



# **J. L. Mudd Teaching Biographies 399 Years Combined Experience**



## **Kindergarten Team**

### Lynn Barklage - 28 Years Experience, Kindergarten

My name is Lynn Barklage and I have been teaching for 28 years. I have been in the Ft. Zumwalt School District for the past 21 years. Prior to that, I taught first grade in Elsberry, Missouri. I have been teaching Kindergarten for the past 16 years here at J. L. Mudd. While in the Fort Zumwalt School District, I have been at J.L. Mudd and have made many good friends throughout the years. I love teaching Kindergarten because each day brings new and exciting things. No two days are alike!! My husband and I live in O'Fallon. We have twin boys who are 15 years old. We love spending time outdoors with our children and our two chocolate labs.

### Allison Guilander – 2 Years Experience, Kindergarten

I am thrilled to be a part of the J.L. Mudd family! I have wanted to be a kindergarten teacher for as long as I can remember. I love working with young children and enjoy learning from them as well. I earned my Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of Missouri-Columbia. I was born and raised in the St. Louis area and I am grateful to begin my career here as well. In my free time, I enjoy being with friends, family, and my puppy Mia. I also love to be outdoors as much as possible walking, playing golf, and exercising.

### Gina Hamel—25 Years Experience, Kindergarten

Ever since I was a little girl, I wanted to be a teacher. My dad was a teacher, and I adored him and wanted to be just like him. Although my father taught high school, I discovered I really enjoyed working with the little guys. This love of children motivated me to pursue a dual degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education. I also obtained a Master's Degree+48 in Elementary Education. I began teaching kindergarten in 1984. Teaching kindergarten is a new adventure every day. It is high-energy, unpredictable, and fun. That is why I have continued teaching kindergarten for 25 years. In my spare time, I enjoy jogging, swimming, and reading. I also enjoy spending time with my husband, three daughters, and two dogs.

### Rebecca Reside—2 Years Experience, Kindergarten

I am so excited to return as a second year teacher at J.L. Mudd. I had such an amazing time teaching my kindergartners last year, and I feel I learned as much from them as they did from me. I am looking forward to getting to know each new group of students as individuals and reaching each one in the best way I can. I love to use books, music, art, drama, and even dance in every part of the school day to make learning exciting and enjoyable.

When I'm not teaching, I love to cook, listen to and play music, and be around animals. I had to leave my dog, Tucker, in Alabama when I moved up to St. Louis, but the past two summers I have been around some other amazing animals. I was able to spend my last two summers working at the St. Louis Zoo where I held snakes, lizards, toads, hedgehogs, giant millipedes, hissing cockroaches, and owls every week. I cannot wait to share what I learned about all of these wonderful animals with my students. This year is going to be great!

## **First Grade Team**

### Kelly Eckhard—5 Years Experience, First Grade

This is my 5th year in the Fort Zumwalt School District, and my first year at J.L.Mudd. I am very excited to be part of such a wonderful school! This is my 5th year teaching first grade and I absolutely love it! There is such a joy that comes from helping children learn and feel great about themselves. I have my Bachelor's Degree from Saint Louis University, and am currently pursuing my Master's Degree from Lindenwood University. I am married and we are expecting our first child in August. In my spare time I enjoy reading, running, and spending time with my family.

### Deborah Gibson—9 Years Experience, First Grade

I am very fortunate to have been part of the J.L. Mudd Elementary School staff for the past 9 years. I taught one year in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and the other 8 in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Along with my teaching career, I am a student and the mom of two wonderful children. I earned my Bachelor's Degree from Southeast Missouri State University, with certifications in Learning Disabilities, Mentally Handicapped and Elementary Education. I am currently, working towards my Master's at Lindenwood University. My goal is to influence my students and my own children, to enjoy learning, as I do.

### Casandra Hardin—15 Years Experience, First Grade

I am really happy to be a part of the J.L. Mudd family. I am a transplant from the state of Louisiana and I find living in Missouri a real joy. I earned my Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Early Childhood from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. I am married and have two children who attend school in the Fort Zumwalt District. I love teaching because every day is a new adventure for me and my students. They help to keep teaching fresh and fun.

### Julie Moses—2 Years Experience, First Grade

I am looking forward to my second year teaching first grade at J.L. Mudd Elementary. I am so lucky to be teaching children at the age where they are ready and eager to learn and explore new things. I began to pursue the road to teaching early on and went to Truman State University to achieve this goal. I graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in psychology as well as a Master's Degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education. I am originally from the Chicago area but plan to continue to stay in the St. Louis area because I have enjoyed my experience here thus far. J.L. Mudd provides me with a great environment and community to pursue my passion.

### Stacy Reynolds—3 Years Experience, First Grade

I fulfilled a lifelong dream in December 2005 when I graduated from Lindenwood University with a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. Now I live that dream everyday here at J.L. Mudd. I am so proud to be a part of a school family where all staff members are truly committed to the success of each student. When I'm not at school, I enjoy reading, baking and spending time with my husband and our two teenage boys.

### Renee Rhode—7 Years Experience, First Grade

This is my seventh year teaching first grade at J. L. Mudd Elementary. There is no place I would rather be than with the first grade. I love watching students grow and change and sharing in their excitement for learning. I have my Bachelor's Degree from the University of Northern Iowa and my Master's in education from Lindenwood University. I am married and have one child. She attends school in the Fort Zumwalt School District. We love to go to Disney World and spend time at the beach. In my spare time I love to read, cook and shop. My philosophy is that if you can read you can do anything!!

Paula Roberts—10 Years Experience, First Grade

J.L. Mudd is a great place to be! I enjoy teaching first grade and I love helping students grow as readers and writers. Each day is an exciting adventure with a class of enthusiastic learners. I have a Bachelor's Degree and a Master's Degree from Lindenwood University. I am currently pursuing my Doctorate also from Lindenwood University. I'm married and have two children. Reading, swimming and walking are my favorite activities. It has been a pleasure to work with such a wonderful staff and influence the lives of children.

Nicole Shidaker—6 Years Experience, First Grade:

I am so happy to be a part of J.L. Mudd Elementary! I started my career teaching in Ohio, but I am lucky to have found a school like J. L. Mudd. I am currently working on my Master's Degree in Educational Administration from Lindenwood University. Education is very important to me and I believe that a child's school experience should be filled with high standards, vast learning opportunities, and unconditional support and encouragement. J.L. Mudd provides all that and more!

## **Second Grade Team**

Robin McCormick—8 Years Experience, Second Grade

I love being a part of the second grade team at J.L. Mudd. I have been teaching second grade for eight years. I love watching the children grow and learn new things. I am married and have a one dog named Harley. I enjoy spending time with my family, reading books and walking my dog.

Sherri McDevitt—14 Years Experience, Second Grade

I have been teaching second grade for the past 9 years at J. L. Mudd Elementary. I love the students, the curriculum, and my wonderful teaching team. I taught fifth graders at Forest Park for five years after college graduation. I then took some time off to stay home with our children. During that time I worked part-time as a Title I Reading Instructor making home visits. It was very exciting!

My husband and I have been married for 22 years. We have three children and one very spoiled orange cat. I enjoy sports, chocolate, animals, and reading.

### Terri Rhine—5 Years Experience, Second Grade

I simply love coming to J.L. Mudd Elementary each and every day. I enjoy watching the students grow and develop throughout the school year. Not only do I celebrate each child's academic developments, but I also admire how the students grow into responsible, mature, young individuals. I honestly believe I have the most rewarding job on the planet. In our classroom, I strive to create a safe, welcoming, and nurturing learning environment. In my free time, I love to spend time with my husband and beautiful daughter. I love to curl up on the couch with a good book. My favorite book is still Charlotte's Web.

### Elaina Poorman, 2 Years Experience, Second Grade

I could not have asked for a better school to fulfill my life-long dream of being a teacher! I absolutely love teaching at J.L. Mudd Elementary. I have been a teacher professionally for 2 years, however; I knew I wanted to be a teacher since I was five years old. My mother's favorite story is how I enjoyed going to the teacher supply store more than the toy store (and I'll admit it's true ☺). I loved when the stores started having all their school supplies out. It was pure bliss!

I love being a part of the J.L. Mudd team, especially in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade. I have a wonderful group of ladies that I get to work with daily. I earned my Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Fontbonne University, which is here in St. Louis. I will hopefully start my Master's Degree this spring.

I will hopefully be building a new house this summer and also practicing my love of photography. I love to read in my spare time. My favorite authors are Eric Carle, Robert Munsch, Janet Evanovich, Nicholas Sparks and Jane Green. I also enjoy going to the pool, seeing movies, going out to eat and spending time with family and friends.

### Vivian Villani-15 Years Experience, Second Grade

I am honored to be a second grade teacher at J.L. Mudd Elementary. This is a wonderful school filled with eager students and a warm and friendly staff. My background includes a Bachelor of Science degree from Southwest Missouri State University and a Master's Degree in Education from Lindenwood University. I have taught second grade, third grade, and seventh grade. I find watching students grow and discover new things over the course of a school year is an extremely rewarding experience as a teacher. When I am not teaching, I enjoy swimming, boating, fishing, and spending time with my family.

### Mindy Weiss- 3 Years Experience, Second Grade

I absolutely love teaching second grade at J.L. Mudd. I wake up every morning excited to come to school to teach and learn! My goal is to create a positive, safe, nurturing, and challenging environment in which every student will grow and flourish. My favorite book is Oh! The Places You Will Go! by Dr. Seuss. I believe if a child has a great support team at school and at home that he or she WILL go many places!

I have always wanted to be a teacher and spent many summer days playing school with my friends. My favorite place to shop was the teacher supply store and it still remains as one of my favorite place to shop! I received my Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Lindenwood University. This summer I returned to begin earning my Master's Degree. I like to spend time with my husband, my two puppies, Lola and Penny Lane, and my family. I enjoy reading books, listening to music, dancing with my nieces, and of course, shopping at the teacher supply store.

### Kelly Zeier—10 Years Experience, Second Grade

My name is Kelly Zeier and I have taught at J.L. Mudd Elementary since I began my teaching career nine years ago. My first two years I taught second grade special education. The remaining 7 years I have been in second grade. I received my Bachelor's Degree from Southeast Missouri State University and my Master's Degree in Education from Lindenwood University.

In my free time I read, run, swim, and bike ride. I have run in 24 marathons and competed in several triathlons and hundred mile bike ride races. I am married and have a 2 year old boy, Harrison. He is the light of our lives and our greatest blessing.

I enjoy challenging myself; it brings me confidence and satisfaction to set a goal and to achieve it. I want to instill this in my students. I love watching students' excitement when they conquer a particularly difficult concept. Through teaching I get to be the coach and this is why I love teaching.

## **Fine Arts Team**

### Liz Cassel—6 Years Experience, Music

I am really looking forward to teaching music this year at J.L. Mudd. For the past six years, I have taught orchestra and general music at North Middle School. I have a Bachelor's Degree in from the University of Michigan and I am working on my Master's at University of Missouri - St. Louis. I enjoy playing the viola, walking, gardening and spending time with my husband, daughter and son. I also am the proud owner of two pound puppies. They really keep me busy!

### Carmen DeForest—26 Years Experience, Art

This is my twenty second year of teaching art at Joseph L. Mudd Elementary. I truly love working with children and watching them create their artwork. I earned my Bachelor's Degree in Art Education from Lindenwood University and will earn my Master's Degree from Lindenwood University. I am married and have two children. During my free time, I love all types of boating, painting, sporting events, and spending time with my family.

### Brandi Guthrie—11 Years Experience, Physical Education

I am so happy to be teaching Physical Education at J.L. Mudd Elementary. I have taught at JLM for eleven years and have truly enjoyed every moment. I received my Master's Degree in Education Administration from Lindenwood University and have obtained my Administrative certificate. I moved to the O'Fallon area immediately following my student teaching in Central Illinois. My goal in teaching P.E. is to provide your child with lifelong goals pertaining to physical fitness. I want to stress to them the importance of staying physically fit and how this can help them reach all of their goals! These days I enjoy spending my free time with my husband Adam, our handsome son Connor and our cute doggie Carmella. Don't hesitate to call if you ever have any questions about your child.

### Audra King – 4 Years Experience, Counselor

I truly love being a member of the team at J.L. Mudd Elementary! I have taught two years of kindergarten, one year of first grade, and this will be my second year as the school counselor. I love having the opportunity to work with children at the primary level, along with teachers and families to provide them with academic, emotional and social support. Most importantly, I am able to work with our students to help them learn skills needed for life and to help them become problem solvers. I have a degree in elementary education and early childhood education and a master's degree in school counseling. I'm originally from Hannibal, Missouri...which is better known as America's Hometown! I now reside in St. Charles, and I enjoy being with family and friends and love to run and exercise.

### Esther Ruth Offholter—25 Years Experience, Music

My name is Ruth Offholter and I have had the pleasure of teaching music to children at J. L. Mudd for 11 years. I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Louisiana College in Pineville, Louisiana. I received my Master's Degree from Louisiana Tech in Ruston, Louisiana. I have earned three levels of Orff

Schulwerk (a method of teaching music) from Memphis State in Memphis, Tennessee. I am married to Fred Offholter and we have two adult children, Allen and Allison. We are also the proud grandparents of Claire, Aliyah, Mikayla, and Phillip. In my spare time I love to sing, direct church singing groups and watch movies.

### Debi Porter—21 Years Experience, Reading Specialist

My name is Debi Porter and I am currently the Reading Specialist for J. L. Mudd Elementary. I work with children in grades one and two who need support in the area of reading. The program is funded through Title One, a federal program. I have held this position for nine years.

I have taught in the district for 21 years. The first 11 years were spent teaching first and second graders at Hawthorn Elementary School. I taught one year at Dubray Middle School as a Reading Teacher. I have served on several committees in the district including curriculum representative for Communication Arts.

I attended Southeast Missouri State University studying marketing from 1973 until 1977. I received a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Lindenwood University in 1988 and graduated Summa Cum Laude, was a member of the National Honor's Society, named Outstanding Student Teacher for 1988, and named to Who's Who in Education. In 1991, I received a Master's Degree in Education with an emphasis in Reading and have a Lifetime Missouri Teaching Certificate and Reading Specialist Certificate. I am currently pursuing an Educational Doctorate Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Saint Louis University.

I was named Hawthorn Elementary Teacher of the Year in 1994 and J. L. Mudd Elementary Teacher of the year in 2003 and 2007. I was honored with the Mid River's Area Council's Literacy Award in 2005 and I currently serve on the Missouri State Council of the International Reading Association's Executive Board.

I am married and have a son and daughter. Our son Michael teaches at Brevard College in Brevard, North Carolina and our daughter Elizabeth graduated from Oklahoma City University with a Dance Performance Degree and now lives in Los Angeles, California. My husband is a Corporal with the Missouri State Water Patrol.

I am an avid reader and especially love to read historical fiction. My favorite book is To Kill a Mockingbird. I love working with young children and watching the growth they make over the period of time I spend with them.

Kyle Salvo—3 Years Experience, Physical Education

My goal is to have students look forward to Physical Education class. It is also to get students active outside the classroom. My aim is to teach life long activities so that students can carry these ideas and values into their lives outside of school.

Phyllis Shanker—17 Years Experience, Librarian

I truly found my dream job when I became part of the J. L. Mudd staff. Becoming a librarian eight years ago was the best decision I ever made. I love helping the students learn about the library and enjoy watching them apply library skills in their daily lives. During my free time, I enjoy reading and spending time with my husband and two children.

## **Special Education Team**

Diane Ford—17 Years Experience, Special Education

This is my 17<sup>th</sup> year of teaching in the Fort Zumwalt School District. I started taking college courses after my children were in high school. I received my Bachelor's Degree in Special Education and my Master's Degree in Elementary Education from the University of Missouri, St. Louis.

My husband is retired from General Motors, and we have four grown children who have blessed our lives with 13 grandchildren. We spend many of our vacations traveling in the west. My favorite activities include photography, scrapbooking, gardening, fishing, reading, and spending time with friends and family.

Amy Grosch—10 Years Experience, Speech/Language

My name is Amy Grosch and I am one of the Speech/Language Pathologists at J. L. Mudd Elementary. I enjoy working to help my students become better communicators. This is my eighth year in this position. Before coming to J. L. Mudd, I worked at an elementary school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin for two years in the same position. I received both my Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree in Speech-Language Pathology from St. Louis University. When I'm not at school, I enjoy spending time with my husband and my one-year-old daughter. I also enjoy traveling, reading, and going to Cardinals and Rams games.

Sharon McNeill—29 years experience, Physical Therapist

I have been a physical therapist with Fort Zumwalt School District for 10 years. I enjoy being part of the team at J. L. Mudd and working to help students develop stronger motor skills at school. The increased independence and progress I see in each child make this a rewarding job and one I enjoy each day.

Sarah Orlando—2 Years Experience, Occupational Therapist

Becoming an Occupational therapist for Fort Zumwalt School district was one of the best career choices I have ever made. Working as a team with teachers, therapists, and para professionals is what makes Fort Zumwalt School District such a dynamic multi-disciplinary approach to learning. I love what I do and most of all I love the staff and students I work with everyday. Seeing progress and success with independence in every child I work with is so rewarding and brings me back year after year to this district.

Cindy Ortscheid—29 Years Experience, Educational Diagnostician

I have worked in the Fort Zumwalt School District for 20 years. When I first came to this district, I worked as a Speech and Language Pathologist here at J. L. Mudd and in another elementary school. I left J. L. Mudd for several years and worked full time at Mt. Hope Elementary. Six years ago, I changed positions, returned to this building and now work as an Educational Diagnostician. I love working with the children referred for testing, observing in the classrooms, talking with parents and working with the teachers and staff. My desire is to make J. L. Mudd a positive and successful learning environment for each student. On a personal note; I have been married to my husband for 24 years and have two sons, ages 17 and 15. When I am not at school, you can usually find me at the gym working out or attending my sons' high school roller or ice hockey games.

Tanya Sefrit—13 Years Experience, School Psychological Examiner

Fort Zumwalt School District is an important aspect of my family. My husband and I have worked in the district for thirteen years and my son also attends second grade in the Fort Zumwalt School District. We are very proud of our school district and enjoy working with the wonderful teachers and staff! I started working in the district as a third grade teacher at Forest Park Elementary School for three years. I then taught third grade at Progress South Elementary School for two years. I have truly enjoyed being a part of the Special Education services department at J. L. Mudd for the last seven years. During my free time, I enjoy being outside, scrap booking, and playing with my two boys.

### Chelsea Volkmar—1 Year Experience, Special Education

I am extremely excited to be joining the staff at J.L. Mudd. I grew up in Collinsville, IL, and have recently graduated from Saint Louis University with a BA in Early Childhood Special Education. In my free time, I enjoy being outside, watching baseball games (GO CARDS!), rollerblading, traveling, and spending time with my family, my boyfriend, and our friends.

For me, I have always known that I wanted to be a teacher, but it was not until college that I discovered my passion for Early Childhood Special Education. I truly believe that these years of a child's life are the most significant in a child's education, and I am honored to be a part of them. It is my belief that children learn through real-life situations, hands-on experiences, and reflective practices in which I believe are all present in my style of teaching.

In college, I had the opportunity to spend a few weeks at J.L. Mudd where I got to meet and work with students, and began getting to know the staff members. J.L. Mudd is an extremely child-centered school with very approachable staff members, and I am thrilled to now be a part of this team!!

### Sharon Ellerbrook—14 Years Experience, Principal

At J. L. Mudd, my goal is to facilitate learning and growth in every student and staff member. It is my pleasure to be your school principal and I look forward to each day I spend with your children and watch them develop into readers, writers, mathematicians, problem solvers, risk takers, and life-long learners!

My career in education began 14 years ago in the Maplewood-Richmond Heights school district teaching Kindergartners. For the past twelve years I have been fortunate to be an employee of the Fort Zumwalt School District teaching first and second graders at Hawthorn and Rock Creek Elementary, serving as an Administrative Assistant split between Rock Creek and Westhoff Elementary, and now as your child's principal at J. L. Mudd Elementary.

When I'm not at school, I enjoy spending time with family, friends, and of course, my sweet dog, Millie. I am also currently pursuing my doctorate in Educational Administration at Lindenwood University.

We are here at J. L. Mudd to facilitate learning everyday. Please don't ever hesitate to call us if there is ever a question or concern!