



My Maclay Families,

Today I am grateful. I know this is the time of year we are supposed to talk about being thankful, so if this letter checks that box, then so be it. As the school and our community have progressed through the last year and a half, I'm touched by the kindness, partnership, friendship, patience, and gratitude that overshadowed any unpleasantness that we worked through. This community is a special place, and I hope you and your families find peace, comfort, and joy here. Growing up and developing the qualities to be the portrait of a Maclay graduate is not easy, and we should all have a healthy respect for the price the students have to pay to develop into a great human beings, but the price must not steal their joy. American speaker and author William Arthur Ward once wrote, "Gratitude can transform common days into Thanksgiving, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings." As I continue my journey as a husband, father, friend, and head of school, I've developed a deeper appreciation of how this simple concept can sustain me. Our recent journey together was a perfect depiction of the chaos always waiting at the gate. I will take an extra measure of time this coming season to practice gratitude in my own heart and work to be an example in sharing it with others.

It has been heartwarming to have many of you back on campus in a way that feels natural and meaningful. I am grateful for the time and thought given to how to make the best of a challenging situation. As we continue forward and re-establish the rhythm of the school year, we are also guided by our Strategic Plan with a new focus on partnering and connecting deeper with our community. We are working through some foundational goals of the plan now and look forward to sharing these exciting new directions with you in January. The central watchword in our Mission Statement has always been 'Each,' and I'm excited this continues to be the nucleus around which all initiatives revolve.

With just under 20 school days until the end of the semester and our winter break, I wish all of you a season surrounded by those you love, whether on zoom calls or in person. Sam Lefkowitz gave an answer once that I believe would be great for all to remember at this time. As he tells it, "When asked if my cup is half-full or half-empty, my only response is that I am thankful to have a cup." There have been many challenges behind us and great ones ahead; I am grateful to be able to face them alongside you and your amazing love and support for your children and the teachers who care so very much for each of them. Thank you for your trust, support, and dreaming big dreams with us.

Gratefully yours,

James Milford

