

James Newman, Ph.D., Head of School

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Dear Families and Friends,

I've always enjoyed American history more than any other field of study. Presidential elections, in particular, are a favorite of mine.

For example, I thought the presidential primaries and the national election in November 2008 were exhilarating and fascinating. I thoroughly enjoyed watching the electronic wizardry used by the major news networks to report “pre” and “post” primary election results, and ultimately, the race in general election. The colorful maps of congressional districts, pie charts of economic and demographic data, and bar graphs of the results of voter surveys – I loved them all, as they whirred on and off the networks’ large screens. All of it ready for comment and analysis by the panels of pundits, political consultants, and pollsters. What a delight!

The Academy may not rival CNN and other news networks, but in the future we plan to increase the amount of surveys that we ask you to complete. The surveys are intended to be one more way that we can listen to you, our alumni, and our students.

Currently, on a bi-annual basis we ask all parents to complete a “satisfaction survey” in May. This year’s survey will be our third. As in the past, we’ll draw on the results of this spring’s survey to help shape our goals for the 2010-11 and 2011-12 academic years. The “satisfaction survey” has been very helpful to the Academy’s administrative team and I hope this year you will take time to complete it once again.

Other surveys are currently in process. Earlier this week, 8th grade parents received an electronic five-question survey about the effectiveness of their recent course selection meetings with Dr. Banks and Mrs. Roller. We will soon be surveying parents of all students in 4th through 8th grades about their expectations of the new Middle School Head. Lastly, our Development and Alumni Affairs office will use a survey created by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) to collect valuable data and feedback from our alumni. We believe that we can learn much from these kinds of sharply focused surveys.

In addition to assisting member schools with their own surveys, NAIS conducts many surveys on behalf of its 1,500 member schools and publishes the results. A recent NAIS survey was taken at the height of our national economic recession, and it really caught my eye. The survey asks parents whose children are currently enrolled in independent school throughout the country about their perspectives on the value of independent schooling.

From NAIS: “Overwhelmingly, responding parents reported extreme satisfaction with their children’s independent schools. Many commented that their children’s current schools are the best possible match for their children and that their children’s lives have been positively affected by their current schools.” In fact, at least 89 percent of families who responded to the NAIS survey *agree* or *strongly agree* with these three statements:

- A private independent school education is worth the money.
- Sending my child to a top independent school is a top priority for me.
- I would recommend a private independent school education to other parents.

The NAIS survey speaks to parents’ understandings of the advantages of independent schools. The NAIS survey also references small class sizes, excellent academic programs, and high-quality teachers as reasons why parents consider independent schools. It’s for these reasons, among others, that I often speak about the “*Academy advantage*.” Our unique advantage is rooted deeply in our commitment to animate our core values and prepare our students to face the remarkable challenges of a global society.

Surveys are just one way that we collect your valuable input. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me by email or phone, or stop me in the hallways.

Best wishes,

Challenging our students in an environment that nurtures and inspires.