



The Critical Role of Professional Development in Creating High-Quality Early Learning Environments

A CGLR Funder-to-Funder Conversation
Co-sponsored by Overdeck Family Foundation

November 15, 2022 | 12:30–2 pm ET/9:30–11 am PT

Presenter Bios

PRESENTERS



Dana Cilono
Education Program Officer
Kenneth Rainin Foundation
Twitter: @danacilono | LinkedIn: dana-cilono

As an educator for 15 years, Dana helped create and implement early literacy and learning innovations. Dana began her career in education as a first-grade teacher. After teaching transitional kindergarten through second grade, she stepped out of the classroom to become an instructional coach, curriculum trainer, and program director. She has deep personal and professional commitments to Oakland and supporting children's right to read



Emily Grunt
Program Director
FluentSeeds

Emily taught Kindergarten and TK classrooms in East Oakland for 9 years before joining FluentSeeds as a coach and trainer, drawn by SEEDS' emphasis on quality interactions, brain science, and using data to inform instruction.

After 7 years of coaching and training, Emily became Program Director for FluentSeeds. In this role, Emily uses her passion for relationship-based teaching, learning, and coaching to reach more adults and the children they serve. She believes using embedded and explicit strategies for early literacy foundational skills is an essential tool to teach all children to be readers by grade 3.

Emily has an administrative credential from Reach Institute for School Leadership, a K-8 BCLAD credential from Cal State University Long Beach, and has been a SIPPS certified trainer through the Center for Collaborative Classroom since 2018."



Kai-ama Hamer
Associate Director
ParentCorps

A licensed special education teacher and practitioner-leader Kai-ama Hamer has dedicated her career to teaching, training and supporting both children and the adults in children’s lives toward reducing the impact of adverse childhood experiences and improving educational outcomes. Kai-ama Hamer’s focus has been on evidence-based strategies with Black, brown and immigrant urban populations who are more at risk because of systemic racism, poverty and lack of opportunity. She has over twenty years of experience engaging diverse families all across New York City and now with ParentCorps, building an emerging national presence.



Deborah Leong, Ph.D.
Co-Founder and President
Tools of the Mind
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Dr. Deborah J. Leong is the Co-founder and President of Tools of the Mind and Professor Emerita of Psychology at Metropolitan State University of Denver, where she taught for 36 years in the Psychology Department and in the Department of Education. Dr. Leong developed the Tools of the Mind approach with Dr. Bodrova with whom she has written numerous books, articles, and educational videos on the Vygotskian Approach to Psychology and the development of play. Dr. Leong has written several books on early childhood assessment with Drs. McAfee and Bodrova. She has her Ph.D. from Stanford University in Psychological Studies in Education, her M.Ed. from Harvard University, and her B.A. from Stanford University. She was a Fulbright Fellow to the University of Patagonia, Argentina.



Stephanie Sharp
Program Officer, Early Impact
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Stephanie Sharp, Program Officer, supports organizations in the Early Impact portfolio, with a focus on increasing reach, strengthening key capacities, and attracting follow-on funding. Before joining the portfolio in 2017, Stephanie worked at two edtech companies where she focused on scaling through partnerships and implementation models. Prior to that, Stephanie taught Pre-K in Baltimore City Public Schools through Teach For America. She earned her M.S. in Early Childhood Education from Johns Hopkins University and graduated cum laude from George Washington University with a B.A. in Journalism and Mass Communications.

Outside of work, Stephanie is a Board Member for the School of American Ballet and serves on the Young Alumnae Committee for the Brearley School.



Lis Stevens

**Senior Program Officer
Bezos Family Foundation**

Twitter: @bezosfoundation | Facebook: @bezosfamilyfoundation

Lis Stevens is a Senior Program Officer at the Bezos Family Foundation based in Seattle, Washington. In this role, Lis works to drive more equitable outcomes for young children, caregivers and early childhood educators—bringing thought partnership and support to both grant and community partners. Specifically, she stewards the Foundation’s investments to boost parent engagement, transform the early childhood educator field, increase literacy, support the prenatal period, and increase research and insights. With more than two decades of experience supporting children and families in a variety of settings, Lis thrives in helping to foster high-quality learning experiences based in developmental science and improving family systems.