

# Secondary Spotlight

## QUICK LINKS



**NAEA  
WEBSITE**

**JOIN/RENEW NOW**

**ED&I HUB**

**NAHS RESOURCES**

**CONVENTION**

**VOLUNTEER/  
GET INVOLVED**

**CONNECT WITH US**



**naeasecondarydivision**



**naea\_secondary**



## SECONDARY DIVISION NEWS

**FALL 2025**



Here we go again!  
Back-to-School...  
In the Secondary Division article of the fall issue of *NAEA News*, I wrote about starting the school year fresh with a theme: *Engagement and Empowerment*.

More than ever, our roles as secondary art educators can provide a safe space for our students. Our classrooms are an oasis in our school, providing space, time, and materials for creative expression.

Shocking statistics on phone dependence and the effects on young minds are not new to us. I know I'm not the only one who sometimes struggles with student apathy. As my own district is beginning a new initiative to help students spend time away from their phones, I've been reimagining the way I teach and how my classroom looks. I'm finding inspiration from other art educators, and I'm thankful for this community. Your NAEA Secondary Division Team is working on valuable Convention sessions and other ideas to support you on your own path to maintaining and creating a classroom community that is engaged and empowered.

*Robin Brewer is starting her 21<sup>st</sup> year at Garnet Valley High School in southeastern Pennsylvania and is a past president of the Pennsylvania Art Education Association.*

**REGISTER NOW FOR THE BEST RATES!**

**2026 NAEA NATIONAL CONVENTION | MARCH 5-7**



**Registration is OPEN!**

Make your plans now to engage with your vibrant professional community in person at the largest gathering of visual arts education professionals in the world! Make art and lasting connections while experiencing limitless, quality professional learning options—no matter what your professional focus may be. This is visual arts education in action. Don't miss it!



Convention attendees send some love to Roberto Lugo as he takes a photo of the crowd.  
*Photo Credit: Sarah Horn*

**Did you know that you can apply for a scholarship to attend the NAEA Convention?**  
**Check out opportunities [HERE](#).**

**Print this [LETTER OF SUPPORT](#) to give to your administrator when making your case to attend.**



# Advocacy Through AWARDS

*Celebrate excellence in teaching and put a spotlight on SECONDARY arts in education!*

Did you know that any NAEA member can nominate?

NAEA has a number of awards/recognitions and many that apply to the Secondary Division. Consider nominating a colleague for one of these awards:

**National Secondary Art Educator**

**Regional Art Educator**

**Regional Secondary Art Educator**

**New Professional Art Educator**

**Outstanding National Art Honor Society Sponsor**

**Rising Stars Recognition**

*(for HS students considering entering the field of art education)*



## The 2026 Awards Program is now open!

The NAEA Awards Program offers more than 100 awards at state, regional, and national levels. Download the Awards Program Booklet for complete nomination details about each award.

**Nomination deadline:** Saturday, November 1, 2025.

[2026 AWARDS PROGRAM BOOKLET →](#)





# National Art Honor Society Updates & Resources



The National Art Honor Society is a great way to advocate for your students and your program. Take a look at the opportunities coming up including scholarships and awards. Prep for your chapter for the year by taking note of important dates and events.

**Save the dates for the 2025–2026 school year!**



## **NAHS/NJAHS Student Ambassadors**

The inaugural group of National Student Council Ambassadors last school year was wildly successful. The group of middle and high school leaders put on several NAEA Open Studio Conversations with contemporary artists along with virtual studio days.

**Deadline to nominate is September 8, 2025.**



## **Artist Connections: Open Studio Conversations**

Artist Connections is an exclusive online series for middle and high school students who are members of NAHS or NJAHS. The live virtual series begins with a 30-minute artist talk and a 30-minute

Q and A/interview session led by middle and high school students. Recordings are available to chapter sponsors to watch on demand or share at chapter meetings.

**November 20, 2025, at 7pm ET**

**April 23, 2026, at 7pm ET**



## **NAHS/NJAHS Juried Exhibition**

NAHS and NJAHS chapter members are invited to submit artwork for possible inclusion in the annual juried exhibition, which is held virtually.

The annual call opens in October and closes in January.

Visit [Start a New Chapter](#) for resources to get a chapter started at your school.

Find out more about NAHS [STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES!](#)



# Engagement & Empowerment

*Here's a refresher on best practices to keep students engaged in the art room.*



## Choice-Based Projects

Allow students to choose from a menu of project options

## Hands-On Demonstrations and Mini Challenges

Incorporate short fun challenges to boost energy and creativity



## Integrate Peer Feedback & Critiques

Use structured peer critiques to provide positive and constructive feedback



## Connect Art to Pop Culture & Social Issues

Make art relevant to students' lives and experiences



## Integrate Art History Creatively

Use interactive tasks to explore art history in engaging ways



## Use Technology Thoughtfully

Incorporate digital tools and virtual resources in lessons



## Set Clear Goals with Flexibility

Define project goals but leave creative paths open



## Celebrate Progress & Display Work

Recognize accomplishments and showcase student work



## Use Collaborative Projects

Let students work together on group art projects



## Reflect & Personalize

Have students keep sketchbooks or journals





# Meet Your Secondary Division Team!

## Latonya Hicks



## Florida AP Readers



## Director-Elect

Latonya Hicks is a fine arts educator, visual artist, and passionate arts advocate who blends personal narrative with a commitment to creativity and connection. A mixed-media artist, she works with found, gifted, and discarded objects to transform fragments of cultural and personal history into layered visual stories.

For Latonya, artmaking is a form of archaeology—unearthing, preserving, and reimagining. Her current series is deeply personal, marking a new chapter in her life as a Black woman without family historians to consult and with motherhood no longer in view. These works speak of memory, resilience, and legacy.

By day, Latonya serves as secondary visual arts coordinator for Pinellas County Schools, where she shapes the secondary curriculum, mentors teachers, and champions the arts. A graduate of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University, she also leads on state- and national-level platforms as President of the Florida Art Education Association and as a mentor, reader, consultant, and Development Committee member for AP Art & Design.



August energy is a thing, isn't it? Part nerves, part excitement, all deep breaths and big lists. As we return to our classrooms, studios, and shared spaces, I'm reminded that beginnings don't need to be perfect—they just need to be honest.

This year, I'm challenging myself—and you—to lead with authenticity. Our students don't need us to have all the answers. They need us to see them, hear them, and make space for them to discover themselves through art.

As secondary educators, we have the gift of helping students find voice, choice, and belonging. That doesn't take perfection—it just takes presence.

Here's to showing up fully, and trusting that how we begin shapes everything that follows.

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# Eastern Region Director

Heidi O'Donnell

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Team East 2025 Attendees



Day 1 on the Appalachian Trail

Heidi O'Donnell is a 29-year veteran arts educator from Maine with an insatiable appetite for learning and dark chocolate with sea salt. Inspired in part by her completion of the School for Arts Leaders program and a strong desire to give back through service, she has played an active role at the state, regional, and national levels.

Among her numerous positions, she has served as President of the Maine Art Education Association, hosted a Team East conference, and was the NAEA Eastern Region VP. Heidi has successfully sponsored a National Art Honor Society at her high school for over a decade and, for the past 3 years, has thrived as the advisor for a state-recognized Outdoor Adventures Club.

She is a proud member of the Cloud Appreciation Society, and Groundhog Day is her favorite holiday! Heidi practices a variety of media, including analog photography (because who doesn't like the smell of chemistry in the morning), metalwork, beginner lampwork, and felting. She is excited to have helped start the new NAEA Interest Group, Fiber Arts Makers, with Betsy Allison.

To prep for the upcoming year, Heidi attended the NAEA Eastern Region Summer Leadership conference, Team East, in Rhode Island. The virtual keynote speaker, Nikkolas Smith, an activist and former Disney Imagineer, inspired us with his art and passion. For fun, we took a deep dive into Mr. Potato Head's history and created spud-based sculptural selfies! The conference allowed leaders to connect and strategize ways to advocate for their associations and members.

Finally, with her adventurous soul and a desperate need to recharge, Heidi started her southbound section hike of the Appalachian Trail. Life happens outside!

Please feel free to reach out with questions, concerns, and actionable ideas that she can share with other Secondary Division members!





# Southeastern Region Director

## Sarah Horn



Register now  
for KyAEA '25  
at  
[kyaea.com](http://kyaea.com)

Sarah Horn is a ceramic artist, high school art teacher, novice home renovator, coffee drinker, font lover, and pop culture junkie. With a view of the Cincinnati skyline from her river town home in Bellevue, KY, Sarah loves walkable towns filled with historic architecture, a major influence on her ceramic studio work.

Since embarking on a teaching career in 2004, Sarah has been an active member of the Kentucky Art Education Association (KyAEA), serving as the public relations director on the executive board intermittently and currently managing [kyaea.com](http://kyaea.com). In recent years, Sarah has become increasingly involved in NAEA, acting as one of two local Convention Coordinators for NAEA25 in Louisville, KY. At the state level, Sarah is proud to have been on the advisory panel for revising the Kentucky Academic Standards for Visual and Performing Arts with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and is currently collaborating with KDE on a series of teacher video resources soon to be featured on their website.

Sarah balances teaching with being a studio artist and business owner, participating in local art shows, and working with regional galleries that represent her ceramic work. This summer, Sarah has been busy working on a new body of work as a short-term artist-in-residence at Core Clay Studios in Cincinnati, OH.

### Photos on left, top to bottom:

Classy headshot in home studio  
Artwork: *Color Wheel Mug*, 2024  
Sarah Horn Ceramics architectural tiles  
KyAEA Board Members at our gala  
Join us in November for KyAEA 2025 in Louisville, KY!  
**Photos on Right, top to bottom:**  
Installing student artwork at KDE  
Artwork: *She Talked Til She Was Blue in the Vase*, 2023



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# Western Region Director



As the Western Region Secondary Director, Gayle Trueblood comes with 26 years of art education experience. Gayle currently teaches sculpture, ceramics, jewelry, and fashion in Lima, OH. Gayle serves as the Past President of the Ohio Art Education Association (OAEA) and is the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I) State Liaison to the National Art Education Association.

Gayle's leadership journey is grounded in building community and advancing equity through the arts. Most recently, she participated in the Western Region Leadership Summit in Wichita, KS—an inspiring experience that fused powerful artmaking with dynamic professional development and collaborative leadership.

Outside of the classroom and boardroom, Gayle enjoys balancing life through working out, cooking, scooter rides, and spending time with her children and her partner, Matt.

Looking ahead, Gayle is helping shape OAEA's upcoming statewide conference this November in Columbus, OH. With a nostalgic "Retro" theme, the 2-and-a-half-day event promises to deliver high-impact learning, meaningful collaboration, and plenty of old-school fun as educators from across the state reconnect and reenergize. Gayle is this year's OAEA Secondary Art Educator of the Year and was named as an OAEA Distinguished Fellow.



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# Pacific Region Director

## Elise Hansen

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Adventures From the Summer



Summer 2025 Troll Hunt

Elise Hansen (Kohli) has served over 15 years in visual arts education and enjoys supporting the growth of arts education through art advocacy in her state of Arizona. This year she is moving into a mentoring role at her school, taking her outside the classroom to support new teachers on their teaching journeys. Elise is thankful that arts education gave her the opportunity to educate by embracing a strong supportive classroom that expresses individuality as well as a collaborative mindset. She is looking forward to applying her arts education knowledge within other content at her school. Outside of the school/district, Elise also has worked with several different leaders and community organizations to help support arts advocacy. Elise has also served in many roles with her state organization, Arizona Art Education Association.

Outside of education, Elise enjoys spending time with her family, friends, and animals. She enjoys working on her personal art, where she loves 2D and 3D art forms but really finds enjoyment in ceramics and is starting to gain more interest in fiber arts. Secondly, she is hoping to grow her personal studio, to offer a variety of art classes for her community. Elise also loves to travel by air, water, and land. This summer she had the opportunity to get out of the Arizona heat and enjoy the cooler northern Arizona regions, the lakes of Minnesota, and the Midwest corn fields.

Elise is excited and looking forward to representing the Pacific Region's amazing visual arts educators and highlighting up-and-coming activities within the Pacific Region.



# What's Next?

Look for our January issue of ***Secondary Spotlight*** featuring a sneak preview of Secondary Sessions, plus an opportunity to join one of our sessions as a presenter at the NAEA Convention in Chicago OR during a virtual Secondary Division event!

**Remember: Your NAEA membership comes with many professional development opportunities besides the annual Convention. Check out the [NEW arteducators.org](http://www.arteducators.org) to find events and resources.**



Engagement and empowerment are not just for students! Join us on FB and Instagram to connect with other secondary art educators. And please reach out if you are interested in volunteering or getting more involved and don't know where to start.