



May 4, 2022
3 Iyar 5782

Dear Heilicher Community,

When we launched our search for a new Head of School late last year, I shared my excitement for the opportunity that the search provided our community. It was my intent that we use this time to articulate our hopes and dreams for the future and to think critically about our leadership needs. We needed to ask ourselves what skills and what type of individual could help lead Heilicher into the future and ensure its long-term sustainability. We brought to life the Heilicher core value “And if not now, when?” in challenging ourselves to consider what we need today for the sake of our future.

With input from many of you, we quickly identified several core priorities. We needed a seasoned school leader with prior experience serving as a Head of School. We wanted someone who valued a Jewish Day School education; an individual who could both advocate for the importance of our educational program and who would understand and appreciate the culture of our school. We also sought someone who could bring renewed energy and a fresh perspective, who saw our challenges as exciting opportunities to strengthen our school.

I am excited that we have found those attributes in Dr. Dan Ahlstrom. On behalf of the Heilicher Board of Directors, I am thrilled to announce that Dr. Ahlstrom will become Heilicher’s next Head of School on July 1, 2022.

The Board’s unanimous decision to approve Dr. Ahlstrom’s hire was based on the strong recommendation of the Head of School Search Committee, co-chaired by Michele Kaplan Clinard and Esther Goldberg-Davis. With the guidance of Independent Thinking consultant Jane Armstrong, the Search Committee vetted a number of applicants for the Head of School role, and Dr. Ahlstrom’s candidacy quickly rose to the top. As you know, Dr. Ahlstrom came to Minneapolis in early April for an intensive two-day visit, during which he met with Heilicher parents, faculty and staff, students, community leaders, and school supporters. The feedback from those conversations was overwhelmingly positive and constructive, and contributed significantly to the Search Committee’s recommendation and the Board’s hiring decision.

The Search Committee and Board are particularly excited about Dr. Ahlstrom’s proven track record as an experienced and strategic leader, mission-driven problem-solver, and relationship-builder throughout the school and broader community. Throughout the 10+ formal and informal reference calls we conducted during the process, those strengths were reinforced and celebrated. We heard confidence in his abilities as a forward thinking leader who immersed

himself into the culture and rhythms of each of the schools he led. He prioritizes his staff, cultivates their strengths, and creates opportunities for teachers and administrators to grow.

Dr. Ahlstrom was impressed with the strength, vibrancy, and closeness of the Heilicher community, as well as the dedication of the faculty and administration. Dr. Ahlstrom shared with me: *“After I met with Board members, clergy, donors, and faculty, and then was interviewed by the students themselves, I knew Heilicher was the right fit. I am grateful for the opportunity to be Heilicher’s next Head of School and look forward to getting to know everyone very soon.”* Dr. Ahlstrom and his wife Shannon look forward to relocating to Minneapolis in the coming months.

It has been many years since we have welcomed an external candidate to lead our school. I hope you will join me in greeting a new face to the halls of Heilicher. We will keep you apprised of opportunities to get to know Dr. Ahlstrom prior to the beginning of the school year and I invite you to share with him your personal hopes and dreams for our community.

I want to express my deepest appreciation to the members of the Search Committee. In addition to the co-chairs and myself, they include: Mark Appelbaum, Sarah Gollust, Rose Horovitz, Benjie Kaplan, Elena Levitt, Becka Steinberg, and Michael Zis. These individuals worked tirelessly over the past four months to source, vet and advance potential candidates, and their hard work is what has led us to this exciting juncture.

Finally, I want to close by expressing my gratitude to Acting Head of School Maia Poling for all she has done to lead Heilicher ably over the past year. Maia is a tremendous asset to the school, and has helped us to navigate COVID while continuing to deliver an extraordinary education to our students.

We will honor Maia for her years of service to Heilicher at the Annual Meeting:

Thursday, June 2, 2022

6:30-8:00 p.m.

Ben and Bernice Fiterman Beit Knesset @Heilicher

Best regards,
Robyn Schein
President, Heilicher Board of Directors