4th Annual
Dismantling Systemic Racism

2019 Conference on Race, Education & Success

Friday, April 26, 2019
8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Connecticut Convention Center
Hartford, CT
Conference Information

Conference attendees are encouraged to share throughout the day on social media. Remember to include the hashtag #RaceinEd2019!

Today’s conference, including general sessions, breakout sessions, the luncheon, and other activities, are considered to be public events. Photographs or video taken by conference staff at this event may be used by SERC for promotional/educational purposes. As a registered participant in these events, you agree that photos/video of you, if taken, may be used in that manner and you waive any claim to compensation for such use.

Attendees of Dismantling Systemic Racism: 2019 Conference on Race, Education, and Success are not permitted to record audio or video of the conference keynote or breakout sessions. Feel free to take photographs in any areas of the conference, and video recording is permitted anywhere other than the sessions.
8:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.
Registration/Continental Breakfast

8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.
Welcome/Opening Remarks

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.
Keynote Address
Winona Guo and Priya Vulchi
CHOOSE

10:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.
Break/Vendors

10:15 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.
A.M. Concurrent Breakout Sessions

11:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Lunch
Guest Speakers
SERC Recognition Award
George A. Coleman Excellence in Equity Award Presentation
PaperVoices Youth Poetry Squad
Manchester, CT

1:30 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.
Break/Vendors

1:45 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.
P.M. Concurrent Breakout Sessions

3:15 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Closing/Evaluations/Door Prizes
About the Keynote Speakers

Winona Guo and Priya Vulchi

CHOOSE

Priya Vulchi and Winona Guo met in 10th grade, after Eric Garner’s death prompted a conversation in history class—the first time either of them remembers any teacher initiating a discussion about race. They ended up co-founding CHOOSE and developing a 224-page racial-literacy guide for teachers, which was recognized and funded by Princeton University, featured in Teen Vogue, and used in classrooms in over 40 states.

Instead of starting college in fall 2017, Winona and Priya convinced their parents to let them take a year off from school. After raising funds through sponsorships from companies like Airbnb, they traveled alone to all 50 states and listened to over 500 strangers talk about race and intersectionality. Along the way, they also became the youngest TED Residents ever, giving another TED Talk in addition to speaking at TEDWomen in 2017 (their talk, “What it takes to be racially literate,” has over 1 million views), United Nations’ Girl Up Conference, and over a dozen K-12 schools nationwide. They’re currently students at Harvard and Princeton University.

To stay involved with CHOOSE’s journey, follow them on social media: @choose_org. CHOOSE hopes to equip every American with racial and intersectional literacy.
PaperVoices Youth Poetry Squad
Manchester, CT

PaperVoices is a Manchester, CT-based youth-led poetry squad coached by educator and youth empowerment activist Ryan Parker and poet Paige Tyler. This group includes a diverse group of magical poets who engage in the art of the spoken word for the purpose of communicating thoughts, feelings, and creativity. In addition to their dedication to performance poetry, PaperVoices runs community poetry workshops and organizes, hosts, and presents on school-wide and community open mics with a focus on safe space establishment and the social justice cause of centering and amplifying marginalized voices. PaperVoices believes that one step toward dismantling systemic racism in schools is consistently providing marginalized youth with a platform to have their authentic voices heard and the opportunity to display their genius through the lens of performance arts. PaperVoices invites YOU to pick up a mic.
A.M.
Concurrent Breakouts
10:15 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.
A.M. Concurrent Breakouts

**Intentionally Educating at the Intersection of Race and Identity**

*Connecticut School Discipline Collaborative Equity in School Discipline Strand*  
*Sponsored by the Connecticut School Climate Transformation Grant*

**Presenter: Daren Graves, Ed.D.**

**Room 11**

The session will explore what race actually is and the multiple domains and forms in which racism operates in our society and in school, and how building strong racial identities can help students of color flourish in schools.

The session is intended to help participants:

- understand how race and racism operate as powerful ideas/systems that shape our views and opportunities
- learn about racial identity theory and how it impacts learning, teaching, and community building in the lives of administrators, teachers, and students; and
- learn about the research-based practices that center racial identity development as a pathway to academic resilience

**Make America ______ Again:**

**What Happens to an American Dream Deferred?**

**Presenter: Shanelle Henry**

**Room 24**

Simulation activities can have unparalleled power in sensitizing people to issues of oppression and discrimination. The basic theory is to allow individuals to assume the roles of other people with the intention of gaining deeper insight and/or worldview.

In this interactive session, participants will have the opportunity to experience an “edutaining” way to “spend time in someone else’s shoes,” exploring how bias, stereotypes, discrimination, and systemic inequity can block our path to achieving the American Dream. Participants will play the school edition of “The American Dream” table-top board game, a fun, educational tool to raise awareness and provoke discussion about issues of identity, privilege, and inequity. This activity aims to build empathy and provide a forum to engage in complex dialogue about structural inequality and oppression, and examine how intersectionality of identities (race, gender identity, language, socioeconomic status, sexuality, religion, and ability), power, and privilege impact our individual and collective access to opportunities and “success.”

Participants will leave with an action plan for teaching students how to identify and address racism, sexism and other forms of oppression that lead to structural inequality in their schools and communities.
Equity vs. Ideology: Dismantling Elite Bilingualism and Biculturalism
Presenter: Violet Jiménez Sims, Ph.D.

Room 27

Language discrimination and xenophobia are racial discrimination, because language, culture, and race are inextricably linked. While we do the work to dismantle systemic racism, we must consider the needs of diverse language learners as we continue to enlighten the masses and impact policy and social change.

This session provides historical context and examples of how bilingualism and biculturalism have been viewed and legislated across the U.S. This includes Proposition 227 (1998, California); Proposition 209 (1996, California); Massachusetts Question 2, a ballot initiative on English-only education initiative; the Tucson, Ariz., High School Mexican American Studies Program (HB 2281, 2010); and the challenges and opportunities in recent Connecticut legislation embracing the Seal of Biliteracy Diploma.

Using Connecticut’s State Budget as a Tool to Dismantle Systemic Racism

Presenters: Camara Stokes Hudson and Wendy Waithe Simmons, Ph.D.

Room 23

Structural racism is in the fabric of our laws and policies at the local, state, and national level. In order to dismantle systemic racism, everyday citizens need to understand the function and procedures of our legislatures and budget processes. This understanding allows all of us to share our perspective and use our voice to advocate for changes at the deepest levels of government and society.

A review of Connecticut’s budget reveals much about our state’s priorities, with stagnant revenue, spending, and economic growth reflecting an uneven recovery from the recession. Consequently, many families across the state, particularly families of color, are not able to reap the benefits of being a Connecticut resident.

In this session, participants will learn about:

- the CT legislative and state budget process;
- the disparate allocation of resources to children and families of color, embedded in the state’s budget; and
- the tools provided by the Connecticut General Assembly that can be used to advocate for policies consistent with dismantling racist practices.

Participants should emerge from the session with a better understanding of how to advocate for more racially equitable practices at the state level.
“SLAMming Racism”:
Breaking Racial Barriers Through Spoken Word Poetry
Presenters: Mary Nelson and Sixth Grade Student Poets
Room 12

Mary Nelson decided to temporarily abandon her district’s sixth grade curriculum to encourage her students to voice their perspectives about important social issues. Slam poetry seemed to be the best vehicle. Students were asked what they would like to change in the world, and they wrote poetry about racism, gun violence, religious tolerance, immigration, and LGBTQ issues.

Important conversations about race started to happen in their classrooms. They had frank discussions about the current world situation, and a tight community started to form. A local coffee shop invited the group to perform over two days.

This session includes a student-led discussion of how this project led to greater understanding of one another and created a stronger community, and brainstorming sessions on bringing this project to other schools. The students will also perform some of their slam poetry.

Becoming An Equitable School System:
Understanding the Equity Audit
Presenter: Regis Anne Shields
Room 22

Student performance gaps across race and ethnicity have been the target of education reform for decades, but despite well-intentioned efforts, gaps remain. Contributing to their persistence is the lack of attention to the inequitable access to opportunities for these student populations and the underlying causes. Improvement approaches often take the form of a student-centered design but do not specifically address the intended and unintended impact of race and ethnicity.

Inequitable systems do not require deliberate discrimination. In most schools and districts, inequities result despite the best intentions of the school and district community. In this session, participants will learn how inequities of student opportunities contribute to student achievement gaps, how societal inequities and unconscious biases interact with institutional practices to create inequitable student opportunities, and how an equity audit can help schools and districts identify the impact of inequities and biases and adjust policies/practices.
Growing the Movement:
A Grassroots Approach to Placing Equity at the Center of Education

Presenters: Erica Byrne, Cheryl Hilton and Joan Hurley

Room 15

The presentation is intended for families and community activists interested in spurring change in their local education system.

Founded in February 2017, Southington Women for Progress is a grassroots community group with a commitment to making the Town of Southington a more just and equitable place for all. The group currently has over 100 members, with more than 10% identifying as women of color – a percentage that surpasses the town’s demographics (7% POC). Educational equity was a key issue identified by the group, and members set out to get equity placed at the center of Southington's public school system.

This presentation will first outline the development of Southington Women for Progress as an intentionally anti-racist space and how trust was established between white women and women of color (primarily Black women), and how this was key to forming a coalition that includes students and parents of color and white allies. It will then detail the steps that were taken to 1) build the coalition – including educators and advocates, 2) understand the educational and political context of Southington, and 3) establish relationships with key stakeholders. Stories and tools for engaging with students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the media will be shared. Time will also be left for engaging audience participants in identifying ways in which they can build similar coalitions within their own community.

Journey to Real Conversations about Race with Educators

Presenters: Dwight Sharpe and Michelle Gohagon

Room 25

Middletown Public Schools’ district equity leaders will provide strategies for how to engage educators in conversations about race and racial equity. Presenters will discuss the ways an intentional focus on how educators’ own racial identity impact their relationships with students, how racism presents itself in the classroom, and how to move toward racial equity in schools. They will describe the Middletown educators’ process for assessing their readiness to engage in conversations about race, identified their conversation protocol and their work for the future. With the support of the presenters, attendees will participate in racial equity conversations.
Racism has always been integral to American culture. From the violence that stoked the inception of the Black Lives Matter movement to the obstructionism faced by the nation’s first black president and the blatant xenophobia involved in the 2016 election and subsequent administration, this is an issue that permeates the world we live in. We often struggle with the question of how to breach the topic in our classrooms, or if it is even our place. Even the definition of the term “racism” suffers from a generalizing which robs it of the specific identity of systemic oppression. In this session, the presenter breaks down why it is appropriate—and necessary—to teach antiracism in the English Language Arts classroom. She analyzes *To Kill a Mockingbird* (TKAM) by Harper Lee as a unique novel to fit this task, as it simultaneously seeks to fight racism and perpetuates racist ideologies through internalized ideas that play out through the narration. She has used this analysis to develop a Socratic Seminar model, an argumentative essay assignment, and six possible lesson plans that could accompany a unit on TKAM and antiracism.

**Full, Equal, and Equitable Partnerships with Families: Connecticut’s Definition and Framework for Family Engagement**

**Presenters: Dena Booker, Judy Carson and Jessica B. Lavorgna**

Amidst growing calls for deepened family engagement throughout Connecticut and across the country, the state developed “Full, Equal and Equitable Partnerships with Families: Connecticut’s Definition and Framework for Family Engagement.” The document was created through a collaboration of the CT State Department of Education, the Office of Early Childhood, and the Early Childhood Funders’ Collaborative, in consultation with families. This session will share the process of developing the document, its guiding principles, feedback from families, and the framework itself.
The Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) approach is guided by the belief that students are the drivers of school reform. Student researchers work with the school community to conduct empirically rigorous research grounded in areas that the students believe are important or concerning.

In this YPAR project with an independent boarding school, student researchers wondered: How do our students’ experiences with teacher support, their response to feedback, or their help-seeking behavior vary depending on their race? Could teacher feedback itself vary based on the race of the student? How do our students’ experiences with the classroom environment vary?

Students will present their two-year research project, walking the audience through their question posing, methodologies, data analysis, and the development of their conceptual model. In the tradition of YPAR (which requires an action phase), they will also discuss their conclusions, recommendations, and action steps.

The target audience is high school educators and administrators who are interested in elevating student voice in school policy through research or in the lived experience of students in schools, but anyone who is interested in hearing about the experience of our students will learn something.

“Our school is always saying ‘Lean into discomfort’...but as soon as that happens, people shut down.”

Black and White Students’ Experience of Teacher Support at an Independent Boarding School

Presenters: Jessica Watkin, Meg C., Eliza N. and Talia W.

Room 26

Students as Leaders of Racial Equity

Presenters: Winona Guo and Priya Vulchi

Room 14

Winona Guo and Priya Vulchi began their work as racial equity leaders while still in high school. Come hear more about what inspired them, how they moved from ideas to action, and what plans they have for the future. Learn more about how you, too, can become a leader in dismantling systemic racism as a student or at any age!
Who is George A. Coleman?

George A. Coleman has infused his values of equity and opportunity within all of his roles in Connecticut education. As an administrator at the CT State Department of Education (CSDE), including two appointments as Acting Commissioner, George continuously advanced the truth that all children can learn. He has refused to accept educational disparities and has made the most of his positions to advocate for the highest opportunities for all students. George has also been a critical partner with SERC in advancing an educational system that confronts the impact of racism among children of color and their families. In addition to Acting Commissioner, George’s other roles during his 24-year career at CSDE were Deputy Commissioner, Associate Commissioner, Chief of the Bureau of Curriculum and Teaching, and Chief of the Bureau of Early Childhood Education. George retired from CSDE in October 2011 and has since joined the Boards of SERC and the SERC Foundation. He is currently a private contractor for Cooperative Educational Services in Trumbull.

What is the George A. Coleman Excellence in Equity Award?

The George A. Coleman Excellence in Equity Award was created to honor and highlight the demonstration of extraordinary acts of commitment and courage to ensure all students, especially students of color and culturally and linguistically diverse students, are valued and respected in their school experience.

Award recipients are selected based on their steadfast and unwavering action in:

- Advocating for children and families of color;
- Galvanizing individuals and coalitions toward equitable action;
- Taking risks in conversations and actions that promote equity for racially, linguistically and culturally diverse groups;
- Engaging the diverse needs of members of an education community and reconciling them toward a shared vision; and
- Furthering the exchange of information that affects thinking and effects conviction on matters of equity.
Over three decades in Manchester Public Schools, Dr. Diane D. Clare-Kearney has played a key role in spearheading programs and initiatives to foster inclusion and strengthen relationships among Manchester’s diverse population.

While teaching English and French at Manchester High School, Dr. Clare-Kearney designed and became director of G.R.A.D.S., a program focused on empowerment and academic support for marginalized students. She helped establish STARS, a program for students who were in lower-level classes but have the potential to move up, as well as New Horizons, which approached discipline in a manner sensitive and responsive to students’ needs. In 2003, she was named Director of Equity Programming and since 2009 has served as Director of Manchester Adult and Continuing Education.

Dr. Clare-Kearney also helped form the Human Relations Council at Manchester High School and was active on the town’s Human Relations Commission, raising awareness about racial and cultural disconnects within the school and the community and helping to spearhead the development of a mandatory ninth grade course on Race Relations. She has been a member and Board chair of RE-Center, an organization that focuses on dismantling racism.

Dr. Clare-Kearney was born in England and lived in Birmingham until she was 10, when her mother moved her to Connecticut. She earned a bachelor’s in English and French from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, a master’s and Sixth-Year Certificate from Central Connecticut State University, and a doctorate from Nova Southeastern University. She has received numerous honors and is the mother of three.
Dr. Patricia Garcia, the multilingual superintendent of Windham Public Schools, is a visionary and courageous educational leader. She has demonstrated successful and distinctive approaches to engaging parents and the community and knowledge of the multiple factors that affect student achievement.

Dr. Garcia has widespread experience in improving school district performance. As superintendent, she implemented the Windham Early College Opportunity (ECO) program, which has received national distinction, increased the Windham High School four-year graduation rate to 83.7% and oversaw the removal of all schools from the state’s list of turnaround schools.

Dr. Garcia also led districts in New York and Virginia and has been a teacher, principal, assistant superintendent, educational consultant and college professor. Among many notable acknowledgements, Dr. Garcia has been honored by the NAACP as one of the 100 Most Influential Black Leaders in Connecticut, and by the Windham/Willimantic Chapter with the Jacqueline Owens Above and Beyond Award for exemplary commitment. The Connecticut Parent Power Network also recognized her as an “Exemplary Educational Leader.” She served on the Board for the National Association of Latino School Superintendents and has joined educational leaders from across the nation on the Executive Committee of the District Administration Leadership Institute.

Dr. Garcia earned a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Florida State University and is a fellow of the Broad Urban Superintendent Academy. She earned her Ed.D. at the University of Sarasota, a master’s from the University of South Florida, and a bachelor’s from the University of Panama.
P.M.
Concurrent Breakouts
1:45 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.
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Celebrating Our Roots: Who Am I and Who Are You?
A Journey of Self-Exploration in 1st Grade

Presenters: Caroline Hanley and Denise Meza Reyes

Room 25

Helping our students develop an understanding of the self is the first step toward creating more just and equitable schools and taking a stand in dismantling systemic racism within education. Providing guided practice for young students to learn how to engage in positive conversations about differences in a respectful manner will help negate the idea of “different” as scary.

A team from the Greenwich Country Day School has created a safe and respectful space for first graders to explore their own identities, delving specifically into units of study around families, hair, skin shades, and gender. At this session, team members from the school will share resources, activities, and constructive language the team has implemented to help students engage in conversations about race, gender, and other identifiers.

The carefully crafted lessons and activities establish ground rules for the words used when engaging in discussions around these topics and give students the space to question, wonder, and learn about themselves and one another. This inclusive curriculum has been structured to live in different spaces in the students’ school lives, with the goal of understanding that conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion do not end when we leave the classroom space.
How to Create Trauma-Informed Restorative Justice-Based Discipline in Your District
(to eliminate disproportionate out-of-school suspensions & arrests of students of color)

Presenters: Tiana Krause and Kate Rivera
Room 22

This session is for anyone interested in creating meaningful system-wide change, especially administrators, parents, and students. It will focus on how to provide justice-based and trauma-informed discipline to all students.

Kate Rivera created successful restorative justice-based, trauma-informed policy changes while serving on the Bridgeport Board of Education. Data has proven the pilot program wildly successful in reducing disproportionate minority contact in both student arrests and out-of-school suspensions in K-8 and high schools and has since been expanded throughout the district. Students now ask for the restorative justice circles to proactively diffuse potential situations.

As a student, Tiana Krause created climate change in her school to address racially charged incidents and trained three schools with the original material she created with her peers. Tiana will also describe her position at the Juvenile Justice Alliance and how it correlates to the current racist discipline policies in most districts.

Using Public Data as a Critical Lens on Systemic Racism

Presenter: Paige Bray, Ed.D.
Room 21

In developmentally and culturally appropriate classrooms, the child is at the center of complex systems. How do we prepare teachers to engage with families and in the communities where they live? In order to serve the child, an intentional understanding of the system or context in which she lives is essential.

This session includes an opportunity to reveal social inequities through public civic data. Participants will examine specific CT State Department of Education community report cards to experience how public data can offer one lens on community. They will explore their own culture, bias, and live-work-play communities, and identify actionable, personal commitments to dismantling racism.
Mindful Activism:
Examining & Creating Images That Illustrate Social Forces in Context
Presenter: Tina Manus
Room 24

This session seeks to help participants become mindfully aware of visual strategies used to influence social change in our world, specifically surrounding the topic of racism as a social justice issue.

The session will examine images from the past and present that powerfully influence social forces in our world and how they aid in advocating for racial justice, focusing on systemic racism issues such as the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Maryland and Jayson Negron in Bridgeport, CT. Participants will have the opportunity to create their own visual and multimedia images using traditional tools and technology to illustrate their perceptions of racial justice.

Participants will also learn strategies to effectively apply the use of visuals to encourage social change when working with students and adults. Once aware of these strategies and best practices, participants will be encouraged to create action plans for their own school communities using images to advance social change to overcome any perceived obstacles and challenges that currently impede student learning or school improvement.

Superintendent and BOE:
Collaborative Governance with an Equity Lens
Presenters: Michael Conner, Ed.D., and Lisa Loomis
Room 23

A superintendent and board of education united in prioritizing equity is a powerful force for dismantling systemic racism and supporting the success of students of color. Dr. Michael Conner, who became Middletown’s superintendent in November 2017, and the city’s Board of Education members are committed to closing the district’s opportunity gap in order to close the achievement gap.

In this session, Dr. Conner and Board member Lisa Loomis will describe the role of the superintendent, the role of the BOE, and the Collaborative Governance Model they have used to develop the district’s Strategic Operating Plan, policies, and other instructional structures. They will also share mid-year data that is highlighting accelerated growth in student achievement.

The session aims to give attendees a better understanding of the relationship between the superintendent and board of education and the power of collaborative governance.
Decades after the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, we are still seeing inequity in educational outcomes between white students and students of color. We are also seeing a disproportionate number of students of color being misidentified for special education services. The consequences are educational environments that are too restrictive for the students’ abilities and not providing services or supports they actually need, limiting academic and social success.

This session will explore biases that impact both the behavioral and academic supports and educational placement for students of color, and the factors used to assess and identify educational outcomes in our special education processes. The presentation will cover culturally relevant assessment methodology as well as the effects of circumstances such as trauma and poverty that influence student outcomes. Finally, the session will cover pre-referral supports and interventions for the behavioral and academic needs for all students.
This session is intended for superintendents, school/district administrators, human resources managers, talent officers and any personnel responsible for recruiting and hiring.

In 2016, the Connecticut State Board of Education adopted a Five-Year Comprehensive Plan, “Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Connecticut Students,” which outlined three broad goals: (1) High expectations for all students; (2) Great schools; and (3) Great teachers and leaders. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Talent Office is accountable for the success of Goal 3, specifically targeting strategies to increase the number of educators of color employed in CT public schools from 8.3% to 10% by 2021 (for a total of 1,000 certified educators of color).

A recent data inquiry revealed that a significant number of educators of color, certified in CT in the past three years, were not employed in CT public schools as reported in the CSDE Educator Data System (EDS). In 2018 the CSDE partnered with two technical assistance centers—the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL) and the Northeast Comprehensive Center (NCC)—to create and facilitate a four-part professional learning series called Examining Unconscious Bias in the Hiring and Selection Process.

In this session, participants will learn about Connecticut’s commitment to ensuring equity and equitable access to diverse educators for all students. The research behind why it is beneficial and important for all students to be taught by educators of color will be aligned to the design of practical tools, strategies and best practices to guide districts in the development and implementation of an effective plan for recruiting and hiring a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse educator workforce.

**Urban Trauma 101**
**Presenter: Daryl McGraw**
**Room 15**

Urban trauma is a term commonly heard but rarely discussed in educational settings. The presenter will share his own lived experience with urban trauma and build awareness of its long-term physical, emotional and psychological impacts on individuals, families and communities. Participants will learn how urban trauma such as violence, abuse, abandonment, or extreme forms of poverty shape current behavior and lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), intergenerational PTSD, addiction, and incarceration. The session will also explore systemic change to address urban trauma proactively as a community, and the possibility of recovery.
As a vast majority of people remain unconscious of how their racial and cultural identity impacts their approach to life in general, SERC’s Youth Leadership for Equity Initiative is designed to help students develop strong, effective leadership skills in order to make positive changes in their school and community.

This session will assist youth in learning more about who they are “culturally” by exploring various aspects of their identities and working with others to engage in meaningful dialogue. With a better understanding of their own identity, youth can understand how historic injustices impact them and use this knowledge to make positive changes (Wheeler, 2006).

Through an array of strategies such as peer-to-peer conversations, facilitated dialogue, hands-on activities, teambuilding exercises and reflective practice exercises, some of the following topics will be explored: cultural identity; stereotyping, bias and prejudice; equity vs. equality; self vs. otherness; leadership; and multiple perspectives.

Taking Action for Equity:
A Discussion of Districtwide Initiatives
Presenters: Jessica Lavorgna, Veronica Marion, Christina Morales, Cynthia Sanchez and Latasha Turnquest
Room 12

Leaders from the offices of Family, School and Community partnerships in Bloomfield, East Hartford, Vernon and Manchester will share their approaches to changing mindsets and promoting a racially conscious lens in their school districts. They will describe their districts’ process, successes, and failures, as participants share strategies with one another and formulate an action for equity that shifts mindsets in their own districts.

Youth Leadership for Equity
Presenters: Nitza Diaz, Eben McKnight and Nicole Vitale
Room 26
(Priority seating for High School Students)

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Meet the Presenters

Mavis B., Student
Spring Glen Elementary School

Over the course of our slam poetry unit we learned the importance of activism and uncovering the truth of real problems that happen as we speak. We confronted racism, gun violence, gender discrimination, religious intolerance, and LGBT and immigrant rights. We were inspired by Ms. Nelson to continue our education on these controversial matters and to make our voices heard outside of school. Before this experience, we did not think of the world beyond our classrooms. Now, we are reminded of the importance of our voices and the promise to create a better future than the one we are presented with today.

Sarah Barzee, Ph.D., Chief Talent Officer
Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

Dr. Sarah Barzee currently serves as Chief Talent Officer for the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). She has led statewide efforts to increase the racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity of Connecticut’s educator workforce, as well as efforts to address equity gaps that result from shortages in specific certification areas.

Prior to her role at CSDE, Dr. Barzee served as Assistant Executive Director for the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) and as Associate Director at SERC.

Dr. Barzee holds a Ph.D. in Leadership from Andrews University; a Sixth-Year Certificate in Educational Administration and Supervision from the University of Hartford; and a master’s degree and bachelor’s degree in special education from Saint Joseph College.

Dena Booker, School and Family Resource Facilitator
Stamford Public Schools

Dena Booker has worked as a Literacy Mentor, Preschool Teacher, and Family and Community Engagement Coordinator. Currently she is the School and Family Resource Facilitator for Stamford Public Schools, where she helps families navigate the school system, register students for school, connect families to organizations in the community, and works with schools to promote positive relationships by partnering with families and the community. She has a true passion for working with students and their families and to help them feel confident in their educational journey. Dena received a bachelor’s in Psychology from Central Connecticut State University, a bachelor’s in Child Studies from Goodwin College, and a master’s in Early Childhood from the University of Hartford.

Paige Bray, Ed.D., Director of Montessori Studies
University of Hartford

Dr. Paige M. Bray is Director of the Center for Montessori Studies and Montessori Degree Programs and Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Hartford. She has worked with colleagues, allies and accomplices in the community to address systemic inequities for over three decades. An advocate for children and families, Dr. Bray has grounded her research in a community context and is consistently emphasizing human capacity as knowledge producers as well as knowledge consumers. She earned her bachelor’s and master’s from Sarah Lawrence College and her doctorate in education from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
Meet the Presenters (Continued)

Erica Byrne, Founder
Southington Women for Progress

A longtime advocate for health equity, Erica Byrne began her racial equity work in 2016. She is committed to disrupting white supremacist systems and to examining her own biases through self-education, self-reflection, self-change, and self-leadership. Erica is the founder of Southington Women for Progress and a nonprofit consultant by profession, specializing in grant writing and strategic planning. Recent clients include the National Coalition for School Diversity and the Sheff Movement Coalition. She is a native of Connecticut, graduating from West Hartford public schools in 1999, and has a bachelor’s in Political Science from Bryn Mawr College and a master’s in Latin American Studies from Tulane University.

Meg C., Student
Miss Porter’s School

Meg C. is a boarding student from West Hartford. She participates in theater and ultimate frisbee and is active in the student council. She will be attending Emory University in the fall.

Judy Carson, Ph.D., Program Manager, School-Family-Community Partnerships
Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

Dr. Judy Carson is the program manager for family and community engagement at the Connecticut State Department of Education. She is responsible for developing programs and policies designed to help families and schools work together for student success. She holds a Ph.D. in Social Policy from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, where her research focused on policy approaches to supporting parents as partners in their young children’s education.

Michael Conner, Ed.D., Superintendent
Middletown Public Schools

Dr. Michael T. Conner is Superintendent of Schools in Middletown. He previously served as Chief Academic Officer in Norwalk, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning in Windham, and Principal of Augusta Lewis Troup School in New Haven. Under his current leadership as Superintendent, Middletown was one of only 16 districts selected nationally to participate in the 2019 AASA/SPN Innovation and Transformational National Network.

He obtained his bachelor’s in Elementary Education/Humanities from Lasell College, master’s from the University of Bridgeport, Sixth-Year Diploma from Southern Connecticut State University, and doctorate in education from Cambridge College. He is currently enrolled at Harvard Business School completing the Business Analytics Program.
Lisa Cushing, Teacher-Leader-In-Residence  
Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

Lisa Cushing is currently in her second year as a Teacher-Leader-In-Residence for the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) Talent Office. In 2018 she was co-author of *The CSDE Resource Guide for New Administrators*. She has been a teacher leader at CREC (Capitol Region Education Council) Museum Academy, a pre-K to 5th grade interdistrict magnet school in Bloomfield, since 2009, most recently as Interim Assistant Principal. Lisa is committed to ensuring a more diverse educator workforce so that every child in Connecticut has access to great teachers and leaders.

Lisa holds a bachelor’s in Elementary Education from Central Connecticut State University, an master’s in Reading and Language Arts from the University of Saint Joseph, and a Sixth-Year in Educational Leadership from the University of Connecticut.

Sasha Davis, Community Organizer  
Sheff Movement Coalition

Sasha Davis is a community organizer for the Sheff Movement Coalition. A Connecticut native, Sasha has worked for a statewide nonprofit, CT Parent Power, where she helped organize and empower parents around various education and health care policies. She has worked on behalf of diversity and inclusion, including with school-aged students at the RE-Center in Hartford (formerly known as The Discovery Center).

Sasha earned her bachelor’s degree from Bay Path College in Leadership and Organizational Studies. She then graduated from the University of Connecticut’s Master’s in Public Administration program and earned a Certificate in Leadership and Public Management in 2016. Sasha seeks to earn her Ph.D. at UConn’s Neag School of Education, in Leadership and Education Policy.

Sasha aspires to be an education policy researcher and professor at a leading research institution that will be a catalyst in policy changes that create an equitable education system.

Nitza M. Diaz, Consultant  
State Education Resource Center (SERC)

Nitza M. Diaz has served as an education consultant with SERC and the CT Parent Information and Resource Center at SERC. Through training, coaching, and technical assistance, Nitza provides and designs professional development for educators, families, community organizations, and faith-based leaders. As a Latina/Puerto Rican, parent, and educator, she draws from her own experience to help others understand how systemic racism, poverty, and inequities impact schools and communities.
Eric Elias, School Psychologist
Thomas Hooker School

Eric Elias has presented at both state and national conferences in the field of education and school psychology. He has practiced as a school psychologist for 30 years, including 23 in Meriden. Eric holds a master’s degree and school psychologist certificate as well as a postgraduate endorsement through the American Board of School Neuropsychologists. Eric is the editor of the Connecticut School Psychologist and is an executive board member of the Connecticut Association of School Psychologists. He has co-authored the updated state guidelines for the practice of school psychology, has published a number of articles in the field, and co-hosts a biweekly podcast on school psychology. He is committed to best practices and supports in education, school psychology and social justice.

Waynesha F., Student
Spring Glen Elementary School

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Mia G., Student
Spring Glen Elementary School

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Michelle Gohagon
Director of Instruction Technology and Professional Development
Middletown Public Schools

Michelle Gohagon is Director of Instructional Technology and Professional Development for Middletown Public Schools. She has previously taught history in Boston and New Britain, and was a technology integration specialist in Regional School District 13. She earned her bachelor’s in History and Secondary Education at the University of Hartford, a master’s in Special Education at Simmons University in Boston, and administrative certification at Southern Connecticut State University. In Middletown, Michelle works with teachers and administrators in creating personalized and equitable learning opportunities for all students. In addition, she co-leads the District Equity Leadership team and supports other district leaders to ensure that equity is at the forefront of all of their work.
Daren Graves, Ph.D., Associate Professor
Simmons University

Dr. Daren Graves is currently an Associate Professor of Education at Simmons University. His research lies at the intersection of critical race theory, racial identity development, and teacher education. As a teacher educator, he is committed to preparing educators to work with students by directly engaging issues of race and to bring the students’ racialized realities into their educational contexts. In addition to his teaching duties, Dr. Graves serves as the liaison between Simmons University and the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) Pilot School, where he coordinates professional development opportunities for the BTU School staff and the placement of Simmons interns and student volunteers.

Caroline Hanley, Teacher
Greenwich Country Day School

Caroline Hanley was born and raised overseas, spending most her childhood in Saudi Arabia. She graduated from Teachers College, Columbia University with a dual master’s in Early Childhood Education and Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. She began her career teaching kindergarten at Hyde Leadership Charter School in the Bronx, and then joined Greenwich Country Day School as a first grade teacher where she has been for the past 10 years. She is passionate about providing nurturing and supportive spaces for young learners, collaborating with colleagues, and creating and reworking curriculum through a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) lens. In her time outside of school, she stays busy chasing after her two young children and pursuing certification to become a children’s yoga instructor.

Shanelle Henry, Director of Equity and Inclusion
Greens Farms Academy

A native of Brooklyn, New York, a graduate of Smith College and the esteemed Social Justice Education program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Shanelle has spent her lifetime asking and answering questions on the intersectionality of identity and oppression, particularly around race and gender, in formal and informal educational and corporate environments. Having come to independent schools after a career in higher education, Shanelle is currently the Director of Equity and Inclusion at Greens Farms Academy, a pre-K through grade 12 independent school in Westport. In her role, she works with students, faculty, administrators, parents and trustees to provide strategic vision and leadership in areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the school community.
Meet the Presenters (Continued)

Cheryl Hilton, Founder
Greater Hartford Association of Realtors Bridge Committee

Cheryl Hilton currently serves as a Director for both the Connecticut Association of Realtors and The Greater Hartford Association of Realtors. Cheryl is the Founder, past Chairperson and current member of the Greater Hartford Association of Realtors Bridge Committee, whose mission is to improve diversity and foster an atmosphere of inclusion for the association. Cheryl received a 2016 Connecticut Fair Housing Empowering Communities Award for her leadership in the mission to make fair housing education a mandatory, 3-credit, in person, continuing education requirement for all real estate practitioners in Connecticut.

Cheryl is an active member of Southington Women for Progress and is currently organizing a coordinated effort to strongly encourage the Southington Public Schools to put equity at the center of the public schools.

Camara Stokes Hudson, Associate Policy Fellow
Connecticut Voices for Children

Camara Stokes Hudson is an Associate Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children focused on Juvenile Justice and Education Policy. Before coming to CT Voices, Camara worked in different roles serving young people involved in the juvenile justice system, including the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, the Children’s Defense Fund and Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform. She is the recipient of a bachelor’s in Human Development and Family Studies from the University of Vermont. Camara has coached debate in several correctional settings with the nonprofit SPEAK Inc. and continues to do debate education work in her spare time. She looks forward to a career in public interest law.

Joan Hurley, Teacher
University of Hartford Magnet School

Joan Hurley has had the privilege of serving students in the Hartford Public Schools and the Capitol Region Education Council Magnet Schools district for 28 years. The 2008 Connecticut Teacher of the Year, Joan believes that educational equity is the cornerstone to creating a more just society. An elementary teacher for grades 3-5, Joan often uses high-quality children’s literature to guide her students in the reflection and discourse necessary to learn how to speak one’s truth in a diverse society.

Jessica B. Lavorgna, District Coordinator of Family and Community Engagement
Windsor Locks Public Schools

Jessica B. Lavorgna is a family, school, and community partnership specialist. She has an extensive background in educational program development and implementation of evidence-based practices in TESOL, adult education, and PK-12 multicultural education. Currently, Jessie is the District Coordinator of Family and Community Engagement for Windsor Locks Public Schools. Prior to this position, she worked for the Education Development Center, where she designed and delivered training for and provided technical assistance to teachers around fostering and sustaining culturally responsive family-school-community partnerships.
Lisa Loomis taught English at the middle and high school levels for 16 years before becoming an instructional coach for Hartford Public Schools. She is pursuing her doctorate in Educational Leadership from Central Connecticut State University. Her research interests include educational equity and policy, particularly related to students of color and students in the LGBTQ+ community. She is a member of Middletown’s Board of Education and chair of the Curriculum Committee where her priority is advancing educational equity. Her advocacy has been informed by her training with the National Conference for Community and Justice.

Dr. Tina M. Manus, a teacher and department head at Bullard-Havens Technical High School in Bridgeport, works for education reform at the local, state, and national levels. As an “empowerment activist,” she chairs the Greater Bridgeport NAACP Education Committee and serves as treasurer for Friends of “Goody Bassett,” a social justice political action committee. In 2012, Dr. Manus was part of the State Department of Education’s “CT Dream Team” and was chosen in 2013 for the America Achieves National Fellowship. Dr. Manus holds master’s degrees in Learning and Urban Education and completed her Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership this February.

Dr. Veronica Marion has been Coordinator of the Office of Family and Community Partnerships for East Hartford Public Schools since 2016. Through the Office’s Partners in Achievement initiative, educators, families, and community members are engaged in dynamic efforts to move home-school relationships from involvement to engagement and, ultimately, to true and lasting partnership.

Prior to this position, Dr. Marion was co-coordinator of the CT Parent Information and Resource Center (CT PIRC) and an educational consultant at SERC. She is a former first grade teacher at Sacred Heart School in New Haven and Counseling Manager and Outreach and Admissions Manager for the New Haven Job Corps Center. She obtained her bachelor’s degree in Business Management at Albertus Magnus College, her master’s degree in Education from the University of New Haven, and her Ed.D. in Higher Education and Adult Learning from Walden University.
Daryl M. McGraw, Founder and President  
Formerly Inc.

Daryl M. McGraw is known for his work on behalf of ex-offenders battling addiction and overcoming a variety of obstacles. He is the founder and president of Formerly Inc., working on policy development, contract management, project coordination, and collaboration with grassroots peer-advocacy agencies and the Connecticut Department of Corrections. As a leadership consultant, he inspires cultural competency and challenges organizations to move away from the status quo. He is the former Program Director for the Yale University Department of Psychiatry, where he served as the Director of the Office of Recovery Community Affairs for Connecticut's Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Daryl holds state certifications as an addiction counselor, recovery support specialist, and criminal justice professional; and holds a bachelor's degree in human services and a master’s degree in organizational management and leadership, both from Springfield College.

Eben McKnight, Consultant  
State Education Resource Center (SERC)

Before coming to SERC in 2012, Eben McKnight was district coordinator in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). As a SERC consultant, Eben continues to support the implementation of multi-tiered systems of support, providing training and technical assistance for schools across the state. As a certified School-Wide Information System (SWIS) facilitator and through PBIS applications, Eben trains and supports schools on how to use data to make equitable decisions. During the 2018-2019 school year Eben began working with various schools and students participating in the Special Education Youth Advisory Council. He is an endorsed PBIS trainer through the Northeast PBIS Network and a Pacific Educational Group affiliate supporting Courageous Conversation about Race™.

Christina Morales, District Coordinator  
Extended Learning, Family and Community Engagement  
Bloomfield Public Schools

As District Coordinator of Extended Learning, Family and Community Engagement for Bloomfield Public Schools, Christina Morales oversees the implementation of Extended Learning opportunities for over 400 students. She engages families and community partners at schools and bridges the home/school connection across seven schools in the district. She leads a district-wide diversity and equity team and the superintendent’s priority of family and community engagement. She previously worked for The Governor’s Prevention Partnership and committed 10 years to organizational and youth development, implementing afterschool programs and community school strategies for Hartford Public Schools as the lead agency provider with the Compass Youth Collaborative. She holds a master’s of Social Work from Springfield College and is a facilitator of Mind in the Making and Search Institute’s 40 Developmental Assets.

*“COURAGEOUS CONVERSATION” is a trademark of Pacific Educational Group, Inc.
Eliza N., Student
Miss Porter’s School

Eliza is a boarding student from Scituate, Massachusetts. She is active in school traditions and is head of tour guides this year. Next year, she plans to major in biology and political science.

Maryam N., Student
Spring Glen Elementary School

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Mary Nelson, Teacher
Spring Glen Elementary School, Hamden

Mary Nelson has been a sixth grade teacher in Connecticut for eleven years, currently teaching language arts at Spring Glen School in Hamden. In 2015, she was Hamden, Connecticut’s Teacher of the Year, as well as a semi-finalist for Connecticut State Teacher of the Year.

Mary believes that as a teacher she is a change agent, and she teaches her students to become active world citizens. Her students have organized food drives, protested human rights violations, and developed a curriculum to teach fellow students about child heroes around the world. Mary led her district to developing a sixth grade social studies curriculum focusing on global studies.

Mary is an adjunct professor at Fairfield University, where she has taught five different courses in the Graduate School of Education and Allied Professions. She also serves as a TEAM mentor for pre-service teachers.

Patricia O’Rourke
Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut

Patricia is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut, Storrs. Her work focuses on the role of radical love in critical public pedagogy and praxis for transforming social relationships and educational systems marked by broken trust and systemic racism through engaging with others in the challenges of the moment while simultaneously working toward a new and yet unimagined future. Patricia teaches Multicultural Education; Power, Privilege, and Public Education; and a Master’s Seminar for teacher candidates.
Denise Meza Reyes, Teacher
Greenwich Country Day School

Denise Meza Reyes was born and raised in the Bronx and completed an undergraduate degree in psychology at Hamilton College. She is now in Greenwich, CT as the new Lower School Art Teacher at the Greenwich Country Day School, where she instills a passion for the arts in K-3 students. In summer she works at Horizons at Brunswick, an enrichment program for free and reduced lunch-eligible students where she helps prepare 4th graders for their transition into 5th grade.

Kate Rivera, Social Justice Advocate, Activist & Educator
Kate Rivera Consulting

Kate Rivera is a social justice advocate, activist and educator. She is the Creatrix of Kate Rivera Consulting, specializing in presentations and workshops on the school-to-prison pipeline, race, education, bias, mass incarceration, police brutality, trauma, and community organizing. Kate is a Social Justice Educator for the National Conference for Community and Justice, providing intensive anti-bias trainings to school children and adults. She is a founding member and Community Organizer for CT-CORE/Organize Now! Kate co-created 2016’s Bridgeport Black Lives Matter march, served on the founding Action Council for Bpt Generation Now, and as a member of the Bridgeport Juvenile Review Board. Kate is a former member of the Bridgeport Board of Education. Kate is the mother of four amazing kids.

Michael S., Student
Spring Glen Elementary School

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Cynthia Sanchez, Education Investments Associate
Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

Cynthia Sanchez is currently the Education Investments Associate at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. She has experience in community organizing, youth development and philanthropic support. She previously held various roles at the Knight Foundation, supporting grants administration and the community/national initiatives department.
Dwight Sharpe  
District Equity, Restorative Practice and Social Emotional Learning Facilitator  
Middletown Public Schools

Dwight Sharpe was raised in Meriden and received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Central Connecticut State University in Elementary and Mathematics Education. Throughout his teaching career he’s taught preschool, elementary, secondary, and college-aged students. He became an Equity Coach in 2017 and recently took on the role as the District Equity, Restorative Practice and Social Emotional Learning Facilitator for Middletown Public Schools.

Regis Anne Shields, Principal  
RAS Equity Consulting

Regis Anne Shields has 20 years’ experience in public education reform. She is the Principal of RAS Equity Consulting, working with small- to medium-size districts and charter schools around issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Projects include equity audits, cultural proficiency workshops and trainings, and the design and implementation of equitable systems including budgeting, hiring, and performance management. Previously, Regis served as a founding Director of Education Resource Strategies (ERS), a nonprofit strategic consulting firm. Prior to ERS, Regis served as Special Assistant to the Superintendent and Director of High School Redesign for the Providence (RI) Public Schools and served as an Assistant Director for the Boston Annenberg Challenge. She has a Professional Certificate in Strategic Diversity and Inclusion Management from the School of Continuing Studies at Georgetown University, a master’s in Public Administration from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, a JD from New York University School of Law, and a bachelor’s from Brown University.

Wendy Waithe Simmons, Ph.D., Director of Education and Equity  
Connecticut Voices for Children

Dr. Wendy Waithe Simmons is the Director of Education and Equity at Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential. She is also a licensed psychologist with more than 20 years of experience working with children and families through teaching, direct clinical service, consultation, program development, and research in both educational and clinical settings. Dr. Simmons received her doctoral training at the University of South Carolina and post-doctoral training at the Child Study Center at Yale University.
Meet the Presenters (Continued)

Violet Jiménez Sims, Ed.D., Assistant Principal
CREC Montessori Magnet School

Dr. Violet Jiménez Sims is an activist, entrepreneur, and educator who draws inspiration from her experiences as an immigrant, English language learner, world language and TESOL teacher, and public school administrator. She has extensive experience teaching students of diverse backgrounds as well as designing and delivering professional development on topics such as sheltered instruction, strategies for English earners in mainstream classrooms, and equity informed practices. Dr. Jiménez Sims extends her expertise and dedication to diversity, equity, and multiculturalism through her community involvement as the founder of the Diaspora Multicultural Society, Inc.; and as a member of her local Board of Education.

Latasha Turnquest, Director of Family Partnerships
Manchester Public Schools-Welcome Center

Latasha Easterling-Turnquest helps strengthen relationships, build the capacity of parents and staff, and reduce barriers to opportunities. She oversees Manchester’s nine Family Resource Centers, five Parent Liaisons, Parent Leadership Trainings, School Governance/Advisory Councils, Community Partnerships, and the Welcome Center, which centralizes registration for kindergarten through grade 8. Latasha has worked alongside families, community members, and school staff, implementing programming for youth within schools and building the capacity of adults through classes and workshops. She obtained a master’s in education at the University of Hartford.

Nicole M. Vitale, Consultant
State Education Resource Center (SERC)

Nicole M. Vitale has always been passionate about equity and empowering youth. Her early roles included coordinating the College and Career Readiness Program at Children’s Community Programs of Connecticut and developing a mentoring program for Klingberg Family Services in New Britain. After graduating from Central Connecticut State University, Nicole began her career at SERC as an Education Services Specialist, where she coordinated events for the Initiative on Diversity in Education and developed a youth leadership program. Later, as an education consultant, she began facilitating professional learning on cultural responsiveness, equity, leadership, and student voice. Nicole is currently managing the Parent Leadership/Parent Trust Fund Grant that supports parents from across the state to gain and enhance skills to advocate on behalf of Connecticut’s children. She also coordinates the Special Education Youth Advisory Council, which is designed to increase student involvement in the special education process and to help students develop strong, effective leadership skills to make positive change in their school and community.
Talia W. is a day student from Farmington. She is a member of the varsity squash team and is the head of both the yearbook and the Association for White Anti-Racist Education (AWARE). She will be attending the Hobart and William Smith Colleges in the fall.

Mellin W., Student
Spring Glen Elementary School

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Talia W., Student
Miss Porter’s School

Talia W. is a day student from Farmington. She is a member of the varsity squash team and is the head of both the yearbook and the Association for White Anti-Racist Education (AWARE). She will be attending the Hobart and William Smith Colleges in the fall.

Kim Wachtelhausen, Consultant, Talent Office
Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

Kim Wachtelhausen is a Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Talent Office Consultant in the Bureau of Educator Effectiveness. After a 25-year career as an early childhood educator, Kim became the project leader for the Elementary BEST Program until the program ended in 2009. She was actively involved in the development and implementation of the Teacher Education and Mentoring (TEAM) Program to provide guided support for beginning teachers as part of their induction into the profession. Currently, Kim is the strategy lead on meeting the CT State Board of Education’s priority goal to increase the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Connecticut’s educator workforce.

Kim received her B.S. and M.S. from Central Connecticut State University and a Sixth-Year in Educational Leadership from the University of Connecticut.

Jessica Watkin, Academic Dean and Research Methods Teacher
Miss Porter’s School

Jessica Watkin is the Academic Dean at Miss Porter’s School. She teaches Research Methods and is a math and statistics teacher as well as a former actuary. Her research interests lie at the intersection of student agency, school policy, and participatory research.
Meet the Presenters (Continued)

Amelia Young, Teacher
Highville Change Academy, New Haven

Amelia Young teaches English Language Arts at Highville Change Academy in New Haven, CT. Growing up in the Deep South and then coming to the Northeast as an adult afforded her a unique perspective on racism and a passion for ending it. She splits her time between raising her wonderful son, Bear, and figuring out new ways to spark joy in learning with her students. Amelia received bachelor’s degrees from the College of Biblical Studies, Houston (BS- Biblical Studies and Christian Leadership) and Charter Oak State College (BA- Liberal Arts) and a master’s in English Literature at Southern New Hampshire University.

Cynthia Zingler, Director of Family School and Community Partnerships
Vernon Public Schools

Cynthia Zingler is Director of Vernon Public Schools’ Family, School and Community Partnerships Center, whose work includes implementing structures and supports around family engagement, supporting families for partnership around student learning, and coordination and collaboration with stakeholders to ensure access to available and appropriate resources. Prior to this position, Cynthia served as an educational consultant at the Capitol Region Education Council and a special education teacher for South Windsor Public Schools. She earned her B.A. in Elementary and Special Education from Providence College, her M.A. in Education from St. Joseph’s College and her Sixth-Year Degree in Educational Leadership from UConn.

Join the conversation!
#RaceinEd2019
We recognize the following districts and organizations that have partnered with SERC to support their efforts to promote social justice and racial equity.

Avon Public Schools
Connecticut Voices for Children
Montessori Training Center
Oxford Public Schools
Regional School District #15
Southington Public Schools
Stamford Public Schools
Thomaston Public Schools
Waterbury Public Schools

Thank you
Call for Nominations

Do you know a leader or advocate in your local school or community organization in Connecticut …
… whose passion and will to support children and families of color is inspiring?
… whose committed and courageous leadership advances equitable outcomes?

The State Education Resource Center, in collaboration with the SERC Foundation, invite you to nominate that person for SERC’s

George A. Coleman
Excellence in Equity Award

SERC created this award to honor and highlight the demonstration of extraordinary acts of commitment and courage to ensure all students, especially students of color and culturally and linguistically diverse students, are valued and respected in their school experience.

Award recipients will be selected based on their steadfast and unwavering action in:
- Advocating for children and families of color;
- Galvanizing individuals and coalitions toward equitable action;
- Taking risks in conversation and action that promote equity for racially, linguistically and culturally diverse groups;
- Engaging the diverse needs of members of an education community and reconciling them toward a shared vision; and
- Furthering the exchange of information that affects thinking and effects conviction on matters of equity.

Nominations of students are encouraged.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR NOMINATION REQUIREMENTS AND ENTRY FORM

Nominators and awardees will be notified no later than March 31, 2020 and invited to attend a recognition award celebration held at the Dismantling Systemic Racism Conference in early Spring 2020. Please submit completed nomination packages to SERC by Friday, February 21, 2020 to the attention of:
Heather Dawes, Project Specialist
SERC – 100 Roscommon Drive, Middletown, CT 06457
or by e-mail – dawes@ctserc.org

We look forward to receiving your nomination packages. Should you have any questions and/or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Heather at SERC, (860) 632-1485, ext. 263, or dawes@ctserc.org.

Who is George A. Coleman?

George A. Coleman has infused his values of equity and opportunity within all of his roles in Connecticut education. As an administrator at the CT State Department of Education (CSDE), including two appointments as Acting Commissioner, Mr. Coleman continuously advanced the truth that all children can learn. He has refused to accept educational disparities and has made the most of his positions to advocate for the highest opportunities for all students. Mr. Coleman has also been a critical partner with SERC in advancing an educational system that confronts the impact of racism among children of color and their families. In addition to Acting Commissioner, Mr. Coleman’s other roles during his 24-year career at CSDE were Deputy Commissioner, Associate Commissioner, Chief of the Bureau of Curriculum and Teaching, and Chief of the Bureau of Early Childhood Education. Mr. Coleman retired from CSDE in October 2011 and has since joined the Boards of SERC and the SERC Foundation. He is currently a private contractor for Cooperative Educational Services in Trumbull.
Inspired to make a difference?
Ready to take action?

SERC Professional Learning Opportunities

As a leader, how do you take the ideas and practices you’ve learned at the Dismantling Systemic Racism conference and implement them in your district or school?

• Are you looking for ways to support your staff in meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse student population?
• As a literacy coach or teacher, are you looking for ways to make your conferences about writing more culturally responsive?
• Are you and your staff struggling with how to analyze data for racial disparities and how they might be addressed?
• Are your teachers ready to respond to racial, ethnic and sociopolitical tensions that affect students and their families?
• Do teachers know what to say when the topic of race or ethnicity comes up in class?

SERC can help address these questions and many others through collaboratively designed professional learning and technical assistance.

Since beginning this work in 2003, SERC has worked to shed light on race and racism in education, studying the intersection of race and culture with educational achievement, special education, and student outcomes and success. SERC staff members have explored institutionalized racism and how the maintenance and perpetuation of differential distributions of power and privilege in schools result in significant disparities in educational outcomes between students of color and their white peers. SERC offers professional learning opportunities to districts and schools, in a variety of topics and formats, to support the implementation of practices that promote equitable access and achievement for ALL students.

To explore customized professional learning options for your organization, please contact SERC at:

SERC Professional Development Services
pd@ctserc.org
860-632-1485
www.ctserc.org

Experience the SERC Difference
The William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund is excited to continue the journey with the State Education Resource Center and today’s participants to dismantle systemic racism and improve children’s learning throughout our state.

The mission of the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund is to achieve equity in education by working with those affected and inspiring all to end racism and poverty.

2019 Dismantling Systemic Racism Conference
This conference is a collaboration of SERC and the SERC Foundation. www.ctserc.org/foundation

With support from

William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund

In partnership with

Connecticut School Climate Transformation Grant