

The Public Schools of Brookline  
School Committee Meeting of Thursday, April 27, 2017  
Superintendent Report  
Andrew J. Bott  
Superintendent of Schools

### **Brookline Education Foundation (BEF) Caverly Award Winners**

Each year since 1984, the Brookline Education Foundation has presented the Ernest R. Caverly Award to Brookline teachers in recognition of their professional achievements and contributions to the Public Schools of Brookline. Two awards are given annually: one to a high school educator and one to an elementary school educator. The award is named for Dr. Caverly who served as a distinguished public school leader, educator and Brookline Schools Superintendent (1931-1964).

On April 12, I had the pleasure of joining BEF Executive Director Liz Ascoli, Board President Ian Roffman and Associate Director Molly Schmitt in surprise visits to the recipients of this year's Caverly Awards.

This year's elementary school recipient is Dominique Ferdinand, a kindergarten teacher at Lawrence. Early Education Principal Vicki Milstein joined us as we surprised Dominique, who was deep in grade-level planning work with her colleagues. This year's high school recipient is mathematics teacher Betty Strong. Headmaster Anthony Meyer, Dean of Students Lisa Redding, and High School math coordinator Josh Paris joined us to surprise Betty just as her Trigonometry class was about to begin. Dominique and Betty are incredibly deserving of this recognition. We look forward to joining educators and administrators from across the district to publicly honor them at the BEF Celebrating Teachers Reception at 3:30 p.m. on May 16 at Newbury College. The BEF will also announce the recipients of 20 teacher grants and 11 collaborative grants at the Celebrating Teachers Reception.

### **Brookline Education Foundation (BEF) Grants for Administrative Leadership and Educational Initiatives**

We are grateful to the Brookline Education Foundation for funding several important system-wide grants in FY18 totaling \$59,000.

#### **Leadership Team Retreats**

The District Leadership Team (Superintendent, Deputy Superintendents, Special Assistant, and school principals/headmaster) continues to include a high number of administrators in their first or second year in Brookline. This grant will support District Leadership team building and leadership development work by funding team retreats – one in summer 2017 and one during the school year.

#### **New and Interim Principal Mentoring Program**

The challenges for new principals are many. Beyond the support of their Leadership Team colleagues, experience shows that new leaders benefit from additional mentoring, both individually and as a group. This grant provides for a mentored support program for new building leaders during this period of transition. (This is year two of this BEF grant.)

#### **Superintendent Professional Development Grant**

This grant enables the Superintendent to attend state and national conferences and learn how other school districts address problems similar to those Brookline faces, keeping Brookline schools in the forefront of educational innovation.

### **Making Informed and Intentional Instructional Decisions**

During 2017-18, this grant was used to send a team of district leaders to the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Data Wise Institute. This group will embark on data inquiry work with teams during the summer and school year. This grant will also fund a second cohort of district leaders to attend the January Data Wise Institute.

### **District-wide Educational Equity**

For the second year the District will hold a full day of professional learning, focused on the core values of Educational Equity and Respect for Human Differences, to provide a common experience for all educators to reinvigorate ongoing work to eliminate racially predictable achievement gaps. BEF funding will support District hiring of high-profile experts in the area of cultural proficiency to work with educators on this professional development day.

The support of the BEF is fundamental to our district-wide efforts to ensure that we achieve equitable outcomes for all students. We are thankful for their continued support and we look forward to reporting on how these funds are successfully utilized next year to further our work.

### **Lawrence Principal Search Update**

I communicated with Lawrence School families and staff earlier this week to provide them with an update on the search process for a new principal. The 14-member principal search committee completed first round interviews on April 13. The committee identified candidates to move forward into the next phase of the search process, which is already underway. Finalists are participating in interviews with Senior Staff this week after which we will conduct in-depth reference checks. We have tentatively scheduled site visits next week to each of the finalist's current schools. A subset of the search committee will join me in these site visits. My goal remains to name a preferred candidate by May 11.

I want to publicly thank the members of the search committee who volunteered so much of their time for this work. The committee reviewed over 35 applications, developed interview questions, interviewed candidates over the course of three days, and identified finalists for the next phase of the search. The insight, expertise and thoughtful collaboration of the search committee has been an invaluable part of this important process.

### **Three Hidden Veterans**

I had the honor of attending the Three Hidden Veterans ceremony on Tuesday, April 25, in front of the High School. The ceremony honored three enslaved Brookline men - Adam, Peter and Prince - who marched to the Battle of Lexington, April 19, 1775. Since 2015, the Town of Brookline has held flag-raising ceremonies memorializing Brookline veterans who served honorably in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. But the service of these three Brookline veterans of the Revolutionary War had been hiding in plain sight.

Adam, Peter and Prince marched to Lexington with the Brookline Militia, engaged with the British, and helped create a new nation. They were memorialized on Tuesday as some of Brookline's first veterans with a flag-raising and very meaningful ceremony.

BHS educator and Brookline resident Malcolm Cawthorne led the ceremony, which was sponsored by the Brookline Board of Selectmen, the Brookline Veterans Services Department, the Brookline Department of Diversity, Inclusion and Community Relations, The Hidden Brookline Committee: bringing to light the hidden history of slavery & freedom in our town, the Brookline American Legion Post 11 and the Brookline Veterans of Foreign Wars, Stephen F. Rutledge Post.

### **2017 U.S. Presidential Scholars**

Please join me in congratulating Brookline High School senior Amir Siraj who was selected as one of the 723 semifinalists to advance to the final round of the 2017 U.S. Presidential Scholars competition. Of 3.5 million graduating seniors, only 5,100 students were identified as candidates in the program nationwide. The 723 semifinalists have been selected from across the country. The program, established in 1964, seeks to honor some of the nation's most distinguished graduating high school seniors and represents the highest honor for a high school student. The White House Commission on Presidential Scholars will select up to 161 U.S. Presidential Scholars in May. We wish Amir the best of luck!

### **13 Reasons Why**

You may have heard news reports of a new television series airing on Netflix, *13 Reasons Why*. The series is based on a young adult novel and focuses on a high school student who dies by suicide. The popularity of the show among young people has caused concern among suicide prevention professionals. Attached please find a copy of the letter that we sent to all families and staff today regarding this issue.



**Andrew J. Bott**  
Superintendent

**The Public Schools of Brookline**  
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April 27, 2017

Dear Brookline Families,

Supporting the social and emotional health of our students is an important aspect of the work of the Public Schools of Brookline. As part of this work, when necessary, we reach out to families to make them aware of issues that may be of concern. We write to you today to make sure you are aware of the new Netflix series, *13 Reasons Why*, which is raising concerns from suicide prevention experts about the potential risks posed by its sensationalized treatment of youth suicide.

In recent days, a growing number of our students are talking about *13 Reasons Why*. The story's main character is a high school student who commits suicide, leaving behind thirteen tapes which detail the reasons behind her taking her own life. The series deals with challenging issues including bullying, cyberbullying, depression, and abuse. The series contains graphic scenes of sexual assault, rape, and suicide.

We write to you today to ensure that you are aware of the show. Teenage suicide is an extremely difficult topic that both students and adults struggle to understand and process. We encourage you to:

- Ask your child if they have watched the show or discussed the show with peers who have watched it.
- If your child has already watched or discussed the show, we encourage you to discuss the show with them.
- If your child has not yet watched the show but asks to view it, we encourage you to watch it with them or preview it prior to their watching.

Our team of school counselors has been made aware of the impact of this show and are prepared to provide any supports you may need. Our multidisciplinary team of counselors, nurses, social workers, and health and physical education teachers will be participating in a meeting to discuss the importance of being aware of the film's potential silent impact, and will be encouraged to keep it in the forefront when working with our students. If you have a concern or question, we encourage you to work closely with the school counseling team at your child's school.

Below are several links which provide additional resources to support conversations with your child about this series, and a list of our school-based guidance counselors is attached.

**National Association of School Psychologists (background)**

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/13-reasons-why-netflix-series-considerations-for-educators>

**Jed Foundation (issues raised)**

<https://www.jedfoundation.org/13-reasons-jed-point-view/>

**Suicide Awareness Voices of Education (talking points)**

<https://www.save.org/13-reasons-why/>

Sincerely,

*Andrew Bott*  
Superintendent

*Christina Palmer*  
Director of Guidance

*Tricia Laham*  
Coordinator of School Health

## Public Schools of Brookline: School Counseling Staff

### Edith C. Baker School

Katy Sazama (Grades 4-8)  
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Jaime Smith (Grades K-3)  
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Heather Otero (Grades K-8)  
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### Edward Devotion School-Lower

Jordana Spitz (Grades K-2)  
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Mary Toomey (Grades 3-5)  
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### Edward Devotion School-Upper

Jennifer Maylone (Grades 6-8)  
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### Michael Driscoll School

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Hillary Keach (Grades 5-8)  
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### Heath School

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### Amos E. Lawrence School

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Shaina Martinez (Grades 4-8)  
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Alyssa Ovadio (K-8)  
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### William H. Lincoln School

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### John Pierce School

Gayle Van Hatten (Grades K-3)  
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Kate Sullivan (Grades 4-8)  
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### John D. Runkle School

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Rebecca Sneider (Grades 4-8)  
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### Brookline High School

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