



New Faculty and Staff 2022-23

Every year at Wardlaw+Hartridge, we form a new community, often with more than 100 new students and also some new teachers, administrators, and staff. These new community members bring new perspectives, experiences, and ideas, which enrich our school. At the same time, we value the continuity of maintaining and enhancing what is best in our community, and feel that balance of continuity and change serves our school well.

Like every school and business these days, this is a year of more change than usual in our staffing. You will find an overview of their credentials and professional experiences below, along with some notes on changes involving returning staff members. We have previously shared information about those whose positions began July 1, and won't repeat those here.

It is noteworthy that four of the positions below are newly created and reflect our desire to continue to expand and enhance our programs while also maintaining teacher workloads that allow teachers to provide the sort of personal attention we believe is essential to optimal student learning and growth.

Lower School Faculty and Staff

Martha Restrepo will become Co-Head Teacher for our PreKindergarten class, joining Sarina Morales, who is moving next door from her current Junior Kindergarten class. Ms. Restrepo earned her Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education from Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellin, Colombia. She began her teaching career in Colombia, and has taught in the US since 2016. She comes to us from Avenues - The World School in New York City, where she has taught since 2019. She will share the classroom with **Sarina Morales**, who will move from her Junior Kindergarten Assistant Teacher position to Co-Head Teacher of PreKindergarten.



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Silvia Ciccone is nearly a veteran with us, having started in May as Lower School Admission Assistant. However, we have not properly introduced her to the whole community. In her role, she supports all aspects of the operations of the Lower School and is the point person for many of our communications with our families. Mrs. Ciccone comes to us following a seven-year stint at Newark Academy, where she served on the Admission and Financial Aid team. Her friendly spirit and professionalism have already been evident within the Lower School.

Kimberly Mattappallil joins us as Lower School STEM teacher. Ms. Mattappallil earned her Bachelor's degree in Physics at Rutgers University and her Master of Arts in Science Education from Teachers College of Columbia University. She began her teaching career at Ithaca High School in New York before moving to New Jersey, where she has taught in public, charter, and independent schools. Most recently, she served as a Science Specialist, and then a Technology Specialist and Integrator at Stevens Cooperative School, and independent school in Hoboken.

Middle School Faculty

Henna Tailor is entering her eighth year of teaching Middle School Math, with her most recent position being in seventh grade in Montgomery, NJ. She attended Rutgers University for her Bachelor's and Master's degrees, and is back at the home of the Scarlet Knights to pursue her Doctorate degree in Education. In her free time, she is a level 2 Reiki practitioner, and maintains hobbies in sewing and dance. She enjoys spending time with her husband and their 12-year old dog named Moody.

Middle and Upper School Faculty

Elizabeth Gildersleeve will teach English in eighth grade and Upper School. Ms. Gildersleeve received her Bachelor's degree from Connecticut College and her Master's degree from CUNY-Hunter College. She has taught English at the Middle and Upper School levels in private and public schools in New York City. For the last three years, she has served as English teacher, advisor, grade team leader, and editor of the literary magazine at The Elisabeth Morrow School in Englewood, NJ.

Upper School Faculty and Staff

Maxime Sinal joins us as Upper School English teacher and English Department Chair. Mr. Sinal earned his Bachelor's degree in English at SUNY-Stony Brook and a Master's degree in Secondary English Education at Hofstra University. He has taught and served as an administrator at the community college level, and also taught at independent schools such as the Perkiomen School, Tower Hill School, and most recently Xavier High School in NYC. Mr. Sinal has also been an active faculty leader in DEIB practices and will work with our faculty facilitation group and our schoolwide DEIB Committee as we

continue to engage deeply with diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging across all aspects of our school community.

Tony Diaz joins us as teacher of two AP Computer Science courses, Precalculus, and a robotics elective. Mr. Diaz earned his Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, starting at University of South Carolina and completing it at Rutgers, and has taught since 2019 at Delbarton School. Mr. Diaz has teaching in his blood, as both his mother and grandmother were teachers. Anyone who has worked in restaurants as a young person knows this is good experience for nearly any field, and so it is noteworthy that Mr. Diaz worked for two years at the Toast City Diner in Red Bank, advancing from busser to Assistant Manager.

Joseph Konczynski will join us to teach Mathematics and Engineering in the Upper School. Mr. Konczynski earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from CUNY College of Staten Island and is completing his Master's degree in Applied Biomedical Engineering. His career has included a strong focus on teaching junior engineers, both on the job and in an online setting with Kaplan Professional, which involved preparing mid-career engineers for advanced licensure. He is an Eagle Scout and an Ultramarathoner. Along with **Mr. Diaz**, he brings experiences and motivation to help us build an expanded STEM program over the next several years. Mr. Konczynski steps into the position previously held by Mr. Donaghy, who shared with us this summer his difficult decision to resign due to personal reasons.

Michelle Penny is entering her 10th year as a teacher and will be teaching English in the Upper School. She is a graduate of Bishop Ahr High School, just down the road from W+H, and went on to earn her Bachelor's degree at Rider University. She has spent the last nine years teaching at her high school alma mater, now rechristened St. Thomas Aquinas School, where she taught American, British, and World Literature, coached JV soccer, advised film and book clubs, and assisted with the tech crew for dramatic productions.

Brent Giles joins us as Upper School Chemistry teacher. Dr. Giles earned his Ph.D. in Chemistry at Purdue University, following a Bachelor's degree at Colorado College. He also earned an MBA degree from CUNY. He began his teaching career as an Assistant Professor at Colorado College before entering industry as a Senior Chemist, Analyst, and Research Director at two different firms, before becoming CEO at Maneuver Lab, an innovator in pesticide production. He returned to teaching, this time at the high school level in the West Windsor-Plainsboro district. He brings to us a strong background in chemistry teaching and real-world experience in applications and entrepreneurship.

Ann Pengue will become our new Upper School Biology teacher, and will also teach related elective courses. Ms. Pengue earned her Bachelor's degree at

Salve Regina College in Rhode Island, and her Master's degree at Providence College. She has taught at St. Mary's School in Worcester, MA, and at St. Bartholomew School in East Brunswick. She has organized science fairs that drew participants from 20 schools. She has also served as a coach in swimming, volleyball, and cheer, and as Honor Society moderator.

All-School Positions

Matthew DiFabio will serve as our new Performing Arts Center manager. In that role, he will oversee rental use of the facility by outside groups and support all school productions in the performing arts. He will collaborate closely with the Performing Arts Department and will train students in sound and lighting design for these productions. He will also ensure that our facility is properly equipped and maintained. Mr. DiFabio earned his Bachelor's degree at York College in Pennsylvania, and comes to us from a similar position in the Westfield Public Schools.

Alicia Seemuller, our new Physical Education and Health teacher, brings more than 18 years of education, health and wellness experience to Wardlaw + Hartridge. Ms. Seemuller has worked with a diverse student population and is passionate about shaping lifelong learners and practitioners of health and wellbeing. She holds a BS in Exercise and Sport Science from Ursinus College, and is certified in Health, Physical Education, Adaptive Physical Education, Driver Education, Yoga, Movement Coaching, Personal Training, Massage Therapy and CPR/First Aid & AED. In her free time, Ms. Seemuller enjoys recreational physical activities, meditation, reading, learning and time with her family.

Old Faces, New Places

As mentioned elsewhere, **Mike Romeo** has begun his work as our new Athletic Director. **Erin Maciorowski** has moved from Lower School STEM teaching into her new position as Associate Director of Technology. In that office, she is joined by **Kristin Lambertsen**, who has moved into the role of Library and Technology Support associate, after a successful stint as PreKindergarten teacher. She will coordinate and present library activities with Lower School teachers across all LS grades and maintain library and school databases. **Sarina Morales** is moving from Assistant Teacher of Junior Kindergarten to Co-Head teacher of PreKindergarten.

Sarah Honan will be Director of College Counseling, where she had been Co-Director. **Jean Castellano**, whose classroom was rendered unusable by last year's Hurricane Ida flooding, spent the year teaching in the Center for Global Learning, but her classroom was rebuilt over the summer and she will return there this year. **Jaclyn Church**, who has taught Math and Science in fifth grade, will teach those same subjects this year in fourth grade, in partnership with **Ellen Ritz**, who will teach the humanities disciplines. **Liz Stillman**

remains in fifth grade, but will teach math and science in that grade in addition to the humanities disciplines. **Dr. Corinna Crafton**, Associate Head for Curriculum & Instruction, will relocate to the office we refer to as the Tower Room, which rises majestically over the Lower School entrance.