Lessons from Tulsa SEED: Supporting Learning and Well-being During COVID
GLR Learning Tuesdays | Learning Loss Recovery Series

December 8, 2020 | 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm ET

PRESENTER BIOS

MODERATOR

Iheoma U. Iruka, Ph.D.
Research Professor, Department of Public Policy
Founding Director, Equity Research Action Coalition at FPG
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
@IheomaIruka

Iheoma U. Iruka, Ph.D., is a Research Professor in the Department of Public Policy, Fellow at the Frank Porter Graham, Child Development Institute (FPG), and Founding Director of the Equity Research-Action Coalition at FPG. Dr. Iruka is engaged in projects and initiatives focused on how evidence-informed policies, systems, and practices in early education can support the optimal development and experiences of children from low-wealth and marginalized households and communities. Her work focuses on family engagement and support, quality rating and improvement systems, and early care and education systems and programs. She is working on strengthening anti-racist, anti-bias and equitable research, practices, and policies to ensure the excellence and wellbeing for young diverse learners, especially Black children and their families. She is focused on developing classroom and family tools, examination of culturally-grounded pedagogical approaches, equitable public policies, and publications geared towards early education practitioners and policymakers. Dr. Iruka serves and has served on numerous national and local boards and committees, including the Brady Education Foundation, Trust for Learning, and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine committees on *Supporting Parents of Young Children*, and *Applying Neurobiological and Socio-behavioral Sciences from Prenatal through Early Childhood Development: A Health Equity Approach*, and American Psychological Association's Board of Educational Affairs Racial Disparities in PreK-12 Education.

PRESENTER

Anna D. Johnson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Dept. of Psychology
Georgetown University
Co-Director, Child Development and Social Policy Lab
Research Fellow, Child Trends

Anna D. Johnson is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Georgetown University and Co-Director of the Child Development and Social Policy (CDSP) Lab. A hybrid scholar with dual degrees in Developmental Psychology and Public Policy, Anna's research sits at the

intersection of the two disciplines: she blends the theory and measures of developmental psychology with econometric quantitative methods to ask exploratory and evaluative questions about how public policies can impact vulnerable children's early development.

Anna's primary research focus is on the patterns, predictors, qualities, and consequences of publicly-funded early care and education experiences. She has led a series of studies examining access to and features of care purchased using the federal child care subsidy program, impacts of child care subsidy use on the type and quality of early care and education low-income children experience, and impacts of subsidized care on low-income children's kindergarten readiness.

More recently, Anna is leading an ongoing 7-year longitudinal study of Tulsa, Oklahoma's renowned mixed delivery (e.g., Head Start; school-based pre-k) public preschool system: the Tulsa Study of Early Education and Development – Tulsa SEED. With funding from the NIH and multiple foundations, Tulsa SEED is following a cohort of children from age 3 (2016) through 4th grade (2023), collecting comprehensive classroom and teacher data from children's preschool through elementary education settings, as well as directly assessed, observer reported, and administrative data on children's cognitive, social, self-regulatory, and health outcomes.

In a parallel line of research, Anna co-leads studies exploring the predictors and consequences of food insecurity, which disproportionately impacts low-income households with young children and can be ameliorated by public policies such as food assistance and school-based food provision programs.

Across all of her research areas and projects, Anna maintains a focus on barriers to early education and food access as well as particular strengths of vulnerable subgroups of students and families. These vulnerable subgroups include children who are dual-language learners, children with special needs, and households that face other stressors known to impede access to services and positive developmental outcomes like food insecurity and maternal depression.

COMMENTATORS

Cindy Decker, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Tulsa Educare
cindyd@tulsaeducare.org

Cindy Decker is the Executive Director of Tulsa Educare, an agency operating four high quality early childhood centers in under resourced communities and programming to impact young children and their families beyond the walls of our schools. Formerly, she worked at CAP Tulsa as the Director of Research & Innovation. She also served on the Board of Education for Tulsa Public Schools and worked as an Economist at the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Cindy holds a B.A. in Economics and Mathematics from Emory University in Atlanta and a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of California at Berkeley. She is a member of Leadership Tulsa Class 44 and serves on the board of Moto, Inc., a family-owned business based in Illinois. Cindy and her husband Jason have two

teenage children. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, walking her dog, and practicing yoga.

Deborah A. Gist, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Tulsa Public Schools
@deborahgist

Deborah A. Gist is the superintendent of Tulsa Public Schools and a proud graduate of Memorial High School. She holds a bachelor of science in early-childhood education from the University of Oklahoma, a master of arts in elementary education and curriculum from the University of South Florida, a master's degree in public administration from the Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, and a doctoral degree in education leadership from the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to returning home to lead Tulsa Public Schools, Deborah served as commissioner of education for the State of Rhode Island where student achievement reached historical highs, and graduation rates increased significantly.

Deborah started her career in education in 1988 as an elementary school teacher in Fort Worth, Texas. She is thrilled to be back in her hometown working with the best team in the world to make Tulsa Public Schools the destination for extraordinary educators who work with our community and families to ignite the joy of learning and prepare every student for the greatest success in college, careers and life.

Emma Kain
Community Engagement Director
United Way of Wapello County, Iowa
@sociableworker

Emma Kain is the Community Engagement Director at United Way of Wapello County in Ottumwa, Iowa. In her last year of her Master of Social Work program at the University of Iowa, she will graduate in May of 2021. She is an AmeriCorps VISTA alum. Her background is based in volunteer administration and community organizing and focusing on working with allies to tackle equity issues in her community. Her work is grounded in Asset Based Community Development and she approaches everything through a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens; she believes that doing the most good with the least harm is imperative in working towards community change. To her, this means that all work must use anti-racist, anti-homophobic, and anti-bias practices because we know that individuals, namely white people, and white supremacist systems have upheld laws, policies, and beliefs that negatively impact our children and families of color who often experience the largest proficiency gaps. Emma believes that an authentic Grade-Level Reading campaign must work to dismantle these structures to meet the needs of our communities as a whole.