



October 7, 2019

Dear Parents,

It is always the case that we head into October and the heart of the fall and wonder where all the time went. On the one hand, I look back to the opening of school and September and feel like this first month has passed in a flash. On the other hand, the beginning of this school year has not felt conventional or typical in any way. We have been pushed to find our way to the rhythm and routine for which all of us yearn during the early days of the year, and are just now getting there with autumn settling in and the leaves on the trees beginning to turn. While this year's start was unsettling, I continue to be incredibly proud of our school and the way so many have been supportive over this first month. Brooks School is a good place to be at all times, and especially so during trying times. Thank you.

The coming of October brings with it an initial glimpse at how your children are doing in the classroom with a wave of tests, papers, and projects all graded and available for review in gradebooks that are now open. There will be more to discuss when [Family Weekend](#) arrives and you have an opportunity to meet with your child's advisor. In the meantime, students, teachers, and advisors, will all have a chance to take a look at where things are, encourage more of the same where classes are going well, and make suggestions for improvement in areas in need of some attention. In either case, we have a long way to go until the semester ends in December. Lots of graded work and assessments are still to come!

When I was last in touch we were getting our fall trustee meetings underway. I am pleased to report that we made some nice progress on a number of fronts. In my last letter, I indicated we would be thinking about campus projects in the school's future, and we moved that conversation forward. While the scope and sequencing of much of this work is still undetermined, we will have more to share over the course of the fall, winter, and spring about plans to improve the physical plant over the next couple of years. Beyond considering campus projects, we spent some time debriefing on last year's successful admission and college counseling season, and enjoyed a nice dinner with a number of your children who are serving in leadership roles this year. The co-chairs of our New England Association of Schools & Colleges (NEASC) reaccreditation self-study, Mary Jo Carabatsos and Susanna Waters, provided an update on their work with a preview of what is still to come. A step in the relatively near future will be a survey all of you will receive around the time of Family Weekend. Your thoughts on a range of questions will help broaden and deepen the work we are doing. All told, we covered a lot of ground during trustee weekend and look forward to the work ahead.

While with trustees, I shared how much I was looking forward to the smaller parent dinners we have begun hosting in the Bowers Room in our Center for the Arts. The two we have already held were great fun and a nice way to allow those of you who are new and/or returning parents to both renew acquaintances and get to know one another. Beyond what we hope are nice evenings socializing with fellow parents, a primary goal is to share a brief update about the school and engage in questions and thoughts that are on your minds.

Ultimately, the more we can do to open lines of communication in these ways, the better off we will be as we partner with you on behalf of your children. So, thank you to those of you who have already attended. And, we look forward to three or four still to come!

The ninth annual Nametag Party was held later on the night of our first parent dinner. We had a nice hour together enjoying cookie dough and other refreshments, along with making sure hundreds of nametags were attached to all in attendance. Most importantly, we made some progress in getting to know one another. I have been hemorrhaging Brooks Bucks \$5 at a time since the event, however, and am planning on taking full credit for any fiscal success the school store has been enjoying of late! On a more serious note, the good spirit and creative nametags made for a great time. Over the years, this event has proven to be a nice catalyst in pushing us in the direction of deepening our connection to the school and one another. We will stay in pursuit of that goal all year long.

With admission season shifting into high gear, we are beginning to meet with prospective students and families here on campus and across the region and country. We had a very nice reception at the home of Susan and Ace Crary P'16, P'20 in New York with families who will be visiting campus through the fall. With recent graduates Andrew Stevens '18, Jadie DeLeon '19, and Reilly Karger '19 all joining us for the event, we had an impressive Brooks School contingent on hand. A couple of days later, we welcomed well over 100 prospective students and families to campus for our open house and enjoyed all kinds of opportunities to share the school with many who were visiting for the first time. The perfect early fall weather was a big help! Looking ahead, we will hold additional admission receptions in Marblehead, Mass., at the home of Leila Blodgett P'16, P'21 on Thursday, October 10, at 6:30 p.m., and West Newton, Mass., at the home of Nancy and Tom Ferry P'21 on Wednesday, October 16, also at 6:30 p.m. In all of these cases, we draw tremendously from so many of you who open your homes to the school and share so much time in support of our effort to attract a broad and talented group of students to Brooks. Of course, this adds to the broad and talented children of yours who are already here! Your engagement in our admission efforts makes an enormous difference. Thank you.

Before closing, I do want to share with you some of what I covered with the school on Friday regarding a recent disciplinary event involving a vaping device. Just under two weeks ago, a student was discovered using a nicotine-vaping device in a dormitory, which constitutes a major school rule violation. After engaging the discipline committee and following our protocol when this rule is violated, the student was suspended from school, placed on probation for the balance of the school year, and has been required to participate in health and counseling steps aimed at supporting this student's desire to cease using vaping devices entirely.

The challenge we are facing in all vaping cases centers on our need and desire to address nicotine-vaping device possession and use as both a health and a disciplinary issue. On the health side of the issue, there is a news story every day detailing the harmful effects of vaping. A recent one that caught my attention can be found [HERE](#). We are working on increasing non-disciplinary and preventive measures to support students who are not using these devices, but might be feeling some pressure to begin using. Moreover, we want to do all we can to help students who are using know there is a route to quitting. On the discipline side of the issue, we are trying to square our desire to appreciate the addictive elements of nicotine-vaping devices with the fact that possessing and/or using a vaping device constitutes violation of a major school rule. In cases where the mandatory drug test administered to all students who are discovered possessing and/or using vaping devices is positive for substances other than nicotine, the matter becomes a drug and alcohol violation and is treated accordingly. However, in cases where the drug test is clean, we find ourselves more inclined, but not infinitely inclined, to work with students on finding a way forward.

In sum, we are in a fluid and dynamic mode when it comes to addressing nicotine-vaping device possession and use. We will continue to work in a direction that makes health and

counseling support available to students struggling with this issue. We will also remind everyone that there is no student at Brooks who has been discovered to be in violation of our vaping rule twice. There are and need to be limits. To keep the health piece and the discipline piece in an appropriate balance will be our hope moving forward. If you have questions, please let me know.

Finally, we are closing in on Family Weekend beginning for some of you at a parent dinner on the evening of Thursday, October 17. We are looking forward to seeing most of you, however, through the day and evening on Friday and Saturday, October 18 and 19. The program can be found [HERE](#) and we are eager to be as helpful as we can be in ensuring the weekend is full, fun, and a nice opportunity to see your children at work and play at Brooks. With a lot going on, the opportunity to meet with your child's advisor is as important as any part of the weekend. So, please do let us know if we can help in any way in scheduling these meetings over these couple of days. The weekend wraps up after athletic games on Saturday, October 19, and we will all take the day off on Monday, October 21. We hope this allows for a bit more family time than usual ahead of returning to classes for our push through the rest of the fall.

I will aim to be in touch again following Family Weekend with a look at the stretch taking us into November. In the meantime, I will look forward to seeing a lot of you at any one of the events and dinners we have scheduled over the next few weeks. As always, please feel free to be in touch with anything that is on your mind. Enjoy these early fall days!

Best,

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