

# Joseph M. Ernst, M. Ed.

*As a forward-thinking, results-driven educational leader with over 25 years of proven success and academic excellence in Washoe County School District, I am deeply committed to ensuring a high-quality educational experience for all of our students through strong partnerships with teachers, leaders, families, and our community.*

## EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

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| <b>Chief Continuous Improvement Officer</b> , Office of Continuous Improvement, <i>WCSD, NV</i> | <b>2021-Present</b> |
| <b>Co-Lead Area Superintendent</b> , Office of School Leadership, <i>WCSD, NV</i>               | <b>2017-2021</b>    |
| <b>Principal</b> , Anderson Elementary School, <i>WCSD, NV</i>                                  | <b>2012-2017</b>    |
| <b>Principal</b> , Alyce Taylor Elementary School, <i>WCSD, NV</i>                              | <b>2010-2012</b>    |
| <b>Assistant Principal</b> , Alyce Taylor Elementary School, <i>WCSD, NV</i>                    | <b>2008-2010</b>    |
| <b>Assistant Principal</b> , Alice Smith Elementary School, <i>WCSD, NV</i>                     | <b>2006-2008</b>    |
| <b>Teacher</b> , Roy Gomm Elementary School, <i>WCSD, NV</i>                                    | <b>2003-2006</b>    |
| <b>Teacher</b> , Van Gorder Elementary School, <i>WCSD, NV</i>                                  | <b>2000-2003</b>    |
| <b>Teacher</b> , Donner Springs Elementary School, <i>WCSD, NV</i>                              | <b>1996-2000</b>    |
| <b>Teacher</b> , James Rodgers Elementary School, <i>Lake Shore Public Schools, MI</i>          | <b>1994-1996</b>    |

## EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

*My educational leadership approach is rooted in the unwavering belief in every student's potential for success, guided by the principle that strong, respectful relationships form the backbone of educational excellence. I prioritize clear, effective communication and strategic focus, empowering teams to achieve high standards through collective efficacy and data-driven decision-making. My approach balances urgency with long term sustainability, aiming to align educational initiatives with community and economic advancement, ensuring a future in Washoe County School District where every student thrives. Dedicated to fostering a culture of trust, excellence, and innovation, I am committed to transforming educational landscapes for lasting community impact.*

## LEADERSHIP & STRATEGIC PLANNING

- Played a key role on the Strategic Plan Core Planning Team, leading collaborations with community stakeholders to develop the foundational pillars, goals, and portrait of a WCSD learner, including the design of a three-year monitoring process to the Board of Trustees to ensure objectives are met.
- Established the Comprehensive Schools Collaborative, focusing on resources, strategic alignment, and leadership development, to significantly enhance the performance of the district's lowest-performing schools.
- Member of Nevada Association of State Superintendents taskforce for innovative test design, working to reduce student testing time and test length.
- Ongoing core member of Technical Advisory Group for statewide Accountability, successfully championing a systemic overhaul of Nevada's School Performance Framework designation process to correct statistically indefensible and inequitable approaches to identifying Nevada's lowest performing schools.

- In-depth graduation monitoring using timely data, and personalized support for all students, instrumental in achieving an impressive 4-year running average of a 90% graduation rate across Area 3 high schools.
- Supervised 24 principals, emphasizing leadership in school culture, designing effective systems, improving instructional practices, and the use of formative assessment data to improve student learning.
- Successfully hired and mentored 16 new principals within a 4-year timeframe with a focus on fostering leadership development and educational excellence; 13 remain principals or district leaders today.
- Established the PLC Design Team to improve the professional learning community of principals within WCSD, ensuring principals play a crucial role in designing and delivering professional development, and monitoring progress toward identified areas of focus on School Performance Plans.
- As an Area Superintendent, redesigned the hiring practices for principals, assistant principals, and deans of students in collaboration with Human Resources.
- Worked to identify innovative and effective solutions as the Office of School Leadership representative on Washoe School Principal Association contract negotiations.
- Collaborated with the Deputy Superintendent and the Office of School Leadership to develop comprehensive in-person and distance learning models for students and teachers to continue learning during times of emergency.
- Led the development and establishment of pandemic protocols during a global pandemic, including orchestrating several inter-working processes related to contact tracing and coordinating student and staff exclusions to maintain a safe and responsive learning environment.
- Directed three new school openings, spearheading coordination and collaboration between principals, educators, and key central office supports.
- Facilitated dozens of school visits alongside the State Superintendent, WCSD Superintendent, WCSD Board of Trustees, and Nevada Department of Education Leadership.
- Collaborated with the Nevada Department of Education to pilot the consolidation of school monitoring visits.
- Served as an active member of the Equity and Diversity Task Force to promote inclusivity and diversity within leadership roles. Launched initiatives within Equity and Diversity to bolster the leadership capacity of Area 3 principals.
- Collaborated closely with the Title I Department to expand the scope of Solution Tree and The New Teacher Project training, enhancing principal coaching opportunities and support for schools, while also strategizing with the department to prioritize funding allocations for schools.
- Served as a mentor principal in University of Nevada, Reno's Nevada Leads initiative aimed at developing and enhancing leadership preparation and capabilities for educators in Nevada.
- As principal of Anderson Elementary School, we were recognized as a Washoe Academy of School Leaders model school for outstanding development of site-based professional development programs and use of multi-tiered systems to support all students.
- Served a three-year tenure as the elementary school principal representative on the Peer Assistance Review Team, focusing on identifying and implementing support strategies for underperforming teaching to elevate instructional practices.
- Key member of district growth and overcrowding meetings, focusing on optimizing resources to provide support to schools facing expansion and capacity challenges.
- Played a pivotal role as principal representative on the Spanish Springs re-zoning committee, facilitating the seamless transition of affected schools from multi-track to a single-track year-round schedule.
- WCSD administrative lead for the Professional Growth Rubric Design Team that worked to redesign and standardize the teacher evaluation system.

## ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE & IMPROVEMENT

- Collaborated with various divisions within the Nevada Department of Education, including State and Federal Grants, Title I, School Performance, Accountability, and Student Accounting, coordinating initiatives to maximize the use of financial resources, enhance accountability, and improve student and school performance metrics.
- Worked with the Nevada Department of Education Technical Advisory Team to improve accuracy of entrance and exit criteria with school designations and update the Nevada School Performance Framework.
- Strengthened internal student data management tools to better support schools in identifying and addressing critical areas for improvement, such as absenteeism, use of early warning system, and graduation monitoring.
- Awarded WCSD Elementary School Principal of the Year in 2015 for cultivating an exceptional school culture that resulted in significant improvements in student achievement.
- Anderson Elementary School recognized as one of nine “Shining Star” schools by the Nevada Department of Education for outstanding academic growth to a high-poverty student population.
- Significantly improved student growth and achievement at Anderson Elementary School moving from two to four stars on the Nevada School Performance Framework; achieved the distinction of highest performing Title I elementary school in WCSD in 2014-2015.
- Achieved exemplary levels of science proficiency at Anderson Elementary School, earning the distinction of highest science growth in WCSD.
- Received the Inspiration Gold Award from WCSD for exemplary inclusive practices that significantly support the social, emotional, and academic growth of students receiving special education services.
- Achieved a 5-star rating at Alyce Taylor Elementary School for three consecutive years under both WCSD and Nevada State Performance Frameworks.
- Improved inclusivity by developing and implementing a push-in schedule, supporting students who qualify for English Learner and special education services to access and engage more effectively with grade-level curriculum within general education settings.
- As a principal, improved learning outcomes by fostering student ownership of their educational journey, actively integrating student voice into school-wide initiatives, and redefining the application of positive behavior supports to boost intrinsic motivation.
- Played a pivotal role in designing WCSD’s inaugural Zoom program implementation, enhancing Prekindergarten-3rd grade and English Language literacy learning. Hosted Governor Sandoval and State Superintendent of Education Erquiaga for a school tour to demonstrate the effective application of the new Zoom legislation.
- Collaborated with WCSD EL department on reformatting school-wide ACCESS data to allow for improved data analysis; collaborated on designing ELL professional development for Zoom school principals; led collaborative efforts on Zoom summer academy curriculum and structure.
- Designed a professional learning model where teachers observe master educators applying English Language Learning through Guided Language Acquisition Design strategies during intersession periods, coupled with collaborative grade-level planning of integrated units of study. This professional development model has been replicated across the district.
- Led the design and execution of professional development for integrated units of study, establishing a guaranteed and viable curriculum through a universal backwards design model. Successfully piloted the implementation of student learning objectives, significantly enhancing student content knowledge and expository writing skills.
- Improved the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to devise individualized action plans for all students performing below grade level, introduced personal student data folders, and initiated student-led conferences twice a year to discuss academic progress.

## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

- Managed oversight of ESSER funding, the largest federal grant investment in public education history, alongside supervision of over 290 philanthropic, state, and federal grants. This totaled more than half a billion dollars, directly supporting academic recovery, student well-being, and infrastructure initiatives across schools.
- WCSD recognized by Nevada Department of Education and Council of Great City Schools for exemplary practices and innovative solutions in using ESSER American Relief Funds.
- Oversaw research and evaluation of over 15 critical priority areas in WCSD, promoting continuous improvement and fulfilling grant requirements. Our findings informed major district decisions, including ESSER grant investments in tutoring, retention incentives, summer school design, and iReady implementation.
- Directed the supervision and strategic allocation of 11 million dollars in Title I Grants, collaborating with over 50 school principals to develop, refine, and maximize the value of school budgets across various funding streams.
- Led nationally recognized Continuous Improvement Office, who provide transparent data to our 112 schools, community local media, and district leadership to inform decision-making, including and accompanying professional learning supports to schools on data literacy and data tool use.
- Oversight of the Office of Continuous Improvement state-of-the-art approach to data visualization, data transparency, and use of student voice to inform decision-making have been spotlighted nationally by EdWeek, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Council of Chief State School Officers, Council of Great City Schools, and the Learning Policy Institute, among many others.
- Supervised the launch of new reports in WCSD's internal data warehouse, a complex system of 60+ drillable dashboards that visualize data ranging from standardized test scores, high school credits, graduation rates, behavior, and chronic absenteeism. With over 120,000 reports generated annually by school and central office supports, our data warehouse is foundational to school and district operations.
- Served as the Office of School Leadership's representative on the rezoning committee and project lead for the district-wide policy to transition 6th grade to middle schools.
- Facilitated Western Educational Equity Assistance Center (WEEAC) civil rights training for middle school principals.
- Designed, implemented, coordinated, and oversaw multiple district regulations, including school choice, school uniforms, and high school math course requirements.
- As a principal, strategically managed multiple budgets totaling over half a million dollars focusing on providing optimal learning materials and supports for all students. Wrote and received numerous grants to secure additional academic resources, providing enriching outdoor field trips for students, and increase technology for students.

## STUDENTS & FAMILIES

- Led the operationalization of school choice options for WCSD families, simultaneously modernizing and streamlining the on-line registration process in schools.
- Collaborated with Office of Student and Family Supports to evaluate and monitor overall impact and effectiveness of Parent-Teacher Home Visits Program.
- Oversight of the Native Youth Community Grant to better support our Native American students, families, and tribal communities. WCSD was one of 40 school districts in the country awarded this 3.7-million-dollar grant.
- Mobilized ESSER grant funds to support children in transition by allocating resources directly to re-engagement specialists, attendance officers, and graduation advocates.
- Allocated American Relief Grant funds to support individual student tutoring at all WCSD schools throughout the pandemic.

- Secured Congressional Grant funds to expand Family Resource Centers services for students and families throughout the community.
- Collaborated closely with elementary school principals to design and implement a comprehensive full in-person learning model for our youngest students, ensuring continued educational engagement for the duration of the school year during times of global emergency.
- Led "Welcome Walks," an outreach program that visited every Anderson Elementary School household before the start of the school year, delivering school supplies to families sourced from local businesses. While also conducting over 120 home visits in the first year as principal.
- Significantly enhanced family engagement at Anderson Elementary School through the introduction of annual reading barbecues and science festivals designed for students and parents to participate together. This initiative contributed to 95% of parent responses indicating their children are receiving a good or excellent education based on the annual parent climate survey.
- Partnered directly with Truckee Meadows Community College to launch adult English Language classes, provided four nights a week to Anderson Elementary School families.
- Implemented quarterly student award assemblies to spotlight academic achievements, significantly boosting parent attendance through personalized outreach, including phone calls from teachers and parent involvement facilitators.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Regular engagement with the WCSD Board of Trustees, including coordination and presentation of monthly Quality of Education presentations to update the BOT and community on key district data metrics. As an area superintendent, presented monthly to help explain numerous aspects of distance learning models and provide information to make informed decisions.
- Advocated on behalf of WCSD students and staff at the State Legislator to support thoughtful, student-first funding, analysis, and application of NRS and NAC, including by providing multiple research and evaluation datasets needed to make informed decisions.
- Led ESSER community stakeholder meetings to provide updates on funding decisions and overall impact to student outcomes.
- Conducted numerous interviews with local (NPR, RGJ, Nevada Independent, etc.) and national media groups (New York Times) on topics ranging from graduation rates, chronic absenteeism, star ratings, and distance learning.
- Represented the Office of School Leadership in engagements with media partners to explain and answer questions related to WCSD's distance learning strategy and support for all schools and students during times of global emergency.
- Developed and presented information on improving family engagement in schools to the Washoe Education Foundation helping secure additional funding for WCSD; presented exemplary school family engagement efforts to the Nevada Department of Education based on the exceptional work of Anderson Elementary School.
- Selected to represent WCSD as a Mega Conference presenter for excellence and innovation in developing and sustaining a positive climate and high-performance school culture, along with innovative practices in family engagement, at Anderson Elementary School leading to improved academic outcomes.
- As a principal, established educational partnerships with Peppermill Resort and Spa, ITS Logistics, Reno Elks' Club, Solace Tree, and Sunflower Pre-School.
- Collaborated with local businesses and the community to install WCSD's first single point of entry, responding to staff and family concerns.
- Worked with various organizations to build kindness gardens, with each grade level planting and maintaining, used fresh herbs and vegetables to donate food to local assisted living and homeless shelters.

## PROFESSIONAL & COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS

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| Youth Travel Basketball, <i>Coach</i>  | 2014-Present |
| Nevada Department of Education/NAS Innovative Test Design, <i>Representative</i>                 | Present      |
| Nevada Department of Education Technical Advisory Group for School Accountability, <i>Member</i> | 2023-2024    |
| TMCC English Learner Courses for AES Parents, <i>Representative</i>                              | 2014-2017    |
| University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada Leads, <i>Principal Mentor</i>                                | 2014-2017    |
| WCSD PAQC Team to Redesign Purchasing Procedures, <i>Member</i>                                  | 2014-2017    |
| PAR Team to Improve Performance of Lower Performing Teachers, <i>Member</i>                      | 2009-2012    |
| WCSD SARB Committee to Improve Student Attendance, <i>Member</i>                                 | 2007         |
| WCSD Teacher Professional Growth Systems Committee, <i>Member</i>                                | 2006         |
| WCSD Middle School Basketball, <i>Coach</i>  | 2004-2006    |
| WCSD High School Softball, <i>Coach</i>  | 1997-1998    |

## EDUCATION & CERTIFICATIONS

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| University of Phoenix, <i>Reno, Nevada</i>                 | 2002    |
| Master's Degree in Educational Administration & Leadership |         |
| Wayne State University, <i>Detroit, Michigan</i>           | 1994    |
| Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education         |         |
| State of Nevada School Administrator, K-12 Certified       | Current |
| State of Nevada School Teaching, K-8 Certified             | Current |
| State of Nevada School Substitute Teaching, K-12 Certified | Current |

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS & AWARDS

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| Participant in Vistage Executive Leadership Training  | 2024 |
| Nevada Department of Education and Council of Great City Schools Recognition<br><i>Use of ESSER Grant Funding</i> | 2023 |
| Featured in New York Time's Article<br><i>"Pandemic Teacher Shortages"</i>  | 2021 |

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Nevada Department of Education Mega Conference Presenter<br><i>"Investments in Innovation with a Focus on School Culture and Climate"</i>                       | 2017         |
| Anderson Elementary School recognized by Nevada Department of Education<br><i>1 of 9 Shining Star Schools; Only WCSD school to receive recognition</i>          | 2016         |
| Washoe County School Elementary School Principal of the Year<br>Hosted Governor Sandoval and State Superintendent Erquiaga<br><i>Zoom Legislation in Action</i> | 2015<br>2012 |
| WCSD Inspiration Award for Taylor Elementary School<br><i>Exemplary Inclusive Practices for Special Education Students</i>                                      | 2011         |
| Principal at Taylor Elementary School<br><i>NSPF Five-Star School Three Consecutive Years</i>   | 2010-2012    |
| Presidential Who's Who in Education Nominee   | 2009         |
| Reno Gazette Journal's "Best in Education" Nominee  | 2003         |
| People to People Ambassador<br><i>Led 30 HS Students on European Trip, Visiting Six Countries in 21 days</i>  | 2003         |
| Washoe County Teacher's Association Distinguished Performance Award   | 1999         |
| Selected Best in Education by Reno Gazette Journal  | 1998         |
| Sally Mae National New Teacher of the Year Nominee  | 1995         |
| James Rodgers Elementary School New Teacher of the Year   | 1995         |