



Kite and Leaf...

The good news
email from TCS!

TCS Teachers Present at 2022 PEN National Conference

This month, several of our faculty traveled to Seattle to attend the annual national conference of the **Progressive Education Network (PEN)**. There they were able to network and share with progressive educators from around the country, visiting leading progressive schools in the **Seattle** area, attending professional development sessions, and undoubtedly bringing back great new ideas as they do every year.

TCS has participated in every PEN conference since our founding in 2004, and we're proud that our faculty were invited to present again this year, as they have in several past conferences.

At this year's conference, **Ms. Christina Martin, Mr. Will Hudson, and Ms. Kendra Roberts** gave a workshop titled: "**Keeping the Outside In (the curriculum)**." The topic is well aligned with this year's conference theme, "Transformative Education: Disruption, Innovation, and Regeneration in our Learning Communities."



Attending this year's PEN Conference in Seattle are (l-r) TCS faculty Mr. Will Hudson, Ms. Mika Yamamoto, our Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Ms. Christina Martin, Ms. Kendra Roberts and Mr. Louis Kertgen,

Their presentation explained how time in nature during Covid served as a lifeline for our TCS school community. They shared how Covid motivated us toward innovation in using the outdoors through: adapting outdoor spaces at our facility with tents for open-air learning spaces and classrooms; how we used nearby parks to their fullest; how our families offered backyard and garage spaces for classes to safely gather; and, of course, the success of our outdoor learning program in the woods.

It also explored all the ways we are maintaining access to nature in our curriculum over the long term. They shared our commitment to open play and learning outdoors, and how we are ensuring time in nature remains integral to our school culture and curriculum beyond the pandemic.

Here's a video our team shared in Seattle to kick off their presentation, which we hope you will enjoy:



While not presenting this year, our middle-level teachers **Ms. Mika Yamamoto** and **Mr. Louie Kertgen** also attended the conference. "The entire trip was just amazing — to be in a group of like-minded individuals, learn from and with peers, and also grow as educators," says Louie. "I also really enjoyed learning new things/practices, like "Magnet Feet" and making more prominent land acknowledgments. I was able to come right back into the classroom and see the success of these ideas."

Mika reports, "On the first day, the keynote speaker was Jesse Hagopian, a leading voice on issues of educational equity. He spoke about the destruction of collective forgetting and the healing of collective remembering. This resonated with me throughout the conference and beyond. How can we practice collective remembering to heal the world?"

The entire group brought up how the conference inspired them to be "disruptors" and find ways that we as a school can go beyond just talking about social justice and begin making changes in our society.

We look forward to the influx of new energy and new ideas our PEN participants bring back each year.

What is PEN?

The Progressive Education Network

is a membership organization representing progressive schools across the nation. It provides resources, networking, advocacy, and professional development for education professionals that furthers their following vision:



The Progressive Education Network's Vision

PEN believes that the purpose of education transcends preparation for college or career. Schools nurture citizens in an increasingly diverse democracy. Within the complexities of education theory, practice, policy, and politics, we promote a vision of progressive education for the 21st century that:

- Engages students as active participants in their learning and in society
- Supports teachers' voice as experienced practitioners and growth as lifelong learners
- Builds solidarity between progressive educators in the public and private sectors
- Advances critical dialogue on the roles of schools in a democratic society
- Responds to contemporary issues from a progressive educational perspective
- Welcomes families and communities as partners in children's learning
- Promotes diversity, equity, and justice in our schools and society
- Encourages progressive educators to play an active role in guiding the educational vision of our society.

Professional Development in Nature Education

A perk to attending the PEN Conference is the time to visit other schools and organizations nearby.

"One thing that was especially interesting for me is that I scheduled a tour of the **Wilderness Awareness School** outside of Seattle," says **Mr. Will Hudson**, our science teacher at TCS. "I met with one of the coordinators, checked out their administrative offices, and then took a



drive up into the hills to see their land."

"This was a great experience because I learned about this organization years ago and have been using their materials off and on ever since. Once I transitioned into my new role, I've begun leaning more heavily on their philosophy and approach to foster nature connection.



"I was able to ask questions about how they plan for outdoor experiences that allow for freedom of exploration but also create a fluid structure for flow and deep learning and connection.

"It was kind of a cool full-circle experience for me because I discovered the Wilderness Awareness School and their resources before I came to TCS, but it's only been here that I've been able to use them fully and grow as an outdoor / nature lover and educator."

Inspiration and New Tools for a Progressive Teaching Career

"**P**resenting at the conference was a highlight," says **Ms. Kendra Roberts**, our 1st/2nd grade teacher. "A very wise PEN speaker, Taikayh Ward, once said: 'If given a seat at the table, show up! Voice trembling and all!'"



How busy are our PEN participants? Kendra Roberts attended a total of 9 professional development sessions in addition to giving the TCS presentation. This included a full-day school visit:

"**The Little School**' has been around for years, and received its land as a gift. It's in a forest occupying many acres! It is comprised of mini-schools within a school, and its autonomy and pedagogy align with TCS," says Kendra. "It's like we read from the same book- no pun intended! As I entered the school the bookcase that's across from the main office, houses Teacher Tom and Katherine Ellison's *Loving Learning*. We all know TCS actually graces the pages of this very book. Again, the idea of sharing is caring (not boastful) reigns supreme."

"The theme of the conference challenged everyone to see that disruption will always be at the forefront of innovation, regeneration, and sustainability!"

"More themes that we discussed, included: social and emotional skills, social justice, democratic practices, DAP, mindfulness, respect, critical race theory, institutional/ structural racism, honest educators, emergent curriculum, knowing your past before touching on the future, change is constant, and rich historical pedagogy – to name a few. One concept I kept returning to throughout the sessions is that **'the violence of organized forgetting' causes trauma, but the 'healing of organized memory' reveals pride.**

"My favorite part of the experience was coming back and recapping everything with Ms.Dana, and feeling our shared excitement around best practices!"

A Director's PEN Perspective



"PEN conferences are so valuable as they give us a chance to be in a group of like-minded educators whose progressive practices are entrenched in their own school cultures," says Ms. Christina Martin, our director of curriculum and instruction. "School visits are especially fun--it's been a while since any of us have been able to visit another school!"

"PEN has done such a good job in recent years of keeping racial equity issues at the forefront of its work, an area where progressive education has traditionally not been strong. This year's conference offered opportunities to hear from amazing activists/artists/educators--Jesse Hagopian, Elizabeth Ortega, and Mike Browne among others-- doing important and under-recognized work.

"A major highlight for me was presenting with Kendra and Will, who each bring so much expertise and perspective to the topic of outdoor education. People in our session seemed to really enjoy hearing from both of them--talking about our different journeys and experiences and insights made for a very interesting conversation.

"Being with Louie, Mika, Kendra, and Will provided great bonding time for all of us. We enjoyed each other's company and spent hours talking about schools, students, teaching, and learning. There is something powerful about having time and space to do this away from the day-to-day demands of TCS."

Our Previous PEN Presenters

At TCS, we're so fortunate to have a faculty committed to and deeply experienced in progressive education. Many of them have published articles

and given presentations on progressive education to both local and national audiences. We see ourselves as an organization participating in thought leadership among progressive education professionals. Here are previous PEN presentations given by our faculty in recent years:

- **"It's Okay: Integrating Race, Diversity, and other Controversial Topics Into the Curriculum."** 2019 Progressive Education Network Presentation given by Ms. Angela Whitacre de Resendiz.
- **"Transforming an Urban Asphalt Space into a Magical Outdoor Space on a Shoestring Budget."** 2019 Progressive Education Network Presentation given by Ms. Nadine Brockman, Ms. Lucy Coria, and Ms. Dana Nasralla.
- **"Middle-Level Students Need Play Too."** 2019 Progressive Education Network Presentation given by Ms. Gloria Mitchell and Mr. Will Hudson.



Our Donors Make This Possible.

We and our faculty would like to thank our donors, who give to TCS so generously. Part of your donations go to fund professional development opportunities for our faculty, like attending the annual PEN conference. Each year, our faculty return excited and invigorated about teaching in a progressive education setting, and they always bring back new ideas that they gathered from their networking and sessions to improve our curriculum or facility. We hope that you will **make plans to donate generously again during our annual appeal season coming up in late November and December.** Or, give a special donation today:

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