

Dear Upper School Families,

I would like to extend a warm welcome back to school to both our new and current families. I do hope everyone has enjoyed the summer. Not only does summer vacation give us the opportunity to recharge and relax, it is a wonderful time to reflect on and process events of the past school year. The physical, intellectual and emotional growth that takes place over a summer break during a student's middle school years is often tremendous. Encouraging children to reflect on the past year and think about the upcoming year and what they would like to accomplish allows children to take control of their experience and can ease some of the anxiety that is inevitable in the beginning of a school year. As an educator, this is an essential exercise that allows me to design a year that is focused on the needs of my students. As the head of the upper school, I use this time to reflect on the upper school as a whole, reviewing our accomplishments and reflecting on possible areas for growth. For this reason, I want to take a moment to reconnect, as well as share some exciting program updates for the 2018-2019 school year.

The upper school faculty strives to create an environment that is academically rigorous, intellectually engaging, and emotionally supportive. It is the goal of Harbor's upper school program to encompass the full range of human intelligences, both cognitive as well as emotional. This summer our faculty attended a two-day workshop through Project Presence, which focused on mindfulness and character development. Teachers will use their training to help accomplish our social and emotional learning goals in their classes as well as in advisory. We will continue to cultivate an environment that is engaging, challenging, and enriching, while providing support when needed. Math and writing labs will be offered several times a week through our exploratory program. Students will continue to improve their coding skills in technology. This year students in grades 5-8 will have the opportunity to participate in our FIRST Lego Robotics team. Students will compete with other Long Island teams working on programming challenges. Our team is closely advised by faculty at Harbor and from Stony Brook University. As always, our programs will continue to concentrate on the critical skills needed to succeed in both the English Language Arts and STEAM disciplines. Our math and science programs remain strong with a 100% passing rate on the Regents exams in 2017-2018. Please visit our updated website in September to find our new upper school curriculum guide.

In our continuous effort to promote healthy living, we are asking upper school families and students to make healthy choices when packing snacks. We encourage families to review the Healthy Hawks snack guide and choose fruits and veggies over processed snacks. Candy should not be brought to school under any circumstances, even holidays. We would like to work towards a greener school and would like upper school students to help with this initiative by offering suggestions in addition to school-wide recycling and the decrease of waste.

Finally, please remind your child to bring his/her summer reading notes on the first day of school, as well as any supplies requested on the upper school supply list. This year, we have added more school uniform options through Lands Ends and will now allow students to choose sneakers as a footwear option. As always, uniforms, including shoes, should remain neat and clean. Concert dress will remain the same. Detailed information is located in the Harbor Backpack: www.hcdsny.org/parents/harbor-backpack.

Please note our first day of school is Wednesday, September 5th and Back to School Night is Thursday, September 6th (details to follow). Additional events, including parent coffees, are posted on the Harbor calendar.

I look forward to a fantastic year of working with you and your child. If you have any questions or concerns throughout the school year, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at any time.

Sincerely,

Nicole Fotis
Head of Upper School