



June 20, 2019

Dear Parents,

While in some ways the finish to the 2018-2019 school year feels like a long time ago, the manner in which we wrapped up and celebrated the class of 2019 remains fresh in mind. Whether you are a proud parent or guardian of a freshly minted Brooks School graduate, or are preparing for your child to return to Brooks in the fall, we hope your summer is off to a nice start. While a lot happens on campus in between the school years, the flexibility the summer provides for family time and opportunities to pursue passions and interests is a welcome change from the pace we keep from late August until early June. As we close in on the official end of 2018-2019, we feel great about what our students and your children accomplished.

The spring at Brooks is always full of activity and culminating events. In many ways, however, much of what we are engaged in through April and May is leading to graduation weekend. This year's Lawn Ceremony and Prize Day were celebrations worthy of all the class of 2019 gave to the school during their years here. And, after a spring of persistent cold and wet weather, we were treated to two beautiful late spring days!

The summer edition of *The Bulletin* will do a far better job than I will be able to do at capturing our pride in the achievements of all of our students in 2018-2019. In the midst of so much to feel good about over the course of these two days, I was particularly impressed with our student speakers and all they had to share about their Brooks experience from a range of vantage points.

For a number of years now, we have celebrated the arts, athletics, and academic program at our Lawn Ceremony by asking some soon-to-be graduates to speak about their experience while looking through that lens. This year, Stella Si '19 did a fantastic job sharing all she discovered while pouring herself into the full breadth of our arts program. Whether on or behind the stage, it was clear to all of us that she had grown tremendously and learned a great deal due to time spent immersed in the arts. Brooke Robinson '19 shared her experience as an athlete at Brooks in a way that left us thinking about the many ways our students contribute to team experiences at all levels. In Brooke's case, she was an accomplished soccer player when she arrived and performed as such while here. Yet, it was her reflection on discovering and contributing to the girls squash program through these years that stayed with me most. Her message was an important one for all of our younger students who are perhaps thinking about trying something new, but have not yet taken the plunge. Spencer Pierce '19 reflected on what he learned in the classroom during his years at Brooks. While he is an exceptionally strong and accomplished student who excelled across the board, I was most impressed by what he learned beyond the defined curriculum while making his way from classroom to classroom. The connections he forged with his teachers, and his curiosity and obvious love of learning, were abundantly clear. In total, these three students were first-rate examples of what can be found by pushing into new areas and partnering with peers, teachers and mentors who believe in you.

Our 88th Prize Day followed the next morning with scores of family members, friends, and the extended Brooks School community in attendance. While conferring diplomas with the president of the Board of Trustees, Steve Gorham '85, P'17, P'21, is the highlight of this ceremony, Martin Li '19 delivered a wonderful talk certain to remain in the minds of those who were there to hear him. He was chosen by his classmates to have this honor, and we quickly learned the group made an outstanding choice. When I think about what our graduates take with them when walking across the Prize Day stage and collecting their diplomas, I generally land on my belief that they are leaving with skills, values, and a deep sense of self. We aim to equip them with skills and competencies they will need in order to succeed as undergraduate students and in chosen walks of life. We hope to instill in them values we are explicit about modeling, celebrating, and holding ourselves accountable to in ways that yield citizens and leaders who are essential to communities they are a part of in their lives. And, we want them to go forward with a strong sense of who they are, in touch with their gifts and talents, and positioned to leverage those gifts and talents throughout their lives. In these ways, we move in the direction of realizing our mission. As I listened to Martin on Prize Day, I was overwhelmed by the extent to which he has come to know himself so well. He embodied precisely what we hope our graduates will be when Prize Day arrives. If you have not had a chance to view these four talks given during graduation weekend, you can access them [HERE](#). You will be glad to have taken the time to do so!

For third-, fourth-, and fifth-form students, the hardest part of graduation weekend is transitioning to exams beginning the next afternoon. We did well shifting gears this year, and all of you are now in possession of final grades and advisor reports on how the year wrapped up. It is our hope that this final set of grades and thoughts about how the year landed provides useful material for conversation between the school years about goals for 2019-2020. As always, we are glad to be in touch over the summer with questions you might have about how best to move into a new year with its own exciting challenges and opportunities.

Our final department and faculty meetings followed exam week. These meetings are designed to set the table for summer work and to position the school to get off to a great start in the coming year. As I have noted on a few occasions this year, a focal point of 2019-2020 will be work we are excited to do on our reaccreditation self-study. At this stage, we have organized the entire process, and have formed faculty-led committees touching on the full range of standards and areas of school life we are tasked with assessing. As such, we will be moving this work forward through July and August, and then digging into it further throughout the year. Ultimately, we will invite participation and thought from the full breadth of our community with a desire to do all we can to take advantage of this opportunity to improve the school. Mary Jo Carabatsos and Susanna Waters will be serving as co-chairs of the self-study, and we will have increasingly substantive updates to share as the process evolves. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the work ahead, please feel free to let us know.

If you are here at times over the course of the summer, you know how busy the campus can be from late June to the middle of August. With a couple of summer programs already underway and more to come next week, we are also focused on doing what we can around summer activity to improve the physical plant. There are two major projects we will be completing before school opens in early September:

First, we are moving forward with reconfiguring the parking lot behind Wilder Dining Hall in an effort to connect the road behind Ashburn Chapel to the road that runs between Blake House and our Athletic Center. In addition to increasing the safety of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic in that area of the school, this project will remove the current mystery many visitors confront when trying to travel by car from the athletic fields to the boathouse.

Second, work is underway on Blake House to construct new bathrooms and a common

space the building has needed for some time. This will take the better part of the summer to complete and will improve the experience for all living in the space. We did something comparable in Whitney House last summer and plan to continue working on common spaces in all of our dormitories over time.

Before closing, I want to thank those of you who have already given to the Brooks Fund Challenge we launched on Monday. The opportunity to earn the \$200,000 two donors have committed to the school if the entire school community can match the number by June 30 is exciting. A direct line can be drawn between a healthy and robust Brooks Fund and the school's ability to take on the types of projects we are working on this summer. The better we do with our annual giving effort, the greater our capacity to continually improve the school's program and facilities. I am deeply grateful for all of your support and any consideration you might give to helping the school meet this challenge.

Finally, this will be my last letter to parents who are leaving "current-parent" status, with a member of the class of 2019 now onto a next step in life. Any attempt to capture our gratitude for your engagement and support in a letter like this one will be insufficient. Let it suffice to say that you contributed directly in so many ways to improving and deepening the experience your children had here. You helped us move in the direction of realizing our mission and have been terrific partners along the way. Thank you. For those of you returning in the fall, I will look forward to being in touch in mid-July with an update on our summer progress and a welcome to our new parents. Until then, enjoy the start of your summer!

Best,

John R. Packard
Head of School

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

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