



US Class Dean Update

Dear Senior Families,

Many thanks to those of you who made it out to our **Parent Forum** last night. I know it's an incredibly busy (and exciting!) time of year for our kids, and I always enjoy being in conversation with you about how best to support them. For those of you who were unable to attend, I'm including a copy of my [slides](#) from the presentation. I hope you find the information helpful, and you can always follow up with me if you have any questions.

As I mentioned last night, I've had a number of conversations with seniors this month about **the importance of rest for "transcendent thinking."** Many of them feel that if they aren't working on school or college applications all the time, then they're not working hard enough. It's true that this is a pivotal moment in their education, but it doesn't follow that if they find themselves with room for balance in their lives then they're somehow doing it wrong.

As Jenny Anderson and Rebecca Winthrop write in [The Disengaged Teen](#), transcendent thinking happens "when young people ask abstract, bigger-picture questions to make meaning of the world around them." It "goes beyond what we learn [in class] and requires thinking creatively with the information, imagining the perspectives of others, assessing the ethics of something, and uncovering possible implications for our lives and those of others." This kind of thinking is very different from much of the task-driven work we do at school. It doesn't happen because students schedule time for it or work really hard at it; it happens when they give their brain a rest and go outside and touch grass. I do some of my most productive thinking out on my long runs, and I told the kids that they might finally make a breakthrough on that challenging supplement they're trying to write if they walk

away and bake a batch of brownies. Doing something frivolous isn't wasted time; it's an essential part of the process.

Earlier this week we also had our **annual grade-level conversations about party culture** and how to enjoy off-campus social events safely and responsibly. For more information about what we covered in these talks, and for some tips on how to talk to your teen about substance use, please read [this letter](#) from the Upper School dean team. With the seniors, I focused on how a "work hard/play hard" mentality can lead them to cope with the stress of senior fall in unhealthy ways, again emphasizing the need for balance in their daily lives. Halloween is traditionally a big party weekend in our students' outside-of-school social calendar, and for seniors it of course coincides with those Nov. 1st deadlines. My guess is that many of them are looking forward to decompressing and blowing off steam next weekend once they've pressed "send," which makes **this weekend** an especially good time for you to check in with your kids and remind them of your expectations, as we have done here at school.

Today, we kick off **Homecoming and Spirit Week**, which is a really exciting time here at D-E. Please see [this letter](#) from Debbie Murphy and Jason Dargan with more information about the festivities. I have promised the seniors that if they win Spirit Week (which they've never done before) then I will begin the process of extending their **senior privileges**. This involves the right for them to leave campus for lunch, and to "leave-free" when they are finished with their classes for the day. I really hope they win! In the case that they do, you should be on the lookout for another email from me asking you to sign an agreement granting your student permission to leave campus at these approved times. More to come!

Finally, I really hope you'll join us on campus on **Wednesday, November 12th for an evening with Jennifer Wallace**, the award-winning author of bestseller [Never Enough](#). This is a special opportunity for us to be in conversation with a journalist who is really leading the national conversation on how to keep our kids healthy,

safe, and whole as they navigate an increasingly competitive achievement culture.
Please [RSVP here](#). I hope to see you there!

Wishing you all peace, equanimity, and joyful moments with your kids in these critical weeks ahead!

Best,
Emily