

# CURRY COLLEGE

## AWARD FOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

### Dr. Lindsay Illich, Writing

#### PUBLICATIONS:

- This year, my second full length book of poems was published, *Fingerspell*:  
<https://blacklawrencepress.com/books/fingerspell/>.
  - o About the book: I began learning sign language at the suggestion of my daughter's doctors. From a genetic screening, I learned early in the pregnancy that she had Trisomy 21, more commonly known as Down syndrome, a condition that also put her at higher risk for related medical complications. When she was born she needed surgery to repair a duodenal atresia, was diagnosed with hypothyroidism, as well as an atrial septal defect—a hole in her heart—all of which were terrifying. Those days following her birth, hospital stay, and the season of her infancy seemed underlit with precarity, an intensity that heightened emotions at both ends of the spectrum. I felt every emotion as if through a vivid filter, supersaturated. I was learning ASL, caring for my daughter, and writing these poems, and I began to understand language as embodied beyond the vocal. I was seeing the linguistic and the gestural as participating in a kind of poetic that was unfamiliar yet deeply satisfying. And because I was new to ASL, at a point in the language acquisition process primed for improvisation, trying to make due with my limited vocabulary, my poet brain was being charged with novelty, with new ways to speak. I felt I was under a beautiful spell.
- *Teach Living Poets* was published by the National Council of Teachers of English:  
<https://store.ncte.org/book/teach-living-poets#> =
  - o I co-authored the book with Melissa Alter Smith, a high school English teacher who shares a passion for teaching poetry. *Teach Living Poets* opens up the flourishing world of contemporary poetry to secondary teachers, giving advice on reading contemporary poetry, discovering new poets, and inviting living poets into the classroom, as well as sharing sample lessons, writing prompts, and ways to become an engaged member of a professional learning community.
  - o The #TeachLivingPoets approach, which has grown out of the vibrant movement and community founded by high school teacher Melissa Alter Smith and been codeveloped with poet and scholar Lindsay Illich, offers rich opportunities for students to improve critical reading and writing, opportunities for self-expression and social-emotional learning, and, perhaps the most desirable outcome, the opportunity to fall in love with language and discover (or renew) their love of reading. The many poems included in *Teach Living Poets* are representative of the diverse poets writing today.