



**RELAY / GSE**  
GRADUATE SCHOOL *of* EDUCATION

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**2025-2026**  
**Leverage Leadership**  
**Institute Fellow Profiles**

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## 2025-26 Leverage Leadership Institute Fellow Profiles



### AJ Hammond

*Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Curriculum*

Hoke County Schools  
Fayetteville, North Carolina

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**AJ Hammond** is a passionate educational leader dedicated to fostering student achievement and academic excellence. She currently serves as the Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Curriculum for Hoke County Schools. With experience as a principal and former Director of PreK-5 Education, AJ has a proven track record of driving instructional success.

Recognized for her leadership, she was honored as Hoke County Schools Principal of the Year and Wells Fargo Sandhills Principal of the Year. She holds a Master's in Educational Leadership from Fayetteville State University and is on track to complete her Doctorate in Educational Leadership (Ed.D.) by May 2026.

Committed to empowering educators and enhancing student outcomes, AJ focuses on collaboration, innovation, and excellence in education. Her dedication to shaping the future of learning continues to inspire positive change within Hoke County Schools and beyond.



### Ben Samuels-Kalow

*Founder & Head of School*

Creo College Prep  
New York, New York

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**Ben SK** is the Founder & Head of School at Creo College Prep in the Bronx, a 5th - 8th grade middle school that opened in 2019. Creo is guided by the mantra "always safe, never bored" and has innovative social emotional learning, a distributed Restorative Justice and leadership model, and consistent academic results. The school's founding class had >3x the proficiency of the district, and the second class grew 52 points in ELA and 64 points in Math across four years, despite doing an entire year of instruction online.

Prior to founding Creo, Ben was a middle and high school Computer Science and Economics teacher and instructional coach in the South Bronx, developing curricula used across New York City district and charter schools.

Ben holds a BA in Public Policy from the University of Chicago and a M. Ed from St. John's University. He was a 2017 Building Excellent Schools Fellow.



## Dr. Cherisse Campbell

*Zone Superintendent*

Fulton County Schools  
Atlanta, Georgia

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**Dr. Cherisse Campbell** is the Zone 1 Superintendent in Fulton County Schools currently overseeing 10 turnaround schools. She has served as a teacher and leader within schools in Fulton County, DeKalb County, and New Castle County, Delaware for nearly 20 years.

Dr. Campbell holds joint Bachelors degrees in Chemistry and Chemical Engineering from Spelman College and the Georgia Institute of Technology, joint Masters degrees in Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Leadership from the University of Delaware, an Ed.S degree from Kennesaw State University in Charter School Leadership, and an Ed.D in Educational Leadership and Policy from Vanderbilt University. Dr. Campbell's specialties include School Leadership, STEM Education, and Strategy Articulation and she is passionate about harnessing the power of the collective to create world class learning environments for students, teachers and communities.



## Claire Stoneman

*Principal*

Four Dwellings Academy (Lift Schools)  
Birmingham, England

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**Claire Stoneman** is the Principal of Four Dwellings Academy in Quinton, Birmingham, England, where she continues to teach English. Four Dwellings is an 11-16 school that serves a highly deprived community: 68% of the pupils at Claire's school are disadvantaged; in England, the national average is 27%. Last year, Four Dwellings achieved its best ever results. It was the second most improved school in Birmingham and the 23rd most improved school in England.

Claire is passionate about education changing lives. She grew up in poverty in a very deprived area of Birmingham, and if it hadn't been for her family and school, she never would have gone to university. She is a proud alumna of both the University of Leeds and the University of Warwick, and first stepped foot into a classroom as a teacher in 1999. She has never looked back, and loves her job.

Claire is also the organiser of researchED Birmingham, an annual conference that brings together 700 educators from around the world, promoting research literacy in teaching and its practical application in the classroom.



## Corliss James

*Elementary Principal*

Leadership Preparatory Charter School  
Memphis, Tennessee

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**Corliss James** is the Elementary School Principal at Leadership Preparatory Charter School. Originally from Illinois, she began her teaching career at New Hope Christian Elementary in Jackson, MS, before moving to Memphis to join Leadership Prep as the founding first-grade teacher. During her three years in the classroom, Ms. James achieved the highest academic performance data and later transitioned to an academic coach, supporting teachers in refining instructional practices across subjects. She also completed the Building Excellent Schools: Leaders for Emerging Networks of Schools cohort, enhancing her leadership skills in data-driven instruction.

Ms. James holds a Bachelor's in Business Administration from Jackson State University and a Master's of Arts in Teaching from Relay Graduate School of Education, where she received the Alumni Award in 2019. In 2024, she earned her K-12 Educational Leadership Certificate from the University of Memphis and joined the 2024 Leadership Cohort through the Principals Learning Center.

As principal, Ms. James is dedicated to fostering academic excellence and a strong school culture, ensuring that all scholars excel and become leaders.



## Dr. Dawn Ramseur

*Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction for Secondary Schools*

Hoke County Schools  
Fayetteville, North Carolina

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**Dawn Ramseur, Ed.D.**, serves as the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction for Secondary Education in Hoke County Schools. With over two decades of experience in public education, she has been a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and executive director. She leads efforts in instructional leadership and professional development.

In addition to her district role, Dr. Ramseur works with the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals' Association (NCPAPA) as a facilitator and curriculum developer, supporting school leaders across the state. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a Master's in School Administration, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Fayetteville State University.

A passionate advocate for equity and excellence, she is committed to ensuring every student's success. In her free time, she enjoys crafting, baking, beach trips, and spending time with her family and friends and her labradoodle.



## Dr. Deb Dowless

*Director of Curriculum and Instruction*

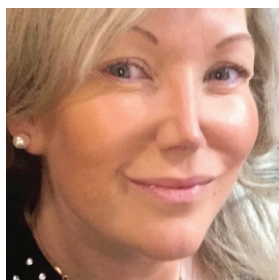
Public Schools of Robeson County  
Raeford, North Carolina

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**Dr. Debra Dowless** has over 29 years of experience as a North Carolina educator and school and district leader. She currently serves as Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Public Schools of Robeson County in Lumberton, NC. Previously, she served as Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction for Hoke County Schools as well as principal, assistant principal, and elementary teacher.

Debra holds a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Bloomsburg University, a Master's in School Administration, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Fayetteville State University. She is passionate about education, believing it has the power to transform lives and change students' trajectories. Her commitment to improving learning opportunities for both students and teachers drives her work in curriculum implementation and student learning.

Debra resides in Raeford, NC, and enjoys beach trips, and spending time with family and friends when not fulfilling her professional responsibilities.



## Dr. Emma Merva

*Regional Director of Education and National Attendance Lead*

Oasis Community Learning UK  
Manchester, England

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**Dr. Emma Merva** is an awarding winning educationalist and is currently Regional Director and Strategic National Attendance Lead for Oasis Community Learning UK with 55 academies across England, chair of Governors for a Special School, a governor of a special school and holds fellowships for the following institutions: Chartered College of Teaching (FCCT), Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (FCIPD) and Royal Society of Arts (FRSA). Dr. Emma is also an associate member of the British Dyslexia Association (BDA) and student member of the Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SPLD).

Emma's commitment to the excellent outcomes of young people and education was formally recognised by the University of Bradford with an outstanding contribution to education award, an invite to attend the Queen's Buckingham Palace summer garden party on behalf of her services to education and through her contributions to a book on inclusive computer science teaching.

Emma holds a master's degree in educational research, leadership and SEND, a postgraduate award in Early Childhood Studies, a postgraduate award in Human Resource Management, National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and is a qualified special educational needs coordinator (NASEN). Emma is currently studying to become a specialist dyslexia teacher and assessor. Emma is also an instructional coach and has improved several schools' outcomes with double digit gains.

Emma has over 27 year's experience in education as a principal and as an executive leader across a wide geographical area of schools. She has also held posts as school inspector both in England and across the world in both English and international curriculum school's. Emma is passionate about improving the life chances of young people so that they have the best choices and opportunities about their own futures.



## Jasmine Woodward

*Executive Principal*

Lift Schools

Birmingham, England

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**Jasmine Woodward** is the Executive Principal of Montgomery Primary Academy and The Rawlett School, working across both primary and secondary phases to improve outcomes and ensure equity for all pupils. Under her leadership, Montgomery achieved Outstanding status and is now one of the highest-performing primary schools in Birmingham, with combined SATs results over 90%.

Jasmine has led system-level improvements across multiple schools and is currently applying the levers of leadership to drive rapid improvement at The Rawlett School, a secondary school in a contrasting context. She is a Lift Schools coach and has completed the One World Instructional Excellence programme, with her coaching work used as a model of good practice across the network.

Jasmine is passionate about staff development, rigorous instruction, and building strong school cultures. She brings a wealth of experience, both nationally and internationally, and is committed to transforming life chances for young people through high-quality teaching and leadership.



## Jennifer Gibbs

*National Lead for Teacher Development*

Oasis Community Learning UK  
Cornwall, England

**Jennifer Gibbs** serves as the National Lead for Teacher Development at Oasis Community Learning, where she champions educational excellence through impactful professional development across the organisation’s 54 schools. After beginning her journey with Teach First as an Art and Design Teacher, Jennifer quickly distinguished herself in various leadership roles, leading struggling teams, turnaround, and start-up schools. Throughout her career, she has maintained that student learning and achievement are her guiding principles in every endeavour.

Jennifer holds a degree in Fine Art and an NPQ in Executive Leadership and is an alumna of the Future Leaders programme. She has spent over a decade in Teacher Education, empowering countless educators to maximise their impact on student achievement. In addition to her impact in schools and trusts, as one of His Majesty’s Inspectors and Subject Lead for Art and Design at Ofsted, she authored the influential Art and Design Research Review, establishing the concept of subject quality and standards for all students aged 3-18 studying art and design across England.

Her unwavering belief that an excellent education opens doors—inspired by her own transformative teachers—has fueled international fellowships and collaborations across the UK, New York, Chicago, Norway, India, and Uganda. Jennifer extends her influence as a trustee of an educational charity and is a member of a school trust board leading 22 schools.

Based in Cornwall, England, she balances her professional passion with family life, including her husband, four children, and a myriad of pets while exploring the best of Cornish life, beaches, and seaside living.



## Lamar Johnson

*Principal*

Liberty City Elementary School, Miami-Dade County Public Schools  
Miami, Florida

**Lamar Johnson** is a dedicated educator with over 16 years of experience in public education as a teacher, instructional coach, and school leader. He currently serves as Principal of Liberty City Elementary School and Dr. Martin Luther King Primary Learning Center. Under his leadership, Liberty City Elementary earned a “B” grade for the first time since 2009.

A proud product of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Lamar began his teaching career by closing reading gaps and was honored with the Miami Teaching Fellows Effective Newcomer Award in 2008-2009. He later served as an instructional coach, helping turnaround schools across Miami.

In 2020, he was recognized as Assistant Principal of the Year in Miami-Dade County Public Schools—the third-largest district in the nation. Today, Lamar also serves as an Educational Leadership Consultant, supporting school districts across the country in building more equitable and impactful learning environments for all students.



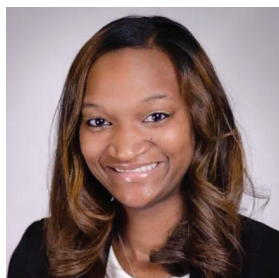
## Leila MacTavish

*Director of Educator Development*

Ark Schools  
London, England

**Leila MacTavish** is the Director of Educator Development for Ark Schools, a network of 39 schools in the UK. Leila believes passionately in the transformative power of education, and that education is the best tool we have at our disposal to create a better, more just society. Leila is proud of the anti-bias strand running through the teacher development programmes she works in.

Leila has worked for 20 years in education, first as a teacher of Citizenship, Philosophy and Sociology, then in school leadership and in teacher development. Before moving to education, Leila worked in the charity sector in the UK and in Kenya. Leila has a degree in Social and Political Sciences from Cambridge University and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education from the Institute of Education, University of London. Leila had free school meals as a child and has firsthand experience of how education can change life chances. She has two children and lives in London.



## Mahogany Jackson

*Principal*

Henry County School District  
Stockbridge, Georgia

**Mahogany Jackson** is the proud Principal of Cotton Indian Elementary School in Henry County Schools. With 17 years of experience in education, she has served as a Teacher, Model Teacher Leader, District Presenter, Curriculum Writer, and Assistant Principal at both the elementary and middle school levels. She began her career in DeKalb County Schools, spent 12 years in Atlanta Public Schools, and joined Henry County in 2023.

Mahogany holds a Bachelor's degree from Albany State University, a Master's degree from Walden University, and a Specialist degree in Educational Leadership from the University of West Georgia.

In her first year as principal, Cotton Indian Elementary saw growth in 6 of 7 Georgia End-of-Grade indicators, improvements across all College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) measures, and was recognized as a Distinguished School for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

Outside of work, she enjoys cooking, reading with her book club, and spending time with family.



## Michael Scott

*Principal*

Uncommon Schools  
Brooklyn, New York

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**Michael Scott, Jr.** is an educator and leader committed to fostering excellence in schools. A native of Gary, Indiana, he earned his undergraduate degree from Indiana State University and a graduate degree in School Leadership from Harvard University. His journey in education began with Teach for America in Dallas, TX, where he taught 7th History and was recognized by TFA DFW and KIPP Foundation for his innovative classroom teaching. Following his corps experience, he moved to NYC continuing to teach 7th History at Democracy Prep.

Now in his 8th year as principal of Uncommon Canarsie Middle School, Michael champions student voice and adult leadership by creating meaningful experiences for students and staff alike. His leadership at UCMS was recently celebrated at TFA's The Principal Retreat as a finalist for the Teach For America The Collective National Advisory Board Honor, recognizing his commitment to advancing educational opportunities for students. Beyond his work in education, he has a love for history, traveling, aviation, and baking. He is known to come to school each week with baked treats for his staff, and use every break to expand his cultural lens in another country or locale.



## Michelle Coleman

*Director of Data and Instruction*

Amethod Public Schools  
Antioch, California

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**Michelle Coleman** is a results-driven education leader with 12 years of experience in teaching and administration. Throughout her career, she has taught humanities and English Language Arts at the elementary and middle school levels and has served in key leadership roles, including Literacy Coordinator, Dean of Culture, Assistant Principal, and Middle School Principal. Now, as Director of Data and Instruction, she leads curriculum alignment and data development across six school campuses, ensuring strategic growth and academic excellence.

As Principal of Richmond Charter Academy (RCA), Ms. Coleman spearheaded a remarkable turnaround, securing 1st place for English Language Learner progress, Top 3 for suspension rate reduction, Top 3 for English Language Arts (ELA) improvement, and Top 3 for Math improvement in the West Contra Costa District. Under her leadership, RCA's 2023-2024 SBAC, ELPAC, and California Dashboard results showcased unprecedented growth, reflecting the dedication of students, staff, and the broader school community.

Ms. Coleman holds a Bachelor's degree in Liberal Arts from Southern Connecticut State University, with minors in Political Science, Sociology, and Criminal Justice, along with a specialization in Pre-Law. She also earned a Master's degree in Criminal Justice Administration from Saint Peter's University. Passionate about educational equity, she is dedicated to ensuring that all students—regardless of background—receive a high-quality education that empowers them for lifelong success. Above all, she is a proud mother of two.



## Octavius Harris

*Principal*

Fulton County Schools  
Atlanta, Georgia

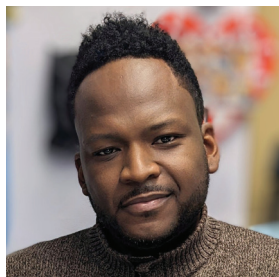
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**Principal Octavius Harris** is a dedicated educator with over 16 years of experience in various roles, including teacher, instructional coach, assistant principal, and principal. For the past four years, he has served as the principal of Langston Hughes High School in Fairburn, Georgia. His leadership has been marked by a strong commitment to academic excellence and student development.

Before becoming principal at Langston Hughes, Harris held the position of assistant principal at Daniel McLaughlin Therrell High School, where his efforts to enhance teacher development contributed to a significant increase in the school's College and Career Ready Performance Index. He also improved the school's graduation rate and student performance on state exams.

Harris' educational journey began at Ralph J. Bunche Middle School, where he taught and later returned as principal. There, he implemented programs like Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to reduce suspension rates and improve school culture.

As principal of Langston Hughes High, Harris continues to foster academic growth, support extracurricular success, and prepare students for future achievements.



## Rick Romain

*Principal*

New York City Department of Education District 18  
Brooklyn, New York

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**Rick Romain** is a dynamic elementary school principal known for transformative leadership and a deep commitment to student success. At Emma Lazarus Elementary in Brooklyn, New York, he led the school from one of the city's lowest performers to among its top-ranking institutions.

Principal Romain believes in the power of community and collaboration, building strong partnerships with teachers, families, and community-based organizations. His leadership is marked by a relentless focus on data, teacher development, and rigorous instruction—all key drivers of his school's success.

An educator since 2005, he has served as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal. He holds degrees from City College of New York, Bank Street College of Education, and Columbia University. Romain is also an adjunct professor at Bank Street College, where he mentors aspiring school leaders.

He is a servant leader dedicated to excellence, equity, and the empowerment of every student.



## Dr. Robert Rametti

*Chief Academic Officer*

Boston Prep  
Mansfield, Massachusetts

**Dr. Robert Rametti** is an educational leader with two decades of experience in urban school districts in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. He currently serves as the Chief Academic Officer at Boston Prep Charter Public School in Boston, where he has helped to improve academic outcomes, resulting in a ten percentage point increase in the state's accountability rankings, from 2023 to 2024.

Dr. Rametti has dedicated himself to supporting all students, families, and educators with a focus on equity. He has extensive experience with coaching teachers and leaders on equitable pedagogy, curriculum development and review, rigorous assessment practices, building strong teacher teams, and strengthening student culture through agency and empowerment. Rob began his career as an English Language Arts teacher, educating students in various settings including inclusion, honors, and Advanced Placement classes. A National Board Certified teacher, Dr. Rametti paid close attention to the individual needs of his students, differentiating instruction whenever possible and making challenging content accessible to all students.

Rob recently earned his doctorate in PK-12 Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Boston University where his research was focused on culturally responsive teaching and how schools can best use professional learning opportunities for educators to create more inclusive and equitable schools for students.

In his free time, you can find Rob trying new restaurants, reading or watching a murder mystery, tending to his rambunctious but adorable pug, Ramses, or obsessively monitoring flight and vacation deals online to book his next adventure.



## Dr. Rodolfo Morales

*Chief Strategy and Schools Officer*

Academy of The Pacific Rim  
Boston, Massachusetts

**Dr. Morales** is a dedicated and accomplished educational leader with a mission to increase educational equity for all students, especially those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As a lifelong Boston resident and a bilingual educator, Dr. Morales personally understands the needs and challenges facing our growingly diverse students and is committed to implementing inclusive and culturally responsive practices to help students develop a positive intellectual identity.

At the Phineas Bates Elementary School, in just five years Dr. Morales and his team increased the school's state accountability percentile from the 15th to the 40th, achieving level 1 status on the district's quality school framework. Furthermore, during Dr. Morales's tenure, favorable responses on the Panorama family and teacher climate surveys rose to the 80th-99th percentile in the nation.

In 2023, Dr. Morales was honored as a City of Boston Civic Hero. Currently, Dr. Morales serves as the Chief Strategy and Schools Officer, where he serves the community by leading, guiding, and developing leaders and educators. Dr. Morales holds a Bachelor of Science in Marketing Communications from Emerson College, a Master's in Education through the Boston Teacher Residency Program at the University of Massachusetts Boston, a Master's in School Leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a Doctorate in Education from Boston College.



## Shanda Gentry

*Chief Academic Officer*  
FirstLine Schools  
New Orleans, Louisiana

**Shanda Gentry** is a dedicated educational leader with 19 years of experience in instructional leadership, curriculum development, and school management. She currently serves as the Chief Academic Officer at FirstLine Schools, where she oversees school directors, instructional systems, and student support services to drive academic success.

Previously, Shanda served as a School Director, leading her school to earn “Top Gains” recognition through strategic coaching, data-driven instruction, and academic interventions. Prior to that, as Director of Curriculum & Instruction, she implemented a small group instruction model that improved student outcomes and contributed to school turnaround efforts.

Shanda holds certifications in Early Childhood Education and Educational Leadership. She is passionate about fostering high expectations for students and educators, ensuring equity, and creating impactful learning environments. A proud New Orleans native, she remains committed to advancing education and student achievement in her community.



## Stephanie Amaya

*Principal*  
W.H. Adamson High School- Dallas ISD  
Dallas, Texas

**Principal Stephanie Amaya** is a proud first-generation college graduate and the daughter of Salvadoran immigrants. A product of the Dallas Independent School District, she earned her Bachelor’s degree from the University of North Texas, a Master’s from Lamar University, and is currently a Doctoral candidate at Dallas Baptist University.

With a deep commitment to the communities she serves, Principal Amaya is passionate about uplifting others and giving back. Her leadership has transformed underperforming schools, a focus of her dissertation, earning her recognition as 2018 Principal of the Year and Outstanding Principal by the Dallas Southeast Chamber of Commerce in 2019. She has successfully implemented International Baccalaureate, Expeditionary Learning, and Novel Engineering programs, driving significant academic improvement.

Now in her fourth year at Adamson High School, Principal Amaya’s leadership has earned her the title of Master Principal for three consecutive years and Region 1 Secondary Principal of the Year. Under her guidance, the school has seen remarkable growth in student achievement, scholarships, and campus culture.

As a Latina and Christian woman, she leads with a focus on empowerment, fostering a supportive environment for students and staff alike. Committed to continuous growth and hands-on leadership, she also mentors educational leaders in other districts, sharing her expertise to inspire change beyond her own campus.



## Sweta Sarkar

*Co-Founder & Director, Schools*

iTeach Schools  
Pune, India

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**Sweta** is the Co-Founder & Director of Schools at iTeach Schools. She has spent the last decade building iTeach Schools alongside the org leadership team. iTeach Schools runs a network of 12 free, high-impact schools and a college-to-career program. In her current role, she coaches principals, supervises the curriculum & training wing and leads programs impacting the school network.

While completing her engineering degree, she volunteered to teach English to the children of sex workers, which had a long-lasting impact on her choice of career. Joining the Teach For India Fellowship in 2013 was instrumental in shaping her career in the education reform movement. As a fellow, she taught grades 6 and 7 in a public school. Her work with her students earned her recognition as a Transformational Impact Journey Fellow in her cohort.

Post the fellowship, Sweta co-founded iTeach Schools in 2015 and led a secondary school for the first 6 years. The first couple of years of starting a school had been rough and led to below-average student learning and staff outcomes. She then turned those around using restorative culture and LL principles and got her school to be one of the highest-performing schools in the network.

Currently, as a manager for principals, she enjoys enabling a group of fierce school leaders towards their school vision and values.



## Vincent Ardizzone

*Principal*

Ogden School District  
Pleasant View, Utah

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**Principal Vincent P. Ardizzone** of Shadow Valley Elementary possesses over 25 years of experience in the field of education. His leadership is informed by a global perspective, originating from his early teaching career in Belgium. A dedicated lifelong learner, Principal Ardizzone holds multiple degrees and certifications, including endorsements in ESL, Mathematics, and STEM disciplines. His professional contributions extend to adjunct faculty roles at the University of Phoenix and Southern Utah University, where he has further cultivated his commitment to educational development

Principal Ardizzone professional expertise is complemented by a strong foundation in family. He is a father of four and has been married for 26 years. His commitment to empowering others is evident in his work, encompassing educator coaching, data analysis, and program development. Beyond his professional endeavors, he values time spent with his family, engaging in activities such as games and international travel, fostering an appreciation for diverse cultures.