

The Public Schools of Brookline  
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, June 15, 2017  
Superintendent Report  
Andrew J. Bott  
Superintendent of Schools

### **Driscoll School Interim Principal**

On June 6, I had the pleasure of announcing the appointment of Dr. Suzie Talukdar as Interim Principal of Driscoll School for the 2017-2018 school year. Dr. Talukdar has been an integral member of Brookline's administrative team for 11 years as the K-12 Director of the METCO program, and I am confident that the Driscoll School will benefit greatly from her skills and experience during the upcoming school year.

We officially introduced Dr. Talukdar to Driscoll parents and guardians on Wednesday, June 14, at a morning coffee in the school theatre. My letter to the Driscoll community announcing her appointment is attached to this report.

Dr. Talukdar's appointment to the Driscoll Interim Principal position created an interim opening in the position of METCO Director. I am pleased to report that Dr. Keith Lezama will be in the Interim Director of the K-12 METCO program for the 2017-2018 school year. My letter to Brookline's METCO families announcing Dr. Lezama's appointment is also attached to this report.

### **Brookline High School Graduation and Scholarship Breakfast**

I had the privilege of participating in my first graduation ceremony at Brookline High School on Sunday, June 4. My vantage point on the stage – looking out on a sea of optimistic faces of the class of 2017 – was remarkable. As always, the administrative team at Brookline High School worked tirelessly to ensure that the day proceeded without a hitch. It truly was an amazing day for the graduates and their families.

I would like to especially thank Sam Kennedy, 1991 graduate of the High School and President of the Boston Red Sox, who was the keynote speaker. His remarks to the graduates were genuine and hopeful. In addition to offering his wisdom and advice, he also presented each of the graduates with two tickets to a Red Sox game. The graduates were ecstatic, and attended last Sunday's game against the Detroit Tigers.

I also attended the annual Scholarship Breakfast on Sunday morning. Grateful scholarship recipients and, in many cases, the families and sponsors of the individual scholarships, enjoyed a sunny morning in the BHS quad. Under the capable guidance of Scott Butchart, BHS Dean and Scholarship Chair, and Linda Wentzell, BHS Registrar and Scholarship Coordinator, the high school awarded over \$280,000 in scholarship funds to worthy and appreciative seniors. Additionally, the recipients of the two Boston University full scholarships and the two Northeastern University half scholarships were announced at the breakfast.

### **From Brookline to Broadway: An Evening with *Hamilton* Cast Member Nik Walker**

Sam Kennedy was not the only famous BHS alum to visit the campus recently. An overflow crowd greeted Brookline High School alumnus Nik Walker (Class of 2006) on Monday, June 12 in the

Roberts/Dubbs Auditorium. Nik is a current *Hamilton* cast member; he returned to Brookline to share his stories and insights about life in the arts. This is how Nik described the value of his performing arts experiences at Brookline High School:

*I cannot begin to tell you how deeply each of the Brookline Performing Arts Departments shaped my drive, my artistic comprehension and style; they taught me the importance of finding my own voice, instead of chasing others', of working within the community to serve the community. Every play or concert I did here was a free master class in critical thinking and expression, and each teacher left their indelible mark on me in ways I am still discovering today.*

High praise, indeed! Nik's comments are a well-deserved acknowledgement of the dedication and professionalism that our Performing Arts educators pour into their work with students year-in and year-out.

### **Announcement from Dr. Asa Sevelius**

On Wednesday, June 7, Dr. Asa Sevelius, principal of Heath School, announced to the Heath School community that he is transgender. Following his announcement, Dr. Sevelius received tremendous support from Heath educators, educators across Brookline, and well beyond. As I said in my letter to the Heath community on June 7, "The Public Schools of Brookline is and will remain a community that supports and embraces everyone. This has been our long standing core value; a value that we are more resolute than ever to uphold and celebrate." My complete letter to the Heath community is attached to this report.

### **Honors for Laura Richardson, First Grade Teacher at Baker School**

Today I had the opportunity to attend a reception in the Great Hall of the Massachusetts State House honoring, among others, Baker School first grade teacher Laura Richardson. Ms. Richardson was a finalist for the 2016 Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. The ceremony, hosted by the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Mitchell Chester, celebrated the achievements of 14 educators from across the Commonwealth. It was a privilege to attend to support Laura and celebrate the skills and dedication that she brings to her classroom. Congratulations, Laura!

### **Pierce School 5<sup>th</sup> Grader Chosen as Brookline Police Chief for a Day**

Following a very competitive essay contest, Pierce School 5<sup>th</sup> grader Graham Horowitz, from Ms. Woogmaster's class, was chosen as Brookline Police Chief for a Day. The essay prompt was, "If you were Police Chief, what would you do to make Brookline safer?" Graham's essay was chosen from over 80 entries. On June 8, Graham joined police officials for a full morning of duties, capped off by a luncheon with police and town officials. I was honored to attend the luncheon to congratulate Graham in person on his exciting achievement.

### **Steps to Success Recognition Ceremony**

On June 6, BHS Headmaster Anthony Meyer and I participated in the annual Steps to Success Recognition Ceremony at the Teen Center. This event recognizes students at each grade level of Steps, with a special recognition for high school seniors. It was my pleasure to offer congratulations and best wishes to the honorees.

The annual Steps to Success *Hats Off Award* recognizes someone who has gone above and beyond on behalf of Steps and its students. This year, the *Hats Off Award* was presented to Kara Lopez, guidance counselor in the BHS Alternative Choices in Education (ACE) program. According to Steps, “Kara worked tirelessly with her students to help them achieve their high school and post-secondary goals. We are thrilled to have Kara working on behalf of educational equity for all of our students.” Congratulations, Kara!

### **Brookline Community Mental Health Center: Shine Bright Fundraiser**

The Brookline Community Mental Health Center held their annual fundraiser at the Larz Anderson Auto Museum on the evening of June 7. I joined School Committee members Helen Charlupski and Barbara Scotto at this festive community celebration that also served to celebrate the leadership of Dr. Cindy Price, who is retiring as Executive Director of the Brookline Center after 38 years of service. The Public Schools of Brookline is fortunate to be able to partner with the Brookline Center to bring mental health services to our students in need.

### **Brookline Education Foundation Board Meeting**

Deputy Superintendent Nicole Gittens and I attended the Brookline Education Foundation’s year-end board meeting on the evening of Monday, June 12, hosted at the home of Jennifer Nadelson. It was a casual evening to reflect on the achievements of the past year while looking ahead to the exciting plans that are part of our continued successful partnership next year.

It is through the incredible efforts of all Brookline Education Foundation volunteers that the BEF is able to provide such significant and impactful grants to educators throughout Brookline. I would like to especially thank Ian Roffman, President of the Board, who has so capably led the BEF for the past two years, and welcome incoming BEF President, Emily Dolbear.

### **Devotion School Volunteer Breakfast**

This morning I stopped by the annual Devotion School volunteer breakfast, hosted at the home of PTO co-president Charla Whitley. As you know, Brookline is fortunate to have scores of committed parent volunteers who partner with us to make our schools the vibrant educational communities that they are. The enthusiastic and passionate efforts of PTO volunteers across the district play a key role in bringing our school buildings to life. It was a pleasure to attend the Devotion volunteer breakfast today.

June 6, 2017

Dear Driscoll Families,

I am very pleased to announce Dr. Sujan “Suzie” Talukdar as Interim Principal of the Michael Driscoll School for the 2017-2018 school year. Dr. Talukdar has 20 years of experience supporting students, families, and educators in the public school, university, and nonprofit sectors. Since August of 2006, Dr. Talukdar has served as Brookline’s K-12 Director of the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) Program, making her well-suited for this interim role.

Throughout her career in education, Dr. Talukdar has used her passion and expertise in cultural proficiency, anti-racism, and educational equity to address academic and opportunity gaps. As a district-wide leader within the Office of Teaching and Learning, Dr. Talukdar has established a strong reputation for her ability to collaborate closely and effectively with central office staff, principals, curriculum and program coordinators, teachers, paraprofessionals, and families in support of student growth and development. Through thoughtful listening and excellent communication, Dr. Talukdar has garnered the trust of Brookline and Boston community members alike.

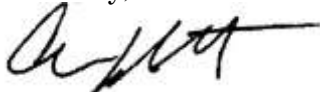
Dr. Talukdar began her career in education as a grade 6 social studies teacher at the F.A. Day Middle School in Newton. Following her work in Newton, Dr. Talukdar served as the Director of the Intercultural Center at Brandeis University. Dr. Talukdar has also spent 17 years as a graduate-level course instructor and consultant for the EDCO Collaborative in Bedford, and the last 2 years as a consultant and instructor for the Leadership Licensure Program for Teachers21 in Wellesley, a program designed for aspiring principals.

Dr. Talukdar earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from Brandeis University. She holds a Master of Arts in Teaching from Boston University, and a Doctor of Education degree in Educational Administration from Boston College. In addition, she holds Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Principal, Assistant Principal, Director, and teaching licenses from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

I would like to acknowledge the support of outgoing Principal Heidi Cook throughout this process. Dr. Talukdar will formally begin as Interim Principal of Driscoll School on July 1, 2017. Dr. Talukdar and I met with the Driscoll faculty and staff earlier this afternoon. We will host a welcome for the Driscoll community to meet Dr. Talukdar on June 14 from 8:15 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. She will be introduced to the broader Brookline community on June 15 at 6:00 p.m. during the School Committee meeting.

Please join me in warmly welcoming Dr. Talukdar to Driscoll. We are thrilled to have her continue to serve Brookline in this new capacity.

Sincerely,



Andrew J. Bott  
Superintendent

June 6, 2017

Dear METCO Families,

I am writing to you today to share some important news about leadership changes in Brookline's Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) Program that will be effective on July 1, 2017.

This afternoon, I announced that Dr. Sujan "Suzie" Talukdar will become the Interim Principal of the Driscoll School for the 2017-2018 school year. Since August 2006, Dr. Talukdar has served as Brookline's K-12 Director of the METCO Program, making her familiar with and well-suited for this interim role. I am pleased that Dr. Talukdar is stepping into a new role and will be able to use her experience supporting students, families, and educators in the public school, university, and nonprofit sectors to lead the Driscoll School community.

I am also pleased to announce that Dr. Keith Lezama will become the Interim Director of Brookline's METCO Program for the 2017-2018 school year. Dr. Lezama has worked for the Public Schools of Brookline since 2006 and has served as the Coordinator of METCO at Brookline High School since 2008. Prior to becoming Brookline High School's METCO Coordinator, Dr. Lezama was a paraprofessional at BHS. Dr. Lezama is well known in the BHS community for providing tremendous support to students academically and socially while also challenging them to take and succeed in higher level courses. He has been a strong collaborator with high school staff and leadership to help students achieve academic excellence.

Dr. Lezama is a graduate of Brookline High School and of the METCO program. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree with a concentration in education from Emmanuel College and a Master's Degree in educational leadership from Simmons. He received his Doctor of Education in K-12 educational leadership from Northeastern University. Dr. Lezama is also a liaison to Emmanuel College's Department of Education in the area of multicultural education and recently completed his tenured role as an advisor to The College Board's national conference on diversity.

Please join me in warmly welcoming Dr. Lezama to his new role. I am pleased to have him continue to serve Brookline in this new capacity.

Sincerely,



Andrew J. Bott  
Superintendent

June 7, 2017

Dear Heath Families,

The Public Schools of Brookline has a diverse group of principals, and we support all of them. Our principals vary in age, experience, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and tenure in Brookline. As Superintendent, I fully support Dr. Asa Sevelius and how he is openly addressing his gender transition.

I appreciate and deeply respect Dr. Sevelius. He is being open, courageous, and honest. As he wrote to families, his transition has come after many years, prolonged introspection, and careful and critical conversations with family and close friends. I fully agree with what Dr. Sevelius said in his letter to families -- the ability to live life openly and authentically will make him a stronger, more effective school leader.

In his letter, Dr. Sevelius identified some very helpful resources for families to guide them in their conversations about gender transition with their children. Dr. Sevelius also provided some wise guidance about being straightforward and simple when speaking with children and provided examples of phrases parents could use. I urge families to look at and use these resources.

The Public Schools of Brookline's core value of Respect for Human Differences calls on all of us to "*acknowledge and celebrate the diversity within our community while affirming the importance of our common humanity.*" Every day in our classrooms and schools, our teachers, our students, and our staff work hard to live up to our core value of respecting human differences. Supporting Dr. Sevelius is yet another example of how we will continue to honor the diversity and the common humanity among our entire school community.

The Public Schools of Brookline is and will remain a community that supports and embraces everyone. This has been our long standing core value; a value that we are more resolute than ever to uphold and celebrate.

Sincerely,



Andrew J. Bott  
Superintendent