



STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER BIOS

Susan Natacha González, born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, is a bilingual-bicultural (Spanish/English) artist, educator, & art therapist with 26 years of experience working in different settings such as schools, transitional housing spaces, and community-based organizations. A TA in Visual Arts and Mentor/Trainer in the Marquis Studios TATI Institute, she has worked with individuals with disabilities and families since 1993 across a range of disabilities - physical, emotional, cognitive, autism and developmental delays. She has presented on Art, Education, Creativity, Art Therapy, and Child Development in a variety of conferences, on the radio and has been interviewed by several publications nationally and abroad.

Susan's academic training is in Art, Psychology, Art Therapy, and Special Education. In addition, she augmented her US-based art training with studies abroad at the University of Salamanca in Spain and the Lorenzo Di Medici Institute for Fine Arts in Florence, Italy.

Elise May, an independent Teaching Artist/Arts Administrator, creates original arts education programming focused on enhancing communication skills through theater arts, empowering students of all ages and abilities – general/special needs/ENL. Her award-winning programs include *Storytime Theater*, *Expressive Elocution*, *Multicultural Voices* and *Creative Readers* (an arts education inclusion program, 2017 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award winner). She is currently devising and performing in a sensory immersive show for audiences on the autism spectrum at Tilles Center for the Performing Arts on Long Island, NY.

Rachel McCaulsky (MSEL, MST, BFA) is Assistant Principal at P4Q, a District 75 school serving children with severe to profound disabilities. Prior to this, she spent 7 years at P396K where she was the Movement Teacher, Arts Coordinator, Mindfulness Coordinator and Unit Coordinator. She is the Arts Coordinator and Movement Teacher at P396K, also a District 75. She incorporated movement into the school's curriculum, creating units of study that fused literacy and social studies with dance. Her movement units have been published multiple times in the *NYC Department of Education Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance*.

Mrs. McCaulsky holds a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership, a dual Master's Degree in Childhood Education and Childhood Special Education and a



Bachelor's Degree of Fine Arts in Dance. She has performed with Complexions Contemporary Ballet, Ballet Hispanico, Ailey II and Dallas Black Dance Theatre.

Maryann Polesinelli has been in the field of education for over 40 years commencing with the teaching of vocal technique and pedagogy at the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music. She went on to have a career in opera, oratorio, operetta and recitals in the U.S.A., Canada, Europe, and Puerto Rico. While living in Europe, Ms. Polesinelli turned her attention to the teaching of English as a Foreign Language.

After returning to the U.S. in 1998, she began teaching ESL, Italian, Reading, and Writing for the NYCDOE, and created a *Musical Reading and Math Saturday Program*. Ms. Polesinelli recently retired as the Director of District 75 MLL/ELL Citywide Programs and is a doctoral candidate in Urban Education at the Graduate Center CUNY. She was invited to present at the 2019 WIDA (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment) Conference in Rhode Island, and to participate as an expert at the WIDA Alternate Can Do Descriptors Workshop in Clearwater, Florida, in November 2019.

Wéma Ragophala, is a leader in access, equity, diversity, and inclusion in the arts. She is an arts administrator, performing artist, director & educator working at the intersection of arts & community for over 20 years, creating interactive arts experiences for people of all abilities. She has worked in arts and accessibility as an Access Programs Manager at Brooklyn Children's Museum, Manager of Arts in Education at Brooklyn Arts Council, Education Director for Marquis Studios and is now – as Executive Director - working to expand Disability Justice initiatives with youth leaders at IntegrateNYC.

She has presented for conferences and convenings such as, Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability (LEAD conference), the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable's Face to Face conference, and Art Beyond Sight's event presented by the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. Mrs. Ragophala is a graduate of the Emerging Leaders in non-profit management program and the Americans for the Arts' Artists at the Community Development Table training.

Lindsay Tanner is Education Director at Theater For a New Audience. She is the former Senior Program Manager for the Everyday Arts for Special Education (EASE) program at Urban Arts Partnership. An educator, facilitator, theatre artist, and Arts manager focusing on participatory creative making and inclusive and responsive pedagogies, she has built K-12 expressive Arts programming for schools, Arts organizations, and therapeutic settings around the country. She was a graduate fellow for VSA Massachusetts (now Open Door Arts) and consulted for the Sesame Street in Communities initiative to build trauma-informed early childhood systems of care.



Lindsay holds an Ed.M. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a B.F.A. from NYU.

Barbara Tremblay began her journey in the NYC DOE as a paraprofessional. Since then she has held many roles in the Department of Education, including teacher, District Administrator, Assistant Principal and – for more than a decade – Principal of P721K in District 75. The Arts are a high priority area for her and play a vital role in supporting the school's mission – enabling young adults with developmental disabilities to utilize their talents, strengths and capabilities to live and work in the community. She seeks the very best teachers, curriculum, instructional methodologies and partnerships to meet the needs of all students and ensure they receive the highest quality instruction. P721K strives to create a culture where active participation and first-hand experiences are the means for students to reach new levels of learning. Ms. Tremblay accomplishes this through strategic planning, collaboration and open communication. She will always ask students and staff alike, "Where are you going?" as a catchphrase to provide an open dialogue about her student's future and ensuring they are set up for success.

Stephen Yaffe is an Arts and Education consultant whose professional development (PD) work has been called “brave, visionary, smart” (Director of Education Programs, PBS). He has mentored classroom teachers, teaching artists and arts administrators in inclusive practices nationally, served as the VSA Teaching Artist Fellows coach and provided PD to those working in the field of disability on five continents. A founding member and Chair of the Arts for All Abilities Consortium, he is a recipient of the 2018 VSA NYC Arts Advocate of the Year and serves on the Arts Committee to the Panel for Educational Policy of the NYC Department of Education.