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HEAD OF SCHOOL

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Head Lines

A LIFE OF MEANING

I sit in senior administrative meetings and scan the crowd to find a host of people who are paying close attention to all of the facets that make this school effective in serving our students. Our admissions staff employs a host of metrics to evaluate admissibility of candidates; our academic teams map out carefully the academic programs of each student and adjust with great regularity; heating demands and anticipated weather are measured carefully as we lock in fuel prices prior to winter; even our food ordering is managed with great precision based on changing appetites. We are a disciplined organization and measure everything – down to the smallest detail. All of this work has conspired to make Brewster Academy a remarkably effective school.

As I've stepped back from this discipline and thought about the broad work of this school and others like it, I am reminded of Einstein's pithy rejoinder: "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted." And in reflecting on his notion against a backdrop of this impressive, effective, disciplined institution, I've been asking myself what ineffable, difficult-or-impossible to measure qualities we will continue to focus on with more urgency given the broader realities of the world.

I've landed on three "C's" – **culture**, **community**, and **character** – all of which are, and will continue to be, important defining qualities of this school even if we can't rely on simple metrics to evaluate progress.

Culture (noun): the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a social group

Community (noun): a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society

Character (noun): qualities of honesty, courage, or the like; integrity

Three C's – all hard to measure, equally hard to shape. And all are, perhaps, antiquated ideas in the era of tweets and Snapchat. Yet I find myself intrigued by them, convinced of their veracity and value both because of the very world in which we find ourselves, and because this world will only become more complex as our graduates grow into adults – for I believe that these three C's can conspire to make a life meaningful to the self and others – the core work of schools.

As I've thought about these three words, I've discerned an implied hierarchy. Our first work is always to shape and strengthen our culture – by clearly defining our cultural beliefs. In other words, how do we expect our students to interact with each other and with those charged with their care? And how can we continue to convey these cultural beliefs crisply, consistently, while more effectively reinforcing these beliefs in what we choose to do and not do as an institution?

In reinforcing our cultural values – and shouting them from the highest peaks – we will continue to select for and instill in our students common characteristics that derive directly from the very culture we are endeavoring to create. In so doing, an ever more unitary, coherent community will surely emerge, one that will, I believe, come to be emblematic of all we wish to engender in our students as they head off into an uncertain future.

I full well trust that in defining and building from a position of strength a yet more coherent, values-driven culture within the context of a well-developed community, we will unwittingly be instilling in our students a robust, durable set of character traits that will both serve them well here and beyond.

Ultimately, in attending ever more vigorously to these three C's, we will shape the sound character of this fine school, an act that will surely both resonate with the intentions of this school's founders – including the remarkable John Brewster, who made clear through his last will and testament how extraordinarily important he believed Brewster and other such educational institutions are in positively shaping our communities and future.

We are just digging in to the complex, multivariate, and challenging work of affirming and giving concise language to these decidedly aspirational yet immensely critical ideas as a faculty, and the work to date has been remarkably heartening because these notions speak to all of us as teachers and citizens alike. And know that as we do so, we look forward to extending the dialogue about these three C's to include all Brewster constituencies – graduates, parents, friends, and members of our broader Wolfeboro community. Please call or write or come for a visit to discuss. We surely welcome partners in our quest, for many hands make light work. / BA /

