



January 25, 2020

Dear Parents,

I hope all of you are well as 2020 takes hold and we cross the finish line of this year's Winter Term. As I noted before our winter vacation, these nearly three weeks do put a bit more bounce in our step than most schools experience during what are often cold and dark January days. We had a nice start in Chapel on the morning we got underway, and it has been so much fun to see and feel the many ways in which students and teachers have partnered around shared passions and interests over the past few weeks. The opportunity to work beyond the bounds of time imposed by our regular academic schedule allows us to learn and experience school in different and exciting ways. It was nice to see a lot of you at last night's symposium, and at the reception following the event. When I made my way around the classroom building, I was impressed by what all your children accomplished!

On the other side of wrapping up Winter Term and this long weekend now upon us, we will get the second semester started in Chapel on Tuesday morning of next week. There is always a bit of an adjustment involved in moving from Winter Term into the second semester, but we will eventually find our way to a familiar rhythm. Before looking ahead to what is to come as we move from January to February, I want to try to capture some of what we have been up to in these early stages of 2020.

Our winter trustee meetings were held during the first weekend of Winter Term, and it was fun to have the group together on campus at this time of year. We cleared some time on the Friday morning of these meetings to allow trustees to explore what was going on at the end of Winter Term's first week. All of them enjoyed the chance to take in the wide range of offerings and experiences students and faculty have been having. With fall and spring trustee meetings taking place in September and April, respectively, it is nice that all of them are able to see the school in this mode.

Beyond a close look at Winter Term, we had a full agenda to cover and made progress on a range of budgeting steps we needed to take for 2020-2021. We also devoted a substantial amount of time to some campus projects we are planning to move forward over the next few years. While the schedules for these projects are still being developed, the work includes the following:

- The construction of a new south entrance to campus. This entrance will be to the south of the existing south entrance and include a new road coming over the hill near the observatory. This will become the school's primary entrance, and will substantially expand one's view of the school when arriving.
- We will be shrinking the width of Main Street from the Center for the Arts to the classroom building. This will involve replacing a lot of asphalt with green space and move us further in the direction of pedestrianizing the core of the campus. Ultimately, the width of Main Street from Wilder Dining Hall to the classroom building will be at the current width of the street along the Center for the Arts quad in front of Thorne

House.

- Eventually, we will be taking down all of the structure attached to the head of school's residence, including the Frick Dining Hall and the current advancement office building. In its place we will be building a new admission and head of school office, along with a new "Frick" space for functions. We are also planning to include some additional outdoor community space in order to expand upon what the Center for the Arts quad has already provided.
- We will be moving in the direction of building some new faculty housing over the next couple of years in order to address part of the gap between the number of faculty housing units we currently have and the number we need.

Finally, there are additional plans centered on academic spaces, dormitories, and common rooms, and we will have more to share about those plans as we move along. For now, please do let me know if you have any questions about what I have outlined above. It's exciting to be moving this work forward.

Before closing on trustee meetings, I want to add that the six students who attended the Student Diversity Leadership Conference (SDLC) at the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) People of Color Conference (POCC) in December shared some of their thoughts and reflections about that experience with trustees during our Saturday morning meetings. I was grateful for their candor and the compelling case they made on behalf of pursuing equity, inclusion, and belonging for all members of this community. They were superb.

On Tuesday evening of last week, we welcomed Dean Karnazes to campus for a talk about *The Road to Sparta* -- this year's All-Community Read. Karnazes is an internationally recognized endurance athlete who has run ultramarathons all over the world. His talk engaged all who attended on a range of subjects related to his passion for running, and students asked him questions for nearly one hour. He encouraged all of us to believe that our highest aspirations can be reached if you work hard and stay the course. You can learn more about him [HERE](#).

On Monday of this week, we welcomed Dr. Jamila Lyiscott to campus to kick off our Martin Luther King, Jr. Day celebration and activities. Dr. Lyiscott spoke in the Chapel and was superb in helping us lean into the day's theme - Being Your Authentic Self. While I suspect her message reached the full breadth of our community in a wide range of impactful and important ways, I was inspired to think more broadly and critically about what we can do to ensure one's ability to be authentic in our community. After a number of excellent questions from students and faculty members, we moved into workshops and a film that added to our consideration of the day's theme, and then debriefed in self-in-community classes at the day's end. I want to thank dean of community life Ashley Johnston, members of our diversity leadership council, and the many students who ran workshops, for all the work they put into arranging a day that honored Dr. King's legacy so well. You can learn more about Dr. Lyiscott Chapel speech [HERE](#).

Looking ahead, we will begin the second semester in Chapel on Tuesday of the coming week and then find our way forward from there. As we adjust to the second semester, Kim and I will look forward to hosting all of you who are fellow fifth-form parents for a reception in our home on Friday, January 31, at 6 p.m. We are also excited to be able to join you the next morning for the College Counseling Kickoff we run at this time every year for fifth-form students and parents. I have learned a tremendous amount as both a participant and observer of this event over the years, and do hope all of you will be able to make it. There are so many outstanding colleges and universities to learn about, and the workshop helps take some of the mystery out of the process that lies ahead for your fifth-form child. Hope to see you there!

By the time we get to the following week, February will have taken hold and I will be

heading to The Headmasters Association annual meeting in Durham, North Carolina, beginning on Wednesday, February 5. This is a nice opportunity to connect with secondary school leaders at independent and public schools from all across the country. Later in the month, I will be traveling to New York, Philadelphia, and Florida for conferences and school events of various kinds. While I miss school when traveling, I am looking forward to the opportunities I will have to share all we are doing, and hoping to do, with so many who care about the school.

On Tuesday, February 11, we will hold our annual Giving Day in support of this year's [Brooks Fund](#). From early in the morning until late in the evening, we will be doing all we can to encourage participation in this year's annual giving effort with hope of reaching record levels. In ways that are fun, spirited, and totally focused on supporting the experience your children are having in 2019-2020, Giving Day aims to add to the momentum we will need in order to make our \$2.4 million goal by the end of June.

Finally, I hope you had a chance to enjoy Playing With Fire: Risk and Reward in the Robert Lehman Art Center during Winter Term. In the coming week, we will welcome Jim Sperber '87, and his exhibit, "Directions", to the gallery. He will then join us during the final week of February to work with students and faculty as a visiting artist. Sperber has been superb with our students when here as a visiting artist in the past, and I am certain we will draw a great deal from the time he will spend with us this year. I hope all of you will have a chance to enjoy his work at some point over the next four weeks.

I will be in touch again in mid-February when we are closing in on the end of the winter season, and maybe the end of winter weather! In the meantime, please do let me know if you have any questions or thoughts you would like to share. Take good care.

John R. Packard
Head of School

Brooks School
1160 Great Pond Road, North Andover, MA 01845

See what's happening on our social sites

