

## MEET THE BREAKOUT SPEAKERS



**Megan Aseltine**

Megan Aseltine, Ed.D. started her career in education as a school psychologist serving preschool through eighth grade. Aseltine joined the Skokie/Morton Grove school district as the Director of Special Education and is currently serving the community as the Assistant Superintendent with a special focus on expanding the community school initiative and early childhood programming.



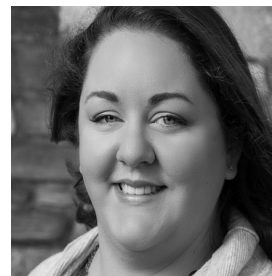
**Lynn Barts**

Lynn Barts began working in the field of Early Intervention over 25 years ago with Easter Seals providing home visits and parent groups for families with babies & toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities. Lynn has worked within Child Care Resource & Referral as an Early Intervention/Child Care Inclusion Coordinator supporting families with infants & toddlers and their child care providers, a Prenatal to Three District Home Visiting Program Coordinator, and has been Adjunct Faculty.



**Lindsay Bohm**

Lindsay Bohm is the Regional KIDS Coach for the Central Region. Lindsay received her Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Western Illinois University and her Master's in Educational Leadership from the University of Illinois at Springfield. She started her teaching career with the Athens C.U.S.D. where she taught for 10 years before taking a position as a school improvement coach with the Illinois Center for School Improvement. She joined the KIDS Team when the tool became mandated statewide in 2017.



**Jennifer Caldwell**

As an integral part of School Readiness Consulting (SRC)'s mission to integrate strategic thinking, best practice, and evaluation to improve early learning, Jennifer Caldwell provides leadership for the organization's work around implementation, professional learning, and leadership development. Jennifer has led SRC's work with multiple local, state, and national with a particular focus on racial equity in ECE. Jennifer holds a M.Ed in Early childhood Ed. and a B.S in Early Childhood Leadership.



**Katie Cannady**

Katie Cannady teaches kindergarten at the Brighton Park Campus of Acero Charter Schools in Chicago. Katie also serves as Union Delegate and was Strike Leader for the United Educators for Justice contract negotiations. She is a two-time recipient of the Rochelle Lee Teacher Award grant.



**Nicole Cannon**

Nicole Cannon is a 2018-19 Teach Plus Illinois Early Childhood Educator Fellow. Nicole teaches pre-3/pre-K at Cuddle Care Learning Center in Riverdale, Illinois, where she is the Head Start teacher. She earned a BA in Elementary Education and a MED in Administration/Supervision from Southern University A and M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.



**Maribel Centeno**

Maribel Centeno is Director, Practice Development and Improvement at the Ounce of Prevention. She has over 25 years of experience in ECE program development and administration, having worked as a teacher, an administrator, and the Vice President of Child and Family Development for a community-based agency. Maribel holds a BA in Integrated Studies from Loyola University and an MS in Curriculum and Instruction in ECE from Chicago State University. She is a certified Brazelton Touchpoints trainer/mentor.



**Sarah Collentine**

Sarah Collentine has been with Christopher House for over 8 years. During her time at Christopher House she has been a 2 year old teacher, founding Site Director and currently holds the role of Associate Director of Early Childhood. In her current role she monitors and supports the data management and curriculum implementation for more than 350 early childhood students as well as coordinates Professional Development for more than 85 teachers across Christopher House' 3 locations.



**Susan Connor**

Susan Connor holds a bachelor's degree in Human Development and Family Studies and a master's degree in Early Childhood Special Education with a special emphasis on infants and toddlers, both from the University of Illinois. Susan's interests in the role that early experiences and development play in a child's desire to connect with other people, explore the environments in which they live and play, and ultimately in their motivation and readiness to learn, continue to inspire her in her work.



**Tiffany Culpepper**

Tiffany Culpepper is the Site Director for the Infant Welfare Society of Evanston, who oversees IWSE's Early Head Start Center Based Program and ISBE Prevention Initiative Home Visiting Program. Tiffany began working as a Director with IWSE after spending over 14 years with Evanston School District 65 in various roles stemming from School Age Coordinator, EHS Assistant Director/ ECE Teacher and EHS Family Support Specialist.



**Heidi Dettman**

Heidi Dettman is the Executive Director of Academics for Rockford Public Schools, District 205, in Rockford, IL. Her career in education includes 10 years as a high school English teacher followed by 7 years as an administrator with experience in curriculum & instruction as a main focus. As the Executive Director of Academics, she supports the work of the Early Childhood Education department, one of the largest programs in the State of Illinois, and a key feature of our district which supports our mission: to be the First Choice for All Families.



**Michelle Escapa**

Michelle Escapa is the Illinois KIDS Professional Development Coordinator. She has been with the KIDS project since 2012 as a trainer and coach. She has 15 years of experience as an Early Childhood teacher. She graduated from Illinois State University with a degree in Early Childhood. Michelle furthered her education with two Master's Degrees - Bilingual/Bicultural Education and Educational Leadership from Western Illinois University.



**Melissa Figueira**

Melissa Figueira helps lead Advance Illinois' statewide policy work to improve educational outcomes for all Illinois students. She has worked on equitable funding reform, including the design and ongoing analysis of the Evidence Based Funding for Student Success Act, and has served on a number of statewide committees, including the Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee. Melissa holds a Masters Degree in Education Policy from Teachers College at Columbia University.



**Rebecca Halperin**

Rebecca Halperin is a doctoral student at Erikson Institute and Loyola University Chicago and currently serves as a doctoral fellow in the Early Development Instrument (EDI) pilot program. Early on in her career, she developed a passion for early childhood advocacy and policy and continues to look for ways to contribute to this field on a broad scale. Rebecca has worked in the early childhood field for over 17 years.



**Megan Hillegass**

Megan Hillegass is bilingual Pre-school for All teacher at Horace Mann School in Blue Island, Illinois. She teaches in a blended special education classroom in which 30 percent of her students have an IEP for a developmental delay. Megan is a member of the instructional leadership team and the multi-tier systems of support committee in her building. She previously taught kindergarten and Preschool for All in Chicago Public Schools and has achieved the NAEYC Accreditation.



**Lisa Hood**

Lisa Hood is a Senior Policy Analyst and Researcher in the Center for the Study of Education Policy (CSEP) at Illinois State University. In this role, Dr. Hood researches and develops policies, practices, and resources to create seamless B-12 education and care systems at the state and local levels. Currently, Dr. Hood is leading a project that studied and developed a clearinghouse of videos of early childhood teachers with supporting resources and artifacts. This website is focused on supporting leaders and teachers who understand developmentally appropriate practice and can connect these practices to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and teacher and leader evaluation and professional growth.



**Erin Jackle**

Erin Jackle is the transition facilitator for early learners for School District U-46 in Elgin, Illinois, where she supports students, teachers, and families during the transition into kindergarten. Erin serves on the early childhood social emotional leadership committee, the districtwide equity committee, and is the co-chair of the special education committee.



**Sarah Kalinowski**

Sarah Kalinowski has been working in Skokie/Morton Grove School District 69 for the past 7 years. Sarah serves as the preschool school psychologist for the TOPS program and as the Early Childhood Transition Coordinator. She support students and families as they begin their school journey.



**Kathleen Kogut**

Katie Kogut has been working as an early childhood leader in the East Aurora School District for the past four years, and across the country for over 20 years. She has a variety of professional experiences, but is always focused on how to close the opportunity gap for our youngest citizens!



**Emily Loney**

Emily Loney leads REL Midwest's communication and engagement activities to build connections between education research and practice. In this role, Loney leads the strategic planning for communications activities and oversees the development of videos, infographics, and events that enhance stakeholders' abilities to use and apply research. Loney earned a Master of Public Policy degree from Duke University and is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP).





**Kelsey Nelson**

Kelsey Nelson has been with Christopher House for the past 3 years and has held roles in both the preschool and the elementary school. During her first year teaching at Christopher House, Kelsey was the Master Pre-K teacher. After completing her first year of preschool with Christopher House, Kelsey transitioned to the elementary school as the K-3 Diverse Learner teacher. She now teaches Kindergarten and uses her preschool experience to support her kindergarten students.



**Mary Joyce Robbins**

Mary Joyce Robbins is an early childhood practice consultant at The Ounce with over 30 years of experience in teaching, school administration, training, and consultation. Her teaching experience spans ages 3 through adult, in the areas of regular and special education including incarcerated youth. A former public school principal in a diverse Illinois community, she integrated Preschool for All and Head Start within her program. She holds a BS in elementary ed, and MEd from Erikson Institute.



**Kimberly Nelson**

Kimberly Nelson is the Executive Director of Early Childhood for Rockford Public Schools. A graduate of Northern Illinois University and St. Xavier University, she has a bachelor's degree in Education with endorsements/approvals in early childhood, elementary, and special education and master's degrees in Educational Leadership and Education and Teacher Leadership.



**Vincent Rodriguez**

Vincent Rodriguez is a 2018-19 Teach Plus Illinois Early Childhood Educator Fellow. Vincent is the Diverse Learners Coordinator at Christopher House in Chicago, where he works with staff and children who need support. Vincent is part of the Simple Solutions Educational team of presenters. He graduated from DePaul University with a BA in Early Childhood Education/Early Learning.



**Peggy Ondera**

Peggy Ondera, the Director of Early Learner Initiatives in SD U-46, has spent her career in Early Childhood Education. She has taught first grade and preschool, worked as a parent educator for families of children birth- 3 years old, and has been an Early Reading First and instructional coach. In addition, she served as a principal for six years at both an Early Learning Center and an elementary building which housed preschool and full-day kindergarten programs. Her most recent projects include the PFA expansion grant, and universal play-based full day kindergarten for all students in U-46.



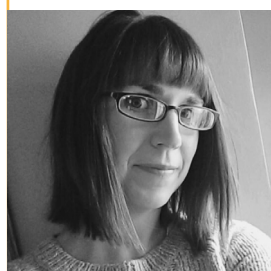
**Emily Rusca**

Emily Rusca brings her interest in education, workforce development, and domestic social policy to EdSystems as the Director of State Policy & Strategy. Her portfolio spans career pathways, workforce development, and data work. Emily's work has included projects such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Youth Employment initiative, the Progressive Pathways Initiative, the Illinois 60 by 25 Network, and the Great Lakes College and Career Pathways Partnership.



**Javier Ramos-Gonzalez**

Javier Ramos-Gonzalez has been a Family Support Specialist at Children's Home and Aid in Carpentersville for 4 years. He is a parent educator for the Expansion Grant and the PFA Expansion programs. Javier acquired a Family Specialist Credential Level 4 through INCCRA and can be found sitting in on trainings and webinars offered by the state that help him hone the skills that are needed and essential to a parent educator. His favorite parts of his career are father engagement, PAC meetings, and event planning.



**Cris Stanek**

Cris Stanek is a LCSW who has worked with children and adolescents for over 16 years. She has provided local and statewide trainings to a variety of audiences from large corporations to child care associations. She enjoys sharing her knowledge of early childhood and infant mental health, trauma-informed care and practice, neuroscience of child development, and the not-so-simple task of caring for children day in and day out. She is also a mother of two loves to share her stories and hear yours.



**Ramona Richards**

Ramona Richards runs Playing with Numbers, a professional development program that promotes exploratory, play-based math instruction in K-1 grades. She is passionate about early education, dedicated to supporting teachers, and intent on bringing joy to the practice of teaching and learning. She has a Master's in Teaching from Dominican University, and taught bilingual kindergarten and first grade in Chicago Public Schools prior to joining Chicago Children's Museum.



**Natasha Stovall**

Natasha Stovall is the Training Specialist at School Readiness Consulting (SRC), a D.C.-area early childhood education consulting firm. At SRC, Natasha contributes to professional development for educators and leaders, with a particular focus on racial equity. With a passion for equity and social justice, Natasha brings significant experience leading local initiatives. She earned her MSED in Elementary Ed. PK-6 and B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies, Elementary Ed. from Old Dominion University.



**Liza Sullivan**

Liza Sullivan, M.A. has more than a decade of personal and professional experience in the field of education. Sullivan has served as the Assistant Vice President of Education at Chicago Children's Museum and the Executive Director of The Alliance for Early Childhood. Currently, she is the B-3 Coordinator in the Skokie School District 69, coordinating student and family services for students birth to third grade.



**Antoinette Taylor**

Antoinette Taylor, PhD was the keynote speaker at the 2019 Illinois Every Student Succeeds Act Conference. She has over 25 years of experience in Education. She focuses on services and policies by consulting with, Policymakers and Professionals on behalf of the community of individuals with exceptional needs including the gifted and talented and mental health. Antoinette is the Chairperson of the Illinois Attendance Commission. She serves on several state committees and has been a guest lecturer.



**Jaclyn Vasquez**

Jaclyn Vasquez is the associate director of the EDI at Erikson Institute. Previously, she was the manager of the Child Parent Centers for CPS, and was an educator for over 15 years. She has her M.S. in literacy education and a B.S. in early childhood education with an emphasis in special education and dual endorsements in ESL and Bilingual and Spanish, from NIU. She is currently completing her doctoral degree in educational leadership with a specialization in curriculum and instruction.



**Maureen Wagner**

Maureen Wagner is Program Manager, Evaluation and Solutions, at the Ounce of Prevention Fund. She supports ongoing Early Education Essentials research, along with the creation of systems needed to disseminate the measurement system nationwide. Wagner is a former teacher with experience across the education and social service sectors. She holds Master of Public Policy and Master of Social Work degrees from the University of Minnesota, and a BA in Psychology from Illinois State University.



**Helen Zhang**

Helen Zhang specializes in data analytics and visualization to inform continuous improvement. She studied Public Policy at the University of Chicago, with a specialization on children and families. Helen gained research experience as an education policy intern at the Brookings Institution and through her undergraduate thesis, which explored the role of social supports in students' transitions to high school.