



DEERFIELD ACADEMY  
Deerfield, Massachusetts 01342

Margarita Curtis  
Head of School

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Dear Members of the Deerfield Community,

It is with joyful anticipation that I greet you, as we launch our 210<sup>th</sup> academic year and pause to reflect on the significance of this new beginning. Two hundred and twenty-seven new students from neighboring towns, 24 states and 13 countries, as well as 14 new faculty members join us this fall, enriching our community with fresh ideas and an array of talents.

As I walk around the Academy and see so many gifted and spirited students interacting with accomplished, dedicated adults, and consider the opportunities for learning that such frequent interpersonal exchanges will yield, I begin the year full of hope and resolve. In the coming months, we will work hard, and we will also take the time to rest and play, to talk to family and friends, to walk by the river or hike up to the Rock. Like many generations of Deerfield students and teachers before us, we cherish our distinctive community spirit and the relationships that are forged here year after year.

Manning and I experienced the enthusiasm of Deerfield's extended family this summer with a trip to Bangkok, Singapore, Hong Kong and Seoul. I can tell you that the Deerfield spirit is as vibrant halfway across the world as it is at home. Close to 100 alumni, parents and students gathered at an evening event in Hong Kong, almost 60 in Seoul, 50 in Bangkok and a handful in Singapore, and all of them came eager to hear about campus life, and ready to support the Academy in any way they can.

At our Convocation earlier this month, we reflected on the extraordinary privilege of spending part of our lives in this community, a privilege that bears with it obligations and responsibilities. Significant events – the Olympics in Beijing this summer, and the upcoming presidential election – frame the beginning of this school year and invite us to look beyond the hills, to consider the very purpose of our journey through Deerfield. As hundreds of remarkable athletes from all over the world gathered in Beijing this summer, we witnessed the level of performance that is achievable through discipline and determination, and also the satisfaction that derives from team work. Michael Phelps relished every single one of his eight gold medals, but based on his expressions of joy, none more than those achieved with his teammates. This is what we want at Deerfield: a combination of individual grit and teamwork, the drive to succeed and the drive to share.

While our students attend classes, try out for teams, audition for the play, participate in community service or the music and dance programs, we often remind them that success at Deerfield and admission to college are only partial goals. The question they must ask is how they will use the skills and knowledge acquired here for the betterment of our community and the world beyond. No personal achievement will be meaningful if it cannot be shared, if it doesn't bring joy, pride or benefit to others; if it doesn't link us in some significant way to the human family.

In just a few weeks, some of our students will exercise the right to vote for the first time, a right that many people across the world will never be given. As responsible citizens, and as members of a leading academic institution, we will inform ourselves about the issues and policies our presidential candidates will debate during their quest for the White House. All of us, regardless of our political affiliation, look forward to engaging one another in civil discourse and to discussing the options ahead of us.

In preparation for the election, we invited Jenry Morsman, Class of 1989, to speak to us at Convocation about the changing role of the media in a presidential election. Members of the faculty have been busy at work preparing for a political forum at the end of this month, and over the next few weeks, will seek to involve the Young Democrats and Young Republicans on campus in this educational process. We are also distributing copies of *The New York Times* in the Dining Hall every Sunday at brunch. As we gather each week to share that most leisurely of meals, and celebrate our sense of community, we take the time to learn about the rest of the world and to imagine the contributions we can make. This is one way to make ourselves worthy of our heritage.

Before concluding, let me give you an update on our strategic planning initiative. The spirit of Deerfield has been palpable and inspiring during this past year of institutional introspection and dialogue. The invitation to imagine the Deerfield of the future and to chart our course for the next decade has been met with a level of engagement that reveals the deep affection and loyalty the school inspires. Over the course of the year, a team ably headed by history teacher Tom Heise and trustee Rory Cowan led a process that benefitted from the work and wisdom of a devoted planning committee, five task forces, a year-long campus speaker series, two Board of Trustees retreats, many faculty, staff and student meetings, and responses to a questionnaire sent out to 12,000 alumni and current parents. The frequent exchange of perspectives over the past twelve months, and the highly interactive nature of our collective planning process has not only heightened our sense of community but also created a spirit of joint ownership as we define our priorities and embrace tomorrow's opportunities and challenges. A more definitive report will be sent to all of you in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, I look forward to seeing many of you here on campus or as I travel around the country, and thank you for your ongoing involvement with the Academy.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margarita Curtis".

Margarita Curtis