Lessons from the Field

Empowering Students, Schools & Communities through Community Violence Interventions

Wednesday, June 15, 2022 | 3:00 – 4:15 PM ET

SPEAKER BIOS

Ruth Ryder
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Policy and Programs, U.S. Department of Education

Ms. Ruth Ryder is the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Policy and Programs – Formula Grants in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) at the U.S. Department of Education. In this role, Ms. Ryder oversees a broad range of management, policy, and program functions related to formula and discretionary grant programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA). Ms. Ryder was previously the deputy director of the Office of Special Education Programs in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, which she joined in 1988. Prior to joining the Department, Ms. Ryder was a program administrator in a Washington state school district. There she had responsibility for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title I and Title II programs, state-remediation, gifted education, outcome-based education, and state- and district-wide testing programs. Ms. Ryder has a bachelor’s degree in Psychology and Elementary Education and a master’s degree in Special Education.
Elizabeth Parker
Behavioral Scientist/Senior Service Fellow, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Dr. Elizabeth Parker completed her doctoral and post-doctoral training at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Dr. Parker’s research focuses are wide-ranging and include the prevention of intentional and unintentional injuries; examining the relationship between teen dating violence or intimate partner violence and substance use; exploring the use of social policy packages to reduce child poverty and involvement in the child welfare system; and evaluating programs or policies intended to serve vulnerable children and youth, including those who are commercially sexually exploited, involved in the child welfare system, or experiencing serious emotional and behavioral disorders. The underlying theme that connects Dr. Parker’s research interests is the use of data to determine how to keep women and children safe at home and in their communities.

Loredana Valtierra

Ms. Loredana Valtierra was recently Education Policy Counsel for the House Committee on Education and Labor under Chairman Bobby Scott and works on K-12 and juvenile justice policy. She holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School. Prior to her position on the Committee, Ms. Valtierra worked to promote equitable school policies for girls of color and represented pregnant and parenting students at the National Women’s Law Center. She has also practiced immigration defense law representing families and children and is a former 7th grade English teacher. Ms. Valtierra is a proud Chicagoan, daughter of immigrant parents, and White Sox fan.

Dr. Denise Davis-Cotton
Director, Florida Center for Partnerships in Arts-Integrated Teaching (PAInT), University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, Sarasota, FL

Dr. Denise Davis-Cotton is recognized as a leading authority in arts integrated-teaching, an accomplished curriculum designer for education, arts integration, and new school/program development addressing minoritized and racialized students. She is the Director of the Florida Center for Partnerships for Arts-Integrated Teaching (PAInT Center) at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee. She is a Milken Foundation internationally-recognized educator, a National Past President and active Board member of Arts Schools.
Network. She is the Founder and was the First Principal of Detroit School of Arts; and author of Losing My Mind over Education (Finding My Way Back to Me). She has established the reputation as a community/civic leader for comprehensive culturally-inclusive arts-integrated education. She shares with others her belief in the importance of arts integrated-teaching and learning in schools; thereby, garnering the distinct honor as a woman of vision, keen insight, and action. She received two Keys to the City of Montgomery (Alabama), the Congressional Record Recognition by the 106th Congress, and Distinguished Alum of Alabama State University.

Josh Peterson
Manager, Office of Violence Prevention, Minneapolis Health Department, MN

Mr. Josh Peterson is Manager of Operations, Programs, and Administration for the City of Minneapolis Office of Violence Prevention. In addition to oversight of the Office’s numerous violence prevention and intervention initiatives, he serves as Project Director for a CDC-funded youth violence prevention grant, helped found a hospital-based violence intervention program partnership with three hospitals, coordinates the City’s portion of a multi-jurisdictional 24/7 Youth Connection Center, provides violence prevention technical assistance to policy makers, city departments, and community-based agencies, and works on issues related to youth development and juvenile justice. Prior to joining the city, he worked in non-profit youth services in both direct service and program director roles. In 2018, Mr. Peterson was selected as a Bloomberg American Health Initiative Fellow, through which he completed a master’s in public health at Johns Hopkins University. He has also been active as a performer and recording artist in the Minnesota music scene for over 20 years.

Dr. Jackie Vertigan
District Program Facilitator, Minneapolis Public Schools, MN

Dr. Jackie Vertigan works for Minneapolis Public Schools, where for nearly 19 years, she has supported the mental, emotional, and social well-being of students and staff, including leading the Critical Incident Recovery Team through the Department of Emergency Management, Safety & Security. Dr. Vertigan comes to her work with a background as a Licensed School Counselor and holds a doctorate in Global Indigenous Teaching and Learning with a doctoral minor in Evaluation Studies. Her prevention work focuses on student wellbeing through efforts that improve school culture and climate. Dr. Vertigan seeks to develop and empower education professionals through lifting
organizational and personal vision; strengths-based training, consultation, and coaching; developing programs that lean into resilience; and assessing impact through storytelling, narrative, and other approaches to evaluation. Dr. Vertigan models “imperfect beingness” – emphasis on the imperfect – through her yoga practice and teaching, art and design endeavors, and adventures out-of-doors.

Brandon Krona  
Program Coordinator for the Building Peaceful Schools Initiative, Minneapolis Public Schools, MN

Mr. Brandon Krona works for the Minneapolis Public Schools as the Project Coordinator for the Building Peaceful Schools initiative. In a new role with the Emergency Management, Safety & Security team he looks forward to new challenges and greater outcomes with the MPS community. “Working with youth the past 10 years has been challenging but rewarding. Identifying my part and accepting my role is key in accepting the outcomes of the work we as a group do each day. The goal is to change hearts and minds of others while giving a safe space to speak and learn from people in their communities” Brandon is also a MPS k-12 graduate, and former Dean of Students of his graduating high school.

Karlton Harris  
Youth Violence Prevention City Lead, Center of Population Health and Public Health Infrastructure, Houston, TX

Mr. Karlton Harris is an accomplished community leader and speaker with more than 20 years of experience in designing and implementing supports designed to improve the lives of underserved youth and communities. Currently, Mr. Harris is the Executive Director of The Forgotten Third, Inc. As the Executive Director of The Forgotten Third, Mr. Harris created a strategic vision and direction for the development of supports designed to address the root causes of youth violent behavior. Prior to becoming the Executive Director of The Forgotten Third, Mr. Harris served Houstonians as the Youth Violence Prevention City Lead for six consecutive years. As the lead, he was responsible for the creation of The Houston Peace Youth Violence Strategic Plan and Houston Peace Youth Violence Prevention Coalition. Mr. Harris is an active member of the Harris County Re-entry Workgroup and The Redefining Youth Justice Coalition.
Dr. Jomella Watson-Thompson
Associate Director, Community Participation and Research, Center for Community Health and Development, Kansas University, KS

Dr. Jomella Watson-Thompson is the Director of the Center for Service Learning, and an Associate Professor in the Department of Applied Behavioral Science at the University of Kansas. Dr. Watson-Thompson leads the Kansas City Youth Violence Prevention Research Center, a Center for Disease Control National Center of Excellence in Youth Violence Prevention. Dr. Watson-Thompson supports community-engaged scholarship using participatory approaches to address community health and development issues including adolescent substance abuse and community and youth violence prevention. She also works with community collaboratives to examine social determinants or factors, including educational attainment and access to resources and supports, that may contribute to disparities, particularly for racial and ethnic groups and underserved communities. She researches and promotes collaboration and community-academic partnerships as an approach to foster sustainable change and improvement in communities. Dr. Watson-Thompson has been the recipient of numerous local and national awards related to her contributions to community-engaged scholarship. She has over 30 publications and has received numerous federal, state, and local funding awards. She is as an Associate Editor with Behavior and Social Issues and serves on the Editorial Board of the Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning. She attained a Ph.D. in Behavioral Psychology, a Masters of Urban Planning from the University of Kansas, and a B.A. in Urban Studies from Jackson State University.