

Address to New Students and their Families

by

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Good afternoon. And welcome. As someone who is also new, it feels incredibly good to welcome others. I've had a lot of welcoming this summer! As you will see for yourselves, St. George's is a welcoming place.

I join you today both as the head of school, as well as a new parent. (I should probably be sitting down there, as opposed to standing up here.) I wanted to share that point with all of you because, unlike the majority of you, I have had the opportunity this summer to truly research the opportunity that is being afforded to our kids. Over the course of the past eight weeks I have met with virtually every faculty and staff member on campus. I have completed about 135 meetings, with only about 10 more to go. It's not every person who gets to interview the entire staff of their kid's school. I feel very lucky.

And here's what I will share... You should feel lucky too. Students, you are walking into an opportunity that is truly unparalleled. And parents, please rest assured that your children will be cared for in amazing fashion.

Let me share a few specifics... In those introductory meetings, I asked each person to "tell me your story." What I learned is that our faculty is steeped both in teaching experience and life experience. Each of them spoke not only about how they got into teaching – what compelled them to spend their lives working with teenagers – but also about their experiences out in the world. They are interesting people – sailors, surfers, lawyers, hikers, readers, musicians, coders, parents, cross fitters, athletes, quilters, actors, writers, travelers, dog people, cat people, sculptors, runners, painters, crafters, tennis players, dancers, scientists, bakers, learners... I could go on and on... Students, you will be living and working amongst fascinating people. And the wonderful thing about a boarding school is that your time with them is not limited to a single class period a day. Because we

all live here together in this community, there will be ample opportunity to talk about all of this other cool stuff. In fact, two, three, four years from now, I imagine that many of you will have undertaken these passions yourselves – learning to surf, sail, act, bake from these amazing educators. I'll also add that's on top of everything they know about their teaching disciplines. Talking with these teachers about their curricula, the books they teach, the activities they do with kids, their favorite units, the projects they look forward to, was truly inspiring. I have committed to visiting every classroom this fall, and I tell you, selfishly, I can't wait.

I also asked each person what they love about St. George's. It says a ton about this faculty that virtually every person said, *the students*. It's one thing to be a teacher and have the opportunity to teach that curriculum and lead those projects. It's entirely another thing to say that what you love most about your job and your community are the kids with whom you work. I can say without a doubt that this is a place that puts kids first.

Which is why I'm here. I have spent the past decade and a half leading schools – first as an assistant principal and then principal in the public schools outside Boston, and then as the head of the upper school at Lakeside School in Seattle. Throughout my experience, I have longed for a school that is truly a community, a place that exudes kindness and warmth that reflects my values. That is St. George's.

Before I finish I want to add one caveat. Just because we are a place of kindness and warmth, it does not mean that every day will be perfect. As I said to the faculty the other day, I don't expect that we ensure students eternal happiness, or that they never experience disappointment. In fact, I think we'd be doing them a disservice if that was our goal. What we can assure you, however, is that there are people – lots of people – who will know them and care for them, who will be there to support them when things are hard. As a parent, and kind of an overbearing one – I mean, I go to high school with my kid – that is what I truly want for my child's adolescence.

So, as a parent and an educator, I am delighted to welcome each of you to St. George's. If there is anything that I can do to help you as you make your transition, I hope you will speak up. My door is open.