

## Developing Innovative Teachers for the 21st Century

*The Innovative Teacher Program uses Nueva's pedagogy to enable associate teachers to advance their skills and enrich students' experience.*

**EVERY YEAR AT ONE OF** Nueva's teacher training institutes, we ask participants what capabilities and attributes they hope their students will take into the world. In response, a range of qualities burst from the crowd like popcorn: kindness, the ability to innovate, flexibility, critical thinking skills, initiative-taking, curiosity, problem-solving skills, resilience, self-awareness, courage, empathy, and the ability to collaborate. Add to this list the broad range of academic skills and subjects we hope our students explore deeply (STEAM, writing, and research, for example), and our participants paint a vivid picture of the goals of 21st century learning.

**TEACHERS, LIKE STUDENTS, DEVELOP THE SKILLS THEY PRACTICE.** Steeped in a school where learning is student-centered, project-based, and integrated, teachers at Nueva hone their ability to get to know each student deeply, to design novel and complex curricula, and to model and cultivate the dispositions associated with 21st century learning. As part of this learning community, teachers reflect on their practice, redesign curricula, seek feedback from students and parents, and invest in regular professional development. Nueva is a fertile environment for 21st century teacher training—and this was part of the school's mission from its founding.

**Today, more than two dozen new** and experienced teachers participate in Nueva's Innovative Teacher Program (ITP). To gain first-hand experience teaching in a constructivist, innovative environment, each associate teacher participates in all aspects of the school experience while engaging in regular professional development and contributing to action research. Through this program, associate teachers enrich the learning community at Nueva and bring their new skills to future classrooms in the Bay Area and beyond.



## Drawing from leading research

on teacher training, the ITP fully embraces a co-teaching model. With the support of a rigorous teacher-training program, co-teaching provides a number of benefits. New teachers with co-teaching experience develop stronger management and instructional skills, report greater confidence and success in their subsequent lead teaching roles, and stay in teaching at a significantly higher rate than those trained through a more traditional student teaching structure. Mentor teachers also benefit from exposure to new teaching practices introduced by their learning partners and from the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching practice. Classrooms with a co-teacher offer more differentiated learning opportunities, and students report feeling more connected to their teachers.

At Nueva, co-teachers are paired strategically to offer greater expertise and exposure to students. In the Lower School, a mentor teacher with a strong humanities background might be partnered with an associate teacher with a strong science education. In upper grades, where teachers take on more specific subjects, co-teachers bring diversity of educational backgrounds and work experience. Co-teachers offer students a range of personality types and teaching styles.

### Q:

ITP's Guiding Questions:

**HOW CAN WE** design curricula for deep learning?

**HOW CAN WE** leverage classroom culture to propel deep learning?

**HOW DO WE** create learning opportunities that allow our students to surprise us and themselves?

**HOW DO WE** create curricula, classrooms, and interactions that reflect social justice and equity?

**THE ITP HAS GROWN RAPIDLY IN SCOPE AND DEPTH.** A number of Nueva alumni have returned to participate in the program, sharing the love of learning they developed during their time as students. Associates have gone on to lead-teaching roles at Nueva and at other independent schools throughout the Bay Area. Those who have pursued graduate programs have found equal success, enrolling in education policy programs at Harvard, master's in teaching programs at Stanford and Mills College, and environmental education programs at Yale.

As the ITP program grows, it continues to evolve. Each year, we refine the professional development offerings, responding to new developments in the field and the interests of associate and lead teachers. We have deepened our connection to other schools, both to broaden our understanding of teaching practices and to prepare associate teachers for the demands of teaching in different learning environments.

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*"I saw that at the core of being a great teacher was caring, being genuine, and being excited. I saw all of the possibilities of what great learning could look like."*

