

## **Building Continuity: Sustaining Community Coalitions During Leadership Transitions**

**A Crucible of Practice Salon  
December 9, 2025 / 12:30 – 2 pm ET**

### **PANELISTS**



**Malai Amfah**  
**Senior Program Officer, Constituency Outreach and Engagement**  
**CGLR Iowa State Lead**  
**Campaign for Grade-Level Reading**

Malai has over 25 years of experience working in advocacy and community engagement in the nonprofit sector, primarily focused on youth. She is currently the Senior Program Officer for Constituency Engagement with the National Campaign for Grade-Level Reading (CGLR) as well as the state lead for CGLR communities in Iowa. In her role as Senior Program Officer, she supports the CGLR community coalitions across the network with connection, coaching, and facilitated learning opportunities around CGLR's shared agenda to ensure more hopeful futures for children. Prior to her role with CGLR, Malai was previously with United Way of Story County (UWSC) for 4+ years where she provided oversight of UWSC's work in education, including leadership of Story County Reads, the CGLR community. She has served on several committees and non-profit board of directors focused on youth and philanthropy. Her current board appointments include Raising Readers in Story County and board Vice Chair with ArtForce Iowa. Malai is a Fellow in Cohort 2 with Mid-Iowa Health Foundation's HealthConnect Fellowship and served as co-chair of Iowa's Equity Advisory Committee with Early Childhood Iowa. She has facilitated workshops and presentations at national, state, and local conferences. Malai also has a passion for animal rescue and volunteers with Heart of a Border Collie Rescue, a Minnesota-based organization in the Twin Cities. **Campaign for Grade-Level Reading**



**Josie Manternach**  
**Program Officer**  
**Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque**

Josie Manternach has lived and taught in schools across the country, but when it came time for her and her husband, Jared, to raise their kids, they settled right back where they grew up: Cascade, Iowa.

As the Community Foundation's program officer, she oversees much of the Foundation's work to support the education and well-being of children close to her small town – and across the seven-county Dubuque region. This work includes the [Every Child Reads](#) and [Rural Teacher Corps](#) initiatives.

Growing up on a family farm, Josie was passionate about agriculture and education and pursued activities and education that combined those interests, including FFA, 4-H and agriculture classes at Cascade High School. After graduating college and earning a master's degree from The Ohio State University, Josie moved around the country teaching at schools in Iowa, Florida and Washington, D.C., as Jared's U.S. Navy duties took him to various regions.

While living out of state, Josie and Jared's first child was born, and they decided to move back to Cascade. "The schools and teachers are great, we are gaining new assets all the time, we have a wonderful daycare, and all the familiar faces make it so welcoming," she says. Today, Josie and Jared have two boys, who they love raising in rural Iowa.



**Marissa Smith**  
**Family Leadership and Literacy Liaison**  
**WAKE Up and Read, North Carolina**

Marissa Smith is the Family Leadership and Literacy Liaison of WAKE Up and Read, a community literacy coalition in which Wake County Schools serves as the backbone agency. Her passion for bringing people together to ignite change and equitable access to literacy for all children, as well as an understanding that families are their children's first teacher, attracted her to WAKE Up and Read. She has worked in this role since 2022.

Prior to officially joining WAKE Up and Read, Marissa worked in the Wake County Public School System for 22 years, as an elementary classroom teacher, reading interventionist, supporting students with literacy opportunity gaps, and as an instructional facilitator and academic instructional coach, training teachers on the science of reading, research based developmentally appropriate literacy practices for K-5 children.

Working alongside families and community members to share the importance of literacy and making literacy more accessible and engaging is at the heart of Marissa's professional and volunteer experience. Marissa holds a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and English, from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction, from The University of Phoenix, and a Master's degree in School Administration, from North Carolina State University.



**Theresa Stacker**  
**Executive Director**  
**NC Early Childhood Foundation**  
**CGLR North Carolina State Lead**

**Theresa Stacker** is the Executive Director for the NC Early Childhood Foundation (NCECF). She is a native of North Carolina’s crystal coast, but for the past few years her family has called Raleigh home.

Theresa brings her over 20 years of experience in North Carolina’s early childhood system to grow the impact and reach of NCECF’s mission to support thriving young children and families. She has worked in the military child care community, provided technical assistance and professional development to the child care workforce and spent her most recent years in state government advising on early care and education. Her depth of knowledge of early childhood policy will be an incredible asset to the organization.

She holds multiple degrees in education and recently completed an Education Specialists (Ed.S.) degree from Walden University. While not at work ensuring kids are on track to lifelong success, she enjoys hiking, listening to music, and baking.