



March 23, 2021

Dear Brooks School Community Members,

As we prepare to resume second semester classes on Thursday morning, and welcome students back to campus over the course of next week, I am very sorry to be writing just one week removed from the horrific shootings in the Atlanta area that left eight people dead. Six of the eight victims were women of Asian descent. Sadly, we again find ourselves reeling on the other side of acts of racial violence at a time when hate crimes have been increasing. This morning, we awoke to news of a mass shooting in Colorado that has claimed 10 lives and has families devastated by loss and authorities searching for understanding. We will surely learn more about this awful incident in the days ahead.

We know these incidents of one week ago have left many in the Asian, Asian-American, Pacific Islander (AAPI) community shaken and outraged. The outrage must become a universal sentiment if we are to overcome the insidious effects of systemic racism that contribute to tragedies of this sort.

At Brooks, we want to be clear and unequivocal in condemning these acts in the strongest possible terms. We want our AAPI community members to know and feel their school's embrace and commitment to being a safe place to live, work, and go to school. We want to reiterate our resolve to foster and deepen an anti-racist culture promoting equity and inclusion for all. We want our AAPI community members to know in equally clear and unequivocal terms that they are valued, important, and vital to the larger Brooks School mosaic of which they are a part. Our school is enriched by difference in ways we see and feel every day. We will be unwavering in our pursuit of ensuring this continues to be the case.

We also appreciate that what we aspire to be is not always in lockstep with what we are. We know there is work to do. We know that my stating what we want does not automatically make it so. It is frustrating to have space between where we are and where we might be. The need to remain engaged with one another in thinking about how to address this gap at our school becomes magnified at times when some in our community are hurting, as is the case now. The hurt some are feeling must matter to us. It needs to be our inspiration to continue undeterred in reaching for a higher plane of equity and inclusion on and beyond our campus. In this way, we all work in a direction of being better positioned to contribute to the dismantling of systemic racism in this country. We become upstanders as opposed to bystanders at a time when a need for the former has never been greater.

Our mission at Brooks seeks to provide the most meaningful educational experience our students will have in their lives. Our values are the underpinnings of this mission --

the means to the end, if you will -- and empathy and engagement are building blocks of a mission-driven experience at our school. If we are to realize our mission with our students, we need to lean in at moments like this one. We need to step in the direction of understanding and reassuring those who are shaken. We need to engage in thinking and doing that aims in new ways to foster equity, inclusion, and belonging on our campus. We need to be outraged in ways that will allow us to be part of solutions moving forward. In my view, we are only being called to be our best selves. We are a kind and compassionate community. We need to leverage these strengths with one another as we move forward.

On Thursday when we return to class, and with input from our Asian Student Association and AAPI community, we will gather for a virtual school meeting to allow time for sharing what some have been thinking about and experiencing since last week's tragedy. We will make time for advisors to catch up with advisees in the same spirit. On Tuesday of next week, we will have affinity group time available for ongoing conversation and processing. From there, in what I hope will be our most engaging stretch of this very challenging school year, we will stay the course of trying differently to see and appreciate the role we all have in one another's belonging at our school.

I am looking forward to being together again on Thursday. Take good care.

Best,

John R. Packard
Head of School