



January 18, 2018

All Parents
American Heritage School

Board Vision and Call to Action

Dear Parents,

This is an exciting and pivotal time in the history of our school. The campus expansion is one of the more visible external manifestations of our growth. But there are other important landmarks as well. Last year, we graduated one of our largest senior classes to date (55 students from six countries), and also our most prepared: 98% of them were already admitted to outstanding colleges and universities on graduation day, 78% on scholarship, with \$1.6 million in scholarship money collectively. And *all* of those graduates successfully defended a 20-page written thesis before an oral adjudication panel. More importantly, these youth entered the world as living examples of our mission to “be useful in the hands of the Lord” and to “conduct themselves in all aspects of life as Christians.”

National and Local Education Trends. As a Board of Trustees, one of our most important responsibilities is to stay focused on the horizon and make long-term strategic plans that prepare us for unprecedented opportunities and challenges facing the rising generation. Some of the key national education trends that we have been watching include ramifications of technological innovation; schools working to grow student agency in ways that help students to find authentic connections to the subjects they study; more students reporting anxiety and depression; and more costly claims against schools relating to various forms of assault. We have also been closely watching some important local trends including major population growth and rising cost of living in Northern Utah County; a severe state-wide teacher shortage and corresponding school district “salary wars” along the Wasatch Front; historically high demand for labor in Utah across a range of industries; and, mirroring national trends—increasing reports in Utah of youth anxiety, depression, and sexual assault (adult-on-child and especially child-on-child).

AHS Response and Strategic Priorities. After a series of meetings over the course of this past year, which included significant focus on our core values and careful listening to our school community, we established the following three strategic priorities to guide our short-term work, which we announced to the school community in August 2017:

1. *Product leadership through transformational teaching and learning.* Initiatives include increased experiential learning opportunities K–12; shift from “one size fits all” to customized learning; various technology initiatives to give students more personal ownership over their learning pace and progress; paid mentors for new teachers; professional in-class coaching for all teachers; and more time for teachers to pursue professional development, preparation, and collaboration.

2. *Intentional culture of physical and emotional wellness.* Initiatives include policy, program, and mentoring support to help teachers give less but more meaningful homework; in-class training for students on topics of emotional resiliency, stressors, risk factors, and preventative techniques; additional PE and conditioning options for students; increased personal leave flexibility for teachers; advisory classes for students matched with teachers who serve as personal mentors; and “Safe at AHS” cards with contact numbers to help students appropriately respond to stress in a variety of situations.

3. *Mission-aligned growth in the areas of “physical arts” and STEM (continued focus on liberal and fine arts).* Initiatives include a completely donor-funded \$32 million dollar campus expansion for PE, intramural, athletic and dance facilities; hiring and training of coaches in the “character athletics” approach; addition of a physics lab; and increased use of digital tools in the teaching and learning process, particularly in STEM subjects.

None of these important improvements could happen without excellent teachers, dedicated administrators, and devoted families—all of us acting in concert and focused on a clear and compelling mission.

“Educating Hearts & Minds” Annual Fund Campaign Progress Report. Since 2006 when the school launched its first “Educating Hearts and Minds” Annual Fund campaign, the school has received numerous donations that have sustained and magnified our mission, including not just for financial aid and teacher compensation (the focus of the recent two years’ Annual Fund campaigns), but in previous years a 40,000 sq./ft. building expansion, an additional one-acre parking lot north of the school, a new music wing, new science, math, and art rooms, thousands of books for our library and classrooms, listening/reading centers, reading tables, special reading and math software, musical instruments, P.E. equipment, bleachers, computer and networking equipment, professional development and faculty enrichment opportunities for teachers, online course development, voice amplification systems, new science lab equipment, special art supplies, and more. Many parents have even made cash contributions directly to our faculty bonus pool so that we can provide Christmas bonuses for teachers and staff. **In short, a tremendous amount of good has been accomplished through the generosity of our school community, past and present.** Your financial assistance allows us to keep tuition low, quality high, and more importantly, it helps to maintain the spirit of sacrifice that we cherish at American Heritage. **Sacrifice consecrates our efforts.**

At the beginning of the current 2017–18 school year, we announced an \$800,000 Annual Fund goal for two key priorities: student financial aid and teacher compensation. **We are pleased to report that we have raised \$525,000 of our overall \$800,000 goal so far this year. THANK YOU! We are on track, and we STILL NEED YOUR HELP. With over 425 families at the school, this is a very achievable goal if we will each take some personal responsibility.** For example, approximately \$650 from each family—or about \$130 per month for the next five months—would accomplish our goal by the end of the school year. We are sensitive that for some families, additional giving may not be possible, and we are deeply grateful for your sacrifice already. If you *can* do more, we hope you will consider helping us by lifting wherever you stand. **Equally important as our dollar goal, however, is our participation goal of 100% of our current families making a donation – in any amount – to demonstrate to each other and to our major supporters**

that we are all grateful stewards of an educational experience that would simply not be possible without the help of donations small and large, past and present. Thank you, all, for helping us to meet this year's Annual Fund goal, and thank you to those who have so generously given already!

Campus Expansion Update. We are pleased to report that we are on schedule and on budget to complete our new Athletic Center as well as all of our outdoor athletic facilities by August 2018. We have contractual assurances regarding August completion by our builder, Jacobsen Construction. We expect to be able to use the tennis courts beginning this spring, and the stadium, baseball field, and outdoor concessions building will be ready in the summer. On September 7, we will hold a dedication ceremony and celebration in the new Athletic Center. All current families, alumni, and friends in the community are invited to join us. With that, we will begin our first season competing in UHSAA (the Utah High School Activities Association) in the 2A Division for Basketball, Soccer, and Cross Country, as well as for two new spring sports, Tennis and Track & Field. Other phases of our campus master plan, including the Performing Arts Center, will begin when donated funds are sufficient to complete those phases. As in the past, the Board has resolved not to raise tuition or to use debt financing in order to fund our major capital improvement projects.

Please know that we are constantly mindful of the great and humble legacy that has been left for us by generations of past trustees, administrators, teachers and parents. We are sensitive to how difficult it is, if not impossible, to satisfy all the various desires and interests of every family who enrolls. As we continue to discuss what is most needful and required—may we have a spirit of gratitude and patience for each other, and stay mindful of what the Lord requires, which is “the heart and a willing mind.” (D&C 64:34). In this spirit, we hope that parents will not hesitate to discuss with Administrators or Board Members any questions that they may have with respect to the upcoming 2018–19 school year. Thank you for your service, sacrifice and commitment!

Sincerely,

Board of Trustees
American Heritage School