



Presenter Biographies

Featured Speaker

The Honorable Christopher B. Coleman

Mayor, City of Saint Paul @cityofsaintpaul

Mayor Coleman took office in 2005 after several years as a city councilmember, community, and neighborhood leader. In addition to his achievements in public safety and infrastructure, Mayor Coleman has been a champion of afterschool initiatives, recognizing that time outside of the classroom is crucial in closing the achievement gap, and in ensuring that Saint Paul's children are equipped with the tools needed for post-secondary and career success. Mayor Coleman has introduced revolutionary programs such as Sprockets, a network of afterschool and summer programs for youth in Saint Paul. Mayor Coleman is the past President of the National League of Cities.

Panelists

Eyenga Bokamba

Executive Director, Sprockets @SprocketsStPaul

As Executive Director, Eyenga leads the vision and strategic direction of Sprockets, St. Paul's out of school time coordinating intermediary. In this role, she builds and maintains relationships with system and institutional partners and manages the organization's fundraising and financial administration. She also leads the policy work for Sprockets by developing long-term policy goals and strategies. Prior to her work with Sprockets, Eyenga was the Youth Programs Manager at Pillsbury House, an arts-integrated social service agency, where she was responsible for out of school time programming for K–8 youth. Eyenga is also a certified Language Arts teacher who has received recognition for excellence in teaching.

Fatima Muhammad

Afterschool Project Director, YCB Minneapolis Afterschool Network

Fatima Muhammad oversees the development of Minneapolis' first citywide out-of-school time system. Fatima comes to the Youth Coordinating Board with 20 years of experience in youth development, program and project management, and community outreach and engagement. Prior to her position at the YCB, Fatima managed college-readiness and independent living youth programs within the Twin Cities, and has also served as a trainer and consultant for a number of youth-serving organizations.

Bela Shah Spooner @belashahspooner

Program Manager – Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, National League of Cities

@leagueofcities

Bela Shah Spooner is the Program Manager for Afterschool Initiatives in the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families at the National League of Cities (NLC). For over a decade at NLC, she has worked to educate municipal officials about the importance of afterschool learning opportunities and supported 50+ cities' efforts to create citywide afterschool systems. Bela has authored various publications on municipal leadership for afterschool, convened three National City Afterschool Summits, and has helped 19 statewide afterschool networks host mayoral summits on afterschool and expanded learning. She previously worked for the Coalition for Community Schools.

Wokie Weah @wokieweah

President, Youthprise @youthprise

As President of Youthprise, Wokie Weah provides executive leadership and vision, works in partnership with the board of directors and brokers relationships to accelerate leadership, innovation and systems in learning beyond the classroom. Wokie previously worked for 18 years at the National Youth Leadership Council, serving as Senior Vice President, where she helped shape the organization's strategic direction, cultivate partnerships, grow the funding base and managed NYLC's youth and schools programs, professional development, annual conference, and special events. She also worked for UNICEF as an Education Project Officer in Liberia, where she coordinated the Support to War-Affected Youth Project, the Juvenile Justice Initiative, African Girl Education Initiative, and Child Friendly Spaces for internally displaced children.

National Experts

Note: Panelists will also serve as national experts for breakout discussions

Dr. Jennifer Axelrod

Policy Fellow, Chapin Hall, University of Chicago @chapin_hall

Prior to her role at Chapin Hall, Jennifer Axelrod was the Deputy Commissioner of Youth Services at the City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services. As the Deputy Commissioner, she designed and supervised the implementation of the City's youth services and related funding strategies, including strategies to reduce violent incidences involving youth and increase their engagement with schooling and workforce development. She also was responsible for facilitating and monitoring the implementation of City funded afterschool programs, behavioral health services, and mentoring programs. Previously, she worked for Chicago Public Schools, helping to lead implementation of evidence-based behavioral health strategies and practices, as well as other school improvement initiatives. She also oversaw the implementation of centrally funded afterschool programming at the Chicago Public Schools.

Dr. Dale Blyth

University of Minnesota

Dale Blyth recently retired as Extension Professor in the College of Education and Human Development, the Howland Endowed Chair in Youth Development Leadership, and a Senior Research Fellow with the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement at the University of Minnesota. He has previously served as the Associate Dean for Youth Development directing the Center for Youth Development, as the Director of Research and Evaluation at Search Institute, as a faculty member of Cornell University and Ohio State University, as the co-developer of the Center for Adolescent Health at the American Medical Association, and as a Research Scientist at the Boys Town Center for Youth Development. Recently he has been leading an initiative to advance social and emotional learning outcomes in collective impact efforts. He serves on several community, state and national leadership groups related to out of school time, data systems, and youth development.

Betsy Brand

Executive Director, American Youth Policy Forum @aypf_tweets

Betsy Brand has served as the Executive Director of AYPF since 2004, and as Co-Director of the organization since 1998. Betsy has spent her career working on education, workforce, and youth policy and specializes in comprehensive approaches to helping young people be prepared for today's careers, lifelong learning, and civic engagement. Betsy has previously worked for the U.S. House and Senate, the U.S. Department of Education, and as a workforce and education policy consultant.

Jessica Donner

Executive Director, Every Hour Counts [@everyhourcounts](#)

Jessica Donner is the executive director of Every Hour Counts, a coalition of national citywide organizations that increases access to quality learning opportunities, particularly for underserved students. The organization is a leading voice promoting expanded-learning systems, including afterschool initiatives. Donner manages the organization's efforts to develop policy recommendations and solutions, test the feasibility of policy and practice recommendations and disseminate findings, and deliver technical assistance to communities to build expanded learning systems. Prior to joining Every Hour Counts, she directed service-learning initiatives at the National Service-Learning Partnership at the Academy for Educational Development and the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Karen Kingsley [@kpkingsley](#)

Director of Public Policy and Communications, Youthprise [@youthprise](#)

Karen Kingsley directs public policy and strategic communications for Youthprise. She has more than 20 years of experience leading public policy and system change efforts to advance the well-being of children, youth and families. At Youthprise, she coordinates a peer learning community of systems builders who are leading expanded learning networks in the Twin Cities metro area and communities throughout Minnesota.

Jennifer Brown Lerner

Deputy Director, American Youth Policy Forum [@aypf_tweets](#)

Jennifer Brown Lerner manages American Youth Policy Forum's work on a wide range of issues that ensure all students graduate ready to succeed in college and careers, including out-of-school time initiatives. At AYPF, she co-authored a compendium on best practices in secondary-post secondary learning options entitled *The College Ladder: Linking Secondary and Postsecondary Education for Success for All*. Prior to joining AYPF, Jennifer worked as a classroom teacher and communications officer for a number of schools in the Boston area. Additionally, she was active in the creation of a Summerbridge (now Breakthrough Collaborative) site in Atlanta, Georgia.

Priscilla Little

Initiative Manager – Learning and Enrichment, The Wallace Foundation [@wallacefdn](#)

Priscilla Little oversees the foundation's \$13 million effort to assist nine cities in providing more high-quality afterschool programs through a coordinated systems approach. She is the former associate director of the Harvard Family Research Project, and has been working in education and conducting educational research for more than 20 years, with an emphasis on research and evaluation to support and improve afterschool experiences. She has worked with national education research firms, state education agencies, nonprofits and private foundations. Outside the afterschool arena, Little has worked in the areas of family engagement, early childhood, and the use of data for continuous improvement.

Dr. Hilary Rhodes

Senior Officer – Research and Evaluation, The Wallace Foundation [@wallacefdn](#)

Hilary Rhodes is a senior research and evaluation officer at The Wallace Foundation, leading efforts to fill key knowledge gaps and generate evidence of what works related to learning and enrichment opportunities for disadvantaged children and youth. She is currently managing grants concerning non-cognitive factors, scaling-up social innovations, data use by afterschool systems, and collective impact in education, amongst others. Her experience in applied research spans the for-profit and nonprofit sectors and an array of social and strategic issues.

Nina Sonenberg

Communications Officer, The Wallace Foundation @wallacefdn

Nina Sonenberg draws on her experience as communications director of two national nonprofits, and as a documentary scriptwriter for CBS News Productions, to sharpen messaging and share lessons from the foundation. She works primarily in learning and enrichment, with a focus on afterschool system building, expanded learning opportunities and summer learning. She was formerly a national communications director of Project GRAD, the nation's largest college access program for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and as vice president of communications of the national nonprofit Libraries for the Future.

Dr. Julie Spielberger

Research Fellow, Chapin Hall, University of Chicago @chapin_hall

Julie Spielberger is a Research Fellow with expertise in child development and early childhood education, particularly emergent literacy, school readiness, the role of play in children's learning and development, and improving program quality and professional development. Currently, she is Principal Investigator of an eight-year longitudinal study of patterns of service use and their relationship to family functioning and child development, particularly as they pertain to school readiness and school success. She is also leading evaluations of several system-building initiatives designed to improve the coordination and quality of a range of early childhood services, including home visitation and early care and education.