

Why do we do roll call?  
February 7, 2020

Dear Students,

I said in my last letter that I would write this week about silence and preparing your mind for excellence. I'm still working on that, so in the meantime I'll address a question that a few of you have asked me: why do we do roll call each morning? (When I remember to do it, that is!)

First of all, I'm glad that a few of you have asked. One of our core values is curiosity, and I appreciate that you feel you can ask me for the reasons behind what we do here. Everything we do should have a reason behind it. Sometimes that reason might be as simple as 'because it needs to get done,' but often there is a greater purpose, a purpose that goes directly back to the values and the mission of the school. We thought a lot about how this school would work, and each thing that we do, even small things, have a purpose.

So why, then, do we do roll call?

Roll call is a simple ritual each morning. One person stands up and calls off the names of everyone else. It takes no more than two minutes. And yet, in the two minutes that it takes to call everyone's name, we have started the day by reinforcing the fact that we are a community. We are all here together at the beginning of each day, and all here in support of each other.

The reason we can do this is *because* we are a small community. If we were a school of 1500, as some schools are, calling off everyone's names would be boring, a waste of time. At some point later on in this year, you might be able to do roll call by memory, because you've done it so many times. Even now, most of you could probably look around the room and know every person's name. At a school of 1500, you could never do roll call by memory. You wouldn't even know everyone's names.

When you go on to university, you'll most likely be at a school with even more than 1,500 students. Some of you will be at universities with 30,000 or more. At a school like this, most people will just be anonymous faces who you walk by. It will be a school, a university - but it won't be a community, at least not in the way that we mean when we talk about the USAP *Community* School.

But remember what Mai Mano told you on the first day that you arrived here. "Look around the room; these are your best friends for life." Maybe you were surprised to hear that, but for many of you it will be true. In three or four years, when you're in college, I hope you'll visit each other during breaks, or call each other to catch up on how life is going, check in during a difficult time, share old memories, or just say 'hi'.

When you've left this school, that will be your roll call. It will be you and a friend talking to each other and thinking, "hmm, neither of us has heard from this person in a while, we should give them a call and make sure everything is ok." Or making sure that, when you have a class reunion, everyone is there. Or keeping each other accountable when you feel like someone is on the wrong path.

I want you to get used to being there for each other, in support, at the beginning of each day. Because in the future, you'll need each other for much bigger moments than a single day.

So, that's why we do roll call.

Sincerely,  
James