

***MEET  
the  
ESSEX FELLS SCHOOL  
STAFF***



*“Let Your Dreams  
Take Flight”*

**2023-2024**



### **REBECCA ALPERT**

Mrs. Alpert, nee Ms. Santin is the art therapist at Essex Fells School. She is overjoyed to enter her 6th year at EFS with her new married name! She will continue to teach art to preschool and will facilitate class meetings that coincide with the school counselor. The purpose of class meetings is to provide character education lessons for grades kindergarten through sixth grade. In addition, Mrs. Alpert meets with students both individually and in small groups to address their social and emotional learning needs using art as a tool to facilitate communication, self-expression, self-awareness, and personal growth. Mrs. Alpert attended Caldwell University for a combined B.A./M.A. program where she earned her Bachelor's Degree in Art and Psychology, and a Master's Degree in Mental Health Counseling with a Specialization in Art Therapy. She holds the credentials of a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and Licensed Professional Art Therapist (LPAT) in the state of New Jersey. She loves exploring new places with her husband Ben, and spending time with their three cats, Husky, Hanson, and Harley. She also enjoys volunteering as a running guide for Achilles NJ, a non-profit organization for differently abled athletes.



### **NICOLE AXENTIYOU**

Mrs. Axentiou is very excited to be returning to Essex Fells School as a Kindergarten teacher! This will be her sixth year as an elementary educator. Last year Mrs. Axentiou joined the Essex Fells School as a Kindergarten maternity leave replacement teacher and will continue to serve in that role. Prior teaching Kindergarten, she also taught second grade. Mrs. Axentiou graduated from Saint Elizabeth University with honors, earning a B.A. in Elementary Education and a B.A. in English with a writing concentration. She is happily married to her college sweetheart and has 3 amazing children, Christian (10), Nicholas (8), and Valentina (4). In her free time, she loves spending time with her family, which most often includes cheering on her boys at baseball and football games! She also loves reading, the beach, and being active.



### **DOROTEA BANEK**

Mrs. Dorotea Banek has been teaching at Essex Fells School for 26 years and enjoys each and every day. Currently, she teaches fourth-grade language arts and sixth-grade social studies. She has a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in History and is certified in elementary education. She has been awarded two Fulbright Scholarships which have enabled her to travel to Japan and New Zealand. Her continuous journeys around the world contribute to her passion for history and culture. Mrs. Banek enjoys watching her students flourish as they become writers and recognize their full potential in language arts. She teaches mindfulness in the classroom and will be incorporating these skills on a daily basis. Furthermore, Mrs. Banek has a background in acting which has enabled her to combine her talents and skills to direct and choreograph the school musical for the past thirteen years. She has two beautiful children, Luca, who is 16 years old, and Elia, who is 13. During her spare time, Mrs. Banek enjoys spending time with her family, venturing to the beach, visiting museums, and practicing meditation. Her motto in life is, "Don't be afraid your life will end; be afraid that it will never begin." In a nurturing environment, she encourages her students to take chances, explore their creativity, and challenge themselves.



### **MICHELLE BARSHAY**

This is Mrs. Barshay's 17<sup>th</sup> year teaching at Essex Fells School. During that time, she has worn many hats. She has taught 2nd, 3rd and 4th grades and is also a certified Level 1 Wilson Reading Instructor/Wilson Dyslexia Practitioner. Currently, she is one of the Basic Skills Instructors for our school. Mrs. Barshay received a Bachelor of Arts in History and American Studies from Boston University. After graduating, she worked in finance for several years before receiving her Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Certification from Caldwell College. Mrs. Barshay lives in Verona with her two children, Connor (16) and Marissa (12). During her spare time Mrs. Barshay enjoys going to farmers' markets, gardening, exercising, and spending time at the beach. Her family thrives to celebrate life and make the most of each and every day.



### **STEPHANIE BAVBEK**

This is Mrs. Bavbek's third year at Essex Fells School. She joined Essex Fells School in 2021 as a leave replacement teacher in the first grade class. She served as a paraprofessional in the preschool class for the 2022-2023 school year and is happy to be continuing that role this year in the kindergarten class with Mrs. Focarino and Miss Scoras. Mrs. Bavbek graduated from Ramapo College of New Jersey with a Bachelor's Degree in Communications and from Montclair State University with a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education. Currently, she resides in Roseland with her husband Billy and two boys, Mason (12) and Jaxon (8). Her boys love to play football, so most of her free time is spent going to their games to cheer them on. She is excited for another great year here at EFS!



### **LAURA BRUTMAN**

This is Mrs. Brutman's 9th year as a first grade teacher and her 19th year teaching at Essex Fells School. Mrs. Brutman received a Bachelor of Arts in Communications at Villanova University. She went on to attain a Post-Baccalaureate Teaching Certificate and Masters in Curriculum & Instruction from Caldwell University. Since then, Mrs. Brutman has become Wilson Level 1 Certified. Mrs. Brutman is happily married and has three children, Charlotte (15), Rebecca (13), and Jack (9). In her free time, she enjoys baking, reading, visiting the beach, walking her dog Ruby, and spending time with family and friends. Mrs. Brutman is looking forward to another exciting year at Essex Fells School.



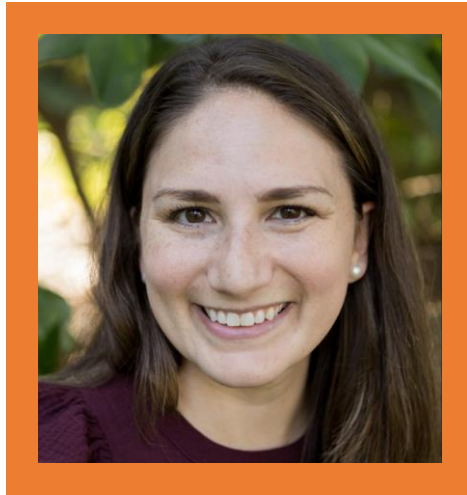
### **LAUREN BRZOSTOWSKI**

Mrs. Brzostowski is excited to start this new year in Essex Fells. Prior to Essex Fells, she taught in Hoboken as a seventh-grade English Language Arts teacher. She graduated summa cum laude from Saint Elizabeth University and received the New Jersey Distinguished Clinical Intern Award during her time as a student teacher. While teaching in Essex Fells, she became a Level I Wilson Reading Instructor. In June of 2022, Mr. and Mrs. Brzostowski welcomed their first baby boy, Landon. Their dog Brewster was reluctant to share his parents' affection but has since come around. This summer, Mrs. Brzostowski read plenty of books, cooked some tasty meals, and spent time with friends and family. She looks forward to getting to know her new class this year. Go Bengals!



### **JACLYN CARROLL**

Mrs. Carroll is so excited to be back for her 9th year at EFS! She absolutely loves being a part of the 6th grade team and wants to make it the most memorable year for the oldest Bengals! She attended Monmouth University where she majored in Elementary Education, Anthropology and is certified in Teaching of Students with Disabilities. In May of 2023, she completed her Master's Degree in the Literacy program at Caldwell University and is certified as a Reading Specialist. When she is not in the classroom, you can find her coaching soccer, playing with her puppy, Sonny, or baking something sweet for her family and friends. She is eager to challenge her students both inside and outside the classroom and is truly looking forward to all the greatness to come in the 2023-2024 school year.

**MARISA DERITES**

Mrs. DeRites is excited to start another amazing year in preschool! This will be Mrs. DeRites' thirteenth year at Essex Fells School. She started as a personal aide and then moved on to teach preschool. Mrs. DeRites also had the privilege of teaching her former students in 2nd grade for two years. She attended Fairleigh Dickinson University, where she received a B.A. in Psychology, M.A.T. in Elementary Education and Special Education Certification. Mrs. DeRites is a certified Level 1 Wilson Reading Instructor and Wilson Dyslexia Practitioner. She is a current and active member within the New Jersey chapter of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Outside of school, Mrs. DeRites loves spending time with her four nephews, trying out some new recipes in the kitchen and relaxing at the Jersey shore with family.

**JAMES DAVIS**

Mr. Davis is excited to start his third year as our School Custodian.





### **RORY DUARTE**

Ms. Duarte is looking forward to her sixth year at Essex Fells School. She is excited for another year with the second grade team. She graduated from the University of Maryland with a B.S. in Early Childhood Education and Special Education. Through her student teaching, she worked with students from birth to second grade in both general and special educational settings. She currently is working towards her M.Ed. in Reading through East Stroudsburg University. In her free time, Ms. Duarte enjoys reading, traveling, and spending time with her family and friends.



### **LISA EVANGELISTA**

Mrs. Evangelista is the Administrative Assistant in the Business/Main Office. She graduated from Rutgers University with a B.A. in Psychology. She and her husband have three children, one in college and two who have graduated. She is looking forward to another exciting year at EFS!



### **PADRAIC FINNEGAN**

Mr. Finnegan is very excited to be starting his first full year at Essex Fells School this fall. Before joining Essex Fells in 2023, he completed his student teaching in K-5 in the Caldwell/West Caldwell School district. Mr. Finnegan earned his bachelor's degree in Health and Physical Education P-12 along with a minor in Public Health from Montclair State University. Outside of the gym, Mr. Finnegan enjoys coaching lacrosse for West Essex and Maddog lacrosse. He also plays semi-professional Box Lacrosse for the Philadelphia Mustangs. Mr. Finnegan is so grateful to be a part of the Essex Fells Community and is looking forward to an active and exciting year in PE and health.



### **LAURIE FISCHER**

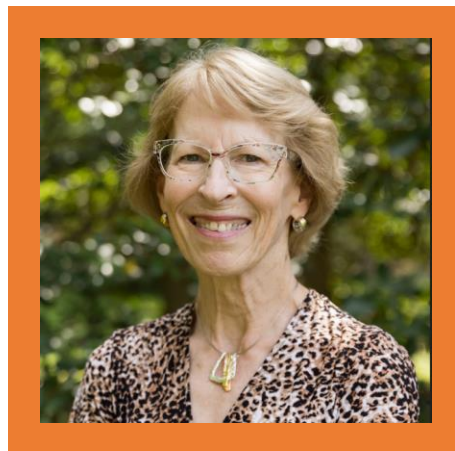
Mrs. Fischer completed her undergraduate work at the University of Maryland, College Park with a degree in Hearing and Speech Sciences and then went on to complete a Master's degree at Kean University in Union, NJ in Speech Pathology. In 2009, she became a Rehabilitation Engineering & Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA) certified assistive technology practitioner (ATP), specializing in assistive technology and augmentative communication. Mrs. Fischer worked for many years in a special needs private school serving students with multiple handicaps and disabilities before coming to Essex Fells School. In her off time, she enjoys being a wife to her husband Jason of 15 years, and her 2 children Micayla (13) and Ethan (11), and they reside in Livingston. Mrs. Fischer is very active in her children's PTA at their school and loves cooking and baking, working at sleepaway camp as the health center administrator, going down the shore, playing mahjong, and spending time with family and friends.





### **CANDICE FITZGERALD**

Mrs. Fitzgerald teaches 3rd grade and is so excited for the new school year! She is entering her 14th year at EFS after earning her Bachelor's degree in Elementary/Special Education and English from Seton Hall University. She also has her Master's Degree in Special Education from Caldwell University and is a Certified Level 1 Wilson Reading Instructor/Wilson Dyslexia Practitioner. Mrs. Fitzgerald loves being at the beach and enjoys spending time with her husband and their two children, Anna (5) and Mikey (3). She is looking forward to another wonderful year at Essex Fells School!



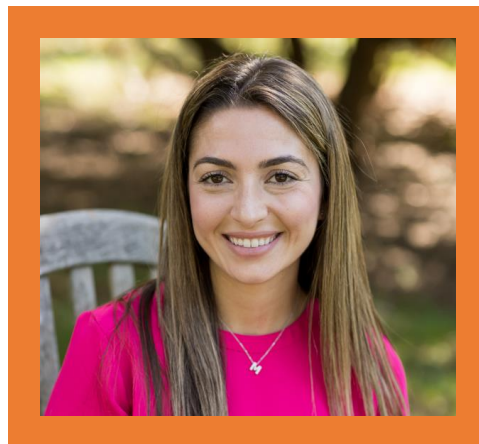
### **SUSAN FITZGIBBON**

Ms. FitzGibbon is a paraprofessional at Essex Fells School. She holds a BA from Union College and an MBA from Columbia University. After a career in business, Ms. FitzGibbon earned her credentials from Caldwell University to become a teacher and taught for many years at MKA. She is the mother of two grown sons and loves to travel with her husband. Ms. FitzGibbon enjoys reading, cooking, and participating in many sports, especially biking and hiking.



### **STEFANIA FOCARINO**

Mrs. Focarino is so excited to be part of the Essex Fells team. This will be Mrs. Focarino's eighth year as a classroom teacher and second year teaching Kindergarten at Essex Fells School. Before joining Essex Fells, Mrs. Focarino taught Pre-K 3. She graduated from William Paterson University with a B.A in Early Childhood Education P-3 and a minor in Writing. In 2020 Mrs. Focarino received her Teacher of Students with Disabilities certification. Mrs. Focarino's favorite thing is being a mom to her two children, Carlo Joseph age 3, and Siena Grace, age 2. Mrs. Focarino is looking forward to another fantastic school year!



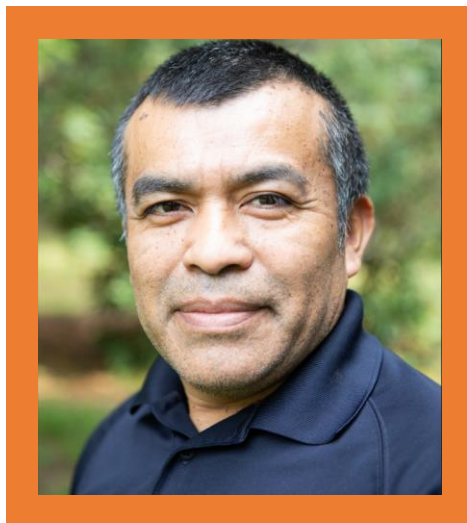
### **MOLLY FORNINI**

Mrs. Fornini is thrilled to be starting her eighth year at Essex Fells School as a Kindergarten teacher! This will be her tenth year teaching Kindergarten. She graduated from Florida Atlantic University with a B.A. in Elementary Education K-6 and ESOL Endorsement in 2013. In 2021, Mrs. Fornini received her Master's Degree in Literacy Instruction at Caldwell University, where she also attained her Reading Specialist Certification. The Fornini's are so proud to announce an addition to their growing family, Albert Charles III, who they welcomed on Mother's Day! With a heart full of love and excitement, Mrs. Fornini is now juggling the joys of motherhood alongside her passion for educating young minds. She is honored to be a part of the Essex Fells team and is looking forward to another fantastic school year!



**MICHELLE GDALETA**

Dr. Gadaleta will have completed 14 years at EFS in February. She serves as our Superintendent/Principal. Prior to Essex Fells, Mrs. Gadaleta was a Principal in Hawthorne and before that a Principal/Child Study Team Coordinator in Washington Boro. She began in education as a teacher including 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade experiences. Mrs. Gadaleta earned her Bachelor's Degree at Radford University in Virginia and her Master's at Montclair State University as well as her Doctorate in Educational Leadership at Centenary University. She lives in Kinnelon, NJ with her husband Maurizio and two daughters, Mikayla (12 years-old) and Mauritzia (8 years-old). Mrs. Gadaleta enjoys spending time with her family and participating in health and fitness activities.



**SANTIAGO GALINDO**

Mr. Galindo is the School Custodian and has been with EFS for 21 years.



### **KRISTIN GANN**

Mrs. Gann is proud to be entering her 31st year as an educator and her 21st year as a teacher at Essex Fells School. She has taught grades Pre-K through 2<sup>nd</sup> and is happy to be teaching First Grade again this fall. Mrs. Gann attended West Chester University where she received a B.A. in Early Childhood Education. She resides in North Caldwell with her husband Michael and her two daughters Alexandra and Ava. In her spare time, she enjoys spending summers at the shore, boating, and traveling with family and friends. She is looking forward to another great school year!



### **SUSAN HACKER**

This year will be Mrs. Hacker's 19th in Essex Fells School where she teaches fourth grade math and science. Before beginning her career in education here in 2005, Mrs. Hacker was a CPA and Accountant for a private insurance company in NYC. She made the decision to pursue her Master's Degree in Education when her two children began school full time. Mrs. Hacker and her family moved to New Jersey in 2005 and currently reside in Lincoln Park. Her children, Matthew and Emily, are grown and pursuing careers in technology and speech and language pathology. In her spare time, Mrs. Hacker likes to exercise, read, and spend time with family and friends. She is looking forward to another wonderful year at EFS.

**DEANA HROMOKO**

Mrs. Hromoko is the 1<sup>st</sup> grade inclusion teacher. This is her 22<sup>nd</sup> year teaching at Essex Fells School. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education and Psychology. She has a Master's Degree in Reading. Mrs. Hromoko is a certified Reading Specialist and has a certificate in Special Education. She is also certified in Wilson Reading. Mrs. Hromoko is married and has 3 children: Jack, age 14, Julia age 14, and James age 11. In her free time, she likes to spend time with her family, read and travel to Disney World. She looks forward to a wonderful year ahead!

**DANIELLE JAWORSKI**

Mrs. Danielle Jaworski is thrilled to return to EFS for her fourth year! She is eager to return to her position as the fifth grade math and science teacher. She graduated from Marywood University in 2016 with her B.A. in Early Childhood Education and Special Education. This is Mrs. Jaworski's 7<sup>th</sup> year teaching, having previously taught first, second, and fourth grade. Her favorite part of teaching is watching a student accomplish something they thought they could not do. She is excited to watch her students flourish, gain confidence, and discover their potential! In her spare time, Mrs. Jaworski enjoys traveling with her husband, reading, crocheting, and spending time with family and friends! She is looking forward to another amazing school year with her EFS family!





### **KRISTEN KOWALSKI**

This is Ms. Kowalski's seventh year at Essex Fells School. She is proud to be a third-grade general education teacher. A Magna Cum Laude graduate of Caldwell University, she earned her B.A. Degree in Elementary Education, B.A. Degree in Psychology, and M.A. in Literacy Instruction. Her NJ State Endorsements/Certifications include Early Childhood, Teacher of Students with Disabilities, Middle School Mathematics, and Reading Specialist. In her free time, she enjoys being with family and friends, maintaining a healthy lifestyle as a fitness trainer at AKT, and is an avid supporter of Breast Cancer Awareness. Ms. Kowalski is looking forward to another rewarding year of teaching at Essex Fells School. Go Bengals!



### **ARIELLA LATINO**

Mrs. Latino is very excited to be joining Essex Fells School this year as the Grade 5 English Language Arts and Grade 4 Social Studies Teacher. She graduated from Montclair State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Family & Child Studies, obtaining a K-5 Teaching Certification. Her passion for reading and writing then drove her decision to pursue a Middle School Specialization certification in English Language Arts Grades 5-8. Thereafter, she pursued a Master's Degree at Felician University in Educational Leadership, earning a supervisor certification and principal endorsement. Mrs. Latino is Orton Gillingham and Leveled Literacy Intervention trained and served as an elementary academic interventionist for 10 years in Language Arts & Math for grades K-5. Additionally, she has served in various roles, such as I&RS Coordinator, NJSLA Coordinator, and School Assessment Coordinator, while playing a vital role on the School Safety Team and Curriculum Revision Team. Outside of school, Mrs. Latino loves managing a media production team for a national dance competition company and is a real estate agent. Most of all, Mrs. Latino cherishes time with her husband Pete, daughter, Vittoria (3), and son, Peter (1). They enjoy traveling together, seeing new places and frequenting old ones. Sunday dinners, stroller walks to the park, and reading books with her kids are some of the simplest things that fill her heart with the most joy. Mrs. Latino is looking forward to an exciting new school year!



**STEVEN LELLA**

Mr. Lella serves as the district's School Business Administrator and Board Secretary. This is his twelfth year with Essex Fells School. Mr. Lella's primary function is to manage the day to day operations of the Business Office. He holds an MA in Management from the College of St. Elizabeth and BA in Accounting from Moravian College. In his free time, Mr. Lella enjoys playing golf, watching the Yankees and Giants, and spending time with family.

**JESSICA LODATO**

Mrs. Lodato is very excited for another wonderful year at EFS! She will be teaching along with the fourth grade team again this school year. Mrs. Lodato graduated from Montclair State University with her Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education. She also holds a Master of Education degree in Special Education as a certified teacher of students with disabilities. Over the course of her career, she has taught kindergarten, third, fourth and sixth grades. Mrs. Lodato is passionate about teaching and is eager to continue to grow as an educator. She enjoys spending her free time cooking, reading, and traveling with her husband Phil and children; Matthew, 10 and Paige, 7.



### **KATIE MACKENZIE**

This will be Mrs. MacKenzie's 14th year at Essex Fells School, and she is very excited for this new school year to begin! Mrs. MacKenzie is the 3rd grade inclusion teacher. She graduated from Rowan University with Bachelor's Degrees in Collaborative Education, Elementary Education, and American Studies, a Teacher of Students with Disabilities Certification, and earned her Master of Science in Collaborative Teaching from Rowan as well. Mrs. MacKenzie became Wilson Level 1 Certified in 2011 and earned her Middle School Math Certification through Montclair State University in 2013. Mrs. MacKenzie loves spending time with her husband, friends, and family.



### **LISA MASSARO**

Mrs. Massaro will continue her role as the Basic Skills Instructor this year. She is excited to begin her 26th year teaching at Essex Fells School. In that time, she has taught 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade. Mrs. Massaro received a B.A. in Early Childhood Education and an M.A. in Reading from Montclair State University. She is a certified Reading Specialist, Level 1 Wilson Reading Instructor/Wilson Dyslexia Practitioner, and is a certified Foundations Level 2 Facilitator. Mrs. Massaro resides in Fairfield with her husband Dan and their two daughters; Nicole, a sophomore at TCNJ and Danielle, a senior at West Essex. The Massaro's enjoy spending the summer with family and friends at the shore. She is looking forward to another amazing year at EFS!

**KATIE MCNISH**

Ms. McNish teaches STEAM/Tech to preschool through sixth grade. She has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Arcadia University and received her Post Baccalaureate teaching certification for K-12 art and K-5 elementary from Caldwell College. Before entering into the teaching profession, Ms. McNish was an interior designer. Currently, along with teaching, Ms. McNish is a floral designer as well as an active artist. She has two children, Haley (21) and Nicholas (19). In her free time, Ms. McNish enjoys painting, refinishing furniture, reading, and spending time with her children.

**PATRICIA PAKONIS**

Ms. Pakonis is the World Language teacher and a paraprofessional. She graduated from Villanova University earning a Bachelor's Degree in Comprehensive Science with a minor in Biology. She received her Post-Baccalaureate teaching certification through Caldwell University. Ms. Pakonis studied Spanish in Guatemala as well as here in the U.S. She holds an ACTFL Spanish certification in both oral and written proficiency. She was a substitute teacher here at Essex Fells School for two years and this is her tenth year as a full-time staff member. She is excited to be back again this year!



### **MARCO PANNULLO**

Mr. Pannullo is our Technology Coordinator. He is a graduate of Kean University. Along with working at EFS, he does website design and computer repairs. In his spare time, he likes to travel and play the guitar.



### **ERIKA PILATO**

Ms. Pilato is very excited to be returning to the Essex Fells School community this year as the school counselor. This will be her third year at EFS and her 16th year working as a school counselor. Prior to her tenure as a school counselor, Ms. Pilato worked in financial services. Making the decision to change careers to pursue her passion was simple. After working with students in the school setting, she decided to further her education. She received her license as an associate counselor and provides therapeutic counseling services to children and adults after school hours. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from The City University of New York and a Master's Degree in Counseling from Rider University. She received her Post Master's Licensed Associate Counselor Certification from Kean University. Ms. Pilato is a National Certified Counselor as well a Certified Positive Discipline Parent and Classroom Educator. She is grateful for the opportunity to be able to continue working with students in the school setting while providing services privately. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her two children, Darien (20) and Jesse (17.) Her favorite hobbies are downhill biking and anything to do with being outdoors as well as taking her mini-goldendoodle Charlie on bike rides.

**LAURA QUINN**

Mrs. Quinn is excited to be teaching second grade again this year! Before teaching Pre-k at EFS, Mrs. Quinn taught second grade in Verona at the FN Brown School. Mrs. Quinn is a graduate of Franklin & Marshall College. She has an MBA from Fordham University and received her Post Baccalaureate Teaching Degree from Caldwell University. Mrs. Quinn is married, has three children Caroline (22), Rachel (21) and Michael (17), and currently lives in North Caldwell.

**MARY RENZ**

Mrs. Renz looks forward to beginning her fifth year as a Certified School Nurse and K- 2nd Grade Health Teacher at Essex Fells School. She received a Bachelor's of Science in Nursing from Fairfield University and a Master's of Science in Nursing from Rutgers University. After years of hospital and research-based nursing, she returned to school and received a postgraduate Instructional School Nurse Certification from Caldwell College and Rutgers University. Mrs. Renz has been practicing as a Certified School Nurse for 18 years in both the public and private sector. She looks forward to caring for the staff and students at Essex Fells School!





### **JUDI REYNOLDS**

Mrs. Reynolds is looking forward to her 25th year at Essex Fells School. She began her professional teaching career at EFS upon graduating with a degree in Early Childhood Education and Sociology from The College of New Jersey in 1999. After 17 years as a classroom teacher in the 1st , 4th , and 3rd Grades, she now acts as the Lead Teacher/Coordinator of I&RS/504 and provides enrichment differentiation. Mrs. Reynolds can be found in any classroom depending on the day! She has a Master's Degree in both Reading from Rutgers University and Educational Leadership from Montclair State University. Outside of school, Mrs. Reynolds loves spending time with her husband, Hugh, and their fifth grader, Cole. Whether they are fishing, snowboarding, or relaxing on a beach, they enjoy being in the great outdoors.



### **TINA RIVERA**

Mrs. Rivera is the assistant in the main office at Essex Fells School. After spending 20+ years in the fashion industry in NYC she decided to make a career change and came to be part of our special school in the Fall of 2020. Mrs. Rivera lives close by in West Caldwell and loves spending time with her two dogs, husband, and son. She loves to cook and entertain her large extended family and friends.





### **ERICA SANTALLA**

Mrs. Santalla is thrilled to be teaching sixth grade ELA and fifth grade Social Studies at Essex Fells School. She has been in education for 21 years, previously in Fairfield. Mrs. Santalla has taught fourth grade, sixth grade reading, was the Churchill School reading specialist, and head of I&RS. She was also the founder and head of the district Drama Club. Her true passion is teaching ELA especially with sixth graders. She majored in Theater/Elementary Education at Muhlenberg College and attended William Paterson University for her Master's in Education in Reading and Reading Specialist certification. At home she has two boys, Grayson and Preston, her husband John, and her Schnauzer, Parker. She enjoys paddle boarding, anything near and on the water, Pilates, binge reading romantic novels, and attending sports events for her boys. Mrs. Santalla has truly always dreamed of working at Essex Fells School and is still pinching herself over this opportunity. She is so excited for a fun year!



### **MARIA SAZAN**

Ms. Sazan is new to Essex Fells Schools this year. She has been a Paraprofessional for 14 years and loves working with children. She has studied Early Childhood Education through Child & Family Resources. Ms. Sazan is married and has 2 older boys that are attending Trade School. She also has a little 9lb. Yorkie named Lola. She loves to go to the beach with her family. She enjoys reading, cooking, and baking.



### **JESSICA SCORAS**

Miss Scoras is very excited to be starting her first full year at Essex Fells School as the Kindergarten inclusion teacher. Before joining Essex Fells in January 2023, she taught in North Brunswick for five years. While there, she served as the first grade inclusion teacher as well as the pull out resource teacher for grades two through five. Miss Scoras earned her Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education K-5 from Rowan University and her Master's in TOSD from Georgian Court University. Outside of the classroom, she enjoys spending time with her fiancé, Steven, and her cat Binx. Miss Scoras is currently planning and getting ready for her wedding in January 2024. Miss Scoras is honored to be a part of the Essex Fells family and is looking forward to another fantastic school year!



### **LEEANN SMITH**

This will be Mrs. Smith's fourth year as the Child Study Team Coordinator/ Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant (LDTc) at Essex Fells School District and her 16th year in education. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Centenary University where she also received both her Elementary & Special Education certifications. She has both a Master's Degree from Centenary University in Educational Leadership and from Caldwell University in Special Education with the LDTc certification. As a former graphic designer, Mrs. Smith loves opportunities to use her creativity. She and her husband, Dennis are parents to their daughter, Isabel, and their son Christian and daughter-in-law, Rose. Dennis and LeeAnn enjoy spending their free time traveling in their RV with their dogs and relaxing at their home in Sussex County.



### **JENNIFER SULLIVAN**

Jennifer Sullivan is a Paraprofessional and is thrilled to be working with the 3rd grade team and students this year. She graduated from Ramapo College with a BS degree, double majoring in Business Administration and Environmental Studies. After working in the Commercial Insurance Industry for several years, she started as a Substitute Teacher at Essex Fells and became a Staff Paraprofessional four years ago. Her three children (Tim, Brad, and Katie) all attended Essex Fells School. Tim works for the Detroit Tigers and the Red Wings in their Community Outreach Team; Brad is a Personal Fitness Trainer and Katie is earning her Grad School Clinical Mental Health Degree at the University of St. Joseph. EFS has always been close to Mrs. Sullivan's heart, and she is very happy to be here! Outside of school she enjoys her family and their four rescue dogs, being down the shore, and NHL hockey, especially the NJ Devils.



### **ROSALIE TAKKEL**

Mrs. Takkel is the second grade inclusion teacher. This is her 16<sup>th</sup> year teaching at Essex Fells School. She has a BA in Psychology from Montclair State University. She received her Post Baccalaureate teaching certificate and special education certificate from Caldwell College. Mrs. Takkel is a Certified Level 1 Wilson Reading Instructor. Mrs. Takkel is married and has two sons; Logan, 12 and Luke, 10. She enjoys spending time with her family and going down the shore.

**JOHN THOMAS**

Mr. Thomas is our Facilities Supervisor and makes sure our school is always the best it can be. He loves to spend time outdoors and camping with his wife and children.

**KIMBERLY TRAFFORD**

Mrs. Trafford is excited about starting her 10th year as the media specialist at Essex Fells School. Mrs. Trafford received a Bachelor of Science in Accounting at Indiana University. She went on to attain a Post-Baccalaureate Teaching Certificate and Master's in Curriculum and Instruction from Caldwell University. She then earned her Media Specialist Certification from William Paterson University. Mrs. Trafford has four boys, Trey (20) who attends the United States Naval Academy, Ryan (17), William (16) and John (14). In her free time, she enjoys reading, traveling, watching her boys sports teams, and spending time with family and friends. Mrs. Trafford is looking forward to a wonderful year at Essex Fells School.



### **JOHN TROGANI**

Mr. Trogani has been teaching music at Essex Fells School for 19 years and has a BA with a concentration in music and a MA in Educational Leadership. He has taught in the Newark Public School district and was the scenery director for the “All Children’s Theatre Summer Camp” programs. He also has a background in the graphic arts and hand drawn animation. Mr. Trogani teaches general/instrumental music, and chorus. He helps organize the school’s annual variety show, concerts, musicals, and graduations. He has two beautiful children, Lilia (19) and Jayden (15). In his spare time, he likes to create and perform music, paint, relax at the beach and spend time with his family. He is looking forward to another great school year!



### **JAMIE WALLACE**

Mr. Wallace is excited to begin his second year teaching Art at Essex Fells. He studied Architecture at Drexel University before earning a B.A. in Art Education from Rutgers University. Mr. Wallace has a diverse teaching background - from Art in elementary and high schools in NJ and NYC to teaching woodworking and design classes privately. Mr. Wallace discovered his love for teaching while serving in the U.S. Marine Corps. He lives in West Orange with his wife Melissa and two children, Hudson (9) and Frankie (7). In his free time, Mr. Wallace enjoys woodworking, photography, cooking and spending time outdoors with his family.



**TRACIE WIECZOREK**

Miss Wiczorek is excited to begin her sixth year at Essex Fells School. Miss Wiczorek has a dual Bachelor's Degree in Special Education and Early Childhood Education from Lock Haven University. She also holds a Masters Degree in Reading and Literacy from East Stroudsburg University. In her free time Miss Wiczorek is involved in animal rescue and enjoys traveling, playing softball, skiing, kayaking and spending time with her rescue pets. Miss Wiczorek is an avid sports fan and is looking forward to an exciting football season cheering on the Buffalo Bills. She looks forward to another exciting year in preschool with Essex Fells School's littlest Bengals.