Teacher Advisory Council 2017–2018

2017–2019

Kristen Brayson was a Portland Public Schools dance educator for 22 years and currently oversees arts education as the Arts TOSA (Teacher On Special Assignment) for the district. In her current role, she provides curricular and professional development as well as support services for 78 schools and 200 teachers who deliver music, theatre, dance, and visual arts programs. In addition, Kristen works closely with the Regional Arts & Culture Council to strengthen K–12 arts education for the Portland region and helps facilitate the implementation of arts integration teaching and learning through RACC’s Right Brain Initiative. The last three years, Kristen has partnered with key arts organization on strengthening and aligning programming to district-wide educational goals that focus on closing the opportunity gap for key populations. As a fervent equity-focused educator, Kristen believes arts education provides unique tools to unlock a student’s personal voice, physical expression, and abstract critical and creative thinking—all crucial cornerstones to healthy human development.

Ilse Bruer is an Oregon native who began her teaching career in the Boston Public Schools 11 years ago. For the first five years of her teaching career, she taught Language Arts at the Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers, which was conveniently a neighbor to Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts and Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. Both of these institutions afforded Ilse and her students the opportunity to pair art with their study of language and literature. Visits to these museums and exposure to various forms of art were instrumental in shaping Ilse’s firm belief that education far exceeds the confines of traditional classrooms and materials. In 2009 Ilse helped expand the nonprofit organization Global Potential in Boston, providing students with leadership, social entrepreneurship, community service, and international travel experience. Since moving back to Portland in 2011, Ilse spent two years at Vestal K-8, where she saw firsthand how the Right Brain Initiative inspired, engaged and motivated students. Since 2013 Ilse has been working at Benson High School, where she sees students employing creativity in a myriad of ways each day through CTE programs. She sees her role as a member of the advisory council as an important opportunity to expose students to ideas and creativity in new ways. As an avid reader, runner of marathons, amateur gardener, doting aunt, lover of road trips, and perpetual student, Ilse’s days are busy and there is never a dull moment. Each experience, in or out of the classroom, is a welcome and valued opportunity to grow and to learn.

Greg Hellman, a native of Massachusetts, has lived in Portland since 1988, and is in his 27th year as a Secondary Language Arts Teacher, the past 20 of which he has spent teaching literature, composition, humanities, and media literacy at Oregon City High School. He has traveled and lived abroad extensively, including teaching in Izmir, Turkey, Caracas, Venezuela, and Hyderabad, India. He has been engaged in a lifelong student’s obsession with culture, language, and human behavior, and is the type of person who loves to imagine the lives of those who have gone before. He loves to hang out with his spouse and twin children, and his dog and cat. He can often be found gardening, listening to live music, playing guitar, contemplating literature and historical objects, and enjoying the outdoors. Art is the source of all human creativity, so he also really enjoys learning from artists.

Dori King is beginning her 16th year in education. She has been a classroom teacher, literacy coach, dean of students, and an assistant principal. Her current position is the Director of Inclusion and Community Engagement at Oregon Episcopal School. She has a bachelor of science in Business Administration and a master of arts in educational leadership from the University of California at Berkeley. She is passionate
about visual and performing arts. “The arts are a language that we use to communicate our thoughts, passions, beliefs, and questions. They unify communities.” In her many travels, you will often find Dori seeking out the arts to engage in communities she visits. She would like more students to experience the impact of the arts and in particular the art museum. She is thrilled be a part of the advisory council!

Emiko Konomi is an assistant professor of Japanese in the School of Business at Portland State University. She received a PhD in Linguistics from Cornell University and has been a member of the PSU faculty since 2010. Prior to joining the School of Business, Emiko taught Japanese in the Department of World Languages and Literatures. She currently teaches in the Masters of International Management (MIM). She has extensive experience training Japanese language instructors at various teacher-training programs across the country. Known for her passionate teaching style and dedication to quality teaching, Emiko received the 2011 and 2015 John Eliot Allen Outstanding Teaching Award from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Her academic research focuses on Japanese linguistics and pedagogy. She has authored several Japanese textbooks and flash card sets, and is currently developing a series of textbooks for professionals. Emiko has trained in various Japanese martial arts and is also a certified yoga instructor.

A California bay-area native, Jeff Leake holds a BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and an MFA from UC Davis. He currently teaches in the University Studies department at Portland State University where he also works with a neuroscientist to teach art and neuroscience there and around the Portland area. He is the cofounder and art coordinator of NW Noggin an art and neuroscience outreach group that teaches primarily in K–12 schools in Portland and beyond. As part of this organization he has been all over the country, lecturing and teaching neuroscience through art including several lectures on art and drugs for Science On Tap, the Portland Art Museum, and the Washington State Psychological Association. Along the way he has shown his art nationally and internationally, he now lives and works in sunny Portland, Oregon with his wife, kids, and three dogs.

Mary Levy is currently entering her 11th year as a French teacher at Lake Oswego High School. She received her BA in French and English from Santa Clara University and her MA in French language and literature from Portland State University. Mary has spent many years studying in and traveling through France. In the process she explored many art museums. She is passionate about all things French and equally passionate about bringing art into her curriculum. In her free time, she likes to cook, do Pilates and spend time with her family. She is excited about the opportunity to learn from so many accomplished colleagues.

Dawn Nelson has been a high school Language Arts teacher for the past 17 years. For the past five years she has worked at Forest Grove High School teaching 9th and 10th grade English, AP Language and Composition, and a new class called “Exploring Culture and Identity.” She is the adviser for the Students for Equity club and Journalism and is a member of the district equity system support team and her school equity team which provides professional development for staff. In her free time she loves to read, hike, kayak, cook, travel, and support the Timbers and the Thorns. She is excited to be a part of the discussion about how to make art a larger part of students’ learning experiences.

Tara Nunimaker is the visual arts educator at Academy of International Studies at Woodburn, a diverse high school representing various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. She previously taught pre-K through 8th grade visual arts in Flagstaff and Phoenix, Arizona. Since her arrival in Portland, she’s brought over 200 high school art students to PAM, guiding her students’ observations and engagement—with the help of the amazing docents—through not only the aesthetic and emotive qualities of each piece, but also their social, political, environmental, and historical contexts. She’s developed technology-integrated, ESOL-sensitive, and standards based K-12 visual arts curriculum within the Discipline-Based Art Education framework.
(DBAE), centering art as an academic content area through the study of art technique and production, art aesthetics, art history, and art criticism. Tara received her B.S. Ed in Art Education from Northern Arizona University, graduating with honors while serving various roles within the NAU student chapter of the National Art Education Association, presenting at state conferences, and publishing both her written and artistic works in local and national publications. Currently she attends board meetings for the Oregon Art Education Association, is a member of the executive board of the Woodburn Education Association, and pursuing a Master’s of Education in Information Technology.

Emily Squires is an artist and educator, currently serving as the Education & Engagement Specialist at the Sexual & Gender Minority Resource Center (SMYRC) in Portland. Squires is dedicated to supporting young people as they learn to lead and work to change our world. Alongside her experience in community organizing and education, Squires is also trained as a printmaker and uses art-making as an organizing tool. Her multidisciplinary and collaborative art practice investigates themes such as voice, participation, belonging, and love. Squires received her MFA at Washington University in St. Louis and a BFA in Printmaking and a BA in Education from the University of Michigan.

Charles Sanderson proudly teaches at Wellness, Business and Sports School in Woodburn, Oregon. Entering his 18th year in the classroom, Charles strives to create a student-centered experience that he describes as “Mirror, Window and Bridge,” a place where students see themselves, the lives of others, and a clear vision of how to build bridges of empathy, understanding and affinity with those who may seem vastly different. Charles is a two-time participant in the Smithsonian American Art Museum Teacher Institute, a certified Writing Coach with the Oregon Writing Project, and a founding member of Slamboo, a rural, urban and suburban Slam poetry collaboration. His current passion is building not only his students’ skill sets but also their academic, intellectual and scholarly self-esteem.

Conrad Schumacher is a knowledge wrangler and a grub rustler. Conrad Schumacher is an academy art, language arts and culinary arts teacher at Centennial Park School. He is also an adjunct professor in University Studies at Portland State University. Previously, Conrad was a founding teacher and art and language arts teacher at Riverdale High School. He holds a degrees from Lewis and Clark and Horst Mager Culinary Institute (now Cordon Bleu). His wife, two sons, one daughter and home life is what gives Conrad the stability to be a teacher.

Abigail Steichen is beginning her ninth year teaching an intermediate classroom in the Corbett School District. She has been teaching at the arts-infusion public school Corbett Arts Program with Spanish (CAPS) at Springdale School since its opening in 2012. As a teacher, Abigail strives to integrate the arts into all content areas, support students in developing critical thinking skills by presenting varied perspectives and information, and encourage students to have adventures in learning inside and outside of the classroom. When not teaching, Abigail enjoys hiking, traveling, reading, and learning about the experiences of others.

Lilly Windle has been teaching in Portland since 1995 and International Baccalaureate (IB) Visual Art and Research since 2003 at Lincoln High School in Portland OR. Teaching the IB curriculum she is most inspired by the reflective, and curious art making students who are actively independent explorers of perspectives outside of their own culture. She enjoys helping them make a future plan that suits their skills and personal vision with global understanding and respect. Lilly is currently exploring a Masters in Career and Technical Education degree that she hopes will infuse more validation into Visual Art classes in this city and State. She embarks on as many adventures as she can with her family at the coast, on the mountain, exploring art at the museum or the walls of the city.
2016–2018

Laresa Beck is a Colorado native who loves to bake, travel, do crafts, and go camping with her family when she isn’t busy teaching. For the past five years Laresa has taught middle school Language Arts and Social Studies, working to incorporate arts integration strategies into her daily practice as an educator and looks forward to bringing this sensibility to her work on the Teacher Advisory Council. In partnership with The Right Brain Initiative, she has collaborated with local teaching artists on rigorous classroom projects. Laresa has presented the work she and her students’ have created through these partnerships at the Kennedy Center Annual Arts Integration Conference in Washington DC for the past two years. This year, Laresa is excited to embark on a new role as School Climate Coach at Beach Elementary School in North Portland, and to begin the most exciting role of new mom. She is thrilled to be joining the Teachers’ Advisory Council and can’t wait to work with colleagues to grow the Art Museum’s impact on all Portland area students.

Marcie Brewer is currently entering her 13th year as a middle school Humanities and Drama teacher at Portland Jewish Academy, but has worked with students at every level, from lower elementary to post-graduate. Marcie holds Masters degrees in both English, and Post-secondary, Adult, and Continuing Education. While pursuing her graduate studies, she served as a fellow at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon, and the Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in London. This amazing experience inspired her to recommit to the integration of the arts into her interdisciplinary classroom. This manifests as using visual arts, theater, film, and music as not just mentor text or writing prompt, but also incorporating the artistic process as a pathway to deeper learning. When she is not reading, writing, teaching, or directing, she is either ghosthunting all around Oregon, or enjoying Shakespeare in the Park with her family.

Carrie Brown has lived in Portland, OR since 2000 and happily calls the Pacific Northwest her home. Carrie values the Arts and has a BFA from the University of North Texas. Carrie values expression in many forms: storytelling, dancing, theater, music and visual arts. As result, the arts play a significant role in her teaching. Carrie has both Montessori Primary certification and a MAT (PreK-8th grade Multiple Subjects) from Concordia University. She is currently teaching at Faubion School with PPS Indian Education at Native Montessori Preschool and is passionate about supporting positive cultural identity and giving children the opportunity to express oneself in a safe environment.

Matt Chalmers teaches language arts to 7th and 8th graders at Alder Creek Middle School, in the North Clackamas School District. He has been with the district since 1998. Prior to public school education, he worked as an outdoor instructor with Pacific Crest Outward Bound School out of Mazama, Washington (known as the Alps of America), instructing, teaching, and guiding students ranging from high school age through adults. Matt’s relationship with the Portland Art Museum began with his involvement with Object Stories several years ago, and he has been committed to bringing his students (and most recently, his staff) to the art museum each year since. Matt has also led creative writing workshops for middle and high school students at the annual Oregon Writing Festival, held at Portland State University each May. Fun fact: once, when benighted with two friends on a longer-than-expected climb of Eldorado Peak, he used a small piece of Swiss cheese for a pillow as the three of them shivered and anxiously waited for sunrise. His passions outside of teaching are rock climbing, backcountry skiing, cycling and running, writing poetry, and fostering an ongoing sense of adventure and wonder with his seven-year-old son Caleb.

Andrea Chunga-Celis is a native of Lima, Peru, who immigrated to Portland, and is currently a Grants Coordinator in the Chicas Youth Development Program at Adelante Mujeres in Forest Grove, Oregon, a nonprofit that provides holistic education and empowerment opportunities to low-income Latina women and their families. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Human Rights and Hispanic Studies from Trinity College in Hartford, CT. In addition, she earned a master’s degree in International Studies from the University of
Connecticut. Through her experience in working for international and local nongovernmental organizations, she solidified her passion for youth development through social and emotional engagement. Her passion for liberal arts education motivates her to continue to strive for an education system that promotes an individual’s expression of freedom. Throughout the academic year, she serves over 90 students in Washington County in after-school sessions in order to support their empowerment of their social and cultural identity to build leadership within the community.

Mariam K Higgins has taught fourth and fifth grades at the Catlin Gabel School the past decade. As adjunct faculty at Lewis and Clark Graduate School of Education and Counseling, she also instructs pre-service graduate students in how to integrate the Arts into teaching. She has mentored student interns from University of Portland and Lewis and Clark for over ten years. In her previous career as a medical illustrator, she created and published artwork for clients including, OHSU, OMSI, Elsevier, and Little, Brown. This background, combined with her passion for working with students, has enabled her to create and hone arts and science integrated curricula. She feels that art education and the making process uniquely develops a student’s ability to observe deeply, think critically as well as abstractly, take risks, develop resilience, collaborate, and creatively problem-solve. And that art, especially, opens minds to experiencing and valuing different cultures, and perspectives. She enjoys expressing herself through design, drawing, and painting.

Andy Kulak is an 18-year veteran Language Arts teacher-leader. He has worked the past 16 years at Jefferson High School in Portland where he incorporates his work as an Oregon Writing Project coach, a CFG coach/facilitator, and Equity Team teacher-researcher. Andy earned an M.Ed from Lewis & Clark College. He also teaches courses at Lewis & Clark Graduate School of Education and Counseling in Portland, Oregon. Having partnered with many institutions in Portland, he is excited to create more opportunities for students to access the art and archives housed in the Portland Art Museum.

Nicole Penoncello is a mixed-media artist and educator, who loves to hike, camp, bike, and find any other excuse to be outdoors when she isn’t teaching or creating. She will be taking on a new position this school year, as the Visual Art Teacher at Buckman Elementary School in Portland Public School District. She is passionate about creating integrated place-based education experiences for young learners. Previously she worked as the STEAM Art Instructional Specialist at Boise-Eliot/Humboldt School, as the Art Teacher at Jason Lee K-8, as a Teaching Artist for The Right Brain Initiative, and as an Adjunct Professor of Art at Portland State University. She holds a BFA in Sculpture from James Madison University, and an MFA in Contemporary Art Practice from Portland State University.

Clay Muwin River is a Passamaquoddy and Mi’kmaq poet, performer, activist and educator as well as an advocate for youth of color. Clay holds a Master of Arts in Indigenous Education and is looking forward to obtaining a PhD in Education Policy and Social Change. Clay has published poetry and artwork in Red Medicine Review and Queering Sexual Violence as well as self-published works. Clay works at the NAYA Family Center as a Cultural Arts and Education advocate where they provide outlets for youth to explore their identity through art and poetry. Clay’s intent is to guide youth in decolonizing their education, unraveling oppression, and reconstructing their identity through culturally relevant arts. While working in Clay’s Sacred Poetry Group, Native youth have rediscovered oral traditions, storytelling and reclaimed poetry as medicine. Clay started doing culturally specific art and education halfway through their undergraduate work when they realized educational institutions still erase us. Clay continues the work they do in hopes of establishing a sense of place and building community around art and healing, tearing down systemic oppression, and empowering youth to see themselves as the artists, leaders, survivors, and warriors they already are.
Jeanne Sheets-Sagoo teaches dual credit English and serves as a teacher coach at the Center for Advanced Learning in Gresham, Oregon. Prior to this, she has taught at both Sam Barlow High School and Mt. Hood Community College. She holds both a B.A. and M.A. in English from Portland State University. Her life-long passion in teaching has been to build engagement in her students through field-based and experiential learning. She has enjoyed teaching adult workshops and classes about field study through the Heritage Institute. She uses the classroom as a place to explore the world, using all of the arts to help her students develop critical thinking. She has spent 25 years bringing students out into the community and the community into her classroom in order to create connection and engagement. She is a strong advocate for art’s ability to express ideas and raise questions about social justice that can enrich student’s learning and lead them to express themselves.

Ben Taylor is the Social Studies teacher at the Native American Youth and Family Center’s Early College Academy. Before moving to Portland in 2014, he taught and coached soccer at a small alternative school in Connecticut for three years. Ben graduated from Colorado College with a degree in History and African Studies, studying abroad in South Africa and writing his thesis on Steve Biko and the South African Student Organisation. He has an M.A.T. from the University of San Francisco, where he focused his field project on increasing student engagement in personal finance education. He loves teaching at NAYA because it is a school that values community and cultural identity, and he incorporates art and music into his classes to give students opportunities to make the content and skills meaningful to them. Ben’s main interests outside of the classroom are spending time outdoors fly fishing, biking, and skiing.

Past Members

2016–2017
Cornel Pewewardy, Portland State University, Indigenous Nations
Rina Shriki, Grant High School

2015–2017
Loren Chasse, Rigler Elementary
Breck Foster, Lake Oswego High School
Michela Grohn, Creative Science School
Annie Knepler, Portland State University, University Studies
Veronica Ledoux, Catlin Gabel High School
Sue Pritzker, Childpeace Montessori School
Caitlin Scott, Education Northwest
Alissa (Penna) Tran, Molalla High School
Lynn Yarne, Grant High School

2015–2016
Hanne Gradinger Duncan, Laurelhurst School
Jennifer Shelton, South Meadows Middle School
Peter Towson, Jefferson High School

2014–2016
Brett Bingham, Multnomah Educational Service District
Wren Christopher, Scappoose and St. Helens school districts
Carolyn Hazel Drake, Centennial High School

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Lisa Jarrett, Portland State University School of Art + Design
Melanie Morris, West Sylvan Middle School
Wendy Thompson, University of Portland
Pamela Wilson, Capitol Hill Elementary
Michelle York, George Middle School
Christopher Zinn, Portland Waldorf High School

2013–2015
Susie Bartley, Franklin High School
Matt Chalmers, Alder Creek Middle School
Katie Gillard, Cedar Park Middle School
John Holloran, Oregon Episcopal School
Julie Jansen, International School
Laurie LePore, Riverdale HS
Lynn Malzahn, Ainsworth Elementary School
Randy Maves, Madison High School
Kathy Mitchell, St. Mary’s Academy
Swapna Mukhopadhyay, Portland State University
Sarah Wolf Newlands, Portland State University
Donald Rose, Beaumont Middle School
June Satak, West Albany High School
George Zaninovich, Catlin Gabel School