

Dear Overlake Community,

These last several weeks have been challenging for all of us. Like you I long for a return to what was before the intrusion of the pandemic. I have dealt with a variety of emotions – disbelief, anger, fear, grief – all part of an emotional process of coming to grips with our new reality. I find myself now focusing on being patient and having greater empathy. Realizing that my family, my students, colleagues, and friends are all struggling now. Having this mindset allows me to come into a conversation with greater listening and tolerance and less about problem solving or debating.

I have also been thinking about what happens once we are on the other side of this pandemic. We will have learned a great deal. There are many practical things we will take away but perhaps the most powerful is our ability to collaborate even more as we have shifted into a far more challenging and unknown environment. In essence even though we are not in physical space with each other, we have become even closer in spite of this physical distance. This I believe will make us a stronger institution and community.

Finally, although we have learned a great deal and continue to do so every day we run *Overlake Online*, our destiny is not to become an online school but rather to return to the places and spaces that all of us were drawn to when we first arrived on our beautiful campus.

But I believe we can learn the art of patience while on this journey. We can teach one another to value patience as an asset to succeeding in life. We can develop the perseverance to look beyond today, or the next weeks and months, and see our real destiny.

Right now, our students are learning how valuable human connection and communication are to sustain healthy relationships. They are learning critical thinking skills as they navigate during this unsettling time. They are learning to be creative in maintaining connections. These are all 21st century skills that we strive for our students to master.

I am looking forward to practicing more patience and empathy in the coming months. In the meantime, I wish you all my best and hope that you and your families are taking care of one another.

Be well,

Matt