

## National Forum on Closing the Opportunity Gap for Early Readers

### Participant Bios

#### **Christine Becker, Consultant, Urban Libraries Council**



Christine Becker is an independent consultant who provides a wide range of services to national associations, local governments, and state municipal leagues including strategic planning, operational analysis, member surveys, research and writing. Before establishing her own consulting firm, she was Deputy Executive Director of the National League of Cities for 17 years. She began her career as a newspaper reporter covering local government in New England and also worked at the International City/County Management Association and the District of Columbia Government. She holds a bachelor's degree in English from Newton College of the Sacred Heart (now part of Boston College), an MPA from the University of Southern California, and is a fellow in the National Academy of Public Administration.

#### **Susan Benton, President and CEO, Urban Libraries Council**



Susan has worked with libraries and local governments for over twenty years. Her professional career has been dedicated to assisting city and county executives initiate and manage change in their organizations so that citizens and businesses are receiving the strongest possible services. She comes to ULC from her position as Research, Development and Strategic Partners Executive at the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

#### **Jenny Bogoni, Executive Director, READ! By 4<sup>th</sup>**



Jenny is the Executive Director of READ! by 4<sup>th</sup>, Philadelphia's citywide campaign to ensure all kids are reading on grade level by the time they enter 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Working out of the Free Library of Philadelphia, Jenny leads a coalition of more than 50 partner organizations that are aligning their strategies and resources toward this shared vision and mission. Prior to this role, Jenny founded the Spark Program in Philadelphia. As Spark's first East Coast site, the Philadelphia program served three schools in North and West Philadelphia and was later expanded to include six more schools. With support from local companies, organizations, and institutions, Spark's primary goals include preparing students for success in high school and reducing the city's dropout rate. Before Spark, Jenny was the Vice President for

Partnerships at Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN), where she led several citywide campaigns, managing complex issues and goals with wide-ranging constituents.

#### **Tim Carrigan, Senior Program Officer, Library Services, Institute of Museum and Library Services**



Tim Carrigan has more than a decade of experience in the informal learning and cultural heritage sectors. He has been with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) since 2007, currently serving as a Senior Program Officer with a portfolio focused on learning in libraries. Prior to coming to IMLS, Tim worked at the National Building Museum and Pittsburgh Opera.

**Michael Casserly, Executive Director, Council of the Great City Schools**



Michael Casserly has served as Executive Director of the Council of the Great City Schools since January 1992. Casserly also served as the organization's Director of Legislation and Research for 15 years before assuming his current position. As head of the urban school group, Casserly unified big city schools nationwide around a vision of reform and improvement; led the nation's largest urban school districts to volunteer for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP); guided the organization to be the first national education-membership group to call for the Common Core Standards; initiated an aggressive technical assistance program to improve urban education; directed the development of public education's first performance management system; and led the first national study of common practices among the nation's fastest improving urban school districts. He is currently spearheading efforts to boost academic performance in the nation's big city schools; strengthen management and operations; and improve the public's image of urban education. An article in USA Today some years ago called him a "Crusader for Urban Schools." He is a U.S. Army veteran, and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland and B.A. from Villanova University.

**Joshua Cramer, Vice President, National Center for Families Learning**



Dr. Joshua Cramer has spent 15 years working in non-profit and public school administration roles including his current position as Vice President for the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL). Significant local and national leadership experiences include design and supervision of: family engagement and family literacy programs, early childhood education, English Language Learner education, before and after school programs, high school reform efforts, school-community partnerships, volunteer management, youth mentoring and development, U.S Department of Education-funded programs—including the full Elementary and Secondary Education Act suite and various competitive grant programs, programs funded through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, programs funded through the Corporation for National and Community Service, and programs funded through the Department of Health and Human Services.

**Jane Eastwood, Director, Saint Paul Public Library**



Jane Eastwood has been the Director of the Saint Paul Public Library since 2015. Previously, she served as the Education Policy Director for Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman, where she staffed and led the Mayor's racial equity initiative from its inception and also guided its citywide afterschool network, My Brother's Keeper, youth employment and school partnership initiatives. Eastwood was Director of External Relations and Partnerships at the Minneapolis Public Library and held executive positions at the Science Museum of Minnesota and Scholarship America, a higher education service organization.

**Ron Fairchild, Director, Network Communities Support Center, Campaign for Grade Level Reading**



Ron Fairchild is President and CEO of the Smarter Learning Group, a national education consulting firm. In this capacity, he also serves as the Director of the Network Communities Support Center for the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, which supports more than 200 communities across the country that are engaged in efforts to move the needle on third grade reading proficiency. Prior to launching the firm in 2011, Ron served as the founding CEO of the National Summer Learning Association and the Executive Director of its predecessor organization, the Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University from 2002 to 2010. His earlier positions include serving as the Director of Education Programs for the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and as an Education Associate with the Public Education Network. He is also a former public school teacher who holds a B.A. and Master's degree from Vanderbilt University

**Robin Hall, Director of Language Arts and Literacy, Council of the Great City Schools**



Dr. Robin Hall is the Director of Language Arts and Literacy for the Council of the Great City Schools. She keeps members informed about research on systems and successful strategies for improving student achievement. Dr. Hall also provides support for development and dissemination of information and tools to implement the Common Core State Standards. She received her B.A. Degree in English from Vassar College and received her M.A. and D.A.H. Degrees from Clark Atlanta University. Dr. Hall is married with two daughters, a granddaughter and grandson.

**Parker Hamilton, Director, Montgomery County Public Libraries**



Parker Hamilton is the Director of Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL), Maryland; a library system serving over one million residents at twenty-two locations, including twenty full-service branches. As the director for MCPL, she has guided the system into the 21st century with new technologies; creative staffing; inventive service deliveries; focused partnerships with non-profit and community organizations; and strategic planning for the future. Under her dynamic and innovative leadership, MCPL has received fifteen National Association of Counties Achievement Awards and the Urban Libraries Council's 2016 Top Innovator Award in the category of Organizational Change and Strategic Management. Parker, who has worked with libraries and local government for over thirty years, has often been recognized for her leadership and her commitment to diversity and inclusion. Ms. Hamilton

holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature and a Masters in Library Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

**Keanne Henry, Vice President, AARP Foundation Experience Corps**



As Vice President of AARP Foundation Experience Corps, Keanne provides strategic, financial, and operational management for Experience Corps' nationwide network of 21 branches and affiliates. She also serves as the Vice President for Strategy, Planning and Innovation. In that role, Keanne leads the Foundation's strategy development, innovation, program evaluation and risk management functions.

**Marie Jarry, Director, Youth and Family Services, Hartford Public Library**



Marie Jarry has served as the Youth and Family Services Director for the Hartford Public Library in Hartford, CT since February 2016. Prior to that, Marie was the Young Minds Manager for the New Haven Free Public Library where she co-created the highly successful REAdy for the Grade Summer Reading Program. Marie holds a Bachelor's degree in History from Central Connecticut State University, a Master's in Library Science from Southern Connecticut State University and was a certified Elementary School teacher.

### **Rodney Johnson, Director, Early Literacy, School District of Philadelphia**



Rodney Johnson has been employed at the School District of Philadelphia since August 2014 serving in the role of Academic Coach. Since October 2014, he has been the Director of K-3 Early Literacy in the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. Previously, prior to transitioning to Philadelphia, Rodney was a first and third grade teacher, a training specialist, and an academic coach. Rodney received his B.A. in English from Florida A&M University, Early Childhood Certification from Georgetown University, and M. Ed in Education from Bowie State University.

### **Lee Keesler, Chief Executive Officer, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library**



Lee Keesler's lifelong passion for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region is broadly evidenced in more than three decades of commitment to the corporate, non-profit, and community sectors in leadership and volunteer roles. Keesler currently serves as CEO of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and is responsible for overall direction, performance and impact of the organization, and for its strategic relationship with Mecklenburg County. Keesler also serves on the Board of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library Foundation, the Library's new charitable fundraising arm. A native of Charlotte, Keesler is a graduate of Duke University and holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Wake Forest University's School of Business. He and his wife, Garrell, have a son, Andrew, and daughter, Anne Chambers.

### **Paula Kiely, City Librarian, Milwaukee Public Library**



Paula Kiely was appointed Milwaukee Public Library Director by Mayor Tom Barrett in September 2006. She is the 11th director in the library's 138-year history. Kiely joined MPL in 1995. During her tenure, she worked as children's and young adult librarian, Children's Services Coordinator, and Deputy City Librarian/Central Library Director. Under her leadership, the Library revitalized its early literacy program, completed a data-driven strategic plan, and developed a comprehensive facilities plan. This plan is underway with a major upgrade of the branch library system, using an innovative mixed-use model to rebuild 6 of its 12 branches. A Milwaukee native, Kiely earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Library and Information Studies from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. She was honored in 2002 as UWM's School of Information Studies Graduate of the Decade and was selected as one of the Business

Journal's 2011 Women of Influence.

### **Ruth Maegli, Chief Academic Officer, Milwaukee Public Schools**



Milwaukee Public Schools Chief Academic Officer, Ruth Maegli, has worked as a teacher, principal and district administrator in MPS for more than 25 years. As the Chief Academic Officer, Ms. Maegli oversees the district's Curriculum and Instruction, College and Career Readiness, Specialized Services and Student Performance and Improvement departments. The veteran teacher and administrator holds a bachelor's degree in art education from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, a master's degree in art education from St. Cloud State University in St. Cloud, Minnesota, and an administrative license from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. from the urban education doctoral program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.



### **Hans Ott, Assistant Superintendent, Office of Teaching and Learning, Saint Paul Public Schools**



Hans Ott is in his third year as the Assistant Superintendent of the Office of Teaching and Learning for the St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS). Prior to this position Mr. Ott was the assistant principal at Bruce Vento Elementary School, a differentiation and data coach through the office of Teaching and Learning and a math teacher/instructional & technology integration coach at Open World Learning Community in SPPS. Before working in SPPS he was a teacher in Minnetonka, MN, the San Francisco Bay Area and Wisconsin as well as co-director of English academies in South Korea.

### **Michelle Puhlick, Executive Director of Policy and Innovation, Hartford Public Schools**



Dr. Michelle L. Puhlick, Executive Director of Policy & Innovation for Hartford Public Schools in Connecticut oversees policy development and recommendations, acts as the project lead on numerous partnerships and initiatives, and serves as the district lead on technology and innovation. As the project lead for SCL supported by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Michelle oversees the High School Centers of Innovation work designed to promote innovation and support efforts to transform Hartford Public Schools into a SCL system. She also provides leadership to the Hartford Student Internship Program and the Hartford Coalition on Education and Talent (All In!), as well as leads the Hartford Public Library Partnership (Boundless). Michelle serves as the district lead for technology and innovation

through providing strategic leadership to district innovation efforts, overseeing the district technology plan, and serving as the liaison to MHIS on district technology priorities. Michelle actively engages in policy advocacy to advance SCL including participating on the *Superintendent and District Leaders Mastery-Based Learning (MBL) Community of Practice* and being a member of the Connecticut Association of Public Schools (CAPSS) Education Transformation Task Force. Michelle participated on the *Raising Awareness of MBL Stakeholder Group* with the National Governor's Association, previously served on the *Act Unleashing Innovation in Connecticut Schools* state-level focus group, and lobbied in Washington, D.C. regarding the need for unpaid internship waivers for school districts. Michelle served on the *NextEd: Next Steps* Task Force which recently released a guide to leading SCL transformation in schools and districts. Michelle is an alumna of the Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP) and recently completed her doctorate through Northeastern University's Doctor of Law & Policy program.

### **Mary Kingston Roche, Director of Public Policy, Coalition for Community Schools**



Mary Kingston Roche is the Director of Public Policy for the Coalition for Community Schools. In this role she leads the policy and advocacy efforts of the Coalition to promote the community schools approach both on the federal and state levels. Prior to this role, Mary served for 2.5 years as Manager of Government Relations for the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). In this role she represented the NASSP members as an active voice on Capitol Hill at the federal level for the best policies possible for secondary school leaders and school districts across the nation. While at NASSP, Mary led the lobbying efforts of the nation's largest education coalition, the Committee for Education Funding, in the role of Hill Teams Co-Chair. Mary is a proud alumna of IEL's Education Policy Fellowship Program, class of 2011. Mary received her Master of Public Policy from Duke University and a Bachelor of

Arts in English from Boston University. Prior to joining the staff at NASSP she began her career teaching middle and high school English for three years in Oakland, CA.

### **Ramiro Salazar, Library Director, San Antonio Public Library**



As Library Director, Ramiro S. Salazar provides management oversight for the San Antonio Public Library system, which serves a population of over 1.8 million. The system consists of the downtown Central Library, 28 library outlets and approximately 500 employees. Mr. Salazar, a native Texan, has been a library professional for over thirty years. Before joining the San Antonio Public Library in 2005, Mr. Salazar served as Interim Assistant City Manager for the city of Dallas. Prior to that, he served as the Director of the Dallas Public Library from 1993 to 2004. He also served as Director of the El Paso Public Library for three years. Wherever Mr. Salazar has served, he has worked to increase access to library resources and services for all segments of the community.

**Emily Samose, Director, Education and Learning Initiatives, Urban Libraries Council**



As the Director of Education and Learning Initiatives, Emily lead’s ULC’s strategic focus area of education and lifelong learning by identifying, advancing and promoting the innovative ways that public libraries are community hubs for learning that advance educational goals. Prior to joining ULC, Emily served as a consultant for the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, spent seven years with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and over ten years developing service-learning programs at nonprofit organizations and universities. Emily holds a master's degree in education from San Francisco State University and is a graduate of the Institute for Educational Leadership’s Education Policy Fellowship Program.

**Brian Schultz, Chief Academic Officer, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools**



Brian F. Schultz is currently the Chief Academic Officer of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in Charlotte, NC. Brian began his career in Indiana, teaching 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. He moved to North Carolina and has worked in several capacities in two school districts, as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, director of elementary education, executive director of a learning community and in his current role as chief academic officer, for a total of 21 years in education. Schultz has also been an adjunct professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC). He holds a bachelor’s degree in elementary education from Purdue University in Indiana and also a master’s degree in school administration from UNCC.

**Jennifer Smith, Senior Director, Curriculum and Instruction, Milwaukee Public Schools**



Jennifer Smith, Ed.D. is currently the Senior Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Milwaukee Public Schools. Dr. Smith holds a Bachelor of Science (Secondary Education) degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a Masters in Educational Leadership from Cardinal Stritch University and a Doctor of Education degree from Walden University. Dr. Smith has also served as the principal of Rufus King High school, and both assistant principal and principal of Milwaukee School of Languages. In July, 2015 Dr. Smith was recognized by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction as a Master Educator Administrator and has successfully completed the National Institute for School Leadership Executive Development program.

**Michell Yorkman, Special Projects Manager, Council of the Great City Schools**



Michell Yorkman is a special projects manager for the Council of the Great City Schools. She serves as a conference coordinator and as the liaison for the Council’s affiliate group, the Council of the Great City Colleges of Education, which highlights successful partnership between colleges of education and great city school districts. Prior to joining the Council, Yorkman served as the professional development manager for Suited for Change, an organization serving low-income women, by providing professional clothing, career and life skills education. Earlier, she was the admissions director for Second Genesis, a private, nonprofit residential and outpatient rehabilitation program for people who are severely addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. Yorkman holds a master's degree in social work from Boston University and a bachelor's degree in English from Emory University in Atlanta, GA.