



February 18, 2020

Dear Parents,

I suspect a poll of students and faculty members inquiring about what might be the most challenging month of the school year would reveal February to be that month. While this has not been a particularly harsh winter to this point (my fingers are crossed), cold and inclement weather does have a tendency to linger in North Andover! Thus, as we head into the final stretch leading up to our departure for Spring Break on the first Saturday in March, we are intent on finishing well with our winter season activities and push to the end of the marking period.

Before taking a look back and ahead at this winter stretch we are currently in, I would like to share some of our evolving thinking about the coronavirus and the ways in which this pandemic has and may still affect our community. As we have noted in parent newsletter correspondence over the past few weeks, we are continuing to follow all guidelines and directives from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Department of Public Health (DPH). We have taken some time to underline the need to practice good hygiene, keep our hands clean, cover our coughs, and so forth. We will stay that course.

We have also been in touch with those of you who have been changing travel plans for your children and our students who might otherwise have been headed to parts of the world under travel restrictions aimed at containing the spread of the virus. We want to be as helpful as we can be in ensuring all students have a place to go during the break. With uncertainty about whether the virus might spread, however, we also want to emphasize our hope that all of us traveling internationally will take every precaution possible in order to ensure that all students will be able to return to classes after Spring Break on Thursday, March 26. We will not be able to house students in need of any type of quarantine, and our ability to continue academically with students who are not able to be here on campus is limited. To do all we can in partnership with you to avoid such circumstances is our goal. If you have questions, please let us know.

Looking at the few weeks that have passed since the second semester began, we have managed to fit a lot of good work into a tight window of time.

For starters, I enjoyed spending time with all of you who are fellow fifth-form parents during our college counseling kickoff weekend at the beginning of the month, and I hope you all left confident and excited about the process ahead. I have attended this workshop as both a parent and an observer, and continue to learn about the dynamic state of college admission in ways that are incredibly helpful. Our college counseling office does a terrific job preparing the day, drawing a wide range of college

representatives to campus, and getting all of us into the right mindset for the road ahead. Many thanks to them!

The following weekend our Model UN Delegation participated in the BosMUN conference and excelled. History Department Chair Michele Musto reported that this year's group earned as many awards as we have received in some time, and that the whole group prepared diligently and performed beautifully. Emily Choe '20, Omolade Mebude '21, Hongru Chen '22, Tanay Kommareddi '21, and Jayda Hayes '22 all earned honors. In an election year where we want and need to do all we can to encourage engaged citizenship, these students voted with their feet and represented the school beautifully. Congratulations to all of them!

In Chapel on Monday of last week, all of the students enrolled in this year's Winter Term class How Massachusetts Got Its Name shared what they learned during their course, and presented a land acknowledgment statement aimed at honoring indigenous people who lived on Brooks School's campus long before Brooks School was founded. This is an increasingly common practice, perhaps most recently and notably done at the 92nd Academy Award ceremony on Sunday, February 9. The group made a compelling case for our doing so on a number of special occasions through the year, and crafted the language themselves: *At Brooks School, we live and learn on land once of the Pennacook people, and we acknowledge their enduring presence.* I am both proud and appreciative of the good work this group of students and teachers did together, and I look forward to sharing the statement at points through the balance of this year and over the years to come.

We held our annual Giving Day on Tuesday of last week and raised just about \$200,000 from 762 individual gifts to the school. Aside from the dollars representing nearly 10% of our annual giving goal for the year, the volume of donors is always the most exciting part of the day. Of particular note was the fact that the participation levels for the classes of 2019 and 2018 ranked 4th and 5th, respectively. It's exciting to have young alums keeping the school in mind and giving at whatever levels they can. A special thanks goes to the entire Advancement Office team, who literally worked from midnight to midnight on the day in question. It was a great day for the school!

In Chapel on Thursday of last week, we heard about the history of St. Valentine from school minister Jim Chapman. This had us fully prepared for Valentine's Day itself on Friday and many of you know by virtue of volunteering for Treats for your Sweets that we were very much in the spirit of the day. Many thanks for the time and sweets a number of you shared for the occasion.

This week, I have been in New York since yesterday morning for some meetings with alumni and alumnae, and will then head to Florida for a few more alumni and alumnae meetings ahead of a reception at the Gulf Stream Bath and Tennis Club in Gulf Stream, Florida. The event begins at 5:30 p.m., and we are looking forward to seeing a number of friends of the school at what should be a very nice evening. If you happen to be nearby, please join us! You can [RSVP HERE](#).

I will be getting back to school on Thursday in time to see the first of four *Beauty and the Beast* performances in the theater. The evening shows on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, will all begin at 7:30 p.m., and there will also be a show on Saturday beginning at 1:30 p.m. Many of the actors have been double cast, and they will have the opportunity to perform in different roles. This gives all of us more incentive to see the show twice. If that is of interest, pairing either the Thursday evening or Saturday afternoon show with either the Friday evening or Saturday evening show will

accomplish the goal. The entire company has worked hard to put on this beautiful Disney classic. I hope you will be able to make it!

On Monday, February 24, at 7 p.m., we will welcome Ashley Hall to campus to speak in the theater about the danger and pervasiveness of vaping amongst adolescents. Ms. Hall is the program manager of Northeast Tobacco-Free Community Partnership, and has been doing extensive work with school groups throughout the year. Her visit comes in the wake of some disciplinary circumstances we confronted at the end of Winter Term involving vaping, drugs, and alcohol. As we continue to engage in these challenges with our focus on the health and wellbeing of our students, and disrupting patterns of use that are disciplinarily consequential, we are eager to have you join us to hear what Ms. Hall has to share. As we move forward intent on making progress in this area, we want and need to partner with you. My hope is that Ms. Hall's talk will give all of us some common ground to help us confront this challenge together in dynamic and increasingly effective ways.

Also beginning on Monday, February 24, we will welcome Jim Sperber '87 to campus as our artist-in-residence. We are currently enjoying his exhibit, Directions, in the Robert Lehman Art Center, and are looking forward to having him here for a week with our students. There will be a reception for Mr. Sperber on Thursday, February 27, at 6 p.m., in the Lehman, and we hope you will be able to make it!

I will be traveling to Philadelphia on Wednesday of that week for the National Association of Independent Schools Annual Conference, and will be getting back to school the night before our winter athletic season wraps up on Saturday, February 29. We are hopeful that a number of our teams will qualify for New England tournament play the following week. If so, the quarter-final games would take place on Wednesday, March 4, in between a couple of other events:

On Tuesday, March 3, we will hold the finals of the Wilder Speaking Prize contest in Ashburn Chapel at 6:45 p.m. This will follow two earlier rounds of competition to identify the finalists in what is always an incredibly impressive field of contestants. English Department member John Haile oversees the competition, and determined this year's prompt: "Create a five-minute oral presentation -- a story, a spoken-word poem - - offering a lighthearted, humorous look at some aspect of your life. It may be fictionalized." I am looking forward to what should be a really fun night!

Finally, we are taking a bit of a different tack with our Boston Reception, scheduled for Thursday, March 5, at 6 p.m., at First Republic Bank's offices located at 100 High Street. This year, we will be holding a faculty panel presentation and discussion aimed at sharing the wide range of exciting work happening in our classrooms. This phase of the evening will be followed by a more traditional reception in the same location running until 8:30 p.m. We hope many of you will be able to join us for whatever portion of the evening you can attend. You can [RSVP HERE](#) .

I will be in touch again at some point during the first week of Spring Break. Until then, I hope to see you at any number of events on campus over the next few weeks. If you have questions about anything I have covered, please do not hesitate to be in touch.

Best,

John R. Packard
Head of School

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

See what's happening on our social sites

