September 13, 2018

Dear friends and families,

It has been a phenomenal start to the school year. I have loved seeing your children jumping right in, engaging in classes, and finding their way through the new year. I have seen classes where students are discussing ideas with excitement and clarity; I have seen hallway conversations that seem lively and fun; and I have seen students meeting with teachers to ask questions and have conversations.

I am writing today about bringing your whole self to school. We often say that we are a school where you can be yourself and bring your whole self to school. I do wonder if we are that kind of a place for all of our students -- I hope we are. I read an article this summer about this point, although it was about bringing your whole self to work. Two quotes stood out to me:

1. “When we don’t bring our whole selves to [school] we suffer – lack of engagement, lack of productivity, and our well-being is diminished. We aren’t able to do our best, most innovative work, and we spend and waste too much time trying to look good, fit in, and do or say the “right” thing. For teams and organizations, this lack of psychological safety makes it difficult for the group or company to thrive and perform at their highest level because people are holding back some of who they really are.”

2. “Authenticity is the foundation of bringing our whole selves to [school]. When we have the courage to be ourselves and be authentic, it both liberates us and gives other people permission to do the same. We can’t bring our whole selves to [school] without being authentic.”

What stood out for me about these quotes were notions of quality and integrity. We will actually have a better school if people can be themselves, and, by doing so, we will help others to “liberate” themselves.

We are a community that sees the innate value of a diverse school; new perspectives can be heard, new knowledge can be shared, new experiences can be understood, and new ideas can be created by respecting and leveraging the various gifts we all bring to our work. I don’t believe we will get this right all of the time; in fact, I bet we will sometimes get it wrong. My hope for this year is that we aim to be a place where students, families, faculty, and staff can be authentically engaged in meaningful, world-changing work together.

Sincerely,

Chris Singler
Upper School Director

1 https://www.forbes.com/sites/hennainam/2018/05/10/bring-your-whole-self-to-work/#63d630aa6291