

THIS SIDE OF THE OAK TREE

Navigating School Life Together



Where Beauty Confronts Purpose

Why No Hoodies in the Classroom?

BY ROBBIE HINTON

Maybe not next year, but at some point in the future, we will host a Blazer Ceremony. Rising seniors will place the Rhetoric School Blazer on the rising freshmen. The elegance of the coat and the crest that is stitched into it calls to the boy to become a man and declares to the girl that she is now a woman. When students wear the blazer, they have a presentation in class or will defend their theses. Thus, putting on the blazer should convey a sentiment of readiness to stand and to deliver.

To be honest, we are a long way from pulling that sentiment off. We have done a poor job in clarifying the *meaning* of the blazer. To tell the truth, we have also done a poor job in creating a healthy pride in our school colors. We are not changing the *purpose* of the uniform. Uniforms help remove distraction. We are not seeking to create militaristic uniformity, and we know that wearing the uniform neither makes you virtuous nor keeps you pure.

RESPECTFUL

RESPONSIBLE

THOUGHTFUL

INTENTIONAL

STRATEGIC

SACRAMENTAL

Imbuing Ideals

We are changing the *meaning*. We are imbuing ideals into a garment. Imbuing, while a strange word, is the correct word. We are laboring to fill the blazer and our blue and gold colors with certain ideals. To use classical lingo, we want garments with our logo and mascot to reflect the goodness, beauty, and truth of our God.

How do you imbue meaning? By creating a confrontation between the ideals of beauty, goodness, and truth with purposefulness of action.

Several years ago, we sought to change the *meaning* of our diploma. We wanted to imbue certain ideals or aspects of God's beauty, goodness, and truth into a piece of paper. The idea was that a parent would walk up after graduation and say, "What a bargain! I paid you \$130,000 for that piece of paper, and it was worth every penny and more." The planning team laughed and said it would never happen, but now, it happens every year. Every year, at least one person says to me, they should have paid more. How? We created a confrontation between the ideals of beauty, goodness, and truth with the purposefulness of the education.

A team meets weekly to plan for graduation. Over the years, they have changed venues, redesigned the diploma, replaced AC units in the gym, and hired AV specialists. The changes and iterations were endless. They even changed the name from Graduation to Commencement. Now, I am told the acoustics and paint colors in the gym have to change.

While the Commencement Team was imbuing ideals into the diploma, our Academic Team was working on the purposefulness of the path our students take to earn their diplomas. The words the teachers say to the students and the students say to the teachers during Senior Assembly and Commencement must be true. When Mr. Seitz states to Dr. Bovenizer that these students have met the expectations of the Board, the students need to feel a sense of accomplishment and pride. This speaks to the excellence of our academic standards, the effort required to meet those standards, and the relationship between students, teachers, deans, and Dr. Bo.

Now, we are seeking to change the *meaning* of our uniform. We want to imbue these same ideals into our colors and logos. **So, what does this mean? In short, hoodies (items with a hood and no zipper) are no longer allowed in the classrooms.** This is a very general policy that eliminates multiple items that were previously approved. Between now and the end of the first quarter, we will review specific garments for consideration to be reinstated for approved wear.

This approach invites you into the conversation, which will focus on one central question:

What criteria separates a garment that calls a student to a higher standard from a garment that does not call a student to a higher standard?

This single change will not establish meaning in the uniform or create a healthy pride in our school colors. It will, however, start a conversation.

In Christ,
Robbie

