



September 20, 2019

Dear Parents,

As we close in on completing our second full week of classes, in what has been a challenging beginning to the school year, I want to start by sharing how deeply grateful we continue to be for all your care and support. In the time that has passed since last Wednesday's car accident, I have been overwhelmed by the kindness and compassion that has flowed throughout our school community. As all four students continue to recover from their injuries, we are poised to do all we can to help and support them and their families along the way. As I noted last week, I have been incredibly proud of how your children have gone forward with their classmates and friends squarely in heart and mind. We took time in our first school meeting to write notes and sign posters to send to all of them, and that pause in our routine, among others, has helped on a number of fronts. As we all process this accident, the care and attention we have paid to one another has made an enormous difference, and will continue to over the days and weeks ahead. Again, thank you for your thoughts, prayers, and all you have done to support these students, their families, and the school.

Typically, we are finding our way into a rhythm and routine when we get to the end of our second full week of classes. While we anticipate this will occur with time, we are not as settled at this stage as we usually are. All of us are mindful of the fact that new students are still very much in the process of transitioning to Brooks, adjusting to new patterns and expectations, boarding for the first time in many cases, and trying to connect with peers and adults all at once. In total, this is a lot to carry under any circumstances, and is even more challenging with the school reeling from the accident. For returning students, the academic and extracurricular load they are carrying is likely to ask more of them than was the case one year ago. Here, too, there is additional weight in their daily lives. And, of course, the class of 2020 is engaged and excited to be leading their school in pursuit of a great year, while all of them make plans for what is next in their lives -- not an easy balancing act. I share this overview in order to make clear our desire to be engaged in supporting your child's particular needs in the wake of this accident. It feels more important than ever to be explicit about this point.

In certain respects, it is hard to believe only two weeks have passed since we opened school in Chapel followed by a half-day of classes. This followed a successful couple of days of preseason practices, orientation, and class trips. Field Day on the first Sunday we were together was also fun with lots of enthusiasm on a beautiful afternoon. From there, we did well getting started the next morning with Senior Prefect Brooke Cordes '20 sharing a wonderful Chapel talk. In it, she reflected on lessons learned and how much she has grown in and out of the classroom. The relationships and connections she has forged with friends, teachers, and coaches have been the bedrock of her experience, and it was good for all of us to hear her wise counsel and advice as the new year got underway. She set an excellent example for all in her class to follow as opportunities to speak emerge for members of the class of 2020 throughout the year.

Yesterday, I had an opportunity in Chapel to spend some time acknowledging the ranking scholars in last year's third form, fourth form, and fifth form, along with the ranking scholar in the school. Emily Choe '20 earned this distinction in the fifth form, Anya Sancharawala '21 in the fourth form, and Yuto Sugiyama Lam '22 was the ranking scholar in the third form, as well as in the whole school. Congratulations to all of them! In addition, I had an opportunity to introduce the seven new members of the faculty this year. While your children are underway with all of them in the classroom, dormitory, and our afternoon programs, I was glad to have a chance to point them out with all of us together. You can learn more about each of them [HERE](#).

Before we finished in Chapel, I had an opportunity to introduce the Hello Campaign to the school, in general, and our new students, in particular. This is an annual event aimed at encouraging all of us to work hard at the start of the year to get to know one another by making sure we say, "hello," as we move about our beautiful campus. This year's campaign was launched with help from Olu Oladitan '20, and our best effort via a skit to provide examples of the do's and don'ts when we encounter one another along Main Street. I finished with my pledge to do all I can to learn everyone's name. Now, the challenge begins!

The introduction of the campaign precedes what will be the ninth annual Nametag Party in our home on Tuesday, September 24, at 9 p.m. At this party, all new students and student leaders are invited to pack into the Head of School's residence, wear a number of nametags, and get to know one another. As of the next morning, all students are encouraged to ask me whether I know their name when they see me on campus. If I fail to answer correctly, I will give that student \$5 in Brooks currency on the spot (redeemable in the school store or snack shack). I am hoping the \$110 Brooks Bucks I have in hand gets me through the fall! This is a fun way to push ourselves to know one another better and take advantage of the opportunity we have to say hello and contribute to helping others feel welcome at school.

As we look ahead to the next couple of weeks, I would highlight the following:

We will be in the first of two days of our fall trustee meetings when this letter makes its way to you. As we move further away from The Campaign for Brooks, and into a first year with all we achieved in that campaign up and running, we will be turning our attention more directly to what we hope to accomplish over the next couple of years preceding the early stages of a centennial campaign. We are just seven years away from celebrating the school's 100th year and want to do all we can to take on a number of relatively smaller campus projects in order to allow that campaign to be more focused on endowment needs of all kinds. In particular, we will be considering a number of projects comparable in scope to the work we completed in July and August on the Blake House common room and Wilder Dining Hall parking area. We will emerge from meetings in time to enjoy dinner this evening with some of your children who are serving in school leadership roles this year. This will be our third year of holding this dinner with student leaders and the whole school year in front of us -- lots of fun!

With much of what we have been thinking about and will discuss this weekend with trustees in mind, I am looking forward to being with groups of you for drinks, dinner, and some conversation about the school's state and aspirations at any one of the five parent dinners we will be hosting in the Bowers Room in our Center for the Arts. While I will offer some thoughts about the recent past, present, and future of the school, I will be equally interested in questions and thoughts all of you have about some of what I touch on, or other items you have in mind. As we move further into a year of working on our self-study as part of our reaccreditation process, we are eager to think with you about the school and how we are doing. Thank you for making the time to join us. If you have not yet signed up, you can do so [HERE](#).

Trustee meetings will be completed by lunchtime on Saturday, and Kim and I will quickly transition to hosting our first Open House of the year. For those of you who are new parents,

we open our home to the school as part of our Saturday night activities about once per month through the school year. We thoroughly enjoy the time with your children watching TV, playing some games, and just being in one another's company at the end of a full week. The highlight for most students is the delivery of calzones from Jimmy's Pizza at 10 p.m., which leads to a feeding frenzy you need to see to believe! We hope your children will be able to join us tomorrow night.

In the coming week, we are hoping to spend some time talking with all students about our major school rules. The goal is to make clear what our rules are as the year begins, and to emphasize that all of them are in place to ensure student safety and maintain a high standard of integrity. You can find them on pages 51-52 of this year's [Student Handbook](#). The vaping epidemic that continues to infiltrate schools all over the country is a particular concern, and it is hard to go one week without reading a new story about the health risks associated with regular use of vaping devices. We will continue to do what we can to increase our collective awareness of those risks, support students who are trying to steer clear of using these devices, and assist those who are trying to quit. The possession of a vaping device in and of itself is a violation of a major school rule. Finally, we will also underline the school's commitment to doing all it can to ensure respectful and healthy relationships between students, including reference to the school's position on sexual intimacy and Massachusetts law regarding consent. Again, the hope is to make clear what the rules are, why they exist, and to provide students with incentive to make the kinds of healthy choices we believe they want to make.

After Tuesday night's Nametag Party, I will be traveling to New York to visit with some alumni and alumnae at an admission reception at the home of Susan and Ace Crary P'16, P'20 on Thursday, September 26, at 6:30 p.m. The Crarys have been kind enough to host this event for a number of years now, and we are looking forward to the time we will have with prospective students and families just beginning to think about Brooks. If you have friends and family members in New York who might like to join us that evening, please feel free to direct them our way!

While I am traveling, I will miss the opening of the Robert Lehman Art Center's current exhibit, *Environments, Cultures and Wildlife at Risk* at 7 p.m. on Thursday, September 26. You can learn more about these incredible photographs [HERE](#). The exhibit will be up through Tuesday, October 8.

I will be back at school on Friday afternoon next week and am looking forward to the admission Fall Visit Day we will be hosting on Saturday, September 28, at 1 p.m. I suspect a number of you may have attended this event in past years with your Brooks School child or children, and I want to thank you in advance for the time I know a number of you will give to this event. As you know, the opportunity to talk with current parents makes a huge difference for those trying to better understand our school. So, many thanks for your help with this event, in the admission waiting room all year long, and in all the ways you help prospective families learn about Brooks.

Again, thank you for all your time, support, and care over the past week-plus. While we move into the year with more to carry than in most years, we have also been reminded in powerful ways about what makes our school community a special one. I will be in touch again in early October. Until then, take good care.

Best,

John R. Packard
Head of School

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