



August 31, 2020

Dear Parents,

The beginning of a new academic year is usually accompanied by varying levels of both anxiety and feelings of apprehension in students, teachers, and parents. This one has been further complicated by the tremendous amount of uncertainty due to the nature of the pandemic, which has fundamentally altered the nature of our daily lives. In addition, this week will mark the first time in five months that many families have been on the campus. It would seem self-evident that COVID-19 has made anxiety and stress issues for all of us.

I mention this for context, and with this as our backdrop, we continue to work through our response to the rising racial tensions in our nation, along with the growing national demand for equity and social justice. In late June, GSB adopted a [*Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Community \(DEIC\) Action Plan*](#) to serve as a guiding framework for improving the climate in our school community. The purpose of the plan is that of better supporting our students, families, colleagues, and alumni of color to create an authentically inclusive anti-racist community. There have been several active conversations across our community over the summer inviting people to share and reflect on their experiences here.

One of these dialogues involved our Varsity Boys Soccer team members, coaches, and alumni who engaged in active discussions about the ways they can support members of our community who are Black and African American. As a result, the student athletes and coaches of the team proposed displaying a banner on the turf field fence for the duration of their season to support the sentiment that Black lives matter, and this was approved by the administration. The banner does not indicate or imply that the school endorses a specific organization or political statement, but rather purposely illustrates support of a broad social movement for justice, equity, and inclusion in our nation. It is my sincere hope that we can work through any concerns or differences of opinion about its meaning and purpose.

In the months since these discussions first began, we have witnessed a steady diet of violent images on the nightly news and in social media outlets. These visual messages have further fueled our apprehension and fears. Now, more than ever, we need safe spaces for our children,

and for you to know that they are cared for and loved. The mission of our school remains unchanged, as do our core values of courage, integrity, respect, compassion, and excellence. Indeed, they are our most important touchstones in these uncertain times and will guide us in all our important decisions. We must also trust in each other's intentions, and to know that members of our school community — while we may disagree about the means to achieve our goals — are indeed working toward a more inclusive one, and by extension, society.

At GSB, we will continue to serve the broad diversity of our community in an inclusive and respectful way. In addition to being a safe space, we also aspire to provide civil spaces for our students and families to address uncomfortable issues so that all may learn and grow. Balance matters here, and in the days and weeks to come, I encourage you to participate in one of the *Cross-Community Conversations About Race* scheduled for September 17th, 30th, and October 14th at 7:30 p.m., via Zoom.

The road to success in addressing these issues is by establishing an ongoing dialogue about how we can work together to make our school a better one. Please know that I welcome these constructive conversations and your willingness to engage in them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S.A. Rowell', with a stylized, cursive flourish.

S.A. Rowell
Head of School