

# **Huntington UFSD Fine and Performing Arts Faculty Profiles**

## **Department Director**

**Dr. Rob Wottawa** studied classical guitar at Franklin Pierce University and earned his master's in music education at LIU Post. After teaching at Longwood for five years, he was awarded the Wallace Grant to attend Stony Brook for school and district leadership.

As Department Chair of Art, FACS, and Music he began his doctorate in Education at LIU Post and as Director of Art, ENL, Music, and World Languages at East Islip completed his Educational Doctorate with a focus on mentoring new teachers.

Currently the Director of Fine and Performing Arts at Huntington UFSD, he's an avid writer, podcaster, and co-founder of LIE (Long Island Educators). Dr. Wottawa is excited to lead the fine arts and music programs!

## **Art Teachers**

**Jennifer Fazin**, a graduate of Cold Spring Harbor High School, has served as a K–12 certified art teacher in the Huntington School District since September 2019. She holds a BFA in Advertising Design from FIT and a master's degree in art education from C.W. Post and brings over 25 years of professional graphic design and print industry experience as the owner and operator of an advertising print shop into her instruction.

At Huntington High School, Ms. Fazin has taught Creative Crafts, Media Art, Studio Art, Drawing and Painting and she currently teaches high school Ceramics Sculpture 1 and 7th grade art at J. Taylor Finley Middle School. She has played a key role in expanding and supporting multiple art programs, adapting instruction to ensure equitable access to materials and learning.

Ms. Fazin has also instructed adult education program ceramics and watercolor classes, which have grown significantly due to high enrollment, and has taught in the district's SCOPE summer program. She has contributed to district-wide initiatives through large-scale wall graphic installations celebrating school identity, athletics, and diversity. In 2023-2025 she co-led the Huntington High School Art Honor Society to national recognition through student service and permanent hand painted wall mural installations across the district.

**Ayallah Jeddah** has been a Huntington art teacher since September 2006. She is a graduate of Syosset High School. She obtained her BFA from the University of Connecticut and her master's in education from Hofstra University. She started her teaching career as a leave replacement in Syosset high school before coming to Huntington High School. She has taught black/white and color photography, digital photography, AP 2D, Media Arts, Studio Art, Computer Graphics, Ceramics, and has taught 7th/8th grade art and Studio Art. In addition, she also taught the summer arts program and served as faculty advisor for the Art Honor Society.

**Nicholas Matarazzo** serves as the art teacher at Washington and Flower Hill Primary School. He graduated from Huntington High School in 2013 and attended Jefferson Primary

School, Woodhull Intermediate, and Finley Middle School. He holds an associate's degree from Suffolk Community College, a bachelor's degree in graphic design from Farmingdale State College, and a master's degree in education from CUNY Queens College. Besides his role in art education, he is also the Assistant Varsity Baseball Coach at Huntington High School.

**Jenna Merget** holds a bachelor's degree in fine arts education from Hofstra University and a master's degree in studio art from Adelphi University. She brings creativity, enthusiasm, and a deep love of school spirit to her work in the Huntington UFSD.

Beyond the art room, Mrs. Merget is an active presence in the school community, co-hosting events and supporting the girls' golf program. Known for her positive energy, she's often found brightening the halls with a warm smile and an encouraging word for students and staff alike.

**Kasmira Mohanty** is a highly respected digital arts educator at Huntington High School, where she has taught since 2001. She holds degrees from the Fashion Institute of Technology, Purchase College, and Dowling College, and served as the faculty advisor for Huntington's Art Honor Society from 2008 to 2017. Her program empowers students to create award-winning work while preparing them for successful careers in the creative industries. Many of her former students now work professionally in digital art, design, and related fields.

Over the course of her tenure, Kasmira's program and professional practice have received national recognition, including more than 15 features in *School Arts Magazine*, where she serves as a writer and Contributing Editor. She has hosted the Davis Publications Media Arts Intensive, was a featured guest on Episode 25, *The Perceptions of Digital Arts*, on the K12ArtChat podcast, and featured in Davis's book collections *CONTEMPORARYart* and *MEDIAarts*. In addition, she has collaborated with school districts across the United States to help curate and develop digital arts programs.

Beyond the classroom, Ms. Mohanty is an award-winning commercial, exhibiting, and installation artist, with work shown locally and internationally, including exhibitions in Croatia and Los Angeles. In 2024, she was honored by the Heckscher Museum of Art as part of its Celebration in Achievement Benefit. She serves on the Executive Boards of the Huntington Arts Council and SCALA (Suffolk County Art Leaders Association), and is a member of the Education and Visitor Experience Committee at the Heckscher Museum of Art.

**Karen Morea** began her career at Huntington in 2006. She taught elementary art at Washington, Jefferson and Southdown primary schools and Huntington Intermediate School, which was later closed and reopened as Jack Abrams STEM Magnet School. She later moved to J. Taylor Finley Middle School, where she has taught seventh and eighth grade art classes for the past ten years. She is now the Intermediate level art teacher at both Jack Abrams STEM and Woodhull Intermediate and loves the energy her students bring to class there each day.

A graduate of Our Lady of Mercy Academy in Syosset, Ms. Morea obtained her undergraduate degree at SUNY Geneseo with a focus on studio art. She earned a master's in art education degree at Long Island University-CW Post.

Ms. Morea is continually striving to learn more about new art techniques and ideas and bring joy into the art room.

**Pamela Piffard-Williams** is a photography teacher in Huntington UFSD who focuses on helping students grow as creative thinkers and visual storytellers. She earned an associate's

degree in photography at the Fashion Institute of Technology and a BFA in photography at Parsons School of Design. She later completed an MFA in Graphic Design at LIU-Post, along with an additional MA in Education from Chapman University in California. Her teaching certification was completed through Columbia University Teachers College.

In addition to teaching, Mrs. Piffard is also a successful professional photographer, bringing real-world experience into her classroom. Her background in both photography and design shapes a learning environment that balances technical skills with personal expression. She encourages students to explore identity, culture, and emotion through their work while building confidence in their artistic voice.

**Jacqueline Plesent** is a graduate of Half Hollow Hills East High School and received a B.F.A. in fine arts and education degree from LIU Post. For a year she taught third grade at Transfiguration School in Freeport. While doing this, Mrs. Plesent went to Hofstra University and took graduate classes in art therapy, and she got the opportunity to work with children at South Oaks Hospital.

Mrs. Plesent has been an art teacher in Huntington for 20 years. She received her M.F.A degree from LIU Post. Her greatest masterpieces she said is a cliché .... her two children.

**Olivia Rouse** is a part time art teacher at Jack Abrams School. She studied visual arts and psychology with a focus on art history at SUNY Purchase College. She then went on to receive her master's in art education from Adelphi University. She is a passionate artist and educator forever exploring new ideas, mediums and techniques to bring to students in her classroom.

**Jessica Simms** graduated with a bachelor's degree in fine art with a concentration in ceramic sculpture at Stony Brook University and a master's degree in art education at Adelphi University. In 2018 she received the Staller Center Award of Excellence for her ceramic installation "Phases."

Throughout her time studying at Stony Brook, she taught at and managed a small children's art studio in Port Jefferson until its closure in 2019. She began working in Huntington in 2021, where she continues to teach 7th-grade art and accelerated studio in art at Finley Middle School.

In her free time, she enjoys traveling, visiting National Parks and experiencing nature, art, and culture of different places. Her hobbies outside of work include film photography, reading, cooking, and going to live music performances. She loves to learn new things, always seeking out new art practices and projects to take on in her downtime.

**Kristin Singer** has been a Huntington art teacher since September 2003. She obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in painting at the College of Architecture, Art & Planning at Cornell University in 2001 and studied at Cornell's campus in Rome, Italy for a semester.

Mrs. Singer earned a Master of Science degree in art education at Hofstra University in 2003. She has interned at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Nassau County Museum Art. The long-term educator has also taught life drawing, painting and sculpture at the Huntington School of Fine Arts.

Mrs. Singer has taught a variety of art courses, but her focus has been on the drawing and painting program that cumulates with the AP Studio Art: Drawing course. Mrs. Singer's drawing and painting students exhibit their art throughout the school year at various galleries and

museums and won numerous awards. She has received Heckscher Museum's Outstanding Teacher Award from Long Island's Best Young Artist Exhibition three times.

She has also taught fashion design for three years, resulting in one of the highlights of her career. Mrs. Singer's fashion class, along with the class of her retired faculty colleague Amy Worth, was invited by First Lady Michelle Obama to attend the donation of her inaugural gown to the Smithsonian Museum after the Huntington students sent a class project inspired by Mrs. Obama to the White House.

**Heather Swan** has been a Huntington Art teacher since September 2006. She is a graduate of Half Hollow Hills High School West and after beginning college at USC, obtained an undergraduate degree from LIU Post and graduate degrees from New York Tech and Hofstra University. She also received a certificate in animation and digital effects from the Vancouver Film School.

She has worked tirelessly to build the Huntington Film Program into the prestigious program that it is today. Her students participate in State and National Film competitions, winning them numerous awards and recognition.

**Kristen Temperino** earned her BFA in Photography at the School of Visual Arts in 2016. From there she worked in the advertising photography industry for many years in Manhattan on jobs for companies such as Starbucks, Amazon Fashion, and beauty brands. In the winter of 2020, she received her master's in art education after completing her student teaching at North Shore Schools. From there she worked at South Huntington school district as an 8th grade art teacher before landing at Huntington High School in 2022. Here she started, and continues to lead, the Video Broadcasting program. Since her start, the program has expanded to include 4 levels, produces daily live broadcasts, and covers news throughout the building and district. She is an active member of BASH, Long Island's Broadcasting Alliance for Senior High, where she and her students collaborate with other Long Island school districts and compete for broadcasting awards.

**Kim Valerio** is an art teacher at Huntington High School. A graduate of Harborfields High School, Ms. Valerio received her undergraduate degree in illustration at Parsons School of Design. After working for many years in graphic arts, mostly in NYC, she went back to school and obtained a master's degree in art education at Long Island University/CW Post Campus. Ms. Valerio completed her student teaching requirements in Huntington. She then worked as a substitute teacher in Huntington and in several other surrounding school districts.

Ms. Valerio was hired as a part-time art teacher in Huntington in 2010 and became full-time in 2015. Throughout the years she has worked in all eight buildings in the district in some capacity. Ms. Valerio teaches courses in Creative Crafts and Fashion Design at Huntington High School and directs the student fashion shows at the annual district-wide art show.

## Music Teachers

**Tara Adams** has been teaching in Huntington UFSD since 1997. A graduate of Walt Whitman High School, she went on to earn a B.M. in music education and music performance at the Crane School of Music, SUNY Potsdam. She received her M.M. in music education at Ithaca College. As an educator, Mrs. Adams has worked with young students throughout Long Island as

a guest conductor for both SCMEA and NMEA All-County Bands, and as a certified NYSSMA brass adjudicator. Mrs. Adams has presented professional workshops both locally and at the state level. As a horn player, she has greatly enjoyed performing with the Northport Community Band for 30 years, as well as many other local ensembles.

**Frank Battista** has been a Huntington UFSD music teacher since September 2001. He is a graduate of Massapequa High School and obtained both undergraduate and graduate degrees at The Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College. His two undergraduate degrees are in Music Education and Music Performance, and his master's degree is in Music Education.

Mr. Battista currently serves as the Finley eighth grade concert band director, Finley Honors Symphonic Band director, Finley ukulele club adviser and manages the lights and sound for the Finley drama club. Frank Battista was a member of the Huntington Blue Devil Marching Band staff for 20 years and taught at Huntington's Summer Arts Enrichment camp for 14 years. Mr. Battista is currently the drummer for the northeast's premier Cake tribute band, "Is It Cake."

**Ashley Berrell** has been a general music/ chorus teacher in the Huntington School District since 2022. She is also a trombonist and piano accompanist for the district. She holds an undergraduate degree at The Crane School of Music and a graduate degree at the University of Buffalo. She loves helping her students prepare for their annual songfest performance and getting involved in the band activities around the district!

**Katie Canales** has been a Huntington general music and chorus teacher since September, 2008. She is a graduate of Northport High School and obtained undergraduate and graduate degrees at Five Towns College.

**Charles Colasanti** attended Hofstra University and received a Bachelor of Science in Music Education Degree in 2022, as well as a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies at Stony Brook University in 2025. Prior to his appointment in the Huntington School District, he taught middle school choir in the Patchogue-Medford School District, as well as directed Show Choir and co-directed musicals.

At Huntington High School, Mr. Colasanti was appointed as Choral Director in 2024 and teaches Concert Choir, Chamber Choir, and conducts the Acapella ensemble. Mr. Colasanti has loved his experience at Huntington and cannot wait to work with students in choir and in vocal training as he continues his career here!

**Julie Cooke** studied music education at Western Connecticut State University, where she graduated with her bachelor's degree in May of 2025. During her time at WCSU, she also studied classical voice and choral methods, performing in several operas and choral events. Additionally, she has directed summer youth musical theater for students grades Kindergarten through 9th. The 2025-26 school year marks Miss Cooke's first year in the Huntington School District, where she is excited to make music with her students!

**James Di Meglio** has been a teacher since 2011 and has been the orchestra director at Huntington High School since 2019. He holds a B.A. in Music from Stony Brook University as well as an M.A. in Music Education from Columbia University, Teacher's College. He is a violist and performs regularly in the Queer Urban Orchestra, New York City's only LGBTQ

community orchestra and has sat principal viola for a number of years. He has also completed the necessary coursework at Stony Brook University for School District Leadership, on target to earn his administrator's license. Mr. Di Meglio lives in New York City.

**Kelly Flynn** joined the Huntington UFSD music faculty in 2025 as an orchestra teacher at Woodhull and Jack Abrams Schools. She began playing piano at age seven, violin at age eight, and singing at age eight, launching a lifelong passion for music education and performance.

Ms. Flynn is a graduate of Commack High School, where she was an All-State violinist. She earned her bachelor's degree in music education with a concentration in orchestra from SUNY Fredonia and later completed her Master of Science in Music Education at CUNY Queens College in 2020.

Her teaching career has taken her around the world, including Australia, Los Angeles, and New York City. She has worked alongside New York Philharmonic Teaching Artists and was sponsored as a Teaching Artist by the LA Philharmonic in 2018, as well as by the D'Addario Foundation. Ms. Flynn has also been featured in *Strings Magazine* for her work in the El Sistema music education movement. She directed the D'Addario Foundation's El Sistema Orchestra for ten years, during which time she collaborated with numerous professional musicians, participated in many Seminario's (including Yale University with Gustavo Dudamel).

As a performer, Ms. Flynn has shared the stage with Joshua Bell, Joshua Gersen, and Time for Three. Her experience spans both the public school system—teaching students from kindergarten through high school—and the El Sistema non-profit sector, where she has provided orchestra instruction to students who otherwise would not have access to music education.

Ms. Flynn studied violin with Thomas Karolyi, the founding orchestra teacher of Finley Middle School, making her new home in the Huntington School District a particularly meaningful full-circle moment. She was the youngest student ever accepted into his private studio. She plays seven instruments, is a proud mom, and is also an amateur International Latin Ballroom dance competitor.

**Jason Giachetti** has been a Huntington music teacher since September 2000. He is a graduate of Massapequa High School and obtained undergraduate and graduate degrees at SUNY Potsdam and the Crane School of Music and Hofstra University and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in percussion performance at Five Towns College. He has served as the Huntington Blue Devil Marching Band Director and now currently is the Percussion Arranger for the program. He teaches AP Music Theory, directs the high school jazz ensemble and the senior symphonic band.

Dr. Giachetti has been a guest conductor for the SCMEA Division 2 and Division 3 All-County Bands. He currently serves as the co-chair for the Suffolk County Music Educators' Association's Day of Percussion. He is also an active clinician and has presented clinics at the New York State Music Educator's Winter Conferences, the NYSCAME/SCMEA symposium, the Society of Ethics in Education symposium, the Crane School of Music, and Five Towns College.

**Kenneth Gonzalez** is a violist who studied at The Crane School of music in SUNY Potsdam. With a bachelor's in music education, he teaches 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade string orchestra classes at Finley Middle School. In addition to being Finley Middle School's orchestra teacher, he gives private lessons to string students back where he lives and has been doing so for two years. He

continues to bring positive, collaborative, and creative musical experiences to all his students as they work together to grow as musicians and performers.

**Sue Graber** has been teaching music in Huntington since 2006. She taught primary music at Southdown and Washington for many years before landing at JT Finley Middle School where she directs Finley Voices and serves as the director of the drama club. Sue graduated from Mineola High School and has a BM in Music Education from Ithaca College, an MA from Teachers College, Columbia University, a certificate in Autism Spectrum Orders from Brooklyn College, and her School District Leader certificate from Molloy University. In her free time, she enjoys doing various crafts and woodworking. Mrs. Graber is a proud member of the Huntington Community.

**Josephine Greco** has been a Huntington music teacher since September 2002. She is a graduate of Bay Shore High School. Josephine obtained her bachelor's degree in music education with a minor in Spanish at Nazareth College of Rochester and received her master's degree from the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College. At Finley Middle School, she directs the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade chorus, general music, honors choir and provides voice lessons to both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.

Ms. Greco has also been the children's music leader at St. John's Church of Cold Spring Harbor since 2005. Josephine has served as a soloist and chorister for the Huntington Choral Society, Ars Long Quire and St. John's Church. She is a professional member of NAFME, LIAOSA, and SCMEA.

**Arielle Harvey** has been teaching orchestra in the Huntington School District since September 2023. A proud graduate of the Huntington High School, she earned her bachelor's degree in music education at the Aaron Copland School of Music, where her primary instrument was the violin. She is currently pursuing a graduate degree and directing the pit ensemble for the high school musical. Ms. Harvey is an active professional member of NAFME, SCMEA, and ASTA and is dedicated to building strong musical foundations while fostering a love and appreciation for music in her students.

**Chelsea Jablon** has been a Huntington UFSDS band teacher since September of 2007. She is a graduate of Wantagh High School and obtained undergraduate, graduate, and post graduate degrees at Hofstra University. She is also certified as a school administrator. She has served as the District Band Fest co-chairperson and is the coordinator of the 6th great band and orchestra Broadway trip. Ms. Jablon maintains an active private flute studio in Wantagh and plays flute professionally with the Flute Quartet of Long Island.

**Nicole Lynch** has been a Huntington music teacher since September of 2001. She is a graduate of Hauppauge High School and obtained undergraduate and graduate degrees from Indiana University and Dowling College, respectively. Over the years, she has taught general music and chorus in our intermediate and primary schools and is currently the director of the 4th grade beginner orchestras at Woodhull and JA STEM Intermediate Schools.

Mrs. Lynch brought several recorder groups to Carnegie Hall for the "Link Up" program; in 2007 Huntington students were chosen to perform on stage after recorded auditions and also had a student's lyrics featured in the program! Mrs. Lynch was also invited to direct a group at

SCMEA's Eugene Reichenenthal Recorder Festival in 2009. Mrs. Lynch has directed several musicals at Huntington Intermediate and was heavily involved with the 6th grade Greenkill trips for many years. In addition, Mrs. Lynch has taught and been the director/co-director of the Huntington Summer Music & Arts Program for many years (OOMPAH, HAC and SCOPE Enrichment Program).

**Andre Rizzuto** has been a music teacher in Huntington since 2022. A graduate of Brentwood High School, Mr. Rizzuto received his undergraduate degree at Hofstra University in Music Education and then received his master's in music performance from Five Towns College. Mr. Rizzuto is an active performer on Long Island performing with the Northwind's Community Band and Nassau-Suffolk Alumni Band. Mr. Rizzuto also played with Huntington Community Band and Bayshore Community Band.

Mr. Rizzuto is the Director of the Junior Symphonic Band (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade Band), Huntington High School Wind Ensemble, Huntington Blue Devil Marching Band and is the teacher for the Music Theory 1 class at Huntington High School.

**Chris Scarnato** has been a Huntington music teacher since September 2005. He is a graduate of East Meadow High School and obtained undergraduate and graduate degrees at Hofstra University. He directs the 7th grade band and middle school jazz ensemble.

As a composer and arranger, Chris has provided numerous works to professional bands, and his music is published by Smart Chart Music. He has also written commissions for the Hewlett High School Jazz Ensemble, and the Ward Melville High School Honors Jazz Ensemble. He currently plays baritone saxophone in the Interplay Jazz Orchestra. The big band's latest release "Detour" placed at #9 on the CMJ Year-End Jazz Charts for 2016, peaking at #4 for three weeks in February 2016.

**Katherine Schmelter** has taught beginning band at Huntington since September 2017. A graduate of Harborfields High School, she went on to earn her bachelor's degree in music education with a concentration in music in special education at The Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam, and her master's degree in music education at the University at Buffalo. She is currently completing her coursework at Stony Brook University for her Certificate in Educational Leadership.

A former high school drum major at Harborfields and instructor for the Huntington Blue Devil Marching Band, Katherine continues to teach summer marching band clinics for Northport High School. She has always wanted to work in a music program as special as Huntington's and considers herself very lucky to be able to make music with our student-musicians.