



216 Hope Street
Providence, RI 02906-2246
PHONE 401.421.8100
FAX 401.751.7674
www.wheelerschool.org

August 2019

Dear Upper School Parents,

It feels surreal to be thinking about the return of school, but as August begins we at Wheeler are starting to rev our engines yet again for the fall. While many have taken full advantage of the opportunity to rest and re-energize over the past few weeks, Wheeler itself never sleeps; this summer in Providence, crews have been hard at work completing the renovation of the Hope Building, various groups (including Breakthrough Providence and a number of summer camp groups) have made the most of our classroom spaces, and our administrative and maintenance staff have been hard at work even while students and faculty have been away.

As excited as I was to take on the role of interim Dean of Students last summer, I'm even more delighted to be starting my second year with the knowledge and experience I was able to gain through my work last year (partly because the interim tag is gone, so I feel even more official). This work with students and families is compelling and fulfilling, and I look forward to opportunities to deepen those connections this year, while making new ones with the class of 2023!

I have once again spent the bulk of my summer at the Wheeler Farm, working at Wheeler Summer Camp and regularly being taken aback by the beauty and serenity of the place. While I have always considered the Farm to be a special spot, and have treasured my time here as a coach in the fall, an avid basketball fan in the winter, and a participant in the many traditions around graduation in the spring, not until this summer have I really appreciated the way this place serves as a living organism and a reflection of all that Wheeler has to offer. While many of us who attempt to take care of our own lawns can appreciate what it must take to maintain 8 playing fields and 120 acres, watching it happen is a wonder; the small Farm staff (4 full time employees!) works from dawn to dusk mowing fields, painting lines, clearing brush, repairing and replacing equipment, cleaning, planting, and too many other tasks to mention. At times in the summer there are close to 500 people on the Farm campus (not to mention the groups that might rent the spaces after the end of the camp day), and each morning the grounds are ready to do it all again. The Farm is also home to all types of wildlife who take over after dark (and sometimes make cameos during the day) - this summer we've seen more groundhogs than we can count, deer, osprey, frogs, and a racing pigeon even dropped in on a swim lesson in the pool! It's no wonder that the Farm Friday program in Early Childhood at Wheeler has been such a success, and that the 6th grade Farm program has been such a treasured memory for students who have come through our middle school. If you haven't had the opportunity to spend time at the Farm (or you just haven't been here recently), I can't recommend it more highly; for students, I'm excited that we will have a chance to bring the entire Upper School out here again for Jamboree and SeptemberFest this fall so we can all experience this amazing location together. In her welcome letter on the school's website, Allison Gaines Pell describes the "buzz" that exists in every nook and cranny of Wheeler - that "buzz" extends out to Seekonk as well, and I hope you can all make it out to see for yourselves soon!

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 12th. All students will meet with their advisors during Orientation on Tuesday, September 3rd in preparation for the start of classes on September 4th. Below are some important dates to mark on your calendars.

- August 16 10am - Football equipment handout (contact Coach Harper if you plan to play)
- August 19 Soccer, Field Hockey, Tennis, practices begin at the Wheeler Farm, Cross Country practices begin in Providence, Football practice begins at PCD
- August 29 Community Council Leadership Retreat for new and experienced leaders (1-3PM). Students are notified if their attendance is expected, and should RSVP to Ms. Berthiaume Leduc. Overnight Peer Support Retreat will begin at the Wheeler Farm at 6:30.
- September 3 Upper School Orientation and Picture Day
- All 9th Graders meet in Isenberg Auditorium at 9:00 AM
 - New 10th and 11th Graders report to school at 10:15 AM for a meeting in Ms. Henneman's office
 - All 10th Graders meet with their advisors at 10:45 AM
 - All 11th and 12th Graders meet with their advisors at 11:00 AM
 - All students (9th-12th) gather in Isenberg Auditorium for an assembly at 11:30 AM
 - Lunch is provided
 - Orientation ends at 2:30 PM – students are welcome to stay on campus until buses leave for The Farm shortly after 3:00
- September 4 Classes begin
- September 19 Jamboree (new students are assigned to purple/gold teams, class competitions), SeptemberFest, and Community Council BBQ @ the Farm from 11:45am-3pm
Senior Retreat begins after athletic practices.
- September 20 Upper School Retreats 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM

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. I ask that you be sure to 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