



Suzanne Walker Buck, Head of School
Convocation
The Chapel

08/18/2019, 5 p.m. EST

Good Evening. Welcome to Convocation. I am Mrs. Buck, the new Head of School here at WRA. I am thrilled to stand before you tonight.

In time, you'll get to know that I practice in authenticity, kindness, and gratitude. I also believe in honesty and sharing what's on my mind.

Right now, the temperature in this Chapel is on my mind. It is a steamy day. I'm concerned for your comfort. So, in an effort to beat the heat, please feel free to remove blazers, loosen ties, and get as comfortable as you can while honoring intentions of civility. I promise to keep my remarks heartfelt yet brief and I thank you for your engagement.

I am so glad that you are here. Here at WRA. You have elected to be a student at a school where intellectual growth is fostered. You have chosen to be a member of a dedicated and dynamic community that values the uniqueness of every individual while creating a shared identity as Pioneers. By coming to Western Reserve Academy you have made a statement that affirms a desire for growth and a commitment to the world around you. New students, you will be navigating what it means to be a WRA student and citizen. Returning students, you will be leading their way.

Tonight we gather in celebration of a new school year. We share excitement, nervousness, wonder. We might reflect upon previous accomplishments or aspirations for the future. Whatever you are thinking about in this very moment is ok. Here at WRA you are valued for having your own thoughts and feelings. You are empowered to be the best you you can be.

As you sit with your thoughts, both the exercise and this space may feel familiar and comfortable. For others of us it may feel foreign. I assure you that in time, we all will grow more and more comfortable. Becoming better acquainted with others, acclimating to routine, understanding traditions, and utilizing opportunity to share, will all aid in creating a sense of home within ourselves and in this school.

Tonight's gathering is both a tradition and a vehicle for being in relationship with one other. This is our Convocation. The word *convocation* is derived from the Latin word "convocare" which means to come or call together. In academia, Convocation is typically an event of welcoming. Here at Reserve it takes form as a ceremony in which our student community is officially received.

Our convocation program tonight is seemingly straightforward. The Head of School offers a few remarks, the student body presidents share reflections, we sing the alma mater, and we proceed to dinner. While I appreciate the simplicity of the evening's plan, I want to ensure we all understand the "why" of what we are doing and how.



Suzanne Walker Buck, Head of School

Convocation

The Chapel

08/18/2019, 5 p.m. EST

Let's start with my remarks. I stand before you this evening sharing words of welcome. My goal is not to bore you but rather to foster a tone of relational connection. I want you to feel valued, empowered, and tied to a community. By all of us hearing the same words at the same time, we are part of a shared message, and together hold understanding of themes and direction.

Our student body co-presidents, Noah and Ellie, will offer their reflections. As elected leaders they represent values that our community holds dear. They are ambassadors, mentors, and cheerleaders who care about this school and the people in it. Their message is one of relationship with you.

At the end of our time in the Chapel we will sing the alma mater. We do this to celebrate our school and do so in a manner that bridges the experiences of those who came before us with those who are gathered today. Traditions are powerful vehicles of connectivity. Anthropologically, song is an essential tool for conveying culture, meaning, and relationship. We will connect with each other by coming together in voice.

Finally, tonight we will share a meal. We will nurture our bodies with food and our spirits with company. Comestibles and Conversation, these are two of my favorite things.

Before we proceed into song and dinner, in the spirit of welcoming I would like to spend a few moments aimed to aid us in getting to know each other. Please bear with me.

Would you please stand up if you are a returning student? Returning students, I introduce you to our community as **guides**. Your role is to help show you the way. Support others in their navigation of the WRA terrain. Share your knowledge, tools, and guidance.

New students, would you please stand up? Thank you. New students are our community's **seekers and truth finders**. They will challenge us to express meaning and understanding of WRA. Their inquiry will inspire us to evolve as stronger leaders.

Faculty and staff members will you please stand? All who work at WRA work in service of learning and student experience. WRA employees are the **magicians** who make everything possible. They work tirelessly behind the scenes to provide an experience of wonder and inspiration. Value their dedication and expertise in meeting student needs. Appreciate their artistry and devotion to their craft.

Over the course of this year, our community will examine and explore the concept of joy. We need magicians, truth seekers, and guides to define joy, to identify what joy looks like, sounds like, how it is experienced. We will explore how we create space for joy to exist while holding it in tandem with our core values. I look forward to going on this journey of exploration with you.



Suzanne Walker Buck, Head of School
Convocation
The Chapel

08/18/2019, 5 p.m. EST

For me, there is something inherently joyful in learning. I think that this sense of joy has called me to pursue a career in schools. I think it is why Mr. Buck and I have elected to raise a family in the boarding school environment.

One of our family's favorite movies is called *Chef*. Has anyone here seen it? It was directed and written by Jon Favreau who also is the lead actor. *Chef* is an endearing and humorous film about redefinition, identity, and relationship. It also features phenomenal foods.

This summer Netflix produced a series called *The Chef Show* in which Jon Favreau spends time cooking and conversing with people connected to the movie industry. In one of these segments he and his good friend, food truck genius Roy Choi, are in the kitchen of prolific director, writer, and producer, Robert Rodriguez. (Robert Rodriguez created many films including *El Mariachi*, and the *Spy Kids* franchise. He is seen as a wizard for his creativity and ability to think outside of the box, particularly in optimization of budget).

Anyway, in this specific video, Jon Favreau, Roy Choi, and Robert Rodriguez are making pizzas together. Rodriguez talks about film creation, his prowess as a pizza baker, and his obsession with mastering the art of chocolate making. He shares that "once you learn how to learn" everything is possible. He argues the importance of diving in full force, immersion, observation, and the importance of re-engineering that which doesn't work, as you go. He states that "a good approach to learning is to know I'm going to fail at this a million times but I will eventually catch on."

For Rodriguez joy in learning stems from the process of growing, aspiring, developing, and discovering.

Learning to learn... what does this mean to you? Within the learning process, where do you find joy? How do you share your sense of joy with others?

I hope that this year will evoke opportunities for you to be inspired, to strive, to be mindful of others, to experience joy. I thank you for being a part of WRA. I am deeply honored to share adventures in learning and being in community with you. Thank you for all that you are and do. Happy New Year Western Reserve Academy!