



November 16, 2018

Dear Parents,

As this letter makes its way to all of you, we will be closing in on departing for Thanksgiving vacation and a well-deserved break from the full and busy pace we have maintained through the fall. While the snow that fell overnight and greeted us as we awoke this morning came early by any standard, its presence underlined for all of us that we are transitioning from fall to winter at this time of year. When we return to classes after the Thanksgiving holiday (my favorite), we will be into our winter afternoon activities and closing in on first semester exams and final assessments. There will be a lot to do in the less than three weeks we will have between Thanksgiving and the winter holidays!

Before looking ahead to what awaits us in December and a festive time of year on campus, I do want to try to capture some of what we have been doing since I was last in touch in late October. We were on the verge of Family Weekend at that time, and it was great fun to see so many of you on campus over those few days. An ominous weather forecast led to an extremely full Friday of programming and athletic contests, but we all did well with the change and got into our weekend before the weather hit. It was exciting to return to school after that weekend and officially enter the Center for the Arts for what will be the first of many firsts in this spectacular facility. In addition to exploring the space together, we also managed to enjoy some refreshments and eat 531 donuts in about 40 minutes, if you can believe it!

As I noted in my last letter, I was headed to Chicago and New York for receptions and some visits with alumni and alumnae, all of which went very well. It was nice to see some of you in New York, and a wide range of graduates spanning the generations in both cities. The opportunity receptions present to catch up with alums and share the school's state and aspirations with those who make time to attend is a lot of fun.

In between my travels, I was glad to have an opening in Chapel to share some thoughts in the aftermath of the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh. While we devoted some time to remembering the victims and reflecting on the weight and horror of this event during our first Chapel following Family Weekend, I did want to make clear the school's position on hate, hate speech, and acts motivated by hate. The fact that our students and your children are growing up in a world where increasing numbers of people are targeted due to some part of who they are, or circumstances they live with, underlines our need to be both explicit and unequivocal in our complete and total rejection of hatred. To make sure that no one in our community has any doubt about this position was my hope. I will look forward to staying on this point as we move forward.

At the beginning of this week, I enjoyed the privilege of being one of a few speakers the day after Veterans Day and the 100th anniversary of the armistice that ended World War I. My colleague Alex Konovalchik spoke on behalf of the History Department, and he touched on how Veterans Day came to be what it is today, and Elizabeth DeSimone '20 shared John

McCrae's beautiful poem, *In Flanders Field*, written while he was serving in World War I on the western front. I shared the fact that 84 percent of those in Brooks School's first 15 graduating classes served in the Navy, Army, or Marines, and I pointed out places in Ashburn Chapel where we honor that service. Tragically, 16 Brooks School students have died while serving, and all of them are remembered on three wooden tablets in the back of the Chapel and to your left as you enter the building. I shared a bit about each of them, and reminded all of us that one of our greatest strengths as a school is our commitment to remembering well. We all participated in carrying that tradition forward this past Monday.

As you almost certainly know, we had our first Head of School's Holiday on Wednesday of this week with a nice confluence of Brooks School events coming together at the same time. For starters, I will not soon forget the amazing classical concert a standing-room-only crowd enjoyed in the theater on Tuesday night. This was our first formal performance in that magnificent space, and Director of Choral and Chamber Music Kenneth Griffith led a wonderfully talented group of student performers through a beautiful concert. On Wednesday afternoon, our field hockey and boys soccer teams both competed impressively in first-round New England tournament action. The girls won their game in overtime and will play in a semifinal game on Saturday afternoon on Anna K. Trustey Memorial Field at 2 p.m. I hope that a number of us will delay the beginning of Thanksgiving vacation to support this still undefeated and ISL championship team. While the boys did not get the result they wanted and their effort deserved on Wednesday, they were heroic on the field and finished the season with a lot to be proud of.

You may also know that the school held a dangerous intruder drill yesterday at noon in order to test our response during a time of day when we are both clustered in the dining hall, and scattered along Main Street and in the classroom building. We executed this drill with the assistance of the North Andover Police Department, and we are still in the process of gathering feedback about how it went. We continue to use the ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) protocol, along with software (In Force 911) that allows for more direct communication with local law enforcement -- cutting down response times. We will learn from this experience and find our way to a next iteration at some point later in the year. If you have any questions about this drill, please let me know.

Before turning to some of what awaits us in late November and December, I want to highlight the current exhibit in The Robert Lehman Art Center. Cuts, Cutouts and Offcuts will run through Monday, December 10, and features the work of Marco Palli. His work is in marble, clay, aluminum, steel, and other media, and it has been profiled nationally and internationally. I hope you will have a chance to enjoy the work while it remains up in the space.

Looking ahead, I will be attending The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS) annual conference in Washington, D.C., shortly after we return from Thanksgiving vacation. Of the few conferences I attend each year, this is the only one focused exclusively on boarding school education. Thus, the workshops are designed for schools like ours, and tend to be more practical and useful as a result. I will look forward to some time with colleagues at other schools and hope to return to Brooks with some new ideas for our consideration.

As we move more fully into December and wrapping up first-semester classes ahead of exams beginning on Monday, December 10, we will also spend some time taking in the holiday spirit. We will light the tree outside of the Head of School's House, and all of your children will return from break to a campus decorated for the season. Our traditional Lessons and Carols service will follow exams and send all of us into winter vacation in style. And, before you know it, 2019 and Winter Term will be upon us!

For now, I wish all of you a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday with your families and friends. We will look forward to getting the winter months off to a great start on the other side of the break. Take good care.

Best,

John R. Packard
Head of School

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