



## SAFER SCHOOLS AND CAMPUSES **BEST PRACTICES CLEARINGHOUSE**

- Lessons from the Field -

### Supporting the Social and Emotional Learning Needs of Afghan and Other Newcomer Students

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*Wednesday, March 16, 2022 | 3:00 – 4:15 PM ET*

*SPEAKER BIOS*

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#### Ruth Ryder

Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S.  
Department of Education



Ms. Ruth Ryder is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Policy and Programs – Formula Grants in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) at the U.S. Department of Education. In this role, Ms. Ryder oversees a broad range of management, policy, and program functions related to formula and discretionary grant programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA). Ms. Ryder was previously the deputy director of the Office of Special Education Programs in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, which she joined in 1988. Prior to joining the Department, Ms. Ryder was a program administrator in a Washington state school district. There she had responsibility for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title 1 and Title II programs, state-remediation, gifted education, outcome-based education, and state- and district-wide testing programs. Ms. Ryder has a bachelor's degree in psychology and elementary education and a master's degree in special education.

## Jessica Swan

Education Program Specialist, Office of English Language Acquisition, U.S. Department of Education



Dr. Jessica Swan an Education Program Specialist with the OELA Team. Jessica has professional experience as a teacher in K-12, university, and community-based classrooms in the United States and abroad. She is passionate about English Learners and ensuring their success, and she is stimulated by diversity of languages and cultures. Most recently, Jessica was an English Language Fellow with the United States Department of State at the University of Shkoder in Albania.

## Kabrillen Jones

Chief of Staff, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education



Ms. Kabrillen Jones serves as Chief of Staff at the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative services where she works to develop policies that benefit infants, toddlers, children, youth, and adults with disabilities. Just prior to her appointment, she served as a consultant for UPD Consulting and a business analyst for education technology firm Crocus. Previously she served as a policy analyst for the D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education, where she worked on a variety of K-12 issues with a primary focus on regulation and guidance on special education. She is a graduate of Spelman College and the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

## Jorge Verlenden

Behavioral Scientist, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Dr. Jorge Verlenden, PhD, is a Behavioral Scientist with the Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH) in the National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD and TB Prevention (NCHHSTP) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Dr. Verlenden earned her doctorate and master's degrees in psychology from Tulane University. She completed her postdoctoral training at Morehouse School of Medicine under the direction of the former Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, and held a combined appointment in Georgia State's Center for Leadership in Disability. She also earned a Master of Education from Loyola University New Orleans and spent her early career working on educational development projects in Cairo, Egypt and Amman, Jordan. As a Behavioral Scientist in DASH, Dr. Verlenden investigates factors that contribute to health disparities. She applies this research to the development and evaluation of programming to enhance the health and well-being of children, youth, and young adults.

## Shereen Naser

Assistant Professor, Cleveland State University



Dr. Naser received her doctorate in School Psychology from Tulane University in New Orleans LA and worked as a school psychologist in New Orleans before entering a faculty position at Cleveland State University. Dr. Naser's passion is helping to build school capacity to address students varying social, emotional, and behavioral needs. Her specific expertise is building equitable systemic supports that include and affirm racially and ethnically diverse youth, as well as gender and sexual diverse youth. Dr. Naser's work is done using a child right lens where children are considered important participants in the school and community decision making process. Dr. Naser is an avid science fiction reader and the daughter of forcibly displaced parents whose strength and resilience laid a powerful foundation for their 8 children.

## Molly Hegwood

Metro Nashville Public Schools, Nashville, TN



Ms. Molly Hegwood began her journey as an elementary teacher of English Learners. After teaching, Ms. Hegwood joined the Metro Nashville Public Schools Office of English Learners district level team in 2011 as an English Language Development Coach, supporting EL teachers, and leading professional development on effective lesson delivery for multilingual students. These experiences marked key moments in Ms. Hegwood's life and fueled her desire to take bigger steps in support of English and adult learners. In the past 11 years, Ms. Hegwood has served as a Coordinator, Director, and now Executive Director of the MNPS Office of English Learners. While leading district wide EL initiatives, Ms. Hegwood has built a reputation for developing positive relationships with teachers, school leaders, central office departments, community members, and neighboring districts in Tennessee. She brings a spirit for collaborative leadership powered by a deep knowledge of instructional practices.

## Alexandra Castillo

Metro Nashville Public Schools, Nashville, TN



Ms. Alexandra Castillo is a district English Language Learner coach for Metro Nashville Public Schools. Her previous experiences include English Learner teacher, Dean of Academics, and Director of Operations for a middle school. She currently serves 13 elementary schools in the northeast Nashville quadrant coaching teachers and school leaders to build capacity of teaching and learning of English Learners. In her recent work she has supported schools and teachers with the influx of newly arrived students and families from Afghanistan.

## Lisa Levasseur

Elk Grove Unified School District, Elk Grove, CA



Ms. Lisa Levasseur is the Director for the Department of Family and Community Engagement for Elk Grove Unified School District. Before coming to Elk Grove, she was the Associate Director for the non-profit Parent Teacher Home Visit (PTHV) and before working for PTHV Lisa was a classroom teacher for more than 10 years. She has her Administrative Credential and Masters in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and is the proud mother of two children. While working with PTHV she received the 2014 California School Board Association's Golden Bell Award and the 2015 Association of California Administrators Partner in Educational Excellence Award.

## Lysette Lemay

Elk Grove Unified School District, Elk Grove, CA



Ms. Lysette Lemay is an educator with more than 20 years of experience working with students and families in both Sacramento and Elk Grove. She has been a classroom teacher and site administrator and now serves as the Community Partnerships Coordinator with the Family and Community Engagement Department in the Elk Grove Unified School District. She has a strong passion for supporting families, students and staff. Ms. Lemay is a mother and a grandmother.

## Nate Dunstan

Oakland Unified School District, Oakland, CA



Mr. Nate Dunstan is Program Manager for Newcomer and Refugee/Asylee Services for the Oakland Unified School District, Oakland, CA. He provides direct support to refugee students and families and coordinates school-based and community services that support students and their families academically and socially.