New faces lead LCSD1 schools

From massive Central High to tiny Clawson Elementary, students will find new leadership in place this fall.

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CHEYENNE -- This fall, 12 schools in Laramie County School District 1 will have new principals, assistants or associate principals.

Royce Backman replaces Mike Hamel as associate principal at Johnson Junior High. Hamel is the principal of Cheyenne's new South High.

Backman has been an assistant principal at Johnson Junior High for seven years. His new salary is $91,802.

He was assistant principal Rawlins Middle and taught K-12 music in Cokeville. He earned his bachelor's degree in music education from Utah State University and a master's degree in educational administration from the University of Wyoming.

He and his wife, LaDonna, have two sons and two daughters.

Don Brantz is the new principal at Arp Elementary. He replaces Janet Materi, who retired and will be the new principal at St. Mary's Catholic School this fall.

Brantz's new salary is $99,373. He worked at Carey Junior High for 17 years. He was a full-time assistant principal for five years and two years part-time. He taught math and science at Carey for 12 years.

Brantz is from Sheridan and earned his degree in math, business administration and a minor in physics from Rocky Mountain College in Billings, Mont. He earned his master's degree at Leslie College of Cambridge, Mass., in computers in education and his administrative certification from UW.

He and his wife, Terri, have four children.

Della Rose Buchmann has been a classroom teacher for 10 years. She is the new assistant principal at Dildine Elementary, replacing Matt Schlagel. He is the new principal at Cole Elementary.

Buchmann attended Laramie County School District 1 from kindergarten through 12th grade. She is a graduate of Cheyenne's East High.

She was a teacher coach last year at Baggs, Anderson and Dildine elementary schools. She taught at Anderson Elementary in Cheyenne and taught eight years in San Diego, Calif.

Buchmann earned her degree in social sciences and elementary education at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colo. She earned her master's degree in curriculum from San Diego State University and her principal's endorsement from UW.

She and her husband, Bryce, have two children.

Her new salary is $80,948.

Brian Cox is a new assistant principal at Central High, and replaces Cory Talich, who resigned to work in a family business.

Cox said he will work with sophomores, athletics and facilities at Central High. His new salary is $87,230.

Cox taught science at McCormick Junior High for two years, creating an environmental and recycling club there.

He taught at Air Academy High at the U.S. Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, Colo., for five years. He was a department chair there.
Cox earned a bachelor’s degree from UW, a master’s degree in space studies at CU-Boulder and the NASA Space Foundation and an administration endorsement at UW.

He is a graduate of Lawson High in Colorado Springs. He is married to Adrienne Cox.

John Cunningham is the new assistant principal at Johnson Junior High. He has been an assistant principal at Pioneer Park Elementary for six years.

He was born and raised Brighton, Colo., and is a graduate of Brighton High.

He earned his undergraduate degree in psychology and a master’s in special education from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colo., and an administrative endorsement from UW.

Cunningham taught special education at elementary schools and the high school in Torrington for nine years. He worked with adolescent day treatment for LCSD1 for five years and taught at the Therapeutic Learning Center at Pioneer Park for six years. His salary is $83,470.

Mike Hamel is the head principal of the future Cheyenne South High.

The school officially opens in 2010-11. But he has high-school duties now and an office at Johnson Junior High. He also will oversee South High’s activities program, which starts this fall. His salary is $110,538.

Hamel has been the associate principal at Johnson Junior High for the last year.

He was a building administrator for 13 years in Green River, which included jobs as assistant principal and principal at Monroe Middle School and assistant principal/activities director at Green River High.

He taught high-school science and math at Rawlins, Gillette and Alaska.

He earned his secondary education degree at UW and a master’s degree in educational administration from the University of Southern Mississippi.

He and his wife, Shelley, have 11 children.

Michael Helenbolt of Lander is principal at Cheyenne's Triumph High, LCSD1’s alternative high school. His salary is 104,089. He replaces Gary Datus who retired.


He earned a bachelor of science in math from the University of North Dakota and a master of arts in educational administration from UW.

He and his wife, Nancy, have four grown children.

Donal Eric Jackson will be the first principal of Saddle Ridge Elementary. The school in east Cheyenne will be finished in August. His new salary is $91,487.

He has been assistant principal at Fairview-Lebhart elementary schools.

He is a native of Sheridan and earned a bachelor's degree in education at UW and a master's degree in technology in education from Leslie University.

He earned a principal's degree at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo.

He worked for nine years in Carson City, Nev., teaching first, third and fifth grades. He taught two years at Namaqua Elementary in Loveland, Colo.

Jackson and his wife, Heather, have two children.

Harry Petty, an educator from Green River, is the new principal at Gilchrist, Clawson and Willadsen elementary schools.

Petty replaces Principal Jeff Felton, who retired. Petty’s new salary is $106,641.

Petty grew up in Shoshoni and earned an associate’s degree in agriculture from Central Wyoming College in Riverton and a bachelor of science from UW in agriculture education.

He earned a master's degree in educational administration and an education specialist degree, both from UW. He is a candidate for a Ph.D.

Petty taught for 11 years, starting in Kaycee, and in Worland and Wright. He taught seventh through 12th graders in vocational ag and science.

Petty was a principal for 17 years, including an assistant principal/activities director at Laramie High and principal at Thermopolis High.

He was principal at the Green River schools of Monroe Middle, Washington Elementary and an alternative school there. He was principal of McKinnon Rural School close to Utah border.

Petty was associate superintendent for curriculum, instruction and assessment for Sweetwater County District 2 in Green River.

He and his wife, Tina, have a son in college and a grown daughter. Tina will teach at Hebard Elementary this fall.

Tony Richey, the new principal at Carey Junior High. His father was a school teacher, and his mother was a school nurse.

He replaces Evelyn Abbott, who retired. His new salary is $107,404.

Richey was born in Sidney, Neb. His family moved to Woodland Park, Colo., when he was 2 years old.

He earned his bachelor's degree in history and political science with a minor in drama at
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He earned his master's degree at the University of Phoenix at Colorado Springs, Colo., in educational leadership. He will receive his Ph.D. on Aug. 14 in educational leadership from the University of Denver.

He started teaching in 1995 at a junior high/middle school in Laredo, Texas. He taught at Panorama Middle in Woodland Park and was an assistant principal at Woodland Park High.

He and his wife, Aimee, have two children.

Margaret Robertson is the new assistant principal at Carey Junior High. She replaces Don Brantz, who is principal at Arp Elementary. Her salary is $80,948.

Robertson taught occupational foods and professional baking at Johnson Junior High and Central High for a year.

She completed her administrative internship at Mount Logan Middle School in Logan, Utah.

She taught eight years in Texas. Robertson taught math, science, art and business computer application classes at Shoreline School in Austin, Texas and taught in Round Rock, Texas. She also taught in Fort Collins, Colo.

She earned a bachelor's of science degree in family and consumer science from Baylor University in Waco, Texas and a master's degree in public school administration at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Okla.

She and her husband, Michael, have three children.

Matt Schlagel has lived in Cheyenne since he was a toddler. He is the new principal at Cole Elementary, replacing Bob Bowen, who retired. His new salary at Cole is $91,487.

Schlagel has been assistant principal at Dildine Elementary for two years.

He is a graduate of Cheyenne's East High. He earned a degree in elementary education and a master's in educational leadership from UW.

Schlagel taught sixth grade for four years at Davis Elementary and the same grade for four years at Jessup Elementary.

He and his wife, Tami, have two children.

Reader Comments

CONGRATULATIONS wrote on Jul 27, 2009 9:13 AM:
" Congratulations to Don Brantz - Arp, Matt Schlagel- Cole, and Eric Jackson - Saddle Ridge. I have had the pleasure of working with these three men, and I know that they will do a great job. Their schools are lucky to have such caring individuals in these positions. Here's to a great 2009-10 school year. "

English Teacher wrote on Jul 27, 2009 8:13 AM:
" And to think that Jason thought he made so much more than an educator. Where is ol' Jason anyway? He's been laying kind of low these past few months. Maybe his job, the one that paid so much more than mine, was a casualty of the recession. "

gardnofevl wrote on Jul 27, 2009 7:44 AM:
" You know, it's no wonder some of the non teacher and non administrative district personnel can't get a darned raise!!!! Most of the support personnel have to work two and sometimes three jobs and some are on welfare. Gimme a break! "

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