Jan. 30, 1986

Dear students & faculty of Concord High,

I am writing to you today because I know that this is such a difficult time for all of you and there remains a hope in me that my words may hold some small amount of comfort for you.

I am a university student and it was not long ago that I too was a high school student. We have all had some very good teachers that we admired and felt close to, and I know how deeply-affected I would have been had they been taken away. A teacher-student relationship is such a special bond and so we should not underestimate the loss that ~~the~~ the students must be feeling.

Christa McAuliffe's death has united us all throughout the world into a global classroom, learning through her death how precious life is. She has taught us that failure is a reality, that it is NOT always inevitable but that it is a possibility, and because of that possibility we must never take success for granted. Because of this tragedy I think we have all stopped in our tracks, forced to re-evaluate what is important and what our goals and dreams are. I'm sure Christa knew the risk of failure in pursuing her dream, and though I did not know her personally, I'm sure that she would want us all, especially us young people, to keep pursuing our dreams and to keep taking those risks, and to learn from our failures instead of being defeated by them.

Robert F. Kennedy once said: "This is an era of challenge. It is a time of uncertainty and peril; it is also a time of opportunity." I believe that despite the tragedies that life sometimes hands us,

we must look for the challenges & opportunities that arise from them. It is up to all of us to prove that our dreams did not perish along with Christa McAuliffe, and I'm sure she would want it that way.

I know it is difficult right now, but I hope that in time you will be able to stand back and put all of this into perspective & apply it to your daily lives. And remember that you are not alone in your grief.

In life, Christa taught many of you, but in death she teaches us all.

I have enclosed a poem that I hope may help.

Your friend,
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P.S. I know you must be receiving many letters and I hope that you will give some of them out to the students who, though silent perhaps, must surely be in need of consoling.

A COMRADE RIDES AHEAD

TIME BRINGS NOT DEATH, IT BRINGS BUT CHANGES;
I KNOW SHE RIDES, BUT RIDES AFAR,
TODAY SOME OTHER PLANET RANGES
AND CAMPS TONIGHT UPON A STAR
WHERE ALL HER OTHER COMRADES ARE.

FOR THERE WERE THOSE WHO RODE BEFORE HER,
AS THERE ARE THOSE SHE LEAVES BEHIND;
ALTHOUGH FROM US TIME'S CHANGES BORE HER,
OUT THERE OUR COMRADE STILL WILL FIND
THE KINSHIP OF THE COMRADE MIND.

TIME BRINGS US CHANGE AND LEAVES US FRETTING;
WE WEEP WHEN EVERY COMRADE GOES —
PERHAPS TOO MUCH, PERHAPS FORGETTING
THAT OVER YONDER THERE ARE THOSE
TO WHOM SHE COMES AND WHOM SHE KNOWS.

I WOULD NOT HOLD OUR LOSS TOO LIGHTLY;
GOD KNOWS, AND SHE, HOW DEEP THE PAIN.
BUT, FRIENDS, I SEE STILL SHINING BRIGHTLY
THE BRIGHTEST LINK IN ALL OUR CHAIN
THAT LINKS US WITH A NEW DOMAIN.

FOR THIS I SWEAR, BECAUSE BELIEVING:
TIME BREAKS NO CIRCLE SUCH AS THIS.
HOWEVER HURT, HOWEVER GRIEVING,
HOWEVER MUCH A FRIEND WE MISS,
BETWEEN THE WORLDS IS NO ABYSS.

FOR FRIENDSHIP BINDS THE WORLDS TOGETHER —
WORLD OVER THERE, WORLD OVER HERE.
FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN IS THE TETHER

(over)

THAT BRINGS THE EARTH AND HEAVEN NEAR
AND MAKES THEM BOTH A BIT MORE DEAR.

NOT WEAKER NOW OUR CHAIN, BUT STRONGER;
IN ALL OUR LOSS AND ALL OUR ILL
WE NOW SHALL LOOK A LITTLE LONGER
AT EVERY STAR ABOVE THE HILL
AND THINK OF HER, AND HAVE HER STILL.

WHATEVER VALES WE YET MAY WANDER,
WHAT SORROW COME, WHAT TEMPEST BLOW,
WE HAVE A FRIEND, A FRIEND OUT YONDER,
TO GREET US WHEN WE HAVE TO GO —
OUT YONDER SOMEONE THAT WE KNOW.

TO ALL ETERNITY SHE BINDS US;
SHE LINKS THE PLANET AND THE STAR;
SHE RIDES AHEAD, THE TRAIL SHE FINDS US,
AND WHERE SHE IS AND WHERE WE ARE
WILL NEVER AGAIN SEEM SO FAR.

— Douglas Malloch