



School One
Providence, RI
Head of School
July 2021

School One (<https://school-one.org/>) was founded in 1973 by a small group of committed parents and teachers who were pioneering the move toward student-centered private high schools. Today, School One is an accredited independent school on Providence's East Side, offering strong college preparatory and visual arts programs. The school's most distinguishing feature is its culture; it is a school where everyone's voice is highly valued and respected, decisions are made collaboratively, first names are universally used, and students are given appreciated freedoms and responsibilities. Students, parents, and faculty consistently note the welcoming and accepting community as one of School One's greatest strengths. Students consistently shared that they feel accepted, valued, and heard at School One—sometimes for the first time in their school experience.

School One students appreciate the opportunities to have choices in their classes and to have their individual strengths and needs seen and addressed. Typically enrolling 80+ students, this year's enrollment of 62 students is the smallest in many years due to Covid related issues and a diminished international student population. Since beginning its international program, the student body has included 8-10 international students each year, and there is only one international student currently enrolled. Providence has a competitive independent school market, and stakeholders did share that School One is too much of a "hidden gem."

School One seeks a leader whose imagination and heart is captured by the description of the culture and who can wholeheartedly embrace the mission. It is a great opportunity to lead, partner, and collaborate with engaged and committed educators, students who revel in the voice and ownership they have at their school, and those students' parents. It is a great opportunity for a thoughtful, confident leader who appreciates the joys and challenges of serving as a head of school in a small school community.

Mission

At School One, we teach students to think, write, analyze, and create. As a community, we treat each other with care and respect. We appreciate each other's differences as people and as learners.

At School One, we help our students:

Write clearly; Think with imagination; Read insightfully; Create art; Pose questions; Develop skills; Know who they are; Make choices about what they learn; Speak up for what they believe; Prepare for college and beyond; Become better versions of themselves.

The Campus

In the mid-1990s, School One moved to its current school building on University Avenue on Providence's East Side. In 2018, the school purchased a house across the street for administrative offices and faculty workspace, freeing up room for additional classrooms in the school building. A well-

timed renovation in Summer 2020 included replacing windows and a new HVAC system that provides the health benefits of state-of-the-art ventilation for the school building. The 1950s era brick exterior of the school building belies the color and art found throughout the inside. As part of ongoing facilities upgrades, an extensive exterior renovation including new signage, new landscaping and redesigned entry points is planned. The school owns, without any debt, both properties.

Faculty and Staff

Along with the Head of School, the administrative staff includes an Assistant Head of School, Directors of Development and Enrollment, and an Office & Operations Manager. The staff also includes an Accountant, a Special Education Coordinator, a Counselor, and a Director of Literary Engagement who oversees literary arts programming and community engagement.

There are nine full time faculty members, two of whom serve as department coordinators for the arts and for math and science. Full time faculty members also serve as advisors to no more than 12 students each year; advising responsibilities at School One are quite extensive. In addition to the full time faculty, School One employs a number of talented adjunct faculty, some who have been integral members of the school community for many years. This staffing model enables the school to offer a wider selection of courses than otherwise might be possible, particularly in the arts.

Students

School One students are wonderfully diverse. Many are attracted to School One because of its strong arts program, and others are attracted to the emphasis on active learning and independent thinking. Some students have diagnosed learning differences and mental health challenges, requiring the safe environment and extra support available from the Counselor and other staff members. Other students have been marginalized in other schools and want to attend a school with an accepting, kind, and respectful environment. More economically and racially diverse than the typical independent or public school, the majority of School One's applicants come from public or charter schools.

Many of School One's students have been unsuccessful or unhappy in their previous schools but flourish in the supportive community where their voices are valued. Through the advising program and the strong, authentic relationships a small school and the respectful culture this community enable, faculty members work closely with individual students to support their successes. Small class sizes enable teachers to offer responsive support to students, ensuring they receive an education tailored to fit their abilities, interests and goals. While some students may have doubted their ability to finish high school at the time they enrolled at School One, the majority of graduates continue on to four-year colleges and/or art schools.

Program

At School One it is our job to reach every student. We designed our school on a personalized approach to learning four decades ago...

Candidates are encouraged to explore carefully the Teaching & Learning section of School One's website. Reviewing course descriptions will highlight that School One's courses are more akin to college course descriptions. Students enroll in classes based on their skills and interests, and many classes include students from varying grade levels. Faculty members love that they can teach their

passions and have the freedom to adjust the curriculum to students' interests and needs. Students recognize and appreciate the passion faculty bring to their subjects.

School One ... is a pioneer in rethinking high school graduation to emphasize student mastery and demonstration of knowledge and skills. At School One we begin with the knowledge, independence and abilities we know students will need to be successful in college, at work and as positive members of their community. Every student has opportunities to develop their voice, uncover their passions and increase their responsibility for their own growth.

While students have credit requirements in specific subjects and community service expectations, there are some unique graduation requirements as well. Students need to pass competency exams in Humanities and Mathematics, a task they can begin to tackle in their first year. These exams are designed to ensure that all graduates have mastered basic English and math skills that every person needs after high school. All seniors need to write a senior or college admissions essay, a process that begins in the junior year, and they must present a successful exhibition before the Graduation Board of Review (GBR) that synthesizes growth and achievement during high school and explains post-graduation plans. An exhibition is a culminating presentation requiring students to reflect on their learning and present their best work in a portfolio. Before the GBR, a board of teachers, peers and parents, students present:

- their growth, personally and intellectually.
- evidence of their community involvement, creative expression, and extra curricular activities.
- key accomplishments and achievements.
- an overview of their plans and goals for the future.

A boasting point for School One is its "humane day." Students do not need to arrive until 8:50, the lunch break is 45 minutes, allowing students to go off campus, and after school activities are available but not required. Classes are over each day by 3:00. Students are welcome to stay after the class day ends to get extra help, do their homework, enjoy a club, and spend time in an art studio. While School One does not have sports teams, through Rhode Island policies, students can participate on their home high schools' teams.

In 2016, School One started a Literary Center to serve both its students and individuals outside of School One. An Intergenerational Program for which the school has received several grants and community recognition is a highlight. This unique program places School One at the forefront of the Creative Aging field, bringing together adults and School One students to create art, stories, and foster shared understanding. Since its launch, a variety of classes such as storytelling, painting, art making, performance and discussion have been offered. The Center's *Write Rhode Island* programming is geared toward young writers in Grades 7-12. A flagship creative writing contest, after-school classes, and an intensive summer program, offer students the opportunity to find their voice and explore their creativity, while strengthening their writing skills. Along with providing unique opportunities for School One students, other youth, and adults in the community, the LitCenter was started with the goals of raising the school's profile, developing external relationships for the school, and supporting enrollment efforts by furthering the school's visibility.

Governance, Associations, Budget

The Board of Directors currently numbers twenty-one. It is a diverse group of individuals that includes alumni, parents of graduates, a current student, a current parent, and community members with backgrounds in education, the arts, law, and business, offering diverse expertise and perspectives. The Board understands well how to partner with and support a head of school; it is cohesive, well functioning, and operates with a strong understanding of appropriate governance.

School One was initially accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) in 1993 and has been successfully reaccredited in the years hence. It is a member of the Association of Independent Schools of New England (AISNE) and the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

The school's annual budget is approximately \$1.7M. It has a \$3M endowment and no debt. Generous philanthropy and grants enable School One to offer 80% of the student body some type of financial assistance. There are continuing efforts underway to increase the endowment and the financial assistance budget. School One's value of inclusiveness is supported by generous financial aid and lower tuition relative to other independent schools in order to reach students from a broad socioeconomic range.

Opportunities

School One has been very well led for fourteen years by current Head of School Jennifer Borman who is departing to take on the headship at her alma mater. Assistant Head Cary Honig has served the school for over 30 years and is responsible for the oversight of the academic program (and has no interest in being Head!). Under Ms. Borman's leadership, the school made great strides in many arenas, including greatly strengthening its financial footing. This current school year, with Covid protection related expenses and tuition income down, for the first time in over a decade, the school is operating at a small deficit. The school fortunately has the fiscal ability to manage this with reserve funds as it moves forward towards stronger, more typical enrollment; this cushion enables a couple of years of runway to recover. The new head of school will have the opportunity to get to know the school community and work with the Board and other stakeholders on a strategic plan to chart a forward thinking path underscored by the goal of long-term financial sustainability.

Strengthening enrollment with mission appropriate students is School One's most significant need, and it is fair to note that school leadership has been working hard on this for a number of years. It is a challenge for an intentionally small school to achieve its enrollment goals as a "hidden gem." School One's new Director of Enrollment Michaela O'Donnell is an alumna and a highly experienced Providence independent school admissions professional, so her expertise and energy is a great addition. The new Head of School will need to add their energy and efforts to admissions initiatives, finding ways to serve the school as a compelling ambassador in the greater Providence community. Additionally, it may be helpful for School One to further consider the optimal make up of the overall student body so recruitment efforts can be targeted—How many international students? How many students who need special education support? How many students who are primarily interested in the arts?

Along with rebuilding enrollment, School One's post Covid recovery will require efforts to re-energize the community, ensuring that its signature welcoming-to-all feel is fully present. Once a week, the whole school community gathers for Community Meeting, a gathering that has moved to a virtual one

this year. Some students voiced interest in re-considering the Community Meeting format and routine, which may offer a new leader an opportunity for collaborating with students to consider how this venue can further engender community.

As the school's enrollment, and therefore budget, strengthens, a key strategic initiative a new Head can lead in conjunction with the Board of Directors is continued consideration of faculty and staff compensation and benefits. The school is slimly staffed. A number of faculty are impressive utility players who can teach a range of subjects, and the significant advisor duties they are responsible for replaces some of the student support roles one might see at other schools. School One faculty clearly love the school—the culture, relationship with students and colleagues, the variety of classes they get to teach, and the curricular freedom. Teaching through the pandemic has added additional stresses. A new Head will have the opportunities to build strong relationships with faculty and staff and work with the Board to ensure faculty and staff are well supported and fairly compensated.

School One balances innovation and well-honed approaches throughout its program. It will be essential for the next head of school to observe, listen, and learn, and lead from a position of sensitivity to established practices. The school community will appreciate the thoughtful, strategic leadership of a head of school who will take time to learn and understand the school's educational philosophy and its program fully.

School One is a community that authentically values difference and individuality and continually strives to more fully represent the diversity of the greater community. Many stakeholders are eager to see School One make positive strides in achieving more racial and ethnic diversity, particularly within the faculty and staff ranks, and to see it continue to make strides ensuring that the community is authentically inclusive and an equitable, just community. A leader who personally values the beauty of a diverse, inclusive community and understands how to engage a community in diversity, equity, and inclusion conversations and initiatives will find willing partners within the school community.

Leadership Needs

School One seeks a leader who will fully embrace its mission and its culture. School One's next head of school will be an individual who is most enthusiastic and prepared to be its chief ambassador, equipped with the skills to ensure School One is not a "hidden gem," building relationships and alliances throughout the greater Providence area to expand the school's profile, attracting students, families, and supporters to secure the school's financial sustainability for the far future. School One's next head of school will be a professional who:

- Is authentically appreciative of collaboration, highly valuing others' voices and input, possessing the ability to lead consensus driven conversations to thoughtful conclusions, and with an ability to, at times, set aside one's own opinion in response to other people's
- Truly respects adolescents, and who is attracted to a culture that lives its commitment to the student voice and to embracing individuality and diversity. Additionally, possesses an empathetic demeanor and a depth of knowledge of the increasing stresses, anxieties, and mental health challenges experienced by today's high school students
- Has a successful track record envisioning new initiatives, garnering community and financial support for, and implementing strategic approaches that move an organization forward
- Is a genuine relationship builder and a successful fundraiser

- Possesses adept financial acumen, with the ability to ground initiatives and decisions in budget realities
- Demonstrates superb communication and interpersonal skills that will enable connections with, inspiration of, and engagement with the community
- Welcomes and supports family engagement and possesses the ability to connect with a diverse group of individuals
- Has the ability to lead conversations and implement initiatives to support a diverse, equitable and inclusive school community, and
- Possesses unwavering integrity, optimism and a good sense of humor.

Heading a small school requires a leader who revels in and effectively balances the myriad of tasks and responsibilities that are intrinsic to the position. The ideal next head of school will be an individual who is both highly strategic and detail oriented, embracing the variety of tasks and opportunities small school leadership requires. They will serve as an effective, creative, and thoughtful leader for this unique school in the competitive and changing landscape of independent schools, possessing the strong interpersonal skills and a track record that prepares them well for this great opportunity.

For Consideration

Please send electronically: Resume, Letter of Interest and Educational Philosophy or Personal Statement to:

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All inquiries will be treated confidentially and review of candidate files will begin immediately.