Dear HB Community,

I am extremely proud to announce that the Hathaway Brown School Board of Trustees has unanimously and enthusiastically endorsed Dr. Mary Frances Bisselle as HB’s 14th Head of School, with a term of service to commence July 1, 2016.

Fran Bisselle comes to HB armed with an impressive résumé of professional achievements, an outstanding and proven track record of innovative leadership, and an undeniable passion for girls’ education. The HB Head Search Committee has worked tirelessly for the last 10 months to locate the ideal candidate to lead the school forward in its next chapter, and I am abundantly grateful for their successful efforts. They have been thoughtful, distinctive, and admirable representatives of HB, and their devotion to the school and to the process has been unflagging. I’m thankful as well to the school’s faculty and administration, parents, alumnae, and my fellow Trustees who have been so gracious, insightful, and supportive throughout. It has been my great honor to serve as the President of the Board of Trustees during this pivotal moment in our school’s history and I couldn’t be more pleased to introduce Fran and welcome her to this incredible community.

Fran holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from Boston College; an M.A. in Liberal Studies with a concentration in History from Wesleyan University; and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies with a concentration in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment from the University of Vermont. She has served for the last nine years as Head of School at Maple Street School, a K-8 independent school in Manchester Center, Vermont. Maple Street was founded by bestselling novelist and Academy Award-winning screenwriter John Irving and his wife, Janet. Fran deftly succeeded Maple Street’s founding director, and she ushered the school through an economic downturn and saw enrollment increase by 20 percent during her tenure. No stranger to hard work, Fran has had a career that has included positions as a classroom teacher, dean of students, coach, dorm parent, educational consultant, and teaching fellow. She has been a member of the faculty and administration at The Taft School in Connecticut, and she developed and redesigned the curriculum for the Master of Arts in Teaching degree at the University of Vermont. She also has shared her expertise with Camp Dudley, a 130-year-old YMCA overnight camp for boys in the Adirondacks. In 2006, Fran spearheaded the project to establish the all-girls Camp Dudley at Kiwija, raising $12 million for the cause and procuring the camp’s bucolic grounds on the shores of Lake Champlain.

A graduate of the prestigious Klingenstein Head Fellowship program at Columbia Teacher’s College, Fran now serves on several high-profile boards of trustees, including as a New England Association of Schools and Colleges commissioned board member for the last five years, and as a trustee for the National Association of Independent Schools—which provides services and oversight for more than 1,800 schools in the United States. She also is the currently installed president of the Vermont Independent Schools Association.

One of 15 siblings with 11 sisters and with two teenaged daughters of her own, Fran knows and understands girls. Her daughter Lucille is a freshman at the University of Vermont, and her daughter Agnes is a high school senior at Burr and Burton Academy. Fran was a lifer at Merion Mercy Academy, a K-12 school for girls located outside of Philadelphia. An avid athlete, she was a Division I college field hockey player, and she’s a marathon runner who today also plays ice hockey, tennis, and golf. Fran plans to relocate to Cleveland this summer with her significant other, Dr. David Vincent, who has been a chiropractor for 24 years and is the past director of both the Dartmouth Health Alliance, and Complementary and Alternative Medicine at Kaiser Health Plan.

Special thanks are in order for Helen Rankin Butler ’87, who chaired the HB Head Search Committee with masterful efficiency, extraordinary attention to detail, and with great respect for the seriousness of this responsibility. I am tremendously appreciative as well for our search partners at Carney, Sandoe & Associates; and for Head of School Bill Christ, who has helped us to make this transition seamless. Once again, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Head Search Committee—made up of 13 appointed and invested faculty members, alumnae, parents, and Trustees—and to the entire HB community for your flexibility, insight, and hospitality during this important and exciting process. The HB Head Search has been defined by its inclusivity and transparency, and today is a proud day for us all.

Fran Bisselle embodies the ideals of visionary leadership, commitment to excellence, and joyful engagement that define the HB experience. Please join me in congratulating her and warmly welcoming her to her new home.

Sincerely,

PAUL MATSEN
President, Board of Trustees