

September 5, 2012

Dear Families,

It is my sincere pleasure to welcome all of you to the new school year at da Vinci Arts Middle School. It is a privilege and an honor for me to work with your child as his or her Core teacher. I intend to help make this a successful and enjoyable year for your student.

For those of you who are new to da Vinci, Core is a three-period block during which students study literature, language arts, and social studies. All sections of Core are multi-age classes comprised of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders. Students typically stay with the same teacher for all three years. Last year, I had a larger than usual group of eighth graders and lost some seventh graders due to a wrinkle in math scheduling. I am excited to see my returning students this fall, but also a big group of new people—who will comprise about half the class. I am also pleased to be working with an excellent student teacher, Marie Fleischman, who is pursuing an MAT at Concordia University, and Bill Delmatoff, an amazing paraprofessional. One of the many things I love about teaching Core is that our class becomes like a family—adults and students.

I have a part-time teaching assignment and will be at da Vinci in the mornings. I will also be teaching Flex on Wednesday afternoons. Despite my mostly morning-only schedule, I can usually meet with students and/or families at the lunch hour; during fifth period (which is right after lunch); before school on Mondays, Wednesdays, or Fridays; or after school by prior arrangement. Since becoming a mom, I have chosen to teach part-time to allow me to devote energy and time to my own young children (an eight-year-old girl and a three-year-old boy). In addition to teaching, I enjoy family time, outdoor adventures, running, swimming, cycling, listening to public radio, creative writing, and reading.

This will be my seventh year at da Vinci. Before coming to da Vinci, I taught upper elementary students in Portland and Sherwood public schools. I also student taught in Portland while earning my Master of Arts in Teaching from Lewis and Clark College. My Bachelor of Arts, also from Lewis and Clark, was in English. In addition to teaching, my professional experience includes working as an educational program coordinator who developed literacy-focused and literature-based curriculum, trained teachers, and evaluated programs. My recent professional training has focused on equity, and on teaching writing and history.

If you have any questions or concerns about your student's work in Core this year, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can do so by calling the school at (503) 916-5356 or by e-mailing me (alanigan@pps.net at school or alanigan@wa-net.com at home). I check and answer both email addresses frequently. I also maintain a web page at <http://lanigancore.weebly.com>, which features daily updates explaining what we did in class. This web page is linked to the da Vinci Arts Middle School website. You can find it there by clicking on my name in the staff list.

Parents and guardians, please feel free to visit our classroom (Room 208) any time. If you are interested and have the time, I would love to put you to work as a volunteer. For example, it is especially helpful to have other adults on hand to help students during writing time and novel groups (when groups are reading different titles). I also greatly appreciate help preparing materials. I look forward to meeting you at Back to School Night on Wednesday, September 19, if not before.

Sincerely,

Alison Lanigan

In the past, I have sent home a paper copy of our course syllabus and expectations. I would ask students to share this printed information with their families the first evening of the school year. This year, to save paper and reduce waste, I am instead posting these items on my webpage, which you can find at <http://lanigancore.weebly.com>, or by navigating to the da Vinci Arts Middle School page and clicking on the link to my page under staff pages. This webpage features daily class summaries, links to assignment handouts, and a link to my online grade book. *If you have Internet access, please take a moment this evening to peruse my webpage and view the course syllabus. If you would prefer or need a paper copy, please indicate that below and I will send one with your student on the next school day.*

I am requesting email addresses at this time to use for class-related communications. I will not share email addresses. I will use the blind copy option when writing to multiple people so that recipients will not see each others' addresses. **Please sign and return this paper by Monday, September 10.**

Student name (printed clearly)

_____ We have viewed Ms. Lanigan's webpage and read the course syllabus and expectations for Core 2012-2013.

_____ Our family has access to the Internet and will check Ms. Lanigan's webpage and email for school communications.

_____ Our family would prefer a paper copy of the course syllabus.

_____ Our family would like paper copies of all communication.

Student signature and email

Parent signature and email