

James Newman, Ph.D., Head of School

I can't think of a better time than the present to be a student!

I'm not thinking simply about how wonderful it would be return to college and take advantage of the remarkable menus of courses, state of the art research facilities, and lecture series that presently are available — although that would be great! Specifically, for any student in any grade before high school graduation, technology makes this a truly exciting time. With just a few "clicks," even the youngest students can benefit from electronic access to previously unimaginable amounts of information.

A case in point: At this month's faculty meeting, Cindy St. John, our MS/US librarian, introduced the newly reconstructed webpage that she and James Harding (our webmaster) recently developed. Without exaggeration, our library portal now provides immediate access to millions of volumes of books, national and international daily newspapers, government documents, primary source documents, and other published research materials as well as access to museums holdings, videos of contemporary lectures, audios of musical scores, and the list goes on and on. Access the Academy's US/MS library webpage at your own risk — www.harrisburgacademy.org/oncampus/libraries/MSUS/ — you may not want to leave it!

A value of being a student today, especially at Harrisburg Academy, means learning to use technology efficiently as a vehicle for research and study. In addition to helping students acquire a strong set of basic skills, Harrisburg Academy is helping students learn to solve problems, think analytically, and learn collaboratively. As Dan Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind*, tells his readers, we must train students for the "Conceptual Age" of the 21st century and not the "Information Age" of the last century. We at Harrisburg Academy are embracing this commitment to staying on the forefront of technology integration and are pleased to teach our students in this forward-thinking environment.

Technology continues with blinding speed, uncovering the secrets of genetic code and structures, transforming our concepts of space and time, and linking every corner of our planet and another. Can we realistically prepare our children for the remarkable challenges of the 21st century? Are we fooling ourselves if we believe we can achieve such an untethered goal?

If now is the most exciting time to be a student, is it also the most challenging time to be a teacher or school administrator? Yes, it's challenging — but highly rewarding as well. We are equipped with unparalleled technological tools, and the opportunity to have a significant impact on our children's learning and their futures has never been better.

Within our faculty and departmental meetings, we consistently discuss how to construct a relevant curriculum, how to best use instructional techniques that will help our students acquire skills necessary for the future, and how to ensure that our students' learning outcomes will prepare them to be nimble learners in the future. As Alvin Toeffler, the famous futurist once wrote, "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."

Challenging our students in an environment that nurtures and inspires.

But skills acquisition alone, just like almost limitless access to information, will not be enough to prepare our students. "Sharpening the senses" of our students, as Dan Pink discusses, is critical, as well. We believe that sharpening their senses will unleash sources of creativity that can inspire them to become leaders, help them prosper and live healthy lives, and care appropriately for others.

In addition to ensuring that our students learn how to compose clearly, speak a modern world language, and follow a scientific process of inquiry, we want them to become storytellers in the broadest sense of the word and to create persuasive narratives that communicate self-understanding and strong awareness of others. We want to engage their passion and imagination to create and design images, music, and three-dimensional shapes. We want them to find joy in synthesizing what appears to be unrelated and disparate, including relationships with people with different world views and life experiences. And we want to encourage our students to love humor and play, and to find purpose and fulfillment in the paths they choose to travel.

This is a very good time to be a student, a teacher, and an administrator at Harrisburg Academy. Actually, to be quite candid, we're quite fortunate.

Best wishes for an enjoyable spring vacation later this month, and try your hand at telling a story during the vacation.

With warm regards,

Jim Newman