

UASSP Mid-Winter Conference Presenter Bios

Dr. Jody Carrington, Author of Kids These Days and Teachers These Days **Presentation: Kids These Days (in Utah)**



Dr. Jody Carrington is a renowned psychologist sought after for her expertise, energy and approach to helping people solve their most complex human-centered challenges. Jody focuses much of her work around reconnection – the key to healthy relationship and productive teams.

A speaker, author, and leader of Carrington and Company, she uses all she has been taught in her twenty-year career as a psychologist to empower everyone she connects with. Jody has worked with kids, families, business leaders, first responders, teachers, farmers and has spoken in church basements and world-class stages; the message remains the same – our power lies in our ability to acknowledge each other first.

Her approach is authentic, honest and often hilarious. She speaks passionately about resilience, mental health, leadership, burnout brief and trauma – and how reconnection is the answer to so many of the root problems we face. Her widely popular book, Kids These Days, was published in 2019 and has sold 150,000 copies worldwide. Jody's message is as simple as it is complex: we are wired to do the hard things, but we were never meant to do any of this alone.

With a PH.D. in clinical psychology, work with major institutions and thriving clinical practice, she brings a depth of experience and insight that is unmatched in the industry. Jody lives in small-town Olds, Alberta, with her husband and three children (she had three kids in 2 years to test her own resilience) and leads the amazing team at Carrington & Company.

Dr. Sydnee Dickson, State Superintendent **Presentation: How to THRIVE During Difficult Times**



Dr. Sydnee Dickson has been serving the children of Utah as a proud educator for the past 41 years. She joined the Utah State Office of Education in 2007 and was named as State Superintendent of Public Instruction on June 23, 2016. Prior to joining the Utah State Office of Education, Sydnee served in Utah public schools in roles including teaching, school counseling, school and district administration.

Superintendent Dickson began her education in a two-room schoolhouse in rural Utah and went on to earn two master's degrees in School Counseling and School Administration as well as a doctorate in Education Leadership and Policy at the University of Utah. Dr. Dickson is a frequent participant on state and national committees, task forces, and boards, including currently serving on the Board of Trustees for the Council of Chief State School Officers and West Ed Board of Directors. Her professional expertise is grounded in engaging community partners, providing educators with evidence-based professional learning, and developing transformative school leadership. Sydnee is passionate about developing school systems that provide equal opportunities for students in order to help them have choices about their future.

Dr. Jacqueline Thompson **Presentation: REACH – Respecting Ethnic and Cultural Heritage – Embracing our Differences to Create a Stronger Community**



Dr. Jacqueline Thompson is a native of Nashville, TN. She is married to Edward Thompson, who retired as a Contracting Supervisor at Hill Air Force Base. They have 2 sons, 2 daughter-in-laws and 4 grandchildren. Dr. Thompson graduated from Highlands High School in North Highlands, CA in 1974. She received a BA in Elementary Education from Idaho State University in Pocatello, ID in 1978. In June 1997, she graduated from Weber State University in the Master of Education Program. She received her Doctorate Degree in Education from Utah State University in May 2010.

Dr. Thompson is currently the Assistant Superintendent in Davis School District. She is the former Director of the Educational Equity Department for Davis School District in Utah. She served as a Race Desegregation/Education Specialist for the Utah State Office of Education. Her primary responsibilities included civil rights monitoring, providing technical assistance, training, and networking resources to address such areas as cultural diversity, bias awareness, and gender equity. Dr. Thompson currently serves as the Diversity and Inclusion Chair and member of the Executive Committee for the Utah High School Activities Association (UHSAA). She is a member of Weber School District - Equity, Justice, and Inclusion Committee – Advisory Council. She serves as a Board Member for the RISE Virtual Academy. Dr. Thompson is a Board Member for Analytic Orange, which is focused on creating a well-rounded and multi-perspective curriculum. She also serves as a historical consultant for Better Days 2020. Dr. Thompson received numerous awards and national recognitions. On November 12, 2012, Governor Gary Herbert appointed her to the State Multicultural Commission. Dr. Thompson was the recipient of the 2018 Salt Lake City NAACP Albert Fritz Civil Rights Award.

Dr. Heather Castagno **Presentation: Rebranding a School Culture**



Heather Castagno has been in education for 23 years, 12 of those as an administrator and the rest spent as a teacher at the elementary school level. She grew up in Milford, UT and is the daughter of educators. She has a wonderful, supportive husband and 3 beautiful children.

Dr. Castagno was selected as the Tooele County School District Principal of the Year in 2019. She has received state and national recognition for the things she has done to "rebrand" her school. She is excited to share ideas that they have implemented at Wendover High School to shift the culture to involve all stakeholders as they have worked to highlight the school vision. It is possible to rebrand a school and move the focus to one that is results-oriented and have fun at the same time!

Dr. Brian McGill, UASSP 2020 High School Principal of the Year **Presentation: College, Culture and Self-Care**



After serving as Principal of Alta High School, Brian McGill currently serves as the new Director of Student Services in Canyons School District. Brian's career in education started early on as a Hall Monitor, TLC Teacher, Guidance Counselor at both the middle and high school levels, Head Coach, State Director for College Access and Outreach for the Utah system of High Ed, and the last 12 years as a secondary school administrator. Brian has earned a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, with a minor in Exercise and Sport Science, three Master's Degrees (Clinical Psychology, School Counseling, and Administration), and most recently (2019) completed his doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy in Social Justice, from the U of U. Brian received the "Educator of the Year" and "Coach of the Year" in 2003, was selected as the state's first SafeUT Champion Recipient for his work in School Mental Health, the Milton Bennion Scholar at the University of Utah in his doctorate program, and was recently named the Utah Secondary Principal of the Year by UASSP. Brian created the first early college pathway (in partnership with the University of Utah) called "Step2TheU," where students save \$15,000 in tuition and completion of university general education requirements. Brian's passion (aside from being a youth advocate) is spending time fitness training where he has spent nearly 30 plus years lifting weights and body building. He was chosen as a top 15 finalist in the Men's Health Competition back in 2016, which was based on education, fitness, life philosophy, and overall career success.



Ryan McGuire, UASSP 2020 Middle School Principal of the Year

Presentation: *Can you Help Me Feed My Fish*

Ryan McGuire is the Principal of Salem Hills High School. He was the Principal of Mt. Nebo Middle School when he was awarded the UASSP Middle School Principal of the Year in 2020. Mr. McGuire received his bachelor's degree in history from Brigham Young University in 2000 and a master's degree in Education Administration from Southern Utah University in 2007.

Mr. McGuire served as Principal of Springville Junior High for five years and as Assistant Principal of Payson High for five years. He also was as an assistant principal of Payson Junior High. As a teacher, he taught Spanish and history at Spanish Fork High and Spanish Fork Middle School. He also coached basketball throughout his teaching career, including being the head coach for the girls' varsity basketball team at Spanish Fork High.

Ryan enjoys spending time outdoors and fishing of any kind. He is married to Trudy and they have four children. They reside in Spanish Fork, Utah.



Heather Gerrard, UASSP 2020 Assistant Principal of the Year

Presentation: *Increase Access to Advanced Coursework*

Heather Gerrard has worked in education since 2005. She earned a Bachelor's of Teaching in History, English and English Language Learner Instruction, and a Masters in Educational Administration. Her professional experiences also include facilitating adult instruction to Utah educators for adopting the Common Core in English, ELL endorsements and ELA accreditation courses. She coordinated bringing the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IB) Program to Ogden High School in 2013 and worked as the AP and IB coordinator, growing both programs, and earning Ogden High a spot on the AP Honor Roll for high schools for increasing the amount of minority students taking AP classes and exams. Her passion for education revolves around closing the achievement gap through college and career readiness programs and supports. Heather's leadership has fostered a focus toward increasing student participation in these programs by more than 50%, while ensuring that teachers were able to support their at-risk and diverse students in these programs for more sustainable growth. These efforts have supported an increase in Ogden High's graduation rate to over 95%. At the same time OHS increased their ACT composite and rigorous course participation increased to 87.9% with an increase in pathway completion and pass rates. She was also teacher of the year for The Utah Council of Teachers of English for 2013, is Utah's Secondary Assistant Principal of 2021 and is one of three final National Secondary Assistant Principals of the year for 2021. She is currently serving as Ogden School District's Personalized Pathways/CTE Director and is Ogden School District's 2021 Administrator of the year.



Heidi Alder, Educational Law

Presentation: *Investigations 101 Plus*

Heidi Alder splits her time as an attorney with the law firm of Lear & Lear and in-house attorney at Weber School District. In both these capacities, she provides guidance and counsel on a variety of legal issues, including FERPA, constitutional rights of students and teachers, employment law, special education, and policy matters. Her work at Weber District gives her an in-depth understanding of the inner workings of a school district, and her work with other districts and charters around the state gives her a breadth of exposure to LEA's differences; this combination puts Heidi in a unique position to understand the issues LEAs face on a macro and micro level. Heidi also spends much of her time providing trainings (like this one) to administrators, counselors, other attorneys, SROs, classified employees, charter schools, and any other organization she can convince to let her teach.

Heidi teaches "educational law" to aspiring administrators as an adjunct at Utah State University. She sat on the Children's Justice Center Board for ten years and served as vice-chair and then chair of the board for the last 2 years. She also sat on the board for Utah Legal Services, and is an active member of the Education Law Section of the Utah Bar. Heidi has a precocious 4 year old who keeps her on her toes, and a patent attorney for a husband, who reminds her why she went into education law and not what she considers to be the boring and technical part of the law that he focuses on.



Rulon Gardner, Olympic Gold Medalist

Presentation: *Hard Work + Never Give Up = THRIVE*

At the 2000 Summer Olympic Games, a determined Wyoming farm boy defeated the greatest Olympic wrestler of all time in "The Miracle on the Mat." Four years later, after a near fatal accident in the frozen Wyoming wilderness, a tearful Rulon Gardner touched the hearts of sports fans everywhere when he left his shoes on the mat, symbolizing his retirement after winning an Olympic Bronze. Rulon grew up on his family's dairy farm, where unceasing chores helped him develop tremendous strength and stamina at an early age. He struggled in school due to learning disabilities and was often the butt on his classmates' jokes. Gardner found success through hard work and never giving up.



Mark Daniels, Utah Teacher of the Year

Presentation: *"My Mission in Life is Not Merely to Survive but to Thrive" (Maya Angelou)*

Mark Daniels has been a theatre educator for the past 25 years. Daniels graduated from Weber State University with a Bachelor of Science with a composite major of communications and theatre arts. Daniels also earned a Master's Degree from Central Washington University in Educational Theatre Production. He currently teaches Theatre, Cinema, Musical Theatre, IB Theatre, and Technical Theatre at Weber High School.

During his 25 years in the classroom, Daniels has loved watching the magic of theatre happen on and off the stage, the creativity and the imagination of his students' flourish, the jitters of opening night, and the smiles of accomplishment at the final curtain on closing night. He loves the fact that his students are not only creating memories for a lifetime, but building self-confidence through performing that will last just as long.

Daniels has received the Sterling Teacher Award from the Utah Advisory Council of Theatre Teachers, the Utah High School Activities Association Distinguished Service Award, the Weber State University Arts and Humanities AHA! Alumni Award, and is the 2021 Weber School District's Teacher of the Year and the 2022 State of Utah Teacher of the Year.