

Personnel Update, August 2010

Some of these folks were “introduced” in my letter in the Start-of-School section of Poly’s website. I’ve provided more detail about their backgrounds below, and I’ve included two additional new staff members since that letter was posted.

I am pleased to announce that we have hired Dan Wood as the science teacher for the Lower School. Dan has worked as a principal and superintendent in California and Oregon, but he started his career as a science specialist in San Francisco working with children in Kindergarten through Grade Nine. While on his path to leadership roles, he established a consistent record of supporting curriculum development in all areas, with remarkable success in science in particular. He and his wife Wendy moved to the Big Apple recently to fulfill a dream of theirs; they are both thrilled to be taking advantage of all this city has to offer. Dan has a B.A. in Biology from Fresno State University and an M.A. in Education from the University of San Francisco. One interesting story: after teaching his lesson to a group of “volunteer” students this summer, the mom of one of the students sent the following message. “[My son] came home very excited after the science lessons. When he got home he filled up the tub with water, built the ‘titanic’ out of aluminum foil, and used his Lego guys as passengers.” Clearly Dan has already begun to make an impression on our students!

After much deliberation and planning, I am happy to announce that Risa Novikoff will be teaching in Pre-Kindergarten next year. Some of you may know that we had tremendous interest in the Lower School this past admissions season, with many strong applicants and applicant families. We will have a larger Pre-K class than expected; almost 100% of the students we accepted took the spots we offered. This high “yield,” as it is known in admissions-speak, necessitated the need for an additional person in the grade. Risa has met with me, Anne, Basia, Olu and Shirley several times to work out the details of her new placement; her primary focus will be on teaching language arts such as word development and poetry. There will be plenty of time for small-group readings, which is a love of Risa's. She is looking forward to working with the Pre-K team to combine her passion for language with the strong artwork in the grade to show off the students' skills. I look forward to the experiences our Pre-K students will share with Risa this year.

Because of this move, we have hired Meghan Pimentel as a new associate teacher to work with Evelyn Gomez-Perez in Kindergarten A. Meghan was a student teacher last year at Poly, working with Anne Leibler and Haley Harvis in 1 B. She earned her bachelors at Brooklyn College and is currently completing the masters program at Bank Street College of Education. Before coming to Poly, Meghan was employed as a post-production producer at Outpost Digital, working on documentaries and commercials.

It is with mixed emotions that I share with you that Pam Weinstein has accepted a position as a lead teacher at Rivendell School here in Brooklyn. She is a talented teacher, and we all are happy that she has this new opportunity; we are sad to see her go, of course! The silver lining is that she will remain at Poly in her role as co-director of the after school program. Due to this new opening in Grade 2 B, Haley Harvis, a two-year veteran associate in 1 B, is “moving on up.” She will join Sarah Davies – and many of her former students! – in her new grade. We think this will make for a smoother transition for the students, and Haley is looking forward to learning a new curriculum and furthering her knowledge of children’s developmental milestones. As of this writing, we are still putting together the plan for Sarah’s maternity leave. We will let you know whom we have chosen as soon as the decision is made, which I anticipate should be in the next week or two.

To fill Haley's post in 1 B, we have hired Isabel Galassi to join Bette Armstrong. No stranger to Poly, Isabel actually served as a substitute teacher here all of last year. She also worked in the after school program and as a staffer during our vacation camps. She has loved her time at Poly, and she already knows many of the children and parents of the Lower School. Originally from New York, Isabel attended the Nightingale-Bamford School. She earned her BA in English at Bates College, spending one semester in Italy through the Intensive Italian Language and Cultural Studies program at Syracuse University. After stints in publishing and fashion, she decided to pursue her desire to work in education; she has already started taking classes at Bank Street.

We have also hired an associate teacher, Molly Goldstone, for the first half of the year in 2 A while Kim Benvegna covers in Kindergarten B. Many of you may remember that Kerry (McNamara) Gallagher will be on maternity leave for the first semester, so Kim will be the head teacher in K B. Molly earned her bachelors at Queens College and just completed her masters in literacy at Bank Street. She has served as an art instructor and a literacy specialist in several settings; she most recently was a second grade teacher from November through the end-of-year at PS 212 in Manhattan.

Lastly, an associate teacher was also hired for this coming year to work in Grade Three. His name is Joe Rinaldi; last year he was a Teaching Fellow at Newton Country Day School in Newton, Massachusetts. He taught English to ninth graders and he observed and helped in all of the other grades there, from Five through Twelve. Joe also coached middle schoolers in soccer, lacrosse and basketball. He graduated from Holy Cross, and he's originally from Long Island. He will split his time between both third grade homerooms.