July 24, 2019

Dear Lower School Parents,

I hope that your family is savoring these last few weeks of summer! I have had a lovely summer full of some good work and a little play too. Brooks and I kicked off summer by celebrating our tenth anniversary in Greece. The food, the people, the land’s natural beauty, the history-- it was an awe-inspiring experience. A professional highlight of my summer was the SAIS Division Heads Conference. I enjoyed learning with and from other independent school division directors from all over the country and even had the opportunity to present and serve on a panel. Finally, no summer is complete without good books, and I’ve had no shortage of those either. Two of my favorite reads of the summer are Educated by Tara Westover and Blindspot by Anthony Greenwald and Mahzarin Banaji. Spending time with family, learning, reading, exploring new places-- I’m officially ready to start another aMAzing school year! Each August brings such excitement and eagerness, and we are looking forward to a joyful year of learning, growth, and development.

One of MA’s strategic initiatives is centered around the idea of innovative teaching and how we can use current research to inform our practices. The Lower School teachers have been grappling with how we might better support our students’ development of math fact fluency. This summer, many of them participated in a two-day training with consultant, Shelly Dubose, to learn how new understandings about the brain have influenced the definition of fluency and how strategy development is crucial to supporting students’ concept of number. This fall, Ms. Dubose will return to continue her work with her faculty, and I’m thrilled to announce that she will also offer a session for parents. More information can be found below, and I hope that you will make it a priority to join us for this session. After having worked with Ms. Dubose for two days this summer, I can confidently say that you will thoroughly enjoy her parent session and walk away with good and practical information that will help you support your child.

We are excited to share one faculty shift that we believe will greatly benefit students. Lucy Tankersley has joined the fourth grade team, teaching reading and writing. Not only does Mrs. Tankersley have experience teaching fourth grade at MA, but she also brings an outstanding skill set to her new position; our students are in excellent hands!

Please mark your calendars for the following dates:

- **Convocation will begin at 8:30 A.M. on Tuesday, August 13.** Kindergarteners will meet their Senior Buddies at 8:00 A.M. at the Bear Field House (the small gym on the Vaughn Road campus). Parents of Kindergarteners will have reserved seating at Convocation. Students in Grades 1-5 are not required to attend this event. Siblings of Kindergartners are welcome to attend this event.
- **From 9:30 A.M. to 11:45 on Tuesday, August 13**, all families are encouraged to attend Lower Eagles’ First Day at the Lower School. The schedule is below. We highly encourage all
parents to attend the meetings in the 10:00 hour; the other components of the event are informal, "come and go" opportunities for families.

- 9:30 - All Lower School families may enjoy an informal "Meet and Greet" with your child’s teacher in his or her classroom. Class lists will be posted outside.
- 10:05 - All Lower School families will meet in Blackmon Auditorium for a community-wide meeting with Head of School John McWilliams and Lower School Director Sarah Housley.
- 10:30 - All Lower School parents will return to classrooms to hear about the curriculum, events, and expectations for the 2019-2020 school year. Lower School students will remain in the gym for the first Eagle Talk of the 2019-2020 school year.
- 11:00 - All Lower School families may visit the After-School Activities Fair in Hobbs Dining Hall in order to sign their children up for extracurricular opportunities.

- The first full day of school begins at 8:10 A.M. on Wednesday, August 14. Be sure to review the traffic procedures on the website. Please know that the carpool traffic will likely be congested in the first few days of school, but once things settle down, the traffic generally flows well.
- The POA is hosting a “Meet the Eagles” party for all MA families at 5:00 P.M on Friday, August 16, at McLemore Field on the Vaughn Road campus. Food, friends, and fun-- you won’t want to miss this event!
- Conference Day will be held on Thursday, September 26, so that you will have an opportunity to discuss your child’s progress with his or her teacher before the first grading period ends. Students will be excused from school, but supervision will be provided for families who need childcare. Your child’s teacher will communicate with you directly regarding the schedule.
- Math consultant, Shelly Dubose, will offer a parent education session about math fact fluency and numeracy development on at 6:00 P.M. on Monday, October 7, on the Lower School campus.
- Mark your calendars! The fourth annual STEAMfest will be held Saturday, November 2, from 10:00 to 1:00. This aMAzing event is still several weeks away, but your family and friends will not want to miss out on the exciting programming this year. (If you’ve never attended STEAMfest, it’s a free, come-and-go, public event hosted by the Lower School that celebrates science, technology, engineering, art, and math. We like to describe it as a pop-up interactive children’s museum.)

The stage is set for a wonderful year ahead! In the meantime, soak up these last bit of summer vacation. If I can be of any assistance in the coming weeks, please don’t hesitate to contact me. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Sincerely,

Sarah Housley
Lower School Director