



June 19, 2018

Dear Parents,

By now, I hope all of you have found your way into a summer mode, and have a lot of time with family and friends in store over the next couple of months. It takes a while to find our way to a change of pace here at school, as there is always a lot of work to do after students depart. At this stage, however, we are beginning to shift gears and move in the direction of a full and robust summer agenda. Before touching on some of what that will involve, I would like to look back at what was a wonderful finish to the year, and a fitting celebration of all that the class of 2018 contributed to Brooks.

For many years now, the highlights of our Lawn Ceremony and Prize Day have been the exceptional talks given by graduating students. These talks come on top of a long series of Chapel and oratory talks given through the spring, and always convey such confidence in the school community, while also giving us much to think about. I noted on Prize Day that this year's talks were especially thought provoking, and this trend continued through graduation weekend.

Our Lawn Ceremony speakers were outstanding. Sally Jong '18 spoke about the importance of the arts -- to her and to the school. Her journey as an artist at Brooks inspired all who attended, and gave us a nice boost as we move closer to completing construction of the new Center for the Arts. Brian Flanagan '18 spoke with refreshing candor and humility about his athletic experiences -- ranging from being cut from varsity teams to winning New England championships as a vital member of varsity teams. His growth, both figuratively and literally, was evident! Callie Scala '18 shared her story of progress and maturation as student. While her achievement in Brooks School classrooms was impressive during her four years here, she focused on her love of learning that grew in ways that she had not envisioned before starting in the fall of 2014. Her message was an important one for all of us to hear.

On Prize Day, Jack Garrard '18 carried the day with a thoughtful reflection on his years at Brooks, the ups and downs, and how he learned from those moments along the way. He called upon his classmates and those who will return to Brooks in the fall to take risks, try new things, and embrace change. He did exceptionally well in representing all 105 in the class of 2018. And, of course, the highlight of all highlights through the weekend was the privilege I enjoy, with the president of the board of trustees Steve Gorham '85, P'17, P'21, of conferring diplomas. As each student collected the true prize of Prize Day, I was left with what amounted to 105 new paint brushes for our Center for the Arts! We will put them to good use. I also managed to survive getting dunked on by two of the class's more boisterous members! All in all, it was a wonderful weekend.

After working through exam week and some final standardized tests, we held three full days of faculty meetings. Aside from completing our grading and comment writing, we spent a lot of time engaged in forward thinking about our academic program and the work we have

been doing on competency-based education with our students. (We were pleased to earn a \$100,000 grant from the Cummings Foundation to further that work in the coming years.) The combination of presentations and conversations was a nice way to launch the summer. We finished our time together with a party to celebrate the year and bid farewell to colleagues leaving us at the end of the month.

From there, our trustees were in for two days of meetings. We enjoyed a tour of the Center for the Arts, which is on schedule to be completed by the middle of the fall. The facility is really extraordinary, and it is exciting to be getting closer to realizing all the possibilities the space will provide. Among the many items we covered beyond that, I would highlight the following:

We always aim to do some work on the physical plant of the school over the summer, and we took substantial steps forward over the past two summers with our Student Center and our Health & Wellness Center. This year, in addition to completing the Center for the Arts, we have two projects we will be working on.

- First, we have decided to do an extensive renovation and expansion of Whitney House. This will involve gutting and replacing both bathrooms, and expanding the size of the first floor bathroom by taking a single room to grow the square feet we can work with. In addition, we will be constructing two common areas for the building that involve taking over a double room and space outside the building's current footprint on the first floor. Along with all new lighting and flooring, we will dramatically improve the size and quality of the building's common and bathroom space.
- Second, we will be constructing a new changing area and bathroom facility in the Athletic Center in order to be better able to support transgender students and visitors getting dressed for athletic events. We continue to be engaged in physical plant work that ensures both access to and use of our facilities are equitable for all community members and guests. This work will be completed by the time school begins in September.

Beyond physical plant work, we will be giving ongoing thought to campus safety and the three points of entry to campus. As I noted in an earlier email, we had a bizarre situation with an intruder in mid-May. While the situation was handled well by all involved, the fact that someone came on to campus and found a way into a dormitory has given us pause. The root of the challenge is cultural. We like to move around our campus with relative ease. This summer, we will be thinking about how to square this desire with having three points of entry to campus. This could lead us to additional considerations, and we will have more to share on this front over the next couple of months. In the meantime, I would welcome any thoughts you would like to share as we think this over.

As of this week, our Summer Programs are underway and will make excellent use of our beautiful campus and facilities all the way to mid-August. There are some new additions to our offerings this year, and we are very fortunate to have quality adult and student programs here through these warmer months. A number of your children have participated as campers, staff members, or both, and these connections continue to feel great to us. The campus will be buzzing all summer long!

Before closing, I want to thank all of you who have given to this year's Brooks Fund. We are in the final stretch of trying to reach our goal by midnight on June 30, and we would not be in our current position without your support and generosity. This, of course, comes on top of all you do so routinely to enhance the experience your children have. Your participation in this effort means an enormous amount to the school.

Finally, this will be my last letter to those of you who will be leaving us with your child who graduated with the class of 2018. Thank you for your partnership, wisdom, and care during these Brooks School years. We certainly hope to keep in touch and to be of service to you

and your recent graduate for years to come. For all of you who will be returning in the fall, I look forward to being communicating with you again in mid-July, when I will welcome new parents to the community and share an update on our summer agenda. As always, please feel free to contact me at any point. For now, enjoy the summer!

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

