



Bringing Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to Every County
A Crucible of Practice Salon
October 11, 2022 / 12:30 – 2 pm EST

PRESENTERS



Brittany Fike
Early and Elementary Learning Specialist
June Harless Center
Marshall University

Brittany Fike is an Early and Elementary Learning Specialist working for the June Harless Center out of Marshall University, the West Virginia Department of Education's Early and Elementary Learning Technical Assistance Center. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education and a Master of Arts in Special Education and Autism from Marshall University. She also completed her Early Childhood Education certification and is currently working on her doctorate degree in Curriculum and Instruction.

After joining the June Harless Center and working as a graduate intern in a preschool classroom while earning her Master of Arts degree, Brittany went on to teach third grade and kindergarten for Cabell County Schools. She also taught summer school, the after-school tutoring program, and hosted an extra-curricular book club for primary students. She has served as a mentor teacher for teacher candidates at several universities and has provided professional development at the school, county, state, and national levels.

In her role as an Early and Elementary Learning Specialist, Brittany works with her team to help strengthen the learning opportunities for all children in the state of West Virginia by connecting stakeholders with research and resources. The aim of their work is to provide district, school, and classroom-level support statewide through providing resources and professional development to assist with the social, emotional, and academic for gaps for all pre-k through fifth grade students. Brittany serves as a coordinator for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Program in West Virginia where she assists families throughout the registration process, develops book activity sheets and monthly newsletters to accompany the books children receive each month, works with local partners to build and sustain family engagement, and supports counties with increasing community support. She is passionate about creating a strong foundation in early childhood to assist students in becoming effective learners who will contribute to a better world.



Kelly Griffith
State Coordinator
Office of Teaching and Learning
West Virginia Department of Education

Kelly Griffith serves as a Coordinator from the Office of Teaching and Learning at the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE). She brings 19 years of experience from the education field with a strong focus on early literacy. Her professional history includes positions of

classroom teacher, Title 1 Reading Interventionist and Education Specialist. Her previous position as Director of Education at West Virginia Public Broadcasting afforded her the opportunity to gain valuable experience in networking with local and state partners to implement literacy programs with an intentional focus on family engagement. Currently, Kelly serves as the State Lead for the Campaign for Grade Level Reading and is the liaison for the West Virginia Department of Education's Early and Elementary Learning (P-5) Technical Assistance Center located at Marshall University's June Harless Center. Kelly is passionate and enjoys being an advocate for young learners and early literacy. She uses her experience and skill set to support teachers, students, and families in West Virginia.



Tarabeth Heineman, Ph.D.
Executive Director
June Harless Center
Marshall University

Tarabeth Heineman, Ph.D. is the Executive Director for the June Harless Center (JHC) for Rural Educational Research and Development, a program of the College of Education and Professional Development at Marshall University. The Center was established in 2000 to provide leadership in educational initiatives with the primary goal of elevating educational opportunities for every child in West Virginia.

After joining the Harless team in the spring of 2005, Tarabeth has held various positions for the Center. Currently, Tarabeth leads a team of 18 staff members and 6 graduate assistants and directs the work of the JHC which focuses on early childhood education, early and elementary learning PreK-5, and STEAM education. She oversees an annual budget of approximately \$2.5 million which includes federal, state, and foundation funds. Under Tarabeth's direction, the JHC also manages Dolly Parton's Imagination Library for the state of West Virginia. This statewide initiative has been a part of JHC programming since 2019.

Tarabeth has participated in three study abroad tours to the world-renowned early childhood programs in Reggio Emilia, Italy. After collaborating with foundations and exploring other state funding opportunities, Dr. Heineman is working to support pre-service and in-service early childhood educators in the implementation of the Reggio-inspired approach. She completed her doctorate at Marshall University with a degree in Curriculum and Instruction in 2022.



Jess McCormick
Vice President
Huntington Children's Museum

Jess is currently the Vice President of Huntington Children's Museum. She has worked for a research firm for over twenty years and has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Jess enjoys spending time volunteering with the local neighborhood association and the Junior League of Huntington. Jess is married with two kids under the age of ten and three dogs. You'll see her family checking out adventures near and far as they try to take advantage of as many opportunities to explore as possible. Jess is most excited to be involved with community projects where children have the opportunity to grow, create, and play in a safe atmosphere. It is not only a benefit to the child, but the community as a whole. Fortunately, both of her children have participated in Dolly Parton Imagination Library since infancy. She feels that reading at such an early age is beneficial to bonding, growth, and imagination.



Alicia Syner

**Program Developer for Imagination Library in West Virginia
June Harless Center
Marshall University**

Alicia Syner is the program developer for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in West Virginia, a program housed within the June Harless Center at Marshall University. Alicia most recently served as Executive Director of the BridgeValley Community and Technical College

Foundation where she was responsible for all fundraising and advancement efforts. Prior to that, she served as special assistant to the president at BridgeValley Community and Technical College. She has an Associate of Science Degree in Office Technology Management from the Community and Technical College at WVU Tech, a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Management from Western Governor's University, a Master of Arts Degree in Leadership Studies from Marshall University, and a Certificate in Fundraising Management from the Indiana University Lilly School of Philanthropy.

As program developer for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Program in West Virginia, Alicia is responsible for fundraising, securing partnerships, managing invoices and funding structures, and developing fundraising resources that can be distributed to all early and elementary learning specialists at the June Harless Center. Alicia is passionate about early childhood literacy and is devoted to enrolling as many children as possible into Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in West Virginia.