

# Amy Vorenberg

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## Common School Head of School Search Committee

Materials Sent by Email to Jerry Katz & Robert Henderson, Consultants at RG175

### Dear Common School Head of School Search Committee:

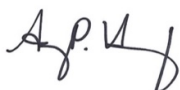
I write to express my interest in serving the Common School community as its next Head of School. I have known and respected the Common School since I visited when Mark Segar was Head of School! That visit was almost 30 years ago. During that time, I have deepened my commitment as a progressive educator through numerous and wonderful experiences as a teacher, division head, and head of school. I am hopeful that I could lead the Common School into its next fifty years, strengthening its position as an innovative and dynamic learning community.

As my résumé outlines, experience has prepared me well for the Head of School position at The Common School. I'm a teacher who understands curriculum development, intellectual engagement, and the importance of high expectations and joyful learning. I bring a collaborative, relational approach to my work. As a Head of School, I supported the development of powerful and productive teams to serve children. Those teams recruited and hired excellence in the teaching faculty and administration. We partnered with the board to create the strategy to bring a shared vision to life. We raised millions of dollars to make bold dreams become beautiful realities, building not only spaces for learning, but also growing endowment and strengthening longer-term financial stability. While I have experienced a multitude of successes and demands in work, and I remain steadfast in my commitment to helping children grow and learn in a truly progressive learning environment.

I am moved by Common School's Core Values. I believe in the intentional work of creating a nurturing learning environment; I have worked to create in-depth, integrated curriculum to help children make meaning. I value the gift of a diverse and inclusive community, as I believe we learn more through courageous conversations about difference. I believe children should fall in love with nature by *being in nature*; I aim to be a part of a school community that has a commitment to spending time outdoors as part of the learning experience. And finally, I continue to love learning and value being a member of an active community of adults, inspired by continually posing questions and using data to inform and improve practice.

I am delighted by experiential, hands-on, meaningful and fun learning that The Common School celebrates. It would be a great honor to serve as The Common School community as Head of School.

**Warm regards,**



**Amy Vorenberg**

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## Education

### **MASTER OF SCIENCE | 1986 | WHEELOCK COLLEGE**

- Major: Early Childhood Education

### **BACHELOR OF ARTS | 1984 | UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE**

- Major: English

## Skills & Abilities

### **LEADERSHIP**

- More than a decade of experience as Head of School at two unique and impressive independent schools, Beauvoir (BVR) and The Philadelphia School (TPS).

### **MANAGEMENT**

- Worked with two different school Boards to manage every aspect of work in two independent schools, The Philadelphia School and Beauvoir, The National Cathedral Elementary School.
- Hired and managed over 100 faculty/staff at BVR; 70 faculty/staff at TPS.
- Implemented online tool Folio Collaborative to coordinate evaluation and feedback for all Beauvoir employees.

### **FUND RAISING**

- Developed relationships to secure over \$6,000,000 in funding for capital projects at TPS.
- Elevated Beauvoir's Annual Giving to over \$800,000, including first-time Faculty/Staff participation at 100%.
- Engaged community to raise over \$650,000 at Beauvoir Auction, including over \$220,000 in Fund-a-Scholar gifts.

### **ADMISSION & ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT**

- Developed school size model to grow The Philadelphia School from 360 to 500 students.
- Created marketing initiatives to develop applicant pools and increase yield of qualified students.
- Grew diverse applicant pool to yield additional students of color and families with same-sex parents.

### **COMMUNICATION**

- Developed and implemented two strategic plans to prioritize, clarify, and guide work across the independent school community.
- Engaged in marketing analysis and redesign of digital and print materials at Beauvoir and The Philadelphia School, including a refresh of school logos.
- Spoke frequently to large groups of faculty, staff, parents, prospective parents, and other constituencies to share information about the process of school improvement and academic learning.
- Wrote extensively to share the mission, philosophy and important work of schools.

## Independent School Leadership

### HEAD OF SCHOOL | BEAUVOIR, THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | JULY 2013 - 2017

- Worked with St. Albans School, National Cathedral School and Washington National Cathedral to collaboratively manage the Protestant Episcopal Cathedral Foundation.
- Redesigned Beauvoir's administrative structure to support an enhanced culture of thinking, teaching and learning across the school.
- Enhanced the teaching model across the school to build teacher capacity through team teaching.
- Developed programming to support diversity, equity and inclusion across the school, including a new initiative *Kaleidoscope* (parent diversity group).

### HEAD OF SCHOOL | THE PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL | AUGUST 2006 – JUNE 2013

- Worked with Board of Trustees to purchase and develop property from the City of Philadelphia. Repurposed a garage building into a Multipurpose Theater and developed a LEED certified Early Childhood Classroom building and gardens with over 14,000 square feet of new teaching spaces
- Developed and achieved strategic plan, master plan, school size model, in support of property acquisition.
- Redesigned administrative structure, thematic curricular sequence, and teacher evaluation/professional development system
- Raised over \$6,000,000 in Every Inch a Classroom Capital Campaign, including two seven-figure gifts, to fund new teaching space in two buildings. Purchased property from the City of Philadelphia through Bond financing, renegotiated to conventional debt, for 8.3 million. Secured a \$1,000,000 Redevelopment Authority for Capital Projects grant from the State of Pennsylvania to develop School project.
- Student body grew by 50 students, from 360 to 410 children, in six years (2007-2012) and created school size model for future growth to 500 students.

### LOWER SCHOOL DIVISION HEAD | SHADY HILL SCHOOL | JULY 2000 – JUNE 2006

- Appointed Director of Curricular Program and Professional Development for the full faculty in 2005.
- Duties included coordination of all aspects of life in the Lower School: hiring, faculty evaluation, curriculum, student services, admission work, participation on the Administrative Council, ran parent workshops, teacher-training course focused on Media Literacy and curricular innovations.
- Chaired committee for AISNE reaccreditation in 1999.

## **Independent School Teaching**

### **THIRD GRADE TEACHER| SHADY HILL SCHOOL| AUGUST 1994 – JUNE 2000**

- Taught sixteen third graders, including Central Subject on Island Cultures (Puerto Rico) and Whales. • Designed and implemented curriculum in all subject areas, including language arts, math, science, and affective education. • Created innovative curriculum on Media Literacy and empowering students as fully-literate in the age of information.

### **MIXED-AGE GROUP TEACHER| ATRIUM SCHOOL |MAY 1986 – JUNE 1990; AUGUST 1992-JUNE 1994**

- Team-taught in various configurations, including a Kindergarten/Grade One/Grade Two mix, Grade One-Grade Two mix, Grade Two- Grade Three mix, and Grade Three. • Fully integrated program, including visual arts, physical education, science and music -- taught everything from reading to physical education.

### **THIRD GRADE TEACHER| FESSENDEN SCHOOL |AUGUST 1991 – JUNE 1992**

- Taught self-contained classroom, traditional curriculum and teaching environment. • Dorm parent for sixteen 4th & 5th graders.

## **Additional Experience**

### **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR| INDEPENDENT SCHOOL ASSOCIATION OF MASSACHUSETTS (NOW AISNE) |AUGUST 1990 – JUNE 1991**

- Coordinated programming for ISAM, including thirty conferences annually. Created teams for school accreditation processes.

### **CONSULTANT| MEDIAWISE |1995-2002**

- Media Literacy consultant, including keynote speeches for student groups, parent organizations and teachers. Developed parent curriculum for Work Family Directions. Work featured on Chronicle, WCVB in Boston and on video series “ADHD and the 21st Century.”

### **MEMBER| COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF PHILADELPHIA, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ADVISORY|2008, 2009**

### **BOARD MEMBER| ADVIS (ASSOCIATION OF DELAWARE VALLEY INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS |2008 – 2013**

### **BOARD MEMBER| KEEWAYDIN FOUNDATION |2008 – 2010**

### **BOARD MEMBER| GARRISON FOREST SCHOOL |2015-2017**

### **MEMBER, DC LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE| AISGW (ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS GREATER WASHINGTON)|2014-2017**

## Professional Development

- Certificate of Advanced Leadership, Harvard University Graduate School of Education
  - Expected June 2018
- SAIS Heads Conference with Michael Thompson & Rob Evans, Summer 2014 & 2016
- Reggio Emilia Study Group, NAREA Tour 2015
- NAIS Diversity Institute for Heads, Summer 2010, facilitator Summer 2011
- NAIS New Heads Institute, Summer 2006
- NAIS/EE Ford Fellowship for Aspiring Heads, 2004 Cohort
- NAIS Annual Conference attendee since 1998
  - Presenter: Collaborative Leadership (Philadelphia, 2013)
  - Presenter: Media Literacy (Dallas, 2004)
- NAIS People of Color Conference attendee (eight years)
- David Mallery workshops on Administrator's Life & New Teacher Institute
- Felton Media Literacy Scholar - Media Literacy Project at Babson College, Wellesley
- Curriculum Mapping with Heidi Hayes Jacobs

## Published Writing

*Independent School*, "School Matters: Rigor vs. Vigor", Spring 2008

Preventing Eating Disorders: A Handbook of Interventions and Special Challenges, *Chapter co-authored with Dr. Catherine Steiner-Adair on Media Literacy and Eating Disorders*, 1999.

Rereading Sir Ken Robinson's book *The Element*, I am reminded how fortunate I am to have found my element – the perfect alignment of passion, work, and creativity – as an elementary educator and school leader in independent schools. As Robinson suggests, it's a profound responsibility and an honor to create learning spaces where children, their teachers, and their parents are empowered to love learning, to find meaningful connections, and to engage fully as a member of a community. Learning in school today, especially a school like The Common School, should be a fascinating adventure where every child can thrive and grow academically, socially, athletically, and artistically.

I am in my element in a vibrant, progressive, and diverse learning community. I am energized by the work of school leadership, in part because I find independent schools fascinating places that draw incredible people together to do good work. Alongside other talented professionals, it is a joy to work in service of children and their families.

Educators need to be facile – or at the least open minded enough – to embrace new research and integrate that research into pedagogy and practice. John Dewey's progressive movement took roots over 100 years ago. Since that time, research on how children learn, cognitive and brain development, habits of mind, and the explosion of new technologies require educators to continue to evolve and improve methods and curriculum. And, the inspiration of John Dewey's work still rings true, and I believe in his guidance. "Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results." As a school leader, I strive to create a culture of thinking in a school community.

"School" in the Age of Information provides opportunities that were only possible in the wildest imagination of John Dewey. Our goal as educators is to give students the mindset and skills to answer questions and utilize learning tools – including tools of the future that we, like Dewey, can only imagine today. Schools need to foster environments where adults and children are willing to question and answer, to mentor and be mentored, to seek and study primary source materials. I believe that educators need to model for students the traits, skills, and enthusiasm that will enable them to excitedly take on the challenges of asking and answering new questions.

Despite – perhaps because of - technology in the classroom, at home, even in pockets between those places – relationships are a paramount component of learning. Learning to respectfully and responsibly share information and ideas, to build strong relationships within diverse communities, this is essential. Children and their teachers, their parents and their friends - all need to be known for who they are, beyond screen names and digital footprints. Schools must lean into the essential work of creating communities where it is safe to challenge and change ideas, to wonder aloud, to disagree, and to learn together. It is clear that this is a shared priority at The Common School.

And while joyful learning is a goal, challenging and meaningful work is also essential. Children should feel stretched by projects that are interesting, that require effort and lead to mastery and accomplishment. I believe in children and their potential – I value classroom environments where students can be self-directed, taught to be reflective about their work, and able to understand themselves as learners and community participants. I believe we must teach children the skills necessary to engage, actively, in community – skills needed for collaboration, compromise, and resiliency in the face of struggle.

Education must allow children to begin to discover their element. Will a child's element be rooted in musical performance or in a deep desire to understand complexities of chemical reactions? Teaching young children through adolescence provides unlimited opportunities to open doors to wonder and discovery. Education must inspire children to learn not only about academic subjects but also how those topics connect to inspire passion. With that foundation, it's my mission to empower and value every child and teacher as their whole self, grounded by a love of learning and strong relationships in community.

Amy Vorenberg  
Finalist Candidate for Head of School  
The Common School  
January 2018

*What about your training, experience, convictions, and skills can you share to address your capacity for leadership in helping The Common School to move forward in its commitment to equity, social justice, and anti-bias education?*

**“We all have a responsibility to create a just society”**

-- **Bryan Stevenson**

As an educator and an open-minded person, I live my commitment to contribute daily to the work of creating a just society. Professionally, my dedication to this effort comes in small moments with every member of the school community, in purposeful work, and in a belief that I can make a positive difference. Personally, it means I actively participate in our democracy, I vote, I read and work to understand the opinions and actions of others as we build together a society of care, respect, and compassion.

**“The arc of history is long, but it bends toward justice.”**

-- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

I have worked for over thirty years in school settings with a focus on issues of social justice. In the early childhood/elementary setting, this work has been purposeful, creating a community of respect and valuing every individual. It has meant redefining what it means to be smart, what it means to be kind, and what beauty includes, so that every child knows they are brilliant, caring and beautiful. To do this in a small classroom and a larger school setting has been essential to my efforts at building a safe environment for learning and growth.

I have continued to be a learner in the area of equity and inclusion. The work has shifted in dramatic ways over the course of my career: it's moved from growing the numbers of diverse peoples to building a truly inclusive community at all levels. It's shifted from including “others” as guests in independent schools to fully embracing the power and potential of every individual as we learn together and strive to build a more just society.

**“I think we ought to give ourselves more time. We should be more patient with ourselves and with each other.”**

-- **Maya Angelou**

I have put a great deal of time, thinking and work into honing my skills as a school leader. I haven't figured it all out; I have made mistakes and I have learned from them. Anger and frustration must not define this work. Curiosity and wonder need to guide the conversations. I am open to continuing to learn as I lead. I love the work it takes to grow towards improvement.

I strive to model joy in the messiness of exploring important diversity efforts. I believe I have more to learn from others who have different experiences and backgrounds than mine. I am aware of my white privilege and bring that awareness to every interaction as I serve as a Head of School.

“Courage is more exhilarating than fear, and in the long run, it is easier.”

-- **Eleanor Roosevelt**

Some learning happens through storytelling. Stories of history inform a child’s view of the past and shape their commitment to tackling the future. A school must tell stories from multiple perspectives, from viewpoints of “winners” and “losers.” The curriculum must be rooted in the understanding that there is power in every story. An anti-biased curriculum is essential, and a school must be willing to analyze resources for the voices left out of the narrative intentionally. Perspectives must be sought-after, as we tell stories that empower students to see the courage, strength, and resilience of people. Curriculum matters, and the willingness to have interesting conversations about the range of human experience is at the root of genuine learning.

“We as a country have to do some soul-searching.”

-- **Barack Obama**

Never in my experience has the work of equity and inclusion been more important than at this moment. We can and must make a difference in opening both the minds and hearts of our students and their families to empower all to feel they are ready and able to actively engage in making our democracy and our world a better place. One must be prepared for soul-searching and authentic engagement to fully embrace an inclusive and compassionate stance.

As a school leader, the words of Obama, Roosevelt, Angelou, King, and Stevenson inspire and guide me. Their words provide touchstones that I believe educators must embrace in every lesson and interaction in school. This is the commitment at The Common School, and I am confident in the shared values we hold.