

A message from HEATH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The Public Schools of Brookline
HEATH SCHOOL
100 Eliot Street
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467
[617.879.4570](tel:617.879.4570)
[617.739.7570](tel:617.739.7570) fax

June 7th, 2017

Dear Heath Community,

I am writing to you all to share some powerful news about me that will shape our interactions moving forward. Please know that I am telling you in the hopes that you can and will be an ally as I move forward with the next steps in my life.

First, a bit of background. Much of my energy, from childhood on, has been spent exploring and considering my gender identity and making sense of my place in the world. As a child, I was fortunate to have teachers who recognized my inherent search and honored my experiences along the way. These teachers and my lived experiences in schools eventually led me to want to work in schools, advocating for kids who bring with them joy, struggle, and their own journeys ... each of which deserves to be heard. Over the years, my work as a teacher and school administrator has allowed me recognize the depth of the human experience through knowing deeply the myriad stories of folks I meet and work with; I now realize it is time for my own story to be heard.

I am transgender. Every transition story is unique, and mine is unique to me. My decision to transition comes after deep and prolonged introspection, careful and critical conversations with my family and close friends, and a need to live my most full and authentic life. As a part of my transition, aspects of my body will begin to change over time, a physical difference you and your children will surely notice. Beyond physical aspects, how I am referred to socially will also change. *I now ask that you use he/him/his pronouns when speaking with me or referring to me – whether I am present in those interactions or not. My title is Dr. Sevelius; my first name is now Asa.*

During my life the decision to transition has always felt so personal; it remains personal. That said, I recognize that I play a very public role in our community. While I would hope my transition would have little impact on our school community, I fully recognize that the impact may indeed be tremendous. I will work to make this as smooth a process as possible and look forward to engaging in conversations that will help to keep us connected.

You might wonder, “How can I talk about this with my kids?” You know your kids best, of course, but the resources below might help when and if you all sit together to discuss my transition. When discussing big changes with kids, though, I tend to keep it straight-forward and simple with phrases like:

- There are all kinds of ways to be in the world and being transgender is one of those ways.
- When someone transitions, it is an act of self-love and we want to celebrate someone who makes such a big change in their lives.
- Dr. Sevelius might look a little different and sound different, but his heart is the same and he’ll be there for you and the school no matter what.
- This is big stuff and I’ll do my best to learn alongside of you; no matter what, Heath School is an awesome place to be and learn.

- We all deserve to live open, authentic lives. Dr. Sevelius has this right and so do you!

It occurs to me that I may be among the first school leaders in the United States to make this kind of announcement. If this is true, one shouldn't be surprised if there is some media attention focused on this moment. I want you to know that I anticipate it, am not afraid of it, and am indeed proud to use any privilege I have or gain in this moment to serve others and share my story for the greater good in order to tear down barriers that still exist in our public and private lives.

There is much to celebrate here – the work as the Heath School principal remains the core of my professional focus and brings me tremendous satisfaction every day. Please know that the ability to live my life openly and authentically brings me great joy and will, I believe, make me a stronger, more effective school leader.

I am thankful for the Heath community, your patience and humor, and I am glad to be open with you about something very personal. The next steps in my life will require honesty and courage and I hope I'll have your help and understanding along the way.

My gratitude,

Dr. Asa C. Sevelius
Heath School Principal