

## Meet Alum at ASA!

### **Alumni at ASA** ***Carly McClain***

The newest alum to join the faculty at Arizona School for the Arts did not attend that long ago. Not only is this Carly McClain's first year teaching at ASA, it's her first official year teaching anywhere. Carly attended ASA for 8th and 9th grades in 2012 and 2013 and even though she did not graduate with us, the school made a lasting impression. After she earned a B.A. in Elementary Education with an endorsement in English as a Second Language in May 2021 from the University of Arizona, Carly says, "As a former ASA student, I knew this was the environment I wanted to return to and teach what I am most passionate about."

#### **What was your art focus when you were at ASA and do you still pursue it?**

At ASA I started with a focus in Cello, with Ms. Simiz, Piano with Ms. Mancini, and Choir with Ms. Kurbat. All teachers who are still working at ASA and I communicate with them on a weekly basis. Although I no longer practice the Cello it set a foundation for other instruments I have picked up since my time at ASA. Cello set a foundation for my current favorite string instruments of guitar and the ukulele. To this day, I can remember Ms. Simiz giving me feedback on how to correctly place my fingers on the string to create a bolder tone. I still play Piano and sing often (although not in a choir). A piano currently sits in my apartment and has become a therapeutic way for me to express myself. I love to sing, and wish I could pursue it in a performance setting more often!

#### **Did you always want to teach and possibly work at ASA and if so were there teachers or staff at ASA who inspired you to work in education?**

After leaving ASA, it became clear to me that I was going to become a teacher at some point. I loved helping kids and started working in the community to tutor students in the younger grade levels. At first, I had my heart set on teaching younger grades (1-3). I quickly learned, after student teaching in a 5th grade classroom through University of Arizona's Elementary Education program, that the curriculum and standards in 5th grade are ones that I thoroughly enjoy teaching. As I knew I wanted to return to Phoenix after my graduation the first place where I began my job search was with ASA. I couldn't think of a better place to have started my educational career. I made so many incredible friends here and also had so many great teachers.

Ms. Kaufman and Mr. Kenton were my favorite teachers at ASA, and they still work here!

To start with Ann, she taught me what it meant to work effectively in groups, and independently. She helped me extensively with my 3rd Quarter Presentation (which

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made me a nervous wreck) and instilled confidence in me. Now she works as one of the new teacher trainers/mentors alongside Jessica Elder. They are both so amazing and have helped me in more ways than they know this year.

Mr. Kenton taught me Geometry which brought out my love for Math. To this day, I can remember the rapport he had with students and the "tough love" jokes that he made with one particular student daily. He made us laugh, and I try to bring that element into my classroom now!

### **How did you happen to come back to ASA?**

I knew that ASA was a place I always wanted to come back to, so as my job search started I quickly looked up ASA's website to see if they were hiring. To my surprise, they were looking for a 5th Grade math teacher. In college through practicums and student teacher, Math had always been my favorite thing to teach, and it felt like this way the perfect opportunity, and a great place to start my career.

### **How does ASA differ in your eyes as a member of staff versus as a student and what is the same?**

As a faculty member I can now see the incredible effort that our administration puts in every...single...day. It truly amazes me and motivates me to be a better teacher. Their support in the classroom does not go unnoticed as a teacher. I also notice as a teacher how genuinely brilliant and wise our students are, at all grade levels. Similarly, that sense of faculty community is the same with the students. The school community hasn't changed at all, which is comforting.

### **What are your ultimate goals as an educator?**

I am currently working towards my Masters in Educational Leadership. I started this program after 6 months of working at ASA and it is fully because of the administrative and leadership staff at ASA. They are so incredible and I love learning from them. Although I want plenty of more time in the classroom so I can focus on what it means to be a teacher, and what the needs of a teacher and their students are, I would love to work with students outside of the classroom in a leadership administrative position. My ultimate goal as an educator is to make sure that I am giving the resources to my students and providing a space so that they feel celebrated, comfortable, and accepted in the classroom. If they don't, why would we expect them to succeed?

### **What do you like to do outside of school?**

Outside of grad school and working towards creating engaging and effective lessons, I like to keep myself busy. I enjoy attending all forms of performing arts, playing guitar, ukulele, and piano. I love to draw with different media forms, take cycling classes, and spend quality time with friends.