

Staff Spotlight: Teaching with Purpose

For the past 12 years, **Nathalja Hogervorst, Junior and Senior High Social Studies Teacher**, has been helping students build confidence, develop practical skills, and better understand both themselves and the world around them. Whether leading discussions on citizenship and globalization, teaching life skills in the kitchen, or supporting students as they discover strategies that work for their unique learning needs, she is committed to helping every student succeed both inside and outside the classroom.

For Nathalja, the most rewarding part of her role is building meaningful connections with students. Watching students gain a deeper understanding of themselves as learners, develop new strategies, and grow in confidence is what makes each school year so fulfilling.

Nathalja's mornings often begin in homeroom with activities like CNN 10, Lexia, and Delta Math before shifting into engaging social studies lessons exploring topics such as citizenship, globalization, nationalism, and ideologies. Lunchtimes for Nathalja often involve supervision or cheering students on as they collaborate and challenge one another in Mr. Reardon's Retro Game Club. Afternoons are filled with Junior High reading skills classes, Senior High learning strategies, and hands-on life skill classes, where students learn everything from cooking and sewing to personal finance and basic automotive skills. During prep time, you'll often find Nathalja updating lessons to reflect current events, marking assignments, or setting up the kitchen for the next cooking class.

At the heart of Nathalja's work is helping students discover their strengths and build confidence in themselves. Through her social studies, learning strategies, reading skills, and life skills classes, she equips students with the knowledge, confidence, and practical tools they need to become independent learners, thoughtful citizens, and resilient individuals. Every lesson is an opportunity to help students better understand themselves, build empathy for others, and prepare for whatever comes next.

One part of Nathalja's job that often surprises people is just how much time goes into preparing for life skills classes. Between grocery shopping, meal preparation, and the seemingly endless dishes, plenty is happening behind the scenes to create meaningful hands-on learning experiences for students.

Looking ahead, Nathalja is especially excited to begin a new chapter at Foothills Academy Society as the school's new Career and Guidance Teacher. This transition will allow her to continue supporting students as they explore their strengths, plan for the future, and build confidence as they prepare for life beyond graduation.

Just for Fun:

- **Sweet or salty snacks?** Sweet - chocolate is life.
- **Current favourite show, podcast, or book?** *Mistborn* by Brandon Sanderson or *The Little Book of Lykke* by Meik Wiking.
- **Fun fact:** Nathalja trained as a ballerina for years.
- **If you could instantly learn any skill, what would it be?** How to speak different languages so that I could connect with people all over the globe!
- **What's your favourite season and why?** Fall because it feels like a fresh start and it's still warm enough to sail.