

## Leadership Institute 4.0

### **Dakarai Aarons**

Vice President of Strategic Communications

Data Quality Campaign

Dakarai is Vice President of Strategic Communications for the Data Quality Campaign, where he leads the development and implementation of evidence-based, multi-platform strategic communications, internal knowledge management, and public engagement strategies designed to support DQC's mission to advance the effective use of education data to improve student achievement. An award-winning former education journalist, he oversees a team of professionals responsible for digital strategy, media outreach, editorial strategy, opinion research, crisis communications, publications, and partner engagement. Dakarai serves on the boards of the American Youth Policy Forum, Education Writers Association, Metropolitan AME Church and the Wayfinder Foundation.



### **Abena Agyemang**

Chief of States

Families for Excellent Schools

As Chief of States, Abena manages Families for Excellent Schools' parent organizing and school partnerships programs. As a child, Abena traveled more than three hours per day in order to attend quality schools and even moved out of state for high school; she hopes that one day this won't be necessary. Before joining Families for Excellent Schools, Abena completed her Master's degree at Teachers College, Columbia University, while working at Hyde Leadership Charter School in the Bronx. Prior to Hyde and Teachers College, Abena lived in Spain and worked for the Ministry of Education in Madrid. She currently serves on the board of Yoga Foster, a program committed to bringing mindfulness into public schools across the country. In her free time, Abena enjoys reading, traveling and playing with her puppy Nola.



### **Atnre Alleyne**

Executive Director

DelawareCAN

Atnre is the Executive Director of DelawareCAN. Prior to founding DelawareCAN, Atnre was the Director of Talent Management at the Delaware Department of Education where he led policy and research efforts pertaining to teacher/leader effectiveness. Atnre is the co-founder of TeenSHARP, an organization that prepares students of color for top colleges. He has worked in the private sector in polling and consulting. He holds a B.A. in economics and a M.P.A. degree from Rutgers University-Camden. He also holds and an M.A. in political science from the University of Delaware. Atnre blogs at [www.fiercelyurgent.com](http://www.fiercelyurgent.com).



### **Leann Arend**

Chief Operating Officer

League of Education Voters

Leann joined the League of Education Voters in 2016 bringing over 25 years' experience in Finance and Operations in both For and Non-Profit organizations. She is an avid outdoor enthusiast and prior to working for LEV she spent 5 years as COO/Director of Finance and Administration at The Mountaineers, a nonprofit outdoor education and conservation organization. She grew up in Alaska, with teachers for parents and spent much of her summers camping and fishing with her family. She is grateful to have been provided an excellent public education experience. Leann believes in the power education and is proud to be a part of LEV's work to improve student outcomes and change lives.



### **Libuse Binder**

Executive Director

Stand for Children Washington

Libuse has spent the better part of her career engaged in the teaching and education of others. She came on to serve as the Executive Director of Stand for Children Washington in 2017 after leading the *Act Now for Washington Students* campaign during the 2016 state legislature as the Chief Civic Affairs Officer for Washington State Charter Schools Association. Early in her career, Libuse wrote the book (literally) on civic participation, *Ten Ways to Change the World in Your Twenties*, creating an organization to instruct people on how to make positive change through civic engagement.



### **Rachel Wiggans Chan**

Senior Program Officer

Rodel Foundation of Delaware

Rachel is a senior program officer at the Rodel Foundation. She works on the Foundation's policy team supporting initiatives related to personalized learning and innovation. She is the facilitator of the Rodel Teacher Council. Prior to joining Rodel, she worked at Freire Charter School in Philadelphia, PA, where she was the director of research and quality assessment. Rachel received a Bachelor of Science in education and social policy from Northwestern University and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government.



### **Parasa Chanramy**

Policy & Advocacy Manager

Stand for Children – Oregon

Parasa’s leadership throughout the 2017 session was pivotal in securing \$170 million for improving Oregon’s high school graduation rates. Her collaboration with key lawmakers and stakeholders was crucial in making this investment a reality for Oregon students. Before working in education policy, Parasa was a teacher in Minnesota. Her students’ stories continue to drive her work. She has served as a Policy Fellow with Princeton University and Leadership for Educational Equity in New Jersey and Minnesota, respectively. Parasa has also worked in Washington where she joined forces with coalition partners to improve student access to advanced coursework and strengthen the state’s college and career readiness diploma.



### **Jennifer Diaz**

Vice President of Communications

Foundation for Excellence in Education

Jennifer serves as ExcelinEd’s Vice President of Communications, providing strategic advice and leading the organization’s external communications and marketing efforts. Previously, Jennifer served as the National Director of Advocacy, working with state leaders to develop and adopt education reform policies, and as the State Communications Director, coordinating media and marketing campaigns across the nation. Prior to joining ExcelinEd, she served as Communications Director for the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Press Secretary for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Marketing Director for the Florida Park Service. Jennifer graduated from Florida State University with a degree in English, Creative Writing.



### **Madaline Edison**

Executive Director

Educators for Excellence – Minnesota

Madaline is the founding executive director of Educators for Excellence in Minnesota. Originally from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Madaline’s work in education started with volunteering in her mother’s elementary classroom and extended into college, where she served as an Upward Bound tutor in Flandreau, South Dakota. At that same time, she began volunteering on progressive campaigns and building political leadership of educators with Leadership for Educational Equity. In 2009, she became part of a founding teaching team as a kindergarten and first-grade teacher in St. Paul. She earned a master’s in teaching from Hamline University, and while teaching, she worked with other teachers to create a grassroots teacher group called Empowering Educators for Equity (E3MN). In 2012, E3MN became the third official chapter of the E4E, and since then, E4E-Minnesota has grown to a network of more than 2,000 teachers across the Minneapolis–Saint Paul region working together in efforts to elevate the teaching profession and improve outcomes for students.



### **Julie Kowal**

Vice President of Policy and Research  
BEST NC

Julie is Vice President of Policy and Research at BEST NC, a business-led state education advocacy non-profit. Julie honed her policy chops during nearly a decade at education consulting firm Public Impact, where she advised on and studied bleeding-edge education reforms across the nation. She joined BEST NC in 2014 after having her second child and launching the North Carolina Campaign for Achievement Now, an affiliate of the 50CAN network. Julie is a P20 product of the North Carolina public schools, and earned her law degree with honors from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



### **Eric Lerum**

VP of Growth and Strategy  
America Succeeds

Eric is currently the VP of Growth and Strategy for America Succeeds, where he leads the organization's efforts to expand and deepen its advocacy impact. Eric has over a decade of experience in strategic planning, partnership development, and advising state and local policymakers regarding public education. Prior to joining America Succeeds, he oversaw policy at StudentsFirst and served in multiple lead roles in school reform efforts in the District of Columbia. A 2003 graduate of the Washington College of Law at American University, Eric developed his interests in public education while teaching constitutional literacy to high school students.



### **Katie Linehan**

Executive Director  
Educate Nebraska

Katie is the founder and executive director of Educate Nebraska, the first organization committed solely to advocating for K-12 education reform in the state. Prior to starting Educate Nebraska, Katie spent a year teaching at a Success Academy Charter School in Harlem, NYC, and two years working in the Nebraska Legislature as the legislative aide for the Vice Chair of the Education Committee and former President of the State Board of Education, Jim Scheer. Katie has advised local, state, and federal officials and candidates on education policy matters, including those for the Omaha Public Schools Board, the Nebraska Legislature, the Nebraska State Board of Education, and the Governor of Nebraska. Born and raised in Omaha, Katie earned her bachelor's degree from Loyola University New Orleans and her law degree from the University of Nebraska College of Law. She also attended graduate school at the University of Nebraska College of Education Administration, studying education policy.



### **Maya Martin**

Founder and Executive Director

Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE)

Maya is a proud 5<sup>th</sup> generation Washingtonian. In April 2016, Maya founded PAVE (Parents Amplifying Voices in Education) to reimagine the education system in DC to be made *WITH* parents, and not just for them. Previously, Maya served as the Chief of Staff at Achievement Prep, as the Director of Policy and Special Programs at Center City PCS, as a Senior Program Manager at SEO, and as an Assistant Director of Admissions at Dartmouth College. Maya received a bachelor's in Sociology & History from Dartmouth College and a Master's in Public Policy from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government.



### **Michael O'Sullivan**

Executive Director

GeorgiaCAN

Michael is the executive director of GeorgiaCAN, a locally led education advocacy organization. He has worked in education reform since 2012 under the banners of the Georgia charter school amendment campaign, StudentsFirst Georgia and now GeorgiaCAN. In this role, he utilizes his background in policy research, legislative advocacy, political campaigns and community organizing to improve the quality of education in the state through the enactment of student-centered policies. Michael is a proud graduate of the University of Georgia, where he earned his bachelor's degree in economics. He currently resides in Marietta with his wife, two children and two miniature schnauzers.



### **Erin Prince**

Vice President of Education Policy

Chalkboard Project

Dr. Erin Prince has spent 32 years of service in public education in Oregon. She joined Chalkboard Project as Vice President of Education Policy in July 2016. Before Chalkboard, she was superintendent for Corvallis Schools for five years and assistant superintendent and human resource director for Sherwood Schools. Additionally, Erin has worked as a classroom teacher, principal, TAG coordinator, grant writer, and curriculum, instruction and assessment specialist during her career. Erin earned a bachelor's degree from Oregon State University in 1984, a master's degree in administration from Lewis & Clark College in 1998, and a doctorate from OSU in 2006. She holds the prestigious Alumni Fellow award from Oregon State University and was selected to the inaugural AASA Superintendent Academy Certification Program. Erin and her husband of 33 years, Rick, have three grown daughters, Morgan, Jordyn and Kendall. In her time away from her educational passion, she enjoys tennis, reading, and any time spent with family and friends.



### **Renisha Ricks**

Director of Advocacy

StudentsFirstNY

Renisha Ricks is an advocate and strategist with extensive experience in media and public affairs, marketing communications, and government and community relations. Renisha most recently served as the Director of External Relations for Achievement First, a charter management organization operating public schools in New York, Rhode Island and Connecticut. Previously, Renisha served as a founder and consultant for the Sharpest Consulting Group, a management consulting firm in Washington, D.C. specializing in all aspects of organizational management for municipal and state educational organizations and start ups. She currently serves as Director of Advocacy for StudentsFirstNY, a grassroots education advocacy organization dedicated to improving public school options throughout New York State. Renisha holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and English from Louisiana State University and Master of Arts in Government from Johns Hopkins. She currently resides in Brooklyn.



### **Ian Rosenblum**

Executive Director

The Education Trust – New York

Ian is the executive director of The Education Trust–New York, which works to eliminate the gaps in equity, opportunity, and achievement that hold back too many students from reaching their full potential. Ian previously served as Deputy Secretary for Education and Economic Opportunity to New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and, earlier, was Secretary of Policy and Planning to Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell. Ian has developed, negotiated, and implemented policy and programs on key equity issues, including high academic standards, early childhood education, school funding, teacher and principal effectiveness, school turnaround, and higher education access and success.



### **Alyssa Schwenk**

Director of External Relations

Thomas B. Fordham Institute

Alyssa is the director of external relations at the Fordham Institute, where she leads Fordham’s fundraising, communications, strategy, and partnerships work. Alyssa started her education career teaching kindergarten via Teach For America, and graduated cum laude from the University of Pennsylvania with degrees in history and communication. She also holds an M.Ed. and a Master’s in education policy. She has previously served as a Girls on the Run Community Coach, math tutor, and TFA-Bridge board co-chairperson. In her spare time, she enjoys competing in triathlons, pub trivia, and baking.



### **Jessica Stewart**

Senior Managing Director

GO Public Schools

Jessica is the Senior Managing Director at GO Public Schools. In her fourth year as a teacher, Jessica became one of the founders of GO and, after a few years of building the organization as a volunteer, has been full-time since 2011. In her second year of teaching, she was named the Alameda/Contra Costa County Math Teacher of the Year. She is an alumna of the New Leaders Council Fellowship and Leadership Oakland. At GO, she leads their advocacy and political campaigns and manages organization-wide initiatives. She blogs about organizational leadership and life as a working parent at <http://www.jessicaeastmanstewart.com>.



### **Bradford Swann**

Executive Director

SouthCarolinaCAN

Bradford has been fortunate to lead in a variety of government, corporate and nonprofit roles. His career in government includes work in both the U.S. House and Senate, as well as in the office of the Governor of Georgia.

Bradford has also worked for multiple corporations, most notably General Electric, where he was a graduate of the Experienced Commercial Leadership Program. After years in the private sector, Bradford joined StudentsFirst in Georgia. He then took over as executive director of SouthCarolinaCAN in 2015.

Bradford has an undergraduate degree in economics from the University of Georgia and a MBA from Georgetown University. He lives in Greenville with his wife, Ashley, and their two young children.



### **Jen Walmer**

State Director

Democrats for Education Reform Colorado

Jennifer Walmer has served as the state director of DFER Colorado (DFER-CO) for four years. She has been instrumental in protecting the Denver school board's reform majority, while also increasing the number of reform-minded legislators in the Colorado Statehouse. Walmer played a key role in the passage of legislation that granted equal access to local funding for Colorado charter schools. Prior to joining DFER-CO, Walmer was the Chief of Staff for the Superintendent of the Denver Public Schools, Tom Boasberg, where she helped pass a \$500 million bond and mill initiative in November 2012. Walmer also was the Superintendent's primary strategic liaison with a divided Board of Education; managed government affairs for the district; and led strategic partnership efforts with community organizations. She has deep political ties in Colorado's Democratic circles, having served as Chief of Staff for State House Speaker Terrance Carroll prior to joining Denver Public Schools. In this role, Walmer was instrumental in the passage of landmark reform legislation surrounding teacher effectiveness.

