



EMERGING SCHOOL MODELS

Maintaining the Momentum

September 12 & 13, 2024



HARVARD Kennedy School

*Program on Education Policy
and Governance*

Participant Directory





Emerging School Models

Maintaining the Momentum

September 12 – September 13, 2024

Conference Moderators

Paul E. Peterson, *Harvard University*



Paul Peterson is the Henry Lee Shattuck Professor of Government at Harvard University. He directs the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard and is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. He also serves as a member of Hoover's Education Success Initiative (HESI) focusing on the improvement of education policy and providing public education solutions for state education and policy leaders. Formerly he was the director of the Center for American Political Studies at Harvard, senior editor of *Education Next: A Journal of Opinion and Research*, and director of the Governmental Studies Program at the Brookings Institution. Paul received his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Chicago. A member of the American Academy of Arts and

Sciences and the National Academy of Education, he is the author or editor of over 30 books, four of which have been identified as the best work in their field by the American Political Science Association.

Daniel Hamlin, *University of Oklahoma*



Daniel Hamlin is an associate professor of education policy in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Oklahoma. His research investigates the effects of education policies on academic achievement, student safety, parental involvement, and school climate. His work appears in a number of scholarly journals, including the *American Educational Research Journal*, *Sociology of Education*, the *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *Educational Policy*, and *Urban Education*. He is also the recipient of research grants from the National Science Foundation, the Randall and Lenise Stephenson Foundation, and the organization of Mathematics of Information Technology and Complex Systems. Prior to joining OU, Hamlin was a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard Kennedy School of

Government. He earned his Ph.D. in educational leadership and policy at the University of Toronto.



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Conference Moderators

Eric Wearne, *Kennesaw State University*



Eric Wearne is associate professor in the Education Economics Center at Kennesaw State University and director of the Hybrid Schools Project. He is the author of *Defining Hybrid Homeschools in America: Little Platoons* (Lexington Books, 2020). His work has been published by the *Peabody Journal of Education*, *The Journal of School Choice*, *Catholic Social Science Review*, *City Journal*, and *Law & Liberty*, among others. He was previously provost at Holy Spirit College, associate professor of education foundations at Georgia Gwinnett College, director of data analysis and deputy director of the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement in Atlanta, and a high school English and debate teacher. He holds a Ph.D. in educational studies from Emory University, a M.A. in English education from the University of

Georgia, and a B.A. in English from Florida State University.

Alexis Calatayud, *Florida State Senate*



Alexis Calatayud is an American politician serving as a member of the Florida Senate for the 38th district. Previously she served as the director of policy and programs at the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE). Calatayud earned a B.A. in political science, international relations, and Spanish from Florida International University. While a student, Alexis interned in the office of Senator Marco Rubio. After college, she was a fellow at the National Campus Leadership Council in Washington, D.C. In 2018, Calatayud managed Vance Aloupis’s campaign for the Florida House of Representatives, serving as a legislative aide for him from 2018 to 2020. To Alexis, educational opportunity means ensuring every child can achieve the American dream through high-quality, accessible VPK–12 education,

affordable postsecondary programs, and workforce training that align with the jobs of the future.



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September 12 – September 13, 2024

September 12, 2024 Keynote Address

Alberto M. Carvalho, Los Angeles Unified School District – Keynote Speaker

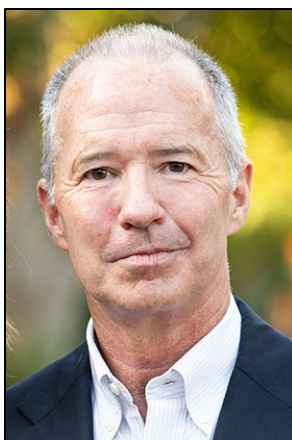


Alberto M. Carvalho has served as superintendent of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the nation’s second-largest school district, since February 2022. He has led the development and implementation of the district’s unanimously approved 2022–2026 Ready for the World Strategic Plan. Through Superintendent Carvalho’s leadership, LAUSD has also established seven new education compacts between the district and local municipalities, made significant progress in greening schools, and secured upgraded credit ratings, generating millions in savings. During his 14-year tenure as superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), Superintendent Carvalho garnered local, state, national, and international recognition. Under his leadership, M-DCPS became one of the nation’s

highest-performing urban school systems. Superintendent Carvalho has been honored by the President of Portugal with the Ordem de Mérito Civil and by Mexico with the Ohtli Award. He was also knighted by King Felipe VI of Spain with the Official Cross of the Orden de Isabel la Católica.

September 13, 2024 Keynote Address

Jeff Sandefer, Acton Academy – Keynote Speaker



Jeff Sandefer is an entrepreneur and a Socratic teacher. He founded several businesses, starting at age 16, including Sandefer Capital Partners, a multi-billion-dollar energy investment firm. While business was his day job, Socratic teaching remains Jeff’s passion. In 2001, he co-founded the Acton School of Business, whose students repeatedly were named as the most competitive MBAs in America by the *Princeton Review*. In 2012, the *Economist* listed Jeff as one of the top fifteen business school professors in the world. In 2010, Jeff and his wife Laura launched Acton Academy, a cutting-edge K–12 school that blends a one-room schoolhouse, the Socratic Method, and 21st century technology to help each learner to find a calling that will change the world. Today the Acton Academy network has 325

affiliates globally. Jeff is a graduate of the Harvard Business School and served for two decades on its governing committees. He was a longtime director of *National Review* magazine and the Philanthropy Roundtable. In 2023 Jeff and Laura were awarded the Simon Devos prize for philanthropy.



Emerging School Models

Maintaining the Momentum

Thursday, September 12, 2024

1:15 p.m. • Nye ABC • Session 1
What's the growth potential of emerging models?

Michael McShane, *EdChoice*



Michael McShane is director of national research at EdChoice. He is the author, editor, coauthor, or coeditor of 12 books on education policy, including his most recent *Getting Education Right: A Conservative Vision for Improving Early Childhood, K–12, and College* (Teachers College Press, 2024), with Frederick M. Hess. He is currently an opinion contributor to *Forbes*, and his analyses and commentary have been published widely in the media, including in *The Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal*. He has also been featured in education-specific outlets such as *Teachers College Record*, *Education Week*, *Phi Delta Kappan*, and *Education Next*. A former high school teacher, he earned a Ph.D. in education policy from the University of Arkansas.

Lisa Snell, *Stand Together Trust*



Lisa Snell serves as senior fellow, education at Stand Together Trust. Prior to joining STT, Snell was the director of education and child welfare at the Reason Foundation, where she oversaw research and outreach on school choice and school finance reform efforts. She has authored policy studies on school finance and weighted student funding, universal preschool, school violence, charter schools, and child advocacy centers. In 2015, Arizona Governor Doug Ducey appointed Snell to the Classrooms First Commission to help redesign school funding in the state. Earlier in her career, Snell taught public speaking and argumentation courses at California State University, Fullerton, where she earned a master's degree in communication and rhetoric.

Michael Petrilli, *Thomas B. Fordham Institute*



Michael J. Petrilli is president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, executive editor of *Education Next*, editor-in-chief of the *Education Gadfly Weekly*, host of the Education Gadfly Show podcast, and a contributor at *Forbes*. An award-winning writer, he is the author of *The Diverse Schools Dilemma*, editor of *Education for Upward Mobility*, and co-editor of *How to Educate an American and Follow the Science to School*. An expert on charter schools, school accountability, evidence-based practices, and trends in test scores and other student outcomes, Petrilli helped to create the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement and the Policy Innovators in Education Network.



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Thursday, September 12, 2024

2:30 p.m. • Nye ABC • Session 2A
Will universal choice programs be captured by the affluent or will they open up opportunities for all?

Myles Mendoza, *Oak Rose Group*



Myles Mendoza is a partner at Oak Rose Group, a firm focused on collaboration to make meaningful improvements in education. Previously he served as president of Empower Illinois, where he successfully led the passage of the “Invest in Kids Act,” Illinois’s tax credit scholarship program. Myles led implementation of the program, raising over \$200 million, and building technology to serve tens of thousands of Illinois children to attend over 400 private K–12 schools. He began his career at Chicago’s Children’s Hospital, followed by Denver’s Children’s Hospital, working as a social worker, then developing an HIV/AIDS program for children and youth. Living in Chicago, he spends his free time with his wife, three kids, and dogs.

Lori Openshaw, *Orchard STEM School*



Lori Openshaw is cofounder of Orchard STEM School, a learner-centered school located in a working orchard in Utah. She is a passionate advocate for fostering STEM education through immersive experiences in the natural world. Lori recognizes the importance of early exposure to STEM concepts and has made it her mission to integrate these disciplines seamlessly into the lives of young learners. By integrating nature-based play with STEM concepts, she empowers students to cultivate a lifelong love for learning and an inherent curiosity about the world around them. Lori, her husband, and two children live in a cozy 1800’s farmhouse where they operate a fifth-generation fruit orchard.

Patrick Wolf, *University of Arkansas*



Patrick Wolf is Distinguished Professor of Education Policy in the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas College of Education and Health Professions. Previously he taught at Columbia and Georgetown University and has been a visiting scholar at the Brookings Institution. As principal investigator of the School Choice Demonstration Project, he has led longitudinal evaluations of school voucher programs in Washington, DC; Milwaukee; and the state of Louisiana. He has authored, coauthored, edited, or coedited five books and over 200 journal articles, book chapters, book reviews, and policy reports on private school choice, public charter schools, civic values, and other topics.



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Thursday, September 12, 2024

2:30 p.m. • Alison Dining Room • Session 2B
Are career and technical education programs worth the investment?

Paul Meinersmann, *St. George Municipal School*



Paul Meinersmann is the technology and makerspace director at the St. George Municipal School Unit in St. George, Maine, where he has worked since July 2015. With experience as a wilderness educator, social worker, and technology specialist, he brings an array of unique skills and perspectives to his role and has been an instrumental part of developing the makerspace and integrating career and technical education into the PreK–8 school. He lives with his wife, two high school daughters, and a number of animals. He used to raise pigs but now spends his free time playing pickleball, which he'd happily talk to you about for hours.

Casey Sacks, *WIN Academy at BridgeValley*



Casey Sacks is the President at BridgeValley Community and Technical College in Charleston, WV. At BridgeValley, she and her team are focused on enrollment, retention, completion, and job placement for the students in the state's capital region. Sacks previously served as the deputy assistant secretary for community colleges at the United States Department of Education, where she led work related to workforce development, career and technical education, adult education, and prison education. She has held a research appointment at Rutgers University, was an Aspen Institute Presidential Fellow in the inaugural class at Stanford University, and earned a Ph.D. in higher education administration from Bowling Green State University.

Keeanna Warren, *Purdue Polytechnic High Schools*



Keeanna Warren has dedicated her career to advancing educational equity through innovation, serving in various roles from classroom teacher to school system leader. As CEO of Purdue Polytechnic High Schools (PPHS), Keeanna oversees the school system's overall administration, educational programs, financial management, and strategic direction. She prioritizes authentic community engagement and relationship building. Keeanna's passion for research and data underscores her commitment to informed decision-making and continuous improvement. She is a proud Boilermaker who earned her undergraduate degree at Purdue University. Outside of her professional achievements, Keeanna is a wife and mother of her three children, Reid, Levi, and Aira.



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Thursday, September 12, 2024

3:45 p.m. • Nye ABC • Session 3A
Are religious charter schools constitutional?

Martha Field, *Harvard Law School*



Martha Field is Langdell Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. She attended Radcliffe College and the University of Chicago Law School, from which she graduated in 1968. She clerked for Justice Abe Fortas at the United States Supreme Court. When he resigned, she clerked six weeks with Chief Justice Earl Warren and then six weeks with Chief Justice Burger. After the Supreme Court, Field joined the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, where she remained for 9 years, before coming to Harvard Law. She has taught and written about a broad range of subjects including criminal law and procedure, evidence, civil procedure, women's rights, disability rights, reproductive rights, family law, constitutional law, and federal courts.

William Jaynes, *California State University, Long Beach*



William Jaynes is a professor of education at California State University, Long Beach, holding graduate degrees from Harvard University and the University of Chicago. His publications include more than 120 articles, 17 books, and 49 book chapters. He has done a considerable amount of quantitative and qualitative research on how to bridge the achievement gap, parental involvement, religious commitment, historical trends, school choice, family structure, religious schools, discrimination, bullying, reading instruction, and public policy. William has advised or consulted for the White House, the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the U.S. Department of Education.

Michael Moreland, *Villanova University*



Michael Moreland is University Professor of Law and Religion and director of the Eleanor H. McCullen Center for Law, Religion and Public Policy at Villanova. A renowned scholar of constitutional law, torts, bioethics and religious freedom, he is frequently sought for commentary at conferences, in the media, and before Congress. Previously he served as associate director for domestic policy at the White House under President George W. Bush, where he worked on a range of legal policy issues, including criminal justice, immigration, civil rights, and liability reform. Moreland received his B.A. from the University of Notre Dame, his M.A. and Ph.D. in theological ethics from Boston College, and his J.D. from the University of Michigan Law School.



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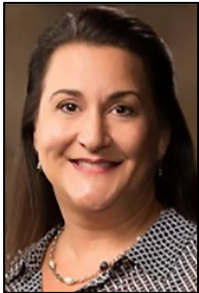
3:45 p.m. • Alison Dining Room • Session 3B
How is homeschooling changing? What are the legal barriers to innovation?

Dalena Wallace, *AIM Educational Collaborative*



Dalena Wallace is president and founder of AIM Educational Collaborative, which assists and coaches those who would like to build Autonomous, Innovative, and Missional educational models. She researches and experiments with innovative learning methods while networking and collaborating with various microschools and homeschool co-ops. As the founder of Wichita Innovative Schools and Educators, a collaboration of educational entrepreneurs in the Wichita area, Dalena provides expertise in network building to help the VELA Education Fund to further build their local communities of grant recipients. She manages a co-op serving 35 local homeschoolers and operates a hybrid microschool called AIM High. Dalena is also a busy homeschool mom of six.

Angela Watson, *Johns Hopkins School of Education*



Angela Watson is a senior research fellow at the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy and an assistant research professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Education. Her research examines the impact of schooling and learning, with an emphasis on homeschool and informal learning options, on academic and social emotional outcomes. She earned a Ph.D. in education policy from the department of education reform at the University of Arkansas, where her dissertation examined the impact of multiple arts-related field trips on students' academic, cultural, and social-emotional outcomes. She also holds an MAT and a B.A. in elementary education and a graduate certificate in STEM education.

Alycia Wright, *Cultural Roots Homeschool Cooperative*



Alycia Wright is the founder of Cultural Roots Homeschool Cooperative, a non-profit with the mission of creating a liberated educational space for children of color. A former educator turned homeschool parent, she launched Cultural Roots in 2016 after struggling to find a cooperative learning space that celebrated her family's African culture and history. The vision of Cultural Roots is to create a cooperative community that nurtures the love of learning and develops a strong cultural and historical awareness in Black and Indigenous children that results in self-love, self-liberation, and community empowerment. It is currently located in an urban setting and plans to launch a second rural site this fall. Alycia lives in Richmond, Va., with her husband and four children.



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9:15 a.m. • Nye ABC • Session 4A
What policies are needed for CTE to work?

Shaun Dougherty, *Boston College*



Shaun Dougherty is a professor of education and policy at Boston College's Lynch School of Education and Human Development. His research and teaching interests focus on education policy analysis, causal program evaluation and cost analysis, and the economics of education, with an emphasis on career and technical education, educational accountability policies, and the application of regression discontinuity research designs. Across these substantive areas, he emphasizes how education can address human capital development as well as issues of equity related to race, class, gender, and disability. He has conducted applied policy analysis with several states and large districts, as well as the Thomas B. Fordham Institute and the Manhattan Institute.

Mikko Silliman, *Aalto University, Finland*



Mikko Silliman is an assistant professor in the department of economics at Aalto University in Espoo, Finland. His research focuses on questions at the intersection of education policy and labor economics, with particular attention to how education systems and labor markets can be designed to reduce inequalities and sustain employment through changes in the nature of work. He has studied the effects that vocational training and early childhood education and care have on careers. He is an affiliate at the FAIR center at the Norwegian School of Economics, CESifo, and IZA. He holds a Ph.D. and M.Ed. in education policy and program evaluation from Harvard, a Master of Social Science from the University of Helsinki, and a B.A. from Tufts University.

Jamie Gass, *Pioneer Institute*



Jamie Gass is Pioneer Institute's director of the Center for School Reform. He has framed, commissioned, and managed over 100 research papers and numerous policy events on K–12 education reform topics. Jamie has more than two decades of experience in public administration and education reform at the state, municipal, and school district levels. Previously, he worked at the Massachusetts Office of Educational Quality and Accountability and in the state budget office under two governors. He's won school reform awards in Massachusetts and Florida for his work on U.S. history and civic education, vocational-technical schools, and digital learning. Jamie speaks on academic standards, school choice options, and school accountability across the country.



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Friday, September 13, 2024

9:15 a.m. • Alison Dining Room • Session 4B
The varieties of hybrid homeschooling

Sylvia Duarte, *hybrid homeschooling parent*



Sylvia Duarte grew up in a Portuguese immigrant family in Bridgeport, Conn. She holds a bachelor's in art history from the College of the Holy Cross and a master's in broadcast journalism from Boston University on a full fellowship. She worked as a health news anchor for ABC40 in Springfield, Mass. Inspired by homeschooled children she met, Sylvia left the news industry in 2004 to become a homeschooling mom. Today her children attend St. John Bosco Academy, a hybrid school in Cumming, Ga., where she also teaches part-time. Sylvia lives in metro Atlanta with her husband Daniel and their seven children.

Jessalyn Franchimone, *hybrid homeschooling parent*



Jessalyn has been a hybrid homeschooling mom through Julian Charter Schools for the past 10 years. For nine of those years, her children have attended one of the school's four-day-a-week brick and mortar programs. She took the 2021–22 school year to explore other homeschool options including an in-home microschool, a homeschool enrichment program, and cooperative experiences within the homeschool community to enrich her children's education. Jessalyn currently serves as co-chair on the Julian Charter Schools Mountain Oaks PTO and recently began substitute teaching there as well.

Kristen Easterling, *hybrid homeschooling parent*



Kristen Easterling has worked as an RN since graduating from the University of Tennessee with her BSN in 2003. She spent her first 13 years focused on pediatric oncology before transitioning to public school nursing. As an adoptive mom with six beautifully unique children, she quickly recognized the need for alternative educational programs. In 2018, the Easterling family was blessed to join Samuel Everett School of Innovation's hybrid public school's founding class in Maryville, Tenn. This year, Kristen and her husband Kermit are celebrating their oldest child's high school graduation from SESI while their youngest begins his kindergarten journey.



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Friday, September 13, 2024

10:30 a.m. • Nye ABC • Session 5A
Are micro schools sustainable?

Amar Kumar, *KaiPod Learning*



Amar Kumar is the founder and CEO of KaiPod Learning and has been working to improve education for students around the world for over 15 years. In addition to having been a teacher, a school principal, and a consultant in McKinsey’s education practice, Amar was the chief product officer for Pearson Online and Blended Learning for seven years. During the pandemic and through KaiPod Learning, Amar transitioned into an education entrepreneur, creating a new learning environment to support families that are seeking individualized and flexible learning options through online learning and homeschooling. Amar earned a Bachelor of Science in computer science from Purdue University and an MBA from Harvard Business School.

April Jackson, *Pass Network*



April Jackson specializes in culturally responsive teaching, curriculum design, and educator coaching. In 2020, April established PASS Network to improve parental engagement in education, provide student support, and enhance teacher development. She founded the non-profit PASS Network Foundation specifically to address the academic, emotional and enrichment needs of children in underserved communities and opened the first PASS Pod, a small group learning community designed to ensure students receive a culturally relevant and academically challenging learning experience. She holds a B.A. in English from Miles College and a M.A. in secondary education and M.A. in curriculum and instruction from the University of Phoenix.

James Tooley, *University of Buckingham, UK*



James Tooley is vice-chancellor and professor of educational entrepreneurship and policy at the University of Buckingham. Previously he was professor of education policy at Newcastle University, during which he took five years’ unpaid leave to enable him to foster entrepreneurial projects in education in the developing world. James’s ground-breaking research on low-cost private education led to his book *The Beautiful Tree: A personal journey into how the world’s poorest people are educating themselves* (Penguin). He has been described in *Philanthropy* magazine as “a 21st century Indiana Jones” travelling to “the remotest regions on Earth researching something that many regard as mythical: private, parent-funded schools serving the Third World poor.”



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10:30 a.m. • Alison Dining Room • Session 5B
What are the new models for educating those with special needs?

Yitz Frank, *School Choice Ohio*



Rabbi Eric “Yitz” Frank serves as president of School Choice Ohio and as the executive director of Agudath Israel of Ohio. An expert in education policy and nonpublic schools, Rabbi Frank also serves as the president of the Ohio Council for American Private Education. He is a volunteer lay leader serving on the community relations committee of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland and president of Congregation Zichron Chaim. As president of School Choice Ohio, he is proud to serve as the tip of the spear along with the dedicated team and grassroots activists to expand school options and empower families throughout Ohio. He firmly believes that school choice is not only the civil rights issue of our time but crucial to the success of our economy.

Cher Harris, *Autism Inspired Academy*



Cher Harris is head of school and cofounder of Autism Inspired Academy, a school dedicated to empowering children with autism to have lives of meaning, purpose, and joy. Harris and her cofounders, Elizabeth Russell and Phillip Russel, founded Autism Inspired to fill a void in servicing students with autism in traditional public schools. It began as a camp in 2017, providing eight students with autism an enriching and safe environment to find a sense of belonging. Harris started her career as a teacher and knew she wanted to help children with autism. It was always her goal to open a school. Currently, 71 students are enrolled at Autism Inspired, kindergarten through 9th grade. Harris hopes to expand in the future to help even more families.

Karla Phillips-Krivickas, *Inclusive Strategies, LLC*



Karla Phillips-Krivickas is the founder of Inclusive Strategies and one of the nation’s foremost thought leaders on education policy and reform. With over 20 years of experience in state and federal policy, she advises education leaders on sound policy and best practices to advance academic achievement for all students, including those with disabilities. Karla has served in advisory roles at the Arizona House of Representatives and was recently appointed to the State Board of Education by Governor Doug Ducey. Karla is the proud mother of a 20-year-old son and a 16-year daughter, both with disabilities. Advocating for her children has provided a new lens through which she personally experiences the policies she has worked to develop and implement.



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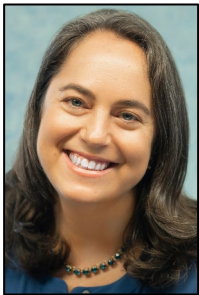
11:40 a.m. • Nye ABC • Session 6A
Redesigning the charter sector

Chuck Nathan Charleston, *NACA Foundation*



Chuck Nathan Charleston (Diné) is a cofounder of the Native American Community Academy and current executive director of the NACA Foundation. During his tenure, he has served as a senior director in the areas of strategic planning in the development and expansion of international Indigenous language and education models, including resource acquisition, co-creating sustainable systems for organizational development and land-based education pedagogy. Chuck Nathan has an international master's in business administration from TRIUM Global Executive MBA, jointly awarded by the London School of Economics and Political Science, New York University Stern School of Business, and HEC School of Management Paris.

Alexis Rubin, *Launch*



For the past 20 years, Alexis Rubin has been committed to enhancing educational opportunities for underserved communities in Brooklyn, NY. She spent many years teaching 3rd through 5th grade and later worked for the Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment, where she supported teachers in developing hands-on, project-based learning curricula. In 2012, Alexis joined the founding leadership team of Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School and now serves as its COO. She currently leads the community design team to plan for Launch High School, which will focus on fostering student leaders to solve the most critical issues of our time—social justice, climate justice, and equity.

Nellie Sanders, *Oklahoma Secretary of Education*



Nellie Sanders was named Oklahoma Secretary of Education by Governor Kevin Stitt in January 2024. Previously she had served on the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board, where she advocated for school choice and resources for students with disabilities. Since 2013, Nellie has worked at the Center of Family Love, a nonprofit serving neurodivergent individuals and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As a dyslexic thinker and advocate, she has first-hand experience navigating the school system as a dyslexic child and later as a parent. She passionately supports education freedom and individualized learning environments including public, charter, and private schools. Nellie resides in Kingfisher, Okla., with her husband and two sons.



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11:40 a.m. • Nye ABC • Session 6B
New technological innovations in emerging schools

Ben Dodson, *Doowii*



Ben Dodson is CEO and founder of Doowii, an AI assistant for data scientists in the educational sector. Starting his career at Deloitte, he laid a foundation in technology and business solutions before pivoting to specialize in AI and machine learning. Ben's expertise in AI led to roles at Google and Snapchat, where he further honed his skills, earning multiple patents for developing innovative AI solutions to complex business challenges, such as using advanced vision transformer networks to improve media quality at scale. He was also an early contributor and data scientist to startups Mux and Marqeta, both of which later went on to achieve unicorn status. Doowii is driven by a clear vision: to empower educators to improve student outcomes by unlocking the power of data.

Amir Nathoo, *Outschool*



Amir Nathoo is cofounder and CEO of Outschool, a marketplace for live online classes for K–12 learners, whose mission is to inspire kids to love learning by making it fun, social, and self-directed. The concept for Outschool began when he was young, playing and programming video games, which taught him that learning can and does happen outside the normal bounds of a conventional school day. Previously Amir worked at Square, leading the development of Square Payroll, and he served as CEO and cofounder of Trigger.io, a development platform for creating native mobile apps. He holds an M.Eng. in electrical and information sciences from the University of Cambridge. Amir lives in San Francisco with his wife Kirsty and their two children.

Kelly Van Sande, *Ignite Academy*



Kelly Van Sande, founder and CEO of Ignite Learning Academy, is a lifelong educator with a passion for children. A certified teacher, principal, and superintendent, she has more than 20 years of experience in online K–12 education. Kelly observed the traditional school system, including online public schools, often were not able to meet the needs of all students and she believed there had to be a way to make education come alive for students at all ability levels, from various backgrounds, and to allow students to learn in their own, meaningful way. She believes school culture is at the heart of a school and must be the top priority for students to thrive. Kelly lives in Charlotte, NC, with her husband, two children, and their dogs.