



Darrow School

A Coed, College-Preparatory, Boarding and Day School for Grades 9–12

July 13, 2016

Dear Darrow Family:

I hope you are enjoying a happy and relaxing summer. I am excited to write you this letter as my first official task as Darrow's new Director of Studies. I can't wait to fully jump into my duties later in the summer, and to join the extraordinary group of people who are the Darrow family. The 2016-2017 school year is shaping up to be an exhilarating one, as we continue to develop Darrow's program offerings and active curriculum model. I look forward to working with you to make our shared learning experience as successful and multi-faceted as possible. Despite my recent arrival, I have already come to see Darrow as an exceptional community for that to happen, with its unique program offerings, many electives, opportunities for community involvement and leadership – and, most importantly, its welcoming, capable, and dedicated people.

Indeed, it is the people of Darrow that were the most important factor in my choosing to come to the Mountainside. During my first visit to the campus in February, I had the good fortune to meet with several students, and to engage in an open and frank discussion about their expectations for the school, its program, and for me. I was extremely impressed with their thoughtfulness, their pride for Darrow's uniqueness, and their ability to articulate their ideas with both subtlety and force. Clearly, they were deeply engaged with their education and wanted to make sure my vision for Darrow was harmonious with the qualities of their school they considered most important. I will do my utmost to live up to those expectations, as well to the example set by my predecessor, Ingrid Gustavson.

During my own 16 years in independent schools I have had a lot of experience with different types of educational communities. It is already clear to me that Darrow is the healthiest one I have yet encountered – a setting that caters not only to the academic learning that occurs in the classroom, but also the social and emotional one that happens in a close-knit community in which all members can feel safe and valued, and in which their diverse identities, interests, talents, and passions are celebrated. As we continue to develop Darrow's active curriculum this coming year, our goal is to make such holistic learning even more effective.

Most of you have already selected courses for this year. A draft of your class schedule for the 2016–2017 school year is included in this packet. Hopefully you have been placed in all of your top choices. Unfortunately, this is not always possible because on occasion there are conflicts between class blocks, or high demand for a course. If you would like to change something that you see (or don't) on your schedule, or find out where a conflict is, please feel free to call or email me after I settle in my office on July 19. Alternatively, as you know, we will have the

opportunity to fine-tune your schedule at Registration when you arrive at the end of August. Independent Studies are not currently listed and will be added upon your return, along with Mentoring blocks.

In a separate August mailing, each of you will receive advisor and house assignments. Athletics and Hands-to-Work choices will be scheduled in the fall. Take the summer to practice healthy habits like regular exercise, sufficient sleep, enriching and fun activities, and time management so as to return relaxed but prepared for the diversity of experiences and responsibilities that we engage in every day at Darrow. Some fall coaches have developed training programs for their teams. Check your Darrow email for details.

Over the summer, we will welcome to Darrow a number of highly qualified new educators who are very eager to work with you. New faces include Brian Granger, who is joining the English Department and the Ann Lee houseparent team; Nicholas Forcier, our new College Counselor and also Ann Lee houseparent; Catherine Stines, who will teach History and join the Meacham houseparent team; Chloe Kalna, joining the Visual Arts faculty and house parenting in Brethrens; Joe Paradis will teach math and work with the Hinckley houseparent team, and Leah Penniman, who will put her rich background to use teaching Environmental Science and Agroecology.

Along with new teachers, we will also have some new spaces on campus. Most visible of these updates is the relocation of the Academic Mentoring Program spaces to the upper level of the Library. Several buildings are also undergoing significant repair and renovation.

Please check the Darrow School calendars for your arrival date on campus and complete the arrival form found on the website.

I very much look forward to meeting your family over the summer or at the start of the school year.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mika Saarela', written in a cursive style.

Mika Saarela
Director of Studies
(518) 794-6017
saarelam@darrowschool.org