



Leadership Team

Mike Hernandez

Deputy Commissioner

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As deputy commissioner, Hernandez works with ADE, legislators and school districts on finance, legislation and other education issues. Hernandez served as the assistant commissioner of Fiscal and Administrative Services for one year before being named deputy commissioner. Prior to working for ADE, he served as superintendent at Danville Public Schools, was the principal/athletic director for Western Yell County High School in Havana, and taught in Fountain Lake Schools in Hot Springs, Hot Springs Middle School, Danville High School and Marion Abramson High School in New Orleans. He has a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a Master of Arts in Mathematics Education from the University of Central Arkansas at Conway. He received a level 1 certificate in math, science and physical education grades seven through 12 from the University of New Orleans. Hernandez also received a Master of Arts in Education Leadership and is working on a doctoral degree in Education Leadership from Harding University at Searcy. He lives with his wife and three daughters in Hot Springs.



Deborah Coffman

Chief of Staff

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Coffman assumed the role of chief of staff in June 2013. She serves as the liaison for the State Board of Education and organizes the board's monthly meetings. She also facilitates activities of the Office of the Commissioner and coordinates special projects in support of the department's strategic initiatives. Before she accepted the position, Coffman served as the director of Professional Development for ADE. In that role, she collaborated with many stakeholders to provide quality professional learning opportunities to Arkansas educators. She has also served as literacy program manager for ADE, instructional facilitator for Pocahontas Public Schools, literacy specialist at the Northeast Education Service Cooperative and elementary teacher at Hoxie Public Schools. Coffman holds a Bachelor of Science in Education and a Master of Science in Education from Arkansas State University. She previously served as an adjunct professor, GED instructor and private school educator. Coffman is a native of Black Rock.



Dr. Eric Saunders

Assistant Commissioner for Fiscal and Administrative Services

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Dr. Eric Saunders began as assistant commissioner of Fiscal and Administrative Services July 1, 2014. As assistant commissioner, Saunders oversees the distribution of funds to public schools. He also is responsible for the Child Nutrition Unit, school finance and student management software, and fiscal distress and accountability. Prior to working at ADE, Saunders served as superintendent of the East End School District in Bigelow, was the principal at Lavaca High School, and was a math teacher and coach at Gentry High School. Saunders received a Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education from Oklahoma State University. He later received a Master of Education and a Doctor of Education from Harding University in Searcy. He is a native of Oklahoma.



Ivy Pfeffer

Assistant Commissioner for Human Resources, Educator Effectiveness and Licensure

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As assistant commissioner of Human Resources, Educator Effectiveness and Licensure, Pfeffer oversees multiple units and programs including human resources, teacher licensure, teacher and principal evaluation programs, and educator ethics investigations. She was hired as assistant commissioner July 1, 2014, after serving as the ADE director of educator evaluation for a year. Prior to coming to ADE, Pfeffer worked at the Pocahontas School District for 18 years. She taught Spanish and English at Pocahontas Junior High School before being named the secondary assistant principal at the high school. She served as principal and as an adjunct Spanish instructor for Black River Technical College. She has a Bachelor of Science in Education in Spanish and English from Arkansas State University at Jonesboro, a Master of Science in Education in Integrated Technology in the Curriculum from Walden University in Minneapolis, MN., completed the ASU program of study for administrative certification and earned an Educator Specialist in Educational Leadership. Pfeffer is from Pocahontas.



Dr. Deborah Jones

Assistant Commissioner for Learning Services

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An educator for 20 years, Dr. Jones specializes in curriculum and instructional design and implementation. As assistant commissioner of Learning Services, a role she began July 1, 2014, Jones oversees the largest ADE division. She has a background in district strategic planning, budgeting and implementation of Response to Intervention programs, intervention models, data analysis and school improvement. She previously served as assistant superintendent in Bryant, principal at Bryant High School, director of secondary education at the Pulaski County Special School District, and principal at Robinson Middle School and Jacksonville Middle School. She received a Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, a Master of Arts in Secondary Administration from the University of Central Arkansas at Conway and a Doctorate of Education in Educational Administration from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She is from Charleston, AR.



Annette Barnes

Assistant Commissioner for Public School Accountability

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Barnes assumed her role as assistant commissioner for Public School Accountability July 1, 2014. As assistant commissioner, she assists districts with educational standards compliance and desegregation orders. She also oversees monitoring activities and Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility. Barnes has worked for ADE for 19 years and was previously the coordinator for School Improvement and Standards Assurance. Prior to working for ADE, she was a counselor and teacher/coach for Hall High School and Southwest Junior High School in the Little Rock School District, served as a counselor/teacher for Rivendell Psychiatric Center for Children and Youth, and taught at Arkadelphia High School. Barnes received a Bachelor of Science in Education from the University of Central Arkansas at Conway. She later received a Master of Science in Education with a middle school science certification from Henderson State University in Arkadelphia. She received secondary principal administrative certification from UCA. Barnes is from Benton.



Cody Decker

Assistant Commissioner for Research and Technology and CIO

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Decker began working for ADE in 2009 as the ADE coordinator of special projects and later as the director of information systems. He was responsible for several successful major information systems projects, including the ADE Data Center and the statewide longitudinal data system.

In his role as assistant commissioner, he leads the division of Research and Technology and serves as the agency's chief information officer for information systems. Previously, Decker worked for Dawson Education Service Cooperative and Environmental and Spatial Technology Inc., commonly referred to as the EAST Initiative, in Little Rock.

An Arkansas native, Decker has a Bachelor of Science in Information Science, a Master of Science in Information Quality and is pursuing a doctorate in Information Quality from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.



Jeremy Lasiter

General Counsel

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Lasiter heads the department's Legal Office, handling lawsuits, legislation and rule making. He's worked for the ADE since 2008 and previously served as an assistant attorney general, defending state agencies in federal and state court. His military experience includes being a judge advocate in the U.S. Air Force and Air National Guard. A native of Pulaski County, Lasiter has a bachelor's degree from Arkansas Tech University and a law degree from the UALR Bowen School of Law.



Greg Rogers
Chief Fiscal Officer
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Named ADE's chief fiscal officer in 2012, Rogers oversees the agency's financial operations. This includes preparing biennial and fiscal year budget requests and representing the agency before legislative committees. With 18 years of state government experience, Rogers previously worked for the Department of Finance and Administration and Department of Human Services. Rogers received a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting from Southern Arkansas University at Magnolia. He recently received a Master of Business Administration in International Business from Salem International University in Salem, W.V.



Kimberly Friedman
Director of Communications
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Friedman joined the department as the director of communications in August 2013. In her position, she coordinates agency internal and external communication efforts. She previously served as the communications director for the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, a position she held for 12 years. She also worked as a reporter for *The Pine Bluff Commercial* and as a page designer for the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*. Friedman received a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from the University of Central Arkansas at Conway. She grew up in DeWitt, located in southeast Arkansas.



Michelle Griffin

Legislative Service Director

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Griffin has served the department for over 25 years in various capacities. As legislative services director, she's the agency's liaison with legislative staff, helping facilitate meetings and information requests. She began in that role during the school funding debates of 2003 and has also had positions in the department's legal office, personnel office and with instructional services. A native of Little Rock, Griffin has a bachelor's degree from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and a master's from Webster University.



Susan Harriman

Policy and Special Projects Director

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Harriman plays a key role in managing special projects such as No Kid Hungry and STEM Works, which includes the New Tech Network High Schools and UTeach teacher preparation program. She's been with the department since 2010. She previously worked for the National Center for Education Achievement, ACT, the U.S. Department of Education, the Texas Education Reform Caucus and Texas Public Education Reform Foundation, the Arlington Independent School District, and Tarrant County College in Fort Worth, Texas. Harriman earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Arlington and a master's degree from the University of North Texas. She is a native of Texas.

