

BURROUGHS

JOHN BURROUGHS SCHOOL

September 9, 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians of Seniors:

It has been such a pleasure watching the Class of 2023 take the helm as leaders of the school. They are already making a positive impact through their leadership in athletics, clubs and as buddies to the 7th graders, and I am very excited about the tone that they are setting for the year. Student Body President Jah'de Alexander and Senior Class President Patrick Whiteford gave really thoughtful and inspiring addresses to the student body in the first week of school.

I also write to ask you to think about one other very important matter, spring break. It seems very early to be thinking about it, but **my hope is that families will not plan any kind of "Senior Trip."** The truth be known, there is no senior spring break trip at Burroughs. We offer a number of trips for students over spring break (though not all are offered every year). It's my hope if you are looking for spring-break travel ideas that you will consider these opportunities for your students – the baseball, lacrosse and track trips to Florida, and the annual Montgomery Plan service trip are all wonderful options.

There have been times, however, when many senior families have elected to travel together to a resort in Mexico or in the Dominican Republic, and you may be contacted by travel companies in the next few weeks urging you to book a resort. I strongly discourage you and this class from organizing such a trip. Because the drinking age is 18 in these areas, it is my understanding that students who travel there have been exposed to and have engaged in a great deal of binge drinking. While drinking is, in fact, legal in these resorts, we still believe that 18-year-olds should not be drinking. Enabling students to participate in such behavior is antithetical to the values of the school. Many students on these trips have jeopardized their health and made decisions that they have later deeply regretted. Moreover, in spite of the efforts made by the hotels, there are safety concerns at these resorts, including reports of illegal drugs being sold or distributed and high rates of sexual assault.

Outside of the health concerns, these trips have also been very divisive. They are expensive, and many families simply cannot afford to have their children be a part of them. It is precisely because we want to avoid such divisiveness that we offer financial assistance for our school-sponsored trips.

For years, many felt pressured by their kids, their kids' friends, and by other parents to allow their children to go on these trips, in spite of the fact that they are averse to the family's values. Some students who either could not afford the trip or chose not to attend because of their own concerns about drinking have felt a bit like outsiders just at a time when the class should be uniting. Many students will argue with me – and with you – that this is an important rite of passage and a necessary tradition through which the class will bond. This simply is not the case. Even this year,

there will be many opportunities for the class to come together, just as they did at Senior Drey Land. I know they're looking forward to the excitement of Spirit Week and the bonfire as we kick off Blue and Gold Weekend. Additionally, there are several events around graduation that students and parents/guardians alike have described as deeply meaningful, and they are all healthy, safe, and inclusive.

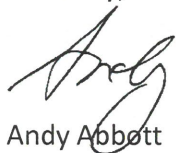
Obviously, many families like to travel during spring break, and I find nothing wrong with two or three families traveling together somewhere, or for a family to invite one or two guests to travel with them. However, I ask you to be very cautious when making plans and promises, because these situations can quickly escalate (a group of two becomes ten) and the situations can become very unwieldy for adults with even the best of intentions.

There was a period of about five years during which no such trip was planned, and the result was a much more positive and unifying end to the school year. In the last few years, unfortunately, a few families have planned a trip for their kids and as the fall and winter passed, the numbers involved in that trip gradually grew. Many of the parents who went on the trips shared that it was virtually impossible to appropriately chaperone the kids and to navigate the legal, ethical, and emotional issues associated with managing multiple teenagers while traveling.

My hope is that we will continue to push back on this trend and work to build a new custom. I ask for your support in helping our seniors make a smart and healthy choice around spring break this year. Please feel free to contact Jennifer Salrin or me if you have any questions.

Every year I find it hard to look at the incoming seniors and not reach back to five years ago when I saw so many of them on their opening days of school. It is truly magical to see the people they are becoming and it is a privilege to be a part of it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Abbott', with a stylized, cursive script.

Andy Abbott
Head of School