You’ve arrived at just the right moment. I’m sure you’ve noticed that the winds of educational change have gained speed. The challenges of remaking our schools have made the cover of Time magazine. They’re also playing right now at your local multiplex. And if you live in Los Angeles and happen to teach in that school district, the LA Times was good enough to tell its readers recently just how much value you add to your students’ lives. These are, indeed, stormy times.

It’s tempting to assume that, as independent schools, we live under blue skies, but of course we know that we don’t. We face tremendous pressure to distinguish ourselves from our peers. We have to assert our value to families with healthy public school options. These are good enough reasons to lift our fingers into the air and feel for the winds.

But you’re not here because you want to be ahead of the curve or because you feel compelled to adopt the next fad before it becomes the new normal. You’re here because you see, as we do, that innovation is a moral imperative. You understand that we must design new ways to educate our students because we live in deeply complicated times and that it is simply irresponsible to pretend that that the old ways will prepare students for the new world.

These will be an exciting next 42 hours. Our goal is that you head home with at least one revolutionary idea that will transform your school and your students. We want you to share and to learn so that your schools can be engines of good in your communities. And then we want to hear what you’ve done.

We owe a great deal of gratitude to many people, but chief among them are Bob Hallett, Executive Director of the Edward E. Ford Foundation, and Ann Rittinger Petersen, Hathaway Brown Class of 1946. Bob leads an organization that relentlessly advocates for educational innovation. The Foundation, itself, is a stellar example of innovative thinking, and the $250,000 the Foundation granted us is, in part, funding this Summit. Bob and the Foundation wouldn’t write the check, though, until we were able to demonstrate an institutional commitment to our plan in the form of a matching gift. I knew exactly whom to call. Ann is a passionate advocate for innovative education. A former teacher and a creative business executive, Ann understands the value of what we want to accomplish at this Summit and as a school. We have no way to express our deep gratitude to the Edward E. Ford Foundation and to Ann Rittinger Petersen ’46 other than to achieve the kind of transformation we’ve set out to achieve.

So let’s get started.

Bill Christ
Head of School