



**October
11-12, 2024**

Central Wyoming Community College
Riverton, WY

welcome



Welcome to the 2024 Collaborative Conference!

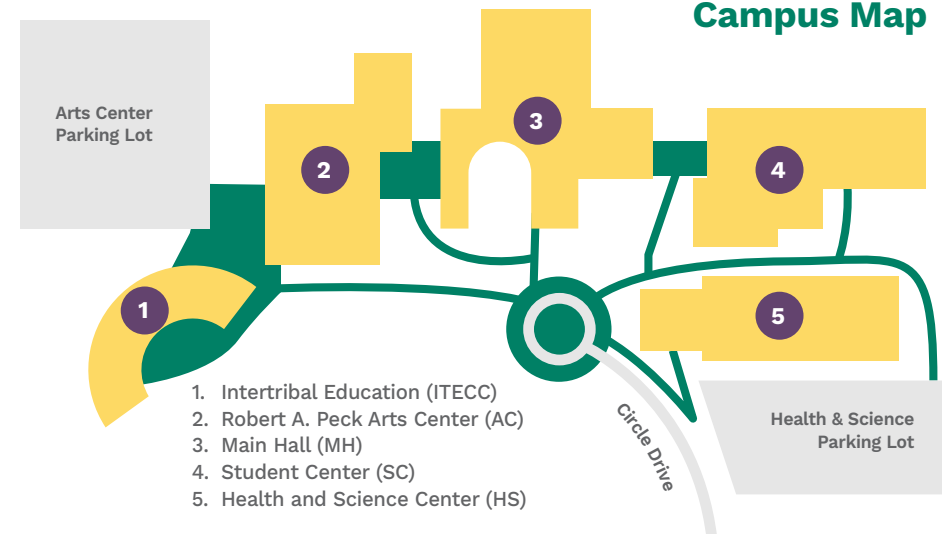
We're excited to have you join us for two days of information sharing, professional learning, and networking as you engage with inspiring speakers. This event will leave you feeling inspired, supported, and energized.

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A huge THANK YOU to all of these partners for coming together to make this year's event happen!



Central Wyoming Community College Campus Map



Lunch Menu

Friday

Orange or Sweet & Sour Chicken/
Vegetable Buffet
White Rice & Vegetables
Eggs Rolls or Crab Rangoon
Fortune Cookies

Saturday

Build Your Own Taco Bar
Taco Seasoned Beef & Chicken
Black Beans
Hard Shells & Soft Shells
Toppings
Spanish Rice

AC = Arts Center
SC = Student Center

MH = Main Hall
ITECC = Intertribal Center

HS = Health & Science Center

Friday, October 11

Time	Workshop	Location
7:00-8:00am	Registration	AC Gallery
8:15-9:25am	Welcome	AC Theater
8:25-9:25am Keynote	Inclusive Foundations: Navigating Special Education Within the Preschool Setting Under IDEA	AC Theater
9:25-9:40am	Break	
9:40-11:10am Breakout Sessions	Nurturing Young Readers and the ABC's: Academics, Brain Science, and Communication	ITECC116
<i>Choose One</i>	Fostering Relationships with Infants and Toddlers	MH181
	Building Inclusive Foundations: Best Practices for Preschool Inclusion	MH171
	Budgeting, Projections, and Planning for Child Care Providers	MH161
	Strengthening and Supporting Families Through a Protective Factors Framework Lens	ITECC125
	Using Music to Benefit Development	AC138
	Family Engagement 101	ITECC106
11:10-11:20am	Break	
11:20am-12:00pm	A Business Problem with Business Solutions	AC Theater
12:00-1:00pm	Lunch	Cafeteria
1:00-2:00pm	Now Boarding: Flight 2494 to Cancun, Mexico	AC Theater
2:15-3:45pm Breakout Sessions	What Should We Play With? Offering Appropriate Learning Materials	MH161
<i>Choose One</i>	Early Childhood and Autism	ITECC125
	DFS ECARES System Demo	AC Theater
	Introduction to ACES	MH171
	Family Engagement – Activities and Forging Connections	ITECC106
3:45-4:00pm	Break	
4:00-5:00pm	Kiss Challenging Student Behavior Goodbye	AC Theater

AC = Arts Center
SC = Student Center








MH = Main Hall
ITECC = Intertribal Center

HS = Health & Science Center

Saturday, October 12

Time	Workshop	Location
7:30-8:30am	Registration	AC Gallery
8:45-9:00am	Welcome	AC Theater
9:00-10:00am Keynote	Growing Readers Through Play	AC Theater
10:00-10:30am	Break	
10:30am-12:00pm Breakout Sessions	Get Off the Rug, Navigating Outdoor Learning	SC104
<i>Choose One</i>	How Our Senses Impact the Brain	MH161
	Early Childhood and Autism	ITECC125
	Introduction to ACES	MH171
	Budgeting, Projections, and Planning for Child Care Providers	MH161
	Family Engagement – Activities and Forging Connections	ITECC106
12:00-1:00pm	Lunch	Cafeteria
1:00-2:00pm	Centering the Experiences of Families to Create Supportive Partnerships in Early Care and Education	AC Theater
2:00-2:15pm	Break	
2:15-3:45pm Breakout Sessions	Creating Supportive Environments for Infants and Toddlers	MH161
<i>Choose One</i>	Using Music to Benefit Development	AC138
	Family Engagement 101	ITECC106
	Strengthening and Supporting Families Through a Protective Factors Framework Lens	ITECC125
	DFS ECARES System Demo	AC Theater
4:00-5:00pm	Kiss Challenging Student Behavior Goodbye	AC Theater

About the WORKSHOPS

Audience	 All	 Administrators	 Directors	 Infant + Toddler
	 Preschool	 School Age	 Afterschool	

A Business Problem with Business Solutions

Fri: 11:20am-12:00pm **Kristin Fong**

A Growth Lab investigation has found that home-based childcare is of special importance because it is currently profitable as a business and viable in lower population and more dispersed areas of the state. A package of 10 state-level business support services and start-up tools can help expand this segment of supply substantially. Center-based child care is also critical as it provides most child care slots, but centers face challenges to remaining profitable with a chief problem being attracting and retaining their own labor. Meaningful solutions at low cost are also possible and differ from previous areas of policy focus. Finally, communities are finding innovative ways to utilize community assets and resources to supply child care in places where the marketplace for child care does not reach. These innovations can be scaled to more communities across the state.

Budgeting, Projections, and Planning for Child Care Providers

Fri: 9:40-11:10am • Sat: 10:30am-12:00pm **Audie Cunningham**

Knowing the financial anatomy of your child care business is paramount. Learn how to financially plan for your business and price your services according to the cost of care. Use a cash flow projection worksheet to estimate and analyze program costs, wages, and the potential for growth.

Building Inclusive Foundations: Best Practices for Preschool Inclusion

Fri: 9:40-11:10am **Kim Caylor and Deana Smith**

Inclusive Practices benefit all preschool children with or without disabilities. Children make the most progress when they are given the opportunity to learn from one another. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) refers to the right of children with disabilities to be educated with their same aged non-disabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate. It is a right given to them under the IDEA in 1975. However, it is the fact that the opportunity to play and learn together maximizes educational benefit for all children that makes this so vital. This session will focus on the importance of inclusive practices, discuss overcoming barriers, and give practical tips. Participants will learn ways to carefully consider the environment, family, instruction, and interaction to impact our children both individually and collectively.

Centering the Experiences of Families to Create Supportive Partnerships in Early Care and Education

Sat: 1:00-2:00pm **Nikki Baldwin**

The presenter will share current data on the experiences of families raising young children and will share insights from the Protective Factors Framework to guide early childhood professionals in creating nurturing and supportive family partnerships.

Creating Supportive Environments for Infants and Toddlers

Sat: 2:15-3:45pm **Taylor Dory**

Come learn how to provide a safe, respectful, predictable, and accessible environment for infants and toddlers through appropriate routines and transitions, materials, and room arrangement. Because infants and toddlers are experiencing the most rapid developmental rate, we will also learn how to create and continually modify our environments to be responsive and supportive of their ever-changing development and learning.

DFS ECARES System Demo

Fri: 2:15-3:45pm • Sat: 2:15-3:45pm **Nicole Norvell**

The Department of Family Services (DFS) is developing the Early Childhood Access Resources and Eligibility System (ECARES) to streamline child care program access for providers and families. ECARES will enhance affordability and quality of care by integrating existing systems like Central Registry and EPICS for payments. Key features include a provider portal for managing enrollment and payments, advanced search tools for families, mobile-friendly access, improved training, and automated eligibility and payments. This session will offer a system demo, functionality overview, and a chance to give feedback and become proficient in using ECARES.

Early Childhood and Autism

Fri: 2:15-3:45pm • Sat: 10:30am-12:00pm **James Bedient and Jayme Culwell**

Exploring Behavior and Interventions in the Classroom: This workshop will explore working with children who have been formally diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and struggle with behaviors in the early childhood classroom. How providers and program directors can best support these children in developing healthier executive functioning (which benefits all children) will be discussed as well as multiple interventions to help support positive behaviors.

Family Engagement 101

Fri: 9:40-11:10am • Sat: 2:15-3:45pm **Emily Vercoe**

Interested in exploring ways to connect with the families whose children attend your program? This session will explore different strategies and benefits of inviting families into your program to make the learning come alive for everyone. Guided by the C.A.R.E. (Connect, Act, Reflect, Empower) framework, we will discuss ways that programs can use hands-on STEM activities to learn and practice skills, build community, and deepen relationships with and across families!

Family Engagement – Activities and Forging Connections

Fri: 2:15-3:45pm • Sat: 10:30am-12:00pm **Emily Vercoe**

Family engagement promotes children's healthy development, wellness, and joy! In this session, we will get hands-on with different activities that can engage families in their child's learning, encourage them to play and wonder together, and build connections that benefit your program and the youth you serve. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) activities are a wonderful way to bring families together around a shared goal. Be prepared to learn a few new things and take home activities and facilitation strategies that will bring families along on their children's STEM learning adventures.

Fostering Relationships with Infants and Toddlers

Fri: 9:40-11:10am **Kelce Eckhardt and Guest Early Childhood Educators**

During this session, participants will learn about the importance of building relationships with infants/toddlers and their families. We will discuss how to engage in meaningful interactions with infants/toddlers and the importance this has on their development.

Get Off the Rug, Navigating Outdoor Learning

Sat: 10:30am-12:00pm

Amy Reyes and Hazel Scharosch

Outdoor learning is on the move in the early childhood world. There is an emerging trend of integrating outdoor learning in preschool. Not only does outdoor learning help students become in tune with nature but allows them to learn self regulation as they immerse themselves in the outdoor world. Children gain an appreciation for the natural world which plays an important part in bringing what they learn in the classroom into real life application. This course is designed to provide teachers and other educational staff with the basic skills and tools to lead their classroom in the adventure of outdoor learning.

How Our Senses Impact the Brain

Sat: 10:30am-12:00pm

Kara Cossel and Guest Educator

Sensory play is more than just making a mess. It is how our brain processes information. Join Kara Cossel and team as we explore our seven (yes, seven!) senses, discuss the impact our senses have on mental and physical development, and engage in some learning invitations that can be taken back to your learning space no matter what age group you work with.

Introduction to ACES

Fri: 2:15-3:45pm • Sat: 10:30am-12:00pm

Tillie Dibben

Educators will gain a deeper understanding of ACEs and how they impact neurodevelopment and learning. Using this knowledge, educators will consider what elements they could add/support in their classroom to provide each child with what they need to thrive in their environment.

Keynote: Growing Readers Through Play

Sat: 9:00-10:00am

Michelle Sullivan

From an infant's curiosity about books to a young child's growing understanding that spoken words can be written text, literacy begins at birth and continues throughout our lifetimes. Yet the strategies that support this development are different in early childhood. During this hands-on and engaging plenary, we'll focus on ways early childhood educators can help foster young children's literacy development through play and playfulness. Using the work of national experts, you will walk away with fun and concrete ways to grow the readers and writers in your care through games, experiences, and conversation.

Keynote: Inclusive Foundations: Navigating Special Education Within the Preschool Setting Under IDEA

Fri: 8:25-9:25am

Kim Caylor and Deana Smith

It is important for all educators, providers, administrators, and families to understand the important role they play in ensuring that children with unique challenges get equal access to and benefit from play and learning opportunities. Let's explore how inclusive practices support the success of every child with or without disabilities.

Kiss Challenging Student Behavior Goodbye

Fri: 4:00-5:00pm • Sat: 4:00-5:00pm

Christine Manning

Managing student behavior in the classroom becomes more difficult each year. In our time together, we will use the KISS principle (Keep it Smart and Simple) to discuss evidence-based tier one strategies and how to ensure they are implemented with fidelity. We will learn how to determine their effectiveness and make simple adjustments to implement tier

two strategies, when appropriate. With a focus on classroom and behavior management strategies for students in early childhood, we can KISS student misbehavior goodbye.

Nurturing Young Readers and the ABC's: Academics, Brain Science, and Communication

Fri: 9:40-11:10am

Christine Harris

During this session, participants will understand how children learn to read by reviewing the science of reading elements for early readers and engage in literacy strategies specific to PreK settings. Participants will also access free aligned high-quality literacy materials and collaborate around best practices with colleagues.

Now Boarding: Flight 2494 to Cancun, Mexico

Fri: 1:00-2:00pm

Jennifer Wilson

If you could take your dream vacation where would you go? What planning would it involve? How would you get there? In this session, we will explore your role as an early childhood professional in the transition planning process for students with disabilities. We are planning the trip of a lifetime for our students as we help them navigate goals, dreams, strengths, and challenges. Transition planning should not just begin when a student is 16 years old, or even when they are 8 years old. Effective planning begins in the early years. So fasten your seatbelts as we prepare for takeoff!

Strengthening and Supporting Families Through a Protective Factors Framework Lens

Fri: 9:40-11:10am • Sat 2:15-3:45pm

Marce Nesslinger and Jessica Jaycox

This workshop will look at the Protective Factors Framework and how it can be best implemented in early childhood programs to serve as a strength-based model of supporting children and their families as they navigate trauma and other potential behavioral issues.

Using Music to Benefit Development

Fri: 9:40-11:10am • Sat 2:15-3:45pm

Dylan Ashburn and Zane Rutledge

Music is a universal language that we engage in and benefit from before we take our first breath. Whether in the classroom using Kindermusik, a research-based curriculum focusing on whole-child development through play and exploration, or clinically with music therapy services provided by a board-certified music therapist, music is a powerful tool that enhances the experience of any child involved. Learn about the classroom benefits of Kindermusik, how you can integrate musical learning into your curriculum, and about the clinical benefits of using music therapy by credentialed professionals to address a child's non-musical goals.

What Should We Play With? Offering Appropriate Learning Materials

Fri: 2:15-3:45pm

Tyler Gonzalez

Thoughtfully offering developmentally appropriate toys and materials to children encourages them to grow and stretch their skills. During this learning session we will reflect on what children are currently playing with in your space, what this means for their development, and brainstorm what you could offer children next based on your observations and reflections.

About the

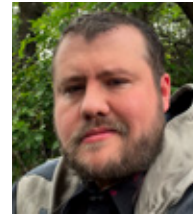
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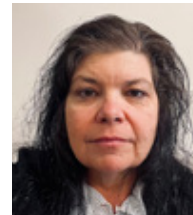
Dylan Ashburn is a native of Casper, Wyoming, and has been involved in music programs since his early childhood. He played in various ensembles and choirs throughout his formative years, taking part in small wind bands, vocal groups, and marching bands, eventually becoming leadership for those groups. Dylan attended the University of Wyoming, graduating in 2017 with a B.S. in Bio-Electrical Engineering. During college he played in the Western Thunder Marching Band, and participated in the UWyo men's choir, UWyo Vocal Jazz group, and the Happy Jacks men's acapella group. He would go on to help found Black Tie Affair, a student-run co-ed acapella organization, where he also served as musical director. Dylan has been with VIBES since 2017, working as a certified Kindermusik instructor and marketer. In February of 2022 he became operations manager of VIBES Fine & Performing Arts | Music Therapy and has used the opportunity to bring as much music and healing as possible to the community of Casper.



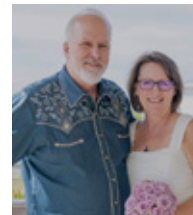
Nikki Baldwin has spent the last 21 years working in early childhood education in Wyoming. She has had a wide range of experiences as a kindergarten teacher, early childhood special educator, Head Start curriculum coordinator, preschool center director, pedagogical leader, private consultant, and member of the University of Wyoming early childhood education faculty. In her time at the University of Wyoming Nikki's research interests and consulting efforts have focused on program leadership, professional learning and development, inclusion, family-centered practice, functional assessment and embedded intervention, creating learning environments, adult facilitation of play-based learning, culturally relevant teaching practices, and international preservice teaching experiences. Nikki's international work includes the creation of an internship in early childhood education in preschools in Kathmandu, Nepal and a sabbatical at Fiji National University, where she led the development of a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Nikki's current role in the UW College of Education includes coordinating the Early Childhood Special Education program and directing the Wyoming Early Childhood Outreach Network (WYECON). Nikki was also involved in the creation of the Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative (WYECPLC), and leads and mentors the statewide facilitators on the team. Nikki has ongoing statewide partnerships with the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND), WY Quality Counts, the Departments of Education and Family Services, and Wyoming Kids First. Nikki is an appointed member of the Wyoming Early Childhood State Advisory Council.



James Bedient is a Provisional Professional Counselor with a Master of Arts in Education in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Chadron State College, with an undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice. He has been working with children for 14 years in various capacities ranging from residential treatment and family services to leadership roles in community-based programs. James is a large proponent of holistic approaches in addressing the needs of children and families; he is a Provisionally Licensed Counselor and a Behavioral Consultant with WYECBC. James believes that children best heal when they are supported through play, self-efficacy, and autonomy.



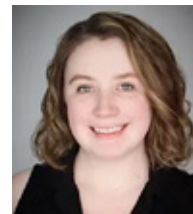
Kim Taylor is the Unit Manager for the Early Intervention and Education Program at the Wyoming Department of Health. She has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with an Early Childhood Special Education endorsement and concentration in Early Childhood education. She also is credentialed as a Certified Public Manager. Kim has over 30 years of experience in Early Childhood and Early Childhood Special Education, serving in a variety of roles including Family Service Coordinator, Preschool Coordinator, Special Education Director, Co-Executive Director, and state Part B/619 Coordinator. She has experience in multiple roles as a regular education teacher, and administrator, working directly with families and administering systems change. She enjoys spending time with her family and grandchildren in her free time.



Penny Cannon has been in the field of early education for almost 30 years. Her career has included being a home child care provider, owner and director of a child care center, Ready to Learn Coordinator with WY PBS, a child care licenser with DFS and currently the Technical Assistant Coach for child care. Her passion lies with helping providers and children build better relationships and elevating the profession as a whole.



Kara Cossel represents Campbell, Johnson, and Sheridan Counties for the Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative. In her role she brings a Bachelor of Arts in Educational Theory and Development, a Master of Science in Management and Leadership, and 18 years of experience working with young children and their families specializing in early childhood special education and deaf studies. Kara moved to Wyoming about eight years ago and found the place that she and her family could call home. She and her husband Tucker have been married for 23 years and have three fantastic boys and one amazing daughter-in-law.



Jayme Culwell is a Behavioral Consultant WYECBC. Jayme is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) and is also certified as a Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapist. Over the years, she has worked with children who have experienced extreme traumas in their life and has also had classroom experience through Head Start and other early childhood programs in the state.



Audie Cunningham honed her financial acumen through owning her own business as well as through specific training with the Small Business Development Center. Audie assists aspiring entrepreneurs and existing businesses in understanding and developing financial plans, budgeting and cash flow, using business financials to manage a business, and funding options to ensure a business' financial health and sustainability. Audie is also a whiz when it comes to traditional and social media marketing strategies. She enjoys seeing community members bring their business ideas to life and is eager to help them grow and thrive. As an entrepreneur, Audie has worked in art licensing and graphic design and has 10 years of experience in customer service and marketing through her work in public libraries. Her education and experience have given her knowledge in print and digital marketing, creating marketing plans, social media marketing, and overall business planning and operations.



Tillie Dibben is a Wyoming native who has been working in early childhood for 17 years. She has worked with children in many capacities from teaching in preschools, afterschool programs, and summer camps, to being a private nanny. Her personal childhood experiences have inspired and fed her passion to study psychology, and specifically generational trauma, at the University of Wyoming. The ACEs study sits at the heart of her passion to support families and individuals in their healing journeys.



Taylor Dory represents the Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative. Taylor offers high-quality professional learning opportunities to educators in Albany County and Carbon County. Before joining the collaborative, Taylor worked in Early Childhood for a handful of years as a lead preschool teacher. Aside from advocating for our youngest learners, Taylor enjoys spending time with her family. As a Wyoming native, you will find her and her husband, Justin, riding their horses, hunting, fishing, and enjoying the precious moments of being new parents.



Kelce Eckhardt is a Learning Specialist and has worked with a range of ages, from infants to college-aged students and everything in between. Most recently, she worked as a 1st grade teacher in a district. She received a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction in Education with an endorsement in Teaching Indigenous Children and a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with a minor in Spanish, as well as an endorsement in Early Childhood Education. Coming from a mixed-race home, Kelce has always had a passion for honoring all under-represented cultures and her passion continued to grow through her education and teaching experience. She loves spending time with her family in the mountains and coaching the Lander High School swim team.



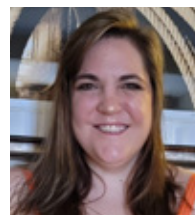
Kristin Fong serves the Bighorn Basin as the Wyoming Business Council's Northwest Regional Director. As such, she's WBC's primary contact and liaison between the state capitol's decision makers and the rural communities within Big Horn, Hot Springs, Park, and Washakie Counties. A midwestern transplant to Wyoming, you'll find her warmth and optimism makes her an adaptable and approachable economic development team member, and her natural curiosity and creativity result in a can-do, pitch-in and problem-solving approach to projects of all sizes. Kristin also happens to be a wife and a working mom of two tiny dictators that demand and deserve her attention and time. The challenge of working parenthood is a reality that so many friends and colleagues struggle with, and Kristin is honored to be able to speak authentically and present real data and evidence to make positive change in Wyoming.



Tyler Gonzalez is a Learning Specialist. She attended the University of Wyoming and obtained a bachelor's degree in Human Development and Family Sciences with a minor in Early Childhood Education. Tyler has over a decade of experience in the field and has worked in a variety of settings and roles. Her favorite part of being a Learning Specialist is getting to share celebrations and learning new things alongside the educators she works with. She is inspired by the passion and determination of Wyoming early childhood professionals and she loves learning about how the environment and nutrition impact children's development and learning. She lives in Powell with her husband and three boys. Together, they love adventuring outside and finding all the best treats at local restaurants.



Dr. Christine Harris resides in Cheyenne, Wyoming and supports school districts as a consultant at TNTP, a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring all students have pathways to opportunity. Previously, she served as an Instructional Supervisor in a middle Tennessee school district, and before that as a principal at both the middle and elementary school levels. She started her career as a fifth-grade teacher in Wisconsin and holds a reading specialist endorsement.



Jessica Jaycox is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with a master's in Social Work. She received her BSW from the University of Wyoming and her MSW from Walla Walla University. She has worked with children and families for the last 10 years spanning from Early Head Start Family Engagement Professional and Manager to working in Youth Residential Treatment Facilities in many roles, from case management to therapist to director and leadership roles. Her passion and joy comes from working with children, families, and communities to provide a place where children can live, learn, grow, and play.



Christine Manning is a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and a Licensed Behavior Analyst in the state of Utah. She has a passion for helping children with autism and other abilities in the home and school settings. She enjoys collaboration with administrators, teachers, and parents in support of children with challenging behaviors using evidence based interventions. Christine has worked as a special education teacher and principal. She also worked for the Utah State Board of Education (USBE), as an education and behavior specialist in the special education department. She currently works as a behavior and special education consultant for Utah schools and contracts with Utah State Center for Schools of the Future Behavior Supports Team at Utah State University. She is the chair of the School Collaboration Committee supporting behavior staff in Utah schools as well as the UtABA President Elect. She is a team member for the Utah School Mental Health initiative working to promote mental health services in schools with wrap-around services in the community. She is the Owner and Director of Manning Behavior Services, an in-home ABA provider serving clients along the Wasatch front. Christine has a genuine compassion and dedication to working with children in home and school settings. When she isn't working, her favorite thing to do is to spend time with her own children and grandchildren.



Marce Nesslinger has been employed in the private mental health practice for over 25 years, beginning her professional career with work at Department of Family Services and Head Start before starting her private practice. She enjoys creating positive opportunities for children by working in many capacities with their educators, their parents, and the community. Teaching parenting skills and providing consultation to schools, the court system and childcare professionals have long been part of her commitment to working with, and on the behalf of, children.

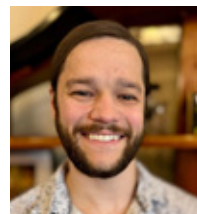


Nicole Norvell is a licensed clinical social worker who brings a wealth of expertise within state government, nonprofit agencies, and educational institutions to her role as Child Care Practice Lead. Formerly, Nicole was the director of the Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning for the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. In this role, she was responsible for administering the federal Childcare Development Block Grant to serve low income, working families by supporting their needs in early childhood education. She also was responsible for administration of all licensed and certified childcare in Indiana (including setting regulatory policy), the administration and vision for the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), and oversaw the state funded On My Way Pre-K program. Nicole also developed and implemented a statewide Learning Management System for early learning professionals.

Nicole also worked as director of the Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services for the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. She served as the state director of special education for the Indiana Department of Education and has experience as a special education social worker, a therapist for family and youth services, and a juvenile probation officer/systems of care coordinator. Nicole holds a Master of Business Administration and a Master of Social Work. She is also an adjunct faculty member at Grand Canyon University, where she teaches master's level social work courses with the hope of molding the next generation of social workers.



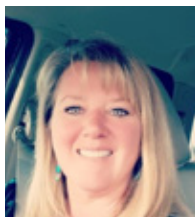
Amy Reyes has been serving in the early childhood space in Wyoming for many years and plays an important role in bridging gaps in ECE across the United States. She is an expert in Early Learning, with specializations in Social Emotional Learning, Outdoor Learning, and Early Literacy. She has over 24 years of combined experience in child development and early childhood education, with expertise in leadership, strategic planning, and transformational change. Amy spent her career as a Head Start Director also spending a good portion of her career as a kindergarten teacher. Amy holds degrees in Elementary Education with an endorsement in Early Childhood Education, Outdoor Learning and Education, Child Development, and Organizational Leadership with a minor in law. Amy currently works as the State of Wyoming's State Early Learning Specialist with the Wyoming Department of Education.



Zane Rutledge obtained a Bachelor of Science in Music Therapy from Texas Woman's University. His time at Texas Woman's University encouraged a deep love for music theory and composition, and created a strong foundation for clinical practice rooted in humanistic and experiential approaches. Zane's clinical experience during this time took place with a variety of populations including special education, memory care, and mental health. At the conclusion of his coursework Zane accepted a clinical internship at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. There he worked at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic leading group sessions and at the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh providing individual music therapy sessions. His time in Pittsburgh helped to create a deeper understanding of the patient experience while introducing more cognitive elements to his approach to treatment. Zane joined the VIBES team in 2019 to assist with the creation of a music therapy program. He utilizes a primarily person-centered approach to treatment while incorporating skills and strategies from Dialectical Behavior Therapy, ensuring that the client's or student's best interests are emphasized, whether focusing on psychosocial, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, or educational goals. Zane has worked with patients of almost every population including hospitalized newborns, older adults with dementia, adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and mental health across the lifespan. Zane is passionate about his work with patients, advocacy for music therapy, and working to reduce barriers to treatment for individuals in the community while helping to support his fellow music therapists.



Hazel Scharosch is a veteran 30-year classroom teacher. Hazel was introduced to Project Learning Tree and Project Wild in 1994 and has used the curricula to expand environmental literacy not only to her students, but to other classroom teachers and non-formal educators. She is especially committed to sharing her passion about providing environmental literacy in the Early Childhood sector, knowing that young children benefit from being outdoors and in touch with Wyoming's unique environment. When not conducting workshops, building networks, and providing outreach education, you can find Hazel and her husband Steve kayaking, snorkeling, growing vegetables for her small community, and spoiling her grandchildren. If you were to ask them, they would tell you that their grandma doesn't mind picking up bugs, looking under rocks for salamanders and lizards, and declaring that mud pies are delicious. Hazel is committed to the idea that, "Every Student (especially a young student) Learns Outside."



Deana Smith is an Education Consultant for the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE), Special Education Programs Division. She is the Part B/619 Coordinator for WDE and coordinates statewide professional development for special education. She holds a master's degree in Education for Reading and a B.A. in Special Education. Education has always been a priority as she has been involved in some capacity for the last 20 years at the High School, Junior High, and Elementary level. Before coming to WDE, she was a Special Education Resource Teacher. While in the district, Deana served on committees and leadership roles, including starting a mentoring program for Title 1 students. She currently serves on the Wyoming Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities as a parent advocate, the Wyoming Governor's Council for Developmental Disabilities, and the Wyoming Early Intervention Council. There is no denying her passion for advocating that all eligible children receive a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. As a mother of six and a grandmother of 10, she brings a plethora of life experiences to aid in her work. She loves spending time with her family, cooking, crafting, and playing outdoors.



Michelle Sullivan is the Director of the Wyoming Afterschool Alliance, a Priority Fund of the Wyoming Community Foundation. Most of Sullivan's professional and voluntary life has focused on the development of dynamic and connected communities. Much of her work integrates cognitive science research to design effective approaches to human development and to strengthen the bridges between educational research and practice. She is also an advocate for the development of leaders on all levels in organizations and facilitates numerous leadership programs.



Emily Vercoe is the Special Programs Associate with the Wyoming Afterschool Alliance. She has diverse experience in formal and informal education and is passionate about cultivating curiosity among learners of all ages. Emily has a bachelor's degree from the University of the South where she studied Art History and American Studies and a pair of master's degrees in Nonprofit Management and Science Education. Emily lives in Laramie.



Jennifer Wilson is out-of-the box. Passionate. Just this side of wacky. Jennifer Wilson has been described as all of these (and probably one or two more). She graduated from the University of Southern California with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Theater. But rather than pursue a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, she completed her teaching certification and eventually a Masters of Education in Special Education. Her 20 plus years in the classroom have taken her from California, to Oregon, to Texas and now Wyoming. Her specialty is successful student transition from high school to postsecondary education and work. An actress is never far from the spotlight, although she now prefers her stage to be the educators, students and their families, as well as, the adult audiences in her professional development sessions. Jennifer has recently transitioned from the classroom to working for the State of Wyoming as the Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Consultant. Her dual perspective will offer insights and she is sure to inspire you to support the students you serve.

Thank You