



March 8, 2019

Dear Parents,

By now, I hope you are settling into a nice spring vacation with your child home and beginning to enjoy a break after our push to the end of the marking period on Wednesday. We all worked hard during this final stretch with a number of tests and assessments piling up over the first few days of this week. My hope is that all of your kids have caught their breath by now and are well on their way to recharging and getting some rest as we gear up for a great spring. As I noted in Chapel on Monday, I tend to think Thanksgiving vacation is the most important break in our year. Spring vacation is a close second, however, and the time away over these few weeks will do all of us a lot of good.

As I noted in my last letter, I have spent a fair amount of time on the move over the past month. This letter will arrive as I am on my way to see alumni, alumnae, and a number of you in Seoul and Hong Kong. I am looking forward to the visit. Before taking a look at the break and some of what awaits us when we return to school at the end of the month, I want to try to capture at least some of what left me feeling so good about how our winter season came to a close.

After a much anticipated Head of School Holiday the day after I last wrote to all of you, we moved later that week into the school's first musical in our new and spectacular theater. For those of you who had an opportunity to enjoy "Hairspray" on one or more of the three nights it ran a couple of weeks ago, you know how well the entire company did at delivering a [wonderful show](#). With so many memorable performances, beautiful music from start to finish, and an important message about inclusion, the audience was left with much to think about. There will be many more shows in the theater over the years that lie ahead for the facility. With some terrific concerts and our first musical under our belts in the space, we are off to a great start!

The following week had me travel to San Francisco and Los Angeles to see and meet with a number of alums in both cities. I also attended the National Association of Independent Schools annual conference in Long Beach, California, before heading back to campus. It was fun to connect with Brooks School graduates ranging from 1966 to 2018, and there were lots of expressions of envy from those we saw while traveling when pictures and descriptions of the Center for the Arts came up. All of the events we held served as powerful reminders about the depth of care and support we have at our backs as a school. This leaves me confident about meeting any and all challenges that lie ahead.

An unfortunate component of traveling to and from campus when school is in session is the fact that I miss a great deal of excitement while away. As I was making my way to California, Kelvin Griffin '22 had just finished eighth in the Prep School National Wrestling Tournament and been named a Prep School All American. Our boys squash team had just won the New England Class B championship with Jose Victorino '20 and Marty Graham '19 winning individual championships at #4 and #5, respectively. Nick Carabatsos '20 and Tobey Smith

'20 were both runners-up at #2 and #3, respectively, and Deven Kanwal '19 finished in third place at #1. Our girls squash team had just played in the Class A tournament and Christy Lau '21 won the championship at #1 -- an incredible feat.

While I was out west, we had two teams hosting New England tournament games here at Brooks last Wednesday. By the time I made it back to campus, our girls hockey team had advanced to the New England final, and our boys basketball team was gearing up for a semi-final game on the road. Both teams were understandably disappointed not to win their tournaments, but I could not have been more proud to be associated with such terrific competitors and winners. The manner in which our student-athletes represent the school all year long is a source of pride. I know our spring teams are eager to have great seasons of their own when we return from the break.

I also missed a couple of sixth-form speeches in Chapel last week, and it is nice to be looking forward to a spring full of reflections and thoughts about this experience from many members of the Class of 2019. I did not miss the Wilder Speaking Prize Finals earlier this week, however. After spending the better part of the past month working through a series of rounds, the finalists shared five extraordinary speeches with the whole school on Monday night. Hongru Chen '22 was a worthy winner of the competition with an amazing and powerful speech. Yet, he was joined by Franklin Dong '22, Caroline Samoluk '21, Emma Houlihan '21, and Aileen Arias '21 and Racquel Baldeo '21 in a duet, who all delivered strong, passionate, and flawless speeches. I was blown away by the depth, quality, and delivery, of all five speeches, and was mostly glad that I did not have to be a judge at the end of the night! What a treat these students shared with all of us.

As I noted earlier, I am looking forward to being with some of you in Seoul and Hong Kong over the coming week. At about the time I arrive in Seoul, all of our admission decisions for students who have applied to join us in 2019-2020 will be posted. I want to thank all of you who have offered to help call admitted students and families to offer our congratulations and willingness to help with any questions they might have. We are very excited about the group we are admitting, and your perspective on the Brooks experience is invaluable to families considering Brooks as the next stop in their child's education. I want to thank you in advance for volunteering your time to help us put our best foot forward as we work hard to attract some terrific students and families to Brooks.

After the break, we will all be excited to return to school and have the Parents Committee Community Appreciation Lunch awaiting us on Monday, March 25. Between the incredible food so many of you prepare for all school employees to enjoy and the many generous prizes you contribute to the raffle, this adds up to a really nice way to begin the spring season and annual sprint to the end of the year. Thank you in advance for the time and talent you contribute so generously to this event. We are looking forward to it!

Once we are back at school and through the final week of March, our admission revisit days will be upon us. We will have well over 100 families visiting with us on either Tuesday, April 2, or Friday, April 5. Much like the calling so many of you will be doing over the next couple of weeks, these days are critically important -- they are the last opportunity admitted students have to visit and experience Brooks before making a secondary school decision. We do all we can to encourage admitted students and families to join us on one of these two days, and appreciate having a number of you here to talk with families and help them learn more about our school. Here, too, thank you in advance for all you do to help us welcome some wonderful people to our school community.

For now, enjoy these few weeks at what I hope will be a slower speed whether you are staying close to home, or are on the move. I will be in touch again in early April with spring beginning to show signs of arriving -- I hope!

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

