



# Investing in Kindergarten as a “Sturdy Bridge”: Philanthropic Opportunities

A CGLR Funder-to-Funder Conversation

April 18, 2023 | 12:30–2 pm ET/9:30–11 am PT

*Presenter Bios*

## MODERATOR



**Laura Bornfreund**

**Senior Fellow and Advisor on Early & Elementary Education  
New America**

Twitter: @lbornfreund | @newamericaed | [LinkedIn](#)

Laura Bornfreund is a senior fellow and advisor on early and elementary education with the Education Policy program at New America. Laura focuses on transforming kindergarten and promoting policy and practice that will strengthen the transition into kindergarten and the early grades of elementary school. Laura was director of Early & Elementary Education Policy at New America for nearly seven years. Before joining New America, Laura worked with several policy organizations in Washington, DC, including the Institute for Educational Leadership, The Forum for Education and Democracy, and Common Core (now Great Minds). Previously, Laura worked for the City of Orlando, FL, helping to implement its Parramore Kidz Zone, an initiative modeled on the Harlem Children’s Zone. She began her career as a fourth-grade teacher in Orlando. Laura lives with her husband and two daughters in Florida.

## PRESENTERS



**Swati Adarkar**

**Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Early Learning  
United States Department of Education**

Prior to joining the Department, Swati most recently served as the National Policy Director for Start Early. Previously, Swati was the Co-Founder and President & CEO of the Children’s Institute in Oregon for 15 years, an early childhood policy and advocacy organization. Swati served on statewide advisory committees on early childhood for three Oregon governors. She provided the vision and leadership to launch and sustain the Early Works initiative which aligns birth to five services and supports with elementary school. For more than thirty years she has been a strong advocate for meeting the comprehensive needs of low-income children and families in Oregon and California and has a passion for ensuring the health and early school success of young children. Swati has served on the Advisory Boards of Attendance Works and the National P-3 Center. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies from UCLA and a Master’s in Public Administration from Harvard Kennedy School.



**Chrisanne Gayl**  
**Chief Strategy & Policy Officer, Co-Director**  
**Trust for Learning**

Twitter: @trustfrlearning | LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/trust-for-learning/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/trust-for-learning/)

Chrisanne Gayl is an education leader with over twenty years of policy experience at the federal, state, and local levels. Serving as one of Trust for Learning's co-directors and Chief Strategy and Policy Officer, Chrisanne uses her knowledge and experience to guide the organization's grant-making efforts and lead its national policy strategy to accelerate access to ideal learning programs. Prior to joining the Trust, Chrisanne served as a Senior Policy Advisor at the U.S. Department of Education, where she was responsible for developing new policies and programs to expand high-quality learning opportunities for the nation's children. She played a key role in the Obama Administration's focus on universal preschool and supported efforts to strengthen social emotional learning throughout the early grades. Chrisanne has also worked as the Director of Federal Programs for the National School Boards Association representing the interests of local school districts, and as an education advisor to the governor of California. She has testified in front of Congress and has authored numerous publications. Chrisanne holds a Master's degree in Public Policy from Georgetown University and received her undergraduate degree from Colby College in Waterville, Maine. Chrisanne is deeply committed to strengthening public education for all children and is a mother of two teenage boys who attend local public schools. She lives in Alexandria, VA with her family.



**Phil Halperin**  
**President**  
**Silver Giving Foundation**

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/philip-halperin-64a5027/>

Phil has been actively involved in Pre-K to 12th grade education in California for over two decades. Phil serves as the President of the Silver Giving Foundation. By focusing on quality early education, systemic improvements and enhancing teacher career pathways, the Silver Giving Foundation is committed to improving California's education system for all children. Phil is also a Co-Founder and the Executive Director of California Education Partners. Finally, as an active civic leader, Phil has also co-chaired seven successful ballot campaigns that have raised collectively over \$7.0 billion for the public schools and children of San Francisco.

Phil considers himself fortunate to have been diagnosed as a special education (dyslexia, dysgraphia and ADHD) student as a fourth grader. A group of talented and dedicated elementary and secondary teachers took Phil under their wings and committed to helping him succeed. He believes deeply that every child should have the same opportunities as he did.

Phil earned his A.B. in Political Science from Stanford University and his MBA from Harvard Graduate School of Business. When he is not visiting districts or moonlighting as a live music photographer, Phil, his wife and three grown children can be found at San Francisco Giants games.



**Sara Slaughter**  
**Executive Director**  
**W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation**

In 2015, Sara Slaughter was named Executive Director of the W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation where she oversees investments designed to build equitable systems in K-12 education, early childhood education and youth development in five major urban areas. Prior to joining the Stone Foundation, she served for ten years at the Robert R. McCormick Foundation as the Director of the Education Program, and during her tenure, the Council on Foundations awarded the Education Program the 2008 Paul Ylvisaker Award for Public Policy Engagement.

Ms. Slaughter's focus on supporting equitable systems is also informed by her experience in the fields of law and government. She clerked for a federal district court judge following her graduation from law school and then served as a litigation associate at Kirkland & Ellis in Chicago. From 2004 until 2007, Ms. Slaughter also served as a policy advisor to former Indiana Governor, Evan Bayh.

Ms. Slaughter is a member of the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative, and served as its chair for almost four years, guiding the organization through a two-year strategic planning process that resulted in hiring its first Executive Director. She has served in leadership roles in a variety of early childhood and education organizations, and currently is a member of the Education Funders Strategy Group, the Illinois Early Learning Council, and the Metropolitan Family Services Head Start Oversight Board.

Ms. Slaughter holds a bachelor's degree from Duke University and a Juris Doctorate from Indiana University Maurer School of Law — Bloomington. She resides in Chicago and is the proud mom of two graduates of Chicago Public Schools. When she isn't thinking about equitable systems, she enjoys spending time with her family, walking her two Labrador Retrievers, and riding horses.



**Bryan Stokes II**  
**Director, Education Portfolio**  
**Robert M. McCormick Foundation**

Twitter: @McCormick\_Fdn | @bstokes584 | Facebook: McCormickFoundation  
LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/bryanstokesii](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bryanstokesii)

Bryan Stokes serves as Education Portfolio Director at the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. In this role he leads the foundation's investments in programs and initiatives serving families with children birth through kindergarten. Prior to joining McCormick, he most recently served as Chief of Early Childhood Education at Chicago Public Schools and worked to build a universal preschool system that ensures that every child in Chicago is ready for school success.

Bryan began his career as a classroom teacher at the Carole Robertson Center for Learning before spending six years leading early childhood and youth development programs at Gads Hill Center, which serves more than 4,500 children on Chicago's Southwest Side. His range of professional experience in the early childhood sector includes managing implementation of the state's Preschool Development

Grant in the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and serving as Vice President of Early Learning at Illinois Action for Children.

Bryan holds a Master's degree in English Literature from Penn State. Originally from Detroit, Michigan, he came to Chicago as a Teach for America corps member in 2007. He is a member of the Illinois Early Learning Council as well as a board member of the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) and the HighScope Educational Research Foundation.