

GLR Crucible of Practice Salon

Words in Every Neighborhood: Citywide Efforts to Expand Literacy-Rich Environments

November 12, 2024 * Moderator and Panelist Bios

MODERATOR

Priscilla Little

Senior Advisor, The Learning Agenda



Priscilla M. D. Little is a youth development evaluation and strategy consultant whose current clients include the Forum for Youth Investment, Sperling Center for Research and Innovation, The Learning Agenda, and illuminatED. Through these clients she has worked with private philanthropy, United Way, national and local youth-serving organizations, and local school districts. She has also participated in field-building efforts aimed at supporting young people's social, emotional, academic, and cognitive development. Prior to these engagements, she oversaw The Wallace Foundation's \$15 million effort to assist nine cities in providing more high-quality afterschool programs through a coordinated systems approach. The former Associate Director of the Harvard Family Research Project, Priscilla has been working in education and afterschool and conducting research for more than 30 years, with a particular emphasis on research and evaluation.

PANELISTS

Jenny Bogoni

Chief, Community Engagement and Public Programming, Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation



Jenny Bogoni is Chief of Community Engagement and Public Programming with the Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation where she oversees Read by 4th, a citywide effort of 50 organizations, public and private, large and small, aiming to majorly increase the number of students in Philadelphia entering the 4th grade at reading level. Previously, she was the Executive Director at Spark, a national non-profit that provides life-changing apprenticeships to youth from disadvantages 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 Central Africa in the Peace Corps and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Haverford College.

Amanda Charles

Program Officer, Children and Families, William Penn Foundation



Amanda Charles manages grantmaking under the Children and Families program related to advancing our Out-of-School Learning and Caregiver Supports objectives. Previously, Amanda worked as a Child Care Specialist with the Arlington County Government in Virginia, balancing caseload management of child care facilities while working collaboratively to improve program quality. Amanda holds a master's degree in education from the University of Pennsylvania and a bachelor's degree in education from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania, where she majored in elementary and special education. When she's not at work, Amanda enjoys walking her dog on local trails, visiting the Free Library of Philadelphia, and exploring the Philadelphia food scene.

Emily Nanney

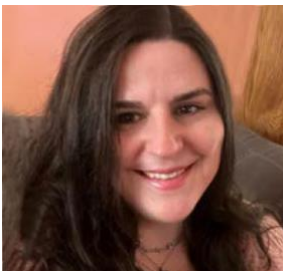
Associate Director, Programs, Charlotte-Mecklenberg Library, North Carolina



Emily Nanney, who has been with the Library for over 20 years, is most passionate about public libraries and exceptional customer service for all. She is also passionate about hard work and gratitude in all things, as well as positivity. Her quote to live by? "It is never too late to be what you might have been." Emily says, "I interpret this quote to mean that it is never too late to fulfill your dream or purpose in life, pick up a talent or interest that has been set aside for a time, etc." Spending time with family, being outside enjoying nature, watching professional tennis and reality television are all ways Emily fills her free time. And of course, reading!

Rachael Todaro

Playful Learning Fellow, City of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



Rachael Todaro is the City of Philadelphia's Office of Children and Families Playful Learning Fellow. Rachael specializes in integrating Playful Learning principles into the City's public programming and built environment projects. She comes to the City of Philadelphia after a three-year Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at Temple Infant and Child Laboratory where she led evaluations of city-wide Playful Learning interventions. Rachael possesses expertise in cognitive development and has conducted research on children's math and literacy development. She has 5 years of experience working with funders, city agencies, non-profits, and policy-makers to promote playful, evidence-based practices to improve children's critical skill development.

Dea Wright

Director, Office of Early Childhood Initiatives, City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin



Dea Wright has been the Director of the City of Milwaukee's Office of Early Childhood Initiatives (OECI) since its inception in November 2018. Under her leadership, OECI has helped raise awareness around the importance of early reading and talking to children, emphasizing birth to age three. Mighty Small Moments and Sponge Baby are a part of OECI's messaging used to connect the work of any organization that supports parents as the first teacher and provides education around healthy development, free or low-cost experiences, and free materials that encourage early talking, reading, and playing together. Mighty Small Moments was a recognized campaign by the Public Relations Society of America in 2024! The campaign has also been cited nationally. In 2020, OECI received the Outstanding Partnership of the Year Award from the Laundry Cares Foundation for the workaround creating literacy spaces inside laundromats and children's courts in partnership with Too Small to Fail, a Clinton Foundation Initiative and the National Council of Family and Juvenile Court Judges. Since 2020, Dea has been a Presidential Leadership Scholar learning from the presidential experiences of George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George H.W. Bush, and Lyndon B. Johnson. In 2022, Milwaukee County Transit System unveiled the largest art installation in county history in partnership with OECI. Under Dea's direction, over twenty bus shelters had PopSpots installed. PopSpots are artistic, fun, relatable, and educational reminders to talk with children while waiting. Other PopSpots have been installed at WIC Clinics, Health Centers, and a hospital child care wait area. In 2023, Wright was selected by the Milwaukee Bucks and Gruber Law Office to highlight OECI work during a 2024 home game. Wright serves on local and state-wide boards. Wright says her work will end when all children are academically performing proficiently.