Welcome Lab’s New Employees
and staffing updates since January 2018

NEW ADMINISTRATORS

**Damon Cates, MBA’05, Executive Director, Alumni Relations & Development**

Most recently, Damon worked as senior vice president for advancement at Loyola Chicago. Prior to that he spent more than six years as UChicago’s senior associate vice president and campaign director in the Office of Alumni Relations and Development. Damon has spent time in development roles at the University of Pennsylvania and Stanford, and before that he served an additional six years at UChicago assisting the medical center as well as the Booth and Law Schools with ARD work. In addition to his Booth degree, Damon has his BA from Millikin University and an EdD, with a concentration in philanthropy, from the University of Pennsylvania.

**Carla Ellis, Assistant Director of Schools**

Carla joins the senior leadership team after serving in country director roles for the Peace Corps, most recently in Ghana where she has led programs focused on health, agriculture, education, and youth development. Prior to the Peace Corps, she was regional director of schools and superintendent for Lighthouse Academies Charter Schools, served as the inaugural high school principal for the DuSable Leadership Academy, and principal at New Leaders for New Schools and Noble Street Charter Schools. She also co-ran a university–public school partnership at the DePaul Center for Urban Education. She has an EdD from DePaul and master degrees from both National-Louis and DePaul.

**Rickey Harris, Dean of Faculty, N–2**

Rickey joins Lab from Wolcott School, where he served as director of student life. He has supported and led faculty in employing best practices to help students with learning differences. Over two decades, Rickey has served at CPS and Chicago parochial schools, teaching middle school social studies and math, serving as principal, assistant principal, dean of students, and director of student support. Rickey has a BS in elementary education and MA in educational administration from Chicago State and is an EdD candidate at DePaul.

**Brian Hewlett, Director of Innovation & Technology**

Brian brings a wealth of technological, classroom, and administrative experience to his new role. Prior to joining Lab, Brian worked at Sheridan School, Washington DC, where he was the Director of Technology and Communications for six years. He holds a BA in economics and secondary education and MS in information from the University of Michigan and a graduate certificate in public health informatics from the University of Maryland.

**Uzma Panjwani, Assistant Principal, Lower School**

Uzma comes to Lab from Washington International School where she served as the director of teaching and learning. For grades N–5, she supported pedagogical best practice and provided leadership for curriculum mapping and lesson planning. She has taught third grade and served as division coordinator, student affinity group facilitator, and new teacher apprentice mentor. Uzma earned a BA from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and an MA in curriculum and instruction from the George Washington University.
**Sonia Perez, Dean of Students, Lower School**
Sonia joins us from Horace Greeley Elementary, where she spent 17 years in various roles, most recently as assistant principal. Sonia served as a bilingual, world language, and gifted program coordinator. Sonia taught grades four and eight and Spanish as a second language in grades K–8. She holds a BA in elementary education from Northeastern Illinois University, an MA in teaching and leadership, and an MA in education administration certification from Saint Xavier University.

**Noah Rachlin, Dean of Teaching and Learning, High School**
Noah joins Lab from Phillips Academy, Andover, where he taught history and was a senior fellow at their Tang Institute, an ideas lab dedicated to developing and sharing innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Noah has been a grade-level dean, history teacher, and department chair at schools in California and New York. He earned his EdM from Harvard and BA in history and philosophy from Brandeis.

**Priyanka Rupani, ’06, Director of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion**
Priyanka returns to Lab from the Friends School of Baltimore where she guided equitable and inclusive decision-making for all division and departments of the school, advised admissions, and created and delivered workshops and training for faculty, staff, parents, and students. She consulted for the Glasgow Group, which advises schools and other organizations in leadership, cultural competence, and strategic initiatives. She has also been a faculty member for the NAIS Student Diversity Leadership Conference. Priyanka graduated from the Laboratory Schools, received her BA from Northwestern, and her EdM from the University of Pennsylvania.
NEW FACULTY

Tracy Aiden, N–2 Head Teacher
Tracy joins us from Baker Demonstration School, in Wilmette, Illinois, where she taught Pre-K for five years and Kindergarten for eight years. Prior to Baker, Tracy taught Pre-K for four years at School for Little Children in Evanston, Illinois. Tracy has a bachelor's degree in law enforcement and sociology from Western Illinois University, a master's degree in counseling from National-Louis University, and a master's degree in teaching from National-Louis University.

Charlotte Anliker, N–2 Assistant Teacher
Charlotte joins the ESH faculty as an assistant teacher. She has spent the past two summers working at Summer Lab and was an Extended Day Intern for the 2017–2018 school year. She has her BA in political science from Valparaiso University, currently lives in Hyde Park, and loves spending time with both her husband and her dog, Tigger.

Mariah Bender, HS History Teacher
Mariah joins us from Morogoro International School in Tanzania where she taught history to A Levels. Prior to that, she spent time coordinating English programs across Kenya as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant. She began her teaching career teaching history to youth, ages 16–21, at Olive Harvey Middle College on the southeast side. She holds a BA in education, history, and African American studies from Saint Louis University and is pursuing a Master of Arts in teaching and learning at the University of Missouri, Columbia.

Hasham Bhatti, HS English Teacher
Hasham is the newest member of the high school English department. Hasham joins us from Evanston Township High School where he was a grade nine teacher. Prior to teaching at ETHS, he was an english teacher at Lower Merion High School and Hinsdale Central High School. He has a Bachelor of Arts in secondary english education from DePaul University and a Masters of Science in instructional design and technology from Concordia.

Laura Doto, HS Learning Coordinator
Laura joins Lab from Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine where she provided academic support to medical students. Laura was also a member of the Academic Support Team for Montclair Kimberley Academy in New Jersey. She started at MKA teaching high school Spanish, founded the upper school learning lab, and served as MKA's director of academic support. She's been an educational therapist and learning specialist, starting her career as an educational counselor for the UChicago student counseling service. She has two boys, one in college, and lives in Buffalo Grove with her husband Bob, their younger son, and their rabbit.

Alejandro (Alex) Fernandez, N–2 Physical Education Teacher
With a background in martial arts and personal training Alex has trained individuals in fitness for over a decade. Currently, he teaches shotokan karate at Enso dojo in downtown Chicago. He has led after school programs at schools across Chicago including Lab, Daystar, and Francis Xavier Warde. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology from DePaul University and is an ACE certified personal trainer and fitness nutrition specialist.
Valerie Grbavac, N–2 Assistant Teacher
Valerie joins us from our Extended Day Program. She received her bachelor’s degree in education from Roosevelt University, with a concentration in youth development. She has a wide range of experience with different age groups and enjoys seeing all the different developmental stages children go through.

Michelle Holmes, LS Grade 4 Homeroom Teacher
Michelle joins us from Poughkeepsie Day School in Poughkeepsie, New York, where she was a grade four teacher and head of the Committee for Equity and Justice. Prior to teaching at PDS, she was a teaching artist and museum educator in New York City. Michelle obtained her bachelor’s degree in international political science from Queens College and her MS in museum and elementary education from Bankstreet College of Education. Additionally, she has completed studies in language based learning disorders at the Windward Teacher Institute.

Jasmine Jefferson, MS Humanities Teacher
Jasmine joins our grade six team following 25 years in public education. Her teaching experience spans kindergarten through grade eight, with a concentration in middle school studies. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in sociology from the University of Illinois at Chicago and a Master of Arts in urban teaching from Concordia University. She is passionate about equipping her students with strategies necessary for analyzing, evaluating, delineating, inferring, and thinking critically.

AJ Jennings, N–2 Head Teacher
AJ (pronouns: they/them) is thrilled to be a part of the NK faculty. Before joining the team here, AJ taught for 11 years at Park West Cooperative Nursery School in Lincoln Park. Most recently they were the curriculum and professional development director at the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, an organization that does education and advocacy work to support creating affirming learning environments for LGBTQ+ students in Illinois. They have a BA in women's and gender studies from DePaul University and an MEd in instructional leadership, with a focus in early childhood education, from University of Illinois at Chicago.

Katie Lechowski, LS Computer Science Teacher
Katie began her teaching career as a grade 6–8 math and science teacher at Frances Xavier Warde in Chicago. After five years, she moved to Mark Sheridan Math and Science Academy, a CPS school on the near south side of Chicago. Her first two years at MSA were as a grades 6–8 science teacher. During her third year she transitioned to the technology teacher and technology coordinator role. She has spent the last seven years teaching computer science to kindergarten through grade eight students. Katie holds a bachelor’s degree from Indiana University and a master's degree from Loyola University Chicago.

Mariaelena Lonzao, LS Counselor
Mariaelena joins us from Chicago Public Schools where she was an elementary school counselor for eight years, and a bilingual high school history teacher for six. She has a Bachelor of Arts in secondary education in history from DePaul University, a Master of Arts in school counseling from Concordia University, and a Master of Arts in educational administration from Chicago State University.
**Maria Manrique, N–2 Assistant Teacher**
Maria joins us from the Extended Day Program here at Lab, where she was an assistant teacher for the past year. Previously she has worked in childcare including working at an orphanage in Bogota, Colombia. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from University of Illinois at Chicago, with a focus in studio arts and photography.

**Devyn Mares, LS Learning Coordinator**
Devyn has a background in school psychology, with specializations in behavior management, systems data, and targeted intervention for exceptional learners. She has been a school psychologist in both California and Illinois since 2014, and has held numerous positions including K–8 music teacher, classroom aide, special education classroom assistant, behavior therapist, and behavioral therapy supervisor. Devyn has undergraduate degrees from Knox College and the Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

**Adam Margol, N–2 Counselor**
Adam joins us from Northwestern University where he worked with children and families at The Family Institute. Prior to his years at The Family Institute, he worked in a therapeutic day school for several years supporting children and adolescents within the school system. Adam has a Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the University of Miami and a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from George Washington University.

**Theo Stripling, HS Counselor**
Theo joins us from Celerity Nascent Charter School in Los Angeles, California, where he was a counselor for a year. Prior to Celerity, he was a school counselor in Chicago Public Schools. He has a Bachelor of Arts in public relations from University of Louisiana at Lafayette and a Masters of Arts in counseling from Wake Forest University.

**Thomas Toney, MS Service Learning Coordinator**
Thomas joins us from the Boys & Girls Club of Youngstown, Ohio, where he was in charge of after-school programming for middle school students. Prior to that, Thomas worked throughout the Chicago area, bringing together academic, business, and nonprofit organizations to confront issues related to poverty, diversity, education, and community development. Most recently as a Social Emotional Learning specialist at an area high school with UMOJA, and diversity manager with Teach for America-Chicago. Thomas has a Bachelor of Arts in Africana Studies from the College of Wooster.

**Andrea Vode, MS Grade Six Science Teacher**
Andrea joins us from Crown Point, Indiana, where she was a grade seven science and pre-AP biology teacher for five years. Prior to teaching in Indiana, she taught science in Johns Creek, Georgia, and Glenview, Illinois. She has a Bachelor of Arts in mathematics and in education from North Park University, and a Masters of Education from Saint Xavier University. Andrea grew up in West Michigan, she met her husband at a teaching conference in New Orleans, and she has two children, ages seven and nine.
Sharon Williams, HS College Counselor
Sharon brings 30 years of experience working most recently at Maret School in Washington, DC, as director of college counseling, a position she also held at Chatham Hall, a boarding school in southern Virginia. Sharon's experience includes teaching and college counseling at Elgin Academy, as well as college admissions at selective universities in New York. Sharon holds a BA in African American studies from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

NEW STAFF

Becky Chmielewski, Associate Director, Family Life Programs
Becky leads and support the teams working on behalf of students in Summer Lab, Extended Day, and the student bus service at Historic Campus. Becky is an artist and educator. She returns to Lab after completing her MFA in painting and drawing at Ohio University. For the past 12 years, Becky served Lab as associate director of Adventure Kids Day Camp, assistant teacher in the primary school, lead teacher, and manager of the artists' studio in Extended Day, MS girls volleyball and basketball coach, and May Project coordinator. She holds an MA from Eastern Illinois University and a BFA from Washington University in St. Louis.

Addie Clomax, HS Attendance Secretary
Addie joins us from West Boulevard Elementary school in Columbia, Missouri where she was the attendance secretary for two years. Before that she held various customer service and human resources positions in the business sector. Addie is a native Chicagoan, raised here in the Hyde Park community.

Andrew Hernandez, Facilities Specialist
Andy supports campus operations and program needs at both campuses. Andy joins Lab from Chicago Public Schools, having worked on a wide range of construction projects.

Anna Johnson, Communications Specialist
Prior to joining Lab, Anna was a multimedia designer for the University of Michigan, an event videographer in Michigan and Illinois, and provided marketing services for theaters in Chicago. She attended the University of Michigan where she studied linguistics and creative writing. She graduated from Columbia College with a BFA in graphic design. She’s helped re-create a mastodon, been skydiving above the Hoover dam, eaten Thanksgiving dinner on a submarine., and does sketch and improv comedy at all of the finest establishments in the city.

Nichole Littleton, Sr. Fiscal Assistant
Nicole has worked for the University of Chicago since 1997 in various financial roles with University Networking Services, Facilities Services, and the Biological Sciences Division.
Brian Nolan, Tech Support Specialist
Brian worked for Champaign County Government and the University of Illinois College of Engineering in both administrative and IT roles. Brian graduated from the University of Illinois. In his free time, he loves recording and practicing music. His main instruments are the piano and guitar, which he’s played for over 15 years. Brian lives with his partner, Abby, in Wicker Park.

Megan Resener, Development Associate
Megan graduated from Indiana University in Bloomington with a degree in nonprofit management. During her time as a student there, she served as an intern and development assistant for the Office of Parent Engagement at the IU Foundation. She enjoys keeping company with her friends, watching IU basketball games, and exploring the city.

Jake Rosenbluth, Assistant Director, Family Life Programs
Jake rejoins us from the Francis W. Parker School where he was teaching grade five for the last two years. He previously worked at the as a teaching intern in Lab’s Extended Day program. Jake has a BFA from Kenyon College, and has worked as both an artist and carpenter in Chicago for several years.

Kristen Szewczyk, Lead Nurse
Prior to joining Lab, Kristen worked as an RN in the Emergency Department and taught elementary and middle school students in the Bronx, Chicago, and San Francisco. Kristen received her Master of Science in nursing from University of Illinois at Chicago. During her graduate work, she completed her clinical training at several school-based clinics and at Lurie Children’s Emergency Department. As an advanced practice nurse, Kristen works with Mobile Care Chicago on the asthma and allergy mobile clinic. Kristen holds a Bachelor of Science in education and social policy from Northwestern University and a Master of Science in teaching from Fordham University.

Lori Waterstraat, Nurse
Lori, a pediatric nurse for over 24 years, has been with Lab since the fall and became a permanent member of the team this spring. She earned her Bachelor of Science in nursing at James Madison University, and spent the first half of her career at Children’s Hospital, Philadelphia, working in pediatric cardiac surgery and in pediatric intensive care. Lori went back to school to get a school nursing certification and is excited to serve at Lab on the nursing team.

Michael Zarobe, Director of Alumni Relations
Michael joined the Alumni Relations and Development Office in March. Most recently, he was at Adler University as their director of alumni relations and annual fund. Michael’s 20-year career in alumni and donor relations and advancement has taken him to academic institutions including the University of Michigan College of Engineering, University Liggett School, (Michigan’s oldest co-educational independent school), and Wayne State University, where he also obtained both a BA and an MA in communications.
Current Faculty/Staff - New Roles

Sarah Abella - Dean of Students, N–2
Kimberly Banister - Department Support Associate, World Languages, Music, Fine Arts
Ann Marie Baumann - Associate Director, Family Life Programs, ESH
Amanda Brown - HR People Operations Partner
Justin Clark - Tech Support Specialist II
Debra DelCampo - Assistant Teacher, N–2
Michael Eldridge - Head Teacher, N–2
Andrea Hite - Assistant Director, Family Life Programs, ESH
Nancy Kubel - Assistant Director, Family Life Programs, ESH
Pam Nance - Procurement Manager
Ned Reece - Associate Director, Family Life Programs, Community Relations
Cathy Warren - Assistant Director, Family Life Programs, HC