

One of our family highlights this summer was watching my nephew get married in Seattle, his exuberant bride striding confidently by his side. Happy, educated, employed in a job he loves, and engaged in Seattle's music community, my nephew has accomplished many of the aspirations we hold for our children.

Before I paint too simple a picture, the successful groom was once an eleven-year-old who broke his arm jumping between dilapidated picnic tables to become "Parkour King of the Land." At eight, he mystified my sister when she found his vast "under the bed" candy stash, gathered stealthily while "helping" with grocery shopping (I'm sure the statute has expired by now). My nephew's middle-of-the-night paper writing, when procrastination and poor planning finally hit a deadline, drove my valedictorian sister to madness. And that was all before she and her husband helped him navigate the complexity of high school choices related to relationships, alcohol, finances, and more.

As I reflect on my nephew's journey, it has prompted me to think about what matters in an upbringing and education. What are the myriad forces that give a child the skills, mindset, and determination they need to pursue goals they value, connect well with others, and develop an inner life that allows them to know themselves? For all the work, opportunities, support, and lessons we offer as teachers and parents, what matters in developing confident adults who can engage with the world to contribute to it, enjoy it, and shape it?

The list is long, and seeing the beautiful support our DCD parents provide their children assures me that you know many of the answers. Love, consistency, limits, reflection, support, and opportunities all matter, and the list goes on.

However, one element of this formula – trust – has been on my mind this summer. In Rachel Botsman's book, *Who Can You Trust?*, she defines trust as "a confident relationship with the unknown." What parent doesn't aspire to have their child hold a confident relationship with the unknown, whether they are facing a new school, a new grade level, or another new challenge? Life will inevitably offer up more uncertainty than certainty, and we want children to know how to navigate both - and trust is key.

Botsman writes about how trust has evolved— from face-to-face connections in small communities, to institutions, and now to more decentralized, digital platforms. In a world where our children are increasingly influenced by what they see and experience online, and as AI changes the nature of what they will consume, it is more important than ever that they see and *feel* how trust is built in real life: through consistency, integrity, kindness, and care. Children learn trust not only from what we say— but from how we treat others, how we handle mistakes, how we keep our word, and how we show up for each other day after day.

I'm always aware that for many children, DCD is the first community they have joined— and they are learning from us what a community can be and do. As we model this community for them, the solidity and support they feel set the stage for their academic and social accomplishments. When we can help them feel trust in each other, themselves, and the adults

in their life, we help them find a confidence that opens them up for learning, and all the unknowns they'll face along the way.

So many things will be important in the months ahead for our students: the development of each child's academic skills; learning how to connect with others and resolve conflicts; learning to understand themselves and cultivate an interior life; and developing the confidence to take on new challenges as they embrace our "Learning Is a Way of Life" motto. We know all of these goals will be best met in a culture of trust that models for students what it is to be confident in the face of the unknown. I have enormous trust in both DCD's adults and children, and in the ability of this group to come together to fulfill DCD's mission in its 123rd year.

After many months of preparation, we began building our new community gathering space this summer. Seeing the demolition of the old theater reminded me that knocking things down is fast. While the literal and figurative work of building is slow – whether building lifelong skills and capacities, community, or a physical space, there is no work I'd rather do.

To the year ahead!

Warmly,

Allison