

## Engaging Families for Everyday Attendance

A GLR Learning Tuesday's Webinar: Big Bets Working

January 23, 2024 | 3–4:30 pm ET/12-1:20 pm PT

### Moderator:



**Hedy Chang**  
**Executive Director**  
**Attendance Works**

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.

### Panelists:



**Francisco Baires**  
**Family Engagement Program Manager**  
**Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), Connecticut**

Francisco Baires is a Family Engagement Program Manager at the Capitol Region Education Council in Connecticut and a Senior Fellow at Attendance Works. He leverages twelve years of mission-driven experience in engaging communities for positive change. Francisco began his career in community engagement as a community organizer in central Illinois, where he built strategic coalitions that won policy change while developing community-based programs to serve marginalized individuals and families. Francisco is part of

the team that created the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP), which helps school districts across Connecticut develop meaningful partnerships with families. He also created and manages the Connecticut Home Visit Hub providing training, coaching, and support to districts and schools across the United States so they can build partnerships with families through relational home visits. Francisco holds a Master of Arts in Anthropology and is a proud father who loves nothing more than spending time with his wife and two sons.



**Kari Sullivan Custer**  
**Education Consultant**  
**Chronic Absence, Attendance and LEAP Home Visits**  
**Connecticut State Department of Education**

As an Education Consultant at the Connecticut State Department of Education with over 30 years' experience, Kari has been dedicated to improving student attendance and outcomes through community partnerships and wraparound strategies. She has a master's certificate in strategic communications and public relations, and has developed and delivered workshops, trainings, and publications to raise awareness and share best practices on addressing chronic absence. She has also coordinated statewide initiatives on physical activity, nutrition, and tobacco prevention, and collaborated with various stakeholders, such as schools, districts, families, and community organizations. She is passionate about supporting the health and well-being of all students, especially those who face barriers and challenges to attending school regularly.



**Nancy Duchesneau**  
**Senior P-12 Research Associate**  
**The Education Trust**

Nancy is a Senior P-12 Research Associate and leads the Social, Emotional, and Academic Development work at EdTrust. In this role, she works to fill current gaps in research, policy, and advocacy to ensure that schools holistically support the well-being and development of students, and especially for low-income students and students of color. In addition to having served as EdTrust's Spencer Fellow for Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, Nancy worked in multiple roles prior to joining EdTrust. Experiences include being a tutor and barista before graduate school, and more recently as a research assistant under education faculty at Michigan State University. She has also previously worked on projects with researchers at ETS and interned with consultants at the Center for Assessment. Nancy received her B.S. from Lehigh University in psychology and is currently in the final stages of the Education Policy Ph.D. program at Michigan State University, with a dissertation that focuses on the intersections of social-emotional learning with culture and restorative justice.



**Angella Graves, MAT**  
**Principal, Cornelius Elementary School**  
**Early Learning Administrator, Forest Grove School District, Oregon**

Angella Graves is the Principal of Cornelius Elementary School. She is committed to the students and families in our community, especially those who are marginalized. She is focused on equity, inclusion, language, and culture, so that all of our students can experience a meaningful education that will open opportunities for success both in school and in life. Angella received her Bachelors of Arts degree in History, Humanities, and Spanish from Willamette University. She then completed her Masters of Arts in Teaching at Willamette. Angella started her career teaching 5th & 6th grades, specializing in teaching in Dual Language

Programs. She has been a Math Coordinator, New Teacher Mentor Program Coordinator, and an Assistant Principal. Angella has been a principal for a dozen years. While being principal, she has been tapped to oversee Early Learning for her school district. A quarter of a century of experience in public school education has taught her some tips & tricks that she enjoys sharing with other educators. More than knowledgeable, she understands how to set up systems and how to lead staff toward a common vision.



**Kali Thorne Ladd**  
**CEO**  
**Children's Institute, Oregon**

Kali Thorne Ladd is Children's Institute's chief executive officer. Previously, Thorne Ladd was the co-founder and executive director of KairosPDX, a culturally specific organization dedicated to eliminating educational opportunity and achievement gaps for historically underserved children. Through that work, and as a visionary leader in multiple capacities in the region, Thorne Ladd has a long track record of working to transform early learning and healthy development for children and families in Oregon. This has included serving as the chair of the board for Portland Community College, serving on Governor Brown's Early Learning Council, and serving on the board at the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation based in Portland. Thorne Ladd has also worked on education strategies in the mayor's office in the City of Portland and at the Oregon Department of Education. She holds a master's degree in education policy from Harvard University and a bachelor's degree in elementary education and psychology from Boston College.



**Jo Ellen Latham**  
**Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction**  
**South East Polk Community Schools, Des Moines, Iowa**

Dr. Jo Ellen Latham is the Executive Director of Teaching and Learning for Southeast Polk Schools in Iowa. She has been an educator for the past 42 years and has worked with elementary, secondary, and college-level students. She also serves as a member of the State Assessment Advisory, the Iowa Assessment Task Force, the ELL Administrator Academy, and is chairperson of the Urban Education Network Curriculum and Professional Development Leaders.