

# SEWICKLEY ACADEMY

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November 4, 2002

Mr. Peter H. Gibbon  
Harvard Graduate School of Education  
Longfellow Hall, Appian Way  
Cambridge MA 02138-3752

Dear Peter,

As I crossed the parking lot after seeing you off, I passed one of the newer members of the Academy history department. I congratulated him for having, in his rookie season, coached his soccer team into the state tournament. He smiled but said only that he now knew how he now wanted to spend his next summer, which was studying history at Harvard. Two other teachers had earlier stopped me in the cafeteria, one to congratulate me for bringing you to the school, the other (an art teacher) to say simply that your presentation was "fantastic." That, in short, was your effect here. I was a good boy. I basked in the reflected glory without pointing out that the glory was yours, and I also declined to point out that history was occasionally taught well at places other than Harvard.

The most telling comment, however, came from a student who approached me, hand extended, to simply thank me for having you at the Academy. Clearly, the students here enjoyed every minute of your presentations. Rarely, in fact, have I witnessed such a groundswell of appreciation for an outside speaker. The topic is slippery, and I know that in addition to your erudition students and faculty appreciated the way in which you responded to direct questions with answers which, while equally direct, always left open avenues to further thought and discussion. In short, you made everyone think.

It was a great day. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Thomas Rodd, Jr.  
Interim Head of School

TR:csb