

August 24, 2017

Dear Form III Students,

I hope you are enjoying the last few weeks of your summer vacation and starting to think about your first year in the Upper School. Whether you have been at Browning for a long time or are new to Browning, all of you will be new to the Upper School. My hope is that through participating in this new experience together, you will quickly become a unified class.

First, let me introduce myself to you and to give you an idea of what you can expect from me in the coming school year. I also want to give you some advice about navigating your first year in the Upper School. Like you, I attended an all-boys private school (albeit a few decades ago). For me the summer before my ninth-grade year was filled with excitement and trepidation: I worried that I would be unable to manage the workload and feared that the upperclassmen or my peers might not accept me. Within the first week of school, my concerns diminished, and I went on to experience four years filled with academic, athletic, and social challenges, opportunities and successes. My hope is that you will have a similar breadth of experiences during your four years in the Browning Upper School.

As Head of Upper School, I think you will find me to be fair, patient and a good listener. I will expect you to live up to the Browning community principles. Please review the online *Student Handbook*, which describes these principles and contains other important information. I hope that at this point you have completed all of your summer reading for your classes. Additionally, everyone in the Upper School community will have read *Born A Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*, by Trevor Noah, and I look forward to our discussions of that honest and engaging book.

Here are a few things to consider as you start life in the Upper School:

- At the beginning of the year take note of the Form VI boys and recognize their maturity and confidence. Consider that not too long ago they were Form III students. In three short years they have become the student leaders of the school, which is a position you will hold sooner than you can imagine.
- The opening weeks of school may seem hectic with homework to complete, activities to choose, schedules to navigate, and, if you're on a sports team, practices to fit into your packed day. Take time in the first few weeks to catch your breath and to remind yourself that the school year is long; you will need to pace yourself and to establish a routine.
- Whether you are coming to Browning as a new student or you are moving up from Form II, moving into the Upper School provides a new beginning for everyone. Take advantage of this transitional moment; it is an opportunity to reinvent yourself. Be clear about who you aspire to be and also allow your classmates room to grow and change.
- Do not fall into the trap of verbally going after one another. Nothing diminishes a class's confidence or impacts the camaraderie of the group faster than immature bickering, bullying or the slinging of insults. Browning

is a small school, and you will be with one another for the next four years. I expect all of you to act with integrity and to respect all of the members of the Browning community.

We will continue our two-semester schedule. There will be final exams in December and June. Additionally, we have implemented some changes to the Advisor/Parent conferences; there will be two conferences, one in November and another in April, and all Upper School students (Forms III to VI) will attend these conferences with their parent(s). You will hear more about this from your advisors as the school year progresses.

Each student in Form III will be receiving a MacBook Air on which he will be able to download books for several courses (Biology, Geometry, and some literature for English), which should reduce the weight of his backpack. During Orientation, Mr. Grill and the Technology Department will help you set up your laptops. Obviously these are expensive items, and we hope you all will recognize the need to be very responsible with the device. We are confident that this technology will serve the students well and advance our pedagogy.

As a way to ease back into the school mode, you will participate in an Orientation on Tuesday, September 5. Please arrive at Browning that morning at 9 a.m. I will lead the day along with Dr. Brett Wisniewski, the faculty proctor of our Peer Leadership program and Classics teacher. Also spending time with you will be the Form VI Peer Leaders, who, weather permitting, will lead groups out into Central Park. The school will provide lunch, but you should bring a water bottle. The dress code for Orientation is casual, so wear clothing that will allow you to engage easily in active outdoor activities. The day will end after lunch in the park, and you can plan on the activities ending around 1:30 p.m.

Most importantly, come to school ready to be an asset to the Upper School. How do you best achieve that? You care about your peers, and you understand that your experience in this division is predicated on a mutual respect for your peers and for yourself. These are important developmental years for you, and your classmates will have a profound impact on the person you become. Support each other and have the confidence that you will have the support of your peers.

This school year is the second year of Head of School John Botti's leadership, and he is particularly interested in getting to know all of you as you enter the Upper School at Browning. I am confident you will find him engaging and interested in each of you.

Mr. Marshall and the Browning maintenance staff have worked very hard this summer to ensure that the building is ready for your arrival in September. Make a point in the first few weeks of letting the team know how much you appreciate their hard work.

Enjoy the final days of summer vacation. I look forward to seeing all of you at 9:00 a.m. on September 5.

All the best,
James E. Reynolds
Head of the Upper School