

A CELEBRATION OF LIFE

CLAIRE

du Nouy



I can see tomorrow;
I've been lovingly prepared,
And I know that I'll be ready
because of those who cared.

I can see my future;
it is shining oh so bright,
For I have the strength of warriors.
I've inherited their might!

And if I have seen further,
It's because you've lifted me so high!

FROM "STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS"
COMMISSIONED IN 2020 FOR THE NIGHTINGALE CENTENNIAL CHOIR



Celebrating the Life of Ms. Claire du Nouy

A MOST EXTRAORDINARY TEACHER, COLLEAGUE, & FRIEND

SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 2024 · THE 92ND STREET Y

Opening Remarks

*Paul A. Burke
Nightingale Head of School*

“Can’t Take My Eyes Off You”

*Performance by
Nightingale’s Bassless Accusations*

“My favorite memory of Ms. du Nouy...”

*Student voices, read by
Ryan A. '28, Beatrice K.'28,
and Olivia Y. '24*

Student Reflection

Sasha H. '24

Remarks on Behalf of

*Nightingale Alumnae
Sophia Kiam '14*

A Message on Behalf of

*The Spence School
Felicia Wilks, Spence Head of School*

“ABBA Medley”

*Performance by
Spence’s Triple Trio*

“Working with Claire...”

*Professional Community voices, read by
Jennie Brodsky P'13 P'22, Panayotes Dakouras, PhD,
and Damaris Maclean '97*

Remembering Our Colleague & Friend

*Andrea Kassir
Westridge Head of School*

*Johara Sealy
Nightingale Assistant Head of School
for Diversity and Equity*

*Rebecca J. Urciuoli, PhD
Nightingale Head of Lower School*

“This made me think of you...”

Introduced by Jeff Kearney

A Legacy of Joy in Middle School

*Remarks on behalf of the
Nightingale Board of Trustees*

Closing Remarks

Eric Pakurar

“You Learn”

*Combined Performance by
Bassless Accusations and Triple Trio*



“A responsible school must balance the innovative and new with an awareness of the fundamentals and non-negotiables that cross generations and continue to matter. The greatest gift we can give our students is an education that remains just as relevant throughout their lives as it is right now.”

—— MS. CLAIRE DU NOUY

— MS. CLAIRE DU NOUY —

Luminary of Learning & Laughter

Ms. Claire du Nouy, an extraordinary leader, educator, and colleague who dedicated over two decades of her career to the Nightingale community, died on January 21, 2024. Ms. du Nouy was serving as both Nightingale's associate head of school and the head of Middle School. Her death followed a courageous and private four year battle with cancer. She was 50.

"Claire devoted a boundless energy to Nightingale. There was always work to do, faculty to love, and students to embrace. She moved from one task to the next with unwavering dedication. In every instance, with the child at the center. In every instance," said Head of School Paul A. Burke.

"Given her irreverence and irrepressible wit, stories of Claire's mischief should be shared far and wide. And yet, still for me, her humor was merely the outgrowth of her brilliance. The most intuitive educator I have ever known. She could spend twenty minutes catching up with you about your family pet because in the next five she would cut through the complexity of the Nightingale issue on the table and then move towards a solution and an action plan. With her there was always action. And it was always

brilliant. For over twenty years she chose to shine her brilliant light on us every day, even—as we all know now—under the most challenging circumstances."

Claire Lecomte du Nouy was born in Manhattan on March 2, 1973. She attended The United Nations International School and the Fleming School prior to enrolling in The Spence School for fourth grade, where she would remain through her high school graduation in 1991. A proud graduate of Swarthmore College, Ms. du Nouy furthered her academic pursuits with a Master of Arts in developmental psychology from Columbia University, Teachers College.

After an initial teaching stint at York Prep, Ms. du Nouy's journey at Nightingale began in 1997. She joined the school as a member of the modern languages faculty, spearheading the development of the French program for Class V and Class VI. Dorothy Hutcheson, Nightingale's former head of school who first hired Ms. du Nouy, expressed the privilege it was to have witnessed her—from near and afar—grow from a high-spirited middle school French teacher into an extremely talented and beloved school leader.



"In the first few months of watching Claire teach French to exuberant and exasperating fifth and sixth graders, I knew she had 'it.' It is that rare ability to enter their world with humor and joy to inspire them to love school and to embrace the language and culture that was part of her DNA. Along the way, she never lost her 'it,' and I am grateful for what she gave to innumerable Nightingale girls, my daughter Holly '11, and to me."

Ms. du Nouy continued to teach French in both Middle School and Upper School until 2002, when

she briefly departed Nightingale to run the Oxbridge summer program in Paris and to oversee Middle and Upper School admissions at Marymount.

"She taught French with enthusiasm and flair," reflected Kitty Gordan, retired assistant head who served Nightingale in multiple capacities for more than four decades. "I admired her unwavering dedication to the girls and her high standards, which were firmly rooted in her sharp intellect and insightful comprehension of human nature. She consistently bridged the divide between younger



and more seasoned faculty members, and everyone appreciated her sense of humor and boundless enthusiasm."

Fortunately for Nightingale, Ms. du Nouy's time away from 92nd Street was brief. She returned to the Schoolhouse in 2006, assuming the role of Upper School dean of students, a position she held until becoming the head of Middle School in 2014. During her tenure in this role, Nightingale's Middle School truly became a destination of its own, where her leadership celebrated intellectual curiosity, the joy of discovery, and the excitement of taking risks.

"Claire infused boundless energy, an innovative spirit, and humor into every facet of Middle School life," reflected Head of Lower School Rebecca Urciuoli, who also co-led the Middle School alongside Ms. du Nouy during the 2014-2015 academic year.

Dr. Urciuoli described Ms. du Nouy as a force of creativity who could turn visionary ideas into reality. "She inspired teachers to create engaging and innovative minimester programs. She loved elaborate surprises. She wanted Middle School to be a time of exploration for both students and teachers. More than anything, she was committed to making sure school stayed fun. Her infectious passion for Nightingale translated into a symphony of joy that echoed through every hallway."

In 2017, Ms. du Nouy extended her leadership responsibilities again, this time adding associate head of school to her title. In that capacity, her attention turned towards stewarding the overall academic curriculum, providing faculty leadership and mentoring, and managing the processes by which instruction was administered to students in every division.

During the summer of 2020, Ms. du Nouy's associate head of school responsibilities became her exclusive focus as she navigated Nightingale through the COVID-19 pandemic and began charting the academic roadmap for the school's second century. Her vision for Nightingale, her collaboration with faculty, and her support for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives demonstrated an unwavering commitment to educational excellence.

For Johara Sealy, assistant head for diversity and equity, Ms. du Nouy will be remembered for her invitational nature that cultivated space for a more loving community. "Claire believed wholeheartedly that, in her words, 'all of our students deserve a curriculum that evolves as they do, one that is sensitive to the world around them.' Her leadership and commitment to equity and justice were rooted in an ethic of joy: joy in building relationships and

maintaining critical connections; joy in committing to the process of learning and unlearning; and joy through collaborative action."

Ms. du Nouy was also firmly committed to "inspire girls to go beyond barriers"—a signature phrase from Nightingale's mission statement that she helped school leadership define in 2017. "The greatest gift we can give our students," Ms. du Nouy often said, "is an education that remains as relevant throughout their lives as it is right now."

Panayotes Dakouras, head of Nightingale's Classics department, described Ms. du Nouy as a visionary and innovative educator who undeniably shaped Nightingale. "Claire could look at the big picture as well as reflect on the most minute details. Bold, wickedly funny, and irreverent, but always with caring and compassion, sage advice, and a pragmatic

approach to problem solving for the benefit of every constituent of the Nightingale community."

This past fall, Ms. du Nouy transitioned back to her dual roles. At the time, she expressed pure delight in returning to lead the Middle School, emphasizing the unique and transformative nature of these formative years.

"Middle Schoolers navigate what I think of as some of the funnest, quirkiest, smartest, and most appealing years of a child's life," she reflected in a letter to families last spring. "We know that during these years, a student's joy of learning grows in harmony with inspired confidence and an emerging independence." Her commitment to meeting the diverse needs of students in Class V through Class VIII was at the heart of a new Middle School leadership structure she introduced this fall, which emphasizes an authentic and supportive environment for every student.

Ms. du Nouy's extraordinary impact extended well beyond the blue doors, having profoundly influenced the lives of countless students and colleagues, both past and present. For many alumnae, including Sophia Kiam '14, Ms. du Nouy continued to be a guiding presence and a source of inspiration and wisdom that endured beyond the classroom.

"We talked about everything. She was brave and she was honest, and I could be too around her. She held me to high standards. She extended empathy without pity," said Sophia, reflecting on the deep connection they shared.



"Ms. du Nouy gave great advice, but more than any specific wisdom was a complete depth of understanding. She cut through formality and artifice immediately with her sharp humor, and got to the heart of what really mattered. When language failed, humor filled the gaps. She recognized and delighted in the absurdity and strangeness of life. We laughed together for hours. Joy was everywhere. Our lives were sacred. Other people were ridiculous. So were we. She showed me that irreverence and respect are not opposites, but twin forces in the expression of care, in the expression of love."

Beyond her professional endeavors, Ms. du Nouy found joy in family. She beamed with pride when sharing stories of her mother, Patricia, her husband, Eric, and their children, Lucy and Sebastian. She volunteered as a crisis counselor for Crisis Text Line, a nonprofit organization that provides mental health support and crisis intervention. She proudly ran two marathons, loved Broadway musicals, and had an uncanny ability to weave joy into every encounter, effortlessly putting a smile on the faces of those around her.

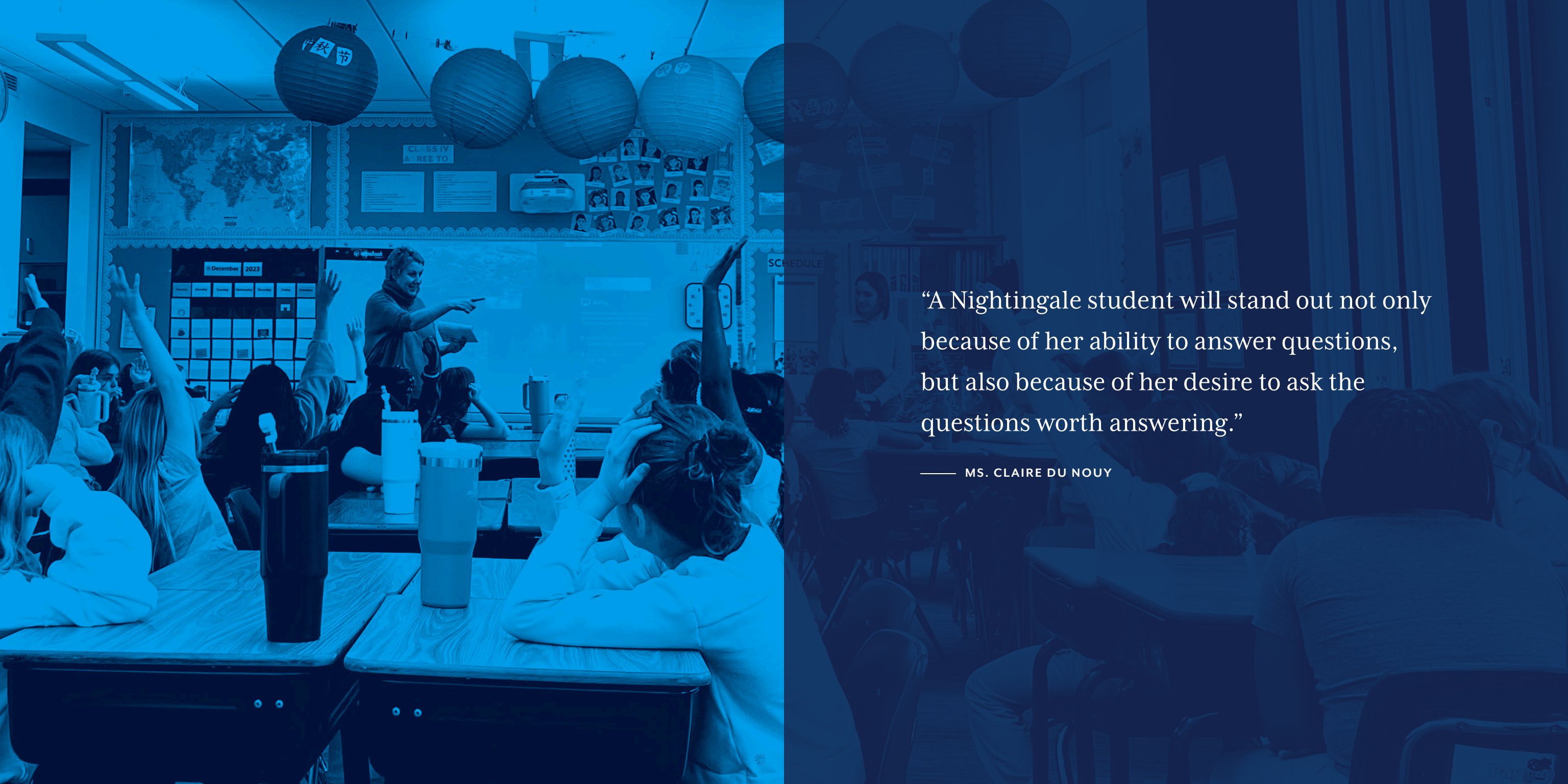
"Claire was rarer than rare, and larger than life. It's impossible to imagine this world without her," said Andrea Kassir, head of school at Westridge School and former head of Nightingale's Upper School. "She was unique in her strength, brilliance, and inspiration. She was a friend so profoundly connected to my core. It's an honor—a true privilege—to have shared a deep bond of friendship with her. Claire's love for us all was a gift."



Indeed, Ms. du Nouy left an indelible mark on Nightingale and all who knew her. At a school that strives for every student to be known, we will all be forever grateful for knowing Ms. du Nouy: grateful for her joy, grateful for her wisdom, and grateful for the warmth she brought to our lives every day.

"Claire's legacy is ours to live. Her legacy belongs and lives in each of us—there is work she would want us to do; which there is, after all, always work to do and lives to lead on behalf of others," added Mr. Burke.

"My great Nightingale hope in this impossibly sad moment is that we can all somehow see in Claire the true meaning of what it means to inspire others to go beyond barriers. We often talk about our mission. She lived it every day, on full display, for all to see."



“A Nightingale student will stand out not only because of her ability to answer questions, but also because of her desire to ask the questions worth answering.”

— MS. CLAIRE DU NOUY

Ms. du Nouy will be remembered as...

"...wickedly funny! Claire was the best educator and loved the students so much. I can hear her laughing."

LIZ LAYNE, FORMER STAFF



"...always such an upbeat, happy presence for us all. She always brought laughs and smiles wherever she was."

JOYCE SLAYTON MITCHELL, FORMER STAFF



"...true wisdom, blended with kindness and integrity that was reflected in how she lived each day."

KIMBERLY KYTE, FORMER STAFF, ALLEN-STEVENSON



"...an amazing woman with energy that cannot be matched."

JENNY SMITH, FORMER STAFF



"...honest and funny and made every room more comfortable."

AMY KRAUSS P'25 P'29



"...a hilarious delight. And more than being entertaining, she gave us all the permission to take ourselves a little less seriously, to find more joy in the everyday, and to be a little more free. She was also a tremendously wise and compassionate educator and administrator, who served as a role model and inspiration for me."

AMY NICHOLS, FORMER STAFF



"...my beloved French teacher from 4th grade ('97-'98) through 8th grade ('01-'02), and one of my best and all-time favorite teachers throughout all my years of schooling. I will forever remember her as an incredibly engaging, entertaining, warm, fun, and patient teacher, who cared deeply about her students and went above and beyond for us."

ALEXANDRA JIGA '06

"...incredibly cool. But she was never intimidating, never aloof, and never held herself above anyone. I learned everything I needed to know from interacting with her warmth, her intelligence, her sense of humor, her delightful weirdness, and her ability to relate to people in a way that made them feel seen. She was such an amazing example to me of the person I could become, and I genuinely believe I made it through all of the discomfort of being a teenage girl trying to figure herself out because of Ms. du Nouy."

RIDLEY ROCHELLE '15



"... such a funny and kind woman. The kind of funny that I spent most of my time crying (because I was laughing) whenever I got to spend some time with her."

LAURA DAVIS STAHL '94, FORMER STAFF



"...a beacon of warmth, efficiency, and caring."

CHRISTINA GALBRAITH P'28



"...an educator, a friend, and an inspiring, good human being. She truly incarnated the best of Nightingale."

CATHY TRENTALANCIA P'07'10



"...a beautiful soul and an extraordinarily committed educator."

MICHELE BALFOUR NATHOO P'19

"...that unique type of person that enlightens your day just by exchanging a hello with you."

KIKI AND LUIS VARGAS, P'31 P'33



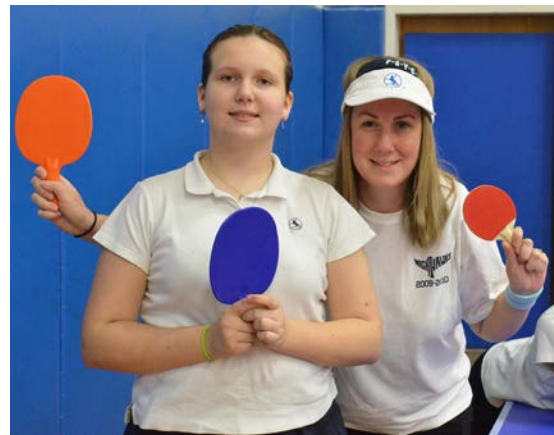
"...an irreplaceable, one-of-a-kind spirit— there for our girls in ways like no other."

PAM MICHAELCHECK P'98 P'03 P'11



“I believe that these years—often characterized as the trickiest in a person’s life—can and should be filled with joy, wonder, and amazement at every step of the way. Our mission is to help make that happen.”

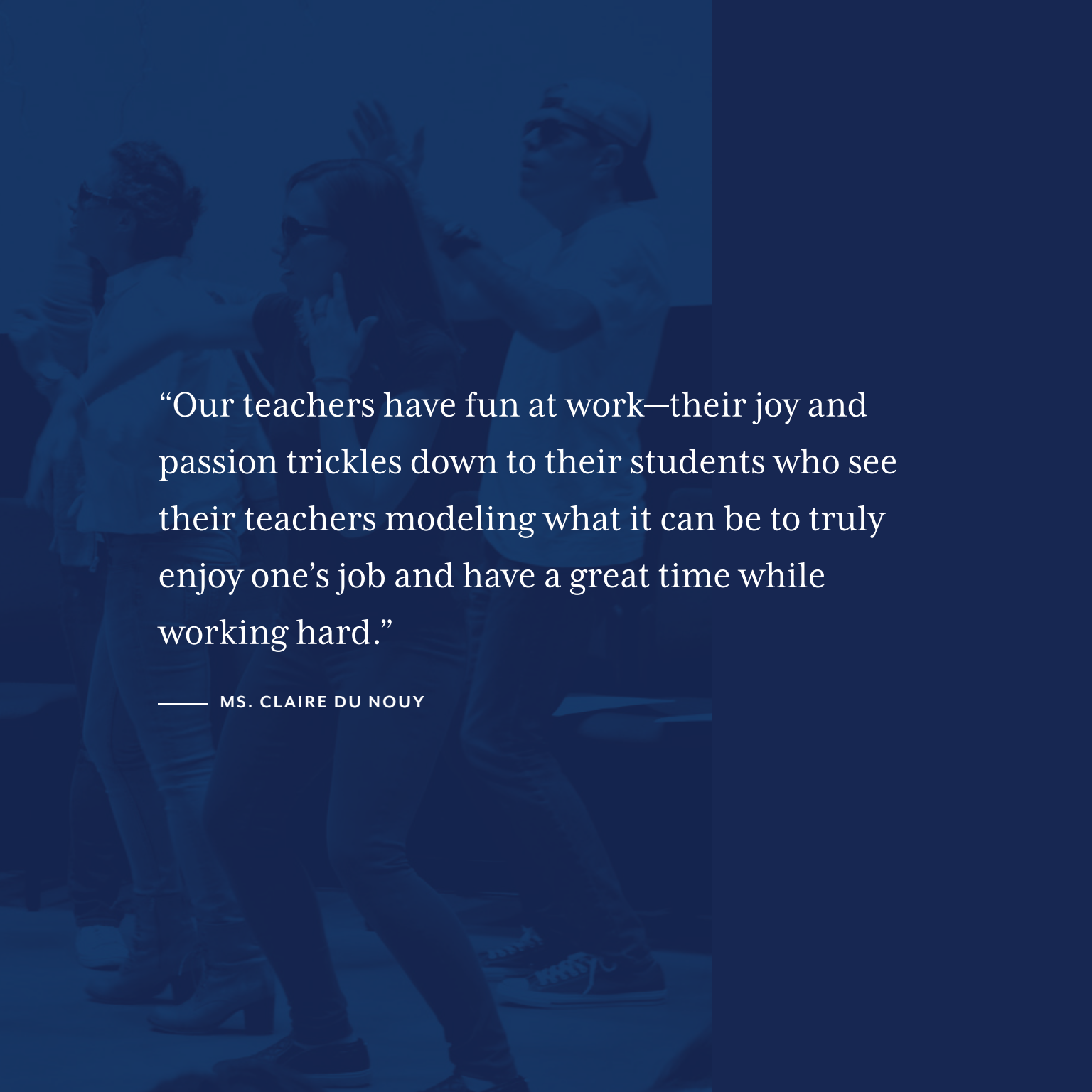
—— MS. CLAIRE DU NOUY



From the moment of her triumphant return as the first Dean of Students, we knew that Nightingale would change for the better. Ms. du Nouy is not afraid to say it like it is. She has one of the busiest agendas in the Upper School, but she always has time to chat with us in her office. Through her complete understanding of the erratic psychopath that is the teenage girl, she handles the “dirty work” that other teachers go to great lengths to avoid. Although we might complain when she hands out copious amounts of points for our illicit gum chewing, iced coffee drinking, scarf wearing, and tardiness, we know it’s because she cares.

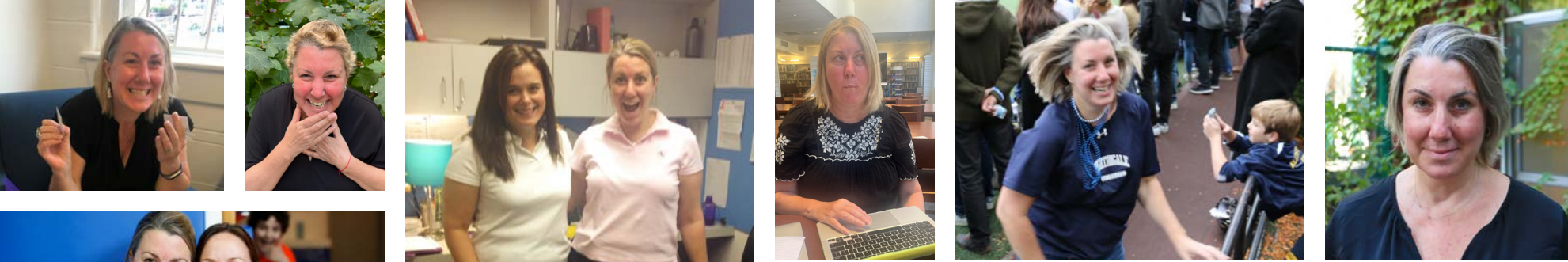
Ms. du Nouy is someone we not only respect but also truly love, as we know she always has our best interests at heart. She works tirelessly to keep Nightingale’s students happy and its traditions alive. Ms. du Nouy’s combination of good humor and genuine compassion makes her not only a role model, but also a trustworthy confidant. We will never forget her folding bicycle, her valuable advice, and all the good times that she has bestowed upon each and every one of us throughout our years here at Nightingale.

————— CLASS OF 2009 YEARBOOK DEDICATION —————



“Our teachers have fun at work—their joy and passion trickles down to their students who see their teachers modeling what it can be to truly enjoy one’s job and have a great time while working hard.”

— MS. CLAIRE DU NOUY



Joy

[/joi] • noun

A feeling of great pleasure or happiness caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying.

See also: Claire du Nouy



The Claire du Nouy Fund for Joy in Middle School Leadership

The Claire du Nouy Fund for Joy in Middle School Leadership is an endowed fund established to preserve the philosophical approach to learning that Ms. du Nouy espoused her entire career—that joy is inextricable from the most effective teaching—and help Nightingale acquire, nurture, and retain outstanding Middle School leadership who are able to continue her legacy.

An extraordinary leader, educator, and colleague, Ms. du Nouy served in a variety of roles at Nightingale: a member of the modern languages faculty, Upper School dean of students, head of Middle School, and associate head of school. Ms. du Nouy had a deep love of the Middle School—years during which she said "a student's joy of learning grows in harmony with inspired confidence and an emerging independence." Under her transformative leadership, Nightingale's Middle School became a destination of its own, celebrating intellectual curiosity, the joy of discovery, and the excitement of taking risks.



If you would like to discuss ways in which you can support this fund, scan the QR code here or contact the Office of Institutional Advancement at giving@nightingale.org or (212) 933-6505.



