

Kristie Gonzalez

A New Face in Admission

Glen Urquhart felt like the right fit to Kristie Gonzalez even before she walked through the front door.

In fact, our new director of admission was helping to design the website at another school when she took a look at the GUS site and became more than a little intrigued. A colleague confirmed her first instincts and told her emphatically, “That is your school.”

Head of School David Liebmann and the hiring committee concurred, and Gonzalez came on board in July. “I’m so excited to be here,” she says. “I really believe this is how children should learn.”

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“They should access learning in a safe, interesting way.” She noticed right away that “kids come here and they are excited to be here. They also come here and care about each other.” When she first brought her second grade son Liam to visit, “I peeked out and saw [him] playing Gaga Ball with some kids. I heard some kids say, ‘Let him have the ball, He’s the new kid’.” She wasn’t surprised when Liam asked his mother at the end of his visit, “When can I come back?”

Stepping into the shoes of longtime Director of Admission Leslie Marchesseault has been eased by the “incredible help” Leslie has offered. “She has done such a great job with this school,” says Gonzalez. “I don’t think I will ever want to replace someone like Leslie, but I want to build on what she has done. We are different people with different strengths and I hope to build on my strengths. There is a certain warmth about Leslie that everyone appreciated. She did a really great job of counseling people through what can be a

very stressful experience. I do hope to continue providing that.”

Gonzalez’s goal is “to help GUS be more GUS. This is what good education is. It is clear that theme teaching that ties writing, math, history, and reading together helps kids gain deep understanding. Every school is using project-based learning now but it’s what this school was founded on. What is the science behind what we do? What kind of thinker does that produce? GUS graduates think deeply and want to understand subjects thoroughly. They want to learn because they are not forced to fit into a certain pigeonhole and are allowed to make choices about what they pursue.”

Gonzalez wants to share what GUS is doing “without being boastful, to define what we do and how we do it.” Making sure that everyone internally and externally knows the message and how to share it is a top priority. That way, she believes, everyone will grow to understand “what we are and who we are.” Gonzalez is excited to partner with the “incredible teachers and administrators” to “come up with ways to have people know about us.”

As for immediate plans, Gonzalez hopes to make the admissions office a resource for our community. “I want our Open Houses to offer more community engagement,” she explains, “to be more like a fall fair and invite preschools here.”

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Kristie Gonzalez and her family.

She also wants to utilize the power of word of mouth. “I want to help people be ambassadors for us. We have a wonderful community here who want to be respectful and are sometimes reluctant to be loud and proud. I hope to encourage them to speak out more about GUS.” In addition, Gonzalez wants to offer herself as a resource for parents of children in early education settings, helping them find the right fit for children — “to talk about admission as finding the best fit.”

Listening to Gonzalez, it is difficult not to be infected with her enthusiasm for GUS. “Let’s be proud of who we are and say it loudly,” she repeats. “We are the best kept secret and that’s not a good thing for a school to be. But those who know about us can’t stop talking about how great we are.” With Gonzalez on campus, there are sure to be more people who know just what GUS is all about!

For admission information, go to www.gus.org/admission.

The Back Story...

Kristie Gonzalez grew up outside Philadelphia and attended Benchmark School and Shipley School before going to Middlebury College where she majored in American Literature and minored in Elementary Education. She met her husband, Eric McCollom, at Middlebury. He now teaches English at Pingree School. In addition to Liam, they have a four-year-old son, Andrew, and a dog named Mattie “who looks like a bath mat.” Before coming to GUS, Kristie was director of admissions at Sant Bani School, worked in advancement at Nashoba Brooks School, admissions and advancement at Middlebury, and as a teacher at Brookwood School and the Bixby School in Colorado.