

Presenter Biographies

Jeremy Anderson is the President of the Education Commission of the States, a national organization that believes informed policymakers create better education policy. The Education Commission of the States provides education leaders with unbiased information, opportunities for collaboration and strives to ensure policymakers learn from experience. Jeremy has a strong public service record working with officials in Washington, D.C., with many governors and legislators in states and with education policy organizations around the country. Some of his accomplishments include providing strategic leadership on education policy design and implementation through projects with the National Governors Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Conference of State Legislators, and many other national policy organizations. Jeremy has served in multiple policy and governmental affairs roles for governors on state and national education initiatives and was instrumental in brokering the bipartisan passage of the largest K-12 funding investment in Kansas history, successfully averting a shutdown of Kansas schools. Jeremy currently serves on the Academy of Education Arts and Sciences Board of Governors. Jeremy is the eighth president of Education Commission of the States since its establishment in 1965.

Belinda Biscoe Boni serves as the University of Oklahoma (OU) Associate Vice President for Outreach (AVP) for the Public and Community Services Division and as the South Central Comprehensive Center (SC3) Director and Central Comprehensive Center (C3) Principal Investigator. As SC3 Director, she works with staff members, Center partners, and associates to design and provide high impact and high quality technical assistance (TA) services in four states: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. Her strengths in working with large systems through partnerships and helping them to reform and build capacity are demonstrated in her work in education and the community and have been the hallmark of her career. She has taken on a leadership role at the national level by helping to design and conceptualize an educational model to define capacity building work with state education agencies. Previously, she directed the program and TA functions of the former Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center (MC3). She has nearly 30 years of experience with school- and community-based programs, including higher education as an administrator, researcher, and program developer. As AVP, she bears responsibility for 16 program units totaling over \$60,000,000 in gross revenues and employs 500 professionals.

Dr. Biscoe Boni's collaborative spirit has been acknowledged by her appointment to the Regional Educational Laboratory - Southwest (REL Southwest) Board of Directors (2005-2012), where she served as Chair from 2010-2011. Additionally, she was recently appointed to serve on the U.S. Department of Education's National Advisory Board for the Office of Special Education (OSEP). She was appointed to an Educational Research Board for the Texas State Education Agency in 2008 by the Texas Commissioner of Education. SC3 is Dr. Biscoe Boni's third time to serve as director of a comprehensive center. In addition to SC3 and MC3, prior to 2005, she was director of the Region VII Comprehensive Center, which served the states of Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma. Prior to her time at OU, Dr. Biscoe Boni worked for eight years in the Oklahoma City Public School District as a senior research associate and Director for Federal and State Programs focusing on areas such as bilingual education, homeless education, safe and drug free schools, Indian Education, Title I, and Community Education. As a researcher and practitioner, Dr. Biscoe Boni has been able to blend scientific rigor successfully to TA work resulting in numerous awards. Dr. Biscoe Boni holds a Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of Oklahoma. In October 2015, Dr. Biscoe Boni will be inducted into the Oklahoma Higher Education Hall of Fame.

Diane DeBacker recently completed a year-long assignment as a senior advisor to the Director General of the Abu Dhabi Education Council in the United Arab Emirates. Her role as senior advisor included leadership in the areas of education policy, special education, assessments, curriculum, educator licensure, professional development and health and wellness initiatives. Prior to joining the Abu Dhabi Education Council, Dr. DeBacker served as the Commissioner of Education in Kansas from October 2009 to May 2014.

Dr. DeBacker has had a long and varied career in education. Among her many positions, she began her career in education as a high school business teacher in 1982 and taught for three years before joining Washburn

University in Topeka, Kansas, where she developed and lead a statewide curriculum center. She then moved to the Auburn-Washburn school district in Topeka, Kansas, where she spent the next 12 years in various roles including instructional facilitator, assistant principal at Washburn Rural High School and principal of Washburn Rural Alternative High School. DeBacker's work at the state level includes Director of School Improvement and Accreditation at the State Department of Education from 2003-2006, Deputy Commissioner of the Learning and Innovative Services Division from 2008-2010; Interim Commissioner of Education from October 2009, and Commissioner of Education from September 2010 through May 2014. DeBacker has served as an adjunct instructor at Washburn University and Kansas State University and also as Associate Superintendent of Shawnee Heights USD 450 in Tecumseh, Kansas, from 2006-2008.

Dr. DeBacker has been at the forefront of many education reforms including Kansas' adoption and implementation of the Common Core Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards while serving as Commissioner of Education. She represented Kansas as a governing state on the Smarter-Balanced Assessment advisory board, as well as being a member of a small group of state chiefs from the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to advise members of the Federal Corporation Commission on modernizing the E-rate program.

Over her 32 years in education, DeBacker has been sought after for her advice from educators, parents, policy makers, business leaders and politicians both in the United States and the Middle East. Her clear focus and level-headed approach positioned Kansas to consistently rank among the top states in the nation in student academic achievement, and her advice to the Abu Dhabi Education Council has resulted in raising academic expectations and a refocus of the Abu Dhabi School Model.

Dr. DeBacker has a doctorate in educational administration and leadership from Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas; a master's in curriculum and instruction from Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas; and a bachelor of science in business education from Emporia State University in Emporia, Kansas.

Patricia Fleming joined the Central Comprehensive Center (C3) during its prior iteration as the Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center (MC3) in July 2006. She currently serves as C3 Associate Director and Technical Assistance Coordinator. Prior to joining MC3 and C3, Ms. Fleming worked at WestEd as a Research Associate in the Arizona office of the Southwest Comprehensive Center. Her responsibilities included providing consultation and technical assistance services to the state department of education and districts and schools in the areas of state education agency (SEA) capacity; district and school improvement; standards, instruction, and assessment; serving diverse learners, literacy, data analysis, and leadership capacity.

Prior to joining WestEd, Ms. Fleming worked at the Arizona Department of Education assisting Title I schools in program implementation and school improvement, serving as statewide coordinator for a federal grant entitled Comprehensive School Reform (Title I Part F), and also assisting in the development of a process for Title I schools identified for school improvement. Patricia also was an elementary classroom teacher for 9 years prior to working at the state level.

Patricia has a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance from the University of Oklahoma. She received her elementary education certification Post Baccalaureate from Grand Canyon University, and received her Masters of Education in Educational Leadership from Northern Arizona University.

Patrice Guilfoyle is Communications Director for the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). She earned a B.A. in Journalism at the University of Memphis and an M.S. in Public Relations/Corporate Communications at Mississippi College. She also earned the Accredited in Public Relations (APR) credential in 2012.

A former journalist for nine years, Guilfoyle has 11 years of experience in public relations. Prior to joining MDE, she was associate director for media relations at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

Terry Holliday became Kentucky's fifth Commissioner of Education in July 2009. Since that time, the state has successfully implemented many reform efforts including Senate Bill 1 (2009) that mandated new academic standards, new aligned assessments and a balanced accountability system; a Professional Growth and Effectiveness System for teachers, principals and superintendents; and a comprehensive system of school and district improvement planning and support. Under Dr. Holliday's leadership, Kentucky has improved dramatically both its graduation rate and the percentage of students who graduate from high school ready for college/careers.

Dr. Holliday is currently serving on the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), and on the Malcom Baldrige Board of Overseers. He has served on the board of directors of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) since December 2010, and as board President in 2014.

Dr. Holliday is the co-author of *Running All the Red Lights: A Journey of System-Wide Educational Reform*. He earned a bachelor's degree from Furman University; a master's degree and education specialist degree from Winthrop University; and a doctorate from the University of South Carolina.

Beth Howard-Brown is a Principal TA Consultant at American Institutes for Research (AIR). She directs the Southeast Comprehensive Center, which addresses state and local capacity building in school improvement and key content areas, including reading/literacy, math, science, the use of scientifically based research, professional development and teacher quality, and instructional strategies for specific populations. She also oversees SEDL's (*merged with AIR January 1, 2015*) partnership with the Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast at Florida State University. Dr. Howard-Brown's interests include high school reform, turning around low-performing schools, and college and career readiness. Dr. Howard-Brown has more than 20 years of experience working as an educator and assisting high schools in their reform efforts. She has served as a teacher, a coach, and an instructional leader in assisting staff in understanding and using local, state, and national data along with state and federal legislation to assess, monitor, and improve student achievement. Through her work, she has provided direct on-site technical assistance to district- and school-level administration and teachers in the areas of curriculum development, climate and culture, collaborative planning, and utilizing best instructional practices for increasing student learning. Dr. Howard-Brown has worked in collaboration with the South Carolina Department of Education in providing direct support to low-performing schools and was instrumental in the development of the Palmetto Priority Schools/Turnaround initiative for the state. The initiative created a partnership zone for state-identified low-performing schools working to meet state and federal accountability standards. These schools received support through state-identified teams and private- and public-sector partnerships. Dr. Howard-Brown received her Ed.D. in curriculum and instruction and her Ed.S. in educational leadership from the University of South Carolina.

Denise Kahler has spent nearly 30 years in the communication and marketing arena and currently serves as the Director of Communication and Recognition Programs for the Kansas State Department of Education. She started her career in newspaper advertising sales before moving into the non-profit world where she developed membership marketing strategies for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America and, most recently, directed all communication and public relations work for the Commercial Real Estate Women Network.

Denise is a graduate of the University of Kansas where her two daughters are currently enrolled. Rock Chalk Jayhawk!

Kyle Lankford is Director of Communications for Education Programs for the Public and Community Services Division of University of Oklahoma (OU) Outreach. He is also the Communications Coordinator and Tech Team Leader for the Central and South Central Comprehensive Centers. He has worked with the National Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Center, the former Mid-Continent Comprehensive Center, and OU's Overseas Practicum for English Teachers, which was recognized for outstanding collaboration in 2012. Previously, Kyle served as General Counsel and Marketing Director for Air Traffic Simulation, Inc., and he has also held positions with the Oklahoma Court of Criminal Appeals and the OU Student Association. Kyle was named one of *The Journal Record's* "Achievers Under 40" in 2011 and OKCbiz Magazine's "Forty Under 40" in 2010. Kyle was selected as a member of Leadership Oklahoma City's LOYAL Class V, and has served on the

Leadership Oklahoma City Alumni Association Board. He is Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Norman (Oklahoma) Community Housing Development Organization 2015. He also serves as advisor for OU's chapter of Gamma Beta Phi honor and service society.

Kyle graduated with distinction from the University of Oklahoma College of Law and also attended a program at Brasenose College of Oxford University. He earned his B.A. and M.B.A. *summa cum laude* from Oklahoma Christian University. Kyle was admitted to Mensa, and he is an international award-winning artist with a painting on permanent display in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Wendy Larvick is the Assistant Director of the Office of Public and Governmental Affairs for the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). She has served MDE since October 2012, initially as the Legislative Liaison for the department. Wendy's previous work experience includes 10 years with the Michigan House of Representatives as a legislative and education policy advisor and five years as a middle school English and Social Studies teacher. Her work now focuses on strategic communications for department initiatives and legislative outreach as well as project management and process improvement.

Tom Luna is Senior Vice President and Chief Policy Officer of Project Lead The Way (PLTW). Tom leads the Policy, Advocacy, and Research team, which focuses on advancing federal, state, and local policies, as well as research initiatives that support PLTW's continued growth across the United States.

Before joining PLTW, Tom served as the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the state of Idaho, a position he held for eight years. As superintendent, he championed several STEM initiatives. In 2007, he successfully advocated the Idaho Legislature to create the Idaho Math Initiative, a statewide effort to raise student achievement in mathematics. He also helped design and launch the Idaho Science Aerospace Scholars Program with NASA astronaut Barbara Morgan for high school juniors. Luna's administration made it possible for Idaho students to apply STEM courses like engineering and computer science to their core graduation requirements, and he worked to provide funding to local districts to attract and retain more hard-to-fill STEM positions.

Prior to serving as state superintendent, Tom served on the Nampa School Board for seven years, including three as chairman. He was appointed to lead the Idaho Achievement Standards Commission, and was appointed to chair the Idaho Assessment and Accountability Commission by former Governor Dirk Kempthorne. He served as a senior advisor to then-U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige from 2003 to 2005, and has served as president of the Council of Chief State School Officers. He was appointed by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan to serve on the National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees the Nation's Report Card. Tom also has an extensive business background; in addition to his roles in local, state, and national education, he served as owner and president of an industrial weights and measures company for more than 25 years.

Romanita Matta-Barrera's decision to launch Fluent Strategy Group is the result of her passion for educational advocacy and institutional advancement for all students. She brings to her company a successful history of collaborating with community and business leaders, grassroots influencers and elected officials to foster partnerships and influence outcomes.

In her commitment to public service, she served as Texas Media Director for U.S. Senator John Cornyn of Texas and served at the federal government in two roles; Deputy Director to the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans and Director of Hispanic Outreach and Communications at the U.S. Department of Education. In these capacities, she led and executed nationwide communications strategies, coalition-building and outreach campaigns on issues such as education, business, and immigration issues.

Ms. Matta-Barrera and her team take pride in helping clients like AARP, HEB, Zero-to-Three and many others transform their vision into results that changes lives, improves brands and educates for the broadest impact. Fluent Strategy Group provides services in public relations, multicultural marketing, advocacy and communications. Their guidance has helped numerous clients improve their visibility and public perception for increased national outreach and coalition-building, developed multicultural campaigns for clients wishing to

increase market penetration, and bringing government and corporate leadership together to support targeted educational programs.

Ms. Matta-Barrera's passion for supporting education policy and advancement can currently be seen as she serves on the Advisory Boards of the UTSA Center for Educational Leadership, Policy and Professional Development; The OneStar Foundation and Family Service Association. She has served as chair on the Education Committee for the San Antonio Chamber's federal legislative advocacy trip and was a proud member of Leadership San Antonio, Class of 39. Ms. Matta-Barrera is a graduate of The University of Texas at Austin, with a double major in Government and Latin American Studies. She resides in San Antonio and is married to her husband, Juan.

Alan Morgan is the former New Mexico State Superintendent of Public Instruction where he oversaw 89 schools districts and 36,000 public-school employees, with an annual operating budget of \$2 billion. During his tenure as State Superintendent, Dr. Morgan served as President of the Council of Chief State School Officers, Chairman of the National Indicators Panel for the U.S. Congress, and chaired or served on 15 national boards and panels. He chaired the board of directors for Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, the Agency for Instructional Technology, the Educational Testing Service Visiting Committee, and served a dozen years as a Commissioner for the Education Commission of the States. Dr. Morgan began his career in education as an elementary school teacher and was formerly vice president of U.S. Government Relations for Pearson, Inc., the largest education products and services company in the world. Dr. Morgan also leads a professional consulting and government relations practice specializing in state educational policy support, product development advice, and government program support. As President of High Desert Government Relations, Inc., he serves as the senior policy advisor to several leading education-committee companies and national organizations.

Dean Nafziger serves as the Director of the Building State Capacity & Productivity Center (BSCP Center) for the U.S. Department of Education as part of its Comprehensive Centers program. The overarching focus of the Center is to assist state education agencies (SEAs) in their transition into performance management organizations that support the goal of greater student learning in the most resource-efficient manner. In addition to a number of research-based publications that provide examination and dissemination of pivotal issues facing states in the current environment, the Center has developed a number of *consultancies* with SEAs. The consultancies are technical assistance activities that provide individual support and specific, targeted help or advice in response to a request from an SEA, typically about an implementation problem.

Dr. Nafziger has published extensively in professional journals, such as the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* and the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. In addition, Dr. Nafziger has served on boards and held officer positions for numerous professional organizations, and is frequently invited to speak at conferences and symposia. He has served in leadership roles on Boards of Directors of professional and trade associations and has been active in both the American Educational Research Association and the National Council for Measurement in Education. He was awarded his Ph.D. in Educational Research from New Mexico State University.

Kristin Nafziger, with 10 years executive experience, is Executive Vice President for Emerging Practices at Edvance Research. She has deep experience with federal contracting, contract requirements, and program goals, having managed IES, OESE, and OII contracts funded by the U.S. Department of Education. She is a nationally recognized leader in the areas of process and quality improvement, strategic planning, and performance measurement. Ms. Nafziger has worked consistently with the Texas Education Agency to advance project and performance management and the use of research-based practices in the federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers program during the past seven years. Within this context she conducts regional, field-based outreach and needs sensing activities, directs the development and delivery of online and face-to-face training services, manages a team of field-based technical assistance consultants, and leads an annual statewide conference for agency that serves more than 10,000 afterschool professionals statewide.

Donna Castle Richardson is currently the Director of the Central Comprehensive Center, one of 15 Comprehensive Centers providing technical assistance with funding from the United States Department of Education. Also, she serves as the Director of EDUTAS, a department within the Division of Public and

Community Services in the University of Oklahoma's College of Continuing Education that provides education technical assistance services

Dr. Richardson began her professional career as a television Romper Room teacher in Southwest Oklahoma. She taught kindergarten and first grade in Oklahoma City Public Schools and went on to earn an advanced degree while serving as an adjunct instructor in early childhood education at East Texas State University. During her early career as a teacher educator, she served an Assistant and Associate Professor of Education at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, as well as co-developing and administering a Title XX childcare training program. Dr. Richardson, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Education at Oklahoma City University (OCU), served over two decades where she designed and directed the teacher certification program in Early Childhood Education. She held a variety of administrative positions to include the Residency Program Coordinator, Coordinator of Elementary Education, Teacher Certification Officer, and Chair of Education. She founded and headed the Family Education Institute for Research and Training.

Over the past two decades, Dr. Richardson's interest has been in family literacy research, early reading, and technical assistance in school improvement. She evaluated the Oklahoma City Public Schools' Even Start project in which her research and the project design were validated by the U.S. Department of Education's National Diffusion Network. Her Reading Discovery Tutor Training program was featured in the U.S. Department of Education's document *So That Every Child Can Read...America Reads Community and Tutoring Projects*. She is developing the program, Reading Discovery: The Family Adventure. Her interest in literacy and children's literature lead to the writing and publishing of her second children's book, *Little Lilly Ladybug*.

Dr. Richardson received her doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in early childhood education at East Texas State University. She earned her Masters' in Education at the University of Oklahoma and her Bachelor of Science degree at Southwestern State University.

Michael O. Sibley is Director of Communications for the Alabama Department of Education. Dr. Sibley leads the team responsible for communicating education policies, programs and events with state and national news media, as well as internal and external publics and other education advocacy groups. Sibley's communications delivery plan is a systematic and structured approach to communicating the vision and goals of the State Department of Education to education stakeholders throughout the state. He is responsible for spearheading the Department's social media presence as well as writing, editing and conceptualizing content for various publications, both online and printed. Sibley earned a Bachelor's degree in Journalism and Public Relations from Troy University; a Master's degree in Management from Troy University Montgomery; and a Doctorate in Education Leadership, Policy, and Law from Alabama State University.

Carol Surber has a Master's degree in Sociology with an emphasis on statistical analysis and research methods. She has nearly 30 years' experience conducting program evaluation with an emphasis in education, Pre-K to Grade 12. She currently serves as the lead evaluator for multiple education programs housed at the University of Oklahoma, including the Central Comprehensive Center (providing technical assistance to state education agencies in Colorado, Kansas, and Missouri) and the South Central Comprehensive Center (serving New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana), both of which are funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Her background includes serving as the lead external evaluator and principal grant writer for grantees of federally funded programs, notably: seven Title III English Language Acquisition programs serving Native American and Spanish-speaking students; two Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiatives creating community-wide partnerships to prevent violence and drug use among school-age children; two 21st Century Community Learning Centers for after-school support; a Grant to Reduce Access to Alcohol among underage students; and a National Science Foundation project to promote science and technology skills among youth with disabilities. Carol has worked with over 40 school districts in both rural and urban locations across Oklahoma.

Margie Vandeven was appointed Missouri's sixth Commissioner of Education by the State Board of Education in December 2014. She assumed her new role January 1, 2015.

Dr. Vandeven began her education career in 1990 as a communication arts teacher in O'Fallon. From 1995-2002 she taught high school English and served as an administrator in Maryland, before returning to Missouri as an English teacher and administrator for three years at St. Dominic High School in O'Fallon.

In 2005 Dr. Vandeven joined the Department where she played a significant role in developing the fifth version of Missouri's School Improvement Program (MSIP 5). During her nine years with the Department, Dr. Vandeven served as a supervisor of the Missouri School Improvement Program (2005-07), Director of School Improvement and Accreditation (2007-08), Director of Accountability Data and Accreditation (2008-10), Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Quality Schools (2010-13) and most recently as Deputy Commissioner of Learning Services (2013-15).

During the last four years, Dr. Vandeven assisted with the planning and implementation of the Department's Top 10 by 20 initiative, which calls for Missouri to be one of the top 10 states for education by 2020.

Dr. Vandeven earned a bachelor's degree (1990) in education from Missouri State University and a master's degree in educational administration and supervision (2003) from Loyola College in Maryland. She received a doctorate of philosophy in educational leadership (2014) from Saint Louis University.

She and her husband, David, reside in O'Fallon, Missouri.

Kerri White is the Arkansas/Louisiana Technical Assistance Coordinator for the South Central Comprehensive Center (SC3) at the University of Oklahoma. Dr. White's role is to support State Education Agency personnel by building their capacity to implement state and federal education priorities. Prior to coming to SC3, Dr. White was the Assistant State Superintendent of Educator Effectiveness at the Oklahoma State Department of Education, where she previously served as the Mathematics Director and then Executive Director of High School Reform. After graduating from Oklahoma Baptist University, Kerri began her career as a middle school and high school mathematics teacher at Deer Creek Middle School and then Putnam City High School in Oklahoma. She completed a master's degree in educational leadership at Southern Nazarene University and doctorate of education in school administration at Oklahoma State University.

Ryan Wise is Deputy Director at the Iowa Department of Education. In this role, he oversees the work of the policy, communications, and Iowa Learning Online teams, leads the development of Iowa's Teacher Leadership and Compensation system, serves as the Department's liaison to the State Board of Education and to the Iowa High School Athletic Association, and plays a key role in the development of the Department's strategic initiatives. He also serves on the Governor's Council for National Service.

Dr. Wise began his career as a high school history teacher in Mississippi as a member of Teach For America and was the founding Executive Director of Teach For America in South Dakota on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations. He has worked in education at the district, state, national, and international levels. He is originally from South Dakota and holds a BA in history from Creighton University, a Master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and a Doctorate in Education Leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Dr. Wise lives in Des Moines with his wife Sacha and sons Weston (8) and Graham (5).

Heather Zavadsky is a Research Scientist for the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center (BSCP Center) at Edvance Research and director of EdPractice Connect, an organization created to help educators improve their systems through practical lessons learned from successful reform approaches. Focus topics covered over her 25 years of research include systemic district reform and turnaround, effective human capital strategies, district data and accountability systems, and special education. She recently published her second book on district reform for Harvard Education Press (HEP) entitled “School Turnarounds: The Essential Role of Districts,” and her current focus is on restructuring district central offices to better support school improvement. Prior to her research career, Zavadsky taught for six years in the area of special education, and tutored students with autism. In addition to her masters in special education, she has a doctorate in educational policy and planning from the University of Texas at Austin, and she is trained and certified as a principal and superintendent.