October 3, 2014

Dear Members of the Brearley Community,

As the Building Committee of the Board of Trustees moves ahead in evaluating options for additional space to enhance the School’s academic program, we want to share some of the key criteria that are informing the process and update you on the status.

This is a 100-year decision for Brearley, one that requires the greatest possible care. As you know, the Board is weighing the renovation of our current building in tandem with the construction of new academic space at 70-74 East End Avenue against options for moving to a new location, where we could accommodate the entire school in a single building.

This is also a decision about the culture of the School: Will we remain in our current location and create a campus with two separate academic buildings plus the Field House, or will we keep our students and teachers all together under one roof and move from Brearley’s neighborhood of the past 85 years?

We are pleased to report that since we last updated you in May, the Building Committee has narrowed the options under consideration to a short list of sites that are being assessed and compared with the option of renovating 610 and construction on East End Avenue.

Due diligence is ongoing and, among other factors, the Board is considering the following criteria: space that aligns with program goals; costs and financing plan; environmental factors and efficiencies of operating one building versus three; appropriate consideration of the value of Brearley’s historic location; neighborhood atmosphere, safety and traffic; proximity to public transportation and to attractive uses, including parks, playing fields, cultural institutions, universities and schools; and temporary disruption to the program during construction/renovation.

Either option will offer exciting opportunities for the School; the ultimate choice must be consistent with Brearley’s mission, values and philosophy.

We began our process with a clear and long-established understanding that the goal of continuing Brearley’s legacy of excellence in education for girls requires us to have more space:

• Our academic program has evolved over many years, and today girls of all ages study as much science and math as they do English and history. Curricular changes are essential for Brearley to continue to offer a world-class education for girls, but they have compounded the need for additional space and require us to use the existing facilities at 610 in ways that are quite different from the past.

• We have outgrown the current potential of 610. Even with the Field House, we have only 147 square feet of space per student today, less than the average for many public schools and well below the more than 169-252 square feet per student at Brearley’s peer independent schools here in the city. It only takes a look at the hallways on each floor crowded with students and study sessions every day to experience our need for more space.
• Soon after the addition of two new floors to the top of 610 in 1995, the Board of Trustees at that time concluded that new space would need to be acquired and began the almost 20-year search for the ideal configuration.

• We believe that our tradition of having faculty teach and guide students across the divisions is an essential and distinguishing feature of the School. In addition to a modern library/learning hub, labs to inspire young scientists and excellent facilities to support music, drama, fine arts and athletics, we need carefully configured additional space in which to provide the best education for our girls.

• Our hope for new space involves much more than an increase in the number of classrooms or square feet. In keeping with the forthcoming Strategic Plan, we have an aspiration for a more balanced, open and accessible way of living the Brearley experience, while still retaining the cozy and understated atmosphere that we all associate with the School. Everything from the way we enter a building and access floors and facilities and the manner in which we interact and collaborate with each other affects our ability to deliver on future goals for the School.

We are tremendously grateful to the alumnae, parents, faculty members and administrators who are devoting their time and professional expertise to leading this thoughtful process. Thank you also to all the members of the community for sharing your thoughts and suggestions and for your patience and understanding as the Board determines how best to meet the needs of future generations of Brearley students. As you would expect, maintaining confidentiality around specific details affords the School the needed flexibility in any transactions that might be involved.

We are hopeful that we will be in a position to reach a final decision before the end of the year and look forward to keeping the community informed as the process unfolds.

Sincerely,

Ellen Jewett ’77
President, Board of Trustees

Jane Foley Fried
Head of School