

“High Character is Timeless” A Letter from Gabe Burnstein, Head of School

Dear CRS Community,

One of my favorite gifts over winter break is more time to read. One book I’ve been saving for break is Adam Grant’s *Hidden Potential: The Science of Achieving Greater Things*. Grant is an organizational psychologist, professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and a bestselling author who “explores the science of motivation, generosity, rethinking, and potential.”

I am certain that Adam Grant would love Charles River School. Every time I read his work or listen to an interview, I hear him affirming and celebrating our values. In *Hidden Potential*, Grant writes about the importance of the same character skills we cultivate at CRS, how they are different from cognitive skills, and he highlights the ways in which character skills teach our children to be proactive, prosocial, disciplined, and determined.

It is true that CRS faculty are experts in igniting and supporting the cognitive skills of our students from age four to fourteen. Right before break, an eighth grader explained his excitement about starting a high school geometry course in January. He can’t wait to practice the cognitive skills of deductive reasoning to write proofs. He’s not alone. Our Otters find joy in grappling with meaningful cognitive challenges that advance these skills.

AND... I believe that it is actually the intentional and expert development of character skills at CRS that sets this education apart and allows “academic excellence” to flourish across our sixteen-acre campus. In a recent interview with Dr. Rangan Chatterjee, Grant explained the character skills that expert kindergarten teachers instill in five-year-olds which includes teaching children to persist instead of giving up (determination), to help their classmates learn and share their knowledge with them (prosocial), to anticipate challenges that may arise, and to ask the teacher for help (proactive). And when these skills are developed in kindergarten, *they stick*. Grant shares the research that for four and five-year-olds who learn these skills, “in fourth and eighth grade still get rated higher in character skills, and if we want to predict adult income, character skills matter almost two and half times as much as cognitive skills.”

In the age of artificial intelligence, the ways in which our children can create and consume information is changing at warp speed. But high character is timeless, and at CRS, we do not underestimate the power of these skills that allow students to build character and to live their values when they face real challenges. I see this every day.

Right before break, I watched a second grader struggle with a new concept. He made a face, put his eraser in his mouth, turned to his friend and said, “This is hard.” Then he took a breath, and said, “I’m going to try again.” His friend nodded and matter-of-factly said, “I can help you... if you want.” The first second grader smiled. And with that, they both went back to work. It was a perfect display of character skills from two seven-year-old Otters.

Adam Grant would be proud.

Best,



January



CHARLES RIVER
SCHOOL

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Winter Break - School Not in Session		School Reconvenes				
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	7 - 8pm PA Zoom Meeting	10	5:30 - 7:30pm Rainbow Families Meeting Dining Hall	MLK Action Day	13
14	MLK Day - School Not in Session	16	6:30 - 8pm Past parent, alumni & former faculty Wine & Cheese Atrium	18	MLK Action Day 6 - 8pm PA Movie Night	20
21	22	6:30 - 8:00pm PA Education Night: Martha Haakmat	24	25	8:30 - 9:30am Sharing Assembly	27
28	29	30	31			

