

A Message from Carly Andrews

To the Baker Community,

There is a lot that you can learn when you listen to children. During my visit I spent some time observing a gathering of three-and-four year-olds who were planning a birthday party for Elephant around a small table carefully set with cups and plates. In their conversation, they were simultaneously planning the celebration (negotiating when to sing and deciding together when Elephant should open their wrapped gifts) and actually celebrating. Picture this fluid movement from toasting Elephant to encouraging a friend to finish wrapping his presents - small classroom objects carefully folded by red and yellow paper and stowed beside their chairs.

This moment reminds me of the immense and complex skills that are learned through the negotiations of play - the language and socio-emotional skills involved when sharing a plan, listening to another suggestion, facilitating a compromise when two friends have different ideas, and employing the language of rituals such as birthdays. These youngest children at Baker are engaged in a complex experience, one that can't be replicated by prefabricated worksheets. Globally, they are also developing confidence and agency in their learning, a natural by-product when a child's voice matters in the schoolhouse.

We can learn a lot from children, who create playful rituals to express their joy. In an eighth grade science class, the students are donning their safety goggles and gloves, reviewing safety precautions before they test compounds in the lab. They are focused and excited, eager to discover the ways that heat can transform particular compounds. While in Latin, sixth graders are engaged in deep discussion. While they focus on the verbs in the passage, they also talk about ways to disagree with care and ways to use eye contact to keep a conversation going, important lessons in our age of screens. These moments were as lively and nuanced as Elephant's birthday. I was struck by the threads of a Baker education that connect the experiences of our three and 13 year-olds - the importance of discovery, joy, and community, essential qualities for deep learning.

During this January visit, I started Friday morning observing the celebration of Elephant's birthday, spent time observing students' work in many classrooms and ended the day with the launch of Baker's Centennial Campaign. It was a visceral reminder to me that there is no better work than creating spaces for children, for the development of their interests and curiosities, guided by their need for and pleasure in movement, discovery, and play. The launch of [From the Inside Out](#) was a joyful dedication to ensuring that all of our spaces, indoor and outdoor, are guided by our unique mission. It was wonderful to celebrate with you!

I want to thank you all for your generous welcome during this last visit. The more time I spend with our community, the more I realize how lucky I am to be a part of it. You have all made Baker a very special place for our children and their families. I am looking forward to reconnecting with you at the Baker Benefit on Friday, March 3.

Sincerely,

Carly Andrews
Head of School-Elect

STAY CONNECTED

