



THE
OAKRIDGE
SCHOOL

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Dear Jim,

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to share my news with the Board of Regents at the January meeting tonight. Immediately following, I met with my colleagues on the faculty and staff to inform them as well. It has been an emotional evening, yet there is peace in knowing that in life there is a season for everything.

After many months of thoughtful deliberation and fervent prayer, Kristi and I have determined that the next academic school year, 2021-2022, will be my last as Head of School. Making the announcement this far in advance is out of my respect and love for the Oakridge family – the community I cherish. The timing also coincides with the end of my contract on June 30, 2022, and will afford the Board sufficient time for a national search for my successor.

I first visited 5900 West Pioneer Parkway in the early 90's to interview with Andy Broadus. The excitement and wonder of Oakridge on that day are stamped indelibly in my memory. What was life like behind the landmark white fence? Would I, a young, public school educator, find my place at this charming independent, college preparatory school? Mr. Broadus shared the school's mission and his vision that summer day and ultimately took a chance on me. It didn't take long to settle in and fall in love with this special place.

As the years passed Mr. Broadus and I formed a bond, and he became more than just my boss. He was my mentor and friend. Serving as his Assistant Head from 2000-2007 was an honor and also paramount to my professional success. Reflecting back to my first year, the school was in its adolescence – just 14 years old. I was 29. In the blink of an eye, the school is now 42 and I am a bit more seasoned as well. Oakridge is now deeply rooted in the community, enjoying a respected national reputation and the fruits of her labor. I, on the other hand, have earned more pronounced smile lines and have a lot less hair. For both Oakridge and me, the days and weeks may have seemed long at times, but the months and years have passed quickly!

In addition to joining Oakridge in 1993, Kristi married me; it was a hallmark year. But the best was yet to come. Born in 1997 and 2000, our sons Cole (Class of 2016) and Cade (Class of 2018) attended Oakridge from Preschool through Upper School...graduating with Alpha and Omega distinction. In their 15 beautiful years at Oakridge, they both made us extremely proud. The Oakridge School has been a "home away from home" for the Kellams for almost 30 years and such an incredible blessing to our family. Our hearts are filled with gratitude.

When I reminisce, I am particularly proud of the positive relationships we have established with thousands of students, faculty, staff, parents, alumni, and grandparents. Oakridge is a relational organization, a welcoming place where people come before programs. This is something that differentiates our school from others. Building a premier faculty and staff has been a priority as well. Over the years, we have developed an all-star team as a result of hiring happy people who are also talented educators and quality human beings. Additionally, enhancing our 100-acre campus through numerous building projects has been rewarding. Most notably, we have renovated nearly every space on campus while building a new kindergarten center and developing an incredible 50-acre athletic complex. My mind is filled to the brim with wonderful memories, and the school is the beneficiary of state-of-the-art indoor and outdoor learning spaces.

Much of my work for the past 20 years has involved collaboration with the administrative staff and Board of Regents. I have enjoyed my career because I have been surrounded by sharp, talented, humble people...those who love children and value education. I am indebted to each of these men and women. I specifically wish to thank the seven board chairs under whom I have served for they have supported me and given generously of their time, talent, and treasure to advance the school's mission. Thank you Bruce Ashworth, Steve Crudup, Steve Wall, Chuck Reynolds, Dana Queenan, Don Duke, and Jim Haddock. You have inspired me, and you will long be remembered as difference-makers at Oakridge.

In my remaining year and a half, I pledge to continue leading our school with my heart and soul. Our team will remain focused on delivering the mission and working toward strategic improvement. As needed, I will assist the search committee and the board in their quest to find the next head of school and partner with them for a smooth transition in 2022.

Serving The Oakridge School for half of my years has been an honor and a privilege. My heartfelt thanks to you all for making this season of my life so fulfilling.

With Oakridge pride,

Jon Kellam
Head of School