



December 16, 2007

Dear Senior School Parents,

With the snow driving outside and the Steelers already on the field, I am taking a moment to look back over the course of the fall. We have had tremendous success and some challenges that we have weathered. With the first round of college letters arriving yesterday, we recognize that good news is often balanced with a bit of disappointment. I also know that our students are ready for winter break, after a long fall with many events and meaningful learning.

This past Monday, I spoke at Assembly, sharing the following thoughts:

Character often reflects in the behaviors you choose when no one is looking. For those of you who reflect on what a good decision is, think carefully about how you want to behave, and then behave in line with your character, I commend you for a job well done. I say this because, although no one got into trouble at Snow Ball, I know there is a good chance that some of you were not making good decisions. There is a story called the “Ring of Gyges” about a man who finds a ring that makes him invisible. The question of the story concerns how an individual would behave if he or she was not accountable to others. I hope that each of you reflect on the decisions you made this weekend and think about how those decisions line up with our Guiding Principles and our Non-Negotiables. Please know that life will afford you lots of opportunity to make these kinds of decisions. I hope you choose ones that reflect a character aligned with the Guiding Principles. As they say at the Middle and Junior Schools, do it because it is right.

That said, please also take a moment to thank the wonderful faculty members and parents who helped make Saturday evening such a wonderful event. For those of you who weren’t there, we missed you! Have a wonderful week and make good decisions.

By Tuesday afternoon, I had gotten a range of feedback. Some students passed along appreciation for reminding students of their responsibilities. Others said that I had called our trust into question. I appreciate the former feedback and the later feedback helps me arrive at ways of talking about trust. As I told the members of the Student Council, with whom I met on Wednesday morning, trust without accountability is negligence and, if I did not trust the students, we would not have had an opportunity like Snow Ball, where

the students could make decisions that banked on the trust I and the rest of the faculty have in our students.

This is all to say that our students are normal teenagers and, like most adolescents, they occasionally take risks. I want them to know that we care about them, that we will give them the latitude to consider courses of action, and that we will hold them accountable as best we can. I also want you to know about this conversation because our greatest success in helping students to think about decisions they will make and to reflect on decisions already made depends on parents and teachers alike helping students to do this work.

I have been fortunate this fall in that a number of parents have come by to speak with me about their child and also about the health of our school community. These conversations help us all better understand where school and home fit together and how we can team to help your children and our students become the adults we all hope they will be. Please let me know if you have any questions, thoughts, or concerns about what we are doing and how we are progressing. I know that our careful attention and work together will help the rest of the year be as an effective educational experience as the fall has been. I hope you all have a wonderful winter holiday and look forward to seeing you on campus soon.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeremy LaCasse". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Jeremy LaCasse

Head of Senior School

[jlacasse@shadysideacademy.org](mailto:jlacasse@shadysideacademy.org)

Announcements from the Faculty:

Chamber Choir will do Christmas Caroling through the halls for the patients at Shady Side Hospital on Dec. 17 at 7 p.m.

The director of the Maine Coast Semester will speak to the IV Form students January 10 at 9:55 in the Kountz Theatre in the Hillman Performing Arts Center. This program is a one semester V Form program that blends academics, environmental education, and community. A Shady Side student choosing to attend would spend either the Fall or the Spring term in this program. Shady Side has sent students each year for the past twelve years. Bill Diehl is the campus coordinator for this program. If you have questions, Bill can be reached at [wdiehl@shadysideacademy.org](mailto:wdiehl@shadysideacademy.org).

On January 23 at 7:30 p.m. in the Rauh Theater of the Hillman Performing Arts Center, the bands of the Senior School will present a winter concert. This concert will feature the Concert Band, The Symphonic Band and the Jazz Ensemble. There will also be music offered by small performing groups including the Jazz Combo, Clarinet Choir, Brass Ensemble, Flute Choir, Saxophone Ensemble and Percussion Ensemble.