

Five Star Message

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Have you ever heard someone mention the “BA Bubble”? The phrase suggests that life within Brookfield Academy can feel somewhat sheltered from—or not fully reflective of—the world beyond its campus. This isn’t a criticism. In fact, every organization, geographic region, and even family exists within its own “bubble,” shaped by its people, practices, and values.

The more important question is: *are we aware of the bubble?* Because within it lies both strength and weakness, hurdles and opportunities, and moments of discouragement alongside meaningful support—all of which have the power to shape us in positive and negative ways.

In light of the Five Stars, I took time to reflect on the “BA Bubble,” not only as a member of the Class of 1989, but also as a parent of four BA graduates—Jack '18, Mary '20, Max '25, and Katie '26—and one current student, Xavier, graduating in 2028. I reconnected with BA in the summer of 2014 while searching for a high school for Jack. When we chose BA, the school felt both familiar and surprisingly unfamiliar at the same time.

With Katie about to graduate, I recently reflected with her on how her experience compared to my own. We focused especially on the Star of Character, which we both believe is the most important, as it ultimately shapes how the other four stars are lived out.

For both of us, character was deeply formed through academic rigor. We felt challenged, supported, and well-prepared for the future. Small class sizes allowed us to build meaningful relationships with our teachers, and we were surrounded by highly capable peers. At times, that environment could feel overwhelming, but it also helped develop grit and resilience. Katie noted that academic Star support in the Lower and Middle Schools taught her the importance of asking for help—a skill that proves essential both inside and outside of the classroom when facing challenges we cannot navigate alone.

Athletics also played a significant role in shaping character. At a smaller school, opportunities to participate were more accessible, and sports became a gateway to form deep friendships, including connections beyond one’s immediate class. For Katie, athletics provided balance—a healthy outlet from academic demands—while also teaching time management, organization, and teamwork. And, importantly, it was fun.

Finally, we discussed the impact of the social environment. I graduated in a class of 20 students, while Katie’s class was closer to 80. Each came with its own strengths and challenges. Yet some things remain consistent: there is little room for exclusion, and respect matters—even when friendships vary. There is a shared understanding that develops over time, and for many, friendships stretch back years, sometimes even to early childhood. In many ways, it begins to feel like family—you may not always agree, but you should continue to show up for one another.

For Katie, senior year brought some unique social challenges that proved especially instructive. As she reflected, “I tried to remember that my words can either build others up or tear them down. I also learned the value of staying open-minded about people, which allowed me to rekindle some old friendships and form new ones as well.”

And perhaps that is the true gift of the “BA Bubble”—a place that shapes not just students, but people who are ready to contribute meaningfully wherever they go next.