From the Acting President

Dear Pine Crest Community,

Over the past few weeks, I have begun meeting in small groups with faculty across both campuses to discuss our vision for Pine Crest’s future, one where critical thinking and synthesis are at the core of all of our students’ learning experiences. Throughout these conversations, I have found myself excited by the extent to which this vision is already infusing our faculty’s approach to teaching. The ability to anticipate what comes next will define success in the future and separate the great from the merely good, and many of our teachers are already projecting ahead. While none of us can predict how this vision will translate into reality, our teachers are already embracing a future where they will nurture in our students the capacity to readily adapt, to think critically and quickly, and to devise new and innovative solutions.

At the heart of all critical thinking is the capacity to write and express ideas, and it is through writing that students are challenged to establish and articulate the interconnectedness of concepts. It is this understanding that has recently prompted our Lower School faculty to incorporate into their classrooms the philosophy and teaching strategies of “Writing Workshop.” While students still learn spelling, grammar and other isolated language skills, they spend much of their time participating in brief mini-lessons about a specific genre or writer’s craft, after which they are given substantial in-class time to incorporate these attributes into their own writings. While students possess differing levels of writing proficiencies, they all have the opportunity to regularly engage the art of writing itself in a structured setting where they receive individualized feedback from their teachers. Recent surveys show that employers identify strong writing skills as one of the most necessary tools for success in the workplace; and it is our task as a school to ensure that our students develop into excellent writers.

Another recent development is the expansion of “science research” to our Middle School. For years, our Upper School Science Research program has embodied all that our vision is trying to achieve. Inspired by the way in which this program encourages students to think critically and in original ways, Middle School science teachers on both campuses have partnered with our Upper School Science Department to expose younger students to this model. Over the course of the fall, our Middle School students have posed scientific questions, have designed research projects to help them uncover the answers to their questions, and have even mentored our fifth graders in doing the same. Through these projects, our students still engage the scientific principles that they would learn in more traditional classroom settings, but have the additional opportunity to apply them to and understand their relevance to real-world problems.

As we move into the next chapter of Pine Crest’s history, we have no greater asset than our students and the faculty’s commitment to our vision. I look forward to sharing more examples of exciting learning opportunities in future newsletters. In the meantime, I wish everyone a happy and healthy holiday season.

We are Pine Crest – and we always will be.

Sincerely,

Dana Markham, Ed.D.
Acting President