



April 12, 2018

Dear Parents,

Each April, we have what usually proves to be a delusion that nice weather will accompany our beginning to this final stretch in the year. And, each year we return and find ourselves in cold, raw and even snowy conditions well into this month. So, in many ways, the beginning of our final two months of 2017-2018 are right on schedule. We are all yearning for some warmer days and the spectacular spring color that eventually emerges at Brooks every year. Unfortunately, the long-term forecast indicates that 50-degree days will be the norm for a while!

I want to begin this letter by acknowledging and sharing some thinking with all of you about a recent discipline incident that led to a student leaving the school. On the Saturday evening of our first weekend back from Spring Break, a student was discovered to be in possession of a container that had stored alcohol. As conversation about the container ensued, it became clear that the student had been drinking earlier that evening. This student was involved in a drinking incident at the end of the 2014-2015 school year, and was suspended for that infraction. At the time of that suspension we indicated, echoing language found in the Student Handbook, that a clear second drug/alcohol violation involving possession or use would leave the school feeling that it could not continue with the student.

I spoke to the school in Chapel on Thursday of last week hoping to do three things: First, I wanted the community to be clear about what happened. Second, I wanted to be clear about the school's rationale in cases like this one. Third, I wanted to acknowledge the substantial pain and sadness that this situation has led us to feel on campus. I shared my appreciation of the support many in the community have directed to this student, and accepted that we look at this matter through different lenses and see it in different ways.

At the beginning of each year, I speak to the school at our first school meeting and make clear that a violation of any major school rule risks one's ability to continue to be a student here. Our rules exist to keep students safe, and to emphasize the importance of values and standards that matter to us. When students are in violation of our major school rule regarding drugs and alcohol, in particular, they are making decisions that compromise our ability to take good care of them. As I shared with students last week, the school reserves the right to determine that we cannot go forward with a student after an initial violation of a major school rule, yet we have a default belief in second chances. We believe in redemption and the opportunity to learn and grow with us on the other side of initial infractions.

At the same time, we believe that we have reason to expect students returning to school on the other side of suspensions to steer well clear of conduct that resembles the initial infraction. We encourage the student to be far away from the line, and we express our desire to be helpful in ensuring that proves to be the case. We are clear about the consequences of a second infraction involving the possession or use of drugs or alcohol. To be in that circumstance in this case has been painful for many, and continues to be. I told the school last week that I wish we could go back in time and discourage the behavior that led to this predicament.

I also indicated that we believe in limits. I shared my belief that moving away from this practice and allowing third chances in drug and alcohol use or possession cases would compromise the integrity, seriousness and intent of our rules. As we try to discourage drug and alcohol use through education, counseling and time spent illuminating the risks, I believe our ability to do this work well in dynamic and evolving ways would be weakened if we allowed third chances. I do not think such a step is in the school's best interest.

I appreciate that this matter has brought a lot of feeling to the surface and that processing that feeling and the hurt that lingers takes time. If I can help with questions you have, please let me know.

The spring is always busy, and our plate has been full since we returned to school in late March. I want to begin by thanking all of you for the wonderful employee appreciation lunch we enjoyed on our first day back from Spring Break. The time that went into preparing a delicious meal, and your generosity with so many great raffle prizes, meant and means a lot to us. Thank you.

In the middle of our first week back, we took some time out to engage in Community Day, which allowed us to see the film *Bending the Arc*, hear from Linda Tirado in Chapel, and have some discussion about socioeconomic difference and poverty. While I think it would be fair to say that our reaction to Linda Tirado's talk was varied, the sum total of the experience underlined the inherent value in all people in ways that elevated awareness and stimulated thinking about ways to take action. I was pleased and impressed with the group of fourth-form students I spent time debriefing with after both the film and the speaker. The level at which the group was engaged in thinking about challenging questions centered on equity and inclusion was encouraging.

Last week, we spent the better part of Tuesday and Friday engaged in our admission revisit days with many of you on campus to help. While there is nothing ordinary about these days, we do aim to provide our guests with an authentic experience that connects them with students, faculty members and parents in ways that get all questions answered as we put our best foot forward. We could not do this without your help. As we move in the direction of welcoming some wonderful new students and families to Brooks in the fall, please know how thankful we are for all you do to enhance the admission process at our school.

Earlier this week, I was in Washington for a reception on Tuesday evening with alumni and alumnae. The event was a lot of fun and served as another reminder about the degree to which so many in our extended community continue to care for the school well after years spent in North Andover as students. I should add that it was also nice to be in a part of the country that is experiencing some real spring weather!

We were pleased to have Amy Broadhead '94 back to campus to deliver this year's Kippy Liddle Day address. As some of you know, we hold this Chapel service every

year to honor a former faculty member and crew coach, Katherine V. "Kippy" Liddle, who died tragically in an accident on the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia while coaching Brooks rowers in 1984. Amy grew up on the Brooks School campus, as her father, faculty emeritus Ray Broadhead '70, was on the faculty for more than 30 years. She was an exceptional student and athlete at Brooks, excelling in soccer and basketball before going on to play college soccer at Brown University. We aim to pay tribute to Kippy by celebrating women's athletics on this occasion every year, and Amy did that beautifully.

I am looking forward to seeing a number of you at tomorrow afternoon's Parents Committee meeting, which will include an opportunity to have a tour of the [Center for the Arts](#). We are on schedule to be in the building at some point in the middle of the coming fall, and getting a feel for the space from inside the building is a lot of fun. I hope there will be more opportunities of this sort as the spring and summer move along.

As a message from Andrea Heinze indicated earlier in the week, we will be conducting an active shooter drill on campus with the North Andover Police Department tomorrow morning. While our expansive campus does not resemble most high schools in the United States, we are doing more routine training and thinking with local law enforcement about how to be prepared for the unthinkable. Above all, we want students, faculty and staff to be familiar with our manner of communicating in such a circumstance, and we want to equip them with a protocol aimed at making everyone on campus as safe as possible. As we support students joining efforts to raise awareness and advocate for legislation that makes schools less prone to gun violence, we are unfortunately in an environment that requires us to stay in the habit of training in order to be prepared.

We hope that a number of your parents and special friends will be able to join us for Grandparents Day on Saturday. In addition to class visits, tours, games and time with your children, Kim and I will host a reception for all who can join us in our home shortly after lunch. Earlier in the day, I will have an opportunity to take the group through a [virtual tour of the Center for the Arts](#). This has been a big hit with students and other groups in the past, as we "fly" through the building and talk about all of its features. We will hope to draw a few "oohs" and "aahs" in the process!

Looking further ahead, I will be traveling to Choate Rosemary Hall next weekend to chair the reaccreditation of that school. I have done this a few times in the past and the experience is always rich and full of learning opportunities. While a much bigger school than Brooks, I am sure that I will learn a great deal from spending a few days on Choate's campus. Shortly after returning from that visit, we will host all of you who are sixth-form parents on Friday, April 27, for drinks, dinner and a chance to celebrate all that your children have achieved and shared with the school. This year's prom will follow just two nights later, and we will officially be into the home stretch by that point in time.

Incredibly, the pace will quicken when May arrives, with Advanced Placement exams and the culmination of so much exciting work in and out of the classroom. I will look forward to being in touch again in the midst of our acceleration. As always, if you have questions for me between now and then, please let me know.

Best,

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Head of School

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