



November 21, 2017

Dear Parents,

I hope the first part of this Thanksgiving vacation has allowed all of you to have more time with your children than is normally within reach when school is in session. I noted last week in Chapel that this pause always feels like the most important one of all to me. With the exception of Parents Weekend, and the occasional holiday or power outage, we move at an aggressive clip through September, October and November. We try to get as much as we can out of the fall, and it seems to me that we have done extremely well in this regard. I am proud of the work your children have produced in and out of the classroom. They have certainly earned this break.

As we close the fall and turn our attention to the winter, there is a lot that wrapped up in the past couple of weeks that is well worth noting before officially turning the page. The following comes to mind:

In the arts, we were treated to three impressive performances of "Radium Girls" in the Science Center Atrium. The company did a beautiful job making maximum use of that unique space on our campus and are to be congratulated for doing so well. It was clear that tremendous work went into pulling the show together on stage and behind the scenes. More recently, many of us enjoyed the Electric Concert on the final Sunday evening before this break in Frick Dining Hall. The combination of instrumental and vocal talent was impressive, and all who performed had clearly put much time and effort into the selections they shared with the audience. I am looking forward to more musical performances through the year.

Our fall athletic season finished in exciting fashion for all teams at all levels, with far too many notable performances for me to capture in one letter. It was fun to have almost all of our teams competing against Tabor Academy on the last Saturday of the regular season. While we did not carry the day in the wins and losses column against Tabor, there were a number of competitive games and a nice atmosphere to enjoy all over campus. At the varsity level, we were pleased to have our field hockey team, boys soccer team, and football team all qualify for postseason action. While field hockey dropped its quarterfinal contest, the football team won the Ken O'Keefe Bowl by defeating New Hampton School on the road in its third bowl game appearance over the past four years. This is quite an accomplishment for Head Coach Pat Foley, his staff, and the sixth-formers who were part of an impressive four-year stretch for Brooks School football. The boys soccer team won the ISL championship for the second consecutive year, and then won the Class B New England Championship, 3-2, over South Kent School, with both the tying and winning goals coming in the final eight

minutes of the match! It was simply extraordinary. This was a fitting finish to Dusty Richard's incredible 40-year tenure as head coach of this team, and the work he and Willie Waters did to lead a terrific group of student-athletes was just amazing. Congratulations to all of our coaches and athletes who did so well representing the school through the fall.

It is also true that from late October through the beginning of this break, our students worked incredibly hard in the classroom at a time when many of them were confronting a steady battery of standardized tests and college applications that turned already full days into overflowing days. I am generally amazed at the grit and resilience our students show through this push and am confident that some of the sleeping they might be doing this week is directly connected to working so hard right up to this past Saturday. This also means our faculty are working hard to assess the tests, papers, and projects that have come due as we pivot in the direction of getting students prepared for first semester final exams in December. All of this underlines my feeling about the importance of this break. To catch our breath before we hit the ground running again next week is critical.

Finally, we also brought our *Brooks Together* push to a close at the beginning of Thanksgiving vacation, and I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you who participated and supported the school in the process. We know well that there are countless ways in which all of you give to the school and enrich the experience our students have by virtue of your time, care, and generosity. All of your support matters, and please know that as we settle into this Thanksgiving week, the school is deeply thankful for all that you do for Brooks School.

Looking ahead, we have a lot to be excited about as the temperatures continue to drop and the first snow draws closer every day. Some of the highlights include:

We have circulated information soliciting interest and applications for our exchange programs and summer internships over the past few weeks. These are exciting opportunities, and many have expressed interest. Furthermore, we are in the process of getting Winter Term course assignments squared away for January. I know that I am very much looking forward to those few weeks, and the opportunity I have to be in the classroom and work with students on a subject that I am passionate about. To immerse ourselves in areas of interest and have a lot of fun along the way is the goal.

On Thursday evening of next week, the opening of Peter Bruun's work in The Robert Lehman Art Center will take place between 6:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. Peter has been working with students and faculty members, in and out of the classroom, at various points through the fall. We are all looking forward to seeing, enjoying, and learning from the work that students pull together with Peter's help and guidance. If you are not able to join us for the opening, we hope you will have a chance to see the work while it remains up in December. You can learn more about the exhibit on the [Spider's Soliloquy website](#).

I will be attending The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS) annual conference in Boston at the end of next week. This is always a nice opportunity to share with and hear from peers about challenges and opportunities we are facing and pursuing as boarding schools. Of late, TABS has engaged all boarding schools in a conversation about pursuing strategies that will grow interest in our schools throughout the United States and Canada. I am hoping to get a feel for how that work is progressing. It should be a useful couple of days.

In addition to finding some time to have a proper tree lighting ceremony outside the Head of School's residence at some point once we are back in school next week, I am also

pleased to be one of many who will invite and remind you to consider attending our Lessons & Carols service on Sunday, December 10, at 4 p.m., in Ashburn Chapel. This is the same service that we will hold for the whole school on Thursday, December 14, and is one of my favorite events of the year. Our students lead the way musically, and the service has a lovely rhythm to it. A reception will follow in the Head of School's residence. We hope you will be able to attend both.

I suspect that the first semester exams I referenced earlier will be a bit less exciting to students. Most of your children will have four exams between Monday, December 11, and Wednesday, December 13. We will spend a good bit of time next week and the following week reviewing and helping students prepare for those exams. This can cause stress, particularly for new students, and we will do our best to help all of your children manage the work and keep these assessments in perspective. You should certainly be in touch with your child's advisor if you have any questions as exam week draws closer.

I hope that all of you are on your way to a wonderful Thanksgiving. We look forward to getting the winter off to a great start next week.

Best,

John R. Packard
Head of School

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