

The Peak to Peak Alumni Magazine

# Piqued

**/ˈpēkt/** (verb) to excite interest or curiosity, to arouse an emotion or provoke to action



## EDIFY

Volume 5: Issue 2  
May 2022

Rebounding from the pandemic has meant a return to K-12 collaboration with renewed energy and enthusiasm. Across school levels, content areas, and disciplines, we see our students and staff members working together to provide unique experiences for students. Partnerships, teamwork, and mentoring opportunities ignite curiosity and creativity through a shared learning journey.

### In this issue:

- Ms. Reeser Leaves a Legacy
- Spotlight on Mentorship
- Puma Families
- Mentor Teachers
- Strategic Plan Renewal
- Introducing “Peak Week”

# Farewell Message from Ms. Reeser

Executive Director of Education



## Dear Peak to Peak alumni,

In any new position, the opportunity to be guided by someone who has walked the path before you is an incredible gift. Just as it is in the classroom for students, we know that adults learn in incremental ways, and having a go-to person with whom you can openly share questions, thoughts, ideas and even challenges or frustrations as you're getting up to speed in a new role can be hugely helpful in that learning process.

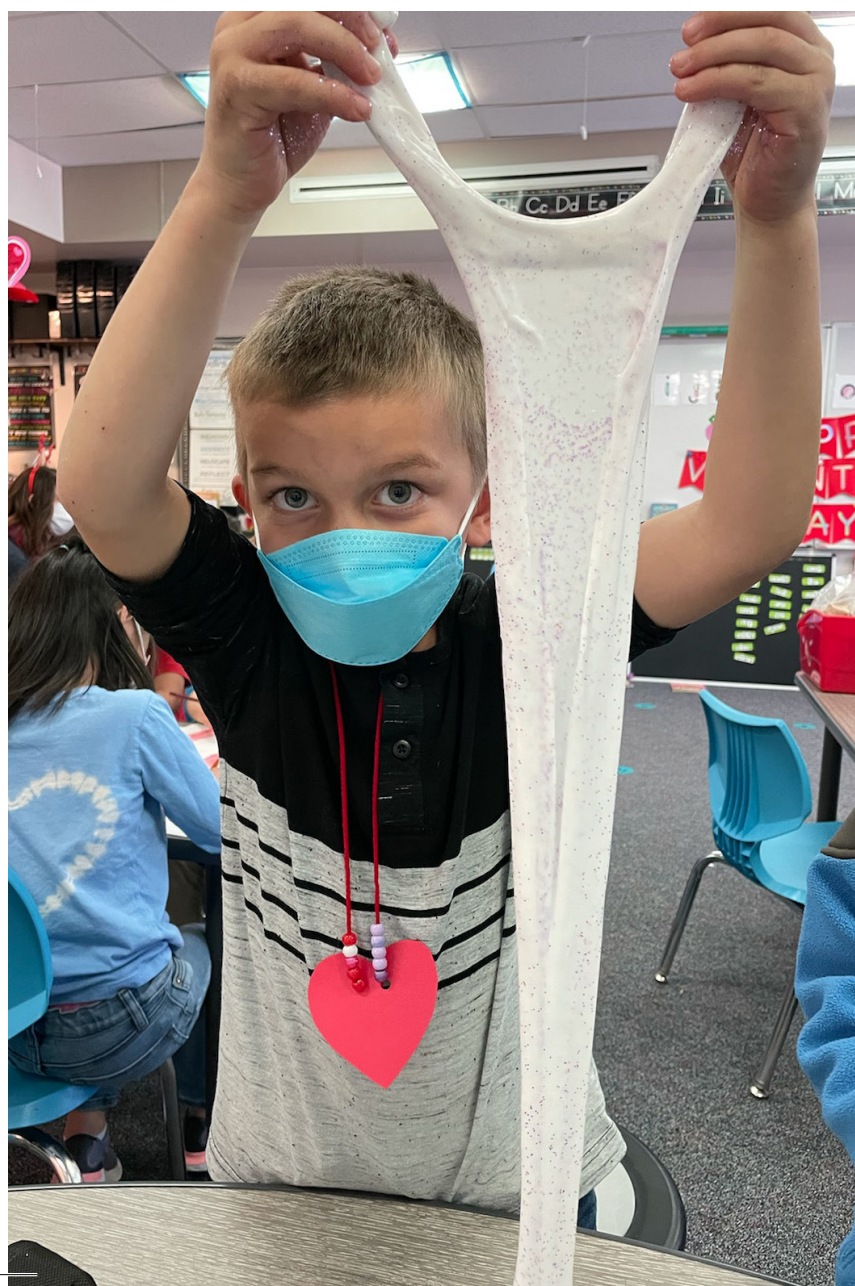
In that vein, mentoring is an important part of Peak to Peak's onboarding process for teachers, counselors, administrators and other employees. Mentors are assigned to all new teachers, counselors, and administrators, and they serve as that go-to person for new employees for a full year, with regular one-on-one meeting times scheduled each month.

Next year, as we prepare to welcome a new Executive Director of Education (EDE) to Peak to Peak, I'm excited to serve as the mentor for that person. I'm looking forward to sharing information about our school's history, best practices, procedures, job duties and responsibilities, as well as my thoughts on the most important priorities to focus on as the school moves forward. In this way, I am happy to reflect back the incredible support and guidance that has helped me so much in my 10 years as the Executive Director. It will be my pleasure to listen, guide, answer questions, or brainstorm solutions to problems that arise. Retiring from Peak to Peak is certainly bittersweet for me after so many years of being integrally involved in the school, but my highest priority is to do all I can to ensure that Peak to Peak is set up for the best possible future. Mentoring the new EDE is one way that I can create a smooth leadership transition and, in doing so, help support the school's success in the future. In keeping with the motto, **"Once a Puma, Always a Puma,"** I will look forward to staying connected with this wonderful community in the years to come!

With all my best wishes,

*Kelly Reeser*

Executive Director of Education  
from 2012 to 2022





*On the cover: 10th grade students visit 4th graders for an economics lesson.*

*Left: Kindergarten students made slime during a science lesson.*

*Above top: With spring in full swing, it's hard to remember how cold and snowy it was just a few weeks ago.*

*Above: Students in the high school Engineering the Future class support and guide middle school students taking Introduction to Engineering and Design.*

*Right: Kindergarten students left the cold and white of winter behind, and welcomed spring with beautiful colors and wishes of friendship!*

# News & Noteworthy

# Empower

## BUILD A BETTER WORLD

Lily Zhao (10th grade) won a national award for a video game she created in her Innovation class. Lily's creation, called Hegemony, won a national award in the Games for Change "Build a Better World" 2021 challenge. This game engages players in a Minecraft world where celebrating diverse cultures conquers all! You can play Lily's amazing game in the Student Arcade. [Click here to play the game.](#)

## INTERNATIONAL WORLD OF 7 BILLION POPULATION

Ranye Ezenekwe (9th grade) won 2nd place in the International World of 7 Billion Population Video Contest in the Agriculture category. The contest receives on average 2000 entries across three categories from all over the world. All 9th graders participate in this contest as part of the Population unit in Human Geography. [Click here to watch the video.](#)

## HEALTHY COMMUNITY AWARD

Siddharth Nareddy (10th grade), JP Kerrane (10th grade), and Nivedita Prabhu (12th grade) worked with a number of other Boulder County high school students who were recognized by Boulder County Public Health with the Healthy Community Award. These students developed a public awareness social media campaign to promote healthy drinks. Their work exposes the negative and disproportionate impact that targeted advertising of sugary drinks can have on disadvantaged groups. The campaign resulted in over 820,000 impressions and is still growing.

[Click here to read the press release.](#)

[Click here to watch a video of the award ceremony.](#)

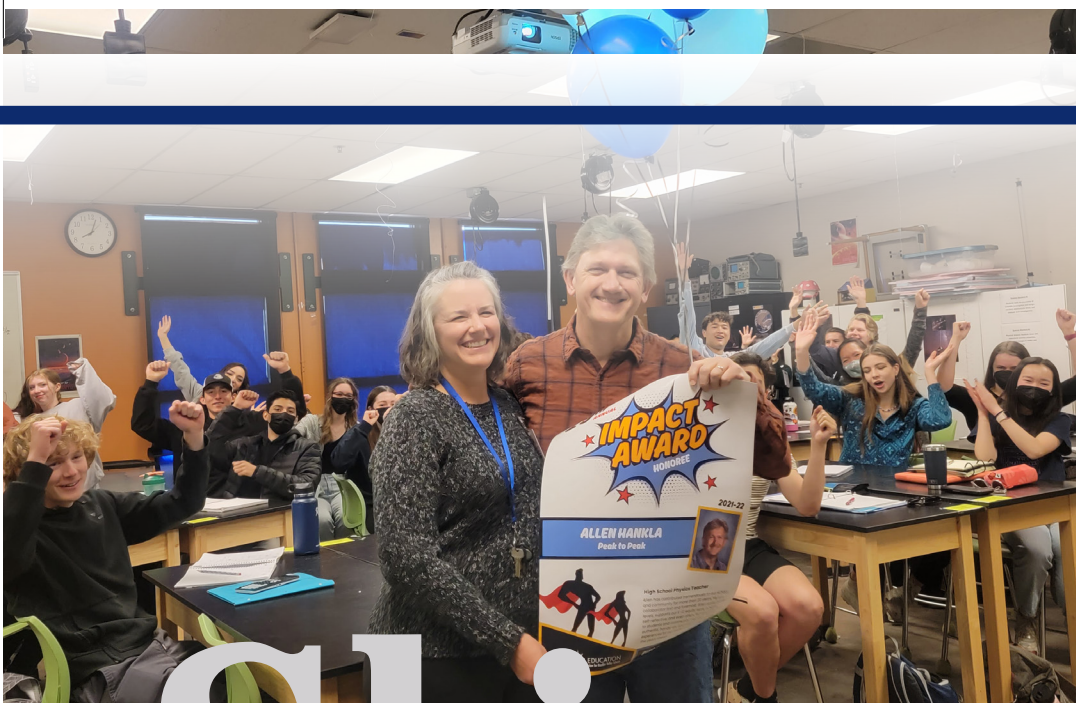
## HALL OF FAME LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



Kelly Reeser, Peak to Peak's Executive Director of Education, was honored at the 2022 Colorado State Charter School Conference with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her years of service at Peak to Peak, but also in the broader charter school community.

"Based on the sheer number of nominations that this beloved #CharterSchool leader has received, we could not find a more deserving winner for this year's Lifetime Achievement Award. Kelly Reeser has given more than 20 years of service to the charter school sector. A founder of Peak to Peak Charter School, she co-chaired the first grant writing committee, co-authoring grant applications that brought in more than \$1 million worth of start-up funding. A co-chair or member of the Hiring & Organizational Development Team since the first year of operation, she served as an elected member of the school's board prior to becoming Executive Director of Education. In addition to her work at Peak to Peak, she has served as a consultant with the CDE's Schools of Choice unit, working with charter schools across the state conducting trainings, grant writing workshops, and school evaluations."

[Read more via this link.](#)



## HANKLA RECEIVES 2022 IMPACT AWARD

Mr. Hankla was recognized as Peak to Peak's 2022 Impact Award winner! Mr. Hankla has been at Peak to Peak since the very beginning, starting as a volunteer in 2000 and later joining the staff in 2008. As a high school science teacher, he has taught just about every Peak to Peak graduate since he began his tenure. He built the curriculum for the Physics courses around a practical model of entrepreneurship and a series of mind-bending essential questions such as: "What happens if you actually reach the speed of light?" "Can you use electric fields to levitate?" and "Can UFOs really turn at right angles?"

From his early years managing the Accountability Committee for our school, to his innovative approach to using Requests for Proposal (RFPs) as his main project assessments, Mr. Hankla has proven to be a highly creative, enthusiastic and down-to-Earth educator that students love and respect at Peak to Peak. Moreover, his peers and administrators value him for his model collaboration, support for equity in STEM and commitment to a growth mindset no matter what he approaches.

**ESSWEIN NAMED AS FINALIST** MS. Kayleigh Esswein, High School English Teacher, has been nominated as one of the four finalists for the Imogene "Jean" Maxon Early Educator Award from BVSD's Impact on Education Foundation.

# Shine

## CONGRESSIONAL APP CHALLENGE

Aditya Nandyal (10th grade) was awarded 1st place in the 2021 Congressional App Challenge! In addition, Yosha and Avanti Gautam (10th grade) were awarded 2nd place! "The Congressional App Challenge is an annual competition hosted by Members of Congress, and is the most prestigious prize in student computer science."

"I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity, and I hope my app influences Gen Z to help reduce our impact on the planet," said Aditya, the first place winner in this year's challenge, whose app focuses on interactively tackling climate change.

The press release from Congressman Neguse, [linked here](#), includes [a link to a video Aditya created to demonstrate the winning app](#).

## OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE PRIZE

Alex Henry (9th grade) is one of ten students in the U.S. to win the Outstanding Performance prize for his original song "Phillis Wheatley, the First of Her Kind." This song, like the ones Lin Manuel Miranda wrote for Hamilton, was based on historical fact and inspired by Alex's analysis of primary source documents. His historical analysis, innovative songcraft and excellent singing wowed the professional judges. This spring, the Gilder Lehrman Institute will fly Alex to NYC for a performance of Hamilton and a chance to ask the cast questions. He will also have the opportunity to view the rare primary source documents on display in the Gilder Lehrman Collection. [Click here to view the video of Alex singing his original song.](#)



# Innovate

## WORLD SERIES OF INNOVATION

Two Peak to Peak students have earned the distinction of being Finalists in the World Series of Innovation!

Sydney Lewis's (9th grade) amazing innovation Hydroilet was a top ten finalist in the Bank of the West Move on Climate Change Challenge. See her idea for an eco-friendly [toilet with a flushing turbine through this link](#).

Olin Harrison Anguiano's (9th grade) sophisticated program R360 was also a top ten finalist in the Bank of the West Move on Climate Change Challenge. See his idea to restore healthy soil through a [grazing rotation initiative through this link](#).

These students used the UN Sustainability Goals to innovate unique solutions to change our world for the better and they were recognized in this international competition for their fabulous concepts.

## SOLVE FOR

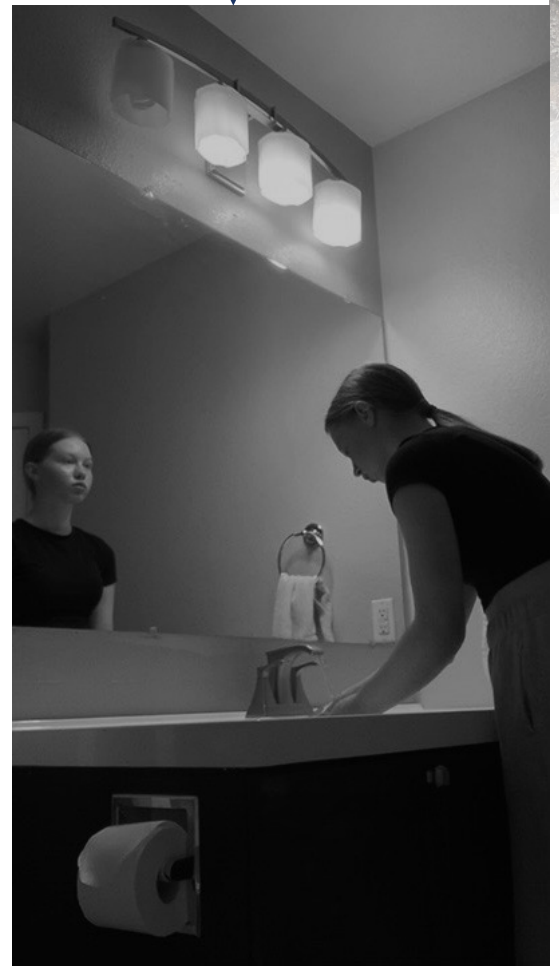
**TOMORROW** Students from Ms. Letter's innovation class have been named 2021-22 State Winners in the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow competition! It's great to see their hard work celebrated as they strive to develop a STEM solution to an issue that impacts our local community. Solve for Tomorrow is a "nationwide education competition that challenges 6-12th grade students and their teachers to creatively use STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) skills to tackle local issues of national importance while keeping sustainability in mind." The winning team's project idea will use GIS mapping and citizen science to help with pine beetle infestations and will receive funding from Samsung. Ms. Letter hopes to take a spring field trip to track infested trees after creating the interactive GIS tools with a Samsung mentor. Addie O'Connell (10th grade) and Jade Fernandez (9th grade) are the student leads on this project.

## AT&T INVENTOR'S

**CHALLENGE** Max Turczyn-Scheppach (9th grade) and Aizek Kemp (9th grade) have won the 2021 AT&T Inventor's Challenge! Their innovative Water Tracking App impressed the judges and out of more than 26,000 students participating, they were chosen as the winners of the Grace Hopper Incubator prize for the best group project. Max and Aizek created an app to help awareness of water waste and preserve this precious resource.

## "WATER RISING"

Chloe Veitzer (10th grade) won an award in the international Bowseat Ocean Awareness competition with her response to the 2021 theme "Water Rising." Her photograph, "Water Privilege," creates a reflection on the incredible privilege that is clean water and the disparity that exists. She earns a cash prize to further her passion for water equity and art.



Left and above right: Eighth grade students participated in team building activities through an outdoor education program. Rock climbing, rappelling, fire-building, and archery were highlights for the students.



# News & Noteworthy



## PEAK TO PEAK IN THE TOP 1%

Each year in the spring, school ratings and rankings are announced, lining up schools across the country to identify those that are demonstrating success. To be sure, “success” is defined by the data available, by various priorities, and by the algorithms established by the reporting entities like U.S. News & World Report, The Jay Mathews Challenge Index, Niche, Great Schools, and many others. These algorithms change frequently, so while the rankings are a positive way to showcase student success, first and foremost, we consider them the result of work we have been doing consistently since Peak to Peak started. Fundamentally, our focus is on each individual student as a human being with great promise and potential, not on chasing after the rankings. Having a K-12 community means we can personalize learning experiences and create opportunities for students and staff alike. Our success is about relationships as much as it is our ongoing dedication to high expectations, rigorous instruction, and risk-taking through innovative practices. We value authentic learning, character development, and people. The rankings are simply a byproduct of our passion and mission. It’s true that the recognition we gain through these rankings helps all current and future alumni in their search for their best-fit schools by garnering the attention of thousands of colleges and universities across the nation and around the globe. We are grateful that the hard work and dedication of our students and staff are reflected in these rankings.

US News and World Report ranks Peak to Peak at #210 out of 24,000 high schools and #56 of charter high schools. Peak to Peak is #1 in the Boulder Valley School District and #6 in Colorado. This places Peak to Peak solidly among the top 1% of America’s 24,000 high schools. [Click here to see the U.S. News rankings.](#)

The Jay Mathews Challenge Index ranks Peak to Peak at #100 of the top high schools in the nation. [Click here to see the Jay Mathews Challenge Index rankings.](#)

Niche recognizes Peak to Peak as #2 in Colorado at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. [Click here to see the Niche rankings.](#)

## THE STATE OF CIVICS

Ms. Kathleen Weil (Elementary Technology Teacher) was recently interviewed on the topic of Digital Citizenship for a BrainPop blog. Through her work on this topic, Ms. Weil was also contacted by the Ronald Reagan Institute who invited her to participate in a panel discussion in their series, “State of Civics” with Colorado’s Commissioner of Education. [Click here to watch the video.](#)

From the blog:

“I believe it’s important to help students identify that their character plays an important role when working online,” says Kathleen Weil, whose school maintains a strong focus on character education. “Character traits from our school program that I incorporate into my digital citizenship lessons include respect, responsibility, kindness, integrity, self-control, cooperation, and perseverance.” [Read the full blog article by clicking here.](#)

# Grow

# Spotlight on Mentors

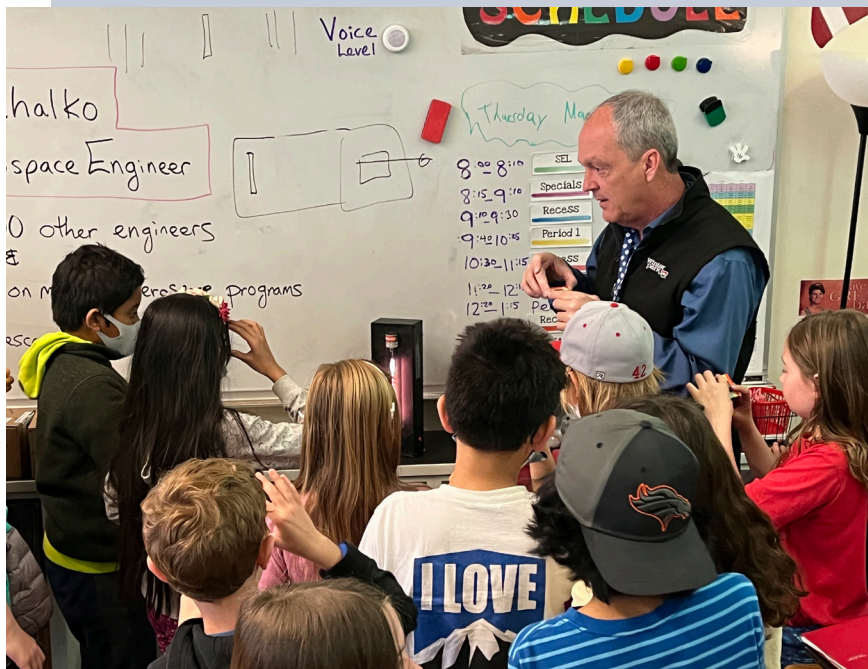
## Rachel O'Connor, Class of 2014

Mentorship hasn't just shaped my career; it's made my career possible. While there have been many mentors who have helped me along my path, Phil Mehalko stands out among them. Mr. Hankla introduced me to Phil during my senior year at Peak to Peak. I was a space-obsessed teenager who wanted nothing more than to be an astronaut, and he was looking for someone to lead some Peak to Peak payload teams for the BIRST program (a collaboration between Ball Aerospace, United Launch Alliance, and K-12 schools across the country). Phil patiently allowed me to talk his ear off about space missions and learn the ropes of leading teams of rocket-builders, leading to Peak to Peak's first BIRST launch in the summer of 2014.

Right after that, I went off to college to study astrophysics, and kept in touch with Phil. He always reminded me that working in the aerospace industry was an option, but I was stubborn. I had my sights set on academics, and a professorship in astronomy. But I also overdid it—I spent my summers working

at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center and my semesters overloaded with classes and research, and I burned out. I turned to Phil for advice on what to do next. He encouraged me to look at taking a gap year in industry while applying for grad school, helped me learn the lingo necessary to sell my physics degree to companies looking for engineers, and helped me prepare for interviews. And I got the job! I was fully set to work at Ball Aerospace for a year, then head off to get my PhD in astrophysics and get back to my original grand plans for life.

Well, you know what they say about the best-laid plans. My original grad school dreams didn't work out (which is a nicer way of saying I got rejected \*everywhere\*). It was tough—I was heartbroken, embarrassed, and didn't feel like I deserved to have a role in space. It was a really hard time, but having a strong network of mentors like Phil got me through it. He encouraged me to not only stay in aerospace, but grow as an engineer and try out different roles. At a time when I felt like my dream was ending, he



## Phil Mehalko, Community Volunteer

My perspective on mentoring echo Rachel's comments on how we adapt to life's challenges. That is, as a high school student, I never would have thought that I would be mentoring elementary, middle and high school students, but when the opportunity presented itself, it seemed like a natural thing for me to do. For me, I would say that mentoring is a team sport. That is, it is so much more gratifying to overcome challenges when you can share success with others.

When I first met Rachel, she was a sophomore and one of the first students at Peak to Peak to participate in the Ball Aerospace and United Launch Alliance student rocket program. What struck me about this opportunity was that I, a hiring manager at Ball



# ship

kept my spirits up and pushed me to grow through the experience. It genuinely changed my life, and I'm incredibly thankful to have him as a mentor.

Now, I'm a systems engineer and deputy capture manager in Ball's Civil Space division, working with teams of scientists and engineers to design the space missions of the future. In my time at Ball I've worked on a wide variety of missions and instruments—the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope, Operational Land Imager 2, the Ozone Mapping and Profiler Suite for JPSS-3, dozens of technology development projects for Earth Science, Planetary Science, and Astrophysics, and many more missions coming soon to a NASA press release near you! I'm also spending my evenings getting an MBA at the CU Leeds School of Business with a focus on space sustainability. It's not the exact path I planned, but thanks to wonderful mentors, some grit, and a ton of luck, I'm getting everything I wanted: a chance to shape our understanding of the universe.



## Volunteer and Mentor

Aerospace, was able to work with future engineers and scientists at the high school level. And through this collaboration, I could help with real-world career direction and advice starting in high school through college. (I correlate this to how in sports we track performance starting in high school, but in science and engineering, we don't track performance until after college graduation.) In Rachel, I saw that she had an amazing drive and passion for science. I knew that she would be successful in any science or engineering opportunity that came her way. So, fundamentally, I felt my job as a mentor was to help Rachel find and reach for any opportunity aligned with her passions. I often imagine about the possibilities and outcomes when we all take a little time to mentor and help our students.

Left: Mr. Phil Mehalko, community volunteer, visits fourth-grade classrooms and provides a lesson on the use of spectrometers.

Right top: Rachel O'Connor pictured with Mr. Phil Mehalko at graduation in 2014.

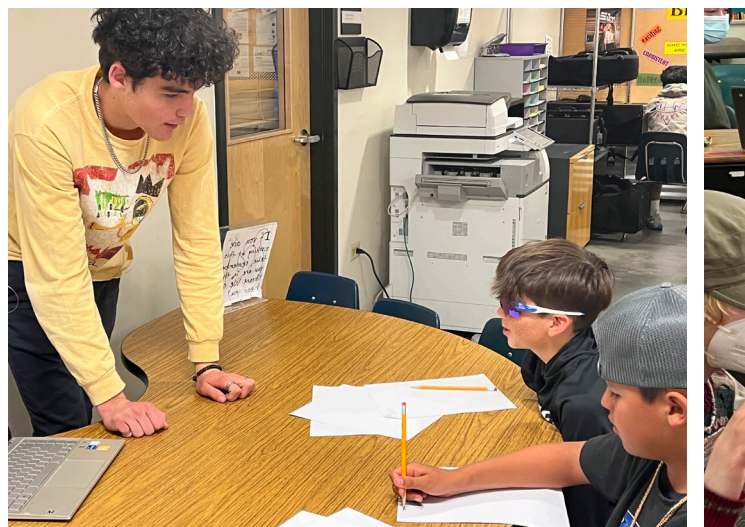
Right bottom: Rachel O'Connor at the 235th American Astronomical Society meeting.



## Sohan Sur, Class of 2020

Mr. Schaefer was a foundational figure in my education at Peak to Peak, providing me with numerous opportunities to learn, educate, and apply my knowledge of chemistry. I began my chemistry education in 10th grade chemistry and fell in love with the subject, its intricacies, and its applications. I yearned for more hands-on practice throughout my sophomore year and Mr. Schaefer noticed. He offered me the opportunity to be a Teaching Assistant (TA) in his Honors Chemistry class, letting me create lessons, teach other students, and practice unseen chemical techniques to further understand chemical concepts.

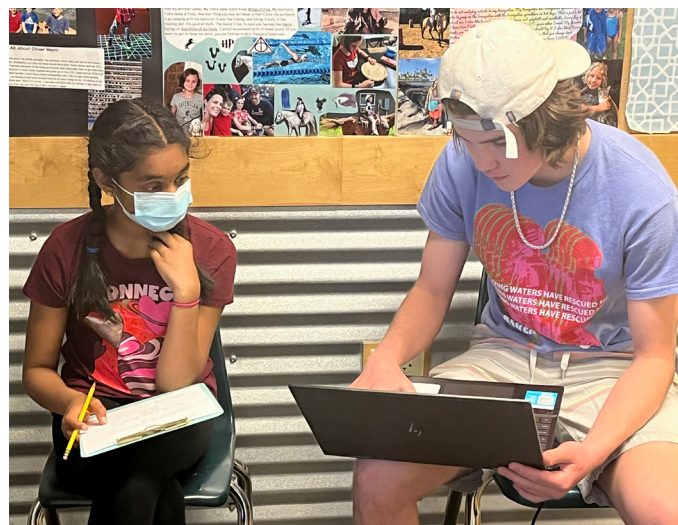
Mr. Schaefer stoked a passion for education in me, and I was eager to accept a position as an AP Chemistry TA during my senior year of high school. He met with me outside of school hours to discuss pedagogical techniques, reviewed my lessons, and offered unequivocal support for my quest to teach. He showed me why teachers fall in love with teaching, something few students are able to witness. I entered the University of Colorado - Boulder, as a chemistry and secondary education major thanks to the constant support of Mr. Schaefer. I will always appreciate the insights he offered and I look forward to becoming a chemistry teacher like him someday!



**K-12 Collaboration and Mentorship**  
Sophomore students visit fourth-

## Austin Ringold, Eighth Grade

**As part of my ALPS project this year at Peak to Peak, I chose to research biotechnology to gain a deeper understanding of different sciences, and it is easy to say that I could not have learned so much without the guidance of Mr. Rozinsky, [Middle School Literacy Interventionist]. When I started, I had no idea what I was going to do with my project, or what my products would be. Mr. Rozinsky, however, tailored my ideas into a realistic project idea based on the thoughts I had. This project concept involved researching biotechnology and writing a paper directed to high school students looking for career options and highlighting the best aspects of biotechnology. After completing my paper, I was shocked at just how much I had learned about biotechnology, and how passionate I had become about it. It would not have been possible without the very valuable insights of Mr. Rozinsky, so I am extremely grateful for his assistance. ([Click here to read Austin's paper.](#))**



**mentoring:**  
8th-grade classrooms for an economics lesson.

## Fabian Dauzvardis, Class of 2017

Mr. Schaefer played a pivotal role as a mentor to me. My passion for science blossomed in middle school with teachers Mr. Grant Safranek, Mr. Brian Knox, and Ms. Andrea Smith. The seventh grade Salish Sea trip certainly fed my curiosity, but it was my 8th grade science fair project that truly sparked my interest in the field of chemistry. As my project developed, Mr. Schaefer supported the use of the high school laboratory and the more sophisticated equipment I needed to complete my project. As I was finalizing my research phase, I was, at the same time, registering for my first year of high school coursework. Mr. Schaefer agreed to let me double up in science, registering to take both biology and chemistry during my freshman year. This opened up the opportunity for me to take AP Chemistry during my junior year, then continue as a teaching assistant in the AP course during my senior year at Peak to Peak. During that time, I developed a lab assignment for Mr. Schaefer that AP Chemistry students are still using today! This was my first venture into teaching chemistry.

I have since completed my undergraduate studies at Beloit College in Wisconsin –a selection guided in large part to Mr. Schaefer’s commitment to “learning by doing”– where I was a teaching assistant for three years spanning general, analytical, and organic chemistry. Today, I am pursuing a Ph.D. in inorganic chemistry at the University of Delaware. I am regularly teaching courses and plan to pursue a career in academia, teaching at the college level. I credit Mr. Schaefer with key components of my approach to education. It was Mr. Schaefer’s mentorship that opened doors during a critical point of development during my time at Peak to Peak. While my commitment to teach in the field was solidified in my undergraduate studies, tending that early spark made a significant impact on my trajectory.

## Kurt Schaefer, High School Chemistry Teacher

When I was in college, I realized that while I enjoyed the research, I was much happier when I had a chance to help others. I relished the opportunity to take a break from the research and instead help someone else negotiate their way through difficult content. This is ultimately why I decided to pursue teaching; it was a more rewarding experience for me. I recognized a familiar pattern in both Sohan and Fabian. They each showed a spark of joy when given the opportunity to share

what they know and to help their peers understand and find the same affinity they have for the subject matter. That’s what our Teaching Assistant program is designed to provide. It is an opportunity for students to further explore. With both Sohan and Fabian, I was able to share the constructs of inquiry based learning and why I believe it is a successful process for students to not just acquire knowledge but to build the knowledge themselves through their own curiosity and experiences.

# Puma Families

## Mother & Daughter



**Traci Schoeneweis**  
Director of the Executive Office

**& Katie Domman**  
Elementary Music  
and Class of 2010

**Katie:** I began subbing for BVSD and Peak to Peak right after graduating from college. I subbed for all levels and subjects including a long-term sub position for high school social studies! During one of the Peak to Peak teacher job fairs, a former Puma teacher who was the executive director at a charter school in Aurora let me know about a full-time elementary music position opening, so I quickly applied and was hired. In the meantime, I maintained contact with many Puma staff members and kept an eye open to see if any music positions became available. My position of choice opened up and I jumped on the chance to join the team here again.

**Traci:** I became a founding family of Peak to Peak back in 1998. The idea of a K-12 school was intriguing to me. I had worked in corporate finance but was ready to pour into something with deeper meaning and that I believed in and supported. I went to an informational meeting about this proposed school and I was all on board! I haven't left since.

We both agree that Peak to Peak has always been an important part of our family and to be able to share our passion for this place together on a daily basis is awesome! We enjoy free lunch dates and it's easy to get advice from each other. We are excited to be able to see each other living our passions here on site.

No matter what the weather, you will see both of us out there in our yellow vests doing traffic duty. We also look forward to mashed potato Mondays and sharing leftovers so lunch has become easier to pack each day. We both have the same days off and have made mutual friends so that is such a nice bond we share together.

# Together

**Scott Hensen**  
Maintenance Technician

**Megan Hensen**  
Fourth Grade Teacher  
& Class of 2009

**Kelley Ward**  
Peak to Peak Substitute Teacher

**Megan:** After working for Peak to Peak for the last six years, I finally convinced Scott to join the Puma family. After fixing all the things for me in my classroom for free, he finally decided he should get paid for his services. Thus, his career as a maintenance person evolved. One of the best things about working together is being able to see one another at school every so often. When I forget my keys, I always have a backup! Another bonus is that Kinley is learning that Peak to Peak is her second home. We love walking her over here from our house for family work sessions!

**Kelley:** I love supporting my kids in any way I can, so when Megan asked me to get certified to be a substitute teacher in 2020, I decided that would be a great way to support both my daughter and the school that had served my family well for so many years. It is so much fun when I get to sub for her with the plans my own daughter has created, and I get instant notoriety because I'm "Mrs. Hensen's mom!" I have enjoyed getting to know Megan's co-workers and to see how well the school is still doing after getting to be a part of opening the school from day one!

## Family



## Partners



**Kristie Letter**  
High School Innovation Teacher  
& **Bobby Letter**  
High School Math Teacher

**Kristie:** More than twenty years ago, I was taking a walk in Lafayette and literally saw a sign, hand-lettered. It said they were opening a new secondary school and looking for English teachers. At the time, I was teaching literature at CU but this little sign struck me as having huge significance and I decided to apply, thinking, "How different could secondary students be from college students?" When I went in for my demonstration lesson with fifth graders, I discovered these young students were very different from the college students. For five years, I loved working at Peak to Peak, but something was missing. Then, when I saw the new math teacher across the hall, everything fell into place. I once thanked the hiring committee for having the good sense to employ Bobby Letter, the love of my life (I hear he also teaches well.) I love working with my husband; we eat lunch together every day and he doesn't find my work stories boring at all!

## Family



**Brian Knox**  
Middle School Science Teacher

**Lenore Knox**  
Athletics & Activities Assistant

**Brian:** I started working at Peak to Peak in 2006 after moving to Colorado from Madison, WI. We had come out to Colorado in the summer of 2005 and fell in love with the place. We were looking for a place that is warmer than Wisconsin for Lenore, but not too humid for me. Lenore got a job at the Boulder Rec Center where she stayed until our twin boys were born. Lenore's current position is a good fit for us since we live so close and we are all on the same schedule so that we can enjoy our down time together as a family. I would say that is the best part about working at the same place. Lenore's previous jobs were pretty busy in the summer and less so during the school year. Being on the same schedule is great. This is actually the second time we have worked at the same place. We met while driving WWII DUKW boats in the Wisconsin Dells. We worked for rival companies for a while and then she came over to my company at the end of the summer. The rest is history!

**Lenore:** Ditto to what Brian said! It's all about spending time together and going on fun adventures during down time.

# Puma Families

## **Yolanda Meiler** Middle School Spanish Teacher

## **& Ilse Meiler** High School French Teacher and Class of 2016

**Yolanda:** I am beyond excited to have the opportunity to share my passion for teaching with my daughter Ilse Meiler. It looks like it was yesterday when she started at Peak to Peak in the 4th grade!

Our dedication to the students and our passion for teaching and languages are extremely important to us, and we could not be happier to share this wonderful community of dedicated families and staff.

Carpooling every day has also been terrific!

### **OTHER FAMILIES ON STAFF:**

- Rachel Hirt, Friends of Peak to Peak & Eric Hirt, Middle School Girls Basketball Coach
- Chris Ford, Middle School Boys Basketball Coach & Kara Ford, Middle School Track and Cross Country Coach
- Evan Eschmeyer, High School Boys Basketball Coach & Kristina Eschmeyer, High School Girls Basketball Coach
- James Wagenschutz, High School Boys Soccer Coach & Katherine Wagenschutz, High School Girls Volleyball Coach
- Allen Hankla, High School Physics Teacher & Nina Hankla, Accounts Payable and Payroll

## **Liz Tarbutton** High School Math Teacher

## **& Terri Tarbutton** Accounts Payable and Payroll

**Liz:** I came to Peak to Peak because I was friends with some of the math teachers who encouraged me to apply every time there was an opening. They believed I'd be a great fit here; so I did! My mom actually taught at the same high school I attended, so this isn't the first time we've been together 9 to 5. The best part of working here with my mom is that I always have someone to grab coffee with.

**Terri:** I came to Peak to Peak because I was looking to return to a school environment. My previous experience was working in middle school, high school, and district level accounting positions. I appreciate being able to see my daughter in the working environment. My favorite moment was the day she received the Crystal Apple award. (Terri retired in the spring of 2022).

## Mother & Daughter





Did you ever wish you had a better idea of what college or a job would actually be like? Current students have a lot of ideas of possible majors or careers they may want to pursue without having concrete knowledge of what an academic program or career path actually entails. In order to help current and future Peak to Peak students determine their best fit for post high school options, we are putting out a call for contact information for Peak to Peak alumni, parents/guardians, and community members who would be interested in sharing their education and work experiences with our current students. Currently, this would include

email communication or a phone/video call. In the future, we are imagining this could include a job shadow or short internship opportunity.

Peak to Peak students are interested in learning more about all career fields and we would love to have contacts for students in as many different areas as possible. If you would be willing to share your experiences with a Peak to Peak student, please use the links below:

[Click  
HERE](#)

OR







Senior Decision Day! Every year during the first week of May, our College Counseling Center celebrates the graduating class. Students are holding the pennants from their selected colleges and universities to share their decision with our community.

Top and opposite: Parents from the Class of 2022 decorated the school with a display of paper flowers and graduation caps to honor our seniors in their final weeks of school.

# Mentor Teachers

Peak to Peak uses a mentoring model to support our teachers, counselors, and administrators. Whether they are new to our school, new to their role, or simply in need of additional support, mentors provide insight and expertise in a differentiated and individualized manner. The mentor-mentee relationship, when partnered with explicit expectations and structures, is a proven avenue toward increasing teacher mastery and retaining quality staff. All new instructional staff members receive a mentor during their first year. In subsequent years, mentors may be assigned for a variety of reasons. Regardless of the timing or the reason, mentoring sets the foundation for a collaborative professional learning experience for all staff members, and provides a path for integrating into our community.

For initially licensed teachers, the state of Colorado requires completion of an induction program prior to applying for a professional license. Peak to Peak has had a state-approved induction program since 2001, however, it's not just for individuals who are new to the profession. Peak to Peak requires all teachers, counselors, and administrators who are new to our school, regardless of their prior experience or licensure, to complete our program. This tenet not only raises the overall educational school



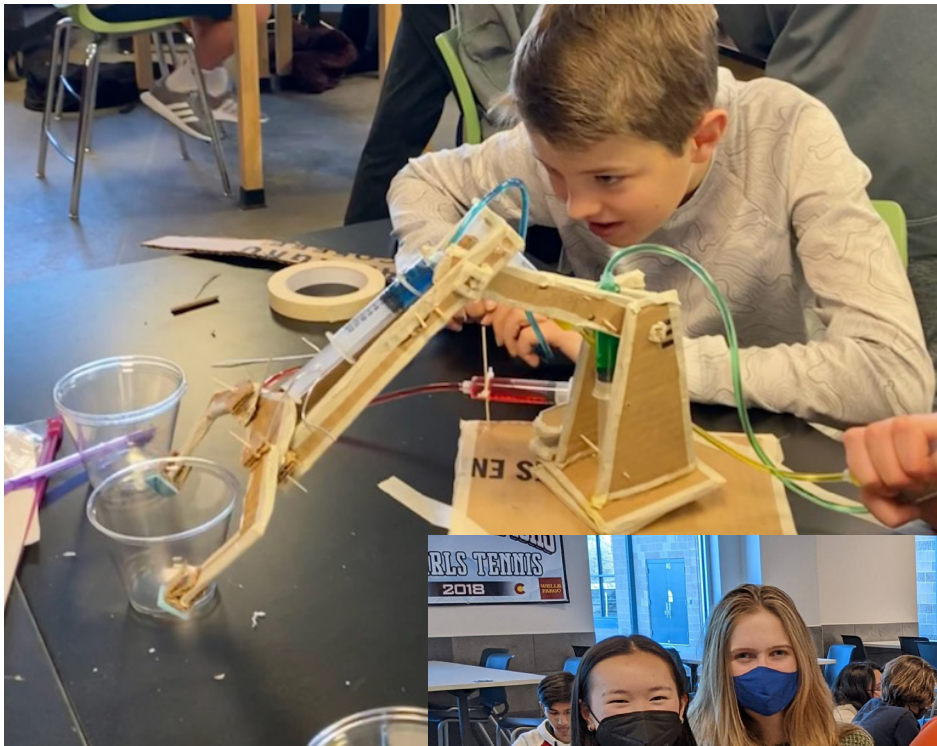
quality, it aids in student academic achievement. While there are a number of components to the induction program, including regular workshops, written reflections, observations, etc., it is the mentoring component of the program that is consistently reported to be the most impactful element of the program. Each year, participants reflect with enthusiasm a deep appreciation for their mentors.

For those who have already completed our induction program, but who are changing roles or who need additional support, a mentor can make a big difference. In this way, Peak to Peak continues to build community and understanding

among our staff. All of our mentors, whether it is through the induction program or otherwise, are selected in collaboration with administration. Selected mentors are offered the opportunity, but participate at their discretion. All mentors receive a stipend for their efforts. Most mentors are assigned for a full year, though there are exceptions based on the circumstances. By serving as a mentor, our master teachers and counselors also have opportunities to grow in their own professional trajectory. Some of our mentors have been at Peak to Peak for over a decade while others may have only recently completed the induction program themselves. The opportunity to mentor another is not limited by one's credentials. Rather, mentors are selected because their demonstrated skills and abilities align with the needs of the mentee.

For more than 20 years, mentoring strategies at Peak to Peak have created avenues for our teachers to work closely with one another. Our students benefit from the increased instructional excellence, and the mentoring program also serves as a model for adult collaboration. With this proven track record of success, Peak to Peak will look to expand mentoring opportunities to our support staff and students through the priorities in the upcoming strategic plan renewal.





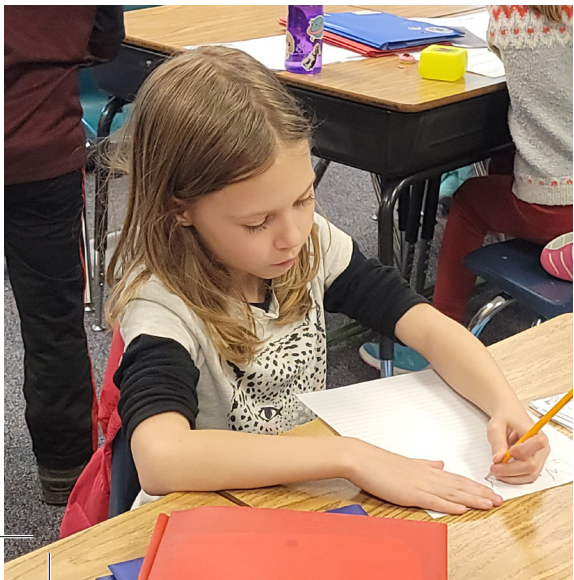
Left: Middle school students in Introduction to Engineering and Design built robotic arms using hydraulics.



Below: Teams gather in the cafeteria on a Friday to engage in the Trivia Night competition.



**K-12 Collaboration and Mentoring:**  
Human Geography students visit the Think Tank for writing support.



# Strategic Plan Renewal

Peak to Peak published our current Strategic plan in 2018. Since that time, we've witnessed much change in the world. K-12 education has evolved at a pace that has surpassed the sum of change seen in the 20 years that preceded the pandemic, the same 20 years that saw Peak to Peak's establishment and development as a top school in the nation. To respond, we must renew the Peak to Peak Strategic Plan. We must create a plan that maintains the vision of our school founders, while responding to all that lies on the horizon for our students.

Over the course of the last year, we have engaged in a process to review and renew the strategic plan as we look to our future. The process began last summer when the school administrators and board members met during a leadership retreat. We reviewed the components of the plan to evaluate what is enduring, what needs to evolve, and what no longer resonates as a visionary goal for the school. Since that time, we have continued to refine and



adjust the language and focus of the strategic plan to identify where our time and efforts are best spent to create meaningful change in our target areas. We've sought input from student leaders, staff members, parents and guardians, college representatives, and community partners. Now, we'd like to hear from you, our alumni. We'd like to know your thoughts and perspectives about our chosen

direction for the future.

We've identified five areas of improvement for the next iteration of our strategic plan. We believe that by focusing our energy and efforts in these five areas, we will better solidify a future for Peak to Peak that is responsive to the future needs of graduates as they enter postsecondary education and the workforce. Tell us what you think!



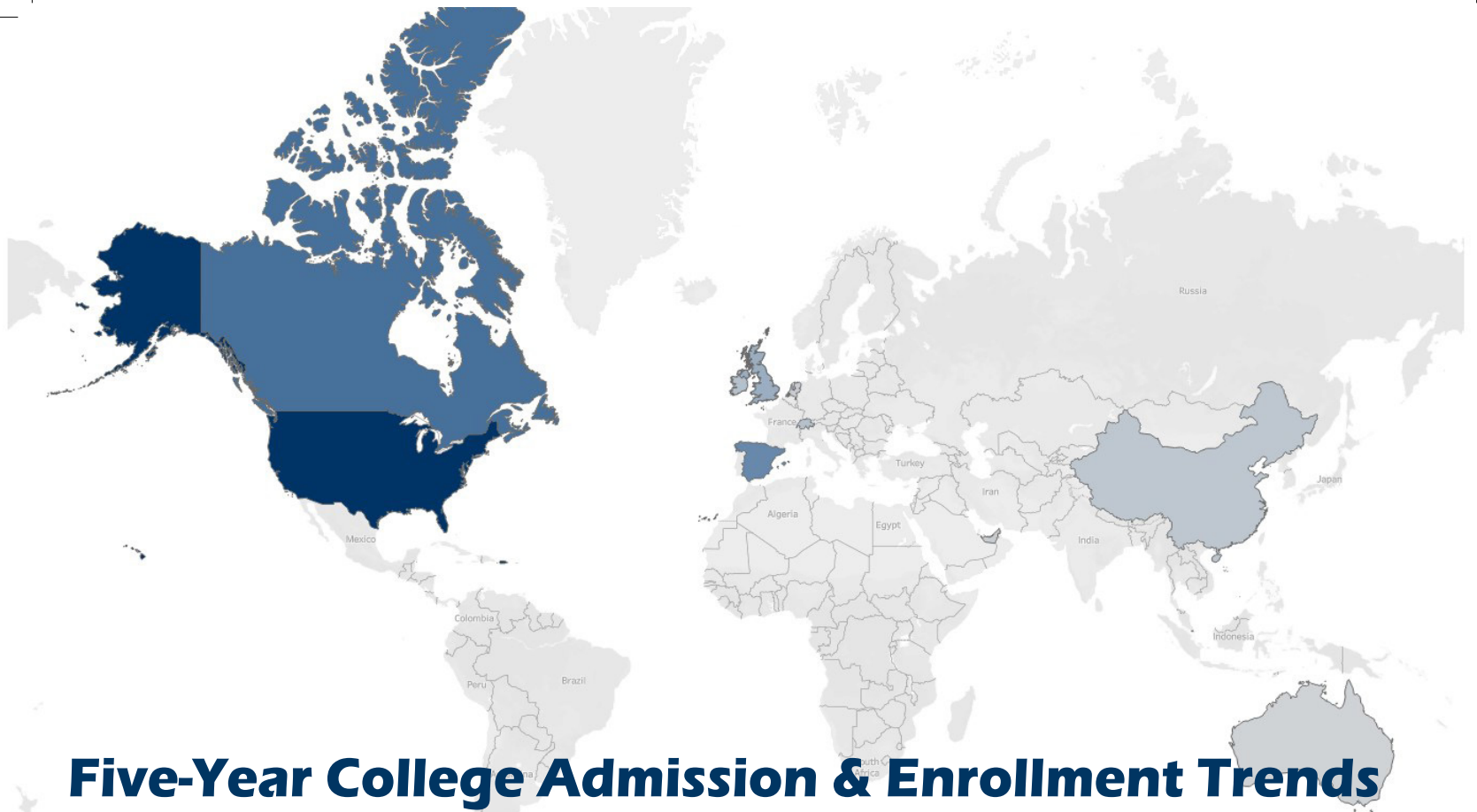
OR



**5-minute  
Strategic Plan Survey**

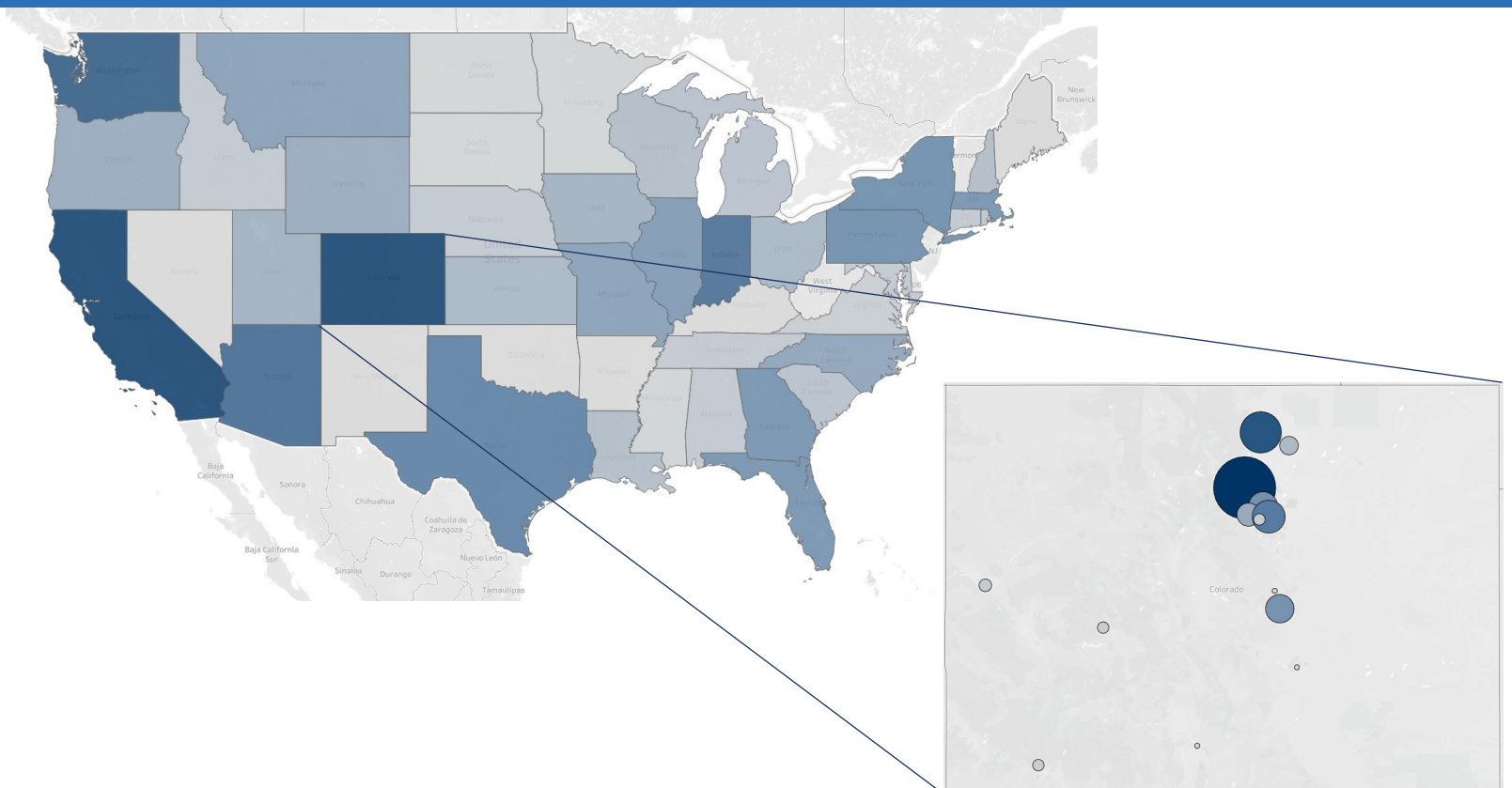
- Opposite, clockwise starting with the top left: Students in AP Psychology work on a task to help better understand left and right brain skills and strengths.*
- Middle School students showing their spirit on "Underwater Day."*
- Fifth-graders visit Young Ameritowne.*
- High school art students visit the Denver Art Museum.*
- A second grade student completing station work.*
- Six students reach the highest musical level possible in the State of Colorado for High School Band.*
- Top right: It's hard to remember how cold and snowy it was just a few weeks ago.*
- Members of the school's leadership team have been helping fill a few gaps by serving lunch in the cafeteria.*





## Five-Year College Admission & Enrollment Trends

From 2016 to 2021, 99% of Peak to Peak graduates were accepted to at least one college or university of their choosing. Students were accepted into 473 different colleges across 13 countries worldwide. Students from the five graduating classes ultimately enrolled in 221 colleges and universities around the world, with 44% attending schools in Colorado, 56% out-of-state, and 1% abroad.





**K-12 Collaboration and Mentoring:**  
Biology students share a co-taught lesson with fourth grade.

# Introducing “Peak Week”

Peak to Peak is introducing a new component to the K-12 journey for students. “Peak Week” will provide students the opportunity to learn in unique settings with real-world connections and experiences that seek to pique students’ interests, allow them a peek at various potential passion areas, and challenge them to reach new peaks, all while growing intellectually, socially and emotionally. Starting in the 2022-23 school year, Peak Week will be an annual experiential education week of five (or more) consecutive days where students will learn in unique settings that create real-world connections and applications of our curricular content and beyond. When fully implemented, all 6th through 12th

grade students will participate, with all teachers, counselors and specialists leading and chaperoning something each day of the week.

To coordinate an effective program, Peak Week will occur concurrently for all high school students during the full week leading up to Spring Break, starting March 13th, 2023. This allows more flexibility for longer, overnight/international trips to be gone for an extended period of time using Spring Break, without having participants miss classes. This timing also allows specifics to be launched to the community in the fall with time for detailed planning and preparation with students. Designating a week for these activities creates equitable opportunities for all students, and

encourages new and creative ways for our staff to collaborate.

Providing students with a variety of extended, hands-on experiences for six straight years will help create an authentic desire for lifelong learning, with a plethora of social and emotional learning opportunities. This supports our vision statement to inspire students to fulfill their academic dreams for college, to develop their creative passions and athletic talents, and to become responsible community members. Peak Week also serves to achieve our mission to provide an environment in which each student is known, respected, and valued as an individual of great potential and promise.

# Athletics

## Ultimate Frisbee

Peak to Peak fields a High School Ultimate Frisbee team that plays both fall and spring seasons with other athletes from Centaurus. The sport has grown in popularity since beginning in 2017. This spring, a High School Girls Ultimate Frisbee debuted with a competitive season that included several state tournaments. At the middle school level, Brian Rozinsky, Middle School Literacy Interventionist and Ultimate Frisbee sponsor, leads a full team of middle school student athletes in skill development and game strategy.



## Disc Golf Course

Did you know that Peak to Peak now has a disc golf course on campus? With the purchase of the open land just to the north of the tennis courts, enthusiasts envisioned and built a course for the community to enjoy. Alumni are invited to visit campus and play a round! [Click here for a map.](#)







## Athlete Mentors

Peak to Peak high school students have been integral in providing skill development camps for our elementary and middle school students. Building relationships across the K-12 campus in this way also benefits students in the classroom.



## High School Boys Volleyball Kicks Off!

We have been delighted to launch the inaugural season of boys volleyball at Peak to Peak. There has been a lot of interest and momentum behind the sport. Peak to Peak is the only school in the Boulder Valley School District and the St. Vrain Valley School District offering this exciting sport. Our roster includes student athletes from various other area high schools such as Erie High School, Holy Family, Boulder High School, Monarch High School, New Vista High School as well as students who are homeschooled. We have a full roster of 36 student athletes.

On a state level, high school boys volleyball is gaining momentum as more and more volleyball clubs

are offering programs for high school boys. This is an exciting time to try this new sport. On the Varsity team, we had 14 incredible athletes. Six athletes had played volleyball at a competitive club level before and bring depth of skill to the Peak to Peak courts. The others have played various other sports and have competed in state level competitions for football, basketball, track and field, and baseball. These are stellar individuals that have an opportunity to further develop their athleticism with a new sport, applying mental toughness and teamwork strategies gained from their previous experiences. Overall it was a great start with lots of learning ahead!

# New Family Mentors

*Friends of Peak to Peak is excited to continue our 20+ year tradition of our New Family Mentor Program! Each year, current Peak to Peak parents with students in all grades volunteer to serve as a mentor to our incoming new Peak to Peak families. In true Puma spirit, these families offer a friendly welcome to our school, provide valuable information and make themselves available for any questions our newest families may have in their transition into Peak to Peak. Making sure our incoming students at all grade levels and their parent/guardians feel part of our community is a long-time tradition at our school and we are thrilled to start getting to know our 2022-2023 newest Puma families over the summer!*



**Inspiring all students to reach their peak potential**

**Looking for a meaningful and impactful way to recognize your family's time at Peak to Peak and/or honor a teacher, counselor, or coach who had a significant positive impact on your student?**

**Consider a gift in their honor to the Peak to Peak Scholarship Fund. This is an easy way to thank someone who has made a difference to your student and leave a legacy to support future Pumas.**

**Please click HERE to make your gift and honorary designation. The honoree will be notified of your contribution to support the Peak to Peak Scholarship Fund which each year benefits four Peak to Peak seniors who need additional funding to continue their education.**

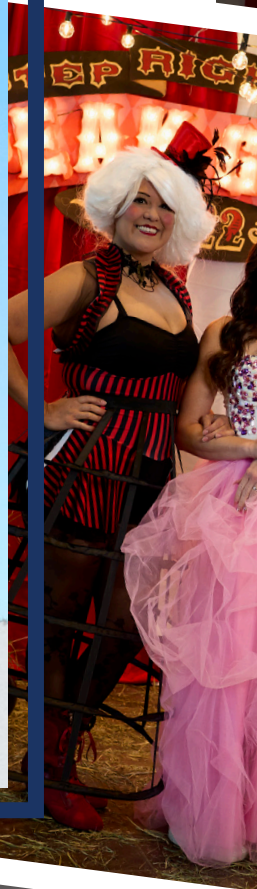
**Thank you.**

for more information please visit

**GIVE.PEAKTOPEAK.ORG**



*Opposite, Parents, staff members, teachers, community supporters, and alumni dressed up for this year's Peak Gala fundraiser themed "Cirque du Peak!"*





# STEP RIGHT UP PEAK GALLA 2022



# Alumni Updates

## Class of 2006

### Chris Beach

Graduation: B.S. Engineering, Colorado School of Mines  
Current Job: Project Engineer, Dewberry

### Conor Doyle

Graduations: B.S. Architecture, Carnegie Mellon University, 2011;  
Architecture License, State of Pennsylvania, 2015 - Present  
Current Job: NICOLEHOLLIS Inc.

## Class of 2008

### Laura Spinella (Gaskins)

Current City: Lakewood, CO  
Graduations: B.S. Materials Science and Engineering, Rice University, 2012;  
Ph.D. Materials Science and Engineering, University of Texas Austin, 2017  
Current Job: Scientist, National Renewable Energy Laboratory  
Marriage: Joey Spinella, 2012  
Children: Cedar Spinella, 2021

## Class of 2014

### Savannah Cohn

Current City: Broomfield, CO  
Graduations: B.S. in Management, Finance and Legal Studies, Tulane University, 2018; Master's in Accounting, Tulane University, 2018  
Current Job: Specialty Services Senior Associate at Pricewaterhouse Coopers



**Bailey Perczak, Class of 2018**, made dean's list at the University of Notre Dame and is now applying to med school.

**Michael Liao, Class of 2021**, and **Mana Setayesh, Class of 2021**, shared their perspectives in an engaging Hechinger Report article from last year. These students, and one other from Colorado shared their experiences over the course of the second pandemic year with the reporter. The article provides real-time insight into educational change as it occurred, but also helps shape the forward vision as we exit the pandemic.

[Click here to read the article: "A School Year Like No Other."](#)



## Wildfire Research Request

Please consider supporting **Connor Hollis, Class of 2016**, with his master's thesis on the topic of wildfires in the Colorado Front Range. Connor is looking for individuals willing to participate in brief interviews. Connor is hoping to speak with individuals who live in Boulder County, as well as business owners, first

responders, and community leaders, to learn about perspectives and opinions with regard to wildfires, what is being done to adapt to them, and what more they would like to see addressed in the future. [Please see this linked invitation to interview.](#) You can contact Connor at [connorhollis.hollis@wur.nl](mailto:connorhollis.hollis@wur.nl).



### Class of 2015

#### Catherine Nicholls

Current City: Westminster, CO

Graduation: B.S. Neuroscience, Baylor University, 2019

Current Job: Professional Research Assistant at The University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

#### Bailey Robbins

Current City: Thornton, CO

Graduation: B.S. Chemical and Biological Engineering, Colorado State University

Current Job: Automation Engineer, Automated Engineering Services, Inc.

### Class of 2018

#### Nabhur Lamsal

Current City: Westminster, CO

Graduation: B.A. Integrative Physiology, University of Colorado Boulder, 2022

#### Diego Olaya

Current City: Lafayette, CO

Graduations: B.S. Physics, Caltech, 2022

### Class of 2019

#### Lauren Karl

Current City: Studying Abroad in Barcelona, Spain



**Casey Judson, Class of 2010**, taught all the ninth graders at Peak to Peak as a special guest in innovation classes! He gave them insights into the solar industry, advice on working in industries which didn't exist 30 years ago, and details on how he started his innovative new clothing business. Students then pitched their own innovative solutions back to Casey.

### Makinzie Short, Class of 2021,

transferred to play soccer at the University of Oklahoma.

[Click here to read the article: "Soccer Adds Transfer GK Short."](#)



Opposite, Mike Puccio, High School PE Teacher, Mary Campbell, High School Counselor, Molly Creek, High School Counselor, and Andy Matthews, High School Spanish Teacher join to welcome 9th grade students at the start of the school year.

Top left: Joseph Barbour, High School Spanish Teacher, takes one for the team during Rise for the Peak.

Above: Jonathan Cuesta, Elementary/Middle Spanish Teacher, Yolanda Meiler, Middle School Spanish Teacher, and Kim Struck, Middle School Math Teacher, showing their school spirit on pajama day.



**Jeffrey Chen, Class of 2021**, gives Ziba Ahamad (11th grade) and brother **Fareed Ahamad, Class of 2021** and attending Emory University, a tour of the UCLA campus.



Above, Kayleigh Esswein, High School English Teacher, Joe Howard, High School Math Teacher, and Kat Fink, High School English Teacher wear their Colorado College gear for College Day.

Top right: Karen Amidon, High School English Teacher, and Kayleigh Esswein, High School English Teacher, join the wheelbarrow race during Rise for the Peak.

# CLASS OF 2012 REUNION

**May 21st, 5pm-9pm**

***Louisville Underground  
at Tilt Pinball***

640 Main St Ste B, Louisville, CO 80027

**\$40 per person**

**Taco bar catered by  
Verde in Louisville, CO**

**Cash bar with non-  
alcoholic and alcoholic  
drinks available**

**Purchase Tickets [HERE!](#)**

If you have questions or if you need assistance with the purchase of tickets, please contact **Carissa Thomas, Class of 2012**, at [carissagrthomas@gmail.com](mailto:carissagrthomas@gmail.com).



**Vince Cornella, Class of 2021** won the Under 20 division for the US open in wrestling, giving him a spot on the US Pan Am team in July. In Early June, he will compete in the US world team trials. Winning the US open automatically gives him a buy to the finals for that tournament. He will need to win two out of three in the finals to be the US team member for the Under 20 World Championships in July. The Pan Ams are in Mexico City and the World Championships are in Bulgaria.

[Click here to watch a video interview.](#)

## Alumni:

### We want to hear from you!

As our school matures, our alumni community grows. Stay connected with us so that you can participate in alumni events and opportunities. Use the links at the bottom of this page to send us your contact information and updates, join our LinkedIn community, or follow us on Facebook.

**Once a Puma,  
Always a Puma!**

### Artists on the Back Cover:



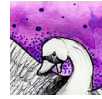
**Gabby Reiland**  
12th grade



**Sophie Hodgson**  
12th grade



**Citlaly Arriaga**  
11th grade



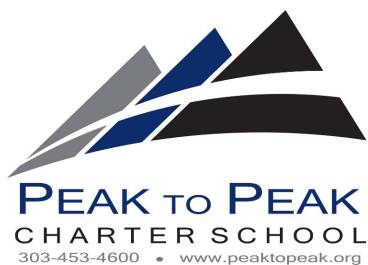
**Nicole Kerschner**  
12th grade



**Chloe Eisen**  
11th grade



**Finn Stevens**  
11th grade



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