

In just a few days, classes begin. The opening of school is always a joyful time as we come back together as a community, listen to fun summer stories, marvel at growth and settle in for another year of learning. The eighth grade year, in San Francisco and a few other areas around the country, offers opportunities and challenges that are rather unique. In few places do families have the chance to explore such a vast array of educational options; the high schools you will visit are all unique, and it is my hope that you will embark upon the coming weeks and months with enthusiasm, optimism and wonder.

Of course, this process can also add a layer of stress to your life. You will have new responsibilities to manage such as shadow visits, open houses, and applications. You will go to high schools and imagine if you see yourself as a student at that school. In addition, you will have the regular work and life of an eighth grader. I write this not to make you apprehensive, but rather to remind you that this will be a unique year. Perhaps in the next few days the family can find time to sit and talk about expectations, hopes, and fears as well as address the ways in which you will all manage, individually and collectively, the challenges that can accompany this process.

A potentially significant challenge of this process is the *rumor mill*. Each year, from parents and students, I receive queries that begin with, "I heard..." Sometimes what follows is a rumor about a specific high school and other times, it's another person's advice on how to do this process. When you hear such information, I urge you to check it out with me first. The majority of the time, the rumors that are being passed along about schools are based on old information that is no longer accurate, or, it is based upon one person's experience that may not apply to your family. When it comes to friends or acquaintances offering advice, remember that their experience in the high school search process is a limited one, from their perspective alone. While I don't want to negate the validity of their experience or advice, I would like you to check out the "I heard I should..." types of advice with me, especially before you pass it along to another family.

At Burke's, the girls have quite a collection of people looking out for them, including teachers, administrators and advisors. Girls, your advising group and your advisor should prove to be excellent sources of support this year, thus I encourage you to invest yourself in that group and those relationships. Parents, in many ways, I serve this role for you, your advisor in essence, so please do not hesitate to follow the advice I have given the girls and invest yourself in this relationship.

While it is always nice to have quiet time around school to get work done, there comes a time when it's just not a school without the students! I am excited to see everyone on Thursday and encourage you to visit my office whenever you need anything.

I would now like to switch gears and talk about some "nuts and bolts". A number of people have inquired about the Bay School's requirement that parents complete Part I of the application in order to schedule a shadow visit. This, indeed, must be done; however, you are welcome to defer responses to questions 3, 4, and 5 if you are not in a position to answer them quite yet. When you submit the full application to Bay in January, you should be sure to include those questions as an addendum. Save the completed form on your computer since other independent schools will expect you to complete Part I as well. Set a goal of completing the form by mid-September so that you will still have options regarding shadow visit dates.

Though the SSAT is a few months away, it is on my mind since I am in the process of registering the girls for the October 26 test. In the next few weeks, once I receive them, I will mail to you your "ticket" for our October test. Please hang onto this document—it includes your SSAT member ID as well as login information. You will need this information to send scores to high schools when the time comes as well as register for a national test if you elect

to take one. When I mail home the ticket, I will also include a question and answer sheet as well as step-by-step instructions for score reporting.

I am looking forward to seeing the girls on campus Thursday. Please remind them that they are welcome in my office with high school questions or just to check-in at any time. Parents, please call or e-mail me with questions, thoughts or concerns at any time. My door is open for you as well!

Best,
Lisa