



May 24, 2017

Dear Parents,

I am pleased to report that over the past week we have experienced some beautiful spring weather that has allowed all of us to enjoy lots of time together outdoors. It has been fun seeing so many students and faculty members enjoy the beauty of the campus now in its green and flowering splendor. We are keeping our fingers crossed for some great weather this coming weekend as we put the final touches on celebrating with the Class of 2017 and all the family members and friends who will be here with us. While I cannot claim to be impartial, I do not believe there is anything quite like graduation weekend at Brooks School.

With the weekend in mind, I want to highlight that on Sunday, May 28, we will be dedicating the remembrance garden that we installed behind the science building. As some of you know, the space was constructed with gifts the school received to the Anna Trustey Memorial Fund. Students, faculty members, and skilled architects conceived of the space through last year, with a goal of creating an area on our campus where we could remember Brooks School students who died young. Thus, the space will eventually bear the names of students who alumni, alumnae, parents, and friends of the school ask us to remember, and we also hope the beauty of the area will allow for contemplation, reflection, and small group gatherings during the run of school. The dedication will take place at 11:30 a.m.

As we look back over the past couple of weeks, the school has been racing along at an impressive clip. Our Alumni Weekend was extremely successful, with roughly 300 people visiting the campus. Our alums enjoy seeing the school in action, and the boys 1st lacrosse team's victory over Thayer Academy in four overtime periods was first-rate entertainment! I am struck during this time we spend with the school's graduates at the depth of the connections so many feel to the school. The juxtaposition of this experience with what is to come during Prize Day over the weekend makes for a powerful combination.

An opening for a final Head of School's Holiday emerged after advanced placement exams had come and gone, and it was fun to find a day to pause before jumping into the final push that we are now in. We also enjoyed both the classical concert and electric concert on Monday and Friday of last week, respectively. Our students and faculty members do a super job pulling together such nice music for the community to enjoy. I was particularly fond of Carl Orff's "O Fortuna" from "Carmina Burana," which happens to be the music that the New England Patriots run onto the field to at Gillette Stadium. Our students were considerably better than the version I hear when I attend the games

through the fall and winter! The good work culminating in the arts has continued this week with a terrific dance performance on Monday night and two performances of Spring Awakening directed by Max Currie '17 in the auditorium's black box theater last night and tonight.

With classes finishing for the sixth form on Monday and all sorts of activity for them ahead of Prize Day rehearsal on Thursday morning, we enjoyed a third Chipotle dinner in our home with a number of them on Monday night. There is one more to go tonight, and it is fun to sit for a bit, enjoy some Chipotle, and talk about next steps in their lives. It becomes clear to us in a wide range of ways at this point in the year that our sixth form is ready for a new chapter, and it is affirming to see the Class of 2017 so clearly prepared to move on.

Looking ahead, we are focused exclusively on delivering a memorable holiday weekend with this year's graduating class at the center of attention. Once the dust settles from the festivities, however, we will move quickly into exams for third-, fourth-, and fifth-form students between Tuesday and Friday of next week. Once the final student finishes his or her last SAT test on Saturday, June 3, the dormitories will be empty and summer will officially take hold.

From there, we will need a few weeks to finish work related to the current school year, including final grades and comments for your sons and daughters. The better part of the first full week in June is spent in faculty meetings, and we will quickly pivot to our June trustee meetings over the second weekend in that month. By the time the board of trustees are on campus, work will have started on our Center for the Arts and the total renovation of the student center will not be far behind. There is no question that this summer is shaping up to be a busy one as we move from this year to next.

Once we are through these faculty meetings and board meetings, we will be in position to turn our attention to transitioning to next year in a couple of areas that we have been thinking about:

First, we have long thought about the opportunity we might have to do better residential work with third-form students during the year if we could find a way to house all of them together. In the coming year, an opportunity to step in that direction has emerged for third-form girls. Obviously, this is a step that we will share with incoming students, as it impacts next year's third-form girls the most, but it also allows for some exciting leadership opportunities for next year's older students. We are excited about that step and look forward to sharing more detail about it in time.

Second, as you know, we have been engaged in a review of our current dress code, driven primarily by widespread frustration with its current state. While we have not yet firmed up all of the particulars, we will be moving in a new direction next year that I hope and think will better address the range of interests and opinions many in the community have about what we ought to wear to school. The most important component of this next step in dress code will center on our collective engagement in the new approach, and I intend to do all that I can to ensure that we get off to a good start in the fall. I will have more to say on this step during the summer.

For now, we are looking forward to finishing well with the Class of 2017. If you have any questions for me, please let me know.

Best,

John R. Packard  
Head of School

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Brooks School  
1160 Great Pond Road, North Andover, MA 01845

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