



# Carson City School District

## *Carson City School District Hires Project Leads for Race to the Top*

### Special points of interest:

- What is a Project Lead?
- Getting to know your site leader
- Meet the implementation teams for our secondary schools

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Race to the Top, a federally awarded grant to Carson City School District, has allowed the district to implement specific curricular, instructional, and assessment improvements in its secondary schools. To help facilitate these changes, Carson City School District has hired Implementation Specialists as well as Project Leads at each site.

As project leads, staff members will serve as the campus coordinators for all endeavors relat-

ed to Race to the Top. These individuals will support both the district office as well site leaders at each location in the implementation of instructional, curricular, and assessment modifications, in alignment with the district's previously submitted and approved grant application. Project leads will also mentor implementation specialist members, assisting in their continued growth and familiarity within these positions. Three of the four candi-

dates selected for these positions have previous experience performing the many duties encompassed within these crucial positions; however, all four selected staff members possess the ideal skill sets to lead the many projected tasks and ventures on their perspective campuses.



## *Carson High School Project Lead-Allen Gosselin*



Allen Gosselin is an RTT-D Implementation Specialist and the designated team lead for Carson High School. He brings 27 years of experience to the district, including 25 years as a classroom teacher, grades K-12, and has twice been recognized by his peers as a teacher of the year (Eureka County School District, 1989 and Douglas High School, 2000). In addition to his classroom experience, Mr.

Gosselin served as a regional trainer for WNRTTP, facilitating professional development for Nevada's five western districts in the areas of school improvement planning (SIP), co-teaching, instructional strategies (T4S) and PLC/collaborative practices.

## *Carson High School Implementation Team*



Ben Contine

Ben Contine is an Implementation Specialist for Career and Technical Education (CTE) in the Carson City School District. He serves as the lead outreach coordinator and developer of the district's community partnership program. After an early career in politics and community organizing, Mr. Contine worked as a special education teacher in both the Clark County and Carson City School Districts. He was recognized for his work as an interventionist and expertise in

the co-teach model. Recently, Mr. Contine served as Chairman of the Carson City School District's Strategic Plan Committee, facilitating the development of the Empower Plan. The plan was unanimously adopted by the Carson City School Board in 2012. Mr. Contine has been named the Ormsby County Education Association Rookie of the Year, Carson City Rotary's Teacher of the Month, and presented a City Life Magazine "Local Hero" award for neighborhood organ-

izing. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science, a Master's Degree in Special Education, a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership and holds an Administrative License and TESL endorsement. Mr. Contine has been identified as an educational agent of change committed to empowering students as lifelong learners ready to innovate, adapt, and succeed in a changing world.

Michele Lewis is the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Administrator in the Carson City School District. She began her career in 1983 in Eureka, Nevada, where she was the agriculture science teacher and advisor for the Diamond Mountain FFA Chapter. She then served as one of the first Tech Prep coordinators in Nevada and was instrumental in moving this initiative forward by working with the Nevada Board of Education and University of Nevada Regents to develop a joint tech prep agreement, which – after many modifications and amendments – is still in use today.

Ms. Lewis then went on to serve as the Nevada FFA Executive Director where her work revitalized the Nevada FFA Foundation and established the Nevada Agriculture license plate, which provides annual income to the FFA organization. After earning a Master's degree in Education Leadership, Ms. Lewis spent a year at Cuesta College as the Workforce Develop-

ment Manager before moving on to become the Administrator at Washoe County School District's CTE high school – Regional Technical Institute (now AACT).

She has been with Carson City School District since 2005 and has served as dean of students and administrator for CTE programs at Carson High School. She has received many awards for her dedication to CTE, such as the Nevada CTE Educator of the Year, Nevada Agriculture Teacher's Association Member of the Year, and the coveted Bill Trabert Memorial Award for Excellence in Occupational Education. She was most



recently recognized by the Nevada Association for Career and Technical Education with the Award of Service – the highest recognition given by the association. She has earned the Honorary American FFA Degree and has served on the Douglas County School District Board of Trustees and the Nevada Interscholastic Activities Association Board of Control. All of these awards speak to Michele's passion for inspiring students to reach their fullest potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success.

As a native Carsonite, Cheryl Macy attended Carson High School, where she now works as Implementation Specialist. After high school, she attended the University of Nevada, Reno, earning a degree in English with a minor in American History. During this time, Mrs. Macy worked as a clerk and Continuous Quality Improvement coach for the Medical Imaging Department of Carson-Tahoe Hospital. While there, Mrs. Macy co-authored a paper on



sinusitis and medical imaging exams. Although her hospital work excited her, she decided to become a teacher and returned to UNR for her education classes. Mrs. Macy has taught English for fourteen years, spending five years as Speech and Debate Coach and five years as Language Arts Department Chair. Her work as a teacher leader inspired her to get her Master's degree in Education Administration from Grand Canyon University, which led to a year-long internship as dean at Eagle Valley Middle School. In 2011, Mrs. Macy was named the Neva-

da Teacher of the Year. This honor gifted her with a great deal of professional development on topics ranging from ESEA to teacher leadership to crafting messages for the media. During this time, Mrs. Macy developed her platform on the relationship between sleep and success in school. In 2012, Mrs. Macy had the opportunity to visit China with the NEA Foundation, where she was able to visit a middle school and a specialized career and technical high school, as well as an American company out-sourcing in China. These opportunities have expanded her understanding of what our students and our schools need to improve. All of these experiences furthered her love of curriculum, instruction and teacher leadership.

Mena Dedmon has been a teacher for 13 years. She lives in Minden with her husband, an English teacher, and her two daughters aged 8 and 3. Her first job in education was teaching US History, World Geography, and Leadership at Pau-Wa-Lu Middle School in Douglas County. During this time she was an annual participant in the Teaching American History Project (TAHP) in Washoe County. She twice served as the master teacher for TAHP summer institutes and participated in fellowship program at the National Archives. In 2008 she sat on the panel which revised the Social Studies standards for the state of Nevada.

Next came a three year stint as an ESL teacher at the Koc School in Istanbul, Turkey. The Koc School is a private Turkish school working with a focus on bilingual instruction. While there, she and two colleagues developed a discipline policy that was adopted school-wide. Ms. Dedmon was selected as the 6th grade level leader for the English department at the

end of her first year and remained in that capacity until returning to the United States.

Next, she taught grade 7 World Geography and Leadership at Carson Middle School from 2011 until she was moved to Carson High School as an implementation specialist under the RITT-D grant. While at CMS, she mentored her second student teacher.

Ms. Dedmon has a Master's Degree in Teaching History (MATH) from UNR.



Mena Dedmon

Sarah Lobsinger received her Bachelor's degree in Secondary Mathematics from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma and has taught middle school and high school mathematics in Oklahoma, Texas, and Nevada. She has taught Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry at Carson High School for the past 8 years. Ms. Lobsinger's love of teaching began at the age of 4 when she taught her cats and stuffed animals how to write numbers and letters on her chalkboard. A strong advocate for teaching students to love learning, she involves her students in exploring new ways in applying their knowledge of mathematics. Her current professional



Sarah Lobsinger

interests focus on working with other teachers and her current projects include implementing Common Core Standards in mathematics throughout the district. In addition, she serves as the Implementation Specialist for the Race to the Top Grant at Carson High School.

## *Pioneer High School Project Lead-Candi Ruf*

Candi Ruf received a Bachelor of Arts in English and Secondary Teaching Credential from the University of Nevada, Reno and began her teaching career at Proctor R. Hug High School in Reno, Nevada where she taught 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> grade English. In addition, Ms. Ruf reinstated the Journalism class and monthly newspaper as well as curriculum mapped, piloted, and co-taught a transitional English course for students moving out of self-contained or immersion programs into mainstream classrooms. She also served as Cheerleading Advisor, Drill team Advisor, Class advisor, and Speech and Debate Coach.

In 2006 Ms. Ruf returned to the classroom after certifying in Elementary Education at Sierra Nevada College. She taught third grade at Bordewich Bray Elementary School for 7 years. As a co-teacher utilizing the Inclusion Model, she worked with Special Education, Deaf and

Hard of Hearing, Autistic, and GATE students. Additionally, Ms. Ruf is a certified Write...from the Beginning Thinking Maps Teacher Trainer and Cognitive Coach. She served as a New Hire Mentor for two years and was a three year member of the CCSD English Language Arts Curriculum Mapping Team for third grade. Additionally, Ms. Ruf served on various site-based committees including Safety, Nevada Day, Spelling Bee, Principal's Advisory, and Climate.

Currently Ms. Ruf is the Implementation Specialist for Pioneer High School and is working on her TESOL Certification.



## Carson Middle School Project Lead-Amy Burton

Amy Burton is lead for the Carson Middle School implementation team. Burton has over twenty years of teaching experience in English Language Arts and Journalism. She began her teaching career in 1991 as a middle school ELA teacher in northern Virginia after receiving her masters of education from the University of Virginia, Curry School of Education. Since then Burton has taught ELA and journalism courses to various age groups ranging from 6<sup>th</sup> grade through community college and university adults in both northern Virginia and Nevada. In addition she has taught secondary literacy courses at the University of Nevada, Reno. Burton began exploring teacher leadership and professional development while teaching ELA at Churchill County High School when she was selected as a trainer for the Nevada State Standards, a scorer for the Nevada High

School Proficiency Writing Exam, and a T4S observer and Professional Learning Community facilitator. In addition, Burton earned a National Board certification in ELA in 2005 and was awarded Teacher of the Year at CCHS. These interests and accomplishments led to her selection as a regional trainer for the Western Nevada Regional Training Program (WNRTP) in 2006 serving Carson City, Churchill, Douglas, Lyon and Mineral counties. While with WNRTP, Burton specialized in program development using the backward assessment model. During her work as a regional trainer, Burton was accepted to the University of Nevada, Reno, College of Education doctoral program in secondary literacy. Through her doctoral studies Burton began to present her action research findings at professional conferences throughout the

United States. She has presented on PLCs, vocabulary study, and teacher learning. Her literacy coursework resulted in a reading endorsement from UNR. In 2008 Burton transferred to the Northern Nevada Regional Professional Development Team in Reno, NV, serving Washoe County and continued her work with program evaluation. In addition, she began focusing on secondary literacy and teacher leadership through professional learning communities. In 2009, Burton chose to focus her professional development skills at the site level. She joined Traner Middle School's faculty to explore a holistic approach to teacher-led professional learning. While at Traner, Burton coordinated an academic vocabulary professional development partnership with UNR's Dr. Dianna Townsend, trained with the Teacher Development Group in coaching mathematics instruction, conducted action



research in a laboratory classroom setting and was selected by Dr. Shane Templeton, co-developer of *Words Their Way*, to be filmed teaching academic vocabulary in that setting by Pearson Publishing Group. It was this experience that led Burton to be interested in Carson City's Race to the Top project, which took a similar systemic approach to a district level. While working as an implementation specialist, Burton chose to switch her doctoral program at UNR from secondary literacy to educational leadership.

Jeremy Lewis is currently an Implementation Specialist at Carson Middle School for the Race to the Top District Grant (RTT-D) awarded to Carson City School District by the U.S. Department of Education. Mr. Lewis holds a bachelor's degree in communications & journalism from Sonoma State University and a master's degree in teaching from Sierra Nevada College.

As a teacher for the Carson City School District at Carson Middle School, Mr. Lewis has been a special education teacher, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts teacher, the ELA department chair, and lead



Jeremy Lewis

department chair. In addition, Mr. Lewis has a strong background in computers and

information technology and has been an essential resource for CMS staff.

As a fellow teacher, Mr. Lewis has fostered collaboration and designed cross-curricular instruction between 8<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts and social studies. He has earned the respect of his peers and was Carson Middle School's Teacher of the Year for 2011-2012.

During the life of the Eagle Valley Middle School SIG Grant, Mr. Lewis worked

closely with the EVMS Implementation Specialists to align ELA curriculum and assessments between the two middle schools and begin the implementation process of the Learner-Centered Model.

In addition to education, Mr. Lewis enjoys music, computers, art, gardening, bicycling, snowboarding, and spending time with his wife and two daughters.



Jeff Greb is currently an Implementation Specialist at Carson Middle School. He taught English at Carson High School beginning in 1995 and taught students at all grade and ability levels, from remedial freshmen classes to Advanced Placement seniors. He holds a BA in English from UCLA, attended graduate school at CSULA, and earned his teaching education license through SNC. He also holds a MA in Education Administration and Supervision from University of Phoenix and is currently working on his doctorate in Educational Leadership.

From 2010-2013, Mr. Greb served as CHS Language Arts Department Chair. In addition, he has held numerous leadership positions within the district. He is a former president of OCEA and currently serves as vice president. Mr. Greb has chaired and served on a wide variety of education committees at the site, district, and state levels. For example, he was an item writer as well as content reviewer of the Nevada HSPE reading test for over 12 years. He was also a site trainer for CHS when state standards rolled out beginning in 1999.

Prior to beginning his teaching career, Mr. Greb worked in various positions at Griffith Observatory and as Implementation and Support Coordinator for Public Storage Management, Inc., the world's largest private landlord.

When not working, Mr. Greb enjoys writing poetry and music, reading, and fishing.

## *Eagle Valley Middle School Project Lead-Kari Pryor*

Kari Pryor is currently an Implementation Specialist at Eagle Valley Middle School and serves as the Teacher on Special Assignment Cognitive Coaching Trainer. She taught at the elementary level for 8 years before leaving the classroom to work in staff development and facilitation. Prior to joining Carson City School District in 2010, Ms. Pryor worked for the Douglas County Professional Development Center as the New Hire/Mentor trainer and the K-6 Elementary Mathematics Specialist. Her career in professional development continued when she left Douglas County to work for the Western Nevada Regional Training Program (WNRTTP) where she supported 5 counties throughout western Nevada in the areas of effective instruction, Professional

Learning Communities, Cognitive Coaching, and mathematics. She holds a BS and Master's Degree in Elementary Education. Ms. Pryor is also a nationally certified Cognitive Coaching Agency Trainer.

When not working, Ms. Pryor enjoys spending time with her son, hiking, camping, and finding new hidden hot spots in Reno, NV where she currently resides.

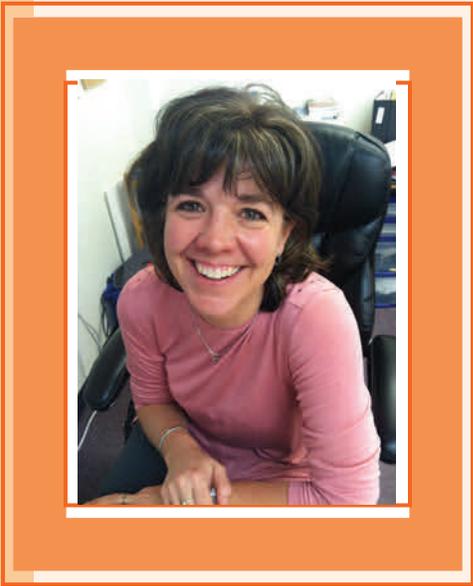


Kim Whisler graduated from Northern Arizona University Summa Cum Laude in 1997 with a B.A. in Elementary Education. She worked in the Carson City School District for the past 17 years. Her first year was spent working as a substitute teacher. She was then hired as a 2nd grade teacher at Mark Twain Elementary School in 1998. Since that time she has taught 4th grade, 5th grade, 6th and 7th grade math, advanced math, and social studies.

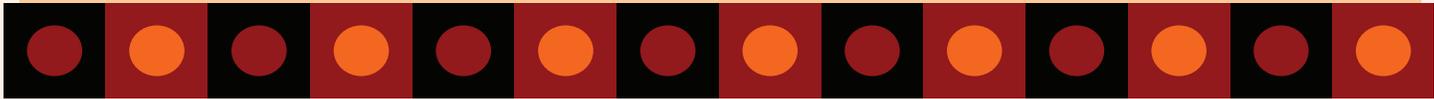
Mrs. Whisler has served in many leadership positions. She has been a grade level representative, math department chair, and served on various committees at the school sites. Mrs. Whisler spent 3 years participating on the Nevada Mathematics and Science Leadership Cadre in collaboration with the University of Las Vegas Nevada. She also spent time working with the Nevada Department

of Education and Carson City School District to help implement the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics. In 2010 she was selected as the Carson Middle School Teacher of the Year.

Mrs. Whisler is currently working as an Implementation Specialist at Eagle Valley Middle School.



*District Hires Three Exceptional Administrative Assistants*



Paige Ellis is a Senior Office Specialist for Carson City School District’s Race to the Top project. She is currently working on-site at Carson High School as support for the Implementation Specialists.

Mrs. Ellis comes to her current position with a varied work history. She began her professional career as a secretary for Robert’s Home Improvement, where she handled the budgeting and daily administration. Later, she enjoyed working in various positions for JCPenney, including Visual Specialist, Catalog Supervisor and Shoe Supervisor. Her supervisory roles at JCPenney provided opportunity for honing her problem-solving and people skills. Wanting to continue to develop these skills, Mrs. Ellis went to work for the Dollar Tree, where she was hired as Freight Manager/Assistant Store Manager.

Over the years, these professional positions have given Mrs. Ellis opportunities to gain skills as well as develop her natural abilities. As a natural problem-solver, Mrs. Ellis enjoys a challenge. She enjoys using computers to manage data and track budgets and is always exploring new ways to use technology in her work. Mrs. Ellis is passionate about education and is currently enrolled at Western Nevada College. Her enthusiasm for her job, passion for learning, and her admirable work ethic has made her an excellent choice for her role as a Senior Office Specialist in a school setting.



Paige Ellis

Cheri' Hall is a Senior Office Specialist, working for the Race to The Top grant in the Carson City School District, and is located at Carson High School. Mrs. Hall has 20 years' experience working with the public, both in-group settings as well as one-on-one. Cheri' communicates with a sense of optimism and purpose. She has the ability to listen attentively, while showing respect and concern for others. She brings to the team a keen sense of knowledge in social skills and interpersonal relations, as well as determination in accomplishing set goals; all while remaining ever vigilant in her positive outlook and attitude. In Mrs. Hall's past, she was given the Miss Congeniality award when she was in the Douglas County Pageant.



Cheri' Hall



Jenae Stryffeler is currently a Senior Office Specialist, working out of the Carson City School District office. Mrs. Stryffeler comes from a varied and extensive background; she is a United States Army veteran, and although never deployed, feels that her somewhat brief enlistment taught her the importance of teamwork and dedication to any goal, whether professional or personal. Mrs. Stryffeler also worked at Arkansas Children's Hospital for a time, and refers to this period of her life as the most humbling experience she's ever had. Mrs. Stryffeler has an apprentice electrician license, experience as a 911 dispatcher, and brings years of administrative assistance experience, having worked at Weber County Fire District in Weber County, Utah for several years.

Mrs. Stryffeler recently graduated from Truckee Meadows Community College with an Associates of Arts degree and has her sights set on obtaining her Bachelor's

degree, potentially in the education field as well as her personal training certification.

When not working, Mrs. Stryffeler enjoys traveling, having been to almost all 50 states, exercising, hiking, riding her bicycle, and spending time with her family.



Jenae Stryffeler



# Race to the Top

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*Every accomplishment starts with the  
decision to try.*

*- Gail Devers*

## RTT-D Quarterly Accomplishments

- Hired Implementation Specialist (IS) staff members including one administrator on special assignment.
- Set up monthly progress reports with the school board
- Developed and implemented training for IS staff, including developing skill sets related to curriculum and assessment. Implementation Specialists also participate and conduct trainings in: Cognitive Coaching, setting learning targets, as well as T4S (classroom observation data.)
- School support teams continue their meetings and formed leadership teams composed of district office staff
- Each group developed their first 90 day plan for each campus, and begun implementation.
- Alignment meetings with Western Nevada College and Carson City School District have begun work in the area of school to career alignment; testing includes the Accuplacer and program development.
- The district selected and purchased a student data system “Mastery Connect.” This program will allow staff to monitor student progress toward meeting and achieving mastery of standards.
- Scope of Work: work is continuing on this item. This process includes verifying the expected outcomes, tasks, and program evaluation for the project. An initial outlay of one million dollars was released by the USDOE, with the remaining balance available upon request once the Scope of Work and performance expectations are approved.
- Program evaluation: the program evaluation focuses on creating a tool to monitor the development of the curriculum and assessments for all courses.

\*As of July 1, 2013 the district has met the timelines and obligations laid out in the initial application.