

## Head of School Corner

I am writing this at the end of the academic year, and a very good year it has been.

1. Finances – we have a soundly balanced budget, an excellent five-year financial plan in place and are right on track for next year's enrollment goals. Our endowment has recovered nicely and stands at its highest level in recent years.
2. Identity – the issues attending the merger of the two schools have been largely put behind us. Our two great schools operate now in tandem, dedicated to single-gender education with a “blend at the end” through our coordinate program.
3. Accreditation – we had an excellent review with the New York State Association of Independent Schools (NYSAIS) this year and are on track for our first full-scale self-study and review in FY 2012.
4. Positive Atmosphere – the atmosphere at the Academies has turned to the positive, and every educator knows this is the condition in which maximum learning occurs.

So, now that we have achieved all this financial stability and confidence, the attention of the Academies can turn fully towards our true bottom line – academic preeminence. Academic rigorousness at the Academies has a high and well-deserved reputation. The cover story in this issue of *A2* magazine is a case in point. There is no ceiling on where the Academies can take a student. The firm grounding in the basics combined with intense personal attention leads to dramatic results.

Alydaar Rangwala '11 and his prize-winning project are a preminent example of a goal that we can attain for every student. We know how to produce self-motivated, self-directed students who have found their passionate path and can do their own work (individually and collaboratively) to a rigorous academic standard. We can do this for every student – at all levels and varieties of innate capability. For me, that is what it means to be truly preparatory.

Another academic strength that we can build upon is the incorporation of information technology into learning. In my State of the School address this past winter, I showed some examples of how this can be done. I have since discovered that there are many excellent Academies teachers doing this already. But we need to push ahead with a more general agenda. So next year, we will focus on the incorporation of two Google programs (both of them free and readily

available) into every student's education: Sketchup and Google Earth. Parents, you may not know much about these right now, but you will, and your students will teach you.

This summer, the Academies will also examine the way in which we teach Math, especially in the Lower & Middle Schools. There is a great deal of national attention given to this subject and we will make sure that the Academies will be at the forefront of best practices.

We are now entering a very exciting period of educational ferment and change – as a nation and as a school: how students learn best; the role of single-gender education; the role of technology; and the preparation of motivated learners. I pledge to keep the Academies on the front edge, a beacon educational institution that consistently leads the way through its own practices.

With good wishes for a great summer,

Dr. Douglas North '58  
Head of School  
The Albany Academies

