

October 8, 2019

Dear Upper School Families,

As many will know, our High School students are enjoying a week of Homecoming excitement—many thanks are due to the parents, students, and teachers who have worked so hard to bring this week of joy and enthusiasm to our school this week.

Though our processes will return to normal after this week, we still have celebrations in store—Cross Country has their regionals on October 19th! From there, we hope to see them pass on to the state competition. Our runners wore their jerseys along with other athletes today. We're delighted with our athletes, who bring honor to our school and the example of fortitude to their peers.

You have recently received an email with information for Conference sign-ups. These conferences, though brief, are a good opportunity to connect with teachers to hear about salient themes regarding the performance of your scholars for the first quarter. The school will be sending home report cards electronically just prior to these conferences so that parents have an opportunity to review grades before entering the conference you have selected.

I want also to pass along some results from recent surveys you contributed to. We intend to conduct a few more in the next few weeks in order to provide a more thorough assessment of the start of the year for our families. Nevertheless, here are a few highlights that have jumped out so far from both the High School Homework Survey and the Middle School Autumn Survey. Some are matters to appreciate, and others are matters to address strategically:

Average nightly homework: The majority of Freshmen are working on homework for under 120 minutes per night, whereas the majority of Juniors work between 90-165 minutes per night.

School's academic expectations for my children: The largest proportion of Middle School respondents (45%) considered the school's expectations to be *very reasonable*, though a noticeable decline in estimation is noted among parents with multiple MS students, where the average response was either "somewhat reasonable" or "neutral".

Sleep: Among Freshmen, the majority of students are getting 8 or 9 hours of sleep per night. Among Sophomores, only 50% are getting 8 hours or more. Parents say that the majority of Juniors are getting fewer than 8 hours of sleep per night.

The school appropriately balances discipline and joy in my children's daily experience: The majority of Middle School parents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, though a considerable proportion (23%) selected "neither agree nor disagree".



Evening commitments: At the busiest point in the year, 50% of our High School students are anticipated to have between 1-3 hours of afternoon/evening commitments.

I see my child growing in virtue and dignity because of the culture at Great Hearts Irving: This statement saw the highest percentage of agreement, with nearly 40% of Middle School parents *strongly agreeing*, though 12% of our parents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Certain elements of these results stand out as praiseworthy, and others as areas for our community's attention. As more surveys are sent and returned, I will be pleased to keep our families informed about the trends taking shape as well as the measures we can take as a community to address those items which need to be improved for our students' sake.

We look forward to an exciting conclusion of the week, and hope to see parents join us for our regular Coffee with the Headmaster meetings, Window into Wonder tours, and Evening with the Classics events to explore different aspects of the school and learn more about the culture we are striving to form.

Sincerely,

Philip Althage
Headmaster, Upper School
Great Hearts Irving