



## The Public Schools of Brookline

333 Washington Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor

Brookline, Massachusetts 02445

617.730.2401

**Andrew J. Bott**  
Superintendent

October 12, 2018

Dear Families,

During the 2016-2017 school year, the Public Schools of Brookline and Brookline High School partnered with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to bring their World of Difference Peer Training Program to BHS. Our partnership with the ADL is one way that the Public Schools of Brookline supports students as they build and practice the leadership skills needed to be upstanders in our schools, our community, and our society. The ADL describes this program as follows:

*The World of Difference Peer Training Program prepares young people to use the positive power of peer influence to motivate other students to reflect upon stereotypes and assumptions and take action against prejudice and bigotry in their schools and communities. Young people learn how to assume leadership roles in efforts to create respectful and inclusive schools and communities. Peer trainers learn how to effectively respond when they hear racial slurs, name-calling, and put downs in the hallways, lunchrooms and classrooms of their schools, and develop the skills to lead interactive discussions and workshops for their peers and younger students.*

Our BHS student team was led by Associate Dean and Special Education teacher Brendan Kobus and Social Studies teacher and BHS Advisory teacher leader Jen Martin. This team of BHS peer leaders now serves to both support and strengthen the already caring environment that exists at BHS.

As the team of BHS peer leaders were trained two years ago, it became clear that expanding this work to our K-8 schools would serve to strengthen individual schools as well as the broader Brookline community. Last year we embarked on the first phase of the K-8 work by training teams of peer leaders at Heath, Lawrence, Lincoln and Pierce schools. Over the course of four days, a group of 15 students from each of the four schools came together as peer leaders to participate in the World of Difference Program. The program was facilitated by ADL trainers and led by teachers from the participating schools.

***This year we are completing our district-wide training by extending this opportunity to Baker, Coolidge Corner, Driscoll and Runkle schools.*** Students in grades 7 and 8 from these four new schools who are interested in becoming peer leaders must complete an application. You will soon receive detailed information from your school's teacher leader regarding the program and the application process.

I want to thank Brendan Kobus, Jen Martin and BHS Headmaster Anthony Meyer for launching this work at BHS two years ago, and I want to thank Kellee Terkla, Zoe Kern, Corey Clifford and Kate Sullivan, along with their school principals, for bringing this invaluable partnership to our K-8 schools last year. Lastly, I want to thank Maurene Doherty, Scott Newman, Katy Sazama and Rebecca Sneider, and their principals, for leading this important work this year at Baker, Coolidge Corner, Driscoll and Runkle schools.

Our partnership with the ADL will help our students develop the skills and empathy that are the cornerstones of our public schools' values. When this year's training is complete, we will have trained approximately 150 students as peer leaders. In future years, we will continue training new cohorts of peer leaders, ensuring a critical mass of students who can serve as leaders in all of our schools.

Sincerely,

Andrew J. Bott  
Superintendent