



February 18, 2019

Dear Parents,

I hope all of you are well as we move further into February and close in on the end of our winter season this coming Saturday. By the middle of next week, we will be transitioning to our spring afternoon program and might even venture outdoors for an occasional practice before we all depart for spring vacation on March 6. The next couple of weeks will be full of culminating moments on the ice, courts, and stage, and it will be fun to see our students excelling in so many areas. We will also be busy in the classroom with some exams, papers, and projects, all due before the marking period closes in early March. In sum, we will earn the break awaiting us in just more than two weeks!

Before taking a look back and ahead at some of what has been and remains on our plate here at school, I do have to pause and celebrate yet another Super Bowl championship for the New England Patriots. When I last wrote to all of you, I shared my excitement about the team and this year's run to the big game. Not long after sending that letter, I snuck onto StubHub, found a couple of tickets, and went to the game with an old friend. There was a strong Brooks contingent in Atlanta, and it was fun to connect with some of you over the course of the day. The win was the icing on the cake. So, please pardon me for beginning a parent letter on the subject of the Super Bowl, but I am still reveling in the outcome!

I noted in my last letter that Giving Day 2019 was approaching, and am pleased to report the day was a big success on a number of levels. The hope for the day is that we draw a lot of participation in the Brooks Fund to the surface for this 24-hour window of time with some friendly competition and fun promotions. When the dust settled, we had just about 750 gifts and more than \$131,000 raised. We were particularly pleased that 140 of those gifts came from donors who had not made a gift to Brooks in three years or more. To have raised more than 5 percent of what we are seeking to raise in the current school year in just one day was quite a feat. Many thanks to our director of institutional advancement, Gage Dobbins, and her whole team, who worked the entire 24-hour stretch. A great accomplishment!

It was a lot of fun to see a number of you and a wide range of alumni and alumnae at our Boston Reception on Wednesday of last week. For those of you who were able to attend, the evening provided a nice window into the ways in which a Brooks education holds over time. I always leave these receptions inspired and confident about the school's prospects moving forward. My hope is that those of you who were with us on Wednesday felt the same way. There are so many in the extended Brooks School community doing all they can to ensure that the school today has what it needs to excel. That feels good.

This past Friday, we held our Wilder Speaking Prize contest quarter-final round after all students participated in the initial round. English teacher John Haile coordinates the contest from start to finish, and all students have been working with the same two prompts:

1. The future is no more uncertain than the present

2. "The past is always tense, the future perfect" (Zadie Smith)

We are on track to move to a final round before we depart for spring vacation. From my seat, the most exciting part of the contest is the fact that so many students find their voice and a lot of courage in getting up in front of their peers and sharing something of their own. There are many winners in this exercise.

With public speaking in mind, our series of sixth-form speeches in Chapel began last week and will run all the way through the middle of May. We learn a lot through these talks and have gotten off to a great start this year. I am looking forward to the many that lie ahead.

As this letter makes its way to you, Kim and I will be in Florida for some visits with alums and a reception in Hobe Sound this evening before returning to school tomorrow. I will head back out for a full week in California this coming Sunday with stops in both San Francisco and Los Angeles. The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) will hold its annual conference in Long Beach at the end of next week, and I will spend some time there, as well. This is the largest independent school conference of the year and always includes a range of impressive speakers. Anderson Cooper of CNN is on this year's program. I am sure I will return to school for our final few days before spring vacation with a lot of good food for thought.

In between trips to Florida and California, "Hairspray" will run in our new theater at 7:30 p.m., on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of this week. This will be our first musical in the Center for the Arts, and the entire company has worked extremely hard to put on a terrific show. In total, we have more than 50 students involved in this production. It will be exciting to be in the space and giving the whole group our complete support. We hope you will be able to join us!

After the weekend, and while I am on the West Coast, we are hopeful that a couple of our winter teams will play in New England tournaments beginning on Wednesday of next week. This will come into greater focus at the end of this week, as all of our teams aim to finish well. With some luck, we might even host a tournament game or two. We will share scheduling news as soon as it becomes available.

In the midst of tournament week, Kristi Kohut's Mixed Media show in the Robert Lehman Art Center will open for all to enjoy on Thursday, February 28. Her work will hang in the space until spring vacation begins, and we hope you will have a chance to take it all in. You can learn more about Kristi's work on her [website](#).

We will hold the finals of the Wilder Speaking Prize contest on Monday, March 4, in Ashburn Chapel following an all-school dinner. We will also be pulling our grades together at that time and getting prepared to head off into spring vacation. My spring vacation will begin with a trip to Seoul and Hong Kong shortly after all of your children depart. I am scheduled to arrive in Seoul in the afternoon on Saturday, March 9, and will spend three days there before heading to Hong Kong on Tuesday, March 12. I am looking forward to events in both cities with alumni, alumnae, and a number of you. In addition, we are planning to host events for admitted students and families, as we will have made admission decisions by the time I arrive. There are no better advocates for the school than current parents, so we do hope a number of you in Seoul and Hong Kong will be able to help us persuade admitted students and parents to choose Brooks! Thanks in advance for your help.

I will plan to be in touch again at some point during my trip through Seoul and Hong Kong as spring vacation takes hold. Until then, I hope you will feel free to be in touch at any point with questions or thoughts you would like to share. Take good care.

Best,

John R. Packard  
Head of School

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