Dear Burke’s Community,

Happy New Year! The Board of Trustees hopes that you had a most festive holiday season with your family and that 2016 has already gotten off to a roaring start.

In looking back at what’s been happening on the Burke’s campus in the first half of this school year, it’s difficult to pick out just one thread to highlight — so many great things were closely tied together. Two that immediately come to mind are:

- **Jane Goodall’s momentous visit to Burke’s on October 13.** Thanks to the help of parents Jennifer Caldwell and John Fisher, the famed primatologist told her story and urged environmental action to both Burke’s divisions at two separate assemblies. That in and of itself is a marvel, but her message of hope continues on campus even now: Third graders are writing letters to area companies and businesses to help clear the oceans of pollution; fourth graders portrayed her life on stage in their play, titled “The Story of Jane”; and students in Tree House created friendship bracelets to go to a home for albino children in Namibia as part of a “Roots & Shoots” project.

- **Burke’s recent Hour Week of Code.** It was fascinating to watch the second incarnation of this new Burke’s tradition unfold across grades and classes — even across the Burke’s community. Hour of Code got a head start in the weeks and months before it was scheduled thanks to several events. First, on November 5, seventh and eighth graders had the opportunity to attend an on-campus screening of the documentary *CodeGirl*, thanks to Google and parent Monica Morse. The second, hosted by our Parent Education committee, featured a Burke’s alumna — Robin Hauser Reynolds ’78e — who screened her film “CODE: Debugging the Gender Gap” for an audience intent on making that gap disappear. And then, the week itself included close to 75 activities demonstrating to Burke’s girls that coding and computer science were within their reach.

All of this collaboration and interconnectedness is wonderful to see because it perfectly echoes the themes in the Strategic Plan, where the vision for Burke’s includes curriculum that bridges grades and subject areas and initiatives that boost cultural competency across campus. We’re happy to report that much of the groundwork that was laid last year during the initial implementation of the Strategic Plan continues unabated:

- A second summer full of professional development opportunities, thanks to your generosity at Dinner Auction 2015, is already generating new lessons and approaches in the classroom. (Check out this one involving improv in the fifth grade.)
- The second year of the refurbished Social Emotional Learning curriculum is building upon last year’s themes, yet introducing new concepts and incorporating elements from that summer professional development.
- Results from Burke’s first year of participation in the Mission Skills Assessment tests have come in and will serve as a baseline as we continue to examine how we educate your daughters in all necessary skills, academic and not.
- Several new prototypes for innovative learning spaces on campus, as well as reconceptualizing the “heart” of Burke’s. As was mentioned in the December 15 issue of Tuesday Notes, this project is quickly moving forward!
• Continued hard work on our Diversity Task Force and in differentiation in the classroom, with the movement of Angelique Downes from third grade to Lower School Math Specialist.

As the Board of Trustees, our role is to make sure that all of the above is doable and fiscally sound. We participate in the growth mindset ourselves, with — this past fall — our hosting of a workshop called “Diversity for Trustees: Foundation and Best Practices for Governance,” which we held in collaboration with the organization Bay Area Trustees Advancing Diversity and frequent Burke’s partner Blink Consulting. Later this winter, we’ll be sending trustees to two important events, both of which will be taking place in San Francisco: the Trustee/School Head Conference with the California Association of Independent Schools, and the Annual Conference for the National Association of Independent Schools. We look forward to expanding our understanding of what it means to serve as a trustee and to meet with others in similar roles from across the state — and the country.

All of this work overlaps with the other parts we play at Burke’s — we are current parents, past parents, alumnae, and friends as well, and we all bring our unique perspectives to the table. We know you stand with us, as fellow members of this amazing community, while we work toward making Burke’s the pre-eminent program for K-8 girls in the country.

There’s much to look forward to in this newly arrived year. Mark your calendars for Dinner Auction 2016 on Saturday, April 2, when — once again — we’ll gather together to celebrate everything Burke’s and to show our support for this wonderful school. Until then, we’ll see you in the drop-off line, ladling soup in the Lunchroom, and running all the various committees and activities that keep Burke’s humming along.

With gratitude,

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Evie Davis
President of Burke’s Board of Trustees