



September 2, 2022

Dear Middlesex community,

Those of us fortunate enough to be in education are privileged to experience the palpable sense of energy, anticipation, and hope that students and faculty bring to a new school year. Whether you are a student, parent, alumni, grandparent, trustee or friend of Middlesex, I wanted to let you know how honored and excited Tom and I are to be joining the Middlesex community next year. We are eager to get to know you and to hear your Middlesex stories as well as your hopes and dreams for this remarkable school. We have received some wonderful notes and emails and I am truly inspired by the deep love and loyalty that so many people have for Middlesex.

In the same spirit, Middlesex faculty and staff received a letter from me, offering a few thoughts on the leadership transition ahead and wishing them well as they welcome one another and students back to the Circle at Middlesex.

This year of transition at both Middlesex and Tower Hill offers us the opportunity to be thorough, thoughtful, and deliberate in ensuring the very best for students, faculty, staff, and the school community. School transitions offer important inflection and reflection points that are rich with opportunity and should not be rushed. To this end, I have been in conversation with both Board President Jason Robart and Interim Head of School Karlyn McNall and we all agree that the focus of this year should be ensuring the very best experience for students, faculty, and staff at Middlesex. Middlesex is fortunate to have a great team in place, including the terrific leadership of Karlyn McNall as Head of Middlesex through June 30, 2023, as I will be busy leading Tower Hill until then as well. I am a big believer in strong governance and while Karlyn and I will certainly be in touch regularly this year, it would be unwise and impossible for me to fully understand the nuances and details of the school community at Middlesex from afar.



Bessie and Tom '76 Speers

You are important to the Middlesex community and I am eager to get to know alums, parents, trustees, friends of the school, and of course students and faculty. We will have plenty of time to arrange visits, conversations, listening sessions, etc. next year. Please do not interpret my “quiet” this year as anything but honoring the important work taking place on campus, observing best governance practices with respect to school transitions, and not distracting from the most important task of tending to the hearts and minds of Middlesex students. I look forward to learning more from you about the Middlesex community.

I plan to visit campus on a few occasions this year to offer a brief hello to students, faculty, and staff

and to convey my excitement in person. Karlyn and I will figure out the best way to engage with the community while I am on campus and we will surely let you know if there may be an occasion to connect. Tom and I plan to attend David Sheldon’s memorial service on October 16th where I hope to sit with former Middlesex Heads Deirdre Ling and Kathy Giles, both of whom I have been in touch with recently. I look forward to visiting campus after the School’s fall break on October 18th.

There are so many opportunities ahead for Middlesex to stand boldly, distinguish itself, and move forward with humility, creativity, clarity, and great optimism. I am particularly excited about a collaborative visioning process that invites and challenges all members of the Middlesex community to ask bold questions. Middlesex has such a palpable sense of place, with opportunity to leverage the natural world, and share its global vantage point with the wider community. All around us, including Estabrook Woods and Bateman’s Pond, are opportunities for learning, wisdom, and engagement with the natural world.

I hope summer offered you some vistas of the natural world. As I shared with faculty and staff, the Speers’ summer included appreciation of the great outdoors. I will never forget a late June evening in New Hampshire when from the screen porch we watched the most magnificent light show I have ever seen—fireflies set the unmowed field aglow! On another evening, we watched three baby bears and their mama saunter within feet of us across the stone wall. Swims in the ocean, tennis, a beach baptism, family time, a



Guthrie, Bessie, Tom '76 and Nellie Speers and Nola

Vermont wedding, golf with my 85 year old mother (who hits straight down the middle of the fairway every time!), a surprise birthday visit from our daughter who has spent the summer in Colorado, and reading - have been among my favorite highlights.

On the top of the stack of books on my bedside table this summer was, of course, Hugh Fortmiller’s *Find the Promise - Middlesex School 1901-2001*. I also enjoyed reading *Think Again* by Adam Grant, *The World According to Mister Rogers* by Fred Rogers, *Food Rules* by Michael Pollan, *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison, *Leading with Gratitude* by Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton, and *Cape Cod* by Henry David Thoreau. I look forward to hearing what Middlesex faculty and students enjoy reading in the future. The year ahead offers all who love schools the chance to share reading together, whether it be poetry, plays, novels or nonfiction—we can offer one another the gift of curiosity. I was thrilled to hear that Middlesex’s “mantra” for the year is: Curiosity, Kindness, and Courage. Over the past 8 years at Tower Hill we have selected a word for the year, and coincidentally this year’s word is Curiosity! Curiosity is indeed fundamental to the core of education. I love Molly Worthen’s description of education:

“Producing thoughtful, talented graduates is not a matter of focusing on market-ready skills. It’s about giving students an opportunity that most of them will never have again in their lives: the chance for serious exploration of complicated intellectual problems, the gift of time in an institution where curiosity and discovery are the source of meaning... And there’s just no app for that.” —Molly Worthen, The New York Times, Feb. 23, 2018

I wish all in the Middlesex family a wonderful year ahead as the school continues to “find the promise” in each of its students. Again, what an honor it will be to join the Middlesex community next year!

With great admiration and anticipation,

Elizabeth C. Speers
Head of School Elect

P.S. Nola, our two year old yellow lab, is eager to meet everyone too!

