



May 5, 2017

Dear Parents,

I noted in Chapel on Monday that with May now upon us, we can expect the pace to quicken with graduation less than four weeks away. This is an incredibly exciting time of year with so much good work culminating in and out of the classroom. The challenge is finding time to enjoy it all in the midst of pushing as hard as we can to finish the year well. The crescendo, of course, is Prize Day at the end of the month. We will be sorry to see the class of 2017 move on to what is next in their lives, but the group is clearly ready and eager to take on new challenges. We could not be more confident about the kinds of citizens and leaders they will be in the communities that will be so fortunate to welcome them through the summer and fall.

In taking a look back and ahead all at once, there is far more worth noting than I will capture in this letter. Yet, I do want to draw your attention to some of what has held in my thinking, along with what we are looking forward to over the coming weeks.

While Grandparents Day feels like it occurred a long time ago, I do want to begin by emphasizing how much fun we had with a number of your parents on campus. The day works well for a variety of reasons, but the fact that we are able to run our standard schedule and share real Brooks School classes with your parents and friends who join us makes all the difference - along with some great weather! We hope your parents enjoyed the day as much as we did.

We were treated early in the following week to four terrific speeches given by students in this year's edition of the Wilder Speaking Prize contest. All four were asked to deliver a memory piece and to interpret a quote from J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*: "The mark of the immature man is that he wants to die nobly for a cause, while the mark of the mature man is that he wants to live humbly for one." The group deserves credit for mustering the courage to address the whole school in these ways and to make the time to prepare a challenging speech at a busy time of year. Lami Zhang '19 prevailed with a wonderful speech, and there were only winners that night.

We were also pleased to see a number of you at our Cum Laude Society induction and then again at our Sixth Form parent dinner the following night. My colleague, John McLoughlin, was the speaker at our Cum Laude event and shared wonderful stories about how traveling, exploring, and learning have all been one and the same for him. In his inimitable way, he gave all of us much to think about as we honored the school's top scholars. The prom followed shortly thereafter, and a number of your sons and daughters seemed to enjoy that evening a great deal. Andover Country Club proved to be an

excellent venue for the occasion.

More recently, Director of the Robert Lehman Art Center Amy Graham welcomed Tjasa Owen '89 to campus to work with a number of our visual art students and open the show that is currently on display in the Lehman. As I mentioned in my last letter, Land & Sea will be up through May 20, 2017, and the official opening on Thursday of last week was fun for all who were able to attend. We continue to be incredibly fortunate to have such accomplished and interesting artists sharing their work and talent with the community.

At present, we are settling into the heart of advanced placement testing that started on Monday and wraps up at the end of the coming week. Students and teachers put a great deal of time and energy into getting prepared for these exams over the course of the year, and there is certainly a palpable sigh of relief on the other side of taking them. In the midst of this acute academic stretch, we will induct the Class of 2017 into the school's Alumni Association over dinner in the Frick Dining Hall tonight. With a number of alums back to share the evening with this year's soon-to-be graduates, we are sure to enjoy the time we will have together.

Looking ahead with all of the "culminating" in mind that I referenced earlier, a quick glance at the school calendar will reveal that the balance of the year overflows with events and performances that are lots of fun to take in. One highlight for Kim and me over the next few weeks will be the four opportunities we have to invite groups in the Class of 2017 to our home for dinner and some nice conversation as they close in on the finish line. While the Chipotle we serve is surely the primary draw, it is nice to spend some time with them as graduation approaches.

In the midst of closing the year well with students, we will also welcome a number of alumni and alumnae back to campus for reunions over Alumni Weekend on Friday, May 12, and Saturday, May 13. We will have graduates spanning 75 years, as at least one member of the Class of 1942 will return for the weekend in order to attend his 75th reunion. I am looking forward to the time we will have with our alums, and I know they will be impressed by your sons and daughters and all they are doing at today's Brooks School.

Before and after Alumni Weekend, we will have a number of athletic teams competing to finish the year well in both league and New England tournaments down the stretch. It is always true that games and matches tend to stack up at this time of year with so much inclement weather, but our athletes have done a great job persevering through April's cold and raw conditions. We are hopeful for mild and sunny spring days for the balance of the year!

In the arts, we are sure to enjoy some wonderful individual performances and final projects that have been building to this point all year long. On Monday, May 15, at 7 p.m., we will hold our Classical Concert in the Chapel, and this will be followed by our Electric Concert in the auditorium on Friday, May 19, at 7 p.m. We hope you will be able to make both concerts and enjoy the wonderful sounds our music teachers and students have been working on throughout the term.

Before closing, I would like to comment on a couple of matters that may have come to your attention in some way.

First, the school's discipline committee convened earlier this week to consider a violation of the school's major rule regarding drugs and alcohol. In this case, one student was found to be in possession of drug paraphernalia and some illicit substances. As is

always the case when we encounter infractions of this sort, our primary focus is on the health and safety of the student along with the integrity of our rules. With all of this in mind, the student was suspended from school for the remainder of the school year. Our hope is that this student is able to grow from the experience, and that all students appreciate that one's good standing at school depends on adhering to rules that are in place to keep them safe. As I indicate at the beginning of every year, all students need to appreciate that major school rule violations jeopardize one's ability to be a student here. If you have any questions about this particular matter, or this broader subject, let me know.

Second, you may have seen a story in the April 28, 2017, edition of *The Boston Globe* covering the Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*. For those who are not familiar with the series, which is based on a book of the same title, it is a fictional story of a high school student who commits suicide. The student leaves behind 13 audio tapes for people she holds responsible in some way for the decision she makes to take her own life. While I have not seen the series, I raise it now because it has come under considerable criticism for the manner in which some feel it glorifies suicide. Our director of psychological counseling, Judy Werner, circulated some information to the faculty about the series last week. I do not mean to be an alarmist, but the series has drawn the attention of mental health experts who are worried about the impact it might have on young people who are vulnerable to such a message. Ultimately, I do think that checking in with your son or daughter to inquire about whether they have watched the series or not will only lead to a worthwhile conversation.

The next few weeks will be full of terrific moments and accomplishments on campus, and I look forward to seeing and sharing them with you all the way to Prize Day on Monday, May 29. As always, I am glad to be in touch at any point.

Best,

John R. Packard  
Head of School

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