



Our Instructors

ALAN SOLIS

Alan Solis received an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from San Jose State University and holds a B.S. in Physics and Computer Science. While at San Jose State, Alan taught Freshman Composition courses for two years. He is a published writer with a short story titled “A Hand in the Bird” published in the Beloit Fiction Journal as well as a poem titled “Campbell, CA” which appeared in the Best of Boston Literary Magazine. Alan’s life-long passion is Creative Writing, and as an instructor at Communication Academy, he has been able to cultivate the same passion for writing and interest in his students.

ANDREW LE

Andrew Le graduated from the University of San Francisco with a degree in Education. He also studied in the University of Sussex for International Relations. He’s been teaching for Communication Academy for a year in Public Speaking and Writing. In his spare time he’s the Vice President of Public Relations for Toastmaster’s International and serves as an instructor of Akido for kids of all ages.

CAROLYN EDWARDS

Carolyn Edwards earned her BA in Theatre from Midwestern State University with a minor in Speech Communication. As a dedicated drama teacher in Pampa, Texas, she prepared students for local and district theatre competitions. Instruction included theatre history, playwrights, improv, projection, and stage presence. For three years, Carolyn taught drama and choir to students ranging from age 5 to 11 at St. Mary’s Junior. While at St. Mary’s Junior, she also coordinated various televised events. Prior to this she served as a teaching assistant at Midwestern State where she focused on being a stage manager for various productions. With additional experience in Lincoln-Douglas debate, Carolyn is well-versed in both speech and debate format. Among her accomplishments, Carolyn earned 3rd place in Literary Magazine for the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association. Carolyn pays special attention to teaching verbal and nonverbal communication skills and brings a spirited and friendly demeanor to the classroom. By incorporating theatre activities and singing into lesson plans, she is able to engage students and promote a fun learning environment.

CYDNEY EDWARDS

Cydney Edwards graduated in 2013 with a BA in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison and is excited to bring her knowledge of human society to all of her classes at Communication Academy! Cydney competed in Policy Debate for four years during her time at Morgan Park High School in Chicago, serving two of those years as Captain of the Debate Team. She won the Chicago City Championships for Debate in 2005. Cydney was also a finalist in the first ever National Association for Urban Debate Leagues (NAUDL) championships and held the coveted position of First Speaker at the 2008 NAUDL championship tournament. In addition, Cydney has also taken first place at numerous tournaments on the Chicago Urban Debate League [UDL] circuit. Cydney worked for the Chicago Debate Commission as the Program Officer for School Support for three years. In that capacity, she coached students in debate formats, research, case writing, strategies, case flowing and cross examination. Furthermore, she planned and directed middle and high school debate tournaments. Cydney was also responsible for creating and managing Debate programs for 28 schools in the Chicago Urban Debate League.

DALLAS WOODBURN

Dallas Woodburn, a 2013-2014 Steinbeck Fellow in Creative Writing at San Jose State University, earned her B.A. in Creative Writing from the University of Southern California and her M.F.A. in Fiction Writing from Purdue University. She is the author of two collections of short stories and is editor and publisher of the anthology *Dancing With the Pen: a collection of today's best youth writing*. A freelance writer for the past ten years, she has written fiction and nonfiction for more than 40 publications including *The Los Angeles Times*, *Family Circle*, *Writer's Digest*, *The Nashville Review*, and *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, and her plays have been produced in Los Angeles and New York City. Woodburn's work has been honored with the International Glass Woman Prize, the Brian Mexicott Playwriting Award, a nomination for the Pushcart Prize, and second place in the American Fiction Prize. She served as Director of the Young Writers Program of the Santa Barbara Writers Conference and has seven years of experience teaching writing workshops for students in elementary school, middle school, and high school.

DARRELL DELA CRUZ

Darrell Dela Cruz is a graduate of San Jose State University where his degrees include a B.A. in English with a Creative Writing minor, and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing with an emphasis on Poetry. His work has been published in literary magazines such as *Reed*, *ZAUM*, *Third Wednesday*, and *Thin Air*. Darrell has taught both at the college and high school levels in Creative Writing, seeing his students go on to become published writers and celebrated poets. He is currently a board member for Poetry Center San Jose.

DAVID NELSON

David Nelson earned his B.S. in Psychology, majoring in Human and Social Development, and holds an A.A. in Liberal studies with an emphasis in ECE and Child Development. He served as an educator for 9 years, working closely with pre-K through 12th grade students. David also served as a Day Care Director and Summer Camp Director for two years, where he utilized his skills in developing and implementing curriculum dependent upon student needs. As an educator with a strong emphasis on the value of public speaking, David continued his love for teaching by serving as a private tutor and therapist for over two years, primarily providing learning assistance and strategy building for children ages 3 through 18.

DAVID TSEITLIN

David Tseitlin earned his M.S. in Mathematics Magna Cum Laude from Tbilisi State University and has more than twenty years of experience as an instructor. He was the college professor of Mathematics at Tbilisi State University, and also served as a math teacher for gifted middle and high school students in Israel. As a Math Olympiad and AMC8 coach, he has guided a number of teams to win first place in Math Olympiad competitions.

FRANCISKA KARPOVICH

Franciska Karpovich attends California State University, East Bay where she is completing her B.A. in English. She has dedicated her time in the last 5 years serving as a volunteer tutor for children grades K-9 as well as working at an educational support center program. During these instructional opportunities, Franciska assessed students' educational needs and implemented appropriate learning materials and activities to facilitate academic growth. She also worked as a tutor for Super Stars Literacy at Park Elementary School in Hayward. As a member of the Chabot College Forensics Team, Franciska wrote award-winning competitive speeches, which she used to compete in forensics tournaments. In the classroom, Franciska enhances the curriculum by creating a positive and fun environment for her students to thrive.



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GINA GIOVANNETTI

Gina Giovannetti is a graduate of West Valley College and holds three degrees in English, Women/Gender Studies, and Liberal Arts. She has over ten years of public speaking experience, both competitive and non-competitive. Gina's experience comes from Leland High School, which is one of the largest and most successful High School Speech and Debate teams in the country. Leland ranked in the top 5 schools for Speech and Debate in California and top 10 in the nation. She competed in Dramatic Interpretation from 2004-2008 and was offered a job as a paid coach upon graduation. In 2014-2016, Gina had the honor of seeing her team place first in the California State Competition for Competitive Forensics. One of her students placed first in the state for Expository speaking in 2015 and 2016. She has also spoken in front of hundreds of high school teens at an annual week-long youth ministry retreat held by the Diocese of San Jose in Lake Tahoe and was a speaker at the annual Global Gender Symposium at West Valley College in 2014, delivered a presentation titled *Malleus Malleficarum: The Historical Demonization and Unjust Persecution of Women Worldwide Under the Guise of the Supernatural.*

GORDON BARRATT

Gordon Barratt grew up in Terre Haute, Indiana where he was a high school speech competitor. He attended Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois and graduated in 2012 with a degree in Political Science. While attending Knox, Gordon was elected Student Body President and Vice President of the Senior Class. He was also involved with several clubs and organizations, including volunteering with the local high school speech team, and serving as a judge at local speech competitions. After working on a San Francisco political campaign, he is now a substitute teacher in Redwood City and a Speech and Debate instructor with Communication Academy.

JILL REYNOLDS

Jill Reynolds attended San Francisco State University where she earned a B.A. in Speech Communications with an emphasis on presentation development and delivery, where she was nominated Outstanding Speech Graduate. She credits her public speaking abilities with her 20+ years of success in sales, training, management, and presentation consulting. Her corporate experience includes companies such as Qwest Communications, the Nielsen TV Ratings, and the Art Institutes. Her experience both as an executive speech coach and a Girl Scout leader have been equally valuable in cultivating her passion: helping others of all ages become poised and confident communicators.

JOHN DUONG

John Duong received his B.A. in Japanese with a minor in Education from San Jose State University. As a graduate student, he continued his education to earn a Multiple Subject Teaching Credential. John served as a student teacher at Rocketship Si Se Puede Academy in San Jose, where he taught 5th grade and 1st grade classes. As an educator, he facilitated both focused and open-ended discussions with his students to keep them actively involved in the learning process. John is experienced in behavior management, creating effective lesson plans, and establishing open communication with his students in order to foster academic progress.



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KALYANI RAMAIYAN

Kalyani Ramaiyan received a B.S. in Science from Sharada College and an M.S. in Information Systems from the University of San Francisco. She has several years of experience teaching science, art, and technology to elementary school students. At Faria A+ Elementary, Kalyani taught daily lessons and setup projects for students in grades K-6. Her background includes building content management systems for clients under Symmetrical Designs. iKolam.com was created by her, which teaches the art of rangoli.

KI-JANA HERNANDEZ

Ki-Jana Hernandez is a passionate and well versed speech coach, with 7 years of competitive experience. Ki-Jana has coached with the James Logan Speech and Debate team, as well as the Great Debaters of Wiley College. He has experience working with all speech events, as well as various forms of debate including Parliamentary, Public Forum, and Lincoln Douglas. Ki-Jana has traveled around the nation with speech and is a very dedicated educator. He has taught multiple age groups from elementary schools at MISD in Texas to middle school and high school students at the Stanford National Forensics Institute. Ki-Jana brings open communication, clear execution, and understanding to the classroom with a high energy teaching style. Ki-Jana Hernandez has competed in the California High School State Championship tournament 3 years consecutively, winning 2nd in the state in Thematic Interpretation. He has been to final rounds at multiple invitationals across the country in Dramatic interpretation, Duo interpretation, Prose, Poetry, and Impromptu. Also, he has competed at 4 national tournaments. He continued to join the Great Debaters of Wiley College where he also earned a National Championship for his school at the oldest standing speech tournament, Pi Kappa Delta National Championship Tournament.

MALAR GANAPATHIAPPAN

Malar Ganapathiappan graduated from Arizona State University with a B.A. in Psychology. She's had several years of experience tutoring children in writing, reading, math, science, and study skills at *The Tutoring Center* and *AVID Tutor*. She's experienced in critiquing essays, holding open-ended discussions with students, behavior management, promoting individual learning styles, and conducting assessments. Malar has also taught Creative Writing camps for *Camp Brainy Bunch*, where she has adapted curriculum to fit student needs, kept an open communication line with parents, and fostered a positive environment for learning.

MAREN LASSNER

Maren Lassner earned her B.A. in English at Santa Clara University and received her Master's in English and Comparative Literature at San Jose State University. She manages a thriving private tutoring business and has over 10 years of career experience in enrichment education. Maren is sagacious with all ages and abilities and is excited to utilize her knowledge, awareness, and expertise to help Communication Academy students succeed! Her passion for acquiring and sharing knowledge, coupled with her dynamic teaching style and outside-the-box approach to learning empowers students to be proactive, productive, and confident contributors in school and life.



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MARIE BALLENTINE

Marie Ballentine has an Elementary Teaching Credential and is currently teaching 1st grade. She has a diverse background in the corporate world having managerial positions in start-up companies such as ESP Safety Inc, RKI Instruments, Azaire Networks, and XKD Corporation. Marie has trained corporate employees to gain ISO 9001 certification and works with teens in Faith Formation. Her leadership skills have varied from successfully planning and directing non-profit fundraising events to introducing new systems to improve the workflows of companies. With a “step up” attitude, Marie motivates her students to work hard and become self-starters.

MARY ETTA EATON

Mary Etta Eaton is a Silicon Valley leadership communications consultant, coach, and public speaking instructor. Mary Etta helps entrepreneurial tech leaders, scientists & engineers at Stanford and beyond to reach their professional goals by creating clear, concise, and compelling messages. Before teaching at Stanford, Mary Etta was a public speaking instructor for the Keys School. She also worked at Hewlett-Packard for over 15 years, serving as a Human Resources Specialist and leading teams of 5-75 marketing professionals. She brings a wealth of management expertise and high-tech leadership experience in Management Development & Training, HR, and Marketing/Sales Development. Mary Etta teaches all levels of public speaking and debate to students at Communication Academy, including Professional Public Speaking and private communications coaching. With an energetic teaching style, Mary Etta creates an active and engaging classroom atmosphere centered on collaboration and creativity.

MELINDA NGUYEN

Melinda Nguyen earned her B.A. in Psychology with a Minor in Education at UCLA. She went on to earn her M.A. in Education and Multiple Subject Teaching Credential from UC Berkeley. She is currently in the process of applying for an additional Single Subject Mathematics credential. Her interest in communication began with a desire to overcome her fear of public speaking. Since joining and becoming Co-President of her high school Speech & Debate club, her love for teaching and communications has flourished. Melinda’s public speaking experiences include competitive public speaking in Interpretation, Impromptu, Oratory, and Prose & Poetry speaking. Her teaching experiences include teaching students across the K-8 grades in various capacities. Most recently, she has taught 6th grade math & science, and is currently teaching 5th grade in Cupertino. Her experiences both in and out of the classroom have proven to her that in order to succeed, having strong communication skills is vital. She looks forward to helping her students recognize their own voice and introducing the joys of public speaking and math to her students.

PATRICIA PINEDO

Patricia Pinedo received a B.A. in Literature with an emphasis on Creative Writing from UC Santa Cruz and continued her education at San Jose State University, where she graduated with an M.F.A. in Creative Writing. As a graduate assistant at San Jose State, she assisted in instructing English courses. In addition to serving as a private aide and peer educator, she also has four years of experience as a substitute teacher in the Sunnyvale School District. As an educator, Patricia strives to develop fun and exciting curriculum for students to develop their skills further. Patricia is an energetic instructor who is thrilled to be working with Communication Academy.



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PAUL OSSERMAN

Paul Osserman has just retired from a 34-year career in public education. After completing his education at Stanford University with a Master's degree in Education, Paul has taught 18 years at the elementary level and 16 years at the middle school level. His credentials include Single Subject credentials in Music and Math and a Multiple Subject credential. Paul loves teaching and inspiring students through coaching chess clubs, MathCounts teams, and teaching and coordinating GATE classes. He has been selected as Teacher of the Year, BTSA support coach, and student teacher mentor. When he is not teaching, Paul plays jazz and enjoys traveling.

RANDI BECKMAN

Randi Beckman received a MA in International Relations with a focus on Human Rights from the University of San Diego. She also earned a Masters in Social Work from San Diego State University. In addition, she possesses a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication Studies from Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts. Ms. Beckman has extensive experience serving as a public speaker throughout the community, speaking on global topics centered on human rights. She has over 8 years of experience working with at-risk school age children and teens and 5 additional years of experience working in the public school system. Previously, Ms. Beckman taught at the International Professional School of Bodywork, where she developed and taught her own curriculum to students. Currently, she provides classroom presentations and provides therapeutic support working as a School Counselor at Berryessa Union School District. Ms. Beckman is working on publishing her first book. She has a passion for writing, teaching, and inspiring students. As an instructor, she draws upon her experience working as a School Counselor in order to help motivate students in the classroom and to make learning fun. She especially enjoys helping people to improve their public speaking, communication, reading, and writing skills. She currently works as an Instructor at Communication Academy teaching a variety of courses centered on communications, reading, and writing.

SWATI BELWALKER

Swati graduated with a Master's in Commerce from Prune University and attended graduate school at National University where she received Level 1 credentials in General Education (multiple subjects) as well as in Special Education. She also holds a Master's in Business Administration from MIT School of Management. Swati has over 10 years of experience at the middle school level having worked for Cupertino Middle School. As an instructor, she taught study skill classes focused in mathematics to a wide-range of students. She also completed the CBEST, CSET, and RICA. Swati has been a math instructor at Communication Academy for over 2 years, and she prides herself in promoting student interest as well as creating a classroom environment that fully engages her students.

TREAHNA FRANCO

Treahna Franco holds a BA in English Education with a concentration in Creative Writing as well as a BA in Psychology with a minor in Counseling. Working as a behavior therapist at the Center for Learning and Autism Support, Treahna guided learning by developing individualized instructional activities and programs for students and recorded student progress. Treahna also worked as a gymnastics and dance instructor at The Little Gym where she helped children enhance social and emotional confidence. Treahna is a personable and dedicated instructor who brings her passion for student learning to every class she teaches.



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TRUC TON

Truc Ton earned her B.A. in English from UC Davis and received her Master's in English from San Jose State University. She has dedicated much of her time during the past 12 years to teaching at various learning centers, serving as a teaching assistant, and educating students through after school tutoring programs. Truc has experience teaching from the kindergarten through the 12th grade level. She strongly believes in developing critical thinking skills along with clear, simple, and effective writing as well as encouraging students to think for themselves and to apply what they read and learn to their daily lives.

VAN TRIEU

Van Trieu graduated from Santa Clara University with a B.S. in Math. To pursue a teaching career, she enrolled in the teacher preparation program at San Jose State University where she earned her California Teaching Credential in 2005. Van has been teaching math since 2005 at the elementary through high school level. She has taught in the San Jose Unified, Berryessa Union, East Side Union, and Oak Grove School Districts. She feels that students learn best when an instructor uses a variety of instructional strategies and offers individualized support. By incorporating class discussions and cooperative learning in her classes, Van strives to facilitate an inquisitive class atmosphere.

ZACHARY RINKINS

Zachary Rinkins has a diverse background in communications and received a B.S. in Journalism at the Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University. He's the founder of Rinkins Multimedia Ventures, L.L.C, which held weekly 90-second personal finance radio vignettes. The show featured Bill Cosby, Billionaire Bob Johnson, and many others. The show won the 2007 Florida Associated Press Broadcasters award for best newscast under five minutes. Zachary was also a member of the Professional Speakers Network. He delivered motivational speeches at public schools, churches, and civic groups, which earned him a certification as a public communicator from the Motivational Training Center. *By Kids for Kids* was a weekly teen magazine show that Zachary hosted and produced. In 2015, he was a multiple champion of the Toastmasters International Speech competitions at the club, area, and district levels.