Chris Pomar Philosophy of Education

One of the great gifts of independent schools is the community of belief and support provided for each and every student. There is no substitute for confidence and a student's self-belief. It is tempting to think of schools in terms of test scores, grade point averages and college placements. While these measures are important, the true success of a terrific independent school is teaching students to think both for themselves and about more than themselves – to think critically and appreciate the world around them. I have never forgotten a quote by an educator I admire: "People respect a school that runs efficiently. People value a school that teaches well and is demanding. People love a school that has a heart and soul."

There is no quantitative measure of resilience, emotional intelligence, self-awareness, empathy, or civility. Beyond these, the gift of knowing oneself and one's learning style is one of the greatest strengths I have identified in a student. The ability to be "good at school" – finishing that paper, solving the equation, or being prepared for a test – matters, certainly, but the qualitative nature of understanding the uniqueness of one's own abilities should be even more highly valued. Like students, the best schools and the adults in them are in a constant state of growth and adaptation. Both teachers and parents must model in equal parts kindness and patience, risk taking and resilience. All adults in the orbit of children must be fluid reflections of the measures which matter the most: self-belief and the courage to follow one's dreams. The "best" schools are incubators of character-building confidence.

I keep a quote on my desk and read it at least once a day: "Each time a man stands up for an ideal … he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance." (Senator Robert F. Kennedy, 1966) Those words remind me of how profound an impact can be made by simply acting with conviction and authenticity. Schools at their best are beloved communities that inspire their students as well as their adults to improve the lots of others, starting with themselves. It is inherent upon the Head of School to galvanize students, faculty, staff and parents to build these beloved communities, to lead with humility, and integrity. When students, parents, and teachers are engaged in learning as a lifelong obligation, a powerful current is built which can inspire and change the world.

The best gift I can offer to a student or community is to show that I care for them and am invested in their success. I do my best to lead by example in how I treat others and take a personal interest in every student. I am confident in my abilities to lead, inspire, problem solve, deliver a good speech or report, fundraise, promote, and innovate. But the most important things I can do daily are greet a student by name and ask them about their day. The best teachers in my life let me know again and again how much they believed in me and led me to expect more of myself. It is their example – poets from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Maya Angelou would call these teachers "extravagant spirits" – that I aspire to with all of my energy, and I can imagine no higher calling.