

Bio for Jennifer Borman
Candidate for Head of School at Commonwealth School

Jennifer Borman has been the Head of School at School One in Providence, Rhode Island, since 2007. School One is a small (100 students), progressive, grades 9-12 school with a mission that includes a focus on creativity, a collaborative culture, and an appreciation of difference. A diverse community where 65% of the students receive financial aid and 30% have a diagnosed learning difference, School One students pursue, “meaningful questions through interdisciplinary coursework and sophisticated arts instruction.” Jennifer’s achievements at School One include significant increases in the endowment and cash reserves; creative and dramatic enhancements to the acquisition of funding for financial aid; extensive improvement, renovation and expansion of physical facilities; creation and inception of an international student program; conceptualization and implementation of an intergenerational learning program where older adults and students take classes together; creation of School One’s Center of the Literary Arts, offering evening classes in creative writing to adults and teens and sponsoring statewide short-story contests and literary readings; sophisticated improvements to data collection and analysis systems to track school performance in a range of areas; and leadership to provide schoolwide professional development for moving neuroscience findings into curriculum design (“brain-targeted teaching”).

Jennifer began her career in education as a teacher of literature, composition, creative writing and basic academic skills courses at School One. Following that experience, Jennifer dedicated a couple of years as a community educator for Planned Parenthood, conducting health and sexuality education in schools, colleges and community agencies. She then left teaching to pursue an advanced degree. Subsequent to her studies, she moved to Brown University to work at The Education Alliance, a reform support organization committed to advancing equitable education opportunities that prepare all students to succeed in the 21st century. There, she evaluated educational innovations focused on adolescent literacy, teacher development, technology and school improvement. “I loved my job at the Education Alliance,” Jennifer says, “but I saw how often good ideas in education failed in practice because of bureaucracy and lack of support.”

A proud graduate of Commonwealth School, as well as Brown University where she received her B.A. in English, Jennifer has completed extensive studies in the doctoral program for Teacher Education and Education Policy at the College of Education at Michigan State University. She has been a recipient of a Fulbright Hays Fellowship to live and study in China, as well as a Klingenstein Fellowship for independent school heads at Teachers College, Columbia University. She has recently served as a grant reviewer for the Women’s Fund of Rhode Island. Jennifer writes, “As a professional, the feedback I hear most often is that I’m kind, smart and articulate. I would prefer more elaborate words – maybe humane and analytic, respectful and strategic – but I do think the terms define key dimensions of successful school leadership. It is a profoundly human enterprise that requires keen psychological insight, empathy, attentive listening, and emotional fortitude. It requires an active intellect – both to reflect the school’s core educational mission and to use it to steer a complex organization.”