

An Open Letter announcing our new Executive Director from Walkabout Education

Dear Walkabout Community,

I am thrilled to introduce myself as the new Executive Director of Walkabout Education. As a Walkabout alum and an educator here in Philadelphia for the last two decades, I am deeply honored to take on this leadership role.

When I entered Walkabout I was a successful student on paper. Someone who had the appearance of “going places.” But as I recounted in my journal at the time, “...when have I ever really accomplished anything? School work is not an accomplishment. I never get appreciated or anything for what I do. Either I miss out or I’m completely overlooked. But how can that be when I seem to have so much to offer?” By the time I graduated from Walkabout in 1998 I had climbed two mountains, mucked out stalls, fed owls, taught young people about apple cider pressing, written copy for a magazine, traveled alone to NYC as a daily commuter 4 days a week, answered the phones at Vibe magazine, and gained a sense of purpose, of self, and agency that I had never had before. This was the gift of my year at Walkabout.

I have had the opportunity to bring aspects of my Walkabout experience to my work in my current school by placing 9th grade students in volunteer positions at local schools, guiding 11th graders through the process of finding an internship, and helping 10th grade students explore local issues through service learning projects. I have also been exploring the potential for a Walkabout school here in Philadelphia. It is clear that my Walkabout experiences have fed this work. I am committed to building on the foundation and legacy of Walkabout Education by supporting and working with others who believe strongly in student-centered, real-world experiential learning. This is the gift that I have been paying forward.

In my role, I aim to foster and continue existing relationships with like-minded individuals and organizations and engage with educators and school leaders who want to bring the Walkabout model to their community. Walkabout Education will support, spearhead, and engage with the work of reimagining education at a time when there are big questions about the future of what education looks like. This work will build on the hard work and dedication of the inaugural Walkabout Education team and continue to engage with the Walkabout community of alumni and supporters at large.

Please connect with me directly to share your experiences, suggestions, and hopes for Walkabout. If you are interested in bringing a Walkabout school to your community, please reach out. I look forward to the exciting journey ahead.

With gratitude,

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Mary Beth Hertz
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A Message from Outgoing Executive Director, Ben Wild

It has been a profound honor to lead Walkabout Education for the past 10 years. As I pass the torch to Mary Beth Hertz, I do so with immense pride and confidence in her capabilities. Her dedication to experiential learning and deep roots in the Walkabout ethos make her an exemplary choice to guide our mission forward. I am excited to see how she will enrich our community with her ideas and unwavering commitment to reimagining education. We stand on the brink of a new and thrilling chapter for Walkabout Education, and I eagerly anticipate the remarkable strides we will continue to make under Mary Beth's leadership. I look forward to continuing to advise and support this work.