

**Creating Conditions and Environments for Thriving Kindergarteners**  
**GLR Learning Tuesdays | Learning Loss Recovery Challenge Series**

February 14, 2023 | 3 pm – 4:30 pm ET

**PRESENTER BIOS**

**MODERATOR**



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



**Sheresa Blanchard, Ph.D.**  
**Senior Education Researcher**  
**SRI International**  
**@SheresaB2**

Sheresa B. Blanchard, Ph.D., is a Senior Education Researcher at SRI with over 24 years of experience in education, ECE, and early intervention. She is also an associate professor of birth through kindergarten at East Carolina University and a partner of The Children’s Equity Project. She provided leadership on state ECE systems-building and family engagement efforts through a governor-appointed role on a state child care commission and membership on the early learning standards leadership team. She has provided TA and consultation through national (e.g., Division for Early Childhood), state (e.g., Kansas, Massachusetts, Texas, Mississippi), and regional (e.g., Montgomery County, Maryland) means and supported professional development efforts at all levels. Through this work, she provided expertise to develop products and deliver content for audiences that included policymakers, system leaders, and ECE professionals.



**Hedy Chang**  
**Executive Director & Founder**

**Attendance Works**

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Hedy Nai-Lin Chang is the founder and Executive Director of Attendance Works, a national and state level initiative aimed at advancing student success by addressing chronic absence. A skilled presenter, facilitator, researcher and writer, she co-authored the seminal report, Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades, as well as numerous other articles about student attendance. Deeply committed to promoting two-generation solutions to achieving a more just and equitable society, Hedy has spent more than three decades working in the fields of family support, family economic success, education and child development. She served as a senior program officer at the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund and as co-director of California Tomorrow, a nonprofit committed to drawing strength from cultural, linguistic and racial diversity. In February 2013, Hedy was named by the White House as a Champion of Change for her commitment to furthering African American Education.



**Rebecca Colbert, Ph.D., RLA**  
**Senior Director of Design & Engagement**  
**Early Childhood Health Outdoors Initiative (ECHO)**  
**National Wildlife Foundation**

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Rebecca Colbert, Senior Director of Design and Engagement, leads the Early Childhood Health Outdoors (ECHO) Initiative of the National Wildlife Federation. The ECHO Initiative provides landscape design and professional development services aimed at transforming early learning environments to ensure that every young child experiences nature daily, for the health of our kids, communities and planet. Rebecca is a licensed landscape architect who specializes in design, research and advocacy focused on connecting children, families and caregivers to the natural environment. She holds degrees in Landscape Architecture and Urban Design and completed her Doctorate in Design and Planning at the University of Colorado, where she worked with the Children Youth and Environments Center for Research and Design.



**Ann Kay**  
**Co-Founder & Education Coordinator**  
**The Rock 'n' Read Project**

[Facebook](#)

Ann Kay co-founded the Minnesota nonprofit The Rock 'n' Read Project, dedicated to “using singing to unlock children’s potential for reading.” She

makes presentations and teaches courses for preschool and elementary classroom teachers. Ann created A Song a Day: Brain Prep for Pre-Readers, 50 sequenced lessons for PreK-K that use singing and music skills to enable young children’s auditory processing, critical for proficient reading. Formerly, Ann was an elementary music teacher, choir director, instructor of music teachers, and associate director of graduate music education at the University of St. Thomas.



**Natalie Walrond**

***Director***

**Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety**

**WestEd**

**@WestEd | #CISELSS**

Natalie A. Walrond serves as the Director of the Resilient and Healthy Schools and Communities content area at WestEd. In this role, she oversees the growth and dissemination of the agency’s body of work related to creating safe, supportive, responsive, and equitable conditions in which every child, youth, and adult can learn, grow, and thrive. She also serves as director of the national [Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety](#), housed at WestEd. In this role, she leads the vision, strategic direction, and external engagement of the center. She leads a team of people who work nationally to build state and local capacity to integrate evidence-based approaches to social and emotional development and school safety with academic teaching and learning, school climate and culture, and all of the ways that children and youth experience school. She speaks and writes for the Center on social and emotional well-being, excellence, alignment and coherence, and equity. Walrond brings to her work 25 years of experience in K–12 education, finance, and strategy for both for-profit and nonprofit organizations. She is currently a member of Education Leaders of Color (EdLoC) and serves on the board of Beyond 12. Walrond earned a BA in International Studies and International Business from Trinity University and an MBA from the University of Chicago with concentrations in analytic finance and policy studies.