



May 21, 2019

Dear Parents,

The three weeks that have elapsed since I was last in touch have moved as quickly as I anticipated, and here we are just days away from graduation weekend. The tent is already up, and we are well into our final preparations for Lawn Ceremony on Sunday afternoon, and Prize Day on Memorial Day morning. The early weather forecast has given us reason to believe and hope for a break in the rainy pattern we have endured this spring. Our fingers will stay crossed! Rain or shine, we are excited to celebrate the year, and 95 soon-to-be Brooks School graduates.

While the time in May has moved quickly, we have also managed to accomplish a great deal during these few weeks.

Kim and I have had our fill of Chipotle, and we have very much enjoyed having groups of sixth-formers into our home for dinner. As far as I can tell, there is not a single person in the class of 2019 who does not like Chipotle, and it was fun to have a few minutes to slow down and catch up as we race to the end of the year. We also enjoyed an evening with many of you who are "graduating" parents this year with a child in the class of 2019. While I am looking forward to sharing more on Prize Day about all you have done to support the school during these years as Brooks parents, it was nice to have some time with all of you here so close to the finish line. The relationships you have formed at Brooks through connections and interests your children have forged and furthered were evident, and so nice to see.

We held our final Chapel service of the year yesterday morning, and brought to a close what could be accurately referred to as the season of sixth-form speeches. Between our Sunday/Monday/Thursday gatherings, and our oratory class talks, dozens of members of the class of 2019 have shared with the community in thoughtful and impressive ways. The messages we have heard this spring have left us laughing, crying, delighting in community, and inspired to find ways to be better moving forward. Beyond the messages, I appreciate the courage so many of these talks require, and the confidence our students have to share with their peers and teachers in this way. We are better for the time spent listening to what this year's sixth-formers had to say.

If you have a child who took an Advanced Placement exam over the past couple of weeks, I suspect the stress level dropped after the last test came and went. Our students and faculty members worked extremely hard getting ready for the hundreds of exams we administered during the testing window. While final papers, projects, and exams for third-, fourth-, and fifth-form students still lie ahead in some of their classes, it is nice to be done with all of this Advanced Placement work!

This past weekend, we had more than 200 alums on campus for Alumni Weekend activities that took place on Friday and Saturday. It was fun to spend time with the class of 1969 on Friday evening, and hear a number of them reflect on years spent at Brooks during a charged

time in American history. On Saturday, we had a wonderful panel of alums talking about their careers in the arts. The group included two filmmakers, an architect, painter, and jewelry maker, and all of them were compelling in sharing the challenges and joys of their work. To hold this panel in our new Center for the Arts was terrific. On Saturday evening, we all had a chance to thank and bid farewell to Dusty Richard, who will be retiring this spring after 41 years on the school's faculty. The occasion drew many alums who were not in reunion years to campus, and made for a great night.

This week, we are wrapping up a wide range of spring activities. With the exception of our crew program slated to compete this Saturday at the New England Interscholastic Rowing Association Championships, all of our teams will wrap up their seasons on Wednesday afternoon. Our girls lacrosse team advanced all the way to the Independent School League tournament championship this past Sunday before losing a tight game to Thayer Academy at Harvard Stadium. A large number of these girls played multiple sports during their years at Brooks, and have served as impressive counterpoints to those who believe excelling in athletics requires specialization. Congratulations to all of our teams for battling rainy weather and representing the school so well throughout April and May. We will be giving out spring season athletic awards in Chapel on Thursday morning.

In the arts, our schedule has been and remains as full as can be. Since I was last in touch with all of you, we have enjoyed our Classical Concert, Dance Concert, and Jazz Concert. Unfortunately, our Brookstock event this past Sunday needed to move indoors to our hockey rink due to some unsettled weather in the area, but a number of students performed and enjoyed a nice afternoon of music. This week, we are enjoying the spring play, *Drop Dead!*, in the theater on Monday and Tuesday evening, and are looking forward to *Mamma Mia!* on Thursday evening, also in the theater. Katie O'Brien '19 has done a terrific job directing a version of *Mamma Mia!* with a focus on the music, and at including a number of her peers, who will be performing for the first time. And, she has managed to do all of this in just one semester! I hope you will have a chance to enjoy both shows.

As we look ahead, the class of 2019 is enjoying a trip to Kimball Farm and some fun through the day today. They will participate in a community service project tomorrow. We will hold Prize Day rehearsal early on Thursday morning, and the group will be free to leave campus later in the day with proper permissions and a promise to return to campus in time for Sunday's Lawn Ceremony. They are, of course, welcome to stay on campus through Sunday, as well. In either case, they will have a few days of rest before the festivities begin.

In terms of graduation weekend itself, our Lawn Ceremony will get underway on Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m. under a tent on the lawn behind the Head of School's residence. At this ceremony, prizes are awarded to students spanning all four forms, and the highlight of the afternoon involves faculty members and students speaking about the arts, athletics, and academic program. We then move to the Ashburn Chapel and our annual Boo Hoo Chapel service. This is generally a student-only affair, where members of the class of 2019 will sing songs in small groups before all of them will come forward to continue our tradition of singing *Leaving on a Jet Plane*. Then, the class of 2019 will file out of the Chapel and line the Chapel walk ahead of saying farewell one-by-one to the faculty and then the entire student body. This is a touching event every year with some tears, laughs, and lots of great photo opportunities!

After a dance and some social activities on campus Sunday night, we will move to Prize Day and our commencement exercises on Monday morning. Breakfast will be available in the Wilder Dining Hall ahead of a short Chapel service for graduates and their families beginning at 9:30 a.m. We move directly from that service to the tent for our Prize Day ceremony, where diplomas will be conferred. This begins promptly at 10:15 a.m. There will be a luncheon following the ceremony in the Wilder Dining Hall. From there, the class of 2019 will have diplomas in hand and be ready to move on to what is next in their lives!

Before closing on graduation weekend, I would like to share an addition we have made to our Prize Day supervision plan, and offer a resource for your consideration on the other side of diplomas being handed out and parties and celebrations coming into view.

On Prize Day, we have had some growing concern about campus safety with more than 1,000 people on campus, and our inability to adequately supervise those outside the tent with the faculty all seated during the ceremony. To address the issue, we have secured two uniformed North Andover Police officers who will be on site and helping us ensure that the conduct of those outside the tent does not distract anyone in attendance from enjoying the proceedings. It is possible you have or will become aware of an invitation to the weekend's events I sent to our three most recently graduated classes (2016, 2017, 2018) on this subject. If you have questions, please let me know.

We also know that graduation parties follow Prize Day, and want to share a concern we have every year about underage drinking, and the risks involved. To be clear, we make no presumptions of what has or has not been planned, but would be remiss if we did not make all of you aware of Massachusetts social host liability law, along with some suggestions on how to keep your children and our graduates safe in a festive and celebratory post-graduation mode. We fully appreciate and want the class of 2019 to enjoy time together following graduation. We also want them to be safe and for all of you to be aware of the risks involved when underage drinking occurs in one's home. I do not know how Massachusetts social host liability law compares with other states, but I suspect these laws are fairly similar throughout the country. I share this link for your consideration: [Massachusetts Social Host Law](#). If we can help with questions, please let us know.

All of us who remain on campus following Prize Day will quickly turn our attention to exam week and standardized testing for some on Saturday, June 1. With all students having departed by the end of that Saturday, the faculty will turn its attention to grading, comment writing, and our final meetings on Tuesday, June 4, and Wednesday, June 5. A focal point of this year's final meetings will be our reaccreditation work, and getting our self-study process launched for 2019-2020. As I have noted before, we will be in touch about this process as it moves along.

Finally, I want to thank all of you again for your Brooks Fund support and all you have done to help us have a year with so much to celebrate as it draws to a close. I will be in touch one last time in mid-June with a final thank you to parents who will be leaving us, and a preview of summer plans here at school. I will look forward to seeing a number of you this weekend. As always, if you have any questions, please let me know.

Best,

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