

Our Teaching Staff



Becca Batchelder

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool

Southview Elementary | School: 952-431-8370 | Voicemail: 651-683-6969 x84231
rebecca.batchelder@district196.org

Education: Unified Early Childhood Education degree from University of Minnesota – Duluth; M.Ed., Augustana University.

I love to practice and learn about “renegade rules for raising confident children” and implement Conscious Discipline in my classroom. My favorite children's book author is Mo Willems. I am a coffee lover, adventure seeker, wiener dog obsessed, foodie! In my down time I enjoy reading, exploring new places in Minnesota, being with family and friends, and just relaxing.



Becca Hancock

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—ECFE

Dakota Valley Learning Center | School: 952-388-1953 | Voicemail: 651-683-6969 x88125
rebecca.hancock@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Early Childhood, St. Norbert College; M.A. in Early Childhood Education, Concordia University.

I love working with ECFE children and families and have a special interest in early childhood language and literacy development. Outside of teaching, I am most often spending time with my two-year old daughter. I enjoy being with my family, traveling, reading, doing yoga and knitting.



Beth Votca Hersman

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool

Greenleaf Elementary | 952-431-8270 | beth.hersman@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Early Childhood Education, College of St. Benedict; M.A. in Education, Hamline University; Certified Cognitive Coach®.

I love working with our ECFE and 3's classes! Children's literacy and Conscious Discipline are two of my passions when it comes to teaching. This program has been a part of my life for 30 years, and I remember so many children and their families. Health and Fitness are very important to me. When I am not teaching, I am working out, reading and traveling. Being with my family and sharing special moments together brings much joy to my life. I also love spending time with our family dog, Percy. He is a rescue, and I know I will always need to have a dog as a part of the family.



Brenda Zirbel

Licensed Parenting Educator—ECFE

Dakota Valley Learning Center | Voicemail: 651-683-6969 x81978 | brenda.zirbel@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Family Studies and Consumer Sciences, San Diego State University; M.Ed., St. Mary's University – Winona; Certified Cognitive Coach®.

I enjoy supporting parents and students in various Connections Preschool classes throughout District 196. I also enjoy family time with my children and their spouses and my lovable grandchildren. We especially enjoy lake time during the summer when we play hard at boating, fishing, water skiing, tubing, bonfires, family games, great food and sharing lots of good times, laughs and memories together. I also enjoy traveling, entertaining family and friends, celebrating holidays and birthdays together. When it is 'my time,' I curl up with a good book or go for a walk.



Caren Breitenfeldt

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—ECFE

Dakota Valley Learning Center | Voicemail: 651-683-6969 x81906 | caren.breitenfeldt@district196.org

Education: B.S. in Family Life and Child Development, Minnesota State University – Mankato; M.S. in Educational Leadership.

I love working with children of all ages! The majority of my teaching time is spent working with children ages 10-36 months old. I also have a strong interest in special education and how to best serve children of all ages, stages and abilities. I love connecting with families to support them on their parenting journey. I have four children, two boys and two girls, that keep me busy. The experiences I've had raising my children make it easy to relate to other parents. My mom is definitely my hero! She raised two children all on her own. She taught me to be responsible, resourceful and independent. I love to travel to warm sunny beaches, photography, spending time with friends and Coke Zero.



Catie Anderson

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool and Family School
Cedar Valley Learning Center | 952-431-8327 | catherine.anderson@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Elementary Education with specialty in pre-primary, Minnesota State University – Mankato.

I taught Head Start for 10 years prior to joining District 196. I love the preschool ages. Their minds are little sponges and I love seeing how they grow over the course of a year. In my spare time I spend time with my family. We enjoy camping and kayaking in the summer and sledding and ice skating in the winter.



Heather Warweg

Licensed Parent Educator—Connections Preschool, ECFE and Family School
Dakota Valley Learning Center | 952-388-1957 | heather.warweg@district196.org

Education: B.S. in Child Psychology and Early Childhood Education, M.Ed. in Early Childhood Special Education, Parent Education Licensure, University of Minnesota.

I have been working in District 196 for 19 years as an early childhood special education teacher. I worked with young children with special needs and in a variety of capacities, but I found home visiting to be the most rewarding because it involved strong relationships with both parents and children. I went back to school to get my parent education licensure and have enjoyed the switch to working in early childhood family education. My husband and I have two girls and we enjoy reading together, playing games, family meals and being outdoors.



Jaci Tuin

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool
Pinewood Elementary | 651-683-6980 | jaci.tuin@district196.org

Education: B.S. in Special Education and Early Childhood Education, St. Cloud State University; M.Ed. In Elementary Education, University of Wisconsin – River Falls.

I have been working in District 196 since 1993. For the past 15 years, I have had the pleasure of working in Early Childhood Special Education and am excited to now be a Connections Preschool teacher. I believe that relationships matter and that by connecting with one another, we are able to learn and grow together. Four- and five-year old children bring so much excitement to the school day with their playfulness and curiosity. It is rewarding to see the accomplishments the children make in a school year. My husband and I have two adults sons. I enjoy any time my whole family is together, being up North at the lake or hunting shack, baking, and volunteering in my community of Hastings.



Jenise Redding

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool
Echo Park Elementary | Voicemail: 651-683-6969 x88307 | jenise.redding@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Early Childhood Education, University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

I love working with young children and their families. I have been teaching preschool for four years but have worked with young children for nine years. In my classroom, I love implementing new Conscious Discipline strategies and building relationships with my students. I believe that children learn best through hands-on exploration and play. When I'm not teaching, I enjoy spending time with friends and family and baking.



Jenna Ruble

Program Manager, Early Childhood Family Services
Dakota Valley Learning Center | 952-388-1955 | jenna.ruble@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Elementary Education and Early Childhood, University of Minnesota – Mankato; M.Ed. in Educational Leadership, Hamline University; PreK-12th grade Administrative Licensure program, University of Minnesota – Minneapolis.

I began my career in District 196 Early Childhood Family Education over 30 years ago, and after exploring teaching and learning through different perspectives for 15 years, I feel like I'm back home again. It's a privilege to guide and learn alongside this amazing 196 early childhood family with their passion and desire to enhance the journey of early learning and parenting for the children and families in our community. This journey is something I love being a part of every day! My values around relationships, joy and learning

extend to using every chance I have enjoying time with my family and friends. My four children, now including a wonderful daughter-in-law, are all adults and live close to us in River Falls, WI. We love to travel, camp, kayak, play games and cheer on the Vikings!



Jenny Kleppe

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool
Oak Ridge Elementary | School: 651-683-6970 | jenny.kleppe@district196.org

Education: B.S. in Human Development and Family Studies/Preschool Teaching, University of Wisconsin, Madison; M.Ed., University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

I have been teaching preschool since 2009. I started out teaching at Headstart in Wisconsin, where I went to undergrad (Go Badgers!). I returned home to the Cities to get my dual teaching licenses and masters in early childhood education and early childhood special education from the U of M. I am passionate about outdoor education and introducing young children to a life-long love of nature. I strive to connect my students to the natural world and engage them in learning through their senses, in all weather and in all seasons. My husband and I have two young children who keep us on our toes, and together we spend time in all kinds of outdoor adventures. We love exploring Minnesota State Parks and hope to someday visit all 66. We enjoy hiking, camping, skiing, playing games and cooking together.



Jocelyn McDonnell

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Family School and Connections Preschool
Dakota Valley Learning Center | 952-388-1974 | jocelyn.mcdonnell@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Social Work, Luther College; M.A. in Early Childhood Education, Grand Canyon University.

My whole life I've always found ways to work with young children and their families. I love their energy and love for learning. They learn so much by experiencing new things through play. I have taught in early childhood for 10 years in different settings and am so glad to be working in District 196. I also teach dance lessons to preschoolers and toddlers at a local family dance studio. Outside of school, I enjoy spending time outside with my husband during all of the Minnesota seasons. In the winter we love to downhill ski and in the summer we love relaxing and watching baseball. We live in the area and love playing with our dog, Luna.



Karen Zimmerman

Licensed Parenting Educator—ECFE and Connections Preschool
Dakota Valley Learning Center | 952-388-1927 | karen.zimmerman@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Child Development Family Life, University of Wisconsin – Stout; M.Ed., University of Minnesota; Certified Cognitive coach, Infant Toddler Specialist, Harris Center at the University of Minnesota.

On my first day working in an ECFE program over 35 years ago, I was asked what I thought of working in ECFE. "I could do this job all my life" was my response. Since then, I have been a parent educator and early childhood teacher with fifteen of those years right here in District 196. I have also taught graduate classes at Hamline University and other colleges. This program is built on family strengths, education and growth through play and learning. With each family I meet, we learn together and strengthen connections that can last a lifetime. All are welcome here. My son and daughter are graduates of District 196 and have found their paths. When they come home, I get to "momilize," love and support them. I love reading, connecting with friends and family, being in the Montana mountains or BWCA, traveling and writing.



Kari Suzuki

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool
Echo Park Elementary School | 952-431-8390 | kari.suzuki@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Early Childhood Education, University of Minnesota – Duluth; M.A. in Educational Leadership, Concordia University.

I started teaching in the field of early childhood in 2005 and many of those years have been in District 196. As an early childhood educator, I believe that learning is meant to be a fun, engaging experience. It is my job to make both the student and the parent have a wonderful first experience in District 196. My passion lies with incorporating music and movement into our day as much as possible. I enjoy creating many different learning centers for my students to actively learn and discover. Relationship building is incredibly important when working with 4-5 year olds and their families. As a parent myself, I am aware of how beneficial consistent communication between parents and teachers can be. My husband (who also teaches) and I have

two young daughters who keep us very busy! Whenever possible, I enjoy attending ECFE classes with my own children to continue my love of learning and parenting. We love to be outdoors and spend most of our time at our family cabin in St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin. We enjoy boating, fishing, swimming and 4-wheeling in our free time. In the summers, you can find us at fairs and festivals selling Hawaiian Style Shave Ice. Aloha.



Kate Kluegel

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool and ECFE
Dakota Valley Learning Center | 952-388-1975 | kate.kluegel@district196.org

Education: B.S. in Elementary Education with a concentration in early childhood, minor in music, Minnesota State University – Moorhead.

Three reasons why I have the best job in the world: I get to experience things for the first time with a group of eager people who are full of curiosity, wonder and joy. There is guaranteed drama and humor every day. And I learn something new from children, their families and my colleagues every day. When I'm not teaching, I enjoy watching HGTV, belonging to a book club and a card-playing group, and playing my clarinet at church. My husband, Scott, and I love to check out places featured on "Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives" or similar kinds of places. We love any gathering that includes our four adult children, son-in-law and granddaughter. Being grandparents and playing with our adorable toddler granddaughter is a most treasured hobby!



Kathy Adams

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool
East Lake Elementary School | kathy.adams@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Early Childhood, College of St. Benedict; M.A. in Education, St. Mary's University.

I love working with families! All of the programs I work in have opportunities for families to learn and grow together. I am a new grandma to four beautiful girls, Natalie, Amelia and Molly and Emmy. That is my new favorite hobby. My husband and I live in Apple Valley with our two Shih-Tzus, Bella and Mia. When I am not playing with or reading to my granddaughters, I enjoy spending time with my children, Chris and Katie, and their spouses, Dawn and Nick, and spending time with my husband, Kevin. I am in a book club and a golf league; I'm not a good bowler but always have a wonderful time. I love to go for walks, play board games, travel, go to movies, and read books. I have many wonderful friends and neighbors and I love getting together with them.



Katie Hait

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool and ECFE
Dakota Valley Learning Center | 952-388-1968 | katie.hait@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Early Childhood Education, University of Northwestern.

"The future of the world is in my classroom today." We all need to find spaces for love and peace. It is such a joy for me to bring that to young children and families so that we can spread happiness in our world. This is my fifth year of teaching, and besides helping children learn, I have also loved learning about various curriculum models, technology to enhance learning, mental health and social emotional development. At home, you will find me laughing with my hilarious husband, Ben, and walking in the fresh air with our dog, Frankie. We have amazing friends in the area and beloved family to visit in Wisconsin.



Kay Sikich

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool
Oak Ridge Elementary School | School: 651-683-6970 | kay.sikich@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Early Childhood Education, St. Cloud State University; M.A. in Teaching and Learning, St. Mary's University. Currently working on Certificate in Early Childhood Leadership through the Saul Zaentz Early Education Initiative at Harvard Graduate School of Education.

I have taught in Early Childhood Family Education and preschool for 26 years. I enjoy teaching preschoolers through play, in an environment where each child can learn at their highest level, through caring, communicating, collaborating and choosing their own learning. My classroom reflects the wonderings, ideas and passions of my students. I believe in being a play advocate for young children because play isn't a luxury, it's a necessity. I love spending time with my two sons and I also enjoy reading, gardening, scrapbooking, biking, researching (especially about play), and taking classes to further my learning.



Kelly Olson

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool
Westview Elementary School | 952-431-8380 | Voicemail: 651-683-6969 x92444 | kelly.olson@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Psychology with a minor in Early Childhood Education, St. Cloud State University; M.A. in Education, St. Mary's University.

I love teaching in our four year old Connections Preschool program. The children and their families I am blessed to work with have enriched my life in many ways. I believe parents are their child's first and most important teacher. I believe in having a strong and open communication process with the families.

Watching children learn through exploration, play and modeling is a gift. I live in Rosemount with my

husband, my two adult children and our dog Tanner. We love Rosemount. It has a small town feel with a huge heart! My personal interests include running, biking, core workouts, walking my dog, reading and hanging out with my family and friends.



Kristi Hanson

Licensed Parenting Educator—ECFE; Program Lead
Dakota Valley Learning Center | 952-388-1972 | kristi.hanson@district196.org

Education: M.Ed. in Family Education, University of Minnesota; Certified Positive Discipline® Parent Educator; Certified Cognitive Coach®.

I am particularly interested in Infants and Toddlers. Their developing personalities draw me in. It's a joy to be involved with our Family School program integrating English Learning, Preschool and Parenting Education. I'm amazed daily by the commitment and caring our staff and parents have for the children of our communities in District 196. I love to be outside walking, hiking, gardening, sitting on the deck with a good book or cooking with my husband and three adult children. I'm a complete Keith Urban fanatic and met him in 2015. I once saw three concerts in the span of one month.



Laura Haag

Licensed Parenting Educator—Connections Preschool and ECFE
Dakota Valley Learning Center | 952-388-1997 | laura.haag@district196.org

Education: M.A. in Parent and Family Education, University of Minnesota.

This is my first year teaching and I am thrilled to be here. My own children are what inspired me to go into this field. I had taken ECFE classes with both of my children and found my zen in the classes relating to other families in the same stage in life. I believe that parents are their children's first educators. Parenting is one of the hardest, yet rewarding, jobs one can have. My goal is to meet parents and children where they are and to provide a welcoming environment where support, acceptance, community and learning can happen. It is truly an honor to serve all the amazing families in District 196. My husband and I live in Woodbury and

have two children—a daughter (9) and a son (6). In my free time, I enjoy going for walks, traveling, watching my kids' soccer games, playing board games and spending time with family and friends.



Lisa Erbes

Licensed Parenting Educator—ECFE and Connections Preschool
Dakota Valley Learning Center | Phone: 952-388-1953 | Voicemail: 651-683-6969 x84905 | lisa.erbes@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Psychology, University of New Mexico; M.Ed. in Parent and Family Education, University of Minnesota; Lamaze Certified Childbirth Educator; ALPP Certified Lactation Counselor; DONA Certified Birth Doula.

I have been educating families in hospital, clinic, agency, home-based and community education classes on childbirth, infant/toddler parenting and breastfeeding since 2005. I am the mother of two teen daughters and have been married to my college sweetheart for nearly 25 years. I love to read, crochet, knit, spend time with family and travel. My areas of teaching interest include infant attachment, newborn parenting, breastfeeding, adopted infant parenting and infant/toddler sleep. It is my goal that every parent I teach feel respected, nurtured, joyful and confident.



Libby Boyd

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool
Echo Park and Parkview Elementary | libby.boyd@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Secondary Education, M.A. in Early Childhood Education, Certification of Montessori Education, St. Catherine University.

I spent eight years teaching preschool and kindergarten in a Montessori classroom in St. Paul Public Schools. I love working with and sparking the curiosity of young children and am grateful for the daily interactions I get to experience with my students and their families. I live in Apple Valley with my husband, John, and my high-school daughter, Leah. We love to walk, play with our dog (Waverly), read good books, spend time outside and watch Netflix.



Megan Quiggle

Licensed Early Childhood Educator and Parent Educator—Connections Preschool and ECFE
Dakota Valley Learning Center | 952-388-1976 | megan.quiggle@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Family and Child Development, Bethel University; M.A. in Social Work, University of St. Thomas.

I have been teaching early childhood for 28 years and I can't imagine doing anything else! I love the energy and wonder that children bring to the classroom, and I hope to meet that energy and wonder with a variety of experiences for them to play and learn through. My goal as the "lead off hitter" on each child's educational team is to help them LOVE school. When children see themselves as successful and in a place that values them, they will push through the hard things until they can do them. My husband and I have six

children between us and have one of the sweetest granddaughters around. When I'm not at work, you can find me busy cheering on the Quiggle sports dynasty in football, soccer, basketball and whatever other sports for which they can talk me into signing them up; baking; and trying to kick the clutter at home.



Rachel Udelhoven

Licensed Early Childhood Teacher—Connections Preschool Fours
Northview Elementary | 651-683-6820 | rachel.udelhoven@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Early Childhood Education, University of Wisconsin – Stout.

I love to read and love inspiring a love of reading in my young learners through children's literature. In my spare time I love to go up to my family's cabin! I love to swim, boat and read a good book on the dock. I also enjoy taking my dog for walks around the many area lakes. The children I teach inspire me everyday to be the best teacher I can be. There is nothing better than seeing the excitement that young learners have towards learning!



Shelly Doran

Licensed Parent Educator—ECFE and Connections Preschool
Dakota Valley Learning Center | 952-388-1969 | michelle.doran@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Early Childhood and Family Education, Bethel University.

I have been working with children and families for 25 years. I truly believe in meeting children where they are. I enjoy getting to know each individual family and feel like I learn something new from each experience. ☞ My husband and I live in Edina and have two adult children. My son and his wife live in St. Louis Park, and my daughter is in college at the University of North Dakota. In my free time, I enjoy walking my black lab, Mikey, around the lake; heading to the cabin with friends and family to fish, boat and bonfire; and our family enjoys downhill skiing together.



Susan Elsass

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool and ECCE
Dakota Valley Learning Center | 952-388-1970 | susan.elsass@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Elementary Education, University of St. Thomas; M.A. in Teaching and Learning, St. Mary's University.

I love getting to know the children in my classes and finding out what their interests are. It's fun to hear about what they're thinking and wondering and to have those types of conversations. What I like best about being a teacher is playing and exploring alongside my students. In my free time, I enjoy being outside in all types of weather. My favorite activities are bicycling, playing tennis, kayaking, hiking, cross-country skiing and yoga. Also, I love food! I like to cook and bake, but I wish someone would clean up my mess!

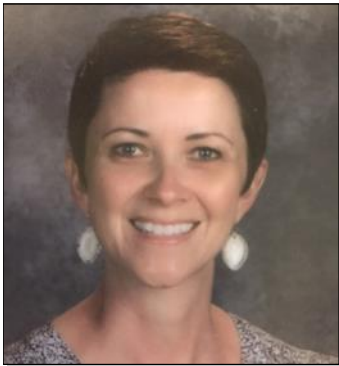


Susan Erstad

Licensed Parenting Educator—Connections Preschool, ECCE and Family School
Dakota Valley Learning Center and Cedar Valley Learning Center | 952-388-1971 | susan.erstad@district196.org

Education: B.S. in Family and Consumer Science, South Dakota State University; M.Ed. In Teaching and Learning, St. Mary's University.

I am fortunate to work with parents and children of all ages, birth through third grade. Babies amaze me with their wonder for the world! I love helping parents connect with each other and find support as they navigate the journey of parenthood. I also enjoy teaching "Parenting the Love and Logic Way" and have been instrumental in growing our ECCE 2.0 classes. In my spare time, I like to garden and watch HGTV remodeling shows. Decorating is how I like to channel my creativity.



Toni Aalberg

Licensed Early Childhood Educator—Connections Preschool and ECCE
Highland Elementary | 952-423-7595 | toni.aalberg@district196.org

Education: B.A. in Early Childhood, University of Wisconsin – Stout.

I love teaching preschool. I learn something new from my students every day. In my spare time, I enjoy spending time with my family and traveling. I am inspired by people being kind and doing good deeds. It makes me want to do better and be better also. My mom is my hero.