



We are delighted to welcome new team members and celebrate returning faculty. View faculty bios for the 2025/26 Mountain Academy Jackson Campus team below.



Chris Bessonette - Head of School

Chris's path, like a great hiking trail, has been full of twists and turns. Originally from a small town in western Oregon, he has lived in Austria, California, and Germany, where he taught outdoor education and worked in independent schools. Chris first moved to Jackson to teach at Teton Science Schools' Journeys School. After fourteen years teaching at a dual language immersion public school, he will now lead Mountain Academy as the Head of School. Chris received a Master's in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Wyoming.

Additionally, he studied language acquisition and holds an English as a Second Language teaching endorsement. He is also a National Board Certified Teacher, a National Geographic Certified Teacher, and was honored as a Milken Educator in 2018. An avid adventurer, he has guided expeditions for the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) as a backpacking and rock climbing instructor. Chris recently completed a new educational adventure by studying bilingual education in Taiwan on a Fulbright teacher research program. He lives in Jackson, Wyoming, with his wife and teenage son.



Macey Ackman - Middle School Faculty

This year, given the task of juggling the positions of Learning Support Coordinator, K-8 Interventionist, and ELA Teacher, Macey Ackman has proven herself time and time again. With her love of literature, including Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar," her deep knowledge of pop culture, and many years of teaching experience, Macey brings a fun energy to the Middle School that students naturally gravitate towards.



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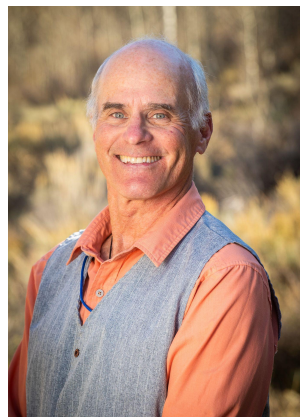
Sam Neirman - Middle School Math and Science Faculty

Sam comes to Teton Science Schools sincerely believing in the power of place, people, and stories. His story began in the Green Mountains of Vermont, where he still vividly remembers his “special place” atop an eroded riverbank overlooking the Ompompanoosuc River. His curiosity for the outdoors led him to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Forestry and Plant Biology. As much as Sam admired the intricacies of sugar maples and white pines while working as a forestry consultant, he yearned for the inspiration of people. For the past dozen years, in a diverse array of managerial and teaching experiences, Sam has explored the intersectionality of education and science. This journey has molded his educational philosophy, in which we all arrive at any moment with a story to tell. It is our responsibility to ensure we provide an inclusive space where that story can be heard and valued. He looks forward to hearing your story when he has the privilege of meeting you. Sam holds an M.S. in Natural Science Education from the University of Wyoming, a graduate program at Teton Science Schools, and a B.S. in Forestry and Plant Biology from the University of Vermont.



Brendan Barnard - Spanish Faculty (K-8)

Brendan is thrilled to be teaching Spanish at the Jackson Campus Mountain Academy! Before joining Mountain Academy, Brendan worked as a Program Coordinator on Teton Science Schools' Field Education team and as a Grade 5 teacher at The Park School in Boston, MA. While at the Park School, Brendan also coached flag football, basketball, and lacrosse, and led an after-school outdoor education program. Brendan is passionate about helping students develop a love for the Spanish language and empowering them to apply their learning in real-world contexts outside of the classroom. In his spare time, Brendan loves skiing, trail running, rock climbing, playing pickleball, and cheering on his favorite football team, the New York Giants.



Jeffery Post-Holmberg - Lower School Faculty

Jeffrey Post-Holmberg holds a BS in Forestry from Oregon State University. He earned his Master's in Counseling Psychology from Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. From 1981 to 2006, he served as a Course Leader at the National Leadership School (NOLS), where he spent 500 field weeks teaching outdoor skills and leadership to students worldwide. After earning his Master's degree in 2009, he embarked on a 13-year journey in his private practice as a couples, child, and family therapist in Portland, Oregon. He lives in the Teton Valley with his wife, Sarah, and two sons, Koven and Tenzin, who are both students at Mountain Academy.



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Lucy Hayward - Lower School Faculty

Lucy is a fun, compassionate, and detail-oriented educator from Rockport, Maine. Before migrating West, she spent several years as an Outward Bound instructor, leading Middle and High School students on backpacking and sailing trips. This upcoming school year, Lucy is excited to see how she can further draw on her experience in outdoor education to take Mountain Academy students on more journeys outside the classroom.



Joanna Cooke - Lower School Faculty

Joanna's journey in education has centered around connecting young people to nature. In 1997, she began her career as an outdoor educator in California. She spent ten years teaching school groups in the Sierra Nevada Mountains and working as an interpretive park ranger in Yosemite National Park. She has written six books for young readers, all focusing on the human connection to nature and science. Joanna holds a BA in Environmental Studies from Mount Holyoke College, an MFA in Writing for Young People from Lesley University, and an M.Ed. in Elementary Education from Prescott College. She and her family have lived in Jackson for 17 years. She teaches third grade at Munger

Mountain Elementary School, a Spanish dual immersion program in the Teton County School District. Looking ahead to her future with Mountain Academy, Joanna is especially excited to cultivate relevant, student-driven, place-based learning that fosters curiosity about oneself and the world.



Jenny Brackin - Kindergarten and 1st Grade Faculty

Jenny graduated with a degree in education from the University of Colorado Boulder and holds an M.Ed. in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis on arts integration from Lesley University. She holds certifications and state licensures to teach art to students in grades K-6 and K-12. Jenny has been an elementary classroom teacher since 2009 and has been an informal educator for much longer. She is a passionate educator dedicated to igniting the spark of curiosity in her students by designing creative and engaging curricula. She believes in project-based, hands-on learning and strives to cultivate an environment where each

student is inspired to explore and discover. Jenny asked us to share that she is thrilled to join Teton Science Schools and Mountain Academy and looks forward to meeting you and your children! Jenny will be teaching kindergarten and first grade.



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David Berry - Art Faculty

Over the past school year, David Berry has distinguished himself as one of the most passionate members of staff. At school, David can be found introducing students to various artistic mediums, including paper quilling, charcoal drawing, and watercoloring, along with playing fun art games intended to encourage students to think creatively and work in teams. Outside of school, David can explore the Greater Yellowstone

Ecosystem on foot and horseback, photographing top-secret locations, competing in regional painting tournaments, and hunting for elk antlers.



Paige Fisher - Director of Early Childhood

Paige's appreciation and curiosity about the natural world began in New Mexico and Vermont. Paige furthered this curiosity through her educational journey at the University of Vermont. She discovered a love for teaching about nature through a sense of place during her time spent at Shelburne Farms. As a Peace Corps volunteer serving three years in the high Andes of Ecuador, Paige recognized the beauty of experiencing the world through different perspectives and languages. Paige continued her love for ecology and education through the graduate program at

Teton Science Schools. Paige is a passionate educator who strives to

inspire curiosity and empathy in children through their play and discovery of the world around them. Paige is excited to collaborate with and lead the early childhood team at Mountain Academy. When Paige isn't teaching, she loves exploring the Tetons, floating the Snake River, enjoying good food with her husband and friends, or relaxing with her cat, Chipi.



Rachel Rubin - Early Childhood Assistant Director and Lead Preschool Teacher

Rachel is an educator who finds joy in creating spaces where young children can explore and connect deeply with the world around them. Her years working at an outdoor education school in Houston, Texas, shaped her belief in the power of nature and play to inspire curiosity, confidence, and connection in young learners. With an M.Ed. from

Vanderbilt University and a background in early childhood and auxiliary

programming, she has led classroom, after-school programs, and summer camps. She is passionate about building strong, collaborative teams that center children's needs, support joyful



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learning, and foster a deep sense of belonging for students, families, and educators. Whether designing hands-on programming, guiding explorations in nature, or creating opportunities for play and discovery, she leads with intention, creativity, and care. Outside of school, she's often found on the trails with her dog Rosie, riverside camping, or bird watching.



Krissanna Andrews - Lead Pre-Kindergarten Faculty

Krisanna graduated from the University of Wyoming with a degree in elementary education, concentrating in science. She loves teaching but dislikes sitting at a desk, so she is passionate about place-based education and can't wait to share the world's wonders with young children. Krisanna spent two summers working with Teton Science Schools' Early Childhood Summer program, adventuring and exploring this place with young children. She is thrilled to return to Teton Science Schools as a member of Mountain Academy, where she will lead the Pre-Kindergarten class. When she's not Nordic skiing, she spends her free time trail running, reading, summiting peaks, and sleeping under the stars.



Danny Martin - Lead Preschool & Pre-K Outdoor Explorations Faculty

Danny arrived in Jackson Hole first through Teton Science Schools' Graduate Program in 2019, following nearly a decade of sharing his passion for the natural world with young people in unique experiential learning environments. Before joining the Teton Science Schools community, he shared his love for creating nutritious and delicious food as the chef in an experiential learning kitchen at a small Montessori School in Southeastern Nebraska. Danny has also shared his passion for gardening and bicycling with children in non-profit settings, teaching garden-to-table concepts and leading group bike rides all over the nature-filled city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Stemming from his roots as a

lifelong lover of learning outdoors and the vast array of literature to support it, Danny believes that outdoor classrooms offer integral and distinctive lessons that encourage a child's social-emotional growth and healthy physical and cognitive development. In his free time, Danny can be found hiking, biking, and swimming in natural bodies of water in the woods, or at home reading, snuggling with his cats, playing board games, cooking, and dancing with friends.



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Briella Brice - Early Childhood Assistant Faculty & After-School Curriculum Coordinator

Briella grew up in northeastern Pennsylvania, which was surrounded by rivers, waterfalls, and lush forests that inspired my love for nature. Briella moved to Utah in 2017 to attend the University of Utah and play in the Wasatch Mountains. After completing her bachelor's degree in Communications with a minor in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, Briella lived in Yosemite National Park. Briella is deeply passionate about the natural world, and her experience as a ski instructor has sparked a desire to combine her passion for the outdoors with her love for skiing. Briella is excited to learn and explore alongside young children at Mountain Academy. Briella is also happy to experience all that the Tetons offer while being inspired

by bright young minds.



Emily Winder - Young Toddler and Toddler Lead Outdoor Explorations Faculty & After School Teacher

Emily is a recent graduate of Appalachian State University and has been working in Wyoming for the past two summers as a Course Director for SOAR. Emily majored in Outdoor Education and is excited to use this knowledge and experience in her position at Teton Science Schools. Emily loves working with children of all ages, but early childhood holds a special place in her heart. Emily admires and loves their curiosity and their untainted view of the world. Emily is excited to explore the Reggio Emilia philosophy and intertwine place-based learning into her teaching practice. When not in the

classroom, Emily loves hiking and trail running. She is excited to use both interests to explore the Tetons and the Jackson Hole area!



Veronica Banks - Preschool & Pre-K Outdoor Explorations Assistant Faculty

Veronica hails from a southeastern Pennsylvania suburb where they grew up rolling in the mud, splashing in puddles, and climbing sweet gum trees. A childhood spent outdoors has led to a career in environmental education, where she shares her passion for the natural world with students of all ages. After graduating from Temple University, Veronica taught children about not-so-creepy crawlies at the Philadelphia Insectarium. Veronica then hopped over the Delaware



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River to work at Fernbrook Farms, where they crafted outdoor education programs for preschool to elementary-aged students. Once their time on the farm ended, Veronica worked leading hikes at North Cascades Institute in Washington. Afterwards, they worked at the Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center in Boston Harbor, leading students in activities such as climbing, team building, and salt marsh explorations. Veronica enjoys hiking, climbing, team-building, and salt marsh explorations. Veronica enjoys hiking, climbing, reading, writing, crafting, and exploring new hobbies. They are excited to spend the school year outside with children, flipping over logs, dancing, creating nature crafts, and finding joy every day!



Paige Sisemore - Toddler Lead Faculty

Paige was born and raised in Redlands, California, and attended the University of Redlands after high school. Paige received a bachelor's degree in business, and after college, she realized her true passion was working with children. Paige has taught kindergarten, first grade, and science in 5th and 6th grade over the last five years. Paige was drawn to Teton Science Schools because of their outdoor learning experiences and nature-based approach for their students. Paige is excited to get an opportunity to learn and implement the Reggio Emilia approach and experience the beauty of Jackson with young explorers. In her free time, Paige enjoys cooking, hiking, and spending time with her dog, Reese.



Maria De-Rosario Vasquez - Young Toddler Lead Faculty

In her many years of working with young children, Maria has developed a deep passion for working with small children. The growth that happens between a young toddler and a toddler is incredible. Maria believes that being a part of their journey as they learn how to name and handle their emotions, such as when they feel sad, angry, or frustrated, is an honor. At this age, children are just learning how to use their words, and Maria enjoys being there to guide them through this process. Maria continues to be excited about learning more about place-based education at Mountain Academy, utilizing the Reggio Emilia philosophy and nature-based practices. Maria feels that we live in such a beautiful place, and she is excited to connect children with our natural world!



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Sean Groenstein - Mountain Academy Staff

At 3 years old, Sean recalls driving down Highway 22 and his mother pointing down into Coyote Canyon, where construction teams were adding the finishing touches to the campus, and saying to him, “Mijo, that’s going to be your new school.” After attending the Journeys School from PreSchool through 12th Grade, and spending four years in Maine attending Bowdoin College, where he studied Political Philosophy and English, Sean returned to the Mountain Academy to help the school prosper. Sean is a thoughtful and hardworking member of the community who, outside of work, enjoys exploring rivers in his kayak, reading old books, camping, playing the flute, and, above all, engaging in meaningful conversations.