



Primrose Schools

The Leader in Educational Child Care®

Primrose Schools 2010 Leadership Team Bios

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Jo Kirchner President and CEO Primrose Schools

As President and Chief Executive Officer of Primrose Schools, Jo Kirchner is responsible for overseeing strategic direction for the company, managing its vision, brand and business strategies, while guiding new business development to drive growth and profitability for the franchise system and the corporation.

Kirchner first began her career with Primrose Schools over two decades ago. Working with Primrose founders, Paul and Marcy Erwin, she helped launch the concept of franchising a premier educational environment for preschool children. In 1990, Kirchner served as Vice President of the company, was promoted to Senior Vice President in 1995 and then became president and CEO in 1999. Under her leadership, Primrose grew from four schools in Atlanta to more than 24 schools in 1998 to 100 schools in 2002. Today, the brand has more than 212 schools in 15 states.



Kirchner was named to *Catalyst* magazine's Top 25 Entrepreneurs in Atlanta in October of 2007. Because of her leadership, Primrose Schools was named to the Top Atlanta-based franchises by the *Atlanta Business Chronicle* in 2006. Additionally, Primrose was named Number One in growth by *Child Care Business* and was featured as the top child care franchise by *Entrepreneur* magazine in 2003.

Before joining Primrose, Kirchner was the President and Founder of Creative Logistics, an Atlanta-based marketing firm offering strategic planning, advertising and public relations. She previously served as Vice President and Publisher at two Atlanta-based magazine publishing companies and as a sales executive for Proctor Silex Corporation.

With her lifelong passion to improve early childhood education in America and create access to quality education for all children, Kirchner is on the Accreditation Commission for AdvancED, serves as a board member for the Early Care and Education Consortium and serves on the Board of Directors for Growing Leaders. She is a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), as well as the International Franchise Association (IFA) and the American Management Association of Sales and Marketing Executives.

Kirchner has always ensured that making a difference in local communities nationwide be a focus at Primrose, both inside and outside of the classrooms. She founded the Primrose Children's Foundation, which provides financial support to not-for-profit organizations supporting young children. Since its inception, the Primrose Children's Foundation has donated more than \$750,000 to Ronald McDonald House charities, and has supported children overseas by sending literacy and learning kits to children in Afghanistan, the Philippines and Panama. The Foundation has also actively supported Reach Out and Read, a national nonprofit organization that makes books and reading a part of pediatric care—especially for low income families providing the organization more than \$600,000 to Reach Out and Read over the past 4 years.

Kirchner graduated with an Associate Degree in Marketing from Ohio Career College. One of her greatest accomplishments has been achieving national brand leadership and financial success for Primrose while maintaining a values-based culture and a strong commitment to work-life balance for all people affiliated with the organization. She has been married for more than 35 years, and places quality time with her family of highest importance. She lives on a horse farm in Dallas, Georgia with her husband Rick and has two grown children and a grandson.

Darin Harris
Chief Operation Officer
Primrose Schools

As Chief Operating Officer of Primrose Schools, Darin Harris' role is to assist the company in maintaining high-quality Primrose delivery and brand consistency, which helps drive the company's growth and profitability. As COO, Darin has oversight over Operations, Franchising & Compliance, Franchise Finance, Real Estate & Development as well as Franchise Recruitment, Marketing and Public Relations.

Before joining Primrose Schools, Darin served as senior vice president for Arby's Restaurant Group, Inc. (ARG), where he oversaw franchise development and recruiting as well as unit growth and development. He was accountable for re-vitalizing Arby's franchise growth and leading Arby's world-wide development strategy for international, franchise and non-traditional development. He also served as a member of Arby's executive committee and capital committee. In 2007, Darin received the President's "Never Settle" award and was recognized as Arby's employee of the year.



Harris spent a majority of his professional career in the restaurant business. He began in franchise development at Pizza Hut, Inc. and sales and marketing management at Hudson/Pierre Foods. From there, he held vice president of franchise development roles at Orion Foodsystems, LLC and as an officer leading all development functions for Captain D's Seafood.

Before joining Arby's, Darin broadened his operations skills as a multi-unit owner of eight Papa John's and three Qdoba Mexican Grill Restaurants. He was the franchise owner and chairman of two companies that employed more than 350 people. His company activities included leadership in operations, marketing, development and financial management.

Darin learned the importance of building a strong team while pitching professional baseball in Italy for a Series A Championship team. He received his MBA from Xavier University, his MS from St. Thomas University and his BAS from Creighton University. In his free time, he can be found playing sports, watching movies and participating in his church. He lives in Alpharetta, Georgia with his wife, Mary, and their three children, Henry, Miley and Sophia.



Robert "Bob" Benowitz
Executive Vice President of Operations
Primrose Schools

Robert A. (Bob) Benowitz is a highly regarded child care professional with a passion for people. Bob has been employed by Primrose School Franchising Company since 1996 and serves as the Executive Vice President of Operations. He has over 33 years experience in the Child Care Service Industry. He began his career as a center director and has worked for large, national child care organizations before joining Primrose Schools.



He and his Operations Team are responsible for pre-opening training, school openings, quality assurance, and ongoing franchise owner support and relationships. Bob's goals with franchise owners are to provide quality early childhood education to our parents and children, and to maximize the enrollment potential of each school. He believes Primrose franchise owner and corporate staff are second to none in the industry. Bob says, "Our people are the best and that's what sets us apart."



J. Derek Fuller
Vice President, Finance and CFO
Primrose Schools

As Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer, J. Derek Fuller oversees the accounting and information technology departments at Primrose Schools. In his role, Fuller focuses on financial oversight through budgeting, strategic planning and reporting.

Fuller's role in managing the IT department drives efficiency in the Primrose Schools organization, both supporting the Primrose corporate office, as well as managing support and resources for more than 212 Primrose Schools nationwide. Additionally, Fuller's group sets technological specifications for individual schools and administers and maintains the Primrose Gateway intranet and communication system that franchise owners rely on as part of their daily school operations.

Before joining Primrose, Fuller worked as a certified public accountant with Jackson Thornton & Co., PC. During his eight years at the firm, he effectively blended his audit and tax experience to serve clients in the construction and small business industries. Today, Fuller draws on his expertise to provide financial service and strategic counsel to Primrose Schools.

Fuller graduated cum laude from Auburn University with a bachelor's degree in business administration and became a certified public accountant in 1996. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Alabama Society of Certified Public Accountants.

He currently resides in Acworth, Georgia, with his wife, Debbie, and their children, Sam and Claudia.



Bill Pierquet
Vice President, Real Estate and Development
Primrose Schools

As Vice President of Real Estate and Development, Bill Pierquet is responsible for planning school growth in new and existing markets, securing real estate for each new location and managing the design, development and remodeling of all Primrose Schools across the country.

Pierquet has more than 27 years of experience in the multi-unit development business. He has managed all aspects of new unit development and remodeling for both large and small companies, including franchise sales, real estate, architecture and engineering, repair and maintenance, as well as property management. Previously he was Senior Vice President of Development for Sonic where he managed a team that was responsible for opening 200 new units per year. He was also a partner in an area development group that developed both Boston Market and Einstein's Bagel locations throughout the Midwest and New England.



Pierquet earned a bachelor's degree in Industrial Education, Architecture and Building Construction, from the University of Wisconsin, Stout and an MBA in Finance from Loyola University in Chicago. He is a member of the International Council of Shopping Centers.

He currently resides in Acworth, Georgia, with his wife, Sam. He has two grown children, Peter and Gabrielle, and a number of pets, including four horses, seven dogs, and a cat.



Paul Thaxton
Vice President, Brand Management
Primrose Schools

As Vice President of Brand Management, Paul Thaxton oversees the development of the strategy, positioning, advertising, and marketing implementation for Primrose Schools. Additional responsibilities include management direction and oversight for franchise recruitment marketing, research and development, public relations, strategic partnerships, and the Primrose Children's Foundation.



Thaxton's main goals for Primrose Schools are to see the company be recognized as a key national contributor in establishing excellence in the early childhood education industry, extend the Primrose School reputation as the best and most trusted early childhood education and child care services company in America, and help each school to create a lasting, positive impact for the communities, families, and children that it serves.

Before joining Primrose, Thaxton worked for more than 25 years in advertising and marketing, specializing in the food service industry, with key national brands including Wendy's, Long John Silvers, Domino's Pizza, and Chick-fil-A. His breadth of work over time includes media planning and buying, sales promotion, product development, business and market development, field marketing, training and development, strategic planning, and communications management.

Thaxton graduated with a dual degree in business administration and marketing from the University of Kentucky. He is a member of the International Franchise Association and the American Marketing Association.

He currently resides in Powder Springs, Ga. with his wife, Carol, and their sons Ross and Sean. Away from work, Paul enjoys golf, fitness training, traveling, spending time with family, and supporting the Wildcats and the "Big Blue" alumni association. In addition, Paul is active in giving back to community and his church.



Mary R. Zurn, Ph.D.
Vice President, Education and Professional Development
Primrose Schools

As Vice President of Education and Professional Development, Dr. Mary Zurn oversees the development of curriculum and training for Primrose Schools. Responsible for the continuous improvement of the Primrose Balanced Learning® curriculum, Zurn also provides up-to-date training tools and materials to ensure consistent delivery of the Primrose model throughout its more than 212 schools. In her role, Zurn also serves as a company spokesperson on education and child development related topics and writes for Dr. Z & Me, a unique blog providing fun, useful tips and resources for parents.



Dr. Zurn has worked actively in a variety of educational arenas, serving as an influential instructor, administrator and designer of innovative interactive multimedia applications and teaching materials. Prior to joining Primrose, Dr. Zurn worked as an independent educational consultant, conducting workshops related to early reading, writing development, children's literature, and the effective use of technology in learning.

Throughout her career, Dr. Zurn has been committed to early childhood education. In 1972, she co-founded the Gateway Preschool and Kindergarten in Atlanta, where she directed and taught for eight years. In addition to the program for young children, the school also offered tutorial assistance to K-12 students with learning challenges. From 1981 to 1986, she lectured and supervised students doing field work in reading, language arts, and children's literature at Georgia State University, where she earned her Ph.D. in early childhood education.

Dr. Zurn went on to work for IBM's K-12 Education Division for 10 years, during which she designed multiple technology-based programs. The teacher-support materials her teams created to accompany the programs won awards as guides for the successful integration of technology into the curriculum.

Zurn's passion centers on a love of children, education, and reading, and she is convinced that a good children's book is the best tool to introduce or teach virtually any topic. A firm believer in Primrose's Balanced Learning® curriculum, Dr. Zurn puts special emphasis on literacy instruction, including reading comprehension and writing, appropriate exploratory and hands-on learning activities to help children build a foundation for understanding of mathematics, and the integration of technology into classrooms and the curriculum.

Before earning her doctorate, Dr. Zurn received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from Emory University, and her Master's Degree in special education from Georgia State University. Zurn resides in Acworth, GA with her husband Warren. The couple has two grown sons, Allen and Lawton.



PRIMROSE LEADERSHIP TEAM



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