

Why I Teach in an Episcopal School
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I love my job teaching second graders at Grace Episcopal Day School. Apparently, I'm in the small minority of people across the world who love their jobs. Why do I look forward to teaching at Grace each day? Grace is a joyful place. We sing, we pray, and we play. We take the time to enjoy our students and share a tender moment with them. The community is warm and welcoming. Our families support us in countless ways, and our alumni come back time and again. Our fifth graders are sad to leave. Grace children are known, celebrated, and loved. When I walk through the doors of Grace each morning, I get to leave the "real" world behind for a few hours, and there is a sense of calm and a measure of hope that overcomes me.

I think we cultivate this joy in our cozy Episcopal elementary school because we allow ourselves ample time and space. Time and space to allow young children to appreciate themselves and one another. Space to make mistakes, be challenged, and explore. Time to think, ponder, reflect, and grow closer to God. Time for teachers to get to know students, to nurture them, and to love them. When I taught in public schools, there was always a sense of urgency: raise test scores, fill achievement gaps, get kids to the next level. There was little time dedicated to slowing down and cherishing the children we had the privilege to teach every day. At Grace, we are not rushing through childhood. We're able to take the time to have mindful and meaningful interactions with students, parents, and one another and learning to nourish ourselves in the process.

At Grace, we claim that every child is "known, nurtured, challenged, and loved," and it's really true. When our fifth graders deliver their final chapel prayers on the eve of their graduation, they often talk about their lives at Grace feeling like warm embrace: they found friends, felt welcomed by kind and gentle teachers, learned to be themselves, and had the time and space to enjoy being a young person and being known as a child of God.

In these uncertain times, it's places like Grace--and the people who inhabit it--that give me hope for the future and our world.