



The Frostig Center Focus

Exceptional Children,
Exceptional Education

Issue 11, September 2019

FROSTIG GOES WEST, OPENS NEW CAMPUS

The Frostig Center is proud to announce the opening of a new school in West Los Angeles to serve children and teens with learning differences.

Frostig School West, located on the grounds of Bel Air Church in West Los Angeles, welcomed its first students on August 26. The school opened with seven middle and high school students, and will gradually grow its enrollment.

"Frostig School West is a tremendous opportunity to spread the values and strengths of Frostig School and provide specialized education to a new population of students in need on the Westside," said Dr. Dean Conklin, executive director of The Frostig Center.

To establish the Frostig culture and teaching methods on the new campus, Dr. Conklin asked Maureen Bennett, a Frostig School teacher for the past seven years, to be the lead teacher at Frostig School West.

Additionally, Dr. Bennett Ross, who was executive director of The Frostig Center for many years and who worked directly with Dr. Marianne Frostig, will spend time on campus to help insure that the new school will be successful.

Dr. Conklin said The Frostig Center has fielded many queries about opening a Westside campus since it



Executive Director Dean Conklin welcomed parents on the first day of school at Frostig School West.

moved from Los Angeles to Pasadena in 1979. The timing and circumstances were never right until now.

The catalyst was a decision by Pacific Point Academy in Santa Monica to close its doors at the end of the 2018-19 school year. A group of parents reached out to Dr. Conklin to explore a Frostig expansion to West

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THE SPOTLIGHT Frostig Alum Works Among The Dinosaurs

As a boy attending Frostig School, Christopher Katoh set his sights on working at a theme park. They don't get much bigger than Universal Studios, where Christopher, 24, is part of the team that built the new Jurassic World attraction.

Christopher works as a show coordinator for Universal Creative, the division that plans and builds all of the attractions for Universal Parks & Resorts. He runs down anything and everything his show producer needs—design drawings, vendor records, requests for proposals and much more. He clocked his first 85-hour

week in the hectic run-up to the grand opening of Jurassic World in July.

"Frostig has been a big part of my career success," he said. As a student at Frostig he learned to accept his disability, which is auditory processing disorder, ask for help, and build relationships. Most importantly, he learned to persevere



Christopher Katoh at the construction site of the new Jurassic World - The Ride at Universal Studios Hollywood.

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Frostig School West

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Los Angeles. With a critical mass of committed families, Frostig's Board of Trustees supported Dr. Conklin's recommendation to investigate the feasibility of a second campus.

The biggest challenge was finding the perfect site. Bel Air Church maintains a beautiful campus that includes a wing of Sunday school classrooms and a pre-school. Frostig School West has the use of two large classrooms, an office, a multi-purpose room and an outdoor space that has sweeping views of the city below.

While the new program will be modeled after Frostig School, there will be important differences. Classes will be smaller and the student-teacher ratio will be lower. Students and teachers will travel to Pasadena every week so they can build social skills and connections with the Pasadena students and be included in school-wide events.

Due to these added costs, the tuition for Frostig School West will be higher than that for Frostig School.



Teachers Brittany Habermehl and Kim Petrarca welcome students on the first day of school.



Executive Director Dean Conklin and Lead Teacher Maureen Bennett at Frostig School West.



16221 Mulholland Drive, Los Angeles

Frostig Board Adds Talented New Members

The Frostig Center welcomed four new trustees who share a commitment to improving the lives of children, teens and young adults with learning differences.

Heather Fung has been an active member of the Frostig community since her son enrolled as a 4th grader in 2010, including three turns as co-chair of the benefit dinner.

Jim McManus is the recently retired executive director of the California Association of Independent Schools and father of a Frostig high school student.

As a clinical psychologist based in Sherman Oaks, Dr. Charles Weinstein appreciates the

challenges facing children with learning differences and the important role Frostig can play in their lives.

Fran Francis is a retired banker and community volunteer who first teamed up with Frostig as a

volunteer organizer of the 2017 benefit dinner. She looks forward to putting her financial skills to work for Frostig.

The trustees were elected to a three-year term.



The new trustees are, left to right, Fran Francis, Dr. Charles Weinstein, Jim McManus, and Heather Fung.

Frostig Takes Its Expertise to Africa

The Frostig Center recently teamed up with an organization based in the Netherlands that is training teachers in Uganda to better understand and serve students with learning differences.

During the spring and summer, Executive Director Dean Conklin dialed into a series of four workshops at a Uganda school and joined the conversation about effective ways to detect and address learning challenges. Kristin Tranquada, an educational specialist in Frostig's Consultation & Education Department, and Dr. Conklin's wife, Babs Conklin, a national certified teacher, also participated in the teleconferences.

"These are teacher-to-teacher conversations where we share stories about applying methods or approaches to a struggling student," Dr. Conklin said. "Teachers in Uganda face different challenges than teachers in the United States, but we share a desire to help every child succeed."

The trainings were organized by Backup Uganda, a non-governmental organization based in the Netherlands that works with teachers at several primary schools



Dr. Roberta Goldberg, center, at a conference in Tanzania.

in Gulu, Northern Uganda, and students at a teachers college.

"The teachers absolutely loved the opportunity to speak with colleagues on the other side of the ocean," said Annemaaïke Kruisselbrink, co-founder of Backup Uganda. "This was their first time learning about how to set up and use individualized support plans for children with possible learning difficulties."

"Our teachers also got to ask some questions about specific children, so they received some bonus tips and tricks as well!"

The Frostig Center has long participated in international efforts to improve the education of children with learning difficulties, primarily through conferences. In July, Dr. Roberta Goldberg, director of the Consultation & Education Department, traveled to Tanzania for the 16th Biennial Conference of the International Association of Special Education. Dr. Goldberg was elected to the association's board of directors during the conference.

Dr. Goldberg spoke with representatives from several schools in Africa about teacher training programs Frostig could conduct via Skype. Dr. Conklin and Ms. Kruisselbrink, meanwhile, will continue their collaboration in the coming year.

The Frostig Center's international work is supported by foundation grants.



Annemaaïke Kruisselbrink, co-founder of Backup Uganda, left, with two of her colleagues.

THE SPOTLIGHT

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and never take no for an answer.

Perseverance paid off at Universal. Christopher said he applied to the theme park several times before he was offered a retail job in 2016. Once inside the gates, he built his network, attended industry mixers, worked his way up the job ladder, and landed his current job in December 2018.

"To get to this point has been an uphill battle," Christopher said, "but Frostig gave me the tools to get here." He attended Frostig in elementary school, then transitioned to the public middle school in Diamond Bar. He went to Cal State Bakersfield on a swim

scholarship, but came home after a year and attended Mt. San Antonio College while he sorted out his goals.

After a mentor advised Christopher that theater was the best route to a career in the themed entertainment industry, he transferred to Cal Poly Pomona and graduated in 2018 with a degree in Theater Arts – Scenic and Technical Design.

How does Christopher handle his disorder at work? Most important, he said, he's honest with his managers about his challenges. He isn't shy about asking people to repeat what they have said. And he takes lots of notes, just as his Frostig teachers taught him.

"Most of the time people are very understanding and are willing to help you."

It's Easy to Make a Difference...



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MISSION STATEMENT

The Frostig Center is dedicated to helping children with learning disabilities reach their full potential through an integrated approach of research, professional development and consultation, and the Frostig School.



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Congratulations, Class of 2019!

Fifteen young men and women graduated from Frostig School in June, grateful for all they learned at Frostig and eager to take on new challenges and adventures. We wish them well!



Good Wishes



Dr. Chris Schnieders, who held key leadership positions during her 18 years at Frostig School, retired in June.

Chris came to Frostig in 2001 as Director of Teacher Training. In that role she shifted Frostig's teaching method from an intuitive approach to a research-based model. She also wrote the first teacher guide for the Success Attributes.

Chris served as Head of School for four years, from 2010-14, then took over as Director of Research. In 2016 she returned to teaching.

"Chris was exceptionally knowledgeable about curriculum," Principal Jenny Tucker Mottes said, "and she was one of the most flexible, generous, and gracious people I have ever worked with."

