



# REFLECTIONS FROM HEAD OF SCHOOL

To The Woodhall School Community:

*“To learn something new, take the same path that you took yesterday.”* - John Burroughs

I shared this quotation with the boys recently in Morning Meeting, just as we reached the midpoint of the school year and the winter doldrums had decidedly taken hold. In some ways, I'm grateful for the same old, same old and find assurance in the predictability of our schedule after three years of pandemic-related disruptions.

While there is much that is novel this school year - the dynamic STEM Lab and its related programming and opportunities, the striking pavilion as a new gathering place on campus, and the relationships and energy of new students and adult mentors. We also have returned to what is familiar about Woodhall: our distinct mission and core values which provides the scaffolding for the supportive community culture that celebrates both a playfulness and a willingness to embrace respectful confrontation, even when the process of doing so is uncomfortable and messy.

Some might complain about the sameness of the daily rhythms of school life—the daily schedule of classes, sports, study hall, and the Communications Program—all obligations and responsibilities and seemingly no free time. Yet, here is where we need to heed what Burroughs is saying. In the original context, John Burroughs, the acclaimed naturalist, was reflecting on his daily sojourns in his native Catskill Mountains; nonetheless, we can embrace the essence of mindfulness—that is, being present—in the well-worn paths that we take during our time at Woodhall.

Nothing will change unless we take on our perceived challenges and anticipated delights - work, play, relationships, and reflections—with a new yet informed perspective each day. To be fair, it takes time and trust in a community to cultivate such a mindset. Yet, it is the critical work of the Woodhall process. Whether you are an alumnus, family member, student, or adult mentor, I hope you read with interest the happenings of the school community and learn something new in the familiar paths that you take as you reflect upon and celebrate your Woodhall experience.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew C. Woodhall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Matthew C. Woodhall