

FRIENDS SELECT

May 25, 2017

Dear families and friends,

As we look ahead to the summer, I've been thinking about things that provide us with energy and things that sap our energy. And by "things" I mean experiences, people, time, arts, and more. One of my colleagues raised this for me recently by speaking of what excites her about her work, about what gets her out of bed in the morning.

In a conference a couple of years ago, I had to write a personal mission. Here's what I wrote then: "I do what I do because I care about students and teachers blossoming and the community coalescing around world-changing work and ideas." I still stand by this mission for the most part, although I might add something about what blossoming looks like; for me, each individual grows in specific ways unique to their own history and needs.

Yesterday I asked the faculty to reflect on why they do what they do. I believe in balancing the constant demands on our energy by using reflection on our missions -- institutional and personal -- to maintain clarity around process, outcomes, and where to put our collective efforts.

In heading into the summer, you might step away from the ordinary questions about camp, work, and relaxation, and instead ask your child about what kind of person they want to be in the world and what they can do this summer to help get closer to that vision. It might be a job or internship, but it also might be self-education and exploration.

I believe deeply in the ability to gain access to Truth (and truths) through our own inquiry; I'm Emersonian in that way. I'll end with a quote from "Self-Reliance" that has informed me in various ways in my life:

"Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another, you have only an extemporaneous, half possession. That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him. No man yet knows what it is, nor can, till that person has exhibited it. Where is the master who could have taught Shakspeare [sic]? Where is the master who could have instructed Franklin, or Washington, or Bacon, or Newton? Every great [person] is a unique. The Scipionism of Scipio is precisely that part he could not borrow. Shakspeare will never be made by the study of Shakspeare. Do that which is assigned you, and you cannot hope too much or dare too much."

In peace and partnership,



Chris Singler  
Upper School Director