



August 2020

Dear Upper School Parents,

In this unprecedented spring and summer, as we all have confronted pandemics, physical distancing, economic and social turmoil, and many questions about what the future holds, I have found myself time and time again returning to thinking about our school's mission - "To learn our powers and be answerable for their use." Deceptive in their simplicity, Mary C. Wheeler's words describe so much of what I value about our community and my hopes for the year to come.

This spring, our whole community certainly had an opportunity to "learn our powers," often in ways beyond what we thought we were capable of doing. Students and teachers transitioned to remote learning in impressive ways, maintaining both the academic excellence and the social bonds which they had worked so hard to establish before our year was interrupted. Community members recreated experiences virtually that they never thought they would have to, including our biweekly Community Meetings, Senior Art shows, athletic practices, club meetings, class retreats, and so much more. While it certainly was not the same as navigating the busy hallways of Morgan, students and faculty also found ways to stay in touch with one another, and to keep their connections strong even from a distance. I'm particularly proud of all the hard work, planning, and patience that went into creating our drive-in Commencement (picture below), the success of which underlined much of what makes our community so strong; while there was understandable skepticism about whether the ceremony would live up to the traditional experience, those who attended spoke to the ways in which we were able to keep the most vital elements in order to make the day as special as any other graduation for the school, the graduates, and the community.

Going forward into the 2020-2021 school year, we will continue "to learn our powers" as we return to campus in September, and it will also remain crucial for all of us to "be answerable for their use." This challenging year has made the legacy of racism and the divisions in our society ever more visible. COVID-19 and its effects, combined with the social unrest and protests that have emerged as a response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others have made clear that there is still much to do in order to reckon with both the historical and present-day effects of racism in our country. As a history teacher, it is clear to me that much of that work can be done in classrooms, but that it also must happen in the hallways, on the playing fields, on the commute to and from school, and around the dinner table. Our students are powerful, and as we help them learn and harness those powers we also must help them understand their responsibilities: to listen empathetically, to recognize their privileges, to speak truth to power, and to help those less fortunate than they are.

While there is so much that is still uncertain as we move toward the start of the school year, I am hopeful. We are blessed to work and learn in a place that is open to change, that is staffed with people so dedicated to the growth and development of young people, and that is filled with students and families who are committed to making the world a better place. I appreciate your partnership in this work, and look forward to the upcoming year together.

Now for some logistics about the opening of school: all 9th and 10th grade students will learn who their new advisors are in personal notes written by advisors and sent home during the week of August 10th. All students will meet with their advisors during Orientation on Tuesday, September 1st in preparation for the start of classes on Wednesday, September 2nd. Below are some important dates to mark on your calendars.

- September 1 Upper School Orientation Day (details and specific timing to follow)
- September 2 Classes begin
- September 18 Jamboree (new students are assigned to purple/gold teams, class competitions)
- September 25 Upper School Retreats (details and specific plans to follow)

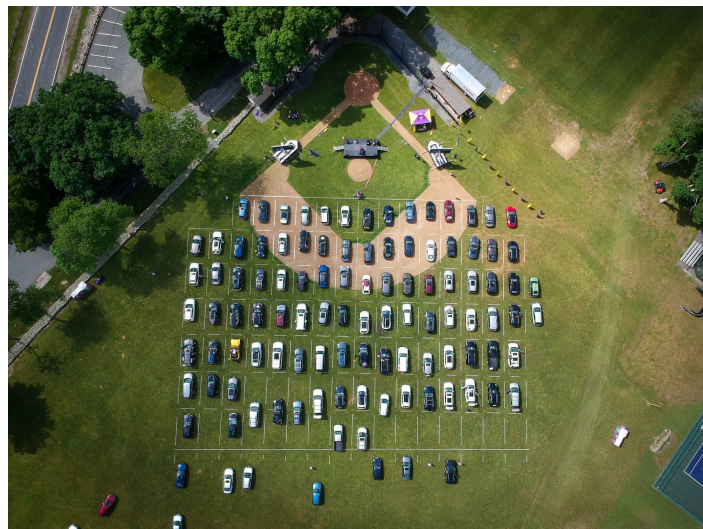
An important component of our opening week of school is the review of the *Student Parent Handbook*. Electronic copies will be available for you online on the Upper School webpage as of the opening of school. Because we have updated the handbook to reflect some of the new procedures we will need to follow in order to make our return to school as safe as possible and to include some of our expectations for virtual learning, should we need to work remotely again, it is particularly important that you review the handbook with your child after the first week of school. Simple questions to your child about the school's standards of conduct, major rules, community expectations, and co-curricular opportunities will help prompt important discussions. I also urge you to review the policies for lateness and absences and to return to the handbook as a resource for answering questions throughout the year.

I look forward to working with all of you and your children over the coming year. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer!

Sincerely,



Matthew Boyd
Dean of Students



Wheeler 2020 Commencement photo courtesy of Joe Scanlon Photography.