

Veteran Faculty and Staff: At the Heart of the Nueva Experience

The last five years have been a time of great growth at Nueva, as the school and community have more than doubled in size. We expanded to three divisions across two campuses, celebrated our 50th anniversary, and added new institutes and initiatives aimed at sharing our approach with the broader community. As we transitioned to this new and more expansive vision of our school, we made great efforts to preserve the values, pedagogy, and authenticity of purpose that are at the core of the Nueva experience. The faculty and staff featured here are among those who have been with us for over ten years; they have helped the Nueva community remain rooted in a sense of who we are and why we are here. At the conclusion of the school year last June, they were asked to reflect on their time and experience working at Nueva.

At Nueva, what makes working and learning unique?

"This is truly a dynamic and vibrant community. Every student, parenting adult, educator, and staff member is beyond committed to the students and the life of the school. This is a learning community — engagement and excitement are naturally expected and given. It's fun to be around people who make work interesting and not feel like work. There is never a dull moment and you know every day will offer something new, no matter how long you've been in the community." — Taryn Grogan, Director of Admissions (Joined Nueva in 2006)

"Nueva has deep roots in the progressive education movement, as do I. As an early childhood educator at Nueva, I have been given the rare opportunity to collaborate with teachers and administrators who also share my beliefs and values, but who work with older students. Most teachers of young children are in preschool only (stand-alone settings), but I have had the ability to see how the kind of teaching and learning I believe in essentially grows up and evolves. To be engaged in dialogue with such an invested and stimulating community has been an enormous source of growth for me." — Carolee Fucigna, PreK Teacher (Joined Nueva in 2001)

"Working at Nueva for almost 19 years has been the most exciting and amazing time of my life. It is challenging, stressful sometimes, but fun and educating for me. Nueva is so unique because of the community — from the administration, to the maintenance workers who make Nueva a wonderful place to work. It is surrounded by talented and kind-hearted people. I'm looking forward to more years working at Nueva." — Lourdes García, Accounting Specialist (Joined Nueva in 2000)

"One of the most unique aspects of working at Nueva has to do with our teacher/student relationships. At Nueva, teachers and students are true partners. Teachers aren't "in charge" of students, and there isn't a hierarchy. Teachers and students work together as wonderers, researchers, learners, and problem-solvers. This fundamental difference is rooted in our deep belief in social-emotional learning. That belief is integrated into everything we say and do. Because of this, we earn the students' trust and respect." — Laraine Ray, Kindergarten Teacher (Joined Nueva in 2004)

"The freedom to follow an intellectual path in pursuit of sharing the love of learning with children and adults in the context of making the world a kinder place with a deeper understanding of the human condition." — Cynthia Kosut, 8th Grade Dean and Humanities Teacher (Joined Nueva in 1990)

"Choice. We are not bound to a book or set of curriculum guides. We follow the questions of our students. We have access to resources that meet the needs of our students and the curriculum plans." — Stephanie Englehaupt, Lower School Math Specialist (Joined Nueva in 2005)

How has Nueva helped you grow as an educator, learner, or colleague?

"I am in an environment where I continually discover the nuances of what it means to be a gifted learner. In that sense, it gives me a larger appreciation and empathy for what we are doing for our students, and for the broader gifted education community. I am able to understand myself more, and thus my fellow human beings." — Ed Chen, Director of Technology (Joined Nueva in 2009)

"Nueva has helped me grow as an educator through countless interactions with students, parents, and colleagues, all of whom exhibit an openness to the wonder and pleasure of discovery — self-discovery as well as intellectual. Each day I work to find the magical balance between finding rich content (the juice), and developing the skills of critical thinking and creativity in my students." — Cynthia Kosut

"I am truly a student here at Nueva. Learn by Doing is our motto and our practice — no matter student or adult."

"I see myself in so many of our students. One area of growth is learning to accept my own mistakes. I seem to forgive others for errors before I will forgive myself. While I have grown tremendously in this area, I am still a work in progress. It's hard, but the good news is, I keep making mistakes, so I'm getting more comfortable every year!" — Taryn Grogan

"I have learned a great deal as a person, learner, educator, and parent in my eleven years at Nueva. The top five gems, which are often quoted on tours and in conversations with perspective families, about what I have learned through working with all members of the Nueva community are:

- The biggest failure is not trying.
- We all have learning differences.
- All children have the right to an education that meets their needs.
- We all want to be seen as we really are.
- The team is greater than the individual."

— Kim Overton, Assistant Director of Admissions (Joined Nueva in 2007)

Share a memory that captures the zeitgeist of the Nueva Experience

"At Nueva, we have access to 34 acres of a lush and beautiful landscape. Being able to walk out of my classroom with my students and easily explore this varied terrain has afforded me some of my most memorable teaching moments. Our property has inspired studies of mushrooms, water flow, seeds, rocks, trees, insects, and many other aspects of the natural world. Nueva's natural surroundings have allowed all of us in the PreK community to learn together, and thus become better 'noticers' of the world around us." — Carolee Fucigna

"Intense collaboration across the grade, calling upon each person's special skills, listening to and accepting the ideas of others, not being satisfied until it's right, independent problem solving outside the assignment, digging deeply and going beyond the simple story, empathy and higher-order thinking skills, bringing powerful emotions to bear — all this certainly captures something about the Nueva experience. Wouldn't you say?"

Reflecting on an experience from a few years ago, Matt said, "The class that is now in seventh grade had chosen The Odyssey for our annual fourth-grade play. They divided the story up into 22 scenes, and drew sticks to be randomly assigned in partners to write the script for their scene. Two students drew the scene after the Trojan war and before Odysseus left on his journey. After working on it for a while, they came up to me to say that there was nothing really happening in that scene, and they couldn't think of how to write it."

"I told them that Euripides had written an entire play about that part of the story called The Trojan Women. I pulled a copy of the play out of the closet and handed to them, suggesting that they especially look at the parts that involved Astyanax, Hector's young son, who was taken from his mother Andromache and killed by the Greeks. They read it together, and when I looked over at them, they were both crying. Through their tears, they said, 'This is great! We'll make all the parents cry!' — Matt Berman, Director, Nueva Center for the Humanities (Joined Nueva in 2001)

"It is a gift to come to Nueva, to work in this place. Our community has heard me say it before, 'It is like falling in love.' Our students surprise and delight me. I am personally transformed by my individual conversations with them, to be able to share their excitement, passions, joys, questions, and concerns. I love overhearing snippets of their conversations in the hall and to be in close proximity to witness the ways they solve problems, not only for themselves, but for the world around them. We are truly growing good people who think and care deeply.

I am energized by attending school performances, brown bags, student standing meetings, culminations, and so much more! To witness these demonstrations of student growth and accomplishment makes every day worthwhile. Our students are amazing." — Diane Rosenberg, Head of School (Joined Nueva in 2001)