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2024 – 2025 Staff Profiles



Laura Berlin is a Special Education Instructor. Laura has Bachelor's degrees in Theater and Dance, as well as Education. Her Master's degree is in Adult Education and Training. She also holds National Board Certification in English Education. Laura is a certified yoga instructor and enjoys regular yoga practice. She spends her time outside of school enjoying family, dogs, hiking, yoga and making jewelry.



Lynsey Bohannon is an English and drama instructor. Lynsey holds a Master of Arts in Teaching. She has taught humanities courses for 14 years in a secondary setting. Lynsey's interests include hiking, identifying native plants and creating natural products. She also enjoys reading anything that sparks her interest.



Marie Booth is a Science Instructor, MESA Advisor and the FRC Robotics coach. Marie graduated from the University of New Mexico with a degree in Secondary Science Education. She holds a Master's in Education from Eastern New Mexico University. While teaching at EMHS, she earned the APS Digital Innovator Badge, became a Level II Google Educator Apple Certified Teacher and received the 2022 AFRL STEM My HS Teacher of the Year Award. She is originally from El Paso, Texas, and lives in Edgewood with her husband, five girls, their two dogs and cat. She enjoys geeking out on all things science and fitness, being outdoors with her family and reading (currently working on book 6 of the 13 book *Wheel of Time* series).



Laurie Edeal Boyce is a Math Instructor. She retired in 2023 after 29 years of teaching. After a year of self-care and reflection, she felt compelled to work with young people again. When she is not nurturing her passion for teaching math, she spends time with her hubby Brad, her teenage daughter Mary, and her dog Toby. She loves a good book, time with friends and family, travel, and has recently immersed herself in the art of storytelling. She was born and raised here in New Mexico and went to UNM.



Gwen Brown is the Operations Manager. She graduated from the University of Iowa and has made her home in the East Mountains for almost 20 years with her family. Gwen is a parent to two EMHS graduates. She enjoys spending time with family and friends as well as hiking, traveling, camping, cooking and exploring new projects/interests.



Micheala Burch is an English and History Instructor. She graduated from the University of New Mexico with her Bachelor's degree in secondary education with a focus in English Language Arts. Micheala has experience teaching eighth through twelfth grade English and experience in building and teaching rhetoric curriculum. She lives in the East Mountains and enjoys hiking, writing stories and books and experiencing the world through reading books. She has self-published two of her own novels and hopes to continue writing and teaching students to read and write as well.



Sondra Burch is a Math Intern Instructor and works primarily with students in math. Sondra has experience working in education as a teacher and tutor with diverse students. She loves helping them grasp difficult math concepts. Sondra's hobbies include playing the piano, singing, spending time with her family, camping and other outdoor activities.



Trudy Candalaria is a Speech-Language Pathologist. She worked at EMHS the first three years it was open and returned over 10 years ago. She works at another charter school and has her own small practice utilizing horses. She loves kids, hiking, horses, reading, puns and singing – leading worship at church once a month, as well as singing for weddings and funerals. Trudy loves the staff at EMHS and how they work so well together to create the best possible learning environment for all students.



Krysta Cano is the Administrative Assistant in the Front Office. She is a mother of five amazing children and is married to her high school sweetheart. She loves singing, watching period drama movies and being with her family.



Cynthia Daly is an English Instructor. Cynthia is originally an Ozarkian from Springfield, Missouri, but she has lived in New Mexico for over 20 years, via Kansas, Georgia and Colorado. She earned her BA from Missouri State University and her MA in English from the University of Kansas. Her past vocations include teaching English, raising alpacas and dairy goats, raising kids, watching migrating hawks and teaching elementary art. She teaches 10th grade English and helps sponsor the English Expo club.



Shayna Davidson is the French Instructor. She holds a BA in French and Intercultural Communication, as well as an MA in French Language & Literature from the University of New Mexico. Shayna previously taught English to primary school students in Avignon, France before joining EMHS. She is passionate about language learning as a door to global citizenship and cultural awareness. In her free time, she loves to bake, write, travel and do crossword puzzles.



Art Famiglietta is the Security Guard. He is the owner of AJF Enterprises, Inc. Security Services. He has been established in business for 19 years and has multiple contracts with multiple schools across the state of New Mexico. He currently employs 55 full-time employees and about 100 event staff. He has four daughters, a stepson and six grandkids and loves spending time with his family. Art enjoys interacting with the students and staff at East Mountain High School.



Nicole Fichtner is a Mathematics Instructor. She attended the Missouri University of Science and Technology where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Aerospace Engineering. Nicole embarked on her career in education through the NMPED Alternative Licensure Program and taught math and science at Roosevelt Middle School for six years before joining the EMHS team last year. Originally from rural Arkansas, Nicole moved to New Mexico in 2006 and soon knew this would be her forever home. She met her husband Garrett here and together they have two kids, Finn and Bertrand. In her spare time, she enjoys going to concerts, playing board games, reading and spending time with her family and their four dogs.



Hannah Flake is the Director of Special Education. Hannah has a BAFA in Fine Arts, with a focus in photography, from UNM, and an MAT in Special Education. She is a coach of the East Mountain Speech and Debate Team and was awarded the 2020 best new district chair from the National Speech & Debate Association. Before teaching at EMHS, Hannah was the lead scenic painter at Musical Theatre Southwest and taught special education in Louisiana. She enjoys visiting family in the UK, baking, logic puzzles and reading, but spends most of her time chasing around her five-year-old or two-year-old. She and her family live in Cedar Crest.



Kasi Giovenco is a Physical Education Instructor, the Athletic Director and Head Volleyball Coach for the past 10 years at EMHS. Kasi holds a BS in Physical Education and is certified in Special Education, Health and Reading Intervention from Towson University in Baltimore, Maryland. Before coming to East Mountain, Kasi taught in the Moriarty Edgewood School District in the Severe and Profound classroom at Route 66 Elementary, as well as at MAS Charter School in Albuquerque as their PE teacher, Athletics Director and Reading Intervention teacher. She currently lives in Edgewood with her husband, Chris, and their two kiddos Gibson, 5, and Raegan, 4. In her spare time, Kasi loves going to concerts, playing sports and traveling back home to the East Coast to visit her family.



Fabian Harada is part of our Custodial Staff. He grew up in Albuquerque and makes his home with his wife in Edgewood. He has been at East Mountain for three years and loves it out here. Some of his favorite things are playing video games, helping others and spending time with his family.



Carmen Healy is an English and Creative Writing Instructor. Carmen holds a BA in English Literature from Oregon State University and an MA in English Language and Literature with a Certificate in Women's Studies from the University of New Mexico. Carmen taught college composition courses at UNM and CNM before joining the faculty at EMHS. Her interests include anything Victorian, poetry, reading as many books as possible while drinking delicious tea, fiction writing, cross stitching and hiking. She loves reading and discussing books with young people as well as helping students develop their creative writing craft.



Sierra Hostetler is a Spanish Instructor and the school's English Language Learner Coordinator. She studied Spanish at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, and at La Universidad Veracruzana in Xalapa, Mexico. She has her MA in Language, Literacy and Sociocultural Studies from the University of New Mexico. International travel has been an important part of her Spanish studies, including stays in Mexico, Costa Rica, Spain and Peru. Many EMHS students know some Spanish from their families, living in New Mexico, or traveling themselves, and Señora Hache loves learning from them.



Michael Jamison is a Humanities Instructor. Michael lives in an historic neighborhood in downtown Albuquerque. He holds a BA in History and Political Science from Bloomsburg University in Pennsylvania and an MAT in History from Rutgers University in New Jersey. His interests include listening to music, going to festivals/concerts; travel – like not too remote camping and discovering new places; cooking nutritious, locally-produced meals; environmental awareness – sustainability issues; bicycling – mountain and road; and reading – mostly non-fiction.



Tucker Janes is an Instructor of Freshman Seminar, Senior Seminar, Psychology and Special Education, and when they will let him, ultimate frisbee. He has a BA in Psychology and Sociology from Wesleyan University and a MEd. in Holistic Education from Vermont College. He has taught for over 20 years in Massachusetts, Maine, Arizona and New Mexico, working with a range of students in a range of settings. His interests include houseplants, mediocre carpentry and pretty much anything you are excited to tell him about. He is accidentally collecting fish tanks, it appears.



Adam James Jones is a Humanities Instructor. He was born in Denver and raised in South Park, Colorado. He received a BA from the University of Northern Colorado and an MA from Western New Mexico University. He is the author of the novels *The Vendetta of Felipe Espinosa* (2014 Gale-Cengage) and *Prisoner's Cinema* (2021 Black Rose Writing). His short fiction and essays have appeared in numerous publications, among them *Wild West*, *Weber*, and *Backpacker Magazine*. Adam is also a screenwriter, and in spring 2019 production wrapped on his horror film *Hatchlings*. In 2023 he was awarded the George R.R. Martin Screenwriting Grant for his television pilot, *American Witch*. He's thrilled to join the Humanities department at EMHS after nine years of teaching at the elementary and middle school levels. While not writing about himself in the third person, Adam enjoys playing metal guitar, hunting, snowboarding, basketball and spending time with his family. For more: www.adamjamesjones.com



David King is part of our Custodial Staff. His family was one of the first homesteaders in the town of Edgewood and his grandfather was the first Judge in Edgewood. He enjoys grilling, camping, 4-wheeling and spending time with his girlfriend and children.



Elizabeth Kuehne is a writer and teacher who has taught at EMHS for two decades! She aspires to write in a variety of genres, particularly crime fiction, though for now her mind is consumed with ways to encourage the growth of young writers and readers. She has published in *Adjunct Nation* and writes technical copy on the side. Elizabeth has three books published, *Notes to People*, a collection of reflections on human interactions that begin in person and complete themselves in her imagination, a HEA romance novel, *Fires at Christmas*, and *Resale Empire*, a nonfiction text on the process of resale. Her next book, *Stinkbug*, is a crime novel that is clearly defining her as a “pantser” and takes more twists and turns than she can keep up with. Unfortunately, she’s also been writing it for far too long and needs to finish it. Now.



Laurel LeGate is a 9th grade Social Studies teacher and also teaches a section of 12th grade Government. Laurel has had a pretty interesting career in the field of education over the past 20+ years. She is proud of the fact that she has worked with babies and toddlers, elementary students, middle school and high school students and seasoned fellow teachers at CNM. She’s literally taught people of all ages. She grew up in Salt Lake City, but has lived in Canada, Washington, Oregon, France, Argentina and even Russia, briefly. And somehow, she also managed, while she was doing all that, to meet her super cool husband, Greg, and to become a mom to two incredible daughters, Greta and Hazel. Laurel loves English and history and art a lot, but really education is her favorite subject; she loves being a teacher and couldn’t imagine doing anything else.



Tamara Marcelain is the College & Career Readiness Counselor and is responsible for the academic and college guidance for all students. She also manages the school’s dual credit program. Tamara earned her MA from the University of New Mexico in Counseling. Before joining EMHS in 2019, she was a School Counselor at NM Connections Academy, Rio Rancho HS and Hogares/APS Mental Health in the Schools. Tamara is also a Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselor and has worked at The Life Change Institute since 2013. Tamara has a daughter who lives in Scottsdale, a son who graduated from EMHS and is attending Montana State University, a son in 10th grade and a son in 8th grade. She has lived in the East Mountains for 20 years and has also lived in Alaska, Maryland, Illinois, Texas and Kenya. Her interests include spending time with family and friends over leisurely meals, going to her kids’ sporting events, working out, playing board games and traveling (or watching Rick Steves and dreaming of traveling).



Delina McKnight is an Administrative Assistant working with the Student Guidance Center. She assists with many administrative functions of the school, including helping with testing and technology inventory. She was in the escrow/title business for over 18 years and is happy to be part of the EMHS staff for the past ten years. Delina and her husband have two daughters and have been residing in the East Mountains since 1984. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her grandchildren.



Shyann McKnight is an Educational Assistant and Health Assistant. Before coming to EMHS she worked at Estancia Valley Classical Academy in Edgewood as an Educational Assistant and Health Assistant. She graduated from Moriarty High School in 2011 and attended Central New Mexico Community College to learn about early care/child development. She has also been a caregiver for childcare and individuals with disabilities. She enjoys spending time with her two-year-old son and loves to cook.



Amanda Forkasdi Millea is the Senior Director of Guidance and Compliance and mom of an EMHS freshman and junior. She works in the Student Guidance Center and serves as the testing coordinator and database manager for PowerSchool and Naviance. She also organizes the Lottery and the enrollment and registration of new and returning students. Before becoming the Assistant Principal, Amanda was the Academic Dean and a Math Instructor at EMHS. She also taught College Success, a dual credit in the high school course through Central New Mexico Community College. She taught math at Roosevelt Middle School for four years before joining the EMHS staff in 2001 (during the school's second year). She is currently the staff member who has been at EMHS the longest! Amanda holds a BS in Elementary Education with a minor in Math and an MA in Secondary Education, both from the University of New Mexico. Her interests include yoga, traveling, camping, hunting, reading, watching Hallmark movies and spending time with her husband, Jeff, and sons, Miller and Sullivan.



Margi Miranda is the Principal. She grew up in Las Cruces, NM and proudly received her bachelor's degree from the University of New Mexico in history and English. She earned an MA in Secondary Education from National Louis University in Chicago, IL where she taught high school English on the south and west sides of the city. Margi earned a second Master's in Educational Leadership from Teachers College at Columbia University in 2015, and became an assistant principal at a math and science-focused high school in Brooklyn, New York. Margi is thrilled to be at East Mountain High School and to serve the students and staff here. In her free time, Margi likes to cook with friends, read and explore new places.



Stephen Morris is an Instructor of Integrated Physics and Chemistry (IPC), Biology and Wildlife Management. Born and raised in Albuquerque, Stephen is a published scientist with a BS in Environmental and Organismic Biology from Fort Lewis College in Durango, CO, and an MA in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Education from Adams State University in Alamosa, CO. He was working as a wildlife biologist in the Four Corners area and was privileged to study birds, bats, rodents, plants and carnivores, including multiple endangered species in his previous career. He taught science for seven years in Ignacio, CO, before deciding to return home. Stephen relies on strong relationships with his students in order to push them onto a path of success created by resilience and self-reliance. His hobbies are fishing, backpacking, golf, video games and spending time with his wife and dogs.



Nicole Naylor is a Spanish Instructor and the Languages Department Chair. She holds a BA in Secondary Education/Spanish from the University of Nevada, Reno. Her interests include golf, scrapbooking, gardening, crossword and other word puzzles, spending time with friends and family and watching movies. She and her family live in the East Mountains with their three kids, one of whom is an EMHS graduate and attends UA Alabama. Nicole enjoys the small class sizes at EMHS as well as the sense of community. She has been teaching at EMHS since 2003. She taught middle school in Nevada before coming to EMHS and has always been a Spanish teacher. She became a teacher straight out of college and loves to share Spanish and the Spanish speaking culture with her students.



Charlotte Nee is the Registrar and the School Librarian. She received her BA in Sociology from the University of New Mexico. Charlotte is a native New Mexican with family roots in Curry County dating back to the 1900's. She has been a devoted East Mountain High School parent for many years and she has two children who are EMHS graduates – Adelynn ('15) and Kellen ('19). She lives in the East Mountains with her husband, David, and she enjoys traveling, reading and spending time with her family.



Atalie Nelson is a Special Education Instructor, SAGA club sponsor and assistant Speech and Debate coach. Atalie graduated from New Mexico State University with a Bachelor's of Science in Counseling and Community Psychology. She is a graduate of East Mountain High School, Class of 2018. She enjoys cooking, reading and geeking out about musical theater.



Colton Oord is the Health and Physical Education Instructor, as well as the Head Boys Soccer Coach. Colton holds his BS in Exercise Science and an MA in Curriculum Development and Assessments Outcomes. Originally from Washington State, Colton spent time in Kansas and Ohio while playing soccer and studying before making it to New Mexico. Colton currently plays soccer with the local arena soccer team: New Mexico Runners. In his free time, Colton enjoys traveling, hiking, camping, snowboarding, playing board games and spending time with his dog, Rainier.



Bird Podzemny is the Director of Student Success and a Licensed Mental Health Counselor. Bird holds a BA in Communications and an MA in Counseling, both from the University of New Mexico. Bird works closely with families and students; she is committed to working with students to help them succeed – not just academically, but in their life as they become more mature and independent. Bird and her husband, Doug, have four amazing children: Dominic, Chase, Cole and Ava - who all graduated from EMHS.



Adelynn Rizvi is the Director of Development. She is also a proud alumna of EMHS. Before returning to EMHS, she explored countries and languages, earning her two bachelor's degrees in International Studies and French from the University of New Mexico. Adelynn also holds an MA in Communication from Arizona State University. Her love of organization, communication, community engagement and adventure has brought her back to the East Mountains to help with the fundraising and development of our unique school.



Pam Rothe is the School Nurse. She is available to assist students, staff and families with any health needs or concerns that may arise during the school day. She comes to the East Mountain community from the Denver area after serving almost 20 years in school nursing. She has her BS in Nursing and has been a Nationally Certified School Nurse. She and her husband have enjoyed the East Mountain life, hiking and exploring the state and its amazing culture. Their two children and two grandchildren continue to reside in Colorado.



Marisa Salazar is an Anatomy and Physiology and Environmental Science Instructor. Having grown up a third-generation East Mountainer, Marisa relishes returning to her community to share her passion for science and all things 'great and small.' She holds a BA in Earth and Planetary Sciences and an MA in Instructional Leadership and Curriculum Design. When not working, Marisa can be found with her partner-in-crime, Jude, at their new home in the North Valley where they watch the neighborhood Great Horned Owls, a pair of roadrunners, their three babies and Spadefoot toads galore. When they are not remodeling, Jude and Marisa may be shaking a tail-feather, camping or dreaming of far-away adventures when travel is possible.



Dr. Melanie Sanchez-Dinwiddie is a Mathematics and Science Instructor. She earned her BS in Biology at New Mexico State University. At NMSU she studied the symbiotic relationship between squid and bacteria. She was fascinated to be studying a marine ecosystem in the desert landscape of Las Cruces, NM. Following NMSU, she attended The UNM Health Sciences Center for graduate school where she earned a PhD in Biomedical Sciences. There Dr. Sanchez studied the murine (mouse) pulmonary immune response to a fungal infection. Upon graduation she entered education and has spent the previous 17 years at the UNM-Valencia Campus. Dr. Sanchez is passionate about learning and thinking and is thrilled to be at EMHS! Outside of school, she enjoys supporting her children Rilee, Jenna and Diego in their pursuits, spending time with her husband Darrell, gym time, hiking and camping.



Stephanie Schroeder has been working at EMHS since 2014 after floating around, somewhat directionless, for the better part of her twenties. She received a BA in Psychology from UNM in 2009 but soon realized there wasn't much work for a lowly psych major. Unsure of what to do, she began coaching cheerleading at her alma mater and realized she had a knack for working with young people. She returned to UNM in 2012 for education and luckily landed a job at EMHS. She teaches world history and adores being a part of the Social Studies Department. She graduated with an MA in History from ASU in 2021; you can check out her graduate work here: [http://tinyurl.com/HistCapstone2021!](http://tinyurl.com/HistCapstone2021) When not geeking out about the past, she's an avid puzzler and paper quiller and a sometimes baker and cook. She loves spending time with her husband, Eric, and their new baby and two precious Chihuahuas, Theo & Zuul the Gatekeeper ("Z" for short!).



Jesse Schwebach grew up on a dirt farm in the Estancia Valley and graduated from Moriarty High School in 2002. As a high school student, he participated in theater, mock trial and a (nationally-ranked top ten!) We the People team. In college, he majored in Philosophy and History and, after stints as a bartender and a barista for a few months, decided to get his MA in Philosophy. Early on in grad school, he began searching for a way to bring the joy of thinking and discussing big ideas to young people and now teaches courses in government, economics and philosophy. He also co-sponsors the Youth and Government chapter at EMHS. In his free time, he enjoys gardening, cooking (with a special emphasis on fermentation and bread) and spending time with his lovely wife and two children.



Wanda Sena is an Educational Assistant. She has been an Educational Assistant for 28 years and has lived in Moriarty for 30 years. She worked at Moriarty Middle School for four years, at Moriarty High School for six years and has been at East Mountain High School for 18 years. She enjoys working with students and working in different subjects. She also enjoys her drive from Moriarty to the East Mountains each day. Spending time with her 9 year old grandson is a favorite pastime.



Ireland Shea is an Educational Assistant. She was born in California and moved to New Mexico when she was a little girl. Ireland has always had a passion for helping others and is working towards a career in social work. She has worked as a case manager for the homeless. She truly enjoyed the happiness she was able to bring to them, whether it was a shoulder to cry on, someone to talk to, or simply helping them work towards leaving the shelter. When she is out of work mode, she is spending time with family and friends, hitting the gym, living life outdoors and dancing.



Amanda Simmons is a Science Instructor and Freshman Seminar teacher. She is originally from Edgewood and is a proud East Mountain High School alumna, Class of 2013. Amanda graduated from the University of New Mexico with a degree in Elementary Education, after which she traveled and lived abroad in South America, New Zealand and Canada. She taught Middle School STEAM at Alice King Community Charter School before returning to EMHS. She just bought a home in Cedar Crest that she shares with her cuddly cat, Alley.



Trey Smith is the Executive Director of EMHS. Mr. Smith is a longtime employee of the school, having served in a wide variety of positions for the past 18 years. In addition to teaching, Mr. Smith founded the school's Speech and Debate program and served as the Foundation's Executive Director. Mr. Smith holds a license in Education Administration, as well as teaching licenses for English, Social Studies and Gifted Education. He received his BA in English and Philosophy, his MA in Public Administration from the University of New Mexico, and is currently a doctoral student in Education Leadership through Arizona State University. Trey is humbled by the responsibility of leading one of the nation's top public secondary schools and is grateful to work with the best colleagues every day. Trey enjoys living just 5 minutes away from the school and traveling the country with his 4 year old son, Xavier, and wife of seventeen years, Cristin.



Lee Theobald, originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, has been an art educator for 29 years. She has worked with people from preschool to the elderly. Lee earned her BA in Art Education from the University of Cincinnati and her elementary teaching license from Fort Lewis College. Her personal art centers around landscape painting and jewelry making. Lee loves spending time with her husband, Greg, and her son, Jackson, who is an EMHS graduate. Lee loves to travel and go on adventures and is an active birder. She can often be found skiing on the slopes of the New Mexico and Colorado mountains. Lee is also an active member of the National Ski Patrol, serving Sandia Peak Ski Area. She loves teaching art to the students at East Mountain High School.



Jennifer Webb is a Mathematics Instructor with one fabulous year of experience at the high school level and 17 years teaching middle school Math and Science. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics, Master's in Curriculum and Instruction and National Board Certification. After growing up in the Democratic Republic of Congo, she spent her high school years in Virginia and then moved to New Mexico to attend ENMU and UNM. She fell in love with the beautiful skies and her husband, Kris. They settled in Edgewood and have two sons, 8th and 10th grade. Jennifer is passionate about teaching Math, furthering her own knowledge and expertise and being part of the education community.



Brandy Wood is originally from Las Cruces and attended New Mexico State University where she earned her BA and MA degrees in Social Work, in addition to obtaining a Clinical license. Brandy has worked with individuals, families and students of all ages, supporting them to explore their strengths and to problem-solve challenges that they may face. Brandy is married and has two children, Grace and Michael, as well as two dogs that she enjoys spending time with. Her favorite pastimes include reading and exploring new places.



Michael Wood is the Music and Technology Instructor. He is a guitar player originally from Las Cruces. He received his BFA in Classical Guitar Performance from the University of New Mexico under Michael Chapdelaine. First and foremost, he is a family man who enjoys spending time with his wife, daughter and son. He has shared the stage with many amazing artists such as Marcus Anderson (Prince and Cee-Lo Green Saxophone player), Four80East, Jeff Kashiwa, Kim Waters, Lindsey Webster, Ryan Montano and many more. Some of his favorite bands that he plays with are the Diamond Empire Band and the original project called Citizens of Tape City.



Laura Wright is an Educational Assistant who was born and raised in the East Mountains. She has a Bachelor's Degree in English from UNM and holds a certificate in Suzuki Long Term Training as a violinist. She has taught violin students for many years and tutored high school literature. Laura loves to cook, listen and learn from podcasts, music and being with her husband and four kids.