



**BEST PRACTICES
CLEARINGHOUSE**

- Lessons from the Field -

Free to Learn Miniseries: Navigating Conflict to Support Inclusion

Wednesday, January 17, 2024 | 3:00 – 4:30 PM ET
SPEAKER BIOS

Ruth Ryder

Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 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 1 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.

Meaghan Wheat

Program Manager, The Program on Intergroup Relations and Summer Youth Dialogues Program, University of Michigan, MI

Ms. Meaghan Wheat is a social worker and higher education practitioner who currently works as a Program Manager at the Program on Intergroup Relations at the University of Michigan. In this role, Ms. Wheat oversees the CommonGround program and works with facilitators in the Summer Youth Dialogues Program. Ms. Wheat has also worked with school districts in southeast Michigan on youth voice and youth empowerment initiatives. Ms. Wheat is from Southeast Michigan and received her MSW and MA in Higher Education from the University of Michigan.

Alphonso Christian Smith

Director of Curriculum & Strategic Engagement, New York City Commission on Human Rights, NY



Mr. Chris Smith is the Director of Curriculum & Strategic Engagement at the NYC Commission on Human Rights. He is tasked with enhancing and creating the agency's youth engagement efforts and facilitating workshops and trainings citywide on the protections covered under the Human Rights Law. As a graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA, Mr. Smith has always felt that it is his responsibility to advocate for those who feel they are unable to do so themselves. His passion for human rights came from personally experiencing racism as a child and wanting to address the unfair treatment that people of color have faced. His personal experience led him to develop the Commission's Resisting Oppression and Racism Curriculum, and create its first youth advisory council, the Youth for Equity and Solidarity (YES) Council to amplify youth voices. When Mr. Smith is not working, he is pursuing his MBA in Marketing at LIU Brooklyn and enjoying life with his wife and daughter.

Morgan Patel

AP Human Geography & NSL Teacher, Montgomery Blair High School, MD



Mrs. Morgan Patel is a Nationally Board Certified Social Studies Teacher that has taught at Montgomery Blair High School for 11 years. She has taught NSL, AP Psychology, and Psychology, but has spent the majority of her career teaching AP Human Geography. Mrs. Patel earned her M.Ed. in Social Studies Education from University of Maryland in an integrated masters program after earning a B.A. in Government. She later earned a Masters in ESOL and Bilingual Education from American College of Education and is working on a Masters in Geography from Marshall University. Mrs. Patel helps to

increase minority student enrollment in AP Human Geography and focuses on building students' academic skills to help them succeed in higher level classes and earn college credit. She works to help students globally in AP Human Geography as an AP reader for multiple years and as an AP Daily video creator.

Scarlett Quast

Youth Relationships First Coach, The School District of Philadelphia, PA

Ms. Scarlett Quast is a sixth grader at Bache Martin in Philadelphia. She is actively developing her Community Building Circle facilitation skills as a Youth RF Coach. Scarlett's creativity shines through her passion for art. The Gifted Arts has blossomed into a vibrant hub of artistic excellence and youth development.

With a decade of dedication, they have grown to serve over 400 students annually through an array of enriching programs, including summer camps, after-school initiatives, and specialized artistic training. Their journey has been defined by our unwavering commitment to nurturing the talents of young minds and harnessing the transformative power of the arts.

Destiny Hamilton

Youth Relationships First Coach, The School District of Philadelphia, PA

Bio coming soon.

Stephen Tetkowski

Youth Relationships First Coach, The School District of Philadelphia, PA

Bio coming soon.