

## **High School Faculty and Staff 20/21**

### **Hugh Brennan - History Teacher**

BA and single-subject teaching credential in Social Sciences from California State University Long Beach; Waldorf Grades Teacher Certificate; National Registered EMT, California State Parks; Hugh has been a part of the WSOC community since 2003. He has worked as an after-care assistant, coach, substitute, guest block teacher, co-class sponsor and humanities teacher. In addition to working at WSOC he has substituted in the Huntington Beach and Albuquerque School Districts and has been a California State Lifeguard since 2002. Alongside teaching, he enjoys spending quality time with his wife and new baby boy, surfing, traveling, reading and having philosophical and political discussions with his friends.

### **Beka Castro - English Teacher**

Before coming to WSOC, Beka Castro taught Music and Middle School Theater in Redondo Beach. She graduated from the Waldorf Institute of Southern California in 2007, and then joined the WSOC Early Childhood faculty as a Pre-K teacher for two years before taking the class of 2020 on their journey from first through eighth grades. During her sabbatical, Beka taught Honors English at a public high school in Carlsbad. In 2016, Beka returned as a main lesson elementary teacher and a Middle School English teacher for two years before transitioning to the high school. She holds a Liberal Arts degree with an emphasis in English Education, and a M.A. Ed. in Teaching and Learning from Point Loma Nazarene University. She also holds a Cleared California Secondary English Credential with an added authorization in Reading and Literacy. She and her husband Armando have three children who are WSOC alumni. Beka is keenly interested in looking at the specific ways that Waldorf Pedagogy nurtures the development of creative thinking in students, and is currently working on a five-year research project measuring growth in creative thinking skills between the 8th and 12th grades. She believes that cultivating inclusive environments that support all learners on their journey to literacy is especially important, echoing Victor Hugo's idea that "To learn to read is to light a fire."

### **Francesco DeBenedetto - Arts**

Francesco De Benedetto is the 9th-12th grade Visual Arts teacher at WSOC. Once he graduated from high school in Italy, he wished to reconnect to his artistic impulse while also honoring a scientific approach. He moved to California, later graduating from the Laguna College of Art with a B.F.A. in Drawing and Painting. He encountered Waldorf Education in 2008, where he saw a method of artistic inquiry that transcended anything he had learned in school. He was mentored by many seasoned Waldorf educators, doing a one year internship in Sacramento Waldorf School and teaching for two years at the Green Meadow Waldorf School, before finding a home at WSOC. He is involved in several ongoing trainings based on the underpinnings of Anthroposophy. He is committed to the practice of mastering the art and science of teaching, and deepening his artistic practice.

**Kim Eijpen - Earth Science and Biology**

Kim teaches earth science and biology in grades 9-12. She first learned of Rudolf Steiner while studying for a diploma in Naturopathy in Scotland, and knew that it was an education route that she'd be interested in for her children. Her oldest child started playgroup in 2008 and she has been a parent at WSOC ever since. Kim graduated from the WSOC grades studies program in 2018 and from the High School Teacher Education Program at the Center for Anthroposophy in New Hampshire in 2019. She is a native of Scotland, and graduated with a B.Sc. in Physical Geography from the University of Glasgow before continuing on to graduate studies at the University of Alberta, Canada and the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. She has spent many years studying glaciers and glacial environments in High Arctic Canada, Iceland, Nepal, the Canadian Rockies, Scotland and Ireland. Kim is passionate about geology, geography, nature and the environment and loves to share that enthusiasm with students both in the classroom and out in the field.

**Ed Feck - Physics**

Ed grew up in rural Oregon and earned his BS in Chemical Engineering from Oregon State University. Ed has spent over 30 years in manufacturing in various engineering, research and management roles and earned his MBA degree from Pepperdine University. Ed has four children that have completed Waldorf education and has twins who are students in the lower school. Ed has completed the Foundation Studies Program and has previously taught the 9th and 10th grade physics blocks. He is very excited about contributing to the excellence of the high school curriculum.

**Ingrid Feck - Mathematics and Chemistry**

Ingrid Feck teaches high school chemistry and mathematics at WSOC. Spending endless hours observing and exploring in her father's physics lab, she developed a fascination with science, technology, and mathematics. She received B.S. degrees in Biochemistry and Computer Science and a M.S. degree in Mathematics. Her interest in education was sparked while teaching Math for Elementary School Teachers at CSULB. After joining the WSOC community as a parent in 1992, she was recruited to the faculty as math and science support teacher. She completed an eight-year cycle as a class teacher and eventually became one of the founding teachers at the high school. Ingrid considers it a privilege to work with the students, parents, and teachers of the Waldorf community.

**Shauna Forsum - HS Registrar**

Shauna has been a parent at WSOC since her children were in playgroup until they graduated with the class of 2017 (Dane) and 2019 (Lulu). She was an avid parent volunteer, working on the yearbook and providing hospitality to numerous events. She enjoyed working on campus so much she took on the job of finance coordinator in the WSOC business office. After 7 years of crunching numbers, she switched gears to work at the "never a dull moment" front desk of the high school. She has her BA in Communications from Cal State Fullerton and has her certificate in Foundation Studies. She is a renowned chaperone and loves traveling with students and teachers.

### **Gina Garrison - High School Coordinator/Drama Teacher**

Over the past 15 years Gina has held a variety of administrative positions at WSOC ranging from Registrar to Finance. She stepped into the role of High School Coordinator last year after 3 years as the Faculty Coordinator. She completed her Waldorf Teacher training in 2015 and her certification in HR Management in 2020. However Gina's original passion is live theatre, and her degree is in Theatre Arts - Performance and Directing - from Long Beach State University. Gina looks forward to directing the senior play and supporting her colleagues with their productions.

### **Silvia Hanustiakova - Eurythmy**

Silvia Hanustiakova joins our faculty from Slovakia, Europe. Silvia graduated from Waldorf Eurythmy training and art therapy in Vienna, Austria in 2003. Silvia is an experienced Eurythmy teacher having taught extensively in Waldorf schools in Slovakia and is one of the founders of a Eurythmy teacher training school there. Silvia has performed as part of a troupe in France, Germany, Switzerland and Slovakia. In 2019 Silvia graduated with a Masters of Arts in art therapy, she had a thriving practice in Germany before joining WSOC. Silvia is passionate about assisting students in their individuality and uniqueness, her goal is always to support and encourage inner development. It is in the interaction with students and colleagues that Silvia finds inspiration and creativity that enrich and enliven her life. Silvia has one daughter in the class of 2029 at WSOC.

### **Kristen Kuczenski - Humanities**

Kristen was born in Connecticut and received her B.A. in English Literature from Trinity College. Before moving to the Deep South for graduate school, she taught creative writing and literature at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts and also worked as the first mate on Mystic Seaport Museum's schooner Brilliant, the nation's oldest sail education program. Ms. Kuczenski completed the M.F.A. and M.A. programs in Creative Writing and Gender and Race Studies at the University of Alabama in 2016. She's thrilled to be working with Waldorf students here in California and loves the ever-evolving play of poiesis in everything from writing to cooking to conversation.

### **Edwin Lovo - Band**

Edwin Lovo is a music teacher who brings his love of wind and brass instruments to WSOC students in middle school and high school. He was born and raised in Orange County. He started playing the trumpet at age 14. He received his degree in music performance and education from Cal State Fullerton, where he won the Rodger Vaughn award, a yearly award given to the best musician. He played in the top wind ensemble, brass ensemble, jazz band, and orchestra while in college. He has performed in the La Mirada Community Orchestra and played trumpet in the Tournament of Roses parade for the past 7 years. He has been featured on KALA morning news on trumpet. He began teaching at WSOC in 2013. He is pleased to provide a strong music program that enables students to enjoy themselves and develop lifelong musical skills.

### **James Mesevage - Mathematics**

James Mesevage comes to WSOC with Waldorf High School math teaching experience from Green Meadow, Baltimore and Sacramento Waldorf Schools. He earned his B.A. in Music from Philadelphia College of Performing Arts, his M.A. in Mathematics and Mathematics Education from Columbia University, and his Certificate in Waldorf Education from Sunbridge Institute. Mr. Mesevage is expected to complete his Doctorate in Education from Columbia University in 2022.

### **Christine Newell - Practical Arts**

Christine teaches handwork in Grades 7-10. She was born and raised in Robin Hood country, in Nottingham, England. She worked in the textile industry until emigrating to Toronto, Canada. In Canada, Christine started a business in sportswear clothing and worked with a local designer making his creations. When Christine moved to California in '98, she attended a three-year handwork training program at the Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, Sacramento. Christine teaches Grade 7 doll making, Grade 8 machine sewing, Grade 9 Basketry and marionette making, and Grade 10 textile designs. She works weekly with our local parent community teaching the Waldorf handwork curriculum. In the summer, she coordinates and runs a children's craft camp on campus. Christine has two grandchildren, a granddaughter who is a WSOC high school graduate and a grandson who is in the lower school at WSOC.

### **Maria Reynolds - Spanish**

Maria Reynolds is the 9th-12th grade Spanish teacher at WSOC. She discovered her love for both teaching and the Spanish language at an early age. She was born and raised in Los Gatos in northern California, where she pursued her language studies through junior high and high school. She completed her B.A. in Spanish Literature and earned her California High School Spanish teaching credential at UC Irvine. During that time she spent her junior year abroad at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. She earned her Master's degree from Cal State Fullerton in Linguistics, during which time she worked on a language preservation project for the Native American Indian Paiute community in Bishop, California. Maria began her Waldorf journey in 2010, assisting and substitute teaching in the WSOC Early Childhood department. Before coming to WSOC, she taught high school Spanish for eight years, and spent two years teaching Spanish to adults at Coastline Community College. Maria has traveled extensively throughout many Spanish-speaking countries and brings her experiences and passion for the people, language and culture to her classroom.

### **Matan Tsufim - Practical Arts**

Matan teaches woodwork in grades 5-7 and practical arts (copper work; carpentry, jewelry) in grades 8-12. He holds a BA in psychology and special education. Matan has worked as a teacher and caretaker in different Waldorf programs. Most recently, he taught special education at the Shaked Waldorf School in Israel. Matan's personal connection with Waldorf education goes back almost two decades when he studied at the first Waldorf School of Israel. He then completed his foundation studies training at the Pennine Camphill Community in England. During his time as a Camphill co-worker, he was involved in the various craft activities and conducted class sessions in the woodwork, blacksmithing, and pottery workshops. He currently is working toward his master's degree in Waldorf Education with a particular focus on the healing arts at Antioch University, New England. His son attends WSOC.

### **Nicola Weiss - Athletic Director**

Nicola Weiss grew up in Switzerland in a very free-spirited learning environment where it was important that children explored what they were passionate about and built their learning from there. She has 5 children, ages 20, 19, 19, 19 and 17, all raised in the United States in the same experiential way. Nicola coached soccer for 12 years while her kids were growing up and for the past 8 years she has managed the Lacrosse program at Edison High School. For 2 years she also managed the Track and Field team at Edison while her daughter competed. Nicola finds deep satisfaction in developing opportunities for students to be active and looks forward to continuing the growth of our high school Athletics program.

