floating through the air, pool noodle archways to mark their path, and warm embraces from teachers and friends—marking a joyful, emotional send-off for the soon-to-be graduates.



DAVID GILLESPIE



CHLOE SACHS



# CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF



ON JUNE 8, the GDS community gathered on campus to celebrate the Class of 2025 in a commencement ceremony filled with optimism and excitement for the 130 graduating seniors.

The ceremony featured reflections and personal stories that captured the essence of GDS. Head of School Russell Shaw encouraged students to get into “good trouble,” echoing the late Congressman John Lewis. High School Principal Yom Fox shared life lessons from a post-college road trip she took with a friend. Class speakers Evelyn Chen '25 and Jeremiah Farr '25 spoke about the strength of the GDS community—where differences are celebrated and students are encouraged to be their truest selves—pausing together mid-ceremony to snap an onstage selfie.

HS history teacher Sue Ikenberry reflected on her 42-year career, sharing a story from her early years that revealed the deep sense of accountability GDS students carry with them long after graduation. And parent speaker Kakenya Ntaiya (a world-renowned educator and mother of Nathan '25 and Liam '29 Ileri) shared her journey from a childhood in a Kenyan village, where girls had few choices, to seeing her own children thrive in a school that nurtures independence and self-advocacy.

Cheers erupted throughout the LMS gymnasium as every tassel turned, marking the graduates' first steps toward a world of endless possibilities.



MATT RYB PICTURES



Faculty Speaker  
Sue Ikenberry



Class Speaker  
Jeremiah Farr



Parent Speaker  
Kakenya Ntaiya



Class Speaker  
Evelyn Chen

# 2025 GDS GRADUATES

Abby Quinn-Shores

Aidan Theodore Jacobs

Alessandro Zola Alfandari

Alexa Hazard Gillespie

Alexander Pantelis Bhatia

Alexandra Morgan Berzok

Angelique Liliane Faselis

Ashwin Satoskar Colby

Atticus Coyne

Audrey Marie Leff

Ava Dorothy Ginsberg

Ava Rose Hallx

Aymaan Sahadat Enayetullah

Beck Urban Holtzman

Benjamin David Hellman

Bijan Luke Hollinger

Brocq Kwaw Awulu Lartey Pobe

Bryan Landon Berman

Caleb Arcio Robinson

Caleb Kohn Murphy

Callie Stone Solomon

Caroline Grace Gann

Charlotte Jordan Green

Cheyenne Naomi Freeman

Christian Michael Santos Silva

Clio Boyang Blum

Connor Wegner Quintenz

Daniel John Reilly III

Daria Rosalind Hoehn-Saric

Dhilan Phatak Desai

Drew Persily Lamel

Eleanor Rose Hawkins Schaffer

Elena Georgia La Guardia White

Elena Marie Valdez

Eli Bernard Zucker

Eliana Justine Green

Elizabeth Lynn Higday

Ella Iorio Lay

Ella Kate Abramson

Elodie Catriona Fleurence

Elsa Moor Cheetham

Emerson Cole Rising

Emerson Lily Hardwick

Ethan Thomas Howe

Evelyn Emilie Chen

Gideon Zalesne Siff

Grace Annabel Zia

Gracie Martel Schuham-Anders

Gregory William Schafer

Hannah Gabrielle Brickman

Hannah Katharine Westfall Wiener

Hannah Satin Kubler

Henry Sims Cohen

Hudson Patrick Reynolds

Isaac Maximilian Seiken

Isabel Lily Schneider Avidon

Isabella Rachel Nian Feng Hsu

Jack D. Hoang

Jada Melis Aksu

Jaya Le Newingham

Jeremiah Stevens Farr

Jessica Yael Berger

Joelle Eva Walters

Julia Louise Wild Young

Julia Victoria Davis

Kaan Yavalar

Kate June Toufanian

Kenji Elijah Stokes Yokote

Kesi Zara McDuffie

Kevin Shengtai Xia

Koen Jungmuo Yu

Laila Nanda Bapna

Lauren Brooke Berman

Layla Mai Coyne

Leia Rose Levine

Leo Fredrik Nyberg

Leo Grant Cohen

Lindsay Ellis López-Isa Lamken

Mac Harding Penniman

Mara Trudy Grace

Matthew Eli Freedman

Matthew John Stern

Matthew Truc German Berman

Maya Raza

Michael Hideo Katayama Dobbs

Naomi Claire Cortese Borek

Natalia Abigail Stutman-Shaw

Natalia Jane Freedman

Nathan Mugoh Ileri

Noah Blake Cheeks

Noah Lichtman Spector

Noah Remie Martz

Nora Emily Schrag

Nora Segal Sachse

Oliver Daniel Nian Long Hsu

Olivia Jung-Yun Jin

Paige Kijai Young

Paolo Bane Imbroscio

Peter Jai Kumar

Richard Hamilton Evans

Robert Mason Orseck

Robinson Nguyen

Sadie Reese Boyle

Safi Jhet Bond

Samson Allard Littlefield Lowenstein

Samuel Paul Pastreich

Saraswathi Ella Swamy

Sawyer Justus Massey

Sawyer Southall Thompson

Seva Rustgi

Shaila Anjali Joshi

Shanwai Lin

Shiraz Lela Benyoucef

Simon Chase Loftus

Sloane Paloma Holder

Sneha Kavita Grab

Sofia Anne Jones Moen

Sophia Magdalena Ades

Sophie Lou Selfridge

Sora Cecelia Walker

Sowmya Rukhmin Natarajan

Theo Munro

Tigin Han Unsal

Tiya Robi

Tomás Bruschi Ferreira

Tyler Quentin Smallwood

Wyatt Oscar Grace

Zachary Eli Lundman

Zachary Spiegel Henderson

Zoe Caran Ryu



All Board trustees serve for at least three years. For a complete listing of the trustees, go to [www.gds.org/about/leadership-and-faculty/board-of-trustees](http://www.gds.org/about/leadership-and-faculty/board-of-trustees)

# MEET THE NEW TRUSTEES

We welcomed five new members to the Georgetown Day School Board of Trustees in the 2024-25 school year: Jorge Castro, Karen Dunn, Caleb Kramer '87, Otey Smith, and Rachel Vogelstein. They joined an active board composed of parents, alumni, and other members of the GDS community who work closely with the Head of School to oversee the financial health of GDS and reinforce its commitment to an equitable and inclusive community.

**JORGE CASTRO** is a member of the Miller & Chevalier law firm, where he leads the tax policy practice and represents leading corporations and tax-exempt institutions before Congress, the Treasury Department, and the IRS. Before joining the firm, Jorge held high-level positions on Capitol Hill and at the IRS. He served as tax counsel to members of the House Ways and Means Committee and Senate Finance Committee, including Sen. John D. Rockefeller IV (D-WV). Jorge also served as an economic advisor on the Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team in 2008-09. In 2010, he was named one of the top Congressional staffers shaping tax policy by Tax Notes. That year, the Lima, Peru native went on to serve as Counselor to the IRS Commissioner, where he worked closely with the leadership of the IRS and Treasury Department to advance the agency's domestic and international tax objectives. Jorge earned a BA from George Washington University and a JD from the University of Wisconsin Law School.

**Why GDS?** Our family has been part of the GDS community since our son, Sebastian '35, started kindergarten three years ago. Our daughter, Mimi '38, joined GDS in fall 2024. We have been fortunate to witness their joy of learning as they've become part of this warm and inclusive community. They've had superb teachers and have formed special friendships in their respective second grade and PK classes—everything we



Jorge Castro

wanted in a school. Heeding the motto “You get back what you put in,” my wife, Sarah, and I have been active members of the GDS community, and we could not be more grateful for the phenomenal parent community and the friendships that are enriching our GDS experience.

**What is your favorite GDS memory?** Every morning during school drop-off, seeing Sebastian walk Mimi to her PK classroom.

**What is your favorite family tradition?** Picking our Christmas tree every year the day after Thanksgiving and decorating it together with ornaments special to our family. This tradition marks the beginning of the holiday season and an expression of our gratitude.

**What expertise do you bring to the Board?** In addition to legal, tax, and public policy expertise, I think I bring an open-mindedness to our Board discussions and a willingness to hear all sides. My professional experience has taught me the importance of having open discussions—especially on complicated and challenging issues—and working toward a shared goal.

**KAREN DUNN** is a founding partner of Dunn Isaacson Rhee LLP, an elite boutique law firm that focuses on high-stakes trials, investigations, and crisis management. Karen previously served as co-chair of the Litigation Department at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP. A former Assistant U.S. Attorney, she also served as Associate Counsel to President Obama, Communications Director for then-Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY), and law clerk to both Justice Stephen G. Breyer and Judge Merrick B. Garland. Karen has prepared Democratic presidential candidates for debates—including President Obama in 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2016, and Vice President Harris in 2020 and 2024. In 2016, she and her husband, attorney Brian Netter, won a key pro bono case securing DC's budget autonomy. More recently, she led a landmark trial against the organizers of the 2017 neo-Nazi rally in Charlottesville, featured in the 2023 HBO documentary *No Accident*.



**Why GDS?** The best parenting decision I have ever made—apart from having kids—was to apply to GDS. My kids (Naomi '29, Micah '31, and Zachary '34) began their GDS journey in September 2020. Even over Zoom, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was immediately clear that GDS would be a life-altering experience for the whole family. Four years later, I am still grateful on a nearly daily basis that we are part of this special community. It is warm, empowering, kind, vibrant, and fun. I am rarely happier than when I can take a brief respite from the outside world to attend a GDS assembly. Obviously, I experience the joy of watching my kids. But more than that, I experience a rare moment of acute perspective and meaningfulness.

**What is your favorite GDS memory?** I always love watching the Lower School MLK Day assembly.

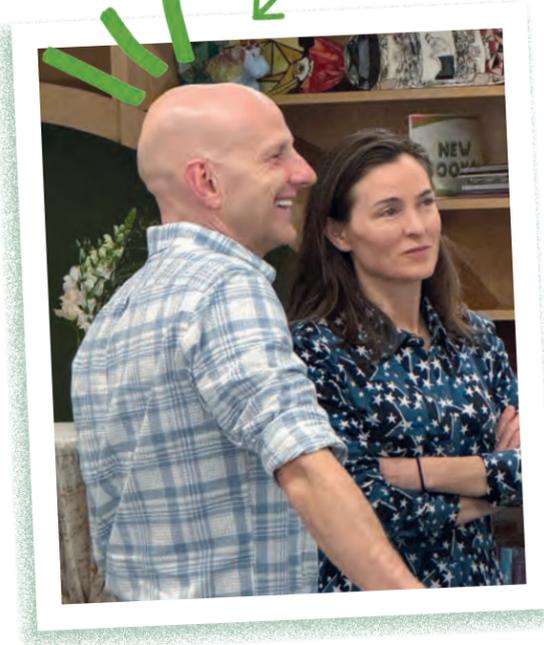
**What is your favorite family tradition?** Our annual summer vacation in Upstate New York. We always take a picture with the kids in the exact spot where Brian and I got married.

**What expertise do you bring to the Board?** In my regular job, I counsel boards of directors with respect to risk management, communications, crisis, and legal issues, so I bring that experience as well as a love for GDS.

Otey Smith



Caleb Kramer '87



**CALEB KRAMER '87** was born and raised in Washington, DC. Upon graduating from the University of Virginia, he moved to New York City to work in finance for a large investment bank. Following his time at several start-up private equity firms, Caleb joined Oaktree Capital Management, where he worked for 23 years. Eighteen of them were spent living in London and building new pan-European investment teams and strategies. Caleb worked across multiple countries, transforming businesses that needed financial and operational restructuring. He has served as a board member of companies headquartered in multiple countries and engaged in businesses in diverse sectors. In 2023, Caleb left Oaktree and now invests in a personal capacity and advises several entrepreneurial investment managers in the United States and Europe.

**Why GDS?** GDS has been a key part of my life since the fourth grade.

**What is your favorite GDS memory?** Too many to list!

**What is your favorite family tradition?** Vacationing on a beach near Charleston

**What expertise do you bring to the Board?** The perspective of an alumni, along with a depth of experience sitting on numerous international company boards.

**OTEY SMITH** is a partner at RLJ Equity Partners, a private equity firm focused on generating long-term capital appreciation by investing in profitable and growing businesses. He is responsible for sourcing, evaluating, structuring, and closing investment opportunities in the business and industrial services sectors. He is a member of the firm's Investment and Exit committees and serves on the boards of several private companies. Before joining RLJ, Otey was a founding member of a Chicago-based private equity firm and an analyst at a global investment bank. He was also a Brookings Society member. Otey, a Richmond, Virginia native, enjoys mentoring college students and young professionals. He earned a BA from Morehouse College and an MBA from Harvard Business School.

**Why GDS?** My wife and I were first introduced to GDS by our daughter's pediatrician, whose daughters were recent graduates. GDS's founding principles and educational philosophy inspired us to apply for our daughter's PK year. We were drawn by the School's rich history of respecting and drawing upon each student's unique gifts, experience, and innate desire to learn. GDS's commitment to living its mission has spurred my wife and me to become unofficial yet ardent school ambassadors to families considering the School. GDS has been a phenomenal experience for our daughter and has helped her foster academic confidence, build strong friendships, and better understand who she is and how she fits into the world. We are grateful that our daughter receives an outstanding education in a dynamic and diverse community.

**What is your favorite GDS memory?** Seeing Haven '34 and her first-grade classmates perform during the MLK Assembly

Rachel Vogelstein



two years ago. We were moved by the thoughtfulness of the program and the passion that all the children demonstrated for social justice and living Dr. King's principles. (A close second was our first Country Market Day in 2022!)

**What is your favorite family tradition?** Our annual summer trip to Martha's Vineyard. We fully unplug, make the best memories together year after year, and always look forward to MV.

**What expertise do you bring to the Board?** I have actively led investment in and value creation of mid-sized companies for almost 20 years. While I've learned so much from my experiences, I believe that my investment and financial acumen are areas where I bring a fresh, informed perspective to the Board.

**RACHEL VOGELSTEIN** is a professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and Director of the Women's Initiative at the Columbia Institute of Global Politics, where she focuses on gender equality. Most recently, she served in the Biden Administration as Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of the White House Gender Policy Council, leading policy development on issues such as health and reproductive rights, economic security, and democracy. For over a decade, Rachel was an advisor to Secretary Hillary Clinton on women's issues, serving on both of her presidential campaigns and as the Director of the Girls' and Women's Initiatives at the Clinton Foundation. During the Obama Administration, she was an official in the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues at the U.S. Department of State. Rachel is the author of *Awakening: #MeToo and the Global Fight for Women's Rights*, which was recognized by the *New York Times* for capturing the global

impact of the #MeToo movement. She began her career as a lawyer focused on reproductive rights.

**Why GDS?** As the mom of two Hoppers, Sage '28 and Parker '30, I feel fortunate to be part of the GDS community. Our family was drawn to GDS for its founding values of diversity and inclusion, its commitment to social justice, and its focus on educating the whole person. I learned about GDS from a close friend whose children attended the School and heard about how GDS lives its mission through traditions like the Free to Be Me Assembly, the Kindness Challenge, and Hill Day. These experiences nurture critical thinking, open-mindedness, and empathy—all essential skills that I'm grateful to watch my children learn at GDS.

**What is your favorite GDS memory?** Seeing both of my kids perform for the first time at the GDS dance assembly. The dance moves, great music, and sheer delight on their faces have stayed with me years later and epitomize the spirit of joy with which the incredible GDS faculty and staff approach instruction and learning.

**What is your favorite family tradition?** Sunday night dinner. Every week, one of us takes a turn deciding on the meal we'll eat, and we light a candle and take some time to reflect on the week we've shared and the one ahead—invariably ending with a sweet treat to start the new week off right.

**What expertise do you bring to the Board?** My background as a women's rights lawyer and advocate helps me support the School's commitment to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion and teach students how to become leaders and active citizens who will make a difference in the world.



"OUR TEAM'S GRIT AND UNITY MADE US STAND OUT."  
GRACE ZIA '25

# UNDEFEATED WOMEN'S VARSITY SOCCER TEAM SCORES ISL CHAMPIONSHIP

**Back Row (from left):** Head Coach Katie Redmond, Evelyn Chen '25, Rachel Sachs '26, Sarah Sakr '26, Jaya Newingham '25, Kesi McDuffie '25, Lulu Tirado '26, Corina Bellermann '26, Annie Del Guercio '27, Zoe Maas '26, Eila Priestap '28, Alexis Rayford '27, Assistant Coach Haze McCrary, Assistant Coach Colleen Redmond, Hannah Wiener '25

**Front Row (from left):** Grace Zia '25, Theo Foer '26, Shanez Benyoucef '27, Naomi Berger '28, Julia Davis '25, Cheyenne Freeman '25, Mara Grace '25, Jessica Berger '25, Cia Carr '28

**THE GDS WOMEN'S VARSITY SOCCER TEAM** won the Independent School League's (ISL) upper division championship in October, a particularly gratifying achievement for the players who weathered the team's ups and downs over the past four years.

In 2021, the team was relegated to the ISL's lower division after a disappointing season. The following year, they returned to the upper division after winning the lower division championship. An undefeated 16-game streak in 2024 led to the recent regular season title—the Hoppers' first since 2019.

"We went from the bottom to the top again," said co-captain Jaya Newingham '25, who joined the team her freshman year. "It's kind of crazy."

The Hoppers shared the league championship with Potomac School, which won the postseason conference tournament after defeating GDS in overtime. But the second-place ranking did not take away from the experience, said Mara Grace '25, who led the Hoppers in goals and was selected to *The Washington Post's* All-Met honorable mention team.

"It was fine because we had already exceeded expectations, and we even won a few games after the league tournament," said Mara, who has committed to playing soccer at Skidmore. "It was a really fun time and a great way to end my last year on the team."

GDS entered the season with a sizable contingent of returning players, including nine seniors, who provided direction and focus, said Head Coach Katie Redmond. "The leadership they showed this year was incredible, and every one of the 10 players on the field at any given time stepped up," Katie said. "They fought through so many games and triumphed over adversity."

Co-captain Jessica Berger '25 attributes the success to the team's bond given that many of them joined the varsity team as freshmen. "Because we played together for so many years, we were able to have this full circle moment as seniors," Jessica said. "We were very committed no matter which division we were in, and each year we got better and stronger."

Going into the 2024 season, the team's seniors were keenly aware that many of them would not be playing competitive soccer in college after years with the Hoppers and on club teams, so they were determined to make the most of the time they had left on the field, said Grace Zia '25, also a co-captain. They put a lot of energy into keeping the team organized and motivated. The day before a big game, for instance, they would stretch together in a circle after practice and discuss their goals to make sure everyone was on the same page.

"We're a chatty bunch, so we had to make sure that we stayed on track and that our actions aligned with our intentions," said Grace. "Our team's grit and unity made us stand out. ... A lot of teams underestimated us, so pulling off the big wins we had and surprising our opponents really felt good."

Goalie Corina Bellermann '26, who was selected to *The Washington Post's* 2024 All-Met first team for anchoring the Hoppers defense, said the seniors' leadership built the team's sense of community. "I felt really connected to the seniors, and I grew close to a lot of teammates from other grades too, which helped our success," Corina said. "We were a really tight team."

**THE FOLLOWING GDS WOMEN'S SOCCER PLAYERS WERE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR PERFORMANCE ON THE FIELD IN THE 2024 SEASON:**

**Corina Bellermann '26**  
All-Met 1st Team, DCSAA Player of the Year, All-ISL AA Team, ISL All-Star

**Jessica Berger '25**  
DCSAA 2nd Team/All-Star

**Julia Davis '25**  
DCSAA 2nd team/All-Star

**Theo Foer '26**  
DCSAA 1st Team, All-ISL AA Team, ISL All-Star

**Mara Grace '25**  
All-Met Honorable Mention, DCSAA 1st Team, All-ISL AA Team, ISL All-Star

**Jaya Newingham '25**  
DCSAA 1st Team/All-Star

**Alexis Rayford '27**  
DCSAA 2nd Team/All-Star

**Grace Zia '25**  
DCSAA 2nd Team, All-ISL AA Team, ISL All-Star



"THIS SPORT HAS MANY LIFE LESSONS TO OFFER PEOPLE OF ALL AGES."  
 DAVID GILLESPIE  
 HEAD COACH

# BIRDIES ALL AROUND FOR GDS GOLFERS



Top Row (left-right): Ahren Sidhu '27, Brady Leblanc '27, Benjamin Gold '26, Asher Puterman '28

Middle Row (left-right): Head Coach David Gillespie, Koen Yu '25 (captain), Leo Nyberg '25 (captain), Assistant Coach Chris Oster, Assistant Coach Darius Pardner

Bottom Row (left-right): Michael Bobo '28, Ashwin Pathiyal '27, Sahra Sevastopulo '28, Noah Petty '27, Tyler Smallwood '25, Alexander Price '28

## THE GDS VARSITY GOLF TEAM MEMBERS

wrapped up their most successful season in recent memory and adopted what they hope will be a lasting tradition: a coach-created "tournament" competition between team members.

Four team members—Leo Nyberg '25, Koen Yu '25, Alex Price '28, and Noah Petty '27—finished among the top 16 of 43 golfers competing at the Mid-Atlantic Conference (MAC) golf championship in October. Finishing in the top 16 qualified all four golfers for the prestigious MAC Individual Championship the following weekend, where Leo earned All-League honors.

Leo and Koen—the team captains—further stood out for their exceptional performance on and off the course, said Head

Coach David Gillespie. Koen was named to *The Washington Post* All-MET honorable mention team in December, placing him among the picks for the DC area's top golf performers in 2024.

"Golf has evolved from a relatively obscure sport at GDS to one where participation is at an all-time high," David said. "We're even hearing interest from many Middle School students. ... This sport has many life lessons to offer people of all ages."

Koen, who played golf with his father for years before joining the GDS team as a freshman, said the sport has taught him mental toughness. "You can really get down on yourself for one bad swing and ruin your entire round," Koen said. "But



Team co-captains Koen Yu '25 (left) and Leo Nyberg '25 holding the trophy for their win in the Individual Cup championship, one of four intra-team competitions created by the golf coaches in the 2024-25 season.

you have to remember that there are more holes to play, and each one is a chance to do better. You have to keep a positive mental outlook. That's what I learned from golf."

When Koen and other team members recently met with MS students to discuss playing golf competitively at GDS, he offered them his recipe for success: "Take the game seriously," Koen told them. "But go out there, have a great time, and make friends while you're at it. That's what I did."

Helping boost the fun factor for the golfers was the intra-team competition launched by David and assistant coaches Chris Oster and Darius Pardner. The competition, which was organized to resemble the PGA's four major golf tournaments, offered GDS golfers opportunities to play against each other throughout the season in four championship rounds: the Individual, the Scramble, the Ryder Cup, and the Grab Bag. On occasion, the coaches would supercharge the competition by joining it.

David coordinated with the GDS Innovation Lab to create a trophy for the winners, complete with wooden plaques commemorating each event and its winners.

Brady LeBlanc '27 and Ahren Sidhu '27 said one of their favorite memories of the season was competing against the coaches in these tournaments. Benji Gold '26 fondly remembers the final tournament when he and Leo beat Koen and Tyler Smallwood '25 on the final hole.

"The season was a lot of fun," Benji said. "I'm sure we had the most fun out of any of the golfers in the MAC."



Koen Yu '25, playing at East Potomac Golf Course, was named to *The Washington Post* All-Met honorable mention team in December.

Alex Price '28 teeing off against Flint Hill.

# LEVELING UP

Congratulations to the GDS athletes who will be continuing their athletic careers at the collegiate level! We are proud of all that you have accomplished. Go Hoppers!



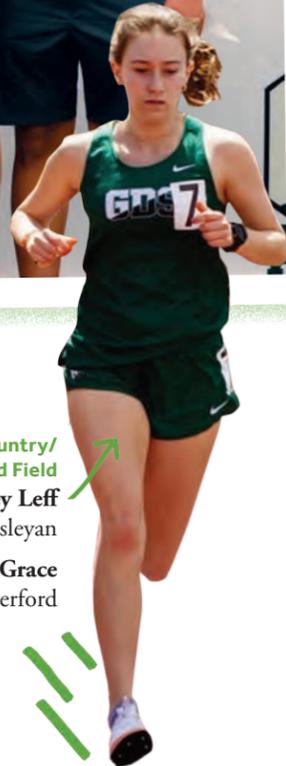
**Class of 2025 Collegiate Athletes:**

Front row (from left): Beck Holtzman, Liz Higday, Audrey Leff, Evelyn Chen, Mara Grace

Back row (from left): Wyatt Grace, Gracie Schuham-Anders, Zoe Ryu, Jada Aksu, Shiraz Benyoucef, Daniel Reilly



**Cross Country/  
Track and Field**  
**Audrey Leff**  
Wesleyan  
**Wyatt Grace**  
Haverford



**Basketball**  
**Evelyn Chen**  
Carleton

**Soccer**  
**Mara Grace**  
Skidmore

**Wrestling**  
**Beck Holtzman**  
Wesleyan

**Crew**  
**Daniel Reilly**  
Colgate

**Gracie Schuham-Anders**  
Skidmore

**Volleyball**  
**Jada Aksu**  
Lafayette  
**2024-25**  
**Gatorade DC**  
**Volleyball**  
**Player of the**  
**Year, DCSAA**  
**Volleyball Player**  
**of the Year**

**Volleyball**  
**Liz Higday**  
Worcester  
Polytechnic  
Institute

**Zoe Ryu**  
Bowdoin

**Shiraz Benyoucef**  
UC Santa Cruz

# UNITED IN PURPOSE

What guides the creative choices GDS faculty make when working with student artists? From theater presentations and choral song selections to art show themes and dance choreography, the GDS arts faculty take much into consideration when planning for the year. They factor in their specific students each year, the zeitgeist, modern artistic movements, and more. For the 2024-25 school year, the faculty emphasized two principles that informed their selection of performances and lessons: creating opportunities for artistic exploration and expression of identity, and fostering a sense of collective purpose.



HS & MS Fall/Winter Dance Showcase



Lower School P.E. Dance Assembly



# DANCE PRODUCTIONS

"One of my primary goals in addressing improvisation with the students is to get them to open their minds and to think critically about what options are available to them at any given moment, not just on what they can come up with individually, but what they can come up with collectively."

**WILL ROBINSON,**  
Consulting dance teacher,  
Dana Tai Soon Burgess

Winter/Spring Events  
LS Dance Assembly \* HS & MS Fall/Winter Dance Showcase  
Fata Morgana (January & May) \* MS Dance Showcase



JERI TIDWELL

Fata Morgana (January)

JERI TIDWELL



# INSTRUMENTAL AND VOCAL MUSIC

"I try to pick a diverse selection of music that is representative of various time periods and cultures. I've selected works in Sanskrit, French, Chinese, and even a piece from Malaysia. I also try to find works by composers that are underrepresented. We just had a concert where we performed works by living composers, particularly women of color. I'm intentional in thinking about who's being lifted up, because that can be a window into another culture while also being a reflection of my students with diverse backgrounds."

**KEITH HUDSPETH**  
LMS music teacher

### Winter/Spring Events

HS Jazz and Creative Music Concerts (GDS, North Carolina, various DC-area venues) \* MS Symphonic Band Winter Concert \* MS Concert and Symphonic Band Spring Concert \* 4th Grade Band Concert \* Choralcopia \* Choral Extravaganza (Grades 4-12) \* Cathedral Treble Choral Festival (Grades 4-6) \* MS Choral Festival, Grades 7-8 \* HS Spring Choral Concert (March 18) \* ISCF Choral Concert \* MS Spring Chorus Concert



HS Choralcopia



MS Symphonic Band Winter Concert



Cathedral Treble Choral Festival, Grades 4-6



"MS Band is all about finding that balance between your individual identity and the group identity. That's what our music is about. We're individually improving our skill, and then we're learning how to apply that skill in an ensemble and how to create music out of that balance."

**REGINA LA VALLEY**  
LMS music teacher

Choral Extravaganza, Grades 4-12



KAI PARK '27



KAI PARK '27



KAI PARK '27

Jazz and Creative Music Concert (December)

"I love teaching jazz and improvised music because it allows for each student to find their personal voice in the music. We listen to the masters and creators and draw inspiration, making informed, canonical choices. Ultimately, the confluence of inspiration and experience is never the same for each individual. The student brings that to the performance and explores the repertoire through their own lens."

**BRAD LINDE**  
HS jazz and instrumental music teacher

# VISUAL ARTS

"About eight years ago, while serving as a judge for the AP Studio Art exams, I began to notice a recurring theme: *identity*. Year after year, students across the country were using their art to explore who they were. ...At GDS, I saw a perfect opportunity to create a dedicated "Identity" show based on eight core identifiers. ...The challenge was guiding students to explore these aspects of themselves with depth and authenticity. ...We encouraged students to ask their families questions—about the meaning of their names, their heritage, their upbringing. ...It took courage to share their discoveries with the larger community."

**MICHELLE COBB**  
HS studio arts teacher & department chair

Winter/Spring Events  
HS Identity Art Show \* HS Spring Art Show  
\* 7th & 8th Grade Visual Arts Show

HS Identity Art Show



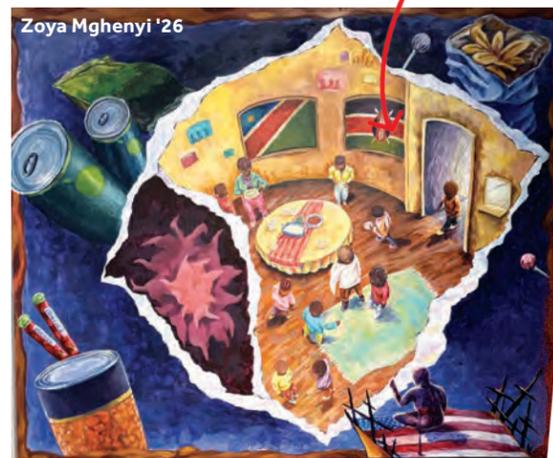
Chloe Sachs '27



Zoe Stutson '28



Nadia Bandy '27



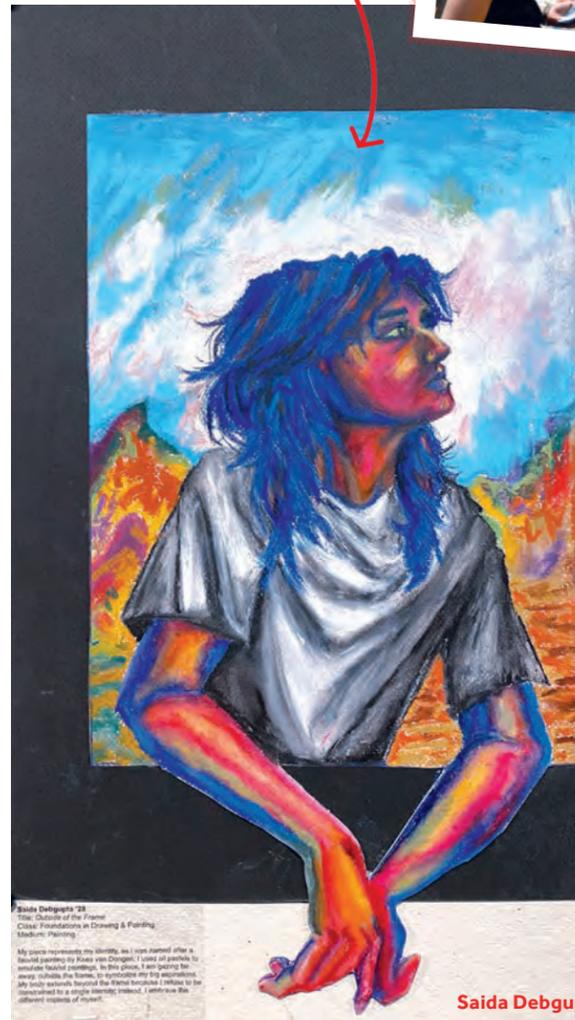
Zoya Mghenyi '26



HS Identity Art Show



Tristan Fulton '26



Saida Debgupta '28



7th and 8th grade art in the works

"We find small ways of connecting the students' passions or interests to the projects. It really helps them to stay engaged. ...They're all learning the same technique, but the outcome is so different for each student. We're really trying to get the kids to understand that their work is never going to look like their neighbor's or mine or anybody else's because they're uniquely themselves."

**ASHLEY ORTIZ**  
LMS art teacher

7th and 8th Grade Visual Arts Show



Dylan Kim '30



Adam Miller '30

# THEATER

"I chose *The Crucible* because I think it is very important for the students to have a challenge. Also, it is a heroine drama, and it sheds light on a part of American history. I feel like we made a journey back in time together, hand in hand. ... [By contrast,] I chose *Bye Bye Birdie* with [HS dance and acting teacher] Maria Watson because it was lighter, less serious, and offered a look at a very special part of American culture."

**JANOS SZASZ**  
HS theater director

Winter/Spring Events

HS Fall Production: *The Crucible* \* MS Fall Production: *High School Musical Jr.* \* Theater Lab Productions: *The Thanksgiving Play* and *Hurricane Diane* \* MS Community Production



Theater Lab:  
*The Thanksgiving Play*

JERI TIDWELL



JERI TIDWELL



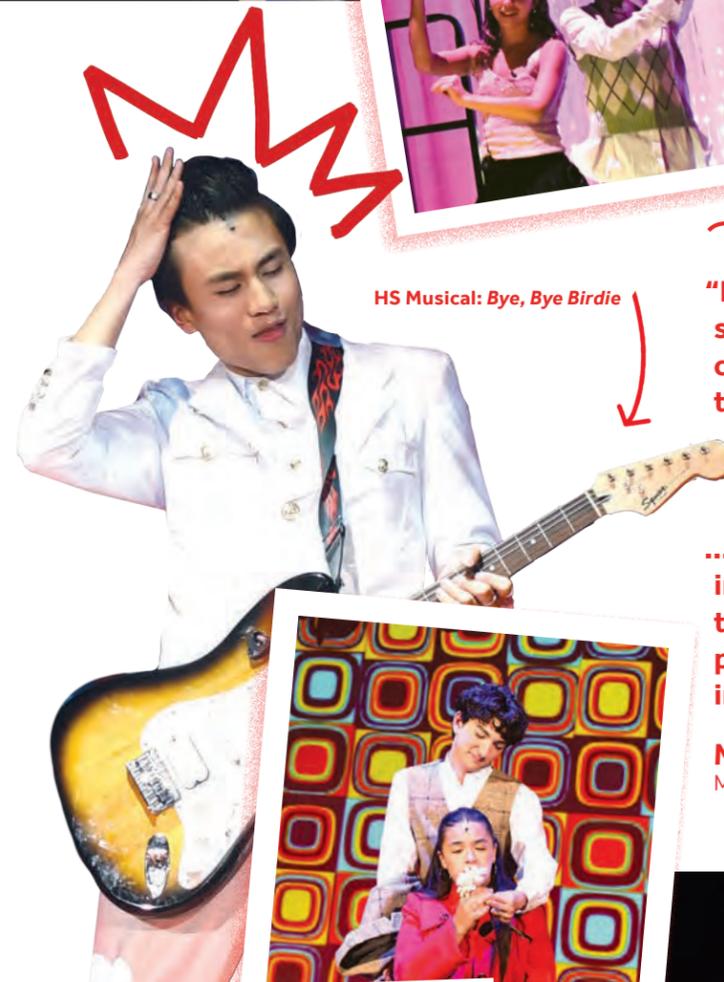
HS Fall Production:  
*The Crucible*



MS Fall Production:  
*Highschool Musical Jr.*



HS Musical: *Bye, Bye Birdie*



"For students to be able to step into someone else's shoes and explore another character's life and journey not only helps them gain some empathy and some insight into other people's walks, but also allows them to better understand themselves as they're able to look at new perspectives. ... In the Community Production or in our improv classes, they get a chance to create their own character and experience a perspective that they may not normally get in their day-to-day life."

**MARCEL SMITH**  
MS theater teacher



# THEY'RE JUST LIKE US!

THEY WORKED SUMMER JOBS IN HIGH SCHOOL!

Ever wonder how the teenage versions of GDS teachers and staffers spent their summer breaks? Many spent those months earning cash. Take a look at what the HS campus crew did with their "time off."



"I did gig work playing in the orchestra for local churches; as a Jew, I was available to play for Easter Mass!"

**RHONA CAMPBELL**  
HS Librarian



"I worked a few summers as a tour guide in Alaska."

**MATTHEW BACHIOCHI,**  
HS Innovation & Computer Science Teacher



"When I was 15, I was a dishwasher and sous chef at an amusement park in Normandy one summer."

**DAVID SARPAL**  
HS Office Manager



"Stocker at a Winn Dixie grocery store"

**BRAD LINDE**  
HS Jazz and Instrumental Music Teacher



Soccer coach, every weekend and every summer"

**ANTHONY BELBER**  
HS history teacher



"I was a host and a busser at my family's restaurant, which my dad owned and operated for 35 years!"

**KATHERINE HEKKE**  
HS math teacher



"Gas station attendant (aka Pump Jockey)"

**GLEN RUSSELL,**  
HS math teacher



"I was a hip-hop dance teacher. It may be too easy."

**SHAKEARA PARDNER**  
DEI Program Coordinator



"Two high school jobs: I worked part-time as an announcer at a radio station. I taught Chinese classes in Chinatown NYC."

**DENISE LI**  
HS Chinese Teacher



"Sorting the bottom half of price tags by 5-digit number, for an inventory company my uncle owned. Eight hours a day. Five days a week. Thousands and thousands of little torn tags each day."

**KATHERINE DUNBAR**  
HS English teacher



"I worked at Target when I was in high school. I was a front-end triple threat: Cart Boy, Cashier, and Service Desk."

**GREG DALLINGER**  
HS science teacher



"Old Navy greeter, server for a catering company, and babysitter at a local church"

**YOM FOX**  
HS Principal



"Worked at a bakery/deli where I washed the dishes for 2 months and then "graduated" to making sandwiches. Fun times."

**DEIRDRE NICHOLSON**  
College Office Coordinator



"I was a short-order cook for a time."

**TOPHER DUNNE**  
HS history teacher



"I was a Dish Machine Operator/Busboy at Fuddruckers. I also cleaned bathrooms there (a task not otherwise reflected in my job title)."

**MIKE WENTHE**  
HS English teacher



"Worked at a ski shop and as a day camp counselor."

**C.A. PILLING**  
HS science teacher



"I dodged my uncle's thrown tools in his heating and air conditioning business."

**MARK GIAIMO**  
HS visual arts teacher



"Coach at baseball camp, piano teacher"

**JULIA FISHER '09**  
HS English teacher



"I did not have any jobs in high school. I did in college. I cleaned laundry rooms; I drove a truck to deliver sheets and such to students who signed up for that service; and later on, I worked at a liquor store."

**RICHARD AVIDON**  
HS history teacher



"I worked at the Jewish Community Center. Answering phones at the front desk. 'Shalom, Jewish community center, how may I direct your call?'"

**ANNA HOWE**  
HS English teacher



"I just remembered a job that I had one summer: selling concessions at Circle Rep Theatre in the West Village. The production was Balm in Gilead, by Lanford Wilson, put on by the Steppenwolf Company out of Chicago, directed by John Malkovich."

**EMILY LANDAU**  
HS history teacher



"I mowed lawns and painted houses."

**QUINN KILLY**  
HS Assistant Principal for School Life



"I was a check-out girl at Drug Fair, worked at Buckaroo Steak Ranch, and sold clothes in the Juniors section at the Hecht Company."

**MARIA WATSON**  
HS dance and acting teacher



"I lived in the hinterlands, too far...But I was required to feed chickens every day."

**SUE IKENBERRY**  
HS history teacher

Thank you to Director of Student Community Programming Bobby Asher for compiling the list.



## HISTORY IN THE MAKING: RICHARD AVIDON RETIRES

**WHEN RICHARD AVIDON** left behind his law career to pursue teaching, he brought to the classroom the precision of a corporate lawyer and the intellectual rigor of a cross-examination—tempered over the years by a playful edge.

Since arriving at GDS in 1988, Richard has taught High School history courses that gradually became synonymous with his name. As one former colleague explained, students would say they're "taking Richard" not "AP History" or "Constitutional Law." Why say more? Richard's reputation preceded him: surprising students with pop quizzes that struck fear into even the most prepared, crafting multiple-choice tests so meticulously constructed that they could not possibly be gamed through process of elimination, and cold-calling students on occasion.

"I remember walking out of Richard's [Constitutional Law] class with a kind of brain hurt," said Franklin Foer '92, an author and staff writer at *The Atlantic*. "He treated the class with the Socratic seriousness of an Ivy League law school, and you knew that if you fed him mediocre work, it would not be

greeted with false applause. ...He stretched our teenage brains beyond the point that most people thought they could be extended because he had that kind of belief in us."

With his retirement at the end of 2024-25 school year, Richard closes a chapter marked by decades of influence on generations of GDS students. He served as faculty advisor to the student-led *Augur Bit* newspaper for more than 20 years, organized the annual Harvard Model Congress trip for over three decades, and mentored the Mock Trial team. He inspired self-reflection, school skits, and career choices. Most of all, he extracted passion, the same kind of passion he brought to every class.

### A CHANGE IN DIRECTION

Richard took a few detours before finding his passion. Born and raised in Queens, New York, he earned a degree in History from Yale. He enjoyed law school at the University of Virginia and secured a clerkship with a federal judge in Baltimore after graduating. He quit a few months in because he disliked the work and the judge.

Shifting gears, Richard moved to DC to do advance work for the 1984 campaign of Geraldine Ferraro, the first woman nominated for vice president by a major party. When the Mondale-Ferraro ticket lost, Richard pivoted back to law and joined a large DC law firm—only to confirm what he'd long suspected. "It wasn't for me," he said. The grind and the work felt meaningless—a far cry from the courtroom drama and righteous battles for justice he'd grown up watching on TV.

It was a college friend who suggested teaching, prompting Richard to apply to several private schools and leave the law firm in 1986. He spent a few months studying French in France and later launched a solo carpentry business—until he finally landed a position at GDS in 1988.

Richard can't say exactly when he fell in love with the School, but it happened early on. "I remember going to events like the talent [now variety] show. Students would forget their lines or go off-key, and everyone would applaud and sing along," he said. "At the public school I attended in New York, people would have booed and made it embarrassing. It was never that way at GDS."

As the years progressed, Richard's lawyer friends were trying big cases and gaining recognition. Some would ask if he was still teaching, with an undertone that suggested he'd fallen behind. But something in him had shifted. "I realized that GDS is a great place to be," Richard said. "And I had a spring in my step every morning."



Richard at Harvard Model Congress in the late '90s with Danielle Tarantolo '97 (center) and Lisa Berenson '97

### HELPING STUDENTS DISCOVER THEIR PASSIONS

Hannah Natanson '15 worked closely with Richard as the *Augur Bit*'s editor-in-chief. She respected him so deeply—and was just intimidated enough—that she had her parents proofread all her emails to him before hitting send. That early reverence grew into a lasting friendship. As a Harvard student, she often sought his advice. Should she stay on the varsity soccer team or free up time to pursue the *Harvard Crimson's*



managing editor role? Go to medical school or take a leap of faith into journalism?

"I have a career that is a vocation and an avocation because Richard, at crucial points, would say to me: 'Do what you love,'" said Hannah, now a reporter at *The Washington Post*. "Every time I needed advice, he would not tell me what to do, but he would talk to me about how to think through it. ... Talking with him was like taking a hike mentally and seeing beautiful views."

Danielle Tarantolo '97 recently found old materials from Richard's classes in a bin at her parents' home. Flipping through them brought it all back: the rare thrill of earning a perfect "10" on a pop quiz ("I'm blown away," he wrote) and the sting of an F in his unmistakable handwriting. She embraced the challenge once she realized she could meet it and took three of his courses, including one on constitutional law. "It takes brilliance to understand some of these legal concepts, but it takes an added level of brilliance to present them in a way that's accessible to a bunch of teenagers," said Danielle, a lawyer at a nonprofit legal services organization in New York.

Some students panicked when they were assigned to a Richard class, as Sahil Gogtay '16 did his junior year. He considered switching out. "I'm so glad I didn't because it was one of, if not the most, rewarding class I had at GDS," said Sahil, who works for a defense technology firm. "Richard devised a course that required you to learn the subject and do second- or third-order thinking, instead of just memorizing facts."

Marc Tracy '03 did not shy away from taking several of Richard's courses and working with him on the *Augur Bit*. As

## THROUGH THE DECADES

"Writing was not difficult for me, then I got into one of Richard's classes [that focused in part on argument writing]. ...I emerged a completely different type of writer. He got me really excited about learning how to do something that I valued at a higher level. It's the first time someone else made me see through their eyes that I could do it."

– **Cara Feinberg '94**, a writer for print and documentary television who most recently worked for the PBS science series *NOVA*



"He was the first person in my life who treated me like a grown-up and demanded that I act like one. I'm not overstating it when I say that he set me up academically for the rest of my life and changed the path I was on."

– **Josh Hersh '00**, a senior editor at *Columbia Journalism Review* (pictured with Richard at GDS's 2025 Alumni reunion.)

"In [Richard's] classes, we didn't simply study a topic and move on. He offered foundational building blocks, and somewhere along the way, you came to realize they weren't just isolated pieces—they were part of something much larger and more thought-provoking. That was his genius."

– **Sarah Cooper '19**, senior associate at *Freedman Consulting*, posing with Richard and his Alexander Hamilton socks.



an eighth grader, Marc had seen Richard in action when he sat in on one of his classes. The day's topic: the Emancipation Proclamation, not as a sweeping moral decree, but as a strategic document that freed only those enslaved in the Confederacy.

"Ideas are animating to him, and he wanted them to be animating to you," said Marc, a reporter at the *New York Times*. "He made ideas, no matter what they were, feel exciting and high stakes."



In mid 90s, Richard surrounded by students from one of his classes

### THE SOFTER SIDE OF AVIDON

For all his intellectual intensity, what struck many students and teachers alike was how Richard's tough guy reputation seamlessly coexisted with his exuberance, sharp wit, and unfailing kindness.

His good friend Andy Lipps, a former GDS math teacher, saved a tribute two students wrote when Richard won the Student Council's teacher of the year award in 2012. The tribute captured many of Richard's "wonderful quirks," Andy said. His love of inside jokes. His tests, broken down into his signature "Notable Quotables" and "MultipleMultipleChoice" sections. And his soft side—like when he invited groups of students to his home for dinner or prepared full meals at school and set up cozy spaces so they could enjoy a movie marathon after an AP exam.

"He may joke that he models himself after [Drill] Sergeant Hartman from *Full Metal Jacket*," the students wrote. "But we all know the truth: He's a sweetheart."

That supportive nature extended to many facets of student life. Richard was a regular at Fata shows, theater performances, and track meets—even before his children (Hannah '19 and Isabel '25) attended GDS. He'd show up in Rockville for "home" games back when GDS lacked a baseball field.

Richard outside GW's Lisner Auditorium on graduation day, 1999, with graduates (from left) Abby Borkin, Bekkah Braswell, and eventual GDS teacher Julie Stein.



And he enjoyed a good laugh, sometimes at his own expense. "Even though he's such a gifted academic and intellectual to his core, he is also self-deprecating and quick to make fun of his own lack of coolness," said Bobby Asher, who joined GDS shortly after Richard and now oversees student community programming.

In class, he is known to read historical novels in character voices and spontaneously burst into song or dance mid-lesson. For years, he wrote pop song parodies for the High School variety show, roped in the entire History department to sing, and had students belt out the chorus. And at the High School Peace Assembly, he gleefully skipped and stomped in rhythm with colleagues and students—bells ringing, sticks clashing, sashes draped—for the Morris Dance, an English folk tradition he organized for decades. Students, teachers, and alumni still talk about the beloved tours he curated through Boston Commons for Harvard Model Congress trips.

But Richard also saw the limits of tradition. He successfully pushed to open the all-male Morris Dance to everyone. He helped lead the call for caps and gowns at graduation instead of white dresses for girls and suits and ties for boys—a dress code that he felt reinforced gender norms and stereotypes.

"He is absolutely committed to his values and moral compass and to speaking up for the underdog," said HS science teacher C.A. Pilling. "He never flinches from doing what he believes is right, even if he knows he will face criticism. His absence will be felt in so many ways."

### GDS FOREVER

Richard said he evolved and even softened since he started teaching at age 30.

He stopped cold-calling people and giving pop quizzes many years ago once he understood the angst it was causing. "I realized that the kids panicked and that wasn't a good way for me to gauge what they were gleaned from their reading

assignments," he said. He also reflected on what it meant to teach in a student-centered school and committed himself to meeting students at least halfway instead of waiting for them to reach out.

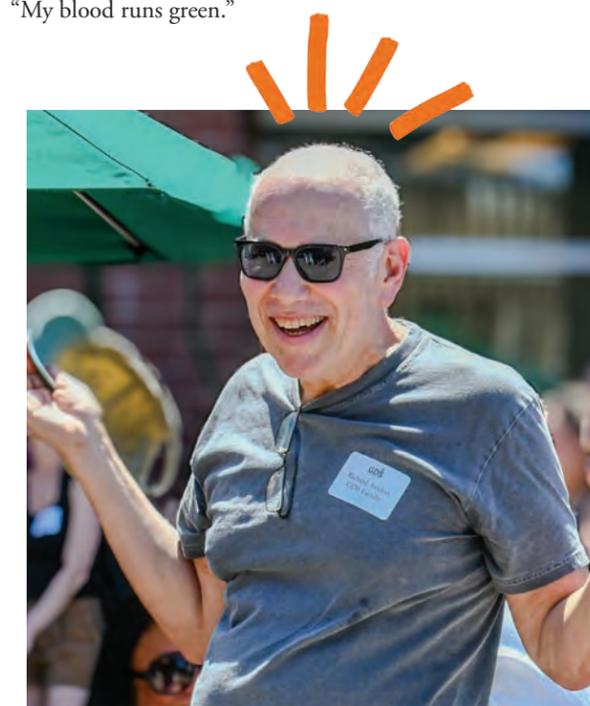
"The thing is, I didn't try to be a tough teacher. It wasn't a badge of honor for me," Richard said. "It caused a lot of students to leave my class in advance of getting to know me or getting to see what I did in class or what I was trying to teach them."

What he hoped to ignite in them, he said, was an appreciation of knowledge for its own sake, of curiosity, wonder, and a richer understanding of the world. Maybe that's why he stayed so closely connected to many of his former students, to see how they carried that spark forward.

"I love to find out the rest of their story," he said. "For me, it's not about how accomplished they are. It's about: Are they happy? Did they find something they're passionate about, something that matters to them? That's what matters most to me."

When asked what passion he will pursue next, Richard deadpans: beekeeping. He's kidding. He's not sure what's next, maybe more time in his woodshop (aka his garage). But wherever he ends up, he said his love of GDS isn't going anywhere.

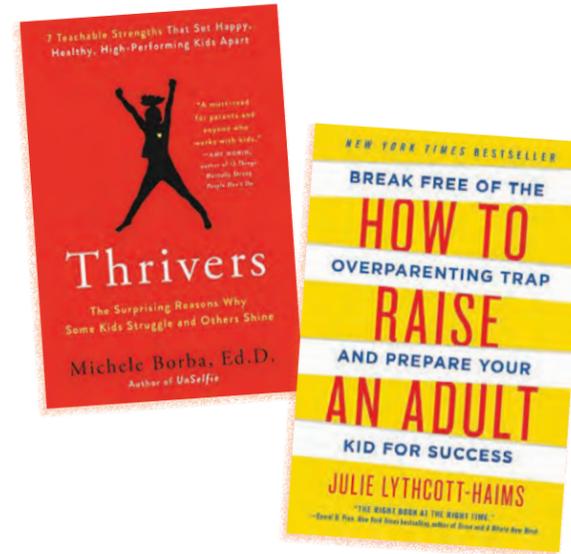
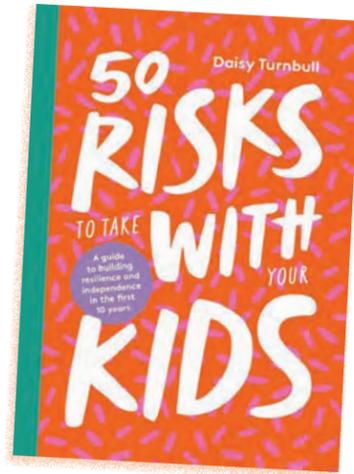
"I love GDS, and I love people who love GDS," Richard said. "My blood runs green."



# TOP FIVE

TIPS FOR CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP IN YOUR CHILDREN

A few of Kelsey's favorite books



## AS MS SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Kelsey Twist Schroeder sees it, schools should teach leadership like they do math or any other subject, as it is central to deliberate citizenship.

As an independent school teacher and a doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania, Kelsey researched how adolescent girls define and experience leadership. She deepened her expertise at the Gardner Carney Leadership Institute (gcLi) in Colorado Springs, which trains educators to nurture leadership skills. Kelsey started attending the group's six-day summer institute in 2011 and has been leading workshop groups there since 2014.

"Leadership is about guiding a group forward towards a shared purpose," Kelsey said. "It's important for every child, especially those from historically marginalized groups, to understand that leadership has no limitations. Everyone has the potential to lead and make an impact."

## Here are a few tips Kelsey shared for parents looking to foster leadership skills in their kids.

### 1. DISPEL THE MYTH OF THE "BORN LEADER."

As adults, we need to clearly define for our kids what it means to be a leader. Often, there is a misconception that leaders are only people who are outspoken, extroverted, or charismatic. But that's not necessarily true. Being a leader is not something static that you are or are not. Leadership is not defined by personality, disposition, authority, or titles. Different people can lead in different ways and in different contexts.

At my previous school, for example, the head of the English Department wanted to drum up enthusiasm for a summer reading project. She formed a committee consisting of the high school's most avid readers, who compiled a list of their favorite books, narrowed the field to three, and presented the titles to the school community. The student body voted on what book to read as a community. The exercise created a perfect leadership opportunity for our bibliophiles, several of whom were introverted kids. Student participation in summer reading went way up that year.

### 2. DEVELOP EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE & SELF-AWARENESS.

Leadership is as much about understanding oneself as it is about guiding and supporting others. It's critical to help kids name their emotions and think about how their feelings influence their actions and affect the people around them.

Parents can help by asking straightforward questions when their child is dysregulated, such as: "How are you feeling about that?" They can also encourage them to invent their own words for complex emotions. (For instance, one GDS fifth grader came up with "nervexcited" to describe how he felt nervous and excited about an upcoming event.) Follow-up questions can include: "What do you want to do next to move toward your goal?" Perhaps they need to take a walk, get a hug, or take a few deep breaths to get back on track. Whatever it is, they need to find a coping strategy. Just like adults,

kids need to work through their feelings to get back to a place of productivity, which is where the leadership piece fits in. They can't make good choices if they're feeling overwhelmed and unsettled.

### 3. ALIGN STRENGTHS WITH PURPOSE & WISDOM.

Encourage kids to align their strengths with leadership opportunities, recognizing that true leadership is tied directly to purpose. Parents can support their children by helping them identify their strengths and recognize how those strengths can power a team to work toward a shared goal.

Through effort and practice, kids can learn to approach each situation with a crucial question: "In this moment, am I better suited to lead or follow?" Keep in mind that leadership is a dynamic role that is responsive to a changing environment—not a fixed, binary position.

### 4. NORMALIZE RISK-TAKING & PROBLEM-SOLVING.

Leadership is a role that demands the confidence to take risks and recover from setbacks. The more opportunities kids have to make decisions and solve problems on their own, the less likely they are to develop a confidence gap.

Consider allowing kids to make their own choices in developmentally appropriate ways. For instance, let them order their own meals at a restaurant when they're old enough to speak or choose which language to study when they reach high school. Cultivate independence and try your best to avoid the paralysis of perfectionism, which discourages kids from taking chances on new or creative ideas. Confidence is built through small successes over time.

Allowing for independent thinking gets tough when the stakes feel high. After all, parents are evolutionarily wired to shield their children from harm. But resist the temptation to fix problems for them. If your middle schooler faces a challenge with a friend or teacher, help them role-play a conversation or write an email so they can learn to self-advocate. Push them to really think about the problem they're trying to tackle. One of my favorite phrases as a parent is: "Tell me more."

### 5. CHALLENGE STEREOTYPES.

Proactively discuss and counteract any fear of judgment, stereotype threats, and potential social costs of leadership, particularly with children who may uniquely feel these pressures. Talk to kids as if leadership is part of their identity. Just as kids in a choir consider themselves singers, all kids can be taught to think of themselves as leaders, as if that role is part of who they are and who they can be.

(from left) MS Principal Kelsey Twist Schroeder, MS counselors Charles Rosser and Sasha Clayton-Shapiro, and MS Dean Sankalp Khanna attended a Gardner Carney Leadership Institute workshop in Colorado last summer. They joined educators from across North America to explore student leadership through the lens of brain science, social-emotional intelligence, and group dynamics.



VICTORIA WRIGHT

## ASHLEY TROUT '99: CRAFTING WINE WITH PASSION AND PURPOSE



VICTORIA WRIGHT

**ASHLEY TROUT '99** had grown fed up with restaurant servers routinely handing the wine list to men and inviting them to sample the first pour, particularly when women buy the most wine.

So Ashley, owner of Brook & Bull Cellars in Walla Walla, Washington, launched HoldtheMenu, a campaign to teach servers to consult women about their wine preferences—and to encourage female customers to confidently speak up. It's not just a matter of changing male-centric norms, she said. It's also good business.

"They're not doing it maliciously—they're just doing it traditionally," Ashley said. "But if the tradition is no longer accurate, and it's a detriment to your financial success as a business, maybe that would be helpful to be aware of."

Today, only about 20 percent of wineries in the nation are women-owned, making Ashley a notable exception in a male-

dominated industry. Her journey into the wine business began during her freshman year of college and has since led to the creation of three wineries in the Walla Walla Valley. The largest is Brook & Bull, which produces 3,000 cases a year of malbec, cabernet franc, rosé, chardonnay, and red blends. Those who know Ashley best say she has made an indelible mark not just for the quality of her wines but for her unwavering commitment to using her platform as a force for social good.

"We all know there's a need, and we can all talk about it," said Alyson LaVarnway, Brook & Bull's general manager. "But she'll go out and do it."

### DOING GOOD

As with HoldtheMenu, Ashley uses her winemaking to uplift women. Brook & Bull sends its wines for "scoring" only to the three or so women wine critics in the U.S. Supporting women as tastemakers, she said, puts them in positions of power and influence.

In 2016, after seeing too many migrant vineyard workers unable to get medical treatment, she started VITAL Wines, a nonprofit winery that raises money to help the workers and their families access health care.

"She's done such a wonderful job of making the wine industry more inclusive," said Maddie Richards, VITAL's executive director. "...She takes her role in our community very seriously, which is probably why she felt compelled to start VITAL."

VITAL provides free eye exams and prescription eyeglasses to vineyard workers and their children and pays them for up to 10 days of "day-at-home pay," akin to sick pay. Its Spanish-speaking advocates also connect workers to the local free health clinic, food bank, and other services. One patient's free mammogram detected breast cancer, allowing her to get early treatment.

### ANTHROPOLOGY, RHETORIC, AND ... WINE?

Winemaking as a profession never entered Ashley's mind while growing up in Friendship Heights and attending GDS for kindergarten through 12th grade. But she said she has felt fueled by the high expectations of GDS teachers, such as Lukie Tannenbaum. It was Lukie, her seventh grade teacher, who first recognized that Ashley has ADHD.

SHE'S DONE SUCH A WONDERFUL JOB OF MAKING THE WINE INDUSTRY MORE INCLUSIVE." MADDIE RICHARDS

"Lukie walked me through that," Ashley said. "It was without taboo, but also it was without excuse...At no point did I feel lesser than, and there was no expectation that I was going to get worse grades as a result. It changed my life, knowing that about myself from such a young age and not having a taboo associated with it."

Never feeling part of the East Coast's "overachiever" crowd, Ashley said, she sought the "adventure" of attending college in the West, double-majoring in anthropology and rhetoric at Whitman College in Walla Walla.

In 1999, one week into her freshman year, she answered an ad for a part-time job at the local Reininger Winery, mixing and agitating the fermentation bins to keep the grape juice properly oxygenated.

"I thought, 'That's not a real job—but that's exactly what I should be doing when I'm 18, and then when I grow up, I'll move to a big city and get a real job,'" she said. "It was almost the complete opposite of what I had grown up around."

Every night around 10 p.m., Ashley worked alone in the winery's fermentation room listening to the soothing jazz of Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane amid the yeasty-sweet scent of fermenting wine.

Her job entailed getting oxygen to the yeast below the "cap" of deflated grapes that forms on the surface of the juice during the fermentation process.

Often, she perched atop the stainless steel bins, her legs in a triangle shape four feet apart as she balanced each foot on a two-inch rim on either side of the bin's opening, hovering above the dark purple juice. Using a pole with a plate-shaped piece on the end, she did "punch-downs" by plunging the plate into the floating grapes to get oxygen to the yeast below.

Other times, depending on the stage of fermentation and the tannin structure that the winemaker sought, Ashley did "pump-overs." That required standing beside the bins and using a hand-held pump to push the juice up and over the grapes—another way to mix and oxygenate the liquid.

She loved the physicality of the work—it felt like a tough triceps workout—and the warm, cozy feel of the fermentation room as the dark autumn nights grew colder outside.

"It was sort of a soulful part of my day," she recalled.

#### A "DEFINING MOMENT"

Ashley became so hooked that she adjusted her college class schedules and, at one point, took a semester off to work the fall grape harvest full-time. After college, she took a break from winemaking to live in Japan and study pottery, a hobby she'd discovered in Laura Tolliver's GDS art class. She returned to Walla Walla after a rock climbing fall in Japan left her with a shattered jaw and broken hand, knee, and femur.

While recovering, she missed the 2004 harvest and decided to devote her life to making wine.

"That was really the defining moment, where I looked around and everybody was doing the harvest but me," Ashley said. "It felt really inappropriate, which was a little bit of a surprise, because if you'd have asked me at age 17, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' I would not have said 'winemaker.'"

Over eight years, she alternated between working the March harvest in Argentina and the September harvest in Walla Walla, where she started her first winery, Flying Trout, at age 24. She sold Flying Trout six years later but stayed on as winemaker until she took time off after her second child was born.

"In many ways, that brand was my MBA," she said. "I learned a lot of the behind-the-scenes mechanics of what it takes to run a business."

#### ADVICE ON WINE

In 2016, Ashley started Brook & Bull, which makes wine from grapes provided by seven vineyards. She focuses on making wine less oaky and using grapes picked earlier in the season.



VICTORIA WRIGHT

Ashley and her husband, Brian Rudin, a winemaker at a rival winery, live in Walla Walla with their children, Alice and Raleigh. Wine, she said, is about the art of companionship, the kind nurtured over four-hour dinners that allow—and require—people to slow down. Her biggest wine lesson after more than two decades in the business: Don't overthink it.

"It doesn't need to be anything other than enjoyable," Ashley said. "It doesn't need to be a bullying contest or a wallet-measuring contest. There's not a right answer or wrong answer."

And no need, she says, to get anxious about pairing food with the correct wine.

"Some of the best wines I've ever had I had drinking out of a Solo cup with my best friend by a pool because I was with my best friend and the sun was shining," Ashley said. "It doesn't need to be more complicated than that."

*Ashley's wines can be purchased on the Brook & Bull website or at the following DC-area stores: Uncorked in Chevy Chase, MD; Whelan's Beer & Wine in Potomac; The Organic Butcher in Bethesda; and Knowles Station Wine & Co. in Kensington.*



Maia standing by the bookshelves that serve as a backdrop for the Tiny Desk performances.

ALANTÉ SERENE

#### ASK AN ALUM

## MAIA STERN '03: KEEPING IT RAW AT NPR'S TINY DESK CONCERTS

SINCE 2019, NPR'S WILDLY POPULAR TINY DESK CONCERTS have been captured through the eyes—and camera—of lead video producer Maia Stern '03. Every week, Maia and her team produce three concerts filmed in front of mostly NPR employees at the company's DC headquarters. No vocal amplification. No Auto-Tune. Just raw performances in an intimate space.

Hundreds of musical artists—from Justin Timberlake to T-Pain to Taylor Swift—have appeared in the Tiny Desk series since its launch in 2008. Performances take place behind the desk once used by former NPR staffer Bob Boilen, who co-created the concept. The concerts are viewed online by millions of fans worldwide each month. Maia estimates that she's shot 500 of those videos so far.

"Being the lead video producer is a really interesting job because it's not all about the cool shots and angles," said Maia,

Hanging out with rapper Action Bronson after his performance in July 2023



KARA FRAME

who majored in Media Studies at Pitzer College and lives in suburban Maryland with her husband, Paul, and two children. “It’s really about setting up a lovely frame for musicians to fill up.”

Maia spoke with *Georgetown Days* about combining her love of music and video, why the intimate concerts make some performers nervous, and which artists she’s still hoping to get behind the desk. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**Q. How did you get interested in video production?** From a really young age, I always had a camera around me. My dad was the home movie maker in my family, and he gave me my first video camera. I would make little plays with my friends after school. It wasn’t until college that I realized this could actually be a field of study.

**Q. What’s your favorite type of music to listen to, and does it differ from what you most enjoy shooting?** I’m a big sucker for the singer-songwriters, the folk musicians and rock bands. Some of my favorite music is music I’ve loved for decades. It sounds like nostalgia, and I love to film those bands at Tiny Desk. But I also love to film bands I’ve never heard of—ones that pleasantly surprise me with a unique sound when I turn on the camera. One of our best shows from last year is also one of my favorites. It was a duo from Argentina called

Ca7riel & Paco Amoroso. It just blew everyone away because no one seemed to be ready for what they heard. It was such fun music, and I absolutely loved it. So those are the two kinds of music styles I like: surprising ones and the ones that I’ve listened to for decades.

**Q. How does the intimate, eclectic Tiny Desk setting affect the performances?** It basically looks like an office space with some cool shelves behind it. There are really people working there. It’s so fun to see artists arrive. That’s my favorite part—when they’re like, “Oh, it looks nothing like what I’ve seen on YouTube” or “Oh, it’s a lot bigger than I thought.” We usually film in the middle of the day, and a bunch of NPR employees are standing six feet away from the artists, so there’s really no place for the bands to hide. Some of these employees may have not even heard of the artists before, or they may be huge fans. When we edit our shows, we keep in all the banter between songs and all the tuning and keep everything raw. I think that really helps showcase who the artists are as people.

**Q. Why do you think people enjoy watching Tiny Desk Concerts?** I’ve got to say, I think the concerts sound amazing, not just from the production side. I think performers really take the time to rehearse because of the challenges and



Maia filming singer MJ Lenderman’s soundcheck before his Tiny Desk concert in December 2024

KARA FRAME



The jam band Phish rocked out at a Tiny Desk concert in July 2024, and Maia was there to produce, direct, and film it.

JOSHUA BRYANT

limitations of playing a Tiny Desk concert. We’re not a studio by any means. I joke that sometimes I prefer to listen to the Tiny Desk [Concert] more than the studio album. It just sounds much more stripped down, like I’m in the room with them. That’s my goal with the video direction—to make [the online audience] feel as if they are at a concert and their eyes are seeing what they’re hearing. You hear background vocals over here, so I want to go to that camera. Now the drummer is doing a cool drum fill, so I want to go to that camera. That’s how we present the shows, as if [the online audience] is right there with us... We definitely like to show people’s faces, to show emotion. It’s important to see the person as much as it is to hear and see the music.

**Q. The items crammed into the shelves behind the desk are all signed and left by previous performers. What are some of your favorites?** The biggest one at the top-center is our orange Grateful Dead bear that Bob Weir left. The bear has since been adorned with various scarves and hats and things. I love him. I also love that Phish—known for jumping on trampolines at their concerts—brought a tiny trampoline that they signed and left on the shelf. I love that Action Bronson brought his own brand of olive oil. Babyface left a bottle of relish. Sometimes people just find something in their backpack, like a Chapstick or an expired license. We’ve had a couple of those, and a lot of guitar picks, a lot of hats. Sweatbands seem to be coming back. A lot of people leave a record.

**Q. Do you have a sense of what the artists get out of performing in this small space?** I think it’s exciting for them to be that close to their audience. They’re kind of letting us in on their basement rehearsal in a way. It gets quiet sometimes in between songs. It’s not like a rowdy concert. I think that

can make the artists a little bit nervous. Sometimes, after a show is over, we’ll say, “Okay everyone, back to work!” Most of the musicians may not realize that people are taking their lunch break to come watch Tiny Desk.

**Q. A lot of Tiny Desk performers aren’t exactly household names. How do you find them?** We have an internal pitch process, and there are three people who decide together what gets greenlit. They take input from the big team of music lovers at NPR Music. It takes a village. We have folks who pitch a lot of Latinx music. We have folks who do more classical, more R&B, more jazz. We pitch internally to each other. One of our big rules is you have to love the music. So Tiny Desk is basically a curation of our whole team. We want there to be a variety.

**Q. Which dream performer have you yet to get?** I would love to see Stevie Nicks. My daughter and I love to put on Fleetwood Mac albums and dance around the kitchen. Her voice is so iconic to me that I would love to see her sing in that setting. Hearing iconic voices that you’ve listened to your whole life singing in front of you is crazy without amplification. I’d also love to see Bob Dylan. I know that we’ve tried with Bruce Springsteen, and it just hasn’t lined up.

**Q. What’s next for you?** I’m just excited to keep producing, to be honest. I’m trying to keep dreaming of who I want to see and see if they want to come. I’m just going to keep letting the music speak for itself. That’s a big part of the Tiny Desk vibe—just capturing it all as it’s happening naturally... I just want folks to know how special it is for us to make this thing and have people like it. That’s what keeps us going.

# ALUMNI REUNITE, LOOK BACK AT THEIR GDS YEARS

GDS Hopper alumni set sail for “Hopper Island” on May 16 for a weekend-long reunion that celebrated the classes ending in 0 and 5. The good times started rolling on Friday with off-campus class gatherings, continued on Saturday with a festive lineup of GDS-sponsored events, and wrapped up on Sunday with a Black Alumni brunch. Here are some of the highlights.



HS History teacher Richard Avidon and HS Studio Arts teacher and Department Chair Michelle Cobb retired at the end of the 2024-25 school year.

## A BARBECUE, A TRIBUTE, AND A PARTY

The big draws at Saturday’s reunion barbecue: HS history teacher Richard Avidon and HS studio arts teacher and department chair Michelle Cobb, both of whom retired at the end of the 2024–25 school year. Alumni and alumni parents turned out in force to honor the long-time faculty members. Head of School Russell Shaw praised them as teachers credited by alumni with having a lasting impact. “What Michelle and Richard have in common is high expectations for their students,” Russell said, noting that many students who once grumbled about being pushed “so hard” later expressed deep gratitude for the experience. The celebratory vibe continued in the evening with an all-alumni party in the LMS Flexible Performance Space, where guests were transported to “Hopper Island.” Alumni enjoyed lively conversation and music surrounded by tropical-themed décor and a matching menu.



## A HIRSHHORN TOUR

CJ Greenhill Caldera ’10, a curatorial assistant at the Hirshhorn Museum, welcomed a group of Hoppers on Saturday morning for a behind-the-scenes tour of *OSGEMEOS: Endless Story*. The exhibition showcases the fantastical world of Brazilian street artists—and identical twin brothers—Gustavo and Otavio Pandolfo, known as OSGEMEOS (Portuguese for “the twins”). CJ shared how her interest in the duo began back at GDS, when she stumbled upon their work as a student while exploring books in the library.



## BLACK ALUMNI GATHERING

The alumni reunion weekend closed with a brunch for Black alumni at the Lower School, where old friends reconnected, shared stories, and strengthened bonds.



Class of 1985 at the River Club



Class of 2000 at Midlands Beer Garden



Class of 1975 at the GDS reunion picnic

## GENEROUS GIVING & CLASS CELEBRATIONS

Alumni celebrating milestone years made a powerful impact through their reunion fundraising efforts. To celebrate their 50th class reunion, the class of 1975 contributed more than \$25,000 for financial aid in memory of classmates who have passed away, including: Danny Moore, Psy Bennett, Charles Epps, Sarah Evans, Lincoln Pitts, and Sarah Zimmerman.

Lisa Scarsella and Larry Silber, reunion co-chairs for the class of 1975, said they had a tight-knit class of about 50 GDS students when they were in School. The class grew even closer in recent years, meeting regularly on Zoom after their 45th reunion was cancelled during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

“The idea of donating money on behalf of our [deceased] classmates felt meaningful,” Lisa said. “Larry and I were especially touched when we heard about current GDS families who lost their jobs due to the political unrest and chaos. Helping people through these times felt important.”

Larry said the class wanted to come together with a purpose that conveyed their collective power and bond. “There’s a real sense of empowerment, trust, and community among us,” he said. “When you mix that all together, that defines why our class is as tight as we are.”

The Class of 1985 also continued its long-standing tradition of giving. By mid-May, they had raised \$75,000—surpassing totals from each of their previous campaigns in 2005 and 2010. Meanwhile, the Class of 2000 went above and beyond, contributing over \$80,000 in honor of retiring faculty. Friday night class parties were a chance to translate the communal giving success into in-person togetherness. From the class of 1985 turning out at the River Club to the class of 2000 partying at Midlands Beer Garden, GDS alums kicked off the weekend in style.



The HS choir crew

Live from Carnegie Hall: (right to left) Assistant Head of School for Equity and Inclusion Marlo Thomas, HS Performing Arts Department Chair Christian Stallworth, Director of Student Community Programming Bobby Asher, and Community Engagement and Experiential Learning Coordinator Winnie Kong.

# FROM HAPPY HOUR TO CARNEGIE HALL, MEMORABLE NYC MOMENTS

**THE BIG APPLE** got a double dose of Hopper energy in March.

The fun started Friday, March 7, when local GDS alumni gathered for a lively happy hour at Stout NYC, offering everyone a chance to reconnect and reflect with many familiar faces from years past and a few new ones. They were joined by Director of Student Community Programming Bobby Asher, Assistant Head of School for Equity and Inclusion Marlo Thomas, and HS Director of Choral and Vocal Studies Christian Stallworth.

The festivities continued on Sunday as the GDS High School Choir took the stage at none other than Carnegie Hall. The group was selected to rehearse and perform with four other outstanding choral groups from across the nation under the leadership of world-renowned conductors Anton Armstrong of St. Olaf College and Rollo Dilworth of Temple University. For Bobby, a GDS fixture for over 30 years, highlights of the

GDS alumni connecting at Stout NYC.



HS Choir members hit the town before performing at Carnegie Hall.

weekend included reconnecting with former baseball players he had coached at least 25 years ago; watching his daughters, Andie '15 and Ellie '20—now New Yorkers—bond with some of his earliest students; and, of course, seeing current HS students perform at one of the world's most prestigious concert halls.

"The entire weekend was so much fun," Bobby said. "I loved the vibe at the alumni gathering. It was informal, just people catching up across grades and classes. ... And the choir absolutely blew me away. Their growth over just two and a half days was extraordinary."

Marlo said it was amazing to meet a large group of GDS alumni that spanned generations, with graduates from the early 80s to the class of 2023. It was also fascinating to watch the GDS High School singers seamlessly blend into a choir of more than 50 students, performing with a unity that belied how little time they'd had together, she said. For practice and



Renowned conductor Rollo Dilworth inspires and prepares HS choir members ahead of their performance.

the final performance, the students were split between two conductors, with GDS working under Dilworth.

"In rehearsals, [Dilworth] told the students that their job was not just to sing the lyrics, but to understand and embody what these lyrics mean," Marlo added. "He helped them understand how to connect their voice to their body and their body to their mind to relay a message. It was beautiful."

Christian, a GDS newcomer who also serves as the HS Performing Arts Department Chair, said the occasion was meaningful to him personally and professionally.

"My sister, niece, and her new husband live in New York, and they came to the [Sunday] show, so I got to introduce my School family to my home family," Christian said. "I also got to introduce myself to GDS graduates, and I was thrilled to learn that many of them are making a living in the performing arts. I'm seeing alumni living their dream and passion for the arts while helping steward the next generation of GDS students on the same path, which is very powerful for me."

# ALUMNI GATHERINGS



"Black Love" gathering, February 2025



Alums spanning three decades: (from left) Nizam Ali '88, Rob Reed '91, Charlton Woodyard II '05



## BLACK ALUMNI GATHERING

In honor of Black History Month, the GDS Black Alumni Council hosted a gathering for fellow alumni at All Set Restaurant and Bar in Silver Spring. The "Black Love" event, which took place the day before Valentine's Day, drew alumni from as far back as the late '70s.

## MINI-REUNION ATTRACTS A CROWD

Conor Bagley '12 hosted a mini 12-year reunion for the Class of 2012 at his family's Georgetown home in November. "After COVID, things got a bit scrambled, and we never officially had a 10-Year, so I wanted to rectify that," Conor said. Dozens of his classmates showed up to reminisce with old friends. Also spotted mingling with the crowd were two GDS institutions: HS history teacher Sue Ikenberry and former HS Theater Director Laura Rosberg.



2012 class reunited (from left): Jared Cowan, Will Cafritz, Courtney Judkins



HS history teacher Sue Ikenberry (white shirt) joined the Class of 2012 gathering.



Conor Bagley '12 welcomes his guests to the mini-reunion

# GDS HIGHLIGHTS



## Alumni

Black roots musician **Jake Blount '13** will be playing fiddle on the soundtrack of Ken Burns' new miniseries, "The American Revolution," coming out this fall. Grammy Award-winning musician Rhiannon Giddens told the *Boston Globe* she recruited Blount for the project because she thought he would bring "a really good kind of approximation of what the fiddle might sound like in the colonial era."

**Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg '97** is representing Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia, the Maryland man who was inadvertently deported to a notorious prison in El Salvador by the Trump administration in March.

**Dan Nadel's** biography of the influential cartoonist Robert Crumb was published in April. *Crumb: A Cartoonist's Life* received high praise in the *New York Times*, where a critic described it as "a definitive and ideal biography—pound for pound, one of the sleekest and most judicious I've ever read." The *Times* called Nadel '94, a museum curator, "an instinctive storyteller, one with a command of the facts and a relaxed tone that also happens to be grainy, penetrating, interested in everything, alive."

Writer and Executive Producer **Alex Berger '98** did some writing for season two of *Pulse*, a Netflix medical drama that started airing in April 2025. Alex's many writing credits include NBC's reboot of *Quantum Leap* and CBS's *The Mentalist*.

**Conor McDermott-Mostowy '17** was part of the Team USA trio that clinched gold in the men's team sprint at February's Speed Skating World Cup event in Tomaszów, Poland. After narrowly missing out on a spot at the 2022 Winter Olympics, could 2026 be his year?

**Isaac Stanley-Becker '12** joined *The Atlantic* as a staff writer earlier this year after many years at *The Washington Post*, where he was part of two teams that won the Pulitzer Prize, most recently in 2024 for a series of stories that examined the rise of the AR-15.

Two more Hoppers caught the public service bug. **Ellen Evans '83** is running for the California State Senate, and **Helen Loennig '86** is serving on the Baker City Council in Oregon.

## Students

Congratulations to **Samyuktha Narayan '32**, the 2025 recipient of the Ethan Alperstein Citizenship Award! Samyuktha was honored at the Middle School Closing Ceremony in June, where her teachers praised her exceptional leadership and her care and concern for others. Ethan Alperstein memorably embodied these qualities during his time at GDS.

**Jessica Berger '25** received the 2024 Hyman M. and Phillip D. Perlo High School Athlete Award, which honors outstanding Jewish scholar-athletes from the Greater DC region.

**Ricky Silvers '31** won the regional Mini Master Model Builder contest held by the D.C. Lego Discovery Center, earning a spot in the global competition against 27 other young builders. His entry—a Lego model titled *Panda-monium* in D.C.—shows the nation's capital overrun by pandas. It is on display at the center and will soon be shipped to Lego headquarters in Denmark.

**Shira Wenthe '27** set five school records in running her sophomore year: 800 meters, 1600 meters (a sub-5-minute mile), 3200 meters, and 5,000 meters on the track and the cross country 5-kilometer record. She represented GDS at the New Balance National Track Outdoor Championships in June.

## Faculty

Congratulations to the most recent inductees into the GDS Twenty Year Club, which honors faculty and staff with at least two decades of service at the School: LMS Librarian **Lisa Fall**, Special Gifts Officer **David Gillespie**, LMS arts teacher **Keith Hudspeth**, Enrollment Management and Financial Aid Director **Chris Levy**, MS physical education teacher **Katie Redmond**, and Network Administrator **M.J. Torres**.

*A Poisonous Silence*, the latest novel by LMS Librarian **Jenny Perinovic**, was released by Penguin Random House in May. This historical mystery is the sequel to Jenny's acclaimed 2024 debut, *A Deadly Endeavor*, and it is the second installment in the Deadly Twenties Mystery series.

**HS jazz and instrumental music teacher Brad Linde** signed on as an artist/ambassador with Rampone & Cazzani, an Italian manufacturer of hand-crafted saxophones.

SUBMIT YOUR NEWS!

Please send information for the magazine to [dina@gds.org](mailto:dina@gds.org)

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# Thank You!

**WE ARE GRATEFUL** to the more than 340 alumni, parents, parents of alumni, grandparents, faculty, and friends who contributed nearly \$400,000 to our financial aid program during our 48 Hours for Financial Aid campaign on March 12-13. Your generosity supports families in need as they face challenges brought on by the changing employment landscape across the DC area, helping us maintain the strength and unity of the GDS community.

Missed your chance to give during 48 Hours for Financial Aid? The need continues to grow. You can make your gift at [gds.org/48hours](https://gds.org/48hours).

