



A Message from the Board of Trustees

Dear BHMS Community,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we write to inform you that Martha Haakmat has notified us that next year (2018-2019) will be her last year at Brooklyn Heights Montessori School.

When the Board hired Martha to be Head of School in 2013, we knew she was a star. This was Martha's first headship, and she took to the position with the joyful energy that is her hallmark. She worked with the Board of Trustees to create an ambitious new strategic plan, focused on enhancing program excellence, maintaining the school's strong financial footing, and improving the school's communications. Martha got to work and delivered in a big way.

Martha dedicated herself to protecting the heart of our program excellence — our thoughtful, caring, creative, ingenious, and highly trained teachers. With opportunities for professional development, a culture dedicated to inclusion, and rigorous curricular evaluation and improvements, Martha has allowed the faculty to soar. The results are breathtaking. One need only look at our eighth graders' high school acceptances to see that the word is out: BHMS graduates are deep thinkers with distinctive individual voices, who have grown through the Montessori method as "whole children." They will enrich the high schools that are lucky enough to receive them.

Martha shepherded the Raise the Roof capital project from a mere idea to a reality — green and beautiful, and now ready for our children to enjoy even richer academic and athletic programming. The upcoming Jazz Fête on the Lawn, to be held on June 1st on the roof, will be the perfect opportunity to celebrate Martha's leadership and the exceptional legacy she will leave behind. We sincerely hope that every family in the community will be there.

Perhaps Martha's greatest gifts to the school have been her infectious enthusiasm, her deep belief in the Montessori pedagogy, and her love of our children. It is hard to think of the front door without Martha standing there, shining her big smile and shaking hands with tiny two year olds and young adolescents alike. But for those of us who saw Dane's bow tie depart with heavy hearts, we know our 53-year-old school will embrace its next chapter with verve, Martha having left us more than ready.

Martha's advocacy for BHMS and Montessori have spread the school's reputation far beyond Brooklyn. In 2016, the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) asked Martha to join its teaching faculty at its summer Institute for New Heads. Martha was recently elected Vice President of the Independent Schools Admissions Association of Greater New York (ISAAGNY), has served on the teaching faculty of the Center for Montessori Education (CME), and has "given back" in countless other ways. Martha's work outside the school has helped cement BHMS's national reputation as the gold-standard of Montessori schools. Martha leaves the school in an ideal position to recruit a fabulous new head of school, to begin in July 2019. We thank her for graciously giving us generous notice for our search.

We are delighted to inform you that the Head Search Committee will be chaired by Teresita Levy, Ph.D., incoming Secretary of the Board of Trustees. Teresita is a Professor of Latin American and Latino Studies at Lehman College / CUNY, parent of Ari Lapidus, class of '19, and Ilan Lapidus, class of '21, and spouse of Ben Lapidus. She served on our Parents' Association for three years before she joined the Board in 2015. She was chair of the Board's Institutional Advancement Committee for the last two years, while it steered the Raise the Roof Campaign. The Committee will also include our incoming Board President, Margaret Donohoe Tull. Margaret is an attorney in private family law practice in Manhattan and will be serving her fourth year on the Board, having served on the Finance and Investment Committee and the Committee on Trustees. Margaret has two children in the school, Elliot Tull, class of '19, and Addie Tull, class of '24, and is married to Dave Tull.

Please keep an eye out for an email from Teresita on May 21st that will explain the Head Search process and will detail the many opportunities for all stakeholders in the community to contribute their thoughts, concerns, aspirations, and ideas. To ensure that we are well-prepared for the search and transition, the Board of Trustees has already engaged Carney Sandoe & Associates as consultants; this is the same group that brought us Martha. We are lucky to have a professional partner who knows our school so well, and in whom we have great confidence.

There will be some heavy hearts in our community as we absorb this news. We will certainly miss our star, Martha. But there is also cause for celebration and gratitude for all that Martha has accomplished, and a call to embrace the immense and exciting opportunities on the horizon, for both Martha and our wonderful school. Thank you, Martha. You leave us looking towards the school's next chapter with your very own signature optimism, energy and enthusiasm.

In partnership,

Ivette Greenblatt
Board of Trustees, President

Margaret Donohoe Tull
*Board of Trustees, Vice President
and Incoming President*

Dear Friends,

I am writing to say that after a rich and wonderful five years as your head of school, I have made the difficult decision to depart from BHMS after next year and allow a new leader to continue to steer this incredible school on its amazing journey. The time feels right for our school to make this change from a position of great strength, and for me to explore the next opportunities in my career.

When I think of all that we have accomplished in the past five years, I am so proud of this community. We managed the review and improvement of important programmatic elements, such as curriculum, assessment, and communication of learning goals. We revamped schedules, improved student support, enhanced leadership development, grew and improved technology education, hired fabulous new faculty and staff, and further developed the administrative team. We created a Strategic Plan and planned for careful and sustained progress on its goals and objectives. We dreamed big, grew our culture of giving and literally raised the roof for a capital project which will benefit the experience of children at every stage of their development from twos through eighth grade for many years to come. We made improvements to our systems from data management, to safety planning, to communication of our program through our website. We further refined ourselves as an excellent, diverse and inclusive school by

enrolling and retaining wonderful and talented students and families, and sent our graduates happily off to an expanded list of fabulous high schools. We have been fearless in our pursuit of new opportunities to be the best school possible for our students, and we did it all with tremendous heart and unwavering dedication to our community.

Moving into my sixth year at BHMS, I too am trying to fearlessly pursue my own development and new opportunities. As the face of headship shifts all over the country to include increasing numbers of women and people of color, I will be leaving BHMS after next year at the end of my current contract in order to pursue other opportunities near and far. I entered this community with great excitement about the unique strengths and possibility of this school, and I discovered all of that and more. My time here has been an honor and a wonderfully engaging process of learning, meeting challenges and celebrating success. In this next and last year as your head of school, I plan to use that success to prepare us for this next phase of BHMS's development under a new leader, who will undoubtedly bring fresh eyes and new appreciation to our school's strong history, deep roots and ongoing impact on our immediate community and beyond.

I am terrifically sad about leaving all of the relationships I have built and come to depend on in the past years in this community. Your partnership, support and dedication to our core principles of Montessori, Excellence, Diversity, and Community, are what makes BHMS the best model of educating children successfully for scholarship and engaged citizenship. Under the leadership of a Board of Trustees characterized by professionalism and fierce dedication to our school, I am certain that your new Head of School will be selected from a rich and experienced, smart, prepared and innovative pool of candidates, and our school will be set up to take the future by storm. In the meantime, my work continues here through next year, and we have plenty to keep us busy as partners. I look forward to working diligently with the Board on a smooth leadership transition, and I also look forward to finding moments to talk with you as we move forward and plan.

I have loved my time at BHMS, every bit of it, including the hardest and most challenging because of the community we are. Thank you in advance for your support now and throughout my next and final year at BHMS.

With deep appreciation and great excitement about our next year together and new possibilities,

Martha Haakmat

Head of School