



What's Working to Narrow Academic Achievement Gaps Post-Pandemic: Insights from School Districts and Partners

A CGLR Partner Webinar

May 14, 2024 | 3:00-4:30 pm ET/12:00-1:30 pm PT

Panelist Bios

PRESENTERS

Adrienne Battle, Ed.D.



Superintendent
Metro Nashville Public Schools

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Dr. Adrienne Battle was named director (superintendent) of Metro Nashville Public Schools by a unanimous vote of the city's Board of Education on March 13, 2020, after serving 11 months as interim director. With more than 150 schools, 80,000 students, 11,000 employees and a budget of more than \$1 billion, MNPS is one of the nation's largest school districts and one of Nashville's largest employers.

Dr. Battle, a Nashville native, has spent almost her entire career with MNPS. She is a graduate of the district's John Overton High School, Missouri State University and Tennessee State University, where she earned her master's, education specialist and doctorate degrees in Educational Administration and Supervision.

Dr. Battle previously served MNPS as a math, reading and language arts teacher; an assistant principal, academic principal and executive principal; a turnaround coach for principals of the district's priority schools; and as a community superintendent overseeing all schools in the southeast quadrant as well as high schools across the district. She is an expert on school turnaround strategies and practices. Antioch High School made strong academic gains, including becoming the first zoned high school ever to earn Tennessee Reward School status in 2014 as one of the state's fastest-improving schools, under Dr. Battle's leadership. She led the transformation of a school that had been designated as low-performing in 2010 into one of the fastest-growing schools in the state.

Dr. Battle was a member of Leadership Nashville's 2021-22 class and is now participating in Leadership Tennessee in 2023-24. She was named the Professional Educators of Tennessee's 2022 Superintendent of the Year, and in 2021 she was named the Tennessee Principals Association's Supervisor of the Year and received the Nashville NAACP's Legacy Award. She was featured in the Nashville Post's Most Powerful Women in 2023. She won the Academies of Nashville Executive Principal of the Year Award and the William J. and Lucille H. Field Award in Support of Excellence in Tennessee Secondary Leadership from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville in 2015 and was named the MNPS Coach of the Year in 2010. She has served on the board of the Northwest YMCA in Nashville and is a member of the American Educational Research Association and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.



Jenny Bogoni
Executive Director
Read by 4th

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Jenny Bogoni is the Executive Director of Read by 4th, a citywide effort of 50 organizations, public and private, large and small, convened and managed by the Free Library of Philadelphia, aiming to majorly increase the number of students in Philadelphia entering the 4th grade at reading level. Jenny is also the Interim Senior Director for External Relations and Strategic Engagement with the Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation, and Principal Consultant with Bogoni Strategy Partners. Previously, she was the Executive Director at Spark, a national non-profit that provides life-changing apprenticeships to youth from disadvantaged communities as a means to reduce the dropout crisis as well as the Vice President of the Philadelphia Youth Network where she facilitated the development and implementation of a multi-faceted work plan that charted a response to the local dropout crisis resulting in a 12 percent gain in the graduation rate. Jenny served as an Education Volunteer in Gabon (Central Africa) in the Peace Corps and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Haverford College.



Dontrelle Young Foster
President and CEO
Housing Authority of the Birmingham District, Alabama

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Dontrelle Young Foster, a native of Selma and graduate of Stillman College is President and CEO of the Housing Authority of the Birmingham District (HABD). Foster holds an MBA and is a 2023 Troy University MPA candidate. As a 20+ year HABD employee, Foster brings an unprecedented knowledge of Birmingham residents and Birmingham’s affordable housing landscape to HABD’s executive leadership. In leadership, Foster enlists a number of personal values to help guide her, including but not limited to humility, self-accountability, respect for others, and integrity.

She has been nominated for a number of accolades, including the Birmingham Business Journal’s People to Watch, Who’s Who in Commercial Real Estate, and CEO of the Year. Foster serves on the Board of the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Birmingham and is a dedicated member of the Upsilon Eta Omega chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and the National Forum for Black Public Administrators.



Noris Price, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Baldwin County Schools, Georgia

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Dr. Noris Price has served as the Superintendent of Baldwin County Schools since July 1, 2014. Under her leadership, the Baldwin County School District has implemented instructional initiatives and strategies that have resulted in improved student performance and the high school graduation rate has increased from 66% to 89%.

Dr. Price has been successful in obtaining over 10 million dollars in grant funds for the Baldwin County Schools and leading the school district through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools/Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS/CASI) district accreditation process. Prior to her appointment as superintendent, she served as Deputy Superintendent of the Clarke County School District, where she helped to develop and implement school and system-wide improvement efforts. She started with the Clarke County School District in 2007 as an Associate Superintendent for Instructional Services and School Performance. Under her leadership, the district was named the Title I Distinguished District 2010, an honor indicating the school district was number one in the state of Georgia for closing the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.

Dr. Price was an elementary school teacher in New York City and Fairfax, Virginia and an Assistant Principal and Principal in Fairfax, Virginia. Dr. Price moved to Georgia in 1997. For 10 years, she served as principal for Woodland Elementary Charter School in Fulton County. During her tenure, the school made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), the state's measure of achievement under No Child Left Behind, every year. In addition, the school was named a Title I Distinguished School and received the Georgia School of Excellence Award, as well as the National PTA Parent Involvement School of Excellence Award.

Dr. Price has received numerous awards and honors, including the 2022 Georgia Superintendent of the Year and Finalist for the 2022 National Superintendent of the Year. Dr. Price earned a Doctor of Education Degree in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University in Florida, a Certificate in Educational Leadership from George Mason University in Virginia, a Master's degree in Elementary Education from Lehman College of the City University of New York, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Wilmington College in Ohio.

Dr. Price is married to Dr. Anthony Price, a retired school administrator and adjunct professor, and they have one son, Juan Carlos Price, who received his undergraduate degree from Auburn University and his graduate degree from the University of Texas at San Antonio. He is a TV News Producer in San Antonio, Texas.



Mark A. Sullivan, Ed.D.

Superintendent

Birmingham City Schools

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Dr. Mark A. Sullivan is a well-respected educator who began his tenure in Birmingham City Schools more than 25 years ago as a 5th grade teacher at Dupuy Elementary School. With a move from the classroom to school administration, Dr. Sullivan served as principal of Spaulding Elementary School where he led faculty and staff efforts resulting in moving the school to “academic clear” status for the first time. Subsequently, he was tapped to serve as Director of Area III, where he worked with the Senior Executive Director in the supervision of twenty-two elementary and middle schools. In meeting various district leadership needs, other positions of service have included: interim principal of Elyton Elementary School; Director of K-8 School Operations; principal of Glen Iris Elementary School; interim assistant superintendent; principal of John Herbert Phillips Academy (International Baccalaureate School); principal of Ramsay High School (International Baccalaureate School); Academic Officer, and Chief of Staff. Dr. Sullivan currently serves as Superintendent of Birmingham City Schools.

Dr. Sullivan is a native of Birmingham and attended Birmingham City Schools from kindergarten through 12th grade, graduating from Woodlawn High School. He received a B.S. degree in elementary education from Alabama A&M University, a master’s degree from Alabama State University, an educational specialist degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and a doctorate degree in educational leadership from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Dr. Sullivan holds membership in a number of professional organizations including Phi Delta Kappa, the National Association of Black School Educators, and the National Education Association.

Dr. Sullivan retired from service to his country with 24 years in the United States Naval Reserves and has served his community through organizations such as Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, 100 Black Men of Birmingham, and Boy Scouts of Central Alabama. On a personal note, Dr. Sullivan is the proud father of one daughter, Morgan, who serves as his inspiration to pursue and provide the best academic options and opportunities for all scholars.



Tony B. Watlington Sr., Ed.D.

Superintendent

School District of Philadelphia

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On June 16, 2022, Dr. Tony B. Watlington Sr. was appointed superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia, the nation’s 8th largest school district with nearly 200,000 students. A collaborative and results-oriented leader, Dr. Watlington began his tenure by launching an aggressive Entry Plan composed of 3 phases. Phase one included a listening and learning tour with 90 sessions in his first 100 days, phase 2 included a Transition Team composed of 100 diverse Philadelphians and K-12 national experts who issued a formal report

with short and long-term recommendations, and phase 3 includes the development of an aggressive 5-year strategic planning process to position the school district to become the fastest improving large, urban school district in the country.

Prior to joining The School District of Philadelphia, Dr. Watlington served as superintendent of the Rowan-Salisbury Schools, North Carolina's first and only Renewal School District where he launched a new equity-focused strategic plan and accountability model. Under his leadership, the district's 3rd-grade district literacy ranking among the state's 115 school districts rose from 96 in 2019 to 74 in 2021, the percentage of schools that met or exceed state growth targets increased from 55% to 71%, and the percentage of schools that exceeded state growth targets increased from 6% to 29%. Additionally, the district ranked #4 among 115 school districts in the state for career and technical (CTE) concentrator students and Dr. Watlington and his team were featured on the NBC Nightly News for innovative leadership during the COVID-19 Pandemic as a result of efforts to keep schools safe and open to mitigate disruption.

Dr. Watlington previously served as Chief of Schools in Guilford County Schools, the third largest school district in North Carolina and the 47th largest among 14,000 school districts in the United States. He was responsible for improving systems that lead to excellence and equity for all students, which resulted in improved academic outcomes in all subjects, at all grade levels, and for all student groups. In addition to achieving 4 of the 5 top-ranked high schools in the state of North Carolina (according to US News and World Report), the district increased graduation rates and teacher satisfaction while reducing teacher turnover, student absenteeism, and student discipline incidents.

Dr. Watlington began his career as a history teacher in Guilford County, NC in 1994 and was named district Teacher-of-the-Year in 1998. He was honored as the North Carolina PTA Administrator of the Year in 2014 and he received the Communities-in-Schools (CIS) Champion's Cup and Business Leaders Movers and Shakers Award. He received his undergraduate degree in History Education from N.C. A&T State University, a master's degree in American political history from The Ohio State University, a Master's of School Administration and a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership degree from UNC-Chapel Hill (where he was a NC Principal Fellow). He also holds training certificates from Harvard and Yale Universities and is a member of the National Urban Superintendent's Academy sponsored by Howard University and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). Dr. Watlington is also a life member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. He also has three sons, Tony Jr., Aaron, and Caleb.