

Dear Parents:

An opinion piece by a Presentation alumna was recently published in the *Washington Post*. The piece recounts accusations of sexual harassment against a former teacher at Presentation in the late 1980s/early 1990s. I want to make you aware of this story, so you can read it yourself: https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/the-courts-regularly-fail-sexual-assault-victims-so-we-have-to-find-our-own-closure/2017/10/20/d476099a-b42d-11e7-be94-fabb0f1e9ffb_story.html?utm_term=.88644f7cd4db

The details of the graduate's experience are disturbing, hurtful, and concerning, and I am deeply saddened by her account. As educators and fierce advocates of women's rights, we take the allegations made against a former, now deceased, employee extremely seriously. Presentation High School unequivocally condemns the type of conduct described in this complaint. I also want you to know that the school conducted an investigation more than 25 years ago into this matter. Due to privacy and confidentiality concerns, I cannot disclose the details or outcome of that investigation; I sincerely wish that I could reveal more information to you.

The Board of Directors has reviewed the details of the investigation and have been very supportive of the efforts of the administration to address concerns and has full confidence in the ability of the administration to continue to provide a safe environment for all students.

It is difficult to imagine a woman in America today who is not upset about the ongoing reports of the sexual misconduct being reported by so many who have found themselves victims of inexcusable conduct. Please be assured that we are equally appalled.

As you well know, having entrusted your daughters in our care, Pres students are in a safe, caring, and vigilant environment in which there is no tolerance for harassment or abuse of any sort. For more than 50 years, the safety and well-being of our students has always been our highest priority. We have well-established policies and procedures in place in our faculty handbook and a clear voice and pathway to discuss and address concerns of inappropriate conduct.

The administration, along with Presentation's governing boards, will continue to review all faculty policies and procedures with respect to student/faculty relations, and they will be refined and updated if appropriate, and widely communicated.

Those policies have evolved and strengthened in the last two decades. Before employment, potential employees undergo a background check. Each member of our faculty understands their critical role in protecting students by recognizing and reporting child abuse as mandated reporters. Our faculty receive training on this responsibility when they begin employment and periodically during their tenure here. Additionally, faculty receives training with respect to student/faculty relations and appropriate boundaries between faculty and students. It is not our intention to alter the warm and nurturing relationship enjoyed by faculty and students, but rather to ensure that there are no unintentional misunderstandings or misperceptions with respect to this important relationship.

Because we believe in the empowerment of women, our curriculum involves units on sexual violence, date rape, healthy boundaries, self-confidence, decision-making, relationships, conflict resolution, mental health and safety. In addition, our students are required to meet at least twice

a year with our school counselors, all of whom are certified Licensed Marriage Family Therapists or Social Workers.

Equally important—as our very mission is to empower women—we offer vital educational programs to our students to help them feel safe, be strong, and speak out through our Student Wellness Program and Student Development Days.

PHS remains a safe and supportive environment for students and faculty alike. Given today's environment, we are even more committed to women's rights and justice, and we stand in solidarity against the mistreatment of women in our society.

Next Monday, during homeroom, our counselors and administration will be meeting with all students to assure them we are aware of the article and remind them of the policies and procedures in place to ensure their safety and protection. We remain thoroughly committed to the well-being of our students. I do hope you believe that.

I have and remain available to you to listen to any comments and concerns you want to share.

Sincerely,

Mary Miller
Principal