



Columbus Academy

Welcome to our new faculty and staff!

Becky Barger-Amato

Advancement Services Associate

Becky Barger-Amato began her role as advancement services associate in the Development Office in September 2020. She previously served four years as development operations coordinator at Mid-Ohio Foodbank and three years at the Ohio Association of Foodbanks as an AmeriCorps VISTA. She holds a B.A. in theatre studies from Capital University. Becky and her husband Tony have four dogs and two cats, of which her favorite “fur child” is 4-year-old Sydney.

Katie Beck

PreK Lead Teacher

Katie (Neenan) Beck returns to Columbus Academy as a PreK lead teacher with Alissa Sommer for the 2021-22 school year. She previously taught on campus beginning in 2012 – teaching in first and third grade – before relocating to Dallas in 2019 as a result of a new job opportunity for her husband. Over the last two years, Katie taught second and third grade at Episcopal School of Dallas. She graduated from the University of Dayton with a B.S. in early childhood education. Outside of school, Katie loves to travel and spend time with family and friends. She and her husband Sam reside in Gahanna and enjoy making their way around the country with a goal of visiting all 30 MLB ballparks, of which they have been to 13 so far.

Janny Cann

Explorers Program Teacher

Janny Cann joined Columbus Academy as a lead teacher in the Explorers Program in 2020 and will co-teach with Mike Weible for the 2021-22 school year. She came to Academy after three years teaching ceramics and environmental art at the University of Guam and grade school pottery in St. Louis. Janny also has 10 years of experience in business development and strategic planning for healthcare systems in Washington and Connecticut. She holds a B.A. in economics and public health and an M.H.A. from the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of Washington as well as an M.F.A. from Fontbonne University. Janny and her husband Will, who served over 20 years in the U.S. Armed Forces, have three children: Wystan '29, Auden '31 and Warren '34.



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Becky Collier

First Grade Associate Teacher

Becky Collier will begin her first year as an associate teacher for the first grade classes of Kara Haustovich and Julie Simmons at the start of the 2021-22 school year. She comes to Academy after serving as a substitute teacher in Dublin City Schools. Becky earned a B.S. in early childhood education from Ohio State University and an American Sign Language/Deaf Studies certificate from Columbus State. Becky and her husband Chad Junge have three grown children and reside in New Albany.

Mary Deeds

Assistant Director of Athletics for Youth Sports

Mary Deeds officially began serving as Assistant Director of Athletics for Youth Sports at Columbus Academy on July 1, 2021. She oversees the youth sports program and assists with gameday management of athletic events. In addition to serving as an assistant coach for our middle school girls soccer team the past two fall seasons, Mary has worked part-time for our athletics department as a site supervisor and youth sports administrator while also holding a director role at Locker Soccer Academy in Powell. Prior to Academy, she was an intern within the athletic departments at Otterbein University and Ohio State University. Mary has a B.S. in business administration from the University of Dayton and is on pace to receive an M.S. in sport management from Ohio Dominican University in December 2021.

Erika Gullick

Long-Term PE Substitute, Lower/Middle School

Erika Gullick will be a long-term PE substitute in the lower school and middle school to start the 2021-22 school year. She will specifically be working with Explorers through kindergarten and grades 7-8. Erika has prior experience as a substitute teacher in our Lower School and has taught elementary in various grades at KIPP Columbus and Barwell Elementary in Raleigh, North Carolina. She is also the owner of The Cheer Institute Polaris and works with Competitive Cheer and Tumble. Erika holds a B.A. in English from Ohio State University and an M.A. in teaching from North Carolina State University, where she also coached the cheer team. Erika and her husband Dennis have four children including Dennis V., Dillon, Dakota and Dawson, as well as a schnauzer named Brutus.



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Erin Harris

Aquatics Instructor, Lower School

Erin Harris will be the new aquatics instructor for our Lower School at the start of the 2021-22 school year. She will oversee the swimming pool lessons in PE class for our lower-schoolers. Erin's love for water developed early, and she spent her childhood and adolescence as a competitive swimmer. She discovered her passion for teaching at age 16 and, coupled with her B.S. in hospitality management from Ohio State University, she went on to lead the Greater Columbus Swim School (GCSTO) for 12 years. She was also a member of the coaching staff at GCSTO during this time. Being part of both the swim school and team allowed her to prepare kids and ensure a smooth transition in moving from a learn-to-swim environment to swimming on a team. Erin currently resides with her partner Scott and their two cats Buddy and Booker. She enjoys spending time with her mom, lap swimming, yoga, meditation, breathwork, reading (mostly non-fiction), music and being outdoors.

Moira Jenkins

PreK Lead Teacher

Moira Jenkins will be a lead PreK teacher with Sarah Penney at the beginning of the 2021-22 school year. She has taught in many types of educational settings, most recently coming from a combined preschool and kindergarten classroom at New Albany Montessori School. She also was previously a lead teacher at Jewish Community Center East in New Albany. Originally from Michigan, Moira considers Ohio her home ever since graduating from Denison University with a bachelor's degree in educational studies. She then went on to obtain a teaching credential from the American Montessori Society. Moira lives with her husband Peter and their three children, and together they enjoy trailer camping and visiting national parks.

Ben Johnson

Spanish Teacher, Lower School

Ben Johnson, Ph.D., will begin as the new Spanish teacher for Lower School at the start of the 2021-22 school year. He previously served as a long-term substitute teacher in the Upper School during the 2020-21 school year. A native of Columbus, Ben earned his Ph.D. in Spanish at Columbia University, and he also taught and lived for several years in Colombia, but he swears it is just an odd coincidence that he only ever associates himself with places and institutions named after the famous Italian explorer. Ben and his wife Alejandra have a young son named Matías. In his free time, Ben likes to read Latin American literature, study Portuguese and ride his bike.



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Kimberly Koehler

Third Grade Associate Teacher

Kim Koehler began her role as an associate teacher in the third grade classrooms of Donna Saide and Katie Altier at the start of the 2021-22 school year. She earned a B.S. in early childhood education from Ohio University and K-12 Reading Endorsement through Lake Erie College. Away from work, Kim enjoys spending time outside, practicing yoga and hosting dinner for family and friends.

Lauren Yen Leahy

Associate Director of Admissions

Lauren Yen Leahy began working as Associate Director of Admissions in the summer of 2021. She previously served as a prospective research associate at St. Luke's School in New Canaan, Connecticut (2013-17), and as a development associate at The Spence School in Manhattan (2009-12). Prior to her work in independent schools, she worked in secondary art market galleries in New York. Lauren is currently a member of the Women's Board for the Franklin Park Conservatory and a Vestry Board Member for St. Alban's Episcopal Church. A graduate of the Columbus School for Girls, Lauren went on to earn her B.A. from Villanova University and an M.A. from University of Manchester-Sotheby's Institute of Art. Lauren and her husband Matt have two children who attend Academy, Molly '32 and Jack '34. She also has two brothers who are Academy alumni (Aaron Yen '01 and Peter Yen '05).

Chris Luzniak

Mathematics Teacher, Upper School

Chris Luzniak will begin teaching mathematics in the Upper School at Columbus Academy at the start of the 2021-22 school year. A native of Cleveland, Chris is thrilled to be returning to teach in Ohio after having taught secondary mathematics for the past 15 years in both New York City and Los Angeles. Chris holds an M.S. in mathematics from the University of Connecticut and an M.Ed. from New York University. An advocate for student-centered math education, Chris works with math teachers across the globe to develop rich and engaging math lessons for students. His book "[Up for Debate!](#)" is currently published by Stenhouse Publishers. Chris and his partner Ray live in Hilliard, where they enjoy cooking, board games and completing the New York Times crossword puzzles. They also look forward to adopting a dog soon.



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Kim Masturzo

First Grade Associate Teacher

Kim Masturzo will be an associate teacher in the first grade classes of Sarah Hansen and Beth Klüg at the start of the 2021-22 school year. Kim's career in education began as a first grade teacher in the school that she attended as a child before moving to Chagrin Falls Exempted Village Schools, where she taught first and second grade. Kim and her family later relocated to New Albany where she tutored young children and accepted the role of an adjunct instructor in the education division at Ohio Dominican University. During her 13 years at ODU, she taught a range of undergraduate courses with a focus on language arts and literacy and also supervised student teachers. She holds a B.S. in elementary education from Ohio State University and an M.Ed. from John Carroll University. Kim and her husband Tim have a son Austin who attends Ohio State and a daughter Abby who attends Denison University. As a family, they enjoy traveling together and spending time outdoors with their two yellow Labrador retrievers. Kim enjoys hiking, biking, yoga, paddle boarding and staying active, has a love for children's literature and enjoys reading memoirs.

April Mealick

PreK Lead Teacher

April Mealick will begin as a lead PreK teacher with Rebecca Gleek at the start of the 2021-22 school year. She has taught in our after-school program for two years and was a substitute teacher in several early childhood classrooms throughout the 2020-21 school year. Prior to Academy, April taught kindergarten for 10 years at North Fork Local Schools in Newark. She is a graduate of Ohio University with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and holds a master's degree in elementary reading and literacy. April and her husband Chris – who is the varsity cross country head coach and track & field assistant coach on campus – have two children, Cayden '27 and Adalyn '35, who both attend Academy. Outside of teaching, April is a Team Beachbody coach, nutrition nerd, book lover and organizational guru.

Carla Miller

Third Grade Associate Teacher

Carla Miller began her role as an associate teacher in the third grade classes of Elizabeth Sinclair and Sarah Warstler at the start of the 2021-22 school year. She previously taught second grade at Northern Wells Community Schools in Bluffton, Indiana. Carla earned a B.A. in elementary education from Purdue University and holds an M.Ed. in curriculum from Indiana Wesleyan University. She enjoys reading historical fiction and non-fiction along with cooking and baking for family and friends. She is a fan of Masterpiece Theatre, nature documentaries and Marvel movies. Favorite travel destinations have included Alaska, Italy and France. Carla and her husband Kevin reside in New Albany with their four boys – Yale, Collin, Breckin and Sterling – along with their family's rescue dog named Bailey.



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Jennifer Neviaser

Long-Term Second Grade Associate Substitute

Jen Neviaser will serve as the long-term substitute teacher for second grade associate Kelsey Ingle to start the 2021-22 school year. She joins the Columbus Academy faculty while also remaining active in several roles with PACA (Parents Association of Columbus Academy) and as a youth sports coach. Jen previously worked for Kaplan K12 Learning Services, where she held the roles of educational sales director in the NYC region and director of implementation in the Midwest region. She also has experience as the center director for Achieva College Counseling. Jen holds a B.A. in psychology from Amherst College and an M.S. in education and higher education administration from the University of Pennsylvania. Jen and her husband Andy have four children who attend Academy.

Lindy Newman

Science Teacher, Lower School

Lindy Newman began teaching science in our Lower School in September 2020 and also serves as a co-curricular team leader alongside fellow science teacher Laura King. She has a wide range of science experience having worked as outreach programs coordinator at COSI for four years, camp director at Camp Mary Orton for two years and as a naturalist at the Cincinnati Nature Center for one year. She holds two degrees from Capital University including a B.A. in environmental science and a B.A. in adolescent and young adult science education. Lindy resides in Clintonville with her cat named Plunk.

Gabriel Paynter

Lower School Director of Academic Programs

Gabriel Paynter began his role as the Lower School Director of Academic Programs in August 2021. Gabriel joins Academy from the Latin School of Chicago where he was on faculty since 2017 as a third grade lead teacher and academic chair. He received his B.A. from Kent State University and a master's degree from DePaul University in curriculum as well as instruction and certification in educational leadership from National Louis University. Gabriel is a Responsive Classroom trainer and was part of LSC's schoolwide RULER implementation team (a social-emotional program through Yale University). Before that, he taught fifth grade as a team leader for the Avoca School District in Wilmette, Illinois. Gabriel was also involved in mentoring new faculty members, serving on the math committee and was part of the admissions team. In his free time, he is a yoga instructor. He recently moved to the Short North with his dog Angela Lansbury.



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Katy Reis

Second Grade Associate Teacher

Katy Reis begins her first year as an associate teacher with Jennifer Thompson's second grade class at the start of the 2021-22 school year. She joins Columbus Academy after nearly 15 years of working for museums and nonprofit art organizations. Upon graduating from Wake Forest University with a B.A. in Spanish with a double minor in art history and studio art, Katy held positions in the curatorial and exhibition departments at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., Washington Project for the Arts and the Wexner Center for the Arts at Ohio State University. In that time, she developed a love for teaching others about art and art history and is eager to put those skills to use in the classroom. Away from work, Katy enjoys reading and adventures with her husband and their two young children.

Ed Rhee '93

Associate Head of Middle School

Ed Rhee began his role as Associate Head of Middle School at Columbus Academy on July 1, 2021. A 1993 graduate of Academy, Ed returns to campus after having served as middle school director of Children's Day School in San Francisco since 2015. He has also held prior administrative positions including head of upper school at the Valley School of Ligonier in Pennsylvania, dean of middle school at Friends Select School in Philadelphia and associate director of admissions at Chapin School in Princeton, New Jersey. Ed also has several years of experience as a classroom teacher and coach. He earned a B.A. in English and drama from Kenyon College and an M.Ed. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Ed and his wife Katie have two sons, Emerson and Lachlan.

Jennifer Sands

Art Teacher, Grades 5 and 9

Jennifer Sands began teaching fifth and ninth grade art at Columbus Academy in October 2020. She came to Academy after serving as a recruitment specialist for The Modern College of Design in Kettering. Jennifer also has four years of experience as an art teacher at John Glenn High School and as an outreach coordinator at The Columbus Museum of Art. She holds a B.F.A. specializing in fine arts and fashion design from Columbus College of Art and Design, a PreK-12 art education license from Muskingum University and an M.F.A. in studio art from Maryland Institute College of Art. She also earned the Gamli Skoli Residency in Iceland in addition to the Tyrone Guthrie Residency in Ireland and is a past recipient of the Bucci-Dietz Artist's Award. Jennifer has two dogs, two cats and six sheep.



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Keith Scowden

Fourth Grade Associate Teacher, Team Leader

Keith Scowden has been teaching fourth grade at Columbus Academy since August 2020 and will be a fourth grade associate teacher and team leader at the start of the 2021-22 school year, assisting all three fourth grade classes while also teaching a section of math. He has become well known on our campus for his many roles with the summer and after-school programs. Keith previously was a substitute teacher in local public schools as well as in our Lower School and Middle School. He holds a B.S. in middle childhood education from Kent State University.

Camille Thiros

Kindergarten Associate Teacher

Camille Thiros will begin her first year as an associate teacher in Kenny Hyttenhove's kindergarten class at the start of the 2021-22 school year. She comes to Academy after having graduated with a B.S. in early childhood education and visual impairment education from Ohio State University, where she also gained experience working with the college's childcare program as a teaching aide. A native of Valparaiso, Indiana, Camille moved to Columbus to attend OSU and is surrounded by a wonderfully supportive group of close friends she considers to be family.

Claire Thompson

Physical Education Teacher, Lower School

Claire Thompson will begin teaching physical education in our Lower School at the start of the 2021-22 school year. A native of Northeast Ohio, Claire has 14 years of experience as a PE teacher and holds a B.A. in physical education from Ohio Wesleyan University and an M.S. from Canisius College. In her time at OWU, Claire was a decorated and record-setting softball pitcher. She enjoys attending and coaching her children in youth athletics, reading historical fiction, listening to and making music, and spending time at the lake or cabin with her family. Claire and her husband Adam will welcome their first child as a couple – and the fourth child to their blended family – in late summer 2021 joining Hayden, Austin and Maddy at home.

Harland Young

Director of Buildings and Grounds

Harland Young officially took over as Director of Building and Grounds on July 1, 2021, after four months of training under his predecessor Doug Bennett. Harland has been a behind-the-scenes manager of many Academy events as the director of events and catering for Taste Hospitality Group. He has 28 years of experience in client-facing roles with expertise in crisis management gained from overseeing operations and staffs at private estates of professional athletes and CEOs. He earned a B.S. in hospitality management from Ohio State University. Harland and his wife Kristen are foster parents and currently reside in Centerburg.