



Leveraging the Power of Data and Relationships: Reducing Chronic Absence in Rural Settings

August 11, 3-4:30 pm ET/12:00-1:30 pm PT

Moderator



Hedy Chang

Executive Director and President
Attendance Works
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Hedy Nai-Lin Chang directs 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, Chang has spent more than two 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.

Co-Presenters



Allison Crain

Northern District Supervisor
Office of Compulsory School Attendance Enforcement
Mississippi Department of Education

Allison Crain received a bachelor's degree in Social Work in 2001 from the University of Mississippi. Shortly thereafter, she began her career as a School Attendance Officer in Yalobusha County. Crain served as the School Attendance Officer for Yalobusha County for eleven years before bringing her passion and love of children to Lafayette County where she had served for seven years. She now has completed her first year as the Northern District Supervisor with the Office of Compulsory School Attendance in which she supervises 46 School Attendance Officers.

Allison devotes her time on and off the clock working with all children. She participates in many community and state programs that offer support to truant and needy families. Crain is an active member of the Communicare Map Team, Junior Auxiliary and Mississippi Chronic Absenteeism Task Force. She also serves as the Attendance Working Group Chairperson for L.O.U. Reads, the Campaign for Grade Level Reading in Oxford, Mississippi.



Ramona Halcomb
Indian Education Specialist
Oregon Department of Education

Ramona Halcomb is an enrolled tribal member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. She has over 25 years of experience working in Education, currently serving as the Oregon Department of Education's Indian Education Specialist. In this capacity she provides information, resources and technical assistance on educational matters to schools, communities and state employees. Halcomb specializes in reducing chronic absenteeism with administration of the Tribal Attendance Promising Practices grant. Ramona works closely with State Education agencies, the 9 federally recognized tribes in Oregon and native communities and organizations in an effort to close the opportunity gap for American Indian Alaska Native students. Prior to joining the Oregon Department of Education, Halcomb served as the education director for her tribe and worked in both two- and four-year higher education institutions to support students' academic pursuits. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Society, Ethics & Human Behavior and her Master's degree in Cultural Studies with a focus on the Native American Opportunity Gap.



Erin Helgren
Early Works Site Liaison, Yoncalla (Oregon)
Children's Institute
@Childinst

Erin Helgren joined the Children's Institute in November 2015, bringing nearly 25 years of experience and knowledge working with young children and families. She has expertise in a wide range of programming, including home visiting, early childhood classrooms, parenting education and play to learn groups.

Before joining Children's Institute, Helgren worked as the North Douglas County Family Relief Nursery program director. In this position, she built programming around the unique needs of rural, isolated families. These experiences have given Helgren a deeper understanding and insight into the needs of rural communities. She currently lives in rural Oregon



Susan Lieberman, M. Ed.
Director
Count ME In (Maine)
@CountMEInMaine
<http://countmeinmaine.org/>

Susan Lieberman, M.Ed., has been the director of Count ME In since it was launched in 2013. Count ME In is a statewide program that seeks to inspire student learning and aspirations by reducing chronic absenteeism in Maine. She has more than thirty years of experience working in the fields of education and mental health as a licensed social worker and certified teacher, managing community and state-run programs as well as working directly with youth and families. She is the mother of two daughters.



Angela Madigan
Principal
Waterboro Elementary School

Angela Madigan is the principal of Waterboro Elementary School, located in a rural community in southern Maine. In her recent experience as a leader, she was the recipient of a 2018 SEL Innovation Award, Ecomaine Excellence Award, and was awarded several grants and recognition for the school's efforts in employing social and emotional learning initiatives, sustainability efforts, and health and wellness practices. She has maintained a partnership with Count ME In and worked diligently with families to reduce barriers and make access to learning more equitable for all students.