

# Starting Strong: Developing Foundational Life Skills in Kindergarten

April 2, 2024

Moderator and Presenter Bios

## MODERATOR

**Carly Roberts**

**Associate Director for Out-of-School Learning**

**Overdeck Family Foundation**



Carly Roberts, Associate Program Director, Out-of-School Learning, manages the Foundation’s out-of-school portfolios, Early Impact and Inspired Minds, which focus on the areas of early childhood and informal STEM education, respectively. Carly has worked in education throughout her career and in her graduate studies, with experience spanning direct impact, research, and policy. She coordinated comprehensive services for children and families in an under-resourced neighborhood in Washington, D.C. and later held consultative roles for school districts, Head Start research, Robin Hood Foundation, and the Newark Trust for Education. Carly earned a Master’s of Public Administration and Master’s of Public Health from Columbia University and graduated magna cum laude from George Washington University with a B.A. in Psychology. She enjoys spending time with friends, traveling, eating her way around NYC, and dancing, and now does all of those things with her husband and two children.

## PRESENTERS

**Elena Bodrova, Ph.D.**

**Co-Founder and Tools Knowledge Advisor**

**Tools of the Mind**



Elena Bodrova is cofounder and Knowledge Advisor at Tools of the Mind—an educational nonprofit company in Colorado, USA. In collaboration with Deborah Leong, she developed Tools of the Mind early childhood curriculum and teacher professional development program based on Vygotskian and post-Vygotskian theories of learning. Her work on applying Lev Vygotsky’s theory to education started in Russia where she worked in the Russian Institute for Preschool Education and continued in the US where she worked as a visiting professor at Metropolitan State University of Denver and later as principal researcher at Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning. She has authored many articles and book chapters on early literacy, assessment, play, and self-regulation, and she holds a Ph.D. in child development and educational psychology from the Russian Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and M.A. in child development and educational psychology from Moscow State University.

**Kim Paddison Dockery, Ed.D.**

**Director  
KPD Education**



Kim Paddison Dockery, Ed.D., Director of KPD Education, retired from Fairfax County Public Schools in 2015 after 26 years of experience as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, Assistant Superintendent of Special Services, and Chief Academic officer. In 2010, as the champion of FCPS Goal 2: Essential Life Skills, Dr. Dockery began her ongoing collaboration with Ellen Galinsky, author of *Mind in the Making (2010)* and *The Breakthrough Years, (2024)*. She is currently serves as a Mind in the Making Trainer of Trainers and is developing a MITM-based program for rising kindergartners on critical life skills (executive function skills). Additionally, she coaches new and developing principals and continues to work with parents, teachers, and students promoting these life skills. Dr. Dockery has also served as Adjunct Professor in UVA’s Curry School of Education from 2008-2015. From 2015 to 2018 she worked as project lead on the implementation of balanced assessment and alternative performance assessment for the Virginia Department of Education and with the Hopewell City Public Schools from 2019 to 2023 supporting Aspiring Leaders, Instructional and Innovation Coaches, School based leadership, and central office through a Wallace Foundation leadership grant. In this capacity she helped develop a crosswalk between Virginia Leadership Standards and ISLIC standards and co-planned with High Tech High Graduate school (San Diego) developing leadership practices for deeper learning and equity.

**Erin Helgren  
Early Works Site Liaison, Yoncalla (Oregon)  
Children’s Institute**



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.

**Dr. Aaliyah A. Samuel  
President and CEO  
CASEL**



Dr. Aaliyah A. Samuel is currently President & CEO at CASEL, spearheading initiatives alongside other educators, researchers, and policy leaders to expand social and emotional learning (SEL) nationwide and serving as a leading voice for children’s education. Dr. Samuel is a bilingual executive leader with expertise from early childhood through higher education. She previously served as Deputy Assistant Secretary, Local, State and National Engagement at the U.S. Department of Education, as a Senior Fellow at the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, and former Executive Vice President of Government Affairs & Partnerships at NWEA. Prior to NWEA, Dr. Samuel was the Director of Education at the National Governors Association (NGA). She has worked with diverse constituents, philanthropies, and national partners. Dr. Samuel holds an undergraduate degree from Tuskegee University, a Masters from University of South Florida, and a Specialist and Doctorate Degree from NOVA Southeastern.