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**Harrisburg Academy Welcomes New Faculty and Staff for the 2016-17 Academic Year**

WORMLEYSBURG, PA – The start of the academic year is here, and Harrisburg Academy is excited to welcome a number of experienced and energetic new faculty and staff to the school. Each position drew a competitive pool of applicants, and we are pleased to have attracted the most qualified and knowledgeable persons to the Academy community.

There are many advantages to an Academy education, and we look forward to seeing how these new employees will add to the programs and positive outcomes at Harrisburg Academy. We welcome the following new faculty members (in alphabetical order):

**Nancy Adams**

*Front Desk Receptionist*

Nancy Adams is the Academy's new front desk receptionist, sharing duties with Louise Lauchlan. Nancy comes to us from Millersburg High School, where she served as the secretary to the principal. She has successfully tackled many responsibilities in this role, including: arranging activities, planning events, advising students, serving as parent liaison, and assisting with accounting activities. Before this, Nancy worked as a local bank customer service representative and at other businesses.

**Heather Blanchard**

*Middle School English Teacher*

Heather Blanchard joins the faculty as a Middle School English teacher. She earned a bachelor's degree in English/creative writing from University of Pittsburgh and later, a master's degree in secondary English education from Edinboro University. Heather has taught English at both the middle-school level, for five years, and the high-school level, for 13 years, in schools across the United States (North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Louisiana). An interesting fact about Heather — her grandfather attended Harrisburg Academy many years ago!

**John Binnert**

*Head of Middle and Upper Schools, IB Program Coordinator*

John Binnert joined Harrisburg Academy's administration on July 1 as the new head of Middle and Upper Schools and International Baccalaureate (IB) coordinator. John comes to the Academy from the Georgiana Bruce Kirby Preparatory School in Santa Cruz, California, where he served as the director of professional development and mentoring, instructional technology coordinator, and mathematics department chair and teacher. He has also taught at California State University, Colegio Internacional de Caracas in Venezuela, and Cottonwood Classical Preparatory School in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Additionally, he served as a representative for independent school mathematics for the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS). John has a bachelor's degree in secondary mathematics education from the University of New Mexico and a master's degree of science in education in supervision and administration from Johns Hopkins University. His is also the father of Lucy '28, a new 1<sup>st</sup> grade student at the Academy.

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**Christine Catherman***School Nurse*

Harrisburg Academy welcomes Christine Catherman (mother of Acadia '27) as its new school nurse. Christine has a nursing degree from Geisinger Medical Center and has completed many credits towards a bachelor's degree. She will begin coursework for her school nurse certification this fall. Most recently, Christine has served as a staff nurse at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and before that, as a staff nurse at various gastroenterology groups locally and in Virginia.

**Miranda Connelly***Communications Associate and International Student Coordinator*

Miranda Connelly is no stranger to the Academy, serving as the school's admission assistant for the past 10 years and as Academy mother to Kate '20 and Kevin '26 since both were enrolled in the Early Childhood division. This year, she will assume the position of communications associate after successfully advancing through the interview process this summer. In her former role as admission assistant, Miranda successfully supported the school's admission, recruiting, marketing, and communications efforts. In addition, she demonstrated leadership through taking on more responsibility as the school's international student coordinator (since 2008) and database manager (since 2014). These experiences, coupled with her strong writing, problem-solving approach to technology, and keen attention to detail in her work will serve her well in this new role, which she will officially start on Sept. 12. Miranda has a bachelor's degree from East Stroudsburg University.

**Jennifer Graf***Assistant Kindergarten Teacher (Weber)*

Jennifer Graf joins the Academy's Early Childhood division faculty as assistant Kindergarten teacher to Karen Weber. Jennifer has a bachelor's degree in psychology, with a minor in French, from Wake Forest University. She has worked as a teacher for a number of years, most recently as a substitute for the West Shore School District and as an assistant to the lead teacher at Trinity Preschool Playgroup (through Trinity Lutheran Church) in Camp Hill. Prior to that, Jennifer was the program director of an international English school in Tarrytown, New York and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

**Amy Grapes***Middle School / Upper School Librarian*

Harrisburg Academy welcomes its new Middle School / Upper School librarian, Amy Grapes! Amy has served as the librarian at Harrisburg Area Community College (York campus) for the past 10 years. Before that, she worked for eight years in the libraries of the South Eastern School District in York County, Pennsylvania. In these roles, Amy offered reference and research assistance, provided in-class instruction, created library guides, and worked on topics regarding information literacy — just the sort of skills for which Harrisburg Academy, too, relies on its library team! Amy earned a bachelor's degree in library science from Kutztown University and a master's degree in library science from Clarion University.

**Courtney Hart***School Counselor*

Courtney Hart joins the Academy as its school counselor (for Middle School and Upper School students). Courtney has a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in school counseling, both from Shippensburg University. She comes to the Academy from Northern High School, where she has worked as a school counselor for the past two-and-a-half years and before that, where she completed some of her field work. Courtney's other field internship locations include Luhrs Elementary School in Shippensburg, Middletown Area High School (Middletown Area School District), Camp Curtin Elementary School (Harrisburg School District), and Eagle View Middle School (Cumberland Valley School District).

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### **Valérie Topf**

#### *Upper School History Teacher*

Valérie Topf is the Academy's new Upper School history teacher. A native of France, Valérie is fluent in French, English, German and Hebrew, with intermediate fluency in Russian. She is a graduate of the Frankfurt International School in Frankfurt, Germany — she is also an IB Diploma recipient! Valérie earned a bachelor's degree in European social and political studies, with honors, from University College in London. More recently, she earned a master's degree in philosophy from Columbia University. She has taught in programs in New York City, served as a private tutor, and has spent summers in Ecuador educating teenagers with physical ailments and illnesses.

### **Karen Weber**

#### *Kindergarten Teacher*

Karen Weber will now be serving as a lead Kindergarten teacher after working as an Academy assistant Kindergarten teacher for four years. Karen earned a master's degree in teaching (special education) from University of Virginia and a bachelor's degree from Dickinson College. Prior to coming to the Academy, Karen served as assistant teacher at the Camp Hill Presbyterian Church Preschool, and director and teacher of Vacation Bible School at St. Stephens Episcopal Cathedral. Karen has been involved in writing programs for kindergarten children and has taught reading skills in a summer program for elementary-aged children with learning disabilities. She is also the mother of Ben '18 and Andrew '23.

### **About Harrisburg Academy**

Established in 1784, Harrisburg Academy is the 17th oldest non-public school in the nation and Harrisburg's only independent school. Our coed, diverse school community inspires students from age three through 12<sup>th</sup> grade by providing an academically challenging and globally minded liberal arts education focused on dynamic classroom experiences, strong student outcomes, and a commitment to character development. The Academy proudly stands as the first school in the greater Harrisburg area to offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program and merit scholarship.

For more information about Harrisburg Academy please visit our website or contact Kristina A. Pae at 717-763-7811 or via email at pae.k@harrisburgacademy.org.

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