

Highly Qualified Teachers

The USOE (Utah State Office of Education) sets standards to qualify teachers in the state of Utah to be highly qualified to teach. **All of the teachers at American Preparatory Academy are considered highly qualified to teach by the state of Utah (USOE qualified).**

At American Prep we hire the most capable people to do the best job for our students. The following teachers all meet the state's Highly Qualified requirements, but do not meet the Federal HQ requirements. We are required to report this to our parents each year, and we are happy to do so! Let us tell you a little about our amazing staff members!

Clayton Andersen (Math teacher)

Clayton M Andersen (Secondary Math) graduated from BYU with a BS in Mechanical Engineering. After graduation, he worked in the US Air Force as a project engineer. While in the USAF he also received a MS in Aeronautical Engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology, taught college algebra for a year at UMUC, and US Constitution to USAF ROTC cadets at New Mexico State University. He has always loved teaching, and recently joined APA after working as a leadership consultant. He is beginning the ARL process this year.

Jerilyn Brunson (P.E. Teacher)

Jerilyn Brunson graduated Magna Cum Laude twice from Weber State University. Her first degree was in Social Work with a minor in Child and Family Studies. She worked as a substitute teacher while attending college and shortly after graduation wondered why she didn't go into teaching. After six years as a sub she returned to WSU for a second Bachelors in Physical Education with a minor in Health Education. She is currently working to get licensed through USOE in their ARL department and will finish April 2017.

David Calderwood (6th teacher)

David Calderwood graduated from Brigham Young University with a bachelors in Latin American Studies and an emphasis in Science. He was executive director of the Spanish Interpreters club at BYU, and completed 2 years of research at BYU checking how alcohol would affect the lipid bilayer and its rate of vesicle fusions. Mr. Calderwood is a certified medical interpreter and a certified phlebotomist while also being certified in CPR and First Aid. He recently worked at a Behavioral Hospital where he ran therapy sessions and took care of adolescents with suicidal ideation. Mr. Calderwood grew up playing soccer and basketball and enjoys sports. He is married with 1 little boy and enjoying life.

Tess Cook (Secondary Art)

Tess Cook (Secondary Art) Graduated from the University of Utah with a Bachelor of Fine Arts with an emphasis in painting and drawing, where she received several scholarships and won best in show graduating year. In 2013, after earning her degree she began teaching art in afterschool programs and summer camps at the MARC in Park City, Utah. Meanwhile, building work for her 2015 Exhibition at Finch Lane Gallery in SLC, Utah. Tess is new to APA this year and currently working towards her teaching license

Leslie Fallis (Music teacher)

Leslie Fallis (6th Grade, JH-HS Orchestra): Studied Violin with Ivan Galamian for two years at The Juilliard School of Performing Arts, New York City, NY; Received Bachelor of Music in Violin Performance, CSU, Fullerton. She performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic for 12 years along with many other symphonic and chamber music organizations. Leslie earned a California Secondary Teaching Credential from Chapman University, Orange, CA and also earned licensure and endorsement in Special Education from Utah State University, Logan. She has taught violin pedagogy for over 40 years and music, both strings and vocal music in public schools since 1995. The Draper 2 Campus Advanced Orchestra has been invited to perform in Carnegie Hall this school year in June, 2017. Leslie recently auditioned for and is now performing with the Salt Lake Symphony Orchestra, 1st Violin Section.

Melanie Jorgensen (Secondary Math)

Melanie Jorgensen graduated with her Bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University. This is her 9th year working for American Preparatory Academy. She's been a groups teacher for all grades and a homeroom teacher for 5th grade. She taught reading, math and spelling as a groups teacher and all subjects as a homeroom teacher. She is currently working on her teaching license through the ARL (Alternate Route to Licensure) program. She enjoys running and hiking in her spare time.

Jason Mair (Science teacher)

Jason Mair has worked in Special Education for 9 years prior to joining the faculty at American Preparatory Academy. He attended Western Governor's University and has finished all course work for a BA in Science Education (Biology Emphasis) and is the Teacher of Record/USOE Intern as he completes the necessary hours for his license. When he saw the education model embraced at APA, he knew that he not only wanted his own children to attend but also wanted to be a teacher here.

Gina McGirr (Theatre teacher)

Gina McGirr is a two-time graduate of Arizona State University where she studied History Education, Theatre Education, and Gifted Education. She received a Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education and an Arizona Teaching Certificate in 2012. She earned her Utah Educator License and endorsement in History in 2014 and began teaching History at APA. In 2015, Gina received her Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialization in Gifted Education. Gina also has over 15 years of

various experience in acting, singing, directing, stage management, and costuming. With her knowledge and passion of dramatic arts and her theatre credits from ASU, Gina began teaching theatre classes during Winterim at APA, and was then given the opportunity to teach Drama year round. In 2016 she also directed the APA D2 Drama Team in the UHSAA Regional and State Theatre Competitions. She is currently working on earning her endorsement in Theatre through the demonstrated competency route to licensure.

Sara Ochs-Swingley (History)

Sara Ochs-Swingley graduated with her Bachelors of Liberal Studies, History Emphasis from California State University San Marcos in 2004. The following year she earned multiple teaching credentials in Secondary History and English, as well as Elementary education from the same university. She specialized in middle level education, and completed requirements for the Cultural language and Development Certification for delivering specially designed instruction in English to second language learners. During her college career Sara worked with at-risk youth in the foster system at San Pasqual High School facilitated by the Casey Foundation and tutored Students at Woodland Hills Middle School. Sara taught middle school English and World History to seventh graders for six years at Desert Springs Middle School in Palm Springs, California. She cleared her California credentials with further specialization in ELL and Special Education. Since moving to Utah she has taught for American Preparatory Academy, completing two years of teaching at the elementary level as well as four years at the secondary level. She brings twelve years of teaching experience in diverse populations and at multiple levels. She has created curriculums ranging from remedial to college level. She is currently working on authorizations in Financial Literacy and Social Studies Composite in order to expand her teaching repertoire.

Joseph Colin Olson (Latin teacher)

J. Colin Olson (Secondary Latin) received his bachelor's degree in Classics from Western Washington University in 2008. While at Western he was published in the Classical quarterly *Amphora* and presented a paper at the Undergraduate Classics Conference at Willamette University, and was also the Captain of the sailing team. After college he was accepted into the Graduate Classics department at the University of Kentucky, graduating in 2011. While in Lexington, he taught Elementary Latin to undergraduates and was a member of the Institutum Latinum, the only Latin speaking graduate college in the country. After Graduate school he taught Latin at Seven Hills Preparatory Academy in Minnesota for four years, coming to APA in 2015. In his spare time he enjoys skiing, sailing, and travelling.

Dr. Juan Hector Pereira

Dr. Juan-Héctor Pereira (Director of D2 Choirs), completed his Doctor of Musical Arts in Voice and Opera from The University of Michigan. Prior to completing his post-graduate studies, he received his Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from Brigham Young University, and Master of Music in Opera Performance from The University of Michigan. In 2012, Dr. Pereira was hired as a Voice Professor at Adrian College, where he taught private studio voice lessons. While at UM, he was hired by the university as the Opera

Assistant for all of the main-stage productions. He directed the Graduate Opera Workshop production, and was a Vocal Coach and Accompanist for the operatic scenes performance in the Undergraduate Opera Workshop class. Following his Doctoral studies, Dr. Pereira was hired by the University of Texas at El Paso, where he served as Director of Opera, and taught courses in Private Studio Voice, Opera Workshop, Vocal Pedagogy, and Song Literature. He served as Chorus Master for El Paso Opera during their 2013 season, and instructed in Music Theory at the El Paso Conservatory of Music. Dr. Pereira has held Music Minister positions at Provo Community Church, Ypsilanti United Church of Christ, Huron Hills Baptist Church, St. Mark's Methodist Church of El Paso, First Presbyterian Church of El Paso, Abundant Living Faith Center of El Paso, and Ascension Lutheran Church. While Dr. Pereira has focused his energy on directing, he has been fortunate to have a prolific semi-professional performing career. Singing the title role in Mozart's, Don Giovanni, Lensky, in Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin, The Judge, in Bernstein's Candide, Mayor Upfold, in Britten's Albert Herring, Siegmund, in Wagner's Die Walküre (Scenes), Zuniga, in Brooks/ Bizet Le Tragedie de Carmen, Arcadio, in Catan's Florencia en el Amazonas (Scenes), Pedrillo, in Mozart's Die Entführung Aus dem Serail (Scenes), Eisenstein, in Strauss's Die Fledermaus, Valetto, in Monteverdi's L'Incoronazione di Poppea. He has enjoyed performing in theatrical roles such as Hal in Scarlet Pimpernel, Tateh in Ragtime, Will Parker in Oklahoma, Prince Dauntless in Once Upon a Mattress, Herald in Cinderella, Mr. Snow in Carousel, and Lun Tha in The King & I. Dr. Pereira has been guest soloist with The University of Michigan Choral Society, Plymouth Michigan Symphony Orchestra, and the Bozeman Colorado Symphony Orchestra, and has been hired to perform solo roles with Opera Theatre Pittsburgh, Canadian Operatic Arts Academy, the SPOLETO Italy Music Festival, Pine Mountain Music Festival, and La Musica Lirica, in Nova Feltria, Italy. Dr. Pereira has been the recipient of the Julian & Vera McIntosh Memorial Fund Scholarship, International Fellowship Award, Shirley A. Stevens Departmental Scholarship Award, Roy Samuelson Award at BYU, and the Oscarson Discovery Grant. Dr. Pereira has been working in Theatre Education at the Hale Centre Theatre since 2006. He is currently the Music Director for all of their summer theatre workshops. He is currently teaching Private Commercial Voice at Utah Valley University, while upholding his Private Voice studio in South Jordan, UT.

Andrew Perazzo (Language Arts teacher)

Andrew Perazzo (Secondary English) received a bachelor's degree in English from Brigham Young University, with a minor in Mathematics and a minor in Writing and Rhetoric. Shortly after graduating, he helped compile a 150-page study guide of insects in southern Utah. Afterwards, he substitute taught in Utah county schools, teaching a large variety of subjects and grades. Mr. Perazzo began teaching at APA in 2015 and enjoys teaching English, although he also sprinkles in some math and science when he can. During Winterim he is teaching a Game Design class as well as a psychology and science class.

Felicia Pimentel (Language Arts)

Felicia Pimentel (Secondary English) received a bachelor's degree in Spanish and English education from Brigham Young University. While a student at BYU, she taught Portuguese at the Missionary Training Center for three years. After having her three children, she returned to BYU and graduated from the law school with a Juris Doctorate degree. She practiced law for several years, working as the managing attorney at Utah Legal Services in Provo and in private practice, specializing in domestic law and domestic violence. Ms. Pimentel began teaching at APA in 2012 and especially loves teaching her 7th graders. In her spare time, she loves hiking, running, birding, reading, and watching internet nature cams (birds and bears).

Lilliam Rogers (3rd teacher)

Lilliam Rogers (3rd Grade Teacher) earned a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Utah in International Studies and a minor in French. Later, she tutored English, Spanish, and French grammar, math, and study skills for five years. Teaching and helping students has always been a passion. She earned her Early Childhood Education certificate and taught preschool after graduating and then eventually moved on to Kindergarten, then 1st grade and now 3rd grade. She loves making a difference in student's lives. The "ah ha" moments when students understand something new are the best. She learns just as much from the students as she teaches them. She truly believes in the concepts American Prep teaches and loves sharing that knowledge and growth with students. When she isn't teaching she loves taking in everything nature has to offer with her dogs and husband. She loves hiking, biking, kayaking, jeeping, tennis, camping, and just relaxing in the great outdoors.

Cory Swensen (Math teacher)

Cory Swensen (Secondary Math) attended the University of Utah where he received his bachelors in mathematics with a minor in economics. During his time there he worked in the T. Benny Rushing Mathematics Center for two years as a Lab and Mathematics assistant. He is currently working through USOE to get his teaching license.

Derrick Wakamatsu

Derrick Wakamatsu received his bachelors degree from Brigham Young University majoring in International Relations with an East Asia emphasis. Duing college he worked as a paraprofessional in the Austic unit at Foothill Elementary in Orem, Ut. He published two papers though the university and was a member of the BYU Kennedy Center Sigma Iota Rho. Through the Teach For America program he taught in Oklahoma City at Douglass Mid-High School from 2013-2015. He taught 8th grade science and became the School's Science Department Lead for the 2014-2015 school year. He received his Oklahoma teaching license at the end of his 2015 school year. He started working for APA in 2015 and is currently in his second year teaching 7th and 8th grade science.

If you have any questions about any of our amazing teachers and their qualifications, please feel free to contact Kevin McVicar, Administrative Director (kmcvicar@apamail.org).

