



SAFER SCHOOLS AND CAMPUSES BEST PRACTICES CLEARINGHOUSE

Lessons from the Field - Returning to In-Person Learning: Supporting Students, Especially Those with Disabilities, through Intensive Instruction, Effective Learning Environments and Family Engagement

Wednesday, May 25, 2021 | 3:00 - 4:00 PM ET

Speaker Bios

Dr. David J. Cantrell

David J. Cantrell, Ph.D., a member of the U.S. Government Senior Executive Service, serves as the deputy director in the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) within the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, at the U.S. Department of Education (Department). In this role, he is responsible for overseeing administration of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which authorizes formula grants to States under IDEA Part B and to lead agencies for the infants and families program under IDEA Part C. IDEA also authorizes discretionary grants under IDEA Part D to institutions of higher education and other non-profit organizations to support grants for state personnel development, technical assistance and dissemination, technology, and parent training and information centers.

With 30-years of professional experience, he is a creative, team-oriented leader with an extensive background serving children with disabilities and their families. He has worked as a special educator, district coordinator, school administrator, and, finally, as director of special education and student support services. Throughout his career, David has passionately advocated on the behalf of students with disabilities. His areas of interest include home-school partnerships, early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities, and dropout prevention programs for students with disabilities. Originally from Louisville, Kentucky, David holds a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish from the University of Louisville, a Master of Education in special education from North Carolina State University, and a Doctor of Philosophy in special education policy from the University of Maryland-College Park. Dr. Cantrell currently resides in Washington, DC.

Dr. Joseph Davis

Moved by the events in Ferguson during 2014, Dr. Joseph Davis pursued the superintendent opening in the Ferguson-Florissant School District (FFSD) and in the summer of 2015 moved his family from North Carolina to the community he now calls home and began serving the community as Superintendent. His role as Superintendent is the culmination of a lifetime as an educator starting as a bus driver then teacher, assistant principal and principal at Vick Elementary School, Darden Middle School and Hunt High School in Wilson, North Carolina. Dr. Davis also served as a Deputy Chief of Schools in the Chicago (IL) Public Schools.

Dr. Davis is an equity warrior in the purest sense of the word. He is committed to creating opportunities for all children; especially children of color who are economically disadvantaged and in whom Dr. Davis sees himself and his own experience growing up as a Black male with limited access to resources for academic success in the south. Every time he speaks on the topic of equity, he emphatically proclaims that he is, “not about bringing anyone down, but about bringing everyone up and creating equitable opportunities for ALL children!”

Dr. Davis is leading high school transformation. The number of FFSD students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses has dramatically increased during his tenure as Superintendent. His team’s efforts have increased the district’s graduation rate so that the 2019 4-year graduation rate of the district was 91.7%. However, he “will not be satisfied until every student graduates ready for success in college and in life.”

Under Dr. Davis’ leadership, the FFSD has opened the STEAM Academy in two schools. The Academy is a project-based learning middle school focused on providing deeper learning opportunities to prepare students for success in fields including science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math. The district also offers the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme at McCluer North High School to provide students an internationally recognized world-class education.

Perhaps most importantly Dr. Davis led the Board of Education to adopt an Equity Resolution in 2018. Equity for all is the lens that will guide policy and decision-making that will change the trajectory of students’ lives for decades to come. Dr. Davis’ mission as an equity warrior is changing lives in Ferguson and in communities across the nation.

Dr. Bonita Jamison

Dr. Bonita Jamison has been an educator for over 19 years. Distinguished as an energetic and driven leader, Dr. Jamison was appointed as the Executive Director of Integrated Supports and Accelerated Learning on July 1, 2018. With a focus on creating a culture of deliberate excellence through the acceleration of student achievement and district and school improvement, her major priorities are: a focus on equity, innovation, ensuring the implementation of multi-tiered systems of support, and mentorship. Prior to her appointment in Ferguson-Florissant School District, Dr. Jamison served as a Regional Principal Director, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services, principal at both the elementary and secondary level and a classroom teacher. In each of her leadership positions, Dr. Jamison played a significant role in improving student outcomes and launching several district initiatives, including leading the opening of Innovation High School designed after the Big Picture Learning design and Care Counts, a Whirlpool collaboration that installed washers and dryers in schools. Dr. Jamison earned her doctorate degree in educational

leadership and policy analysis and an educational specialist degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia, her master's degree in educational leadership from Lindenwood University, and her bachelor's degree in middle school education from Saint Louis University. She is committed to doing whatever it takes to change the life trajectory of children and preparing them to enhance their communities because when communities are enhanced so are schools. Beginning on July 1, 2021, Dr. Jamison will begin serving as the Superintendent of Maplewood Richmond Heights School District.

Thom Jones

Thom Jones is the current State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) coordinator, and the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) Director for the division of Special Education Programs at the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE). Thom has been with the WDE for 5 years where he oversees the implementation of Data-Based Individualization (DBI) and supports the Wyoming MTSS Center through providing professional development and coaching support. Mr. Jones earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Education from Western Kentucky University and spent nearly 15 years as a classroom teacher in Kentucky.

Jill Gallegos

Jill Gallegos has been the Special Services Consultant in the Laramie County School District 1 for the past 9 years, serving IEP teams, school administrators, parents, and agencies to develop successful programming for students and professional development for educators. She previously served students and adults with visual impairment for 17 years, both as a teacher and as a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist at the school, vocational, and state Department of Education levels. Ms. Gallegos began her education career as an elementary school teacher.