



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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California High Arts Teacher to Help Develop Statewide Education Curriculum

WHITTIER – California High School arts teacher Julie Tonkovich is one of only 10 public school teachers appointed to serve on the Instructional Quality Commission (IQC), an advisory body to the State Board of Education, providing her the opportunity to help develop and strengthen education standards that will benefit students across the state.

Tonkovich – who has been teaching visual arts at her alma mater for 24 years – will begin serving her four-year term in January 2017. She will work with an 18-member commission to help revise and update the framework for education, drawing on her experience as a visual and performing arts teacher and utilizing her English and social science credentials within her art classes.

Under this appointment, Tonkovich will advise the state Board of Education on curriculum and recommend instructional materials that will assist teachers in successfully implementing standards-based instruction.

“I try to keep up on education trends by attending development classes and conferences. If my students are going to be entering this modern 21st-century workforce, I need to teach them how to navigate it ahead of time,” Tonkovich said. “I am so fortunate to have this opportunity and am excited to make a difference in the education community.”

Tonkovich was selected as the California Art Education Association’s Outstanding Visual Art Educator in 2013 and has developed a keen ability to establish new arts standards and curriculum at the local level, while meeting the needs of a diverse student population.

At Cal High, Tonkovich teaches Art 1 and 2, Advanced Placement (AP) Studio Art for 2-D and drawing, AP Art History, and Video and Cinematic Arts — a course she developed. She keeps current on trends in the art world by constantly reading blogs and news articles, attending conferences and workshops, and continuously trying to improve her knowledge of technology with opportunities such as iMovie lessons, bringing up-to-date, 21st century teaching to her students.

In addition to teaching AP classes, Tonkovich has also been teaching arts courses for English learners and special education students for more than two decades. She has attended trainings to assist English learners and participated in several conferences and workshops on Asperger’s syndrome and autism to learn more about special education teaching.

“I work well with a diverse student population,” Tonkovich said. “Every student learns differently, so I alter my teaching style to address the diverse backgrounds and preferences of my students.”

Field trips and art exhibitions are also a regular part of Tonkovich’s curriculum. Students attend monthly trips outside the classroom to deepen their understanding of art and also exhibit their work at campus, local or national competitions. Her students have also been taught to reflect themselves in their artwork, think critically and make deliberate choices in the creative process.

“I want my students to always get the ‘big idea’ when it comes to their projects,” Tonkovich said. “I make sure everything they do has a lasting value outside the classroom. I hope to bring all of this with me when I begin my work with IQC.”

Additionally, Tonkovich has presented lectures at the National Art Educator Association conventions for eight years and is a mentor and peer coach at several area universities.

“Julie has demonstrated her ability to strengthen standards, instruction and assessment, while capturing the attention of her students through her engaging, inclusive teaching style,” Whittier Union High School District Superintendent Sandra Thorstenson said. “Our District student achievement rate continues to grow thanks to our quality teachers, our collaborative culture and the innovative frameworks our teachers help to develop, and I am confident that Julie will inspire that same forward thinking at the state level.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

TONKOVICH: California High School arts teacher Julie Tonkovich works on a project with students Devinee Parra, left, Natalie Mancillas and Christian Gutierrez. Tonkovich is one of only 10 public school teachers appointed to serve on the Instructional Quality Commission, an advisory body to the State Board of Education.

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*The Whittier Union High School District provides all students with an engaging, quality standards-based instructional program delivered by a well-trained staff resulting in improved student achievement.
Whittier Union High School District works to achieve and maintain excellence in providing a comprehensive education for all students.*

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