

Remarks by HHS Principal Brenden Cusack September 11, 2017

Peace, harmony, love, respect, understanding, empathy, and unity. These are words we hope can characterize our school, our community and our nation. These words relate to many qualities we strive to see in ourselves. Our history as a nation and as a people includes tales of conflict and struggle, and many challenges we have faced. Our national story also includes many examples of triumph, overcoming of adversity and realization of dreams. It is this rich history and the many highs and lows therein that have served to craft the character of the United States.

On September 11th, 2001, our country experienced an event the magnitude of which many would say is unparalleled in our history. The attacks that occurred on that clear, crisp day in September shook us, and made us question our sense of peace and security in a way we had not experienced before. But as with many stories of hope that appear in the chapters of our national story, in this time of tragedy and heartbreak, people came together and in immediate and long term ways tried to help each other heal. Times of struggle show the true character of any person, community or nation. September 11th was such a time.

Many of you do not remember the events firsthand, as they move deeper into our history. Those of us who did experience that day can speak to the lasting impressions, the feelings of horror on that day and the bearing of witness to the resilience of our people in the aftermath. In an attempt to convey this to my own children, who are 7 and 9 years old, we brought my boys to the 9/11 memorial this past spring. The trip allowed me a new perspective, seeing through the eyes of my children the Freedom Tower, the reflecting pools that represent the footprints of the Twin Towers that fell and the surrounding area known as ground zero. My wife and I did our best to answer their many questions as we toured the grounds,

the most difficult of which was the simple question of why. The question remains a challenge for children and adults alike. Perhaps, however, an even more important question is “how?” How can we ensure that the tragedy experienced on September 11th never repeats itself? The answer is not something we can simply leave to the leaders of this or other nations. Each of us bears the responsibility, in a current national climate that may sometimes feel divided, that we create to the best of our ability an America that can be characterized with words like peace, harmony, love, respect, understanding, empathy and unity.

At this time I ask that we observe a moment of silence in honor of the many lives lost as a result of the attacks on September 11th.