

January 12, 2018

Dear Common School families,

I am writing with a long, but important, update on our search for a new Head of School. In the coming two weeks, we will welcome three candidates to campus for visits. These visits are an important opportunity for all of us to be involved in selecting our next Head.

The schedules for the three candidates are as follows:

**Candidate #1:**

**Thursday, January 18, 2:30-3:15:** open meeting with parents and guardians in the Music Room (childcare available in classrooms until 3:15)

**Thursday, January 18, 3:30-4:15:** Forum on Anti-Bias and Social Justice Education in the Music Room (childcare available)

**Friday, January 19, 8:30-9:15 (am):** open meeting with parents and guardians in the Big Room

**Candidate #2:**

**Monday, January 22, 2:30-3:15:** open meeting with parents and guardians in the Music Room (childcare available in classrooms until 3:15)

**Monday, January 22, 3:30-4:15:** Forum on Anti-Bias and Social Justice Education in the Music Room (childcare available)

**Tuesday, January 23, 8:30-9:15 (am):** open meeting with parents and guardians in the Big Room

**Candidate #3:**

**Thursday, January 25, 2:30-3:15:** open meeting with parents and guardians in the Music Room (childcare available in classrooms until 3:15)

**Thursday, January 25, 3:30-4:15:** Forum on Anti-Bias and Social Justice Education in the Music Room (childcare available)

**Friday, January 26, 8:30-9:15 (am):** open meeting with parents and guardians in the Big Room

A quick word about the format of the Forum on Anti-Bias and Social Justice Education. In consultation with the Diversity Committee, we have decided to have each of the candidates respond to the same set of questions. This will offer us a better basis for comparing the candidates. If you would like to suggest questions or topics, please email them to the co-chairs of the Diversity Committee, Kim Sherman [ksherman7@charter.net](mailto:ksherman7@charter.net) and Will Syldor [Wsyldor@gmail.com](mailto:Wsyldor@gmail.com), or to me: [hudsongs@earthlink.net](mailto:hudsongs@earthlink.net)

I encourage everyone to take advantage of these opportunities to meet and interact with the candidates. At the conclusion of each visit, all members of our community will have the opportunity to give feedback to the Search Committee, either through a simple online form or with a paper version of the same form. While it is the sole responsibility of the Search Committee to make a final recommendation to the Board of Trustees regarding the appointment of our next Head of School, your perceptions of each candidate's strengths and/or potential areas of concern will be important for us to consider.

As we prepare for the candidate visits, I'd like to share a few thoughts about the Search. The Head of School's job is a large one, requiring skills across many areas. Here are a few of the many things the Search Committee has been thinking about as we evaluate candidates:

- Does the candidate possess the training, experience, convictions, and skills to help The Common School move forward in its commitment to equity, social justice, and anti-bias education?

- Does the candidate demonstrate a strong commitment to progressive education and have the intellectual capacity to lead us in thinking about what the principles of progressive education are in a 21<sup>st</sup> century context?
- Does the candidate have the skills, experience, and determination to be an effective fundraiser?
- Does the candidate demonstrate excellent communication skills – interpersonal, oral, and written?
- Has the candidate shown an ability to be a strong and inclusive leader, fostering creative thinking, the development of consensus, and following through to ensure that good ideas reach full fruition?
- Has the candidate successfully implemented creative and effective approaches to marketing and enrollment?
- Does the candidate’s experience in managing budgets demonstrate an ability to effectively marshal resources towards clear objectives?
- Has the candidate demonstrated the ability to support and stimulate dedicated faculty members in their ongoing development?
- Do the candidates bring joy and energy to their work?

In thinking about what questions you’d like to ask the candidates, bear in mind that the objective is to get them talking in an open and relaxed fashion. Asking honest questions in a friendly manner will give us the chance to learn most about the candidate’s views and practices. It is not a good idea to set “trip wires” or to play “gotcha” with candidates.

The most useful questions are those about the candidate’s practices at his/her current or previous schools. We’ve found that questions based on hypothetical scenarios don’t provide much useful information. Similarly, asking candidates how they would handle some situation unique to The Common School is unlikely to yield much. And, of course, some questions are simply not permitted: marital status, sexual orientation, age, and other personal questions.

Please bear in mind that while we’re evaluating the candidates, they are assessing us. They are our guests on campus. Let’s make them feel welcome, even as we ask important and difficult questions.

### **Amy Vorenberg**

The first candidate to visit us will be Amy Vorenberg, who will be on campus next Thursday and Friday (January 18-19). Amy is very excited about the possibility of joining The Common School community, after more than a decade of experience as Head of School at The Philadelphia School (PA) and Beauvoir School (DC). Amy (BA, University of New Hampshire; MS, Wheelock College) has spent most of her professional life teaching in and leading progressive elementary schools. She sees a potentially great fit between her values and leadership style and the mission and culture of The Common School. Her resume, statement of personal philosophy, and statement on social justice and equity are [attached here >](#) You will also find them (and all up-to-date information on the Head search) on the Common School website (under [Head of School Search](#)) later today. You’ll find the schedule for Amy’s visit at the top of this letter.

Information on the other two candidates will be circulated by email and posted on the website three days prior to their visits.

I hope to see many of you at these upcoming events. This is an important transitional moment for The Common School. Please come, meet the candidates, ask questions, and share your feedback afterwards.

Sincerely,

Geoff Hudson

The Head Search Committee

Geoff Hudson, Chair

Abisola Adediran

Ken Carter

Jenny Coy

Linda Donnelly

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