



CAPITOL
HILL
DAY
SCHOOL

GRAY MATTERS (Jan2017)
By Jason Gray, Head of School

CHDS Social Justice Curriculum

Happy New Year! I trust everyone had a wonderful break during which you found your own special way to relax and reenergize. Winter break was a staycation for me, a much needed opportunity to let some inertia set in and find joy in simple things. We spent time with family, time in parts of DC to which we do not often get, and on top of being able to ‘clear my desk,’ I had an opportunity to read a few books.

I find it particularly enjoyable to read books that have been given to me. I assume the book was chosen for its meaningfulness to the giver and for its perceived relevance to me. As I read, I try to keep the gift giver in mind. All three books that I read over break - *Helping Children Succeed* by Paul Tough, *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson, and *The Book of Joy* by the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu - were given to me by people I admire very much.

I thoroughly enjoyed all three books, finding meaning and relevance in each. Maybe unpredictably, among the three, *Just Mercy* was the one that I had the most difficulty putting down. Stevenson weaves a riveting narrative about our criminal justice system and makes an extremely compelling argument for his view of the system’s inherent inequalities. I was drawn to Stevenson’s passion for his work, his enduring belief in the humanity of all individuals, and his commitment to being an agent of change.

At the start of this academic year, faculty and staff committed ourselves to deepening social justice education at Capitol Hill Day School. Throughout the fall, I have been impressed by the engagement in learning and the depth of critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration that I have seen within the building. Through integrated projects, I have witnessed the manifestation of what Archbishop Tutu describes as “self-collaborating truth - when different fields of knowledge point to the same conclusion.” I have faith that while teaching children to develop into solid writers, strong mathematicians, scientists, artists, and much more, we are also facilitating their journey toward becoming what Stevenson calls “stonecatchers,” or individuals actively standing against injustice.

I encourage you to mark your calendars for Thursday, February 9, our annual Curriculum Night. I have the privilege of observing the byproduct of Capitol Hill Day School teachers’ passion and commitment every day. Curriculum Night, with a theme this year of social justice education, is your opportunity to see it as well.

Meanwhile, if you have read *Helping Children Succeed*, *Just Mercy*, or *The Book of Joy*, I’d love to talk with you about your perspectives.