



President and Head of School
Middle and Upper School Remarks
August 31 Student Convocation:

Hi everyone. I wanted to take a couple of minutes to speak to you in a bit more detail about what we value at Bolles. First, we know that this school year will be unlike any other in history. Feelings of isolation, anxiety, and even frustration are normal in unsettling times such as these. Please make sure that you are taking care of yourself, both mentally and physically. Academics are certainly important, but your health must remain your top priority. Be sure to make time for yourself and reach out to an adult if you are feeling anxious, overwhelmed, or stressed.

Second, we all have had to develop new levels of comfort with the uncertain. Recent developments both locally and nationally including COVID, the Black@Bolles Instagram posts, and racial unrest have forced all of us to reflect on what we truly value as a school community. We are by no means a perfect school, and we recognize that it takes humility and honesty to recognize shortcomings. If we pretend otherwise, our mindset blocks our capacity for true personal and community growth. At Bolles, we emphasize the pursuit of excellence along with courage, integrity, and compassion. But as a community, our collective values have to extend even beyond those four words. Just as we must monitor our own health, we must all also prioritize efforts to help make Bolles a positive and welcoming community where no one feels like “the other.” In doing so, we must be active listeners who seek to pursue truth and empathy. This does not mean that we all have to agree or that differences in opinion are bad. We can and should choose to be concerned with the well being of those in our school family and treat them with respect even if we do not always agree. We will not tolerate racism in any form at Bolles. Instead we must value productive and respectful dialogue that helps move the entire school community in a positive direction. We are anchored in intellectual curiosity, exploration, and doing good at all times. We must all be intentional. I encourage you that when in doubt, build a bridge. Instead of choosing isolation or aversion, try to make a connection and engage. With all of us feeling a bit more isolated, doing so is more important than ever. So please forge relationships with your teachers and classmates. Teaching and learning can not take place if there is a spirit of fear on campus. Our goal should be to create an environment where every member feels heard and can be their authentic selves.

I believe that this is going to be a special, positive, and unique year for Bolles. Yes, we will tire, maybe even stumble, but with the support of each other I have no doubt we will not only complete the metaphorical race but will demonstrate to others locally and nationally what commitment, resiliency, and the pursuit of excellence looks like at Bolles. We are called for this time, and Bolles has always valued continuous introspection and improvement. I like to run, and when my body wants to quit during a race I focus on just putting one foot in front of the other, not losing momentum or stopping. I encourage you to do the same this year. Take each day one at a time. Focus on the short term and how you can best support your friends and fellow colleagues in that moment. I believe that if we do so we can not only preserve our collective sanity but also find great satisfaction in a race well run.

Bolles is a special place and is by no means perfect. Let’s not forget that we have much to celebrate and much to still do. This is a great institution, and we all have roles to play in making it even better. In the end, we are a family, and we will work through this as a family to build a better future together.

Thank you and have a great day.