



We're changing the equation

PCEF February 2020 Teacher Spotlight

Kristen Robinson

Parley's Park Preschool Teacher

"As preschool teachers, I just feel that we are the gateway to creating little learners. We are the first experience that adults and their children have with school," says preschool teacher Kristen Robinson. "That's an important role. We are a safe place for these children - they just love us!"

If there's one thing you learn about Ms. Robinson (also known as Ms. Kris) from speaking with her, it's how much *she* loves her students.

And that love, much like the academic foundation that preschool provides, continues long after the students are done with her class. The pride in her voice is crystal clear: "I love seeing last year's preschool kiddos in the cafeteria and how independent they are."

Ms. Robinson is the lead preschool teacher for the full-day 4-year-old preschool program at Parley's Park Elementary School. PCEF connected with her to learn a bit more about how she came to be one of the beloved teachers in the Park City School District.

1) Where are you from?

I am a California native. I moved to Park City after spending 20 years in Oceanside. My family relocated to Utah and we wanted to raise our son in Park City.

2) How did you start as a teacher? Give us some background. Did you always know? Was it a roundabout realization?

I did want to be a teacher from an early age but got sidetracked and went another direction for many years. I came full circle back to teaching when I came on board with the preschool program.

I started my college career taking Early Childhood Education classes but discovered that I also had a strong interest in science. I enjoy using my science background in the classroom.

3) What/who inspired you to be a teacher?

There were so many people who inspired me to teach. I have 3 wonderful and talented family members who were all elementary school teachers. I spent many hours after school in those classrooms as a child. I loved the environment. I loved seeing them inspire their students. Additionally, I have had excellent teachers throughout my education and remember and value those who went above and beyond the job description.

4) What values guide your work?

It is important to me to develop a relationship with my students. With that, I can instill confidence in my young learners. It is important that they have a trusted adult in their life other than their parents or caregivers. I love showing my students that they can accomplish tasks independently through exploration, experimentation and lots of conversation. I take honor in developing that foundation of lifetime learning. My goal is to send them off with a love of learning.

5) How long have you been a teacher? How long in PCSD? What grades/classes have you taught?

I spent several years as a substitute teacher at Jeremy Ranch Elementary working with 3rd to 5th-grade students. The next position I held was as an aide at Trailside Elementary working with 2nd and 3rd-grade students before joining the preschool team at PPES.

I have been with the preschool program for 5 years. I spent 4 years splitting my time between teaching the $\frac{1}{2}$ day programs for both 3 and 4-year-old students.

This is my first year teaching the full day 4-year-old program and it has been so much fun getting to spend the entire school day with my students.

6) Why Park City?

Look around. The beauty and resources available. There is no place like it. I look directly at the ski resort from our playground. It is breathtaking.

7) Difference teaching in Park City versus other districts? (If you've taught in other districts.)

I have only taught in PCSD.

8) Best thing about teaching in Park City School District?

I have always enjoyed being involved in the District as a parent and now as a teacher. I value the opportunities PCSD currently provides for me. Working with a talented group of educators

is essential and knowing we are supported by the District is important. We come from many backgrounds and locations and that is unique in a school district.

Working in the preschool program is especially fun. Being in each elementary school where our children can see their siblings is important. We join in some assemblies, participate in the science fair, and have access to some of the specialists.

Most importantly, I love the support that I receive from my coworkers in our program. We share ideas, collaborate on projects and share resources. We have a lot of fun together.

9) Best day or moment or part about teaching?

I get to laugh, sing songs, and dance every day.

I love watching a child's wheels work when trying to master a particular skill. My little learners are so full of curiosity and I enjoy fostering their interests. I love providing that safe environment for them to explore, make mistakes, and create amazing things. All while learning how to socialize and become caring friends. Watching and listening to them learn through play is one of my favorite moments.

I love seeing my former students at school and see how much they have grown and learned and feel like I had a small part in that.

10) What does PCEF mean to you?

I value the work that PCEF does. I spent a few years volunteering on the grant committee and had the opportunity to learn more about the incredible programs they support. Their mission in helping all students reach their academic potential helps our schools become stronger and in return helps our community become better. Their reach is wide and the funding stays in our schools.

I am now a recipient of a generous grant I wrote that was awarded this school year. I appreciate the support they have given the children in our preschool program.

11) Kids/Family?

My husband David, my son Andrew and several pets!

12) Hobbies/Passions?

I enjoy skiing, mountain bike riding, SCUBA diving and traveling.

I make handmade cards for relaxation. I love to read. I also enjoy trying out new recipes to cook with my family.

I am passionate about learning and enjoy taking online classes to brush up on old skills or learn new ones.

13) Degrees and credentials/endorsements

I have a certificate in Early Childhood Education from Mesa Community College in San Diego and a B.S. in Biology from Humboldt State University in Arcata, California.

About Park City Education Foundation

Vision

To help launch well prepared, curiosity-driven, creatively inspired citizens of the world.

Mission

Lead the community in funding initiatives that inspire and challenge all Park City students to successfully reach their academic and life-long potential.

Why does PCEF exist?

- Park City is the wealthiest micropolitan area in the country - and our schools *still* don't have the money they need for programs that district families have come to depend on.
- Utah schools rank last in per-pupil funding... AND ...
- 96% of state-collected education tax dollars go to *other* school districts.
- Park City Education Foundation fills the gap in funding.

PCEF funds 8 key initiatives/programs:

1. Preschool
2. Afterschool
3. Elementary Visual Arts (EVA)
4. STEM

5. Park City Center for Advanced Professional Studies (PCCAPS)
6. Bright Futures
7. Classroom Grants
8. Idea Lab