



American Youth
Policy Forum



William T. Grant
FOUNDATION

Panelist Biographies

Emily Anthony
Senior Policy Advisor
United States Department of Education



Emily Anthony is a senior policy advisor at the U.S. Department of Education. As a member of the Department's Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development (OPEPD), Ms. Anthony manages the Department's evidence planning portfolio, which includes increasing the use of evidence in policymaking, planning major program evaluations, and improving how the Department's data is made available. Ms. Anthony works closely with staff from the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) and the Office of Innovation and Improvement to ensure the coordination and alignment of Department's evidence-related activities, and recently helped with new evidence requirements in the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. Prior to joining OPEPD, Ms. Anthony directed the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) program at IES' National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and has also held research positions at NYU's Institute for Education and Social Policy and the Urban Institute. Ms. Anthony has a bachelor degree from Pomona College in Claremont, California and a master's degree from the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at NYU.

Paula Arce-Trigatti
Director
National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships (NNERPP)



Paula Arce-Trigatti is Director of the National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships (NNERPP), a recently launched organization aiming to connect research-practice partnerships in education housed at the Kinder Institute for Urban Research at Rice University. Prior to joining NNERPP, Paula was a post-doctoral fellow at the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans and The Murphy Institute, both at Tulane University. Her research interests broadly focus on the supply side of schools; more specifically, she is interested in studying innovations in education, the unintended consequences of school or district level policies, and how the production of knowledge can be improved. She has bachelor's degrees in music and business from Florida State University and her Ph.D. in economics from the University of Houston.

Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger
Director of Policy and Program Studies Services
United States Department of Education



Jennifer Bell-Ellwanger is director of the Policy and Program Studies Services at the U.S. Department of Education. Bell-Ellwanger joined the Department in February 2015. In this role she leads a team of researchers and policy analysts to provide analytic support and research expertise to enable Department staff to make evidence-based decisions, inform policy development by analyzing data, and conduct objective reviews of Department products, including reports and speeches. Bell-Ellwanger holds a bachelor's degree in education and psychology from the Catholic University of America and a master's degree in counseling and personnel services from Fordham University, and completed her doctoral coursework in educational psychology at Fordham University.

Thomas Brock
Commissioner, National Center for Education Research
Institute of Education Sciences (IES)



Thomas Brock is Commissioner of the National Center for Education Research at the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). In this role, he oversees federal funding for scientific research that addresses major education problems and solutions in the U.S. Much of the research is focused on exploring, developing, and evaluating interventions designed to improve education outcomes for students at all levels, ranging from pre-kindergarten to postsecondary education. Prior to IES, Brock led the Young Adults and Postsecondary Education policy area at MDRC, where he and his colleagues focused on developing and evaluating programs designed to increase academic achievement, persistence and completion for students in college. Earlier in his career, Brock evaluated a variety of welfare reform and anti-poverty programs that included education, job training and case management services targeting low-income adults. Brock has a master's degree in public administration from Columbia University and a Ph.D. in Social Welfare from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Carrie Conaway
Chief Strategy and Planning Officer
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education,



Carrie Conaway is the chief strategy and planning officer for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, with over 15 years of experience in improving systems through evidence. She leads the agency's Office of Planning and Research, which helps the state and districts implement effective policy and programs and make effective resource use decisions to improve student outcomes.

She holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Oberlin College; a master's degree in policy analysis and labor policy from the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota; and a master's degree in sociology and social policy from Harvard University.

Rita Fentress
Director of School Improvement
Tennessee Department of Education



Rita Fentress is the director of School Improvement at the Tennessee Department of Education. Her work in the department’s Division of Consolidated Planning and Monitoring (CPM) targets support for the state’s Priority schools, the bottom 5% of all schools academically and Focus schools, the 10% of schools with the largest achievement gaps between groups of students. Ms. Fentress has worked with the state’s Achievement School District (ASD) and Innovation Zones (iZones) in the state’s four large urban districts since their inception in 2012.

Fentress holds a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Murray State University and a Master of Science in Education Leadership from University of Alabama.

Steve Fleischman
Chief Executive Officer
Education Northwest



Steve Fleischman serves as the highest ranking officer of Education Northwest, providing overall leadership for the Portland, Oregon-based nonprofit. He has spent the past two decades advocating for and supporting numerous initiatives to use evidence to improve schools. Fleischman currently leads a foundation-funded project to create a “next generation” education decision-making support website and service. Fleischman also serves as the chairperson of the Knowledge Alliance and as a board member of The Forum for Youth Investment and NWEA.

He is a frequent author and presenter on the topic of evidence-based policymaking and practice in education. Most recently, he co-authored the Center for American Progress report, *Better Evidence, Better Choices, Better Schools: State Supports for Evidence-Based School Improvement* and the Every Student Succeeds Act and the Teachers College Record article, *Improving High School Success: Searching for Evidence of Promise*.

Carrie Heath Phillips
Program Director, Standards, Assessment, and Accountability
Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)



At the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), **Carrie Heath Phillips** oversees implementation of college- and career-readiness standards by facilitating cross-state collaboration and elevating high-leverage practices to chief state school officers and their senior staff. She also is leading the Council’s expanding work on state systems of school improvement and support. Prior to her current role, Carrie was a core member of the team who developed the Common Core State Standards, and she oversaw efforts to build support for the Common Core among national education stakeholders. Her tenure at CCSSO started with federal advocacy and partnership

development. Prior to working at CCSSO, Carrie was a fellow on Capitol Hill for Senator Chris Dodd. She began her career in education as a fourth and fifth grade classroom teacher in the Chicago Public Schools. Carrie holds a Bachelor’s degree in Social Policy and a Master’s degree in Education from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

Alisande Henry
Special Assistant to the State Superintendent
Michigan Department of Education



Alisande Henry is the Special Assistant to the State Superintendent in the Michigan Department of Education, a position she has held since April 2011. In this role, she serves as a member of the Superintendent's Cabinet and is responsible for a variety of projects and initiatives within the Superintendent's Office and the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), including playing a key role in the coordination and development of the state's plan for the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Alisande received her BA in Political Science/Public Policy from Michigan State University, earning Phi Beta Kappa honors, and was selected to serve as a member of the College of Social Science Dean's Advisory Council. She is a resident of Lansing, MI, where she serves on the city's Planning Board.

John Hughes
Associate Director, Florida Center for Reading Research
Deputy Director, Southeast Regional Education Laboratory



Dr. John Hughes is the Associate Director for the Florida Center for Reading Research and the Deputy Director of the Southeast Regional Education Laboratory. He has conducted research and program evaluations at all levels of the educational system; as an education analyst for the Florida Legislature, as the program manager for Florida's early learning programs and as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research at the Florida College System. While serving in the Florida College System he was contract the manager for Florida's new college placement test and oversaw the implementation of an early college readiness testing program. His current work is primarily K-12 oriented with a focus on helping states better utilize their data systems to inform decision-making. Dr. Hughes holds his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Florida.

Russell Johnston
Senior Associate Commissioner
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



Russell Johnston has served as a Senior Associate Commissioner at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's since August 2014. There, he manages the state's accountability and assistance system for all public schools and districts to support their work to raise achievement for all students, and oversees the implementation of various initiatives to assess effectiveness, monitor improvement, and identify appropriate interventions.

Johnston, who began his career as a special education teacher and administrator, also led the West Springfield Public Schools from 2010-2014, where he oversaw an annual operating budget of \$39 million for a school district that serves 3,900 students and 700 employees in nine schools. Under Dr. Johnston's leadership, the West Springfield district's four-year graduation rate increased from 71.7% to 81.6%, the annual dropout rate declined to 2.1%, and students across the grades made performance gains. He holds a Doctorate of Philosophy and Education Leadership and a Master of Education, Visual Impairments degree from Boston College as well as a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from DePaul University.

Laurie Lee
Researcher
Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR)



Laurie Lee is a researcher at the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR). She came to FCRR from the Just Read, Florida! office with the Florida Department of Education where she spent nearly ten years providing professional development to teachers and district personnel in literacy, working with state policy, and providing technical assistance to district and school staff, parents, and students. Ms. Lee obtained her B.S. Ed. from Missouri Southern State University and her M.S. Ed. from Western Illinois University and spent 14 years teaching elementary and middle school students in Missouri, Mississippi, and Illinois.

Karen Ruple
Manager, MI Excel Statewide System of Support (SSoS)
Michigan Department of Education (MDE)



Karen Ruple is the manager of the MI Excel Statewide System of Support (SSoS) for Michigan Department of Education (MDE). She was involved in the redesign of the SSoS in response to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility waiver and is currently on several action teams that are creating the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reauthorization of ESEA criteria for Michigan. Previously, she was a School Improvement Consultant at Kent ISD. She has taught at all grades K through 8th. Karen completed her undergraduate and graduate work at Western Michigan University and Michigan State University.

Nathaniel Schwartz
Chief Research and Strategy Officer
Tennessee Department of Education



Nathaniel Schwartz is the Chief Research and Strategy Officer for the Tennessee Department of Education. In this role, he oversees the agency's work around research and data analysis, partnerships, and strategic planning. He holds a Ph.D. in Education Policy from the University of Michigan and a bachelor's degree from Harvard College. He previously taught high school science in Illinois and Arkansas.

Vivian Tseng
Vice President, Program
William T. Grant Foundation



Dr. Vivian Tseng leads the Foundation's grantmaking and spearheads its initiatives to connect research, policy, and practice. In 2009, she launched the Foundation's focus on the use of research evidence in policy and practice, inspiring a national network of partnerships between school districts and researchers. Dr. Tseng has a deep interest in mentoring young researchers and is committed to strengthening the career pipeline for scholars of color. Under her leadership, the William T. Grant Scholars Program has broadened its diversity and deepened its support for early-career professionals.

Dr. Tseng received her doctorate from New York University and her bachelor of arts from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Martin West
Associate Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Faculty Research Fellow, National Bureau of Economic Research
Editor-in-Chief, Education Next



Martin West is associate professor of education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, a faculty research fellow at the National Bureau of Economic Research, and editor-in-chief of Education Next, a journal of opinion and research on education policy. He is also deputy director of the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard's Kennedy School. West studies the politics of education and how education policies affect student learning and non-tested skills. In 2013-14, West worked as senior advisor to the ranking member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. He previously taught at Brown University and was a research fellow in Governance Studies at the Brookings Institution, and he is a founding board member of Rhode Island Mayoral Academies, an organization helping educators open socioeconomically diverse public charter schools in partnership with mayors.