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La Salle College High School

Dean of Students

Men,

As we begin a new school year, it is natural to think about new classes, new opportunities, and the goals we hope to achieve. While academic success is important, I want to challenge each of you to focus on something even more important: your character.

"Character is doing the right thing when nobody's looking."
– J.C. Watts

Character is not built when things are easy. Character is built when you are faced with a choice and decide to do what is right, even when another option may seem more appealing or convenient. In a world filled with shortcuts, true growth comes from embracing challenges rather than avoiding them. Whether it is completing an assignment honestly, persevering through a difficult course, or learning from a setback, the choices you make each day shape the person you become.

One area where this is especially important is the use of artificial intelligence. AI is a powerful tool that can help you brainstorm ideas, deepen your understanding, and improve your work. However, it should never replace your own thinking, effort, or learning. Character means using AI responsibly to support your growth, not to avoid the hard work that leads to genuine understanding. Technology can assist you, but it cannot replace the knowledge, skills, and confidence that come from wrestling with challenges yourself.

Another opportunity to build character comes through self-advocacy. As you grow into young adults, it is important that you learn to speak for yourselves. If you are struggling in a class, have a question about an assignment, or face a challenge with a teacher or coach, I encourage you to take the first step and address it directly. While parents and guardians are invaluable partners in your education, your voice matters. Learning to communicate respectfully, seek help when needed, and solve problems independently are life skills that will serve you far beyond your years in school. It can be tempting to let someone else handle a difficult conversation or resolve a problem for you. Yet growth comes from taking responsibility, advocating for yourself, and engaging in the process. Every time you do, you build confidence, resilience, and maturity.

As members of this school community, we are called to live our values every day. These values are not simply words in a handbook or displayed on a wall. They are reflected in how we treat one another, how we approach our studies, how we respond to adversity, and how we conduct ourselves when no one is watching. When we choose honesty over shortcuts, respect over division, responsibility over excuses, and service over self-interest, we strengthen not only our own character but the character of our entire community.

So, I challenge each of you to make one commitment today: when faced with a choice between what is easy and what is right, choose what is right. Remember, character is not measured by the choices we make when everything is easy. It is revealed in the moments when doing the right thing requires courage, integrity, and determination. Make this a year in which your actions reflect the values you believe in and the person you are striving to become.
I wish you an outstanding school year filled with learning, growth, and meaningful accomplishments.

Make this a year that makes you stronger.

Sincerely,
Charles Cirelli
Dean of Student Life