



- Lessons from the Field -

Supporting Transgender & Nonbinary Students in K-12 Schools

Wednesday, April 13, 2022 | 3:00 – 4:15 PM ET
SPEAKER BIOS

Sam Ames

Director, Advocacy and Government Affairs, Trevor Project



Sam Ames (they/he) is the Director of Advocacy and Government Affairs at The Trevor Project. They are a civil rights attorney, author, and national advocate with over a decade of experience fighting for LGBTQ rights, with a focus on transgender youth and conversion therapy. Before joining The Trevor Project, Sam served as the Interim Executive Director of Trans Lifeline, an organization that provides direct emotional and financial support to transgender people in crisis. They also served as the Interim Executive Director at Our Family Coalition, an organization working to advance equity for the full and expanding spectrum of LGBTQ families and youth. They started out their legal career as a Staff Attorney at the National Center for Lesbian Rights, where they were the founder of the Born Perfect Campaign to end conversion therapy and served primarily on constitutional cases involving employment discrimination, marriage equality, and family law. Sam holds a master's in theological studies from Harvard University, with a focus on Religion, Ethics, and Politics; a J.D. from George Washington University Law School, with honors; and a B.A. in Psychology and Theatre Arts from the University of California Santa Cruz, cum laude.

Amy Cannava

High School Psychologist, Arlington County Schools (Virginia)



Ms. Amy Cannava, Ed.S., NCSP, (she/her) is in her 19th year of practice as a school psychologist and the recipient of the 2019 NASP Presidential Award in recognition of Exceptional Service to Children and School Psychology. For the last decade she has specialized in LGBTQIA+ youth which resulted in her being appointed as the Chair of NASP's LGBTQI2-S Committee. Ms. Cannava is a recognized and frequently requested speaker at local and national conferences. She has authored book chapters for NASP on LGBTQIA+ youth, worked with The Trevor Project, GLSEN, Gender Spectrum, HRC, PBS Frontline, HBO, and Project Thrive representing NASP. A former crisis counselor for The Trevor Project, Ms. Cannava remains inspired and appropriately challenged by the youth she serves who motivate her to continue bettering the world.

Rae Garrison

Principal, West Jordan Middle School (Utah)



Ms. D. Rae Garrison (she/her) is the Principal of West Jordan Middle School in Jordan School District. Ms. Garrison has been an educator for 23 years and an administrator for 18. She was the Utah Principal of the year in 2019. Rae is the co-founder and facilitator of the National LGBTQ+ School Leaders Network within the NASSP. Ms. Garrison has served on the Utah Secondary Principals Association Executive Board for the last five years. She was on the Utah State Suicide Prevention Advisory Board for six years. Ms. Garrison earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Utah in 1998 majoring in Fine Arts. She earned her master's degree at the University of Utah in 2002 majoring in Education, Culture and Society (ECS). Ms. Garrison received her Administrative Credential from Southern Utah University in 2004. Since then, she has served as an assistant principal, a district facilities administrator, and principal.

Sam Long

High School Science Teacher, Denver South High School (Colorado)



Sam Long (he/him) is a Chinese-American transgender man and high school science teacher in Denver, Colorado. He cofounded GenderInclusiveBiology.com and the Colorado Transgender Educators Network. Sam is also on the National Education Association Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee.

Dr. Catherine Rasberry

Acting Chief, Research Application and Evaluation Branch, Division of Adolescent and School Health, CDC



Dr. Catherine Rasberry (she/her) is a Health Scientist and Acting Chief of the Research Application and Evaluation Branch in the Division of Adolescent and School Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In her 14 years at CDC, she has conducted a wide range of research on school health, covering topics such as HIV and STD prevention, building safe and supportive school environments for youth, physical activity and academic achievement, school-based asthma management, and the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model. She has authored multiple peer-reviewed research papers and has presented research and evaluation data at professional conferences across the country. Her current work focuses on supporting and evaluating school-based efforts to improve school climate and prevent HIV and STDs among youth. Dr. Rasberry earned a doctorate in health education from Texas A&M University, a master's degree in health promotion from Purdue University, and a bachelor's degree in health promotion from Arkansas State University. She is also a Master Certified Health Education Specialist.

Christian Rhodes

Senior Advisor, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education



Mr. Christian Rhodes (he/him) served as Chief of Staff for Prince George's County Public Schools. In this role, Rhodes supported the chief executive officer through management of specific business functions of the school system. He began his career as a political organizer for the Maryland State Teachers Association, a state affiliate of the National Education Association, and education advisor Office of the Prince George's County Executive. Rhodes has a Master of Public

Administration degree from the American University in Washington, D.C., and a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Laura Ross

Middle School Counselor, Forks Middle School (Georgia)



Laura Ross (she/her) is the lead counselor at Five Forks Middle School in Lawrenceville, Georgia where her focus is connecting with students to connect them to their education. She has been a school counselor for 16 years. At Five Forks Middle School, she is also the advisor for peer leaders, Girl Talk, GSA, Jr. Building Equity Leadership Team, and the Students Organizing Against Racism book club. Laura was an elementary school counselor for 8 years and is in her 8th year as a middle school counselor. She has presented at district, state, and national levels on creating school wide teacher-student connections, integrating academics into counseling lessons, using technology and data in school counseling, creating counseling lessons with a social justice and equity lens, and more. Laura was the 2020 American School Counselor Association (ASCA) School Counselor of the Year. She serves on the Georgia School Counselor Association (GSCA) Executive Board as President-Elect and is a leader in her school district, Gwinnett County Public Schools, collaborating on committees with focuses on middle school counselor professional development, civic engagement, social-emotional learning, Teen Lures prevention curriculum, student discipline, and equity. She is also a Counselors for Computing consultant and Girl Talk DEI Committee member.

Melanie Willingham-Jaggers

Executive Director, GLSEN



Melanie Willingham-Jaggers (they/she), is the Executive Director at GLSEN, a national non-profit that works to ensure K-12 education is safe and affirming for all students, including LGBTQ+ youth. Her vision for the next chapter of GLSENs work is rooted in the belief that education can and should be an experience that is safe, affirming and liberating – and that we can achieve that goal only when we build in racial, gender and disability justice into our education system as a key indicator of success. Before joining GLSEN in 2019 as Deputy Executive Director, Melanie served as the Program Associate Director of The Worker Institute at Cornell University’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations. As a part of the leadership team there, Melanie worked to ensure the strategic, programmatic, and operational excellence of the Institute.

They earned their B.A. in Politics, Peace and Justice Studies and Philosophy from the University of San Francisco, and their M.A. from The City University of New York's School of Professional Studies in Applied Theater, where they lecture as an adjunct. From 2016-2019 Melanie served as board chair of The Audre Lorde Project, the oldest center for community organizing for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Trans and Gender Non-Conforming People of Color, in the New York City area. Melanie's work on the ALP Board was rooted in the belief that as long as there are organizations connected to our freedom movements – those organizations must be internally safe, healthy and vibrant spaces, on which movements can rely if they so choose.