

## Rising Above

As I wrote this letter, I had just received an email from United Airlines asking if I had received my mishandled baggage. At the beginning of my trip to Ghana this summer, my first flight was grounded at Dulles. After rebooking my flight, I went home to fly out the next day. But my luggage went to Dulles, and I have not seen it since. I trusted that the airline would get my luggage to me. Nevertheless, I went to Ghana, rising above the nervous feelings I had about not having my luggage. However, that did not come to pass. I am relatively new to traveling, especially internationally. I have never had anything like this happen to me, and I have been very challenged by how to handle it. Everything within me wanted to cry, yell, and scream. However, none of these actions was going to magically produce my luggage. What I did know was that my reaction to this was paramount to ensuring that my trip was enjoyable in the midst of such unnerving uncertainty. My trip was nothing short of incredible in spite of this unfortunate circumstance.

As we planned for this upcoming school year, the administration team decided on some core principles that will serve as the foundations of our social-emotional curriculum: respect, integrity, self-regulation, and empathy (R.I.S.E.). I loved the way this came together in a way that felt aligned with DCD; our hawk mascot and everything in our mission that points to how we aim to provide, embrace, create, and inspire each member of our community to great heights. Based on this, the Lower School theme for this year is **Together We R.I.S.E.** These values will guide our social-emotional learning curriculum and daily interactions, helping every member of our community grow not just in knowledge, but in character. We will make these values visible in our school through our words and our actions, such as:

- **Respect** – Listening when others are speaking, taking care of our spaces, and treating everyone with kindness.
- **Integrity** – Doing the right thing even when no one is watching, being honest about mistakes, and taking responsibility.
- **Self-Regulation** – Managing our emotions, using strategies to stay calm and focused, and making safe, thoughtful choices.
- **Empathy** – Noticing how others are feeling, offering help, and including everyone in play and learning.

Due to the nature of how things change minute by minute in our world, we, as adults, have a responsibility to model for our children and our students how to rise above the noise, above the conflicts, above the moments that may be designed to steer us off course. Of equal importance, we need these same skills for navigating and celebrating when things are going well. In my conversations with the agents who were either trying (or not trying) to help me locate my luggage, I had to treat everyone with respect and kindness, managing my own emotions, maintaining my integrity, and even being able to feel for the people who misplaced my luggage. Was that easy? Absolutely not! Yet, having the skills in my toolkit to manage this situation was empowering and even freeing. Ensuring that our students have these skills can offer them these same feelings.

Whether you are returning to our Lower School or joining us for the first time, welcome! We are so glad that you are here. Our school is not just a place where students learn. It's a place where they are seen, known, valued, and challenged to reach their full potential. We know that learning happens best when students feel safe, supported, and connected. Therefore, the partnership between school and family is central to everything we do.

To help every student rise, we ask for your partnership in reinforcing school expectations at home. This includes supporting respectful and kind behavior, encouraging perseverance, and helping children understand the importance of personal responsibility. Whether we allow students to pack their own backpack, push through a tough word problem, or consider how they could repair a friend's hurt feelings, we offer them opportunities to build their capacity to rise. Just as important, daily, on-time attendance is essential for academic success and for maintaining a sense of belonging in our community. Each day matters, and each child's presence strengthens our classroom and school family as we lift one another.

We know that when we work together, our children will rise. Please know that your child's teachers and I are here for you. We are ready to listen, support, and celebrate with you at every step of your child's journey. Whether you have a question, a concern, or a story to share, we are here for you.

Here are a few tidbits to help you plan these first few weeks of school:

- **Homeroom lists** will be accessible on the website during the week of August 25, 2025. Please visit [www.dedhamcountryday.org](http://www.dedhamcountryday.org) and click "MyDCD."
- **Supply Lists and Summer Reading** - Books and assignments are available on our website. Please visit [www.dedhamcountryday.org](http://www.dedhamcountryday.org) and click "MyDCD" to find "Resources" and "Summer 2025 Assignments". Please be sure to review the information from teachers about when summer projects should come to school.
- **For Families of Grades 4 & 5 - Language Instruction:** This year, fourth grade will continue the exposure program to both Spanish and Latin, while fifth graders will take one language throughout the year. We worked to honor families' preferences as best we could. Students will learn of their language placement during the first week of school. Following this year, language instruction will continue in 6th grade when students will be able again to switch languages in the middle school years if they choose.
- **New Student Orientation** is Tuesday, September 2, 2025, from 9 a.m. - 10 a.m. Families will receive separate communication regarding this event.
- **The First Day of School** is September 3, 2025. Students must arrive by 8:00 a.m.
- **Car Line Notice** - Please remember when you pull into the driveway, drive up as far as possible before letting your children enter or exit the car. Please follow the directions of the staff outside in order to maintain safety for all.
- **Picture Day for Pre-K - Grade 4** is September 9th
- **Picture Day for Grades 5-8** is September 10th
- **Back to School Night for Lower School** is September 16, 2025, from 5:00 -7:00 p.m.

Together, let's continue to create a school community where every child knows they belong. Thank you for your trust and your partnership. I look forward to the year ahead, confident that, **together, we will R.I.S.E.**

With appreciation and excitement,

Trelane Clark  
Head of Lower School