



NASLEE Leadership Academy 2024 Fellows



Jeannie Allen

Jeannie Allen serves as the Director of the Office of School Readiness at the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (ADECE). In this role, she holds the responsibility of overseeing the delivery of the Alabama First Class Pre-K program, ensuring that Alabama's four year olds have access to a high-quality early learning experience.

Jeannie previously served as the Innovative Projects and Assessment Director. In this position she managed the state-chosen pre-K assessment tool, Teaching Strategies GOLD® and directed The Alabama Pre-K–3rd Grade Integrated Approach to Early Learning. She also served as the project lead in the revision work of the Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development (ASELDs).

Jeannie holds a master's degree in Early Childhood Education from Auburn University and a certificate in early education leadership from Harvard University.



Jennifer Alphonse

Jennifer Alphonse is an Education Program Development Specialist in the Office of Preschool Education at the New Jersey Department of Education, where she supports New Jersey school districts in their implementation of high-quality, state funded preschool programming.

Jennifer has been a leader in Early Childhood Education for the past twenty-three years. Throughout her time in the field Jennifer has had the honor to serve New Jersey preschoolers and their families as a preschool teacher, a preschool instructional coach, a preschool intervention specialist, and a school district administrator.

Jennifer received her undergraduate degree from Rutgers University, her master's degree from The College of New Jersey and she received her post graduate administrative licensure from Rowan University.



Wendy Burgess

Wendy Burgess serves as the Team Lead for Early Learning in the Office of Early Learning and Literacy at the South Carolina Department of Education where she is responsible for the implementation of publicly funded four-year-old prekindergarten. The scope of her duties includes leading, coordinating, and supporting all aspects of early learning, professional development targeted to specific audiences which models the use of evidence-based practices, and state PreK expansion and program improvement.

Wendy, a 27 year veteran educator, brings to the table an intense instructional background as teacher, interventionist, reading specialist, and reading coach. During her tenure, Wendy earned her National Board Certification as an Early Childhood Generalist.

Wendy holds two Clemson University Master's Degrees. The first master's degree is in Special Education with a focus on learning disabilities and the second is a master's degree in Supervision and Administration.



Dawn Kalkman

Dawn Kalkman is an education consultant with the recently established Michigan Department of Lifelong Education Advancement and Potential, in the Office of Preschool and Out-of-School Time Learning. In her role she partners with Intermediate School Districts to administer the state-funded preschool program, Great Start Readiness Program. Dawn also oversees Intermediate School District budgets, policies, and programs and is active in statewide early childhood systems collaboration.

Previously, Dawn worked as an early childhood administrator for an Intermediate School District, a regional manager for a Head Start agency, and a preschool classroom teacher. Dawn participated in Michigan's 2019–20 Education Policy Fellowship Program.

Dawn has a master's degree in human development and family studies with a focus on early childhood development from Central Michigan University.



Dr. Kelli Servizzi

Dr. Kelli Servizzi is the Director of Kindergarten Readiness at the Indiana Department of Education. In this role, Kelli coordinates support for school-based programs; promotes innovation and best practice; and provides content expertise, data analysis, and technical assistance to the field. She is the secretary for NASLEE and the chair of the communications committee.

Kelli's 20 years of experience in education include working as an assistant professor of special education and a developmental preschool, kindergarten, K–4 resource, and 5th–6th grade intensive intervention teacher. Her first job was Director of Communications for USA Diving, where she managed the website, magazine, and media relations.

Kelli completed her bachelor's degree in journalism and master's in special education at Butler University. She earned a master's degree in educational administration and a doctorate in elementary education, early childhood, and reading from Ball State University.



Rachel Stepina

Rachel Stepina is the Grant Manager for Nevada's Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5), at the Nevada Department of Education, Office of Early Learning and Development. In this role, Rachel manages and implements the three-year award by collaborating with statewide partners to make program, funding and policy decisions regarding how to best expand and/or create aligned early childhood programs and services that equitably improve outcomes for Nevada's young children and their families, the early childhood workforce, and the early childhood comprehensive system.

Rachel taught higher education Spanish courses for a decade and consistently pursues volunteer and professional opportunities centered in transforming early childhood systems for birth to third grade learning and development, with a focus on language equity and language access.

Rachel holds a master's degree in Bilingual Early Childhood Education from the University of Texas as well as a master's degree in Spanish Literature from the University of Nevada.



Dawn Odean

Dawn Odean is the Universal Preschool Program Director at the Colorado Department of Early Childhood, directing the start-up, implementation and coordination of the program. Dawn will oversee the 32 local coordinating agencies and work closely with families, other state agencies and partners to achieve the vision of universal preschool for Colorado children.

Dawn previously spent more than 20 years at Jeffco Public Schools, most recently serving as the district's Executive Director of Early Learning. During the course of her 20-year career in public education, she served as a director of early learning, an elementary school principal, an instructional coach, and a classroom teacher.

Dawn earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from Colorado State University and a master's degree in elementary education from the University of Colorado Denver.



Marcy Whitcomb

Marcy Whitcomb is a Public Pre-K Consultant, Maine Department of Education where she supports and guides school administrative units toward best practice and high-quality program implementation in public pre-k, including providing professional development for educators and observing programs.

Marcy spent 13 years as a classroom teacher and regional manager for Head Start, working to lead a state collaborative team to build transitioning to kindergarten resources and webpages, and working closely with a strong, supportive state level team.

Marcy holds a master's degree in early childhood education from the University of Maine at Farmington.

