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## New staff at Wayland Schools

Thursday, August 31, 2006

**Nikki Amara (guidance counselor, Wayland High School):**Amara received her bachelor's degree in psychology from Saint Anselm College and master's degree in secondary guidance and counseling from Salem State College. She was the director of guidance and college counseling at Savio Preparatory High School in East Boston. Most recently, she worked as a guidance counselor at Lexington High School. Amara has volunteered to work with a softball team made up of visually impaired adults and has performed in a lead role in "Joey & Maria's Comedy Wedding."

**Katherine Bassen (social studies teacher, Wayland High School):** Having graduated from Trinity College with a bachelor of arts in history, Bassen went on to Boston University and earned her master's degree in social studies. She spent a year studying abroad at Queen Mary College in London and moved on to do her student teaching at Lexington High School. Last year, she taught at King Philip Regional High School in Wrentham. She has served as academic program coordinator for the Wellesley College Alumnae Association and tutored in history and English.

**Patrice Buckley (music teacher, Claypit Hill School):**A cum laude graduate of Boston University with a bachelor of arts in music education, Buckley returns to Claypit after substituting for her sister, a Claypit Hill music teacher, while she was on a leave of absence last year. While at Boston University, Buckley was the president, musical director and Webmaster of BU's premier, award-winning coed a cappella group. In this capacity she arranged and wrote music for performances and competitions along with producing their latest CD. Claypit is excited to have her back.

**Ruth Burman (library/media specialist, Claypit Hill School):**Burman comes to Wayland from the Rashi School in Newton, where she began as a third-grade teacher's assistant. Upon the completion of her master's degree in education/library science from Salem State College, she was hired as a librarian and built a thriving school library from scratch. She also holds a bachelor of elementary education degree from Franklin Pierce College and spent seven years after college working in the private sector in marketing. She welcomed her first child, Brayden Daniel Burman, this past April.

**Yvonne Ciardiello (elementary teacher, Loker School):**Ciardiello holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Merrimack College and a master's degree in elementary education from Lesley University. Prior to her appointment at the Happy Hollow School as a temporary teacher assistant in 1998, she worked as a fourth-grade teacher in Watertown at the St. Stephen's Armenian Day School. She accepted another teacher assistant position in the Lincoln Public Schools before returning to Loker School in 2001. Now with her own classroom, Ciardiello's face is a familiar one at Loker after five years as a teacher's assistant.

**Christine Crocker (chemistry teacher, Wayland High School):**Crocker graduated magna cum laude from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell with a bachelor's degree in chemistry. For six years Polaroid Corporation employed her as a senior associate scientist, where she managed multiple projects and experiments. Last year she switched careers and became a chemistry teacher at Lawrence High School. She describes this experience of working in an urban environment as "truly rewarding and personally motivating." She is a member of the American Chemical Society.

**Nicole Elliot (elementary teacher, Claypit Hill School):**Another new face at Claypit Hill, Elliot spent seven years in Lunenburg Public Schools as a first-grade teacher. She graduated with honors from the University of Massachusetts with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and sociology and from Lesley University with a master's degree in curriculum and instruction with a specialization in literacy. Having done her student teaching in the Amherst and Sunderland school systems, Elliot was a mentor teacher in the Lesley University/Cambridge Public Schools Summer Compass Program.

**Kristin Fay (elementary teacher, Loker School):**Fay is no stranger to Loker School, as she was a temporary teacher at Loker last year. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology/education from Marist College, from which she graduated cum laude, and a master's degree in special education from Framingham State College. Following seven years as a special education teacher in the Franklin Public Schools, she left to remain at home with her young children, maintaining her teaching skills by continuing to work as evaluator and IEP coordinator in Franklin and as coordinator of religious education at St. Anselm Parish in Sudbury. In addition, she continues to serve as an advocate in the Educational Surrogate Parent Program through the Department of Social Services.

**Jennifer Gorrie (special education teacher, Wayland Middle School):**Gorrie comes to the Middle School from the New England Center for Children in Southborough, where she began as a teacher in the residential program and now works as lead teacher in the Intensive Day School Program. She is a graduate of the University of Connecticut with a bachelor of science degree in human development and family services. She also holds a master's degree in education from

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Simmons College. Last year she was honored by the New England Center for Children as "Employee of the Month." While at UConn, she worked as a preschool teacher assistant in Connecticut and special needs teacher assistant in New York.

**Melissa Gow (kindergarten teacher, Loker School):** Gow holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Pine Manor College and a master's degree in language literacy from Wheelock College. Prior to coming to Wayland, she spent a year in Concord as a special needs tutor and five years in Newton as a long-term substitute for the inclusion facilitator. She is a returning member of the Loker School staff, as she was a kindergarten co-leader for BASE last year and a group leader in the Pegasus summer program in Wayland in 2005.

**Maggie Helon (mathematics/science curriculum specialist, K-5):** Helon joins the team of elementary curriculum specialists with a multitude of experience. She began her career as a second- and fifth-grade teacher in Pennington, N.J., and mathematics learning consultant for McGraw-Hill Company before applying to become a national test developer for ETS Educational Testing Services. After relocating to Massachusetts she worked as a K-5 mathematics lead teacher in Canton for a year. Her most recent position was as the K-8 mathematics curriculum coordinator in Stoughton. She is a graduate of the State University of New York at Oswego with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a concentration in science. She holds a master's degree in educational leadership from The College of New Jersey, from which she graduated summa cum laude.

**Michael Konig (kindergarten teacher, Loker School):** Konig graduated from Boston College with a bachelor's degree in English and earned his master's degree in early childhood education from Wheelock College. He brings to Wayland knowledge gleaned from a variety of experiences, including a year as kindergarten teacher in Arlington and a practicum at the Cambridge Friends School. Most recently, he taught first grade at the Atrium School in Watertown, where he chaired the Faculty Diversity Action Committee from 2001 to 2005.

**Michael Kotin (kindergarten teacher, Loker School):** After practicing law for several years, Kotin applied for a fourth-grade teaching position in Longmeadow at the Blueberry Hill Elementary School, where he has worked for two years prior to coming to Wayland. He graduated from Princeton University with a bachelor's degree in politics, and then went on to law school at SUNY where he graduated magna cum laude with his JD in environmental law. He also holds a master's degree from Boston College with a concentration in elementary education.

**Carolyn Labuda (mathematics teacher, Wayland High School):** Having attained her bachelor's degree with honors from the University of Massachusetts, Labuda matriculated at Cambridge College, attaining her master's degree in education with a concentration in mathematics. She has been involved in leadership as a curriculum and program director for the Student Leadership Training Program for collegiate and high school student leaders and advisors. She has taught leadership skills in the Student Leadership Training Program, a summer program for collegiate and high school student leaders and advisors. As curriculum and program director, she co-authored the program's student manual.

**Lelia Leary (science teacher, Wayland Middle School):** Leary studied topical biology in Monteverde, Costa Rica, while working toward a bachelor of arts degree in biology from Wheaton College, from which she graduated magna cum laude. She finished her master's degree in science education at Montana State University. She has spent the past six years as the Middle School science specialist at St. Mary's School in Brookline, where she worked to develop the life, earth and physical science curriculum. Leary has also worked as a field teacher, environmental educator and botanist.

**Aidan McCann (elementary teacher, Loker School):** McCann has relocated to Massachusetts from Texas where he spent the past three years working for Teach for America in the Donna Independent School District. He is a graduate of Skidmore College with a bachelor's degree in social work. He received his master's degree in elementary education from the University of Texas-Pan America. He has pursued courses in science through the University of Texas and joined the South Texas Science Collaborative to learn more about hands-on science for his students.

**Karen McCourt (elementary teacher, Happy Hollow School):** McCourt holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education and human development from the Lynch School of Education Program at Boston College where she graduated cum laude. She spent a semester studying at the National University of Ireland, Galway, where she was enrolled in the Faculty of Arts. She completed her full practicum in Brookline, Brighton and Sudbury. While at Boston College she organized the Relay for Life and Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walks.

**Lisa Nowak (Spanish teacher, Wayland High School):** Following an internship as a mentor/tutor at The Network in Attleboro, Nowak was a Spanish teacher and department head of foreign languages at Hyde School in Bath, Maine. While at Hyde School, she also coached wrestling and track and worked with students in the performing arts program, choreographing and staging performances. Nowak holds a bachelor's degree from Wheaton College and expects to complete her master's degree in Spanish at Middlebury College next year.

**Deanna Riseman (science teacher, Wayland High School):** Riseman spent recent summers as an intern at the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum & Zoo, as a volunteer with Earthwatch Research Team for the Bahamas Marine Mammals Survey, and as a "teacher at sea" aboard a research vessel, returning at summer's end to Needham High School where she has taught biology and marine science since September 2000. She holds a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Michigan and expects to receive her master's degree soon from Boston College Lynch School of Education.

**Hipolito Rivera (technical education teacher, Wayland Middle School):** Having received his bachelor's degree in biochemistry and molecular biology from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Rivera has worked as an algebra teacher and math lab instructor in the Millbury Public Schools. While working in Millbury, he also served as class advisor, tutor, instructional assistant and site supervisor for the Millbury Aftercare Program, and coached Millbury Pee Wee Basketball.

**Kara Schwartz (library/media specialist, Loker School):** After completing her student teaching at Newton South High, Schwartz was a school library teacher in the Everett Public Schools. She has been a language lab coordinator at Amherst College and an English as a second language instructor at Pine Manor College. She graduated from Colby College with a bachelor's degree with distinction in East Asian studies and holds two master's degrees, one in teaching English to speakers of other languages from Columbia University Teachers' College and another in library and information science from Simmons College.






**Donna Sumner (mathematics teacher, Wayland Middle School):** Sumner brings a wealth of math teaching experience to her position in Wayland, having taught math and served as department chair for many years at the Matignon High School in Cambridge. She graduated magna cum laude from Regis College in mathematics (with minors in economics and secondary education) and later earned her master's degree from Cambridge College. During her tenure at Matignon High School, she served as advisor for the National Honor Society, senior activities coordinator and Math Club moderator.

**Rebecca Talaia (elementary teacher, Claypit Hill School):** A track, cross-country, soccer and cheerleading coach, Talaia has been a fourth-grade teacher in Rhode Island and a sixth-grade teacher in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. Her most recent teaching experience was as a fourth-grade teacher in Portsmouth, R.I., where she facilitated the implementation of the Investigations math curriculum. She graduated with a bachelor's degree from Lebanon Valley College in Pennsylvania, where she had the opportunity to participate in a study abroad program to Anglia Polytechnic University in Brentwood, England.

**Robert Thorsen (physical education and health teacher, Wayland Middle School):** Having received his bachelor's degree from Western New England College and master's degree from Boston University, Thorsen is also certified as a coach through the American Sport Education Program and the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletics Association. He has taught physical education and health in the West Boylston Middle/High School and substituted in a long-term assignment in the Weston Public Schools, where he has also coached football, softball and baseball. He has dedicated several summers to the Girl Scouts, as he was recreation director for three years for Camp Cedar Hill.

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