



BEST PRACTICES CLEARINGHOUSE

- Lessons from the Field -

Strategies for School and District Leaders to Support Students' Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Academic Well-Being and Success

Wednesday, August 23, 2023 | 3:00 – 4:30 PM ET
SPEAKER BIOS

Hamed Negrón-Perez

Group Leader, Title IV-A Student Support and Academic Enrichment Groups (SSAE), Office of Safe and Supportive Schools; Program Manager, School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV), U.S. Department of Education



Mr. Hamed Negrón-Perez is the Group Leader for the Title IV-A Student Support and Academic Enrichment Group (SSAE) in the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools. He is the Program Manager for ED's School Emergency Response to Violence (SERV) grant program and serves as the Contract's Office Representative for the Title IV-A TA Center. Mr. Negrón-Perez is a former Secondary School Principal and Science Teacher with over 14 years of teaching experience. He retired from the US Navy Reserves after 25 years of service.

Christina Pate

Deputy Director, Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety at WestEd



Dr. Christina Pate, PhD (she/her) serves as the Deputy Director of the U.S. Department of Education's [Center to Improve Social & Emotional Learning and School Safety](#) and Director of the Office of the [California Surgeon General's Statewide Trauma Informed Professional Learning](#). She also leads [WestEd's Safe and Supportive Learning Environments](#) body of work. Dr. Pate supports clients in developing work that fosters personal and collective well-being, centers equity, promotes trauma-informed practice and resilience, and improves cross-sector collaboration to improve outcomes for individuals, organizations, and systems. With over twenty years of experience, Dr. Pate brings diverse expertise in strategic planning, professional learning and workforce development, systems thinking, social-

emotional development and mental health, leadership and collaboration, and organizational climate and culture. She has led innovative and successful efforts to strengthen personal and organizational learning, development, and transformation. An accomplished strategist, developer, coach, facilitator, author, and public speaker, Dr. Pate supports people and organizations to transform from the inside out.

Krystal Wu

Technical Assistance Specialist, Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety at WestEd



A Program Associate with the Resilient and Healthy Schools and Communities team at WestEd, Krystal Wu (she/her) delivers technical assistance, designs professional learning, and develops evidence-based resources to cultivate safe and supportive learning environments. With expertise in culturally responsive and sustaining education, co-design, and school climate, Ms. Wu centers the voices and experiences of community members in all of her work, especially those who have been kept furthest from opportunity. Ms. Wu's recent work at WestEd has focused on the design and facilitation of humanizing learning experiences. She currently leads the Safe and Supportive Learning Environments Deep Dive professional learning courses focused on racial equity and belonging through the Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety and the California Center for School Climate.

Candace Colbert

Dean of Students, Bard Early College New Orleans, LA



Ms. Candace Colbert received her M.S in Urban Studies and Applied Anthropology from the University of New Orleans. As an anthropologist and educator, she is passionate about community-based spaces for youth empowerment. Ms. Colbert has served BECNO in a variety of roles including Campus Coordinator, Student Supports Tutor, and Adjunct Faculty, and is now the Dean of Students.

Dr. tam lee

Head of School, Bard Early College New Orleans, LA



Dr. tam lee (we, us, ours), Ph.D., completed a degree in Education, Special Education concentration, at Temple University also earning a graduate certificate in Applied Behavior Analysis. Dr. lee previously taught at an alternative middle school in Louisiana as a sixth grade ELA and History. During graduate studies, Dr. lee served as the SAT Verbal instructor for Temple's Upward Bound program. After two years of teaching, Dr. lee was promoted to Upward Bound Coordinator. Dr. lee's doctoral research focused on the use of student-authored multimedia instruction to increase SAT scores for culturally and linguistically at-risk students and students with disabilities. When not researching or teaching, Dr. lee enjoys time with family, playing or listening to music, cooking, puzzling and traveling. Dr. lee is currently the Head of School at BECNO.

Rachel Nelson

Faculty, Bard Early College New Orleans, LA



Ms. Rachel Nelson (she/her) is a Professor of Humanities for BECNO and has been an adjunct professor at the University of Maine, Hollins University, and an artist in residence at the Pacific Northwest College of the Arts. Her academic interests dwell in the intersections of culture, identities, and the arts, with a special focus on issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. As a playwright, her work has been shown at The Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Sugar Space for the Arts, Performance Works Northwest, the Oregon Contemporary Shakespeare Festival, Baby Crow Productions, and The SOUND OFF Festival of New Works. In 2015, Ms. Nelson received the Rosa Parks Playwrighting Award for Social Justice from the Kennedy Center, in 2018 she was a Featured Playwright at the Seven Devils Playwrighting Conference as well as at the Director's Lab at Lincoln Center, and in 2019 she was a Featured Playwright at the Women's Theater Festival. Her work has been published in BOMB Magazine and Damselfly Press. Locally, she has worked with Southern Rep Theater, as well as New Noise Theater and Mondo Bizarro. She is constantly inspired by the BECNO students and is honored to be collaborating with them on a more equitable and joyful future for us all. Ms. Nelson lives in New Orleans with her partner and their two extremely badly behaved dogs.

Janina Kusielewicz

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction, Clifton Public Schools, NJ



Ms. Janina Kusielewicz is the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in Clifton Public Schools. Ms. Kusielewicz has focused on at-risk students and language learners throughout her teaching career. She oversees all of curriculum and instruction in grades PK-12+ in the 11th largest school district in New Jersey. Her focus is to create an accessible, inclusive environment, addressing academic, social and emotional needs for all types of learners.

Participating with an NJDOE climate initiative and collaborating with the Rutgers Boggs Center, Ms. Kusielewicz set the district wide expectation to roll out PBSIS across all schools and grade spans. Engaging district, school and community stakeholders and seeking out Federal climate funding, this expectation is being met. Ms. Kusielewicz promotes inclusiveness, flexibility, differentiation, and life-long learning for students and educators alike.

Paula Raigoza

PBSIS District Coordinator, Clifton Public Schools, NJ



Ms. Paula Raigoza is a highly accomplished education professional serving as the PBSIS District Coordinator for Clifton Public Schools in Clifton, New Jersey. With an impressive student population of 11,000 spread across 17 K-12 instructional buildings, she excels in providing comprehensive training and technical assistance on the implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) district-wide. Additionally, as the Project Director for the School Climate Transformation Grant, Ms. Raigoza adeptly oversees compliance with grant requirements and skillfully manages fund allocations, resulting in a significant positive impact on school climate initiatives.

Ms. Raigoza's influential leadership extends beyond her current role, as she also served as a Training and Consultation Specialist at The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities. In this capacity, she played a pivotal role in the New Jersey Positive Behavior Support in Schools project, a prestigious partnership between the New Jersey State Department of Education, the Office of Special Education Programs, and The Boggs Center. Her unwavering dedication, comprehensive knowledge, and passion for empowering students and educators alike continue to make her a driving force in the field of education.

Dan Bridges

Superintendent of Schools, Naperville 203, IL



Mr. Bridges began his role as Superintendent in 2011, previously serving the district as Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education. Prior to joining Naperville 203, Mr. Bridges spent 13 years as a school administrator, including years as an elementary, junior high, and a high school principal. Mr. Bridges began his career in education as a middle school social studies teacher. His main responsibility is to act as the school district's chief executive officer. He is hired by the Board of Education to ensure all Board policies, state and federal laws are implemented. Mr. Bridges also is responsible for setting the vision and direction for the school district based on the values and beliefs of our community.

Working with the extraordinary people and incredible teams at Naperville 203 and visiting classrooms to talk with students and staff about what they are learning and how they are growing are what Dan enjoys most about his role at Naperville 203. Mr. Bridges has a Bachelor of Arts in History/Secondary Education from Millikin University, a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership from Aurora University and an Education Specialist degree in Education Administration from Northern Illinois University. Mr. Bridges and his wife Dawn are proud to call the Naperville 203 community home. All five of their children are graduates of Naperville 203 schools.

Lisa Xagas

Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Naperville 203, IL



Ms. Lisa Xagas received her bachelor's degree in special education at Southern Illinois University and her master's degree in Educational Leadership at Concordia University. As the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services for a large suburban school district, she has successfully co-developed and facilitated the social and emotional learning initiative positively impacting over 17,000 students and collaborated with colleagues to increase growth and achievement for students with disabilities across her district. Ms. Xagas has presented at dozens of conferences nationally including SXSW, ASCD, AASA, LRP and other conferences on social-emotional learning, the importance of inclusive practices, and co-teaching.