



# Chicago Southland Educator Consortium Second Annual Conference



Fostering PK-22 and IHE Partnerships to  
Strengthen Educator Retention

Thursday, June 13, 2024  
8:00 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.  
Governors State University





## Sponsors

GovState Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

GovState College of Education and Human Development

Dr. Amy and Dr. Joi from the Teaching & Leading Podcast



Teaching & Leading  
with Dr. Amy and Dr. Joi

# Agenda

7:30 – 10:00 am	Registration	Hall of Governors
7:30 – 8:30 a.m.	Pre-Conference for Invited School Partners	Hall of Honors D1490
8:00 – 9:00 a.m.	Continental Breakfast	Engbretson Hall B1200 and Hall of Governors
9:00 a.m.	Welcome Remarks	Hall of Governors Dr. Joi Patterson, Chief Diversity Officer, Dr. Amy Vujaklija, Director of Educator Preparation, Dr. Shannon Dermer, Dean, College of Education and Human Development, Dr. Giesela Grumbach, Chair, Social Work, Dr. Cheryl Green, President of GovState
9:20 a.m.	Goal of the Day	Hall of Governors Dr. David Conrad, Assistant Dean, College of Education and Human Development
9:30 a.m.	Keynote Speaker	Hall of Governors Dr. Jeremy Coleman, Founder of Century Solutions and Clinical Professor at Ball State University
10:00 a.m.	Transition	
10:10 a.m.	Why Educators Stay	Hall of Governors Dr. Amy Vujaklija
10:20 a.m.	Panel Discussion “Why Educators Stay”	Hall of Governors Teaching and Leading hosted by Dr. Amy and Dr. Joi with panelists Ms. Comfort Agboola, Mr. Bill Curtin, Dr. Tim Doher, Dr. Tim Duggan, Ms. Jordan Romanowski
11:00 am	Gallery Walk	
11:15 - 11:55 am	Concurrent Session 1	See schedule below
Noon	Lunch	Engbretson Hall B1200 and Hall of Governors Dr. Scott Sowinski, Executive Director of Center for Performing Arts
1:00 - 1:40 pm	Concurrent Session 2	See schedule below
1:45 – 2:25 pm	Concurrent Session 3	See schedule below
2:30 – 3:15 pm	Should I Stay or Should I Go?	Hall of Governors Judge Lasheyl Stroud and Dr. Angela Diggs
3:15 pm	Travel safely and thank you for attending!	

# Concurrent Sessions

## Session 1

11:15-11:55 am

Title	Description	Presenters	Location
<p><b>Lifting As We Climb</b></p>	<p>When examining the Illinois 2023 Educator Supply and Demand Report, the findings are consistent with what we see across the school districts and classrooms in Illinois. According to the Illinois School Report Card, In Illinois, 80% of teachers are white and 45% of the students are white. Additionally, 6.2% of teachers are black while 16% of students are black. Similarly, 8.4% of teachers are Hispanic while 16% of students are Hispanic. With these numbers, there is no reflection of the educator workforce in the classroom. Furthermore, 90% of White and Hispanic educators are retained, while 85% of Black educators are retained. We will discuss methods school districts can effectively improve their retention rate of educators of color.</p>	<p>Dr. Dana Whittaker, Ms. Melisa Williams-Rivera, Dr. LeVar J. Ammons, Mr. Broderick Booth, Ms. Farrah Ellison-Moore, Dr. Portia Ransom</p>	<p>D34000</p>
<p><b>Leadership Matters: Collaborative Leadership Opportunities for Educator Retention in P-22 and IHEs</b></p>	<p>Collaborative partnerships between PK-12 (P-22) and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) may create leadership opportunities for educators and empower them to advance in their careers, deepen their impact in the field of education, and contribute to positive school improvement efforts. These collaborative initiatives may also support educator retention, enhance teaching practices, and promote a culture of excellence and innovation in education. This presentation highlights the importance of collaboration within and between P-22 and IHEs to create and leverage leadership opportunities for educator retention. This presentation will explore key components of successful collaboration opportunities and highlight actionable strategies to build and sustain partnerships to support the professional growth and advancement of educators.</p>	<p>Dr. Dawn Brown</p>	<p>D34011</p>

Title	Description	Presenters	Location
<b>Maximizing Collaborative Relationships Between Teachers</b>	<p>Studies investigating factors that contribute to educator retention reveal commonalities for teachers and school psychologists. Some teachers and school psychologists report leaving due to excessive workloads and feeling that they are not making a difference. Given that school psychologists and teachers are affected by similar retention and attrition variables, an exploration of effective collaborations between teachers and school psychologists is warranted. The purpose of this session is to explore the full range of collaborative opportunities between teachers and school psychologists as an effective means to simultaneously bolster retention of both education professionals.</p>	<p>Dr. Shaalein Lopez and Ms. Bonnie Dickey</p>	<p>D34093</p>
<b>Investing in Individual Contributor Career Pathways for Educator Retention</b>	<p>This presentation illustrates how individual contributor (IC) career pathways would increase retention of high-quality Illinois educators. Most career pathways for Illinois educators require shifting to teacher or principal leadership roles for promotion and advancement. However, by implementing IC career pathways in education, educators can be incentivized to remain in their student-facing roles by recognizing and rewarding their skill and expertise in student-facing roles. Given the critical shortage of educators in Illinois, an IC educator pathway will help schools retain high-quality educators who want to make a difference in the classroom without taking on leadership roles.</p>	<p>Dr. David Conrad</p>	<p>D34011</p>
<b>Empowering K-5 Educators: Unveiling Issues, Crafting Solutions, and Honoring Expertise through Teacher Voice</b>	<p>This mixed methods study investigates current challenges and emerging trends in K-5 education by actively engaging practicing Illinois teachers. By evaluating teacher perspectives on potential solutions and gathering feedback through surveys and interviews, we can address key issues raised by teachers themselves. This will culminate in a final report summarizing challenges, trends, and teacher-informed solutions to positively impact policy and practice. An emphasis will be placed on teacher advocacy and empowerment by collaborating closely with K-5 educators to ensure the findings reflect their voices and lived experiences. The goal is to spark practical, positive change in elementary schools across Illinois through research rooted in meaningful teacher-researcher partnerships and upholding teacher expertise.</p>	<p>Dr. Candace Smith</p>	<p>D34170</p>

# Concurrent Sessions

## Session 2

1:00-1:40 pm

Title	Description	Presenters	Location
<p><b>Determinants that Lead to Teacher Retention in K-6 Schools in South Suburban Chicago, Illinois</b></p>	<p>This qualitative descriptive case study addresses the high attrition rates of teachers in elementary school districts. The study elicited several findings: teachers do not feel as though they have a choice in what professional development they are given; teachers feel overworked and that they do not have enough time to do the work required of them by their district; teachers feel that they have little to no autonomy to choose their own curriculum. The implications for practice indicate teachers want choice in their professional development and classroom, and support for student behaviors. Teachers feel overworked and would like their workload to be revisited and tasks that are no longer relevant or beneficial to the school to be reduced.</p>	<p>Dr. Amy Wagner</p>	<p>D34000</p>
<p><b>The Effects of Emotional Behavior Disorder on Teacher Retention</b></p>	<p>This presentation is to raise awareness to administration and faculty on the impact of emotional behavior disorder and the lack of educator preparedness. My presentation will provide statistics from my research on teacher retention and teacher's thoughts on their preparation for dealing with classroom behaviors in the general education setting. I will give them ideas and suggestions from my research and collegiate conversations on how we can address teacher retention concerns from the behavior management perspective.</p>	<p>Ms. Kenya Walker</p>	<p>D34011</p>
<p><b>Building Teacher Leadership to Promote Retention</b></p>	<p>Learn more about the Illinois Teacher Leadership Summit (TLS), a project that empowers teachers and administrators to collaborate to solve a problem and improve student learning. Entering its 8th year, TLS convenes teams of educators from diverse school buildings throughout Illinois. The team identifies a problem of practice within their school, and an assigned critical friend or coach will guide them through a two-day summit using the logic model. Teams return to their school with an implementation plan to improve their school. The teacher leadership summit is scheduled for March 1-2, 2025, in the Bloomington-Normal area.</p>	<p>Ms. Patricia Rinkenberger, Dr. Jan Fitzsimmons, Ms. Beverly Johns</p>	<p>D34093</p>

Title	Description	Presenters	Location
<b>“Weird” Was the Name They Gave Me: Addressing the Intersectionality of Race and Neurodiversity in Educator Retention Efforts</b>	<p>The purpose of this breakout session is multi-fold in that it aims to 1) foster an expansive view of the intersectionality between race and neurodiversity and how they interplay to influence educator retention, 2) examine factors in policy and practice that influence the retention of this population, and 3) encourage participants to actively leverage the strengths of this unique group and empower them to thrive in a supportive and healthy work environment.</p>	<p>Dr. Nichelle Cook</p>	<p>D34160</p>
<b>Teacher Retention: What Does the Research Say?</b>	<p>KEEP Illinois stands for "Keeping Educators Engaged Professionally" and was started by the Illinois P-20 Network as a grass-roots effort to improve retention of teachers and administrators across the state. This session will present emergent findings from an ongoing literature review being conducted by KEEP Illinois on teacher retention and engagement. Participants will work in small groups to analyze the data/themes and begin identifying action steps that could be taken in the coming months to improve retention and engagement policies at the district, state, and regional levels. The whole group will share and summarize suggestions for policy changes that will inform a retention report released by KEEP Illinois in Summer 2024.</p>	<p>Dr. Tim Dohrer</p>	<p>D34170</p>

# Concurrent Sessions

## Session 3

1:45-2:25 pm

Title	Description	Presenters	Location
<b>Building Racism-Free Schools: Implementing Illinois' Newest Discrimination Law</b>	Advocates who developed and passed the Racism-Free Schools Act will share why this law was needed, what it means for schools, and how school leaders can leverage it to address race-related harassment in schools. This session will focus on implementing the law with school-level procedures that don't just meet legal requirements but do an effective job of preventing and responding to racism in schools. There will also be time for Q&A to build understanding of the law before it goes into effect this fall.	Mr. Bill Curtin	D34000
<b>Improving Employee Retention by Fostering Workplace Wellness</b>	This study's purpose is to discover strategies required to improve educators' well-being and reduce burnout. The results of the data gathered in this proposed study can provide insight on how to improve employee retention, job satisfaction and health and well-being. In addition, implications from this study can help leaders and administrators develop work environments conducive to the wellness of the professionals they serve.	Ms. Meagan Washington-Sims	D34160
<b>Teachers of Color Helping Students Bloom</b>	According to a February 2022 Education Week article by Madeline Will, diverse educators "are linked to academic, social-emotional, and behavioral student outcomes and finds that these effects are driven, at least in part, by mindsets and practices aligned to what's known as culturally responsive teaching." Bloom Township High School District 206 has made a concerted effort to actively recruit, hire, and retain teachers of diverse backgrounds to increase opportunities for all students to achieve post-secondary success as future citizens in our local community and global society.	Dr. Tasha Gibson White	D34093



Title	Description	Presenters	Location
<b>Leveraging Photovoice to Foster Reflection, Community, and Support Among Student Teachers</b>	<p>The purpose of this presentation is to share how the Photovoice methodology can be leveraged within teacher preparation programs to support reflective practice, uncover shared experiences, foster a sense of community, and provide targeted support for pre-service teachers during the student teaching phase.</p>	<p>Dr. Amy L. Kelly</p>	<p>D34160</p>
<b>School-University Partnerships in Support of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan</b>	<p>This breakout session on word recognition instruction for grades 6-12 will serve as a demonstration of the types of professional development that GovState faculty could potentially offer to local school districts as they implement the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan (ICLP). We hope to foster collaborative partnerships with local schools in advancing literacy instruction in the Chicago Southland and support local teachers in their practice, thereby reducing teacher attrition.</p>	<p>Dr. Cynthia Rousseau</p>	<p>D34170</p>

## About the Presenters



**Ms. Comfort Agboola**, Middle School English and Math Teacher at Poe Classical School, was the recipient of the Milken Foundation '23 Illinois Award and the ISBE Meritorious Award in '22, as well as Network 13 TOTY in '21, is a. With 12 years of teaching experience, she has focused significantly on Middle School Writing instruction. Recently, she authored a comprehensive Middle School Writing book tailored for teachers, aiming to empower students to express themselves effectively through writing.



**Dr. LeVar J. Ammons**, Director of Equity & Continuous Improvement for Valley View School District 365, has been devoted to the field of education for 13 years. Dr. Ammons leads district equity, diversity, inclusion and MTSS efforts centered on the intentional designing of systems that promote equitable outcomes for students, faculty, and community members. The efforts of redesigning systems have positioned Dr. Ammons to positively impact district policies, strategic planning, leadership development, and building an equity leadership infrastructure. His goal is to support the creation of equitable systems through transformative organizational change. Dr. Ammons earned an Ed.D. in Ethical Leadership from Olivet Nazarene University, an MA in School Counseling from Lewis University, and a BA in Criminal Justice from Quincy University. He also holds an Administrative Endorsement from Concordia University.



**Mr. Broderick Booth**, Assistant Principal of Student Services at Glenbard Township, is a dedicated educator with years of service in various roles, including School Counselor and Dean of Students. Mr. Booth earned his M.Ed. in Educational Leadership and MA in School Counseling from Lewis University and BS in Business Management from Millikin University. He is currently a doctoral candidate at Lewis University.



**Dr. Dawn S. Brown** is the Assistant Chair of Curricular Affairs and Assistant Professor in the Northwestern University Department of Physical Therapy and Human Movement Sciences. Dr. Brown is a national speaker and published researcher on leadership development, faculty development, motivation, and belonging. She is active within numerous physical therapy associations and serves on the Illinois State Board of Health. Dr. Brown completed her Ed.D. at Northern Illinois University, Doctor of Physical Therapy degree at Alabama State University, and Master of Physical Therapy and BA in Psychology at Northwestern University.



**Dr. Jeremy Coleman**, founder of Century Solutions, earned his Ed.D. in Building Administration from Ball State University where he is currently an assistant clinical professor in the Education Leadership department. Dr. Coleman consults nationally for schools, companies and organizations on a range of topics including leadership, building quality teams, school climate and classroom culture, parent and community engagement, and school leadership. He is the board liaison to new teachers for Kappa Delta Pi, a national honor society. He is also the co-chair of Student Development Resources and Scholarships (SDRAS), which is a scholarship foundation for under-resourced undergraduate college students.



**Dr. Nichelle N. Cook**, Owner and Principal of Practegy Consulting, is an educator, attorney, social entrepreneur, and neurodiversity/disability advocate with over 10 years of experience in removing barriers that impede learners from reaching their potential. Ms. Cook advocates for policies that promote equitable educational resource allocation, designs engaging and culturally relevant programs and materials, and supports instruction that caters to various learning styles and exceptionalities. Ms. Cook earned her JD at Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, MA in Educational Leadership and Supervision and MA in Curriculum and Instruction at Xavier University of Louisiana, and a BA in Political Science at Spelman College.



**Dr. David Conrad** is Associate Professor of Educational Administration and Assistant Dean in the College of Education and Human Development at GovState. As president of the Illinois Council of Professors of Educational Administration, he represents professors from almost 30 leadership preparation programs across the state. His scholarship focuses on leadership preparation and education policy. He earned an MA in Educational Administration from GovState and an Ed.D. in Educational Organization and Leadership from the University of Illinois.



**Mr. Bill Curtin** is the Policy Manager for Teach Plus Illinois. A National Board-Certified Teacher, Mr. Curtin taught high school English, History, and Spanish for 13 years and was named Kankakee county's "Innovator in Education" when his class appeared on *This American Life* and *The Late Show with David Letterman*. Mr. Curtin has served on Illinois' Professional Review Panel, the State Educator Preparation and Licensure Board, and as vice president of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English. He is an avid outdoorsman who hiked the 2200-mile Appalachian Trail. Mr. Curtin earned his MA in Educational Administration from GovState.

## About the Presenters



**Dr. Shannon Dermer**, College of Education and Human Development, Dean at GovState, has a Ph.D. in Marriage and Family Therapy. She began at GovState in 2004 and became Chair of the Division of Psychology and Counseling in 2008 and Dean of the College of Education in 2017. Over the last seven years, she has secured over \$8,000,000 in grant funding. In addition, Dr. Dermer has twenty peer-reviewed publications, one book, co-edited the *Encyclopedia of Marriage, Family, and Couples Counseling* and the *Encyclopedia of Multicultural Counseling, Diversity, and Social Justice*, created over 80 training videos, and has multiple book chapters and peer-reviewed presentations.



**Ms. Bonnie Dickey**, Co-Coordinator of the School Psychology Program at Governors State University, teaches various courses in the matriculation plan and supervises practicum and intern students. Professionally, she has worked as a school psychologist for over thirty years at two suburban high schools and was recognized by ISBE and ISPA as a practitioner in the field. She also taught instructional secondary special education for fifteen years. She spent several years working part time as a diagnostician and educational therapist with a clinical psychologist. She is actively involved in an annual family sponsored cancer fundraiser to benefit those impacted by this disease. Ms. Dickey earned an Ed.S in School Psychology from National-Louis University, MA in Education from National College of Education, and BA in English/Journalism and Education from St. Joseph's College in Indiana.



**Dr. Angela Diggs**, Educational Consultant, has a background in special education, school administration, and school psychology. Dr. Diggs is known for her strong work ethic and her personable and down-to-earth leadership style. In addition to her work as an educational consultant, Dr. Diggs is a real estate agent, member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and a mom to three children. She earned her Ed.D. in Counseling Psychology from Argosy University, MA in School Psychology from GovState, and BA in Psychology from Kentucky State University.



**Dr. Timothy Dohrer**, Director of Educator Leadership and Partnerships at Northern Illinois University, has been a classroom teacher, administrator, and consultant for over 30 years in PK-22 schools and higher education. He was a teacher and Principal at New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois and then Director and Assistant Professor in the Master of Science in Education program at Northwestern University. Dr. Dohrer serves on various boards and regularly consults with schools in and around Chicago and Illinois. Dr. Dohrer major areas of research include social & emotional learning, school climate, curriculum theory, teacher education, and leadership. He earned a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Pennsylvania State University, an MA in English from Northwestern University, and a BA in both English and Journalism from Indiana University.



**Dr. Tim Duggan** (he/him) is Professor and Chair of the Teacher Education Department in the Daniel L. Goodwin College of Education at Northeastern Illinois University. In his 40-year career as an educator, Tim has taught high school and college English, as well as a variety of teacher education courses, including teaching methods, educational research, and clinical practice. Tim's main area of expertise is secondary English language arts education, and he has published on topics ranging from writing pedagogy to arts incorporation into literacy learning. Tim has served as the co-chair of the National Council of Teachers of English ELATE Commission on Arts and Literacies, and he is the incoming site director for the Illinois Writing Project.



**Ms. Farrah Ellison-Moore**, Dean of Students at Plainfield East High School, has 20 years of educational experience in School Counseling and School Administration. Ms. Ellison-Moore is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and National Board-Certified Counselor who sees clients as a part-time Mental Health therapist. She earned an MBA in Human Resources, M.Ed. in Educational Leadership, Principal and Special Education Director Endorsement from Lewis University, M.Ed. in Community Counseling and School Counseling Certificate from Loyola University Chicago, and BA in Psychology from the University of Michigan.

## About the Presenters



**Dr. Jan Fitzsimmons** is President and Executive Director of Center for Success, a partnership of college and university schools of education and PK-22 schools that provides a forum for dialog and collaborative action to recruit, prepare and sustain extraordinary teachers and leaders for all schools, especially those serving marginalized, low-income students. She initiated and implemented Project LEAD-Leaders in Education Advocating for Diversity, Teacher Leadership, the Professional Development Network and Junior/ Senior Scholars and the Promise Teacher Corps. Dr. Fitzsimmons has been a college administrator and faculty member for both undergraduate and graduate classes, a principal, and a resource and early childhood special education teacher, and founder of two successful organizations. Dr. Fitzsimmons publishes *Voices for Educational Equity*, an electronic journal and is the author of two books on teacher leadership.



**Dr. Cheryl Green**, President of GovState, brings more than 30 years of professional experience in higher education to her role as the sixth President of GovState, and the leader of the Jaguar family. A passionate educator and administrator, Dr. Green believes fiercely in the power of education to change lives. Throughout her career, she has pioneered the innovation of academic enrichment opportunities and student success initiatives that promote increased retention and graduation rates for first generation and non-traditional college students.



**Dr. Giesela Grumbach**, Social Work Department Chair, believes that research informs practice as practice informs research; it is a reciprocal relationship. Prior to her career in academia, she worked in medical and mental health settings, schools, and as a private practitioner/mitigation specialist. Her scholarly work included participation as an early-stage investigator on the Governors State University (GovState) and the University of Illinois Cancer Center Disparities Education Program. Dr. Grumbach earned Ph.D. in Social Work from the University of Illinois at Chicago and MSW from Loyola University of Chicago.



**Ms. Beverly Johns**, Learning and Behavior Consultant, worked in the public schools with students with significant behavioral and emotional disabilities and learning disabilities for well over 30 years. She was the administrator and founder of an Alternative School responsible for staff development for the Four Rivers Special Education District. She is the current President of the Learning Disabilities Association of Illinois, and she received the Division for the Arts Lifetime Achievement Award and the President's Award from Learning Disabilities Association of America in 2024. Ms. Johns also received the 2000 Outstanding Leadership Award of the Council for Exceptional Children and is the author or co-author of over 26 non-fictions, including the textbook on Learning Disabilities, and fiction books, and numerous articles.



**Dr. Amy L. Kelly**, Assistant Professor in Early Childhood at GovState, teaches and supervises teacher education candidates in both master's and bachelor's programs. Before teaching at the university, Dr. Kelly was a public-school elementary educator in a south suburb of Chicago. She has a background in special education, general education, and ESL. She holds an Ed.D. from Lewis University, an MA in Educational Administration from GovState, and a BS in Special Education from Eastern Illinois University. Her research interests include the student experience, standardization of curriculum and assessment, and critical pedagogy.



**Dr. Shaalein C. Lopez**, Ph.D., NCSP, is an Assistant Professor of School Psychology at GovState where she teaches a variety of graduate courses in intellectual and psychoeducational assessment and intervention, and statistics. Dr. Lopez is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist and co-directs programming at The School Psychology Laboratory at GSU. Dr. Lopez worked as a school psychologist for children and adolescents in the Chicago Public Schools and was a high school mathematics teacher in the US and Africa. Dr. Lopez's research interests include mathematics learning and equitable practices in education.



**Dr. Joi Patterson**, Chief Diversity Officer at GovState, has thirty years of experience in education; as a vice-president of academic affairs/chief operating officer, director, department chair, associate professor, licensing advisor, accreditation reviewer / liaison, college professor, superintendent, principal, middle school bilingual science teacher, online instructor, and CAEP liaison/reviewer. Her service and tenure in education is inspired by the need to improve the lives of others and their families through education. Dr. Patterson's service and scholarly interests include retention, completion, and advancement of marginalized groups.



**Dr. Portia Ransom**, Associate Principal at Edgewood Middle School, is a veteran educator with decades of experience in higher education and secondary education. Dr. Ransom is currently a TeachPlus Educational Policy Fellow. She earned a Ph.D. in American Studies from Purdue University, MA in English from North Carolina A&T State University, M.Ed. in Educational Leadership with Principal Endorsement from American College of Education, MAT in Secondary Education from National Louis University, and BA in English from Oberlin College.

## About the Presenters



**Ms. Patrica Rinckenberger**, Music Educator, has taught music and led musical productions for PK-22, community college, and community groups. Her conducting experience includes church choirs, handbell choirs, professional non-equity musical pit orchestras, and choirs at all levels. Ms. Rinckenberger is an active member of Delta Kappa Gamma, a society that serves female educators internationally and currently is the Second Vice President of Membership for the Illinois state division. She earned her Bachelor of Music degree with highest honors from DePaul University. Her MA degree and most of her post graduate work was completed at the University of Illinois where she supervised student teachers in vocal music education.



**Ms. Jordan Miroballi Romanowski** (she/her) is a school psychologist with five years of experience in the Chicago Public Schools. She has worked in five schools, providing services to students from preschool through age 18 throughout Chicago. She is trained in the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule and focuses on supporting students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Jordan's responsibilities include conducting comprehensive evaluations to determine students' educational needs, implementing intervention strategies, supporting crisis intervention and collaborating with educators and families to develop and monitor individualized education plans and 504 plans. By providing these services, Jordan's objective is to ensure that students receive the necessary support to achieve their educational and personal goals. ,



**Dr. Cynthia Rousseau**, Assistant Professor of English and Secondary English Education Coordinator at GovState has over 15 years of experience teaching high school English. Dr. Rousseau brings a practitioner's perspective to her research and teaching and is passionate about supporting literacy efforts in local school districts. Dr. Rousseau holds a Ph.D. in Reading, Language, and Literacy with a focus on secondary literacy instruction. Her current work explores strategies to support teachers as they foster reading engagement and implement evidence-based practices with adolescent students.



**Dr. Candace Smith**, Assistant Professor and Education Consultant, has been serving in education for over 20 years. She began her educational career as a pre-kindergarten teacher with implementing a pilot program and later transitioned to Chicago Public Schools. She taught third grade for CPS, and then taught for 10 years in Lansing. For three years she served as assistant principal at another school in the same district. Dr. Smith most recently served as principal at Holy Family School in North Lawndale. Dr. Smith earned both her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership for Teaching and Learning and M.Ed. in Educational Leadership from Lewis University.





**Judge Lasheyl Stroud** is a licensed attorney of over two decades and serves as the Lead Juvenile Judge in Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations & Juvenile Branch. In addition, she serves as a mentor, volunteer, an active member of her church and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and is a Breast Cancer Survivor. Judge Stroud earned her J.D. from The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law and BA in Criminal Justice from Kentucky State University. She is married to Corey, a school Administrator, and they have two sons.



**Dr. Amy Vujaklija**, Senior Director of Educator Preparation, Accreditation, and Assessment at GovState is active in teacher recruitment and retention. She earned her BA in English from the University of Kentucky, MAT in Middle and Secondary English Language Arts from Spalding University, and graduate English coursework and Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Louisville, all in her native home of Kentucky. In her role in educator preparation and as Teaching and Leading cohort, she facilitates partner outreach, local conferences, and educator preparation workshops. Dr. Vujaklija's research interests use qualitative narrative inquiry to explore the lived experience of teacher leadership and student learning.



**Dr. Amy Wagner**, University Lecturer at GovState, began her journey at GovState as a student where she earned a BA in Elementary Education and MA in Curriculum and Instruction. She taught as an elementary educator for 18 years before transitioning to higher education. Dr. Wagner graduated from National University with a doctoral degree in Instructional Leadership. Her interest in teacher retention led to her dissertation research where she interviewed local veteran teachers to find out what THEY say schools need. She is excited to share her findings!



**Ms. Kenya Walker**, Early Childhood Educator, has five years of experience in the classroom as a long-term substitute and now a classroom teacher. She began her career in corporate America where she learned communication skills, team building, organizational management skills, morale, and motivational techniques. Ms. Walker is a self-proclaimed career student and the mother of a 15-year-old foster daughter. Ms. Walker earned a BA in Organizational Management and left corporate America after 20 years to pursue her passion for education. She recently earned her MA in Early Childhood Education.

## About the Presenters



**Ms. Meagan Washington-Sims**, Unit Manager at Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center, dedicates her leadership in the Human Services sector. Ms. Washington-Sims is currently a Candidate for the Ed.D. in Interdisciplinary Leadership at GovState. Her research interests include foster care, kinship care, mental health, epigenetics, health and wellness, childhood trauma, child welfare systems, and resilience theories.



**Dr. Tasha Gibson White**, Director of Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) at Bloom Township High School District 206, has over 20 years of experience in public education at all grade levels. Dr. White has served in other administration roles, including Assistant Principal, Division Coordinator of Special Education, Special Education Case Manager, and Credit Recovery Principal. She also serves as the district's administrator to oversee the New Teacher Mentoring Program. Dr. White earned her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership with a Superintendent Endorsement and Licensure from the University of Saint Francis, MA in School Leadership from Concordia University, MS in Communication Sciences & Disorders in Speech-Language Pathology, and BA in English from Western Illinois University. She also completed postdoctoral work at Loyola University to earn certification in the Discipline Equity Program.



**Ms. Dana Whittaker**, Director of Pupil Personnel Services at Lincoln Way East High School, is an educator with almost 20 years of experience as a professional school counselor and most recently worked as the Director of School Counseling for 7 years. Ms. Whittaker earned an MA in Educational Leadership from North Central College, M.Ed. in School Counseling from Loyola University Chicago, and BS in Psychology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



**Ms. Melisa Williams-Rivera**, Professional School Counselor at DuPage High School District 88, is an educator with over 10 years of Professional School Counseling and Academic and Career Advising experience. Ms. Williams-Rivera has an MA in School Counseling from Roosevelt University and BA in Psychology from the University of Illinois at Chicago.





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