

HEAD OF SCHOOL SEARCH

GORDON SCHOOL

East Providence, Rhode Island

gordonschool.org

Start Date: July 2025



**Carney
Sandoe**
& ASSOCIATES

CARNEYSANDOE.COM

Mission Statement

The Gordon School is a racially diverse, nursery through eighth grade, all-gender independent school in East Providence, Rhode Island. Child by child, the Gordon School community cultivates successful students by inspiring joyful learning, encouraging intellectual leadership, fostering an empathic spirit, and stimulating a drive for positive societal impact.

At a Glance



Established
1910



Total enrollment
344



Total full-time faculty
50



Student-teacher ratio
6.9:1



Students of color
43%



Faculty with advanced degrees
50%



Campus size
12 acres

Faculty of color: 32%
Endowment: \$12M

Annual operating budget: \$9.5M

Learn More

Click on the links below to learn more about Gordon School.

[School Website](#)

[Guiding Principles](#)

[Strategic Vision](#)

[Social Justice](#)

[Sustainability at Gordon](#)

[High School Placement](#)

[About East Providence, Rhode Island](#)



Overview

Founded in 1910 by Dr. Helen West Cooke, a Providence pediatrician, Gordon School is committed to the mission, lived out every day, with each child, of cultivating successful students by inspiring joyful learning, encouraging intellectual leadership, fostering an empathic spirit and stimulating a drive for positive societal impact. Dr. Cooke believed that the education of a child requires the development of mind, body, heart, and spirit.

Enrolling 364 students grades N-8, Gordon School remains true to its progressive roots, seeking to instill what Dr. Cooke termed “the true spirit of joyous work” into each day of school. Faculty implement a challenging multicultural curriculum to fuel each child’s innate curiosity and idealistic spirit and prepare them to enter an increasingly complex and diverse world with skillful awareness, unwavering hope, and the capacity to advocate confidently for justice. Students come from twenty-nine different cities and towns in Rhode Island and Massachusetts to the intentionally designed 12-acre campus where the student to faculty/staff ratio is 6:1. Gordon’s equity and inclusion programs support the mission of the school, by ensuring that every student and family feels an authentic sense of belonging and full membership in the community.

Dr. Noni Thomas López has led Gordon School since 2018 and will return to her native New York City in July 2025 as Head of Poly Prep Country Day School in Brooklyn. Under her leadership the school introduced and successfully implemented a bold [tuition system](#) which has become a national model for promoting equity and accessibility. Gordon School created a strategic vision for a more just and sustainable world, and then began making good on its declared commitments, including designing a new school-wide schedule, expanding creative arts and Spanish to Early Childhood, strengthening student learning and wellness support, and elevating environmental sustainability as a core value of the school alongside diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. The school has a deeply established commitment to giving students a rich academic foundation along with a deep sense of connection in a racially and economically diverse community. Gordon’s position is as a national leader in being a place that understands and lives what it means to be inclusive and equitable. The school aspires to graduate courageous learners, unafraid to take risks in pursuit of knowledge and understanding, and who can grow into compassionate leaders.



The next head of school will have an opportunity to continue to develop the school's strategic vision of growing and sustaining the school's resources, educating modern learners for a modern world, celebrating the Gordon story and ethos, and cultivating a family centered community. The Gordon approach to teaching revolves around a curriculum and pedagogy that honors the questions and experiences of students, stimulating their curiosity and driving their learning. In the progressive tradition, children and their voices are placed at the center of their learning. It is a school that does what it says it is doing, and one sees that reflected in its choices, curriculum, and concern for each child and family.

Teachers at Gordon School come and remain in part because of the intellectual humility, curiosity, and growth mindset of their colleagues and for the support, collegiality, and cross-curricular connections they are able to establish. Faculty appreciate that the school is constantly evolving and meeting the needs of the community while being true to its roots. Gordon students "get to be kids longer and leaders sooner." The N-8 model places the focus on supporting the particular challenges of middle school early adolescents to come into themselves in the context of being "on top," the eldest in the school, and inspiring models to younger students.

Parents praise the school's social-emotional teaching that extends outside the classroom where students learn to become both good community members and good members of society. This dimension of teaching inevitably results in older students being able to discuss complex ideas and have difficult conversations with mutual respect and comportsment. They recognize early that a school education can be greatly impactful when it reflects the challenges and beauty of the "real world". This learning requires careful listening to one another, a growth mindset that encourages stretching, disagreeing, and sometimes shifting one's original thought to accommodate new information. Even some of the youngest students display this proclivity to listen before deciding, connecting while struggling and finding joy amidst the process. It's impressive. Prospective parents who first experienced Gordon and felt how mission-aligned it was, discovered later when their children enrolled, that there is indeed intentionality around everything it does.



Location

Providence, Rhode Island, is the capital and most populous city of America's "Ocean State." Located within less than an hour's drive of Boston and three and a half hours of New York City, it is the second largest urban center in New England, with proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, Cape Cod, and mountains of northern New England. A small and easily navigated city, Providence celebrates its rich history of art, industry, culture, and education. It is home to seven institutions of higher learning, including Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and eight hospitals. World-class chefs trained at the local Johnson and Wales University make Providence home to a great food scene, sure to please the most adventurous and refined palates. It's artsy, funky, not particularly corporate, has an active non-profit youth organization and arts organizations. It has the added benefits of being surrounded by the natural beauty of ocean, rivers, "mountains" and forests. Its playful use of nature includes the city's 1,200-acre park system and the Waterplace Park Amphitheatre with summer [Waterfire](#) events and river walks along the banks of the city's two main rivers. It is a city that feels small but offers a great deal.

Opportunities and Challenges

The next Head of School will have the opportunity to work with an experienced and cohesive leadership team and a board invested in partnering with the head to ensure vibrancy in Gordon's present and longevity for the future of this "perfectly sized" school. Opportunities and challenges requiring leadership by the next head include:

- Sustain the traditionally strong academic and co-curricular programs while guiding the creation of other signature curriculum features that inspire prospective and current students;
- Navigate maintaining robust enrollment in the midst of competitive market and local transportation challenges;
- Deepen STEAM programming, connecting it to progressive pedagogy;



- Further nurture strong relationships with alumni/ae;
- Examine and provide support to meet the learning needs of the diverse student population;
- Engage in the school's advancement efforts in fund-raising, admissions, and communication;
- Balance the value of the openness with the clarity of systems and structure;
- Articulate and emphasize the value proposition and strengthen the quality of the school's differentiators for internal and external audiences; and
- Continue to tend to the support and wellbeing of faculty and staff.

Qualifications and Personal Attributes

Gordon School is seeking in its next Head of School an innovative, experienced, and inspiring educational leader who is eager to make a long-term commitment to the position. S/he/they will deeply value the progressive lens which centers the power and importance of the potential of young people as well as an authentic understanding of the ways in which diversity, equity and inclusion are fundamentally connected to academic excellence and powerful personal learning. In addition, the next Head of School will offer most of the following qualifications and qualities:

- Attention to current educational research and ability to combine that understanding with an appreciation for Gordon's mission, values, and history;
- Commitment to supporting faculty and staff in their professional growth and health to be the best models, teachers and caretakers of their students;
- Eagerness to engage actively with students and adults and willingness to prioritize visibility amidst the demands of densely scheduled days;
- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to communicate with inspiration and clarity to diverse audiences;

- A collaborative leadership style built on approachability, responsiveness, and transparency which affirms and leverages diverse skillsets to improve the overall strength of the school program;
- The ability to articulate vision and strategy and the tactical skills necessary to deftly manage the systems and processes necessary to implement strategy;
- Classroom teaching experience and a track record of supporting and developing teaching faculty;
- Personal and professional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion work and the requisite skills to support critical conversations in the design of ever more inclusive culture, curriculum, and programs;
- Experience recruiting, hiring, supporting, retaining, and leading talented, diverse, and mission-aligned faculty and staff;
- Understanding of what effective fundraising/development/advancement functions look like in a school and the ability to effectively be the lead storyteller and gift cultivator of the school;
- The confidence and humility to advocate for new ideas, invite disagreement, manage difficult conversations, make challenging decisions and to welcome feedback;
- Ability to navigate complexity and ambiguity; and
- An appreciation for the humility and vulnerability embedded in humor and laughter, as well as the ways it can deepen community and shared experiences.

To Apply

Interested and qualified candidates are invited to contact the consultants in confidence. Candidates will ultimately need to submit the following materials as **separate PDF** documents:

- A letter of interest expressing alignment with this particular position;
- A current and thorough résumé of no more than four pages which tells a story of the impact and outcomes of your work;

As the process moves forward, selected candidates may be asked to submit:

- Responses to small set of writing prompts
- A list of five professional references with name, relationship, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

Heather Flewelling

Consultant, Chief Talent Officer

heather.flewelling@carneysandoe.com

Ben Bolté

Senior Consultant

bbolte@carneysandoe.com