

# **Georgia Council for the Arts Arts Education Program Grant FY26 Grant Panelist Biographies**

## ***Arts Education Program Grant – Panel 1***

**Nicole Adkins**

***Theatre and Performance Studies Professor***

***Kennesaw State University***

***Cobb County/Cherokee County, GA***

Nicole B. Adkins (she/her) is a playwright, dramaturg, and educator specializing in Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA). Her plays have been performed at venues such as Children's Theatre of Charlotte, Oklahoma Children's Theatre, Kennesaw State University, and Discovery Stage Company, as well as other theatres, schools, and museums worldwide. She has ten plays published with YouthPLAYS, where she also serves as Artistic Associate.

Nicole has written essays for academic volumes, including *A Companion to Children's Literature* (2022), and co-authored *Playwriting and Young Audiences* (2017). Recognized for her teaching, she received Kennesaw State University's 2024 College of the Arts Outstanding Part-Time Teacher and overall Outstanding Part-Time Teacher Awards. Her playwriting honors include the Write Now award and second place in the Beverly Hills Theatre Guild Marilyn Hall competition.

An alumnus of Hollins University's Children's Literature MFA program, Nicole teaches for the Department of Theatre & Performance Studies at Kennesaw State and is a visiting faculty member at Hollins Playwright's Lab. She is a member of the Dramatists Guild, TYA/USA, Working Title Playwrights, and the Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia. Nicole is particularly passionate about nature, ecology, and collaborating with communities to create inclusive, sensory-driven, outdoor theatre for young people and their families.

**Andi Corcelli**

***Environmental Education Program Coordinator***

***Camp Jekyll 4-H Center***

***Jekyll Island, GA***

Andi Corcelli works for the University of Georgia as the Environmental Education Program Coordinator on Jekyll Island. Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, Andi has moved around quite a bit since graduating from Ohio University. After spending time in Colorado and New Jersey, Andi eventually found a home on the Georgia coast, falling in love with the area. Education has always been incredibly important to Corcelli, and there is nothing more rewarding than helping young people connect with the wonder of the outdoors.

**Jonathan Samuel Eddie**

***Teaching Artist***

***Muscogee County, GA***

Jonathan Samuel Eddie is an award-winning teaching and performance artist, recognized for his exceptional work as an educator and his leadership in founding The Fountain City Slam, Inc., a youth

literary arts organization. His artistry and commitment to empowering young voices through spoken word and theater have earned him the esteemed 2023 Governor's Award for the Arts and Humanities. A nationally acclaimed spoken word comedian and storyteller, Eddie's performances seamlessly blend humorous poetry with compelling narratives. His dedication to youth empowerment is evident in his fifteen-year journey of guiding countless young individuals to find their voices through the arts. Recently, as an Apollo Stories Fellow with the iconic Apollo Theater, he developed curricula and lesson plans to foster national dialogues among youth, addressing critical social issues that resonate with today's generation.

**Casey Hall**

***Fine Arts Education Program Specialist***

***Georgia Department of Education***

***Fulton County, GA***

Mr. Casey Hall serves as a Fine Arts Education Program Specialist for the Georgia Department of Education, where he actively supports Georgia's Music Educators (K-12) from across the state. In this role, he advocates for and supports Georgia's Music Educators through managing virtual, content-specific professional learning community groups, assisting in the development of high-quality Fine Arts instructional resources, creating Fine Arts-related, self-paced online courses, and presenting professional learning workshops to school districts and regional education service agencies (RESAs) throughout the state. He joined the GaDOE Fine Arts Department team from Fulton County Schools as a Fine Arts Support Teacher (FAST) and Music Specialist in Atlanta, Georgia, where he was awarded the title of 2019-2020 South Learning Community Teacher of the Year for Fulton County Schools. During his time as a FAST Team member in Fulton County, he coached and provided support for elementary music teachers across the district. He holds a bachelor's degree in music education from the Schwob School of Music at Columbus State University and a master's degree in music education from Georgia State's School of Music. Mr. Hall has presented at various conferences at international, national, state, and local school district professional development sessions.

**Mitch Green**

***Principal***

***Baggett Elementary School***

***Gwinnett County Public Schools***

***Gwinnett County, GA***

Mitch Green currently serves as the Principal of Baggett Elementary School. Mitch began his career in education almost 30 years ago teaching special education at an alternative high school in New Jersey and has since served both general and special education students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The majority of Mitch's career was spent at Trickum Middle School where he served first as a special education teacher, a general education teacher, and finally as an assistant principal. After leaving Trickum in 2012, Mitch served briefly as an assistant principal at Hopkins Elementary before being named principal of Henderson Mill Elementary School in the DeKalb County School District. During his tenure, Henderson Mill was recognized as the first STEAM-certified school in the State of Georgia, a Beating the Odds School by the State DOE, and Mitch, himself, was recognized by the Atlanta Families Award for Excellence in Education in the area of School Leadership. Following a four-and-a-half year tenure there, Mitch moved with his family to Quito, Ecuador where he served as the Director of Language and Learning Services, leading a team to support PK-12th grade special needs students as well as those working to acquire the English language. In June of 2020, in the middle of the pandemic, Mitch and his family moved back to the metropolitan Atlanta area as he was named principal of Baggett Elementary School in the Discovery Cluster. For the past 5 school years, Mitch has championed the

values of engaged learning through STEAM, formed a school culture that is second-to-none, and led the effort to provide experiences to students well beyond those of a typical elementary school. Mitch has presented at various conferences across the State of Georgia often about the benefits of purposeful, integrated learning through STEM/STEAM and on engaging at-risk youth through powerful programs and activities. Mitch is looking forward to transitioning to the role of Principal at the middle school level during the summer of 2025.

**Dr. Angela Shuman-Smith**

***Executive Director of 6-12 Curriculum and CTAE***

***Polk County College and Career Academy***

***Polk County, GA***

Dr. Angela Shuman-Smith is an educator with 20 years of combined experience in classroom teaching, talent management, student services, and administration. She currently serves as the Executive Director of 6-12 Curriculum and CTAE for Polk School District. She earned her B.B.A. in Finance from Kennesaw State University, M.Ed. in Business Education and Educational Leadership from the University of West Georgia, and Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of Georgia. Dr. Shuman-Smith is passionate about providing all students with the ability to develop the skills necessary to be successful in life beyond high school. She feels extremely honored to serve as a panelist for the Georgia Council for the Arts Education Program grant.

## ***Arts Education Program Grant – Panel 2***

**Sally Baker**

***STEAM Specialist***

***Georgia Department of Education***

***Muscogee County, GA***

Sally Baker is an arts and education leader with 20+ years of experience in arts integration, curriculum development, and program leadership. As the STEAM Program Specialist for the Georgia Department of Education, she has redefined STEAM certification and developed the nation's first DOE STEAM Toolkit. Previously, she led education programs at the Springer Opera House, expanding arts access for thousands of students. A published author and speaker, Sally has shaped statewide initiatives and university programs. She holds an MFA in Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities from UT-Austin and a BSEd in English and Drama from the University of Georgia.

**Dr. Jackie Ellett**

***Associate Professor of Art Education***

***Piedmont University***

***Habersham County, GA***

Dr. Jackie Ellett earned her degree from the University of Georgia and is a respected educator, advocate, and leader in the field of art education with a career spanning over 35 years. She is currently serving as a full Professor of Art Education at Piedmont University, after spending three decades teaching elementary art in Gwinnett County Public Schools. Throughout her career, Dr. Ellett has been a passionate advocate for art education, contributing significantly to curriculum development, teacher preparation, and professional development at local, state, and national levels.

Jackie has held multiple leadership roles within the Georgia Art Education Association (GAEA) and the National Art Education Association (NAEA). Notably, she served as the Higher Education Division Representative for GAEA from 2021-2023 and chaired the GAEA Fall Conference at Piedmont University. She has also organized regional conferences, co-chaired the 2009 GAEA Fall Conference, and contributed to the development of the Georgia Teacher Certification Test (GACE) and Curriculum-Based Assessment Program for the Georgia Department of Education.

Her expertise has earned her numerous prestigious awards, including the 2023 GAEA Nix/Mickish Award for Lifetime Contribution to Art Education and the NAEA National Elementary Art Educator of the Year Award in 1995. In addition to her teaching and advocacy work, Jackie has written curriculum for K-6 Arts Connections, contributing author for textbooks with Glencoe and McGraw-Hill, study guides for galleries and museums and has had her students' artwork been featured in national publications. Jackie continues to inspire future generations of educators and artists with her dedication to teaching art educators, developing curriculum, and active involvement in community.

**Paul McClain**

***Fine Arts Specialist***

***Georgia Department of Education***

***Fulton County, GA***

Paul McClain currently serves as a Fine Arts Program Specialist with the Georgia Department of Education where he has worked for the last 6 years managing fine arts grants, developing fine arts-specific professional learning opportunities, and project managing the development of Fine Arts resources for Georgia Teachers. For 15 years prior, he served as a High School Theatre Program Director in Fulton County and worked professionally in Georgia's creative industries including work in theatre, film, and as a voiceover artist. He holds an MFA in theatrical performance from the University of Florida.

**Dr. Kirby Meng**

***Fine Arts Coordinator***

***Rockdale County Public Schools***

***Rockdale County, GA***

Dr. Kirby Meng is the K-12 Fine Arts Coordinator for Rockdale County Public Schools. The Fine Arts program in Rockdale County Public Schools is driven by the Georgia Standards of Excellence. In RCPS, the arts develop the whole child through various literacies, social-emotional learning, and unique forms of expression and communication.

**Christen Napp**

***Arts in Education Director***

***Creative Arts Guild***

***Whitfield County, GA***

Christen is a passionate arts professional with a strong foundation in both creative practice and arts education. Holding a BFA in Studio Art from Murray State University and an MA in Museum Studies from Johns Hopkins University, Christen combines academic expertise with hands-on experience. Her career includes a rewarding tenure of four years at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, in Montgomery, AL, where she contributed to curatorial efforts and some educational programming. Currently, Christen serves as the Arts in Education Director at the Creative Arts Guild in Dalton, GA, where she fosters artistic growth and community access. With previous experience as a panelist for the Alabama State Council on the Arts, Christen has provided valuable insights into the funding and development of arts initiatives across Alabama. With a deep commitment to the intersection of arts, education, and

community development, Christen looks forward to supporting the next generation of creative thinkers and makers in Georgia.