



July 25, 2023

Dear Parents and Guardians of Seniors:

I hope you're all enjoying the summer. As we prepare for another school year, we are looking forward to seeing the Class of 2024 take the helm as leaders of the school. I know the seventh graders are eager to be welcomed by their buddies as a part of our Big Sibling/Little Sibling program! I am also very excited about the tone that Student Body President Monet Witherspoon and Senior Class President Rosalie Tasker will set for the year on opening day in just over a month!

I also write to ask you to think about one other very important matter, spring break. While we know that several trips either have already been or are close to being scheduled, we wanted to share our thoughts. It seems very early to be thinking about it, but **my hope is that families will not plan any kind of "Senior Trip."** The truth be known, there is no senior spring break trip at Burroughs. We offer a number of trips for students over spring break. It's my hope if you are looking for spring-break travel ideas that you will consider these opportunities for your students – the baseball, lacrosse and track trips to Florida, and the annual Montgomery Plan service trip are all wonderful options.

There have been times, however, when many senior families have elected to travel together to a resort in Mexico or in the Dominican Republic, and you may be contacted by travel companies in the near future urging you to book a resort. I strongly discourage you and this class from organizing such a trip. Because the drinking age is 18 in these areas, it is my understanding that students who travel there have been exposed to and have engaged in a great deal of binge drinking. While drinking is, in fact, legal in these resorts, we still believe that 18-year-olds should not be drinking. Enabling students to participate in such behavior is antithetical to the values of the school. Many students on these trips have jeopardized their health and made decisions that they have later deeply regretted. Moreover, in spite of the efforts made by the hotels, there are safety concerns at these resorts, including reports of illegal drugs being sold or distributed and high rates of sexual assault.

Outside of the health concerns, these trips have also been very divisive. They are expensive, and many families simply cannot afford to have their children be a part of them. It is precisely because we want to avoid such divisiveness that we offer financial assistance for our school-sponsored trips.

For years, many felt pressured by their kids, their kids' friends, and by other parents to allow their children to go on these trips, in spite of the fact that they are averse to the family's values. Some students who either could not afford the trip or chose not to attend because of their own concerns about drinking have felt a bit like outsiders just at a time when the class should be uniting. Many students will argue with me – and with you – that this is an important rite of passage and a

necessary tradition through which the class will bond. There will be many opportunities for the class to come together this year, including Senior Drey Land in August. I know they're looking forward to the excitement of Spirit Week and the bonfire as we kick off Blue and Gold Weekend. Additionally, there are several events around graduation that students and parents/guardians alike have described as deeply meaningful, and they are all healthy, safe, and inclusive.

Obviously, many families like to travel during spring break, and I find nothing wrong with two or three families traveling together somewhere, or for a family to invite one or two guests to travel with them. However, I ask you to be very cautious when making plans and promises, because these situations can quickly escalate (a group of two becomes ten) and the situations can become very unwieldy for adults with even the best of intentions.

There was a period of about five years during which no such trip was planned, and the result was a much more positive and unifying end to the school year. In the last few years, unfortunately, a few families have planned a trip for their kids and as the fall and winter passed, the numbers involved in that trip gradually grew. Many of the parents who went on the trips shared that it was virtually impossible to appropriately chaperone the kids and to navigate the legal, ethical, and emotional issues associated with managing multiple teenagers while traveling.

My hope is that we will continue to push back on this trend and work to build a new custom. I ask for your support in helping our seniors make a smart and healthy choice around spring break this year. Please feel free to contact Jessica Wasilewski or me if you have any questions.

Every year I find it hard to look at the incoming seniors and not reach back to five years ago when I saw so many of them on their opening days of school. It is truly magical to see the people they are becoming and it is a privilege to be a part of it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andy Abbott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Andy" being more prominent than the last name "Abbott".

Andy Abbott
Head of School