

Leadership Academy

Leadership Conference 2024

July 5 – 7, 2024

Welcome to the Leadership Conference, the culminating experience for the Leadership Academy 2023 cohort. This year's conference will be held in Bowman Hall on MCLA's campus in North Adams, and remote access is available for each session.

Dr. Darcy Fernandes will open the conference with a keynote presentation on Friday, July 5th, from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. in Murdock Hall, Room 218. Additional keynote presentations include **André Lynch**, Vice Provost of Equity and Belonging at MCLA on Saturday evening, July 6th, and Anti-bias Education Consultant **Phil Fogelman**, on Sunday evening, July 7th. "Alumni Talks" will be offered on Saturday and Sunday mornings from 9:00 – 9:45. Conference sessions run on **Saturday July 6th** and **Sunday July 7th** from 10:00 a.m. until 3:45 p.m. and are presented by members of the Leadership Academy 2023 cohort on topics ranging from leading inclusive, anti-racist schools to implementing instructional programs that enhance success for all. Sessions are organized according to the four standards established by MA DESE's *Professional Standards for Administrator Leadership* (PSAL):

- Instructional Leadership
- Management and Operations
- Family and Community Engagement
- Professional Culture

In this conference program you'll find:

1. Session schedule and links
2. Session descriptions
3. Presenter Bios
4. Titles of texts informing presentations and professional practice

Thank you to the Leadership Academy 2023 cohort for their engagement, tenacity, and professionalism throughout the year. Thank you to all educators. Thank you to all students.

Marianne R. Young
Leadership Academy Director



MCLA

Friday July 5, 2024

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.: Keynote Address

Dr. Darcy Fernandes, Senior Associate Commissioner, MA DESE

Murdock 218

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82277905214>

Saturday July 6, 2024

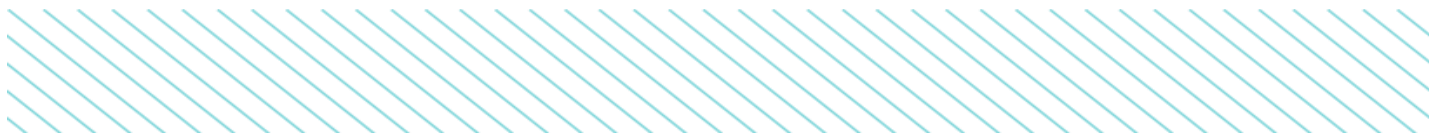
9:00 – 9:45	Bowman Hall Room 201 Alumni Talks <i>Leading through change and topics addressing fiscal responsibilities will be woven into this discussion.</i> Heidi Allen (2019) Christine Davis (2021) Griffin Labbanca (2022) Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82277905214		Bowman Hall Room 202 Alumni Talks <i>The life of a principal and how Special Education influences building leadership will be woven into this discussion.</i> Tim King (2022) Annie Pecor (2015) Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82277905214		
	Time	Bowman Hall Room 201	Bowman Hall Room 202	Bowman Hall Room 203	Bowman Hall Room 204
10:00 – 11:00	Healthy Teachers, Happy Students Jennifer Juneau-Lederman Akira Byng- Regan Link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/5767603710?pwd=LzNLU29XcWZFcTc5MEkxa3VuUmV1dz09&omn=83140411764	Let Them Be Little: How Free Play, Phone Bans, and Mindfulness Can Alleviate the Student Mental Health Epidemic Roseanne McGough Chelsea Murphy Link: https://meet.google.com/kki-qadc-rbx	Better Together: Building a More Connected and Emotionally Intelligent Team Amy Isenhardt Link: https://meet.google.com/mkm-uvmo-fto		
11:15– 12:15	Engaging Students in Meaningful Ways: A Historically Responsive Approach to Teaching Literacy Kewsi Burgess Link: https://meet.google.com/dzy-nxwv-hvf	Collaboration and Communication: Building Effective Partnerships Between Special Education and General Education Staff Season Browe, Marisa Plant Link: https://meet.google.com/yyc-uhut-gob	Transforming Faculty Connections: Leveraging Social Capital to Fight Teacher Burnout Matthew Funigiello Link: https://us05web.zoom.us/j/81350297956?pwd=ABnaPpkOLsaW3VPOfxl7hgaMzuhndX.1		

12:15 – 1:15	Lunch			
1:30 – 2:30	<p>Supporting Chronically Absent Students Through the Use of Equitable Grading Practices</p> <p>Berit Erickson Tess McCarthy</p> <p>Link: https://tel.meet/dfm-oqqi-cud?pin=8182915559091</p>	<p>Integrating PBIS and Restorative Practices: An Approach to Addressing Student Behavior through Empathy, Equity, and Positivity</p> <p>Stephanie Dockins</p> <p>Link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/9328735606?pwd=q7r2HqfyvyybUAFj3NhHQabu57UQH.1</p>	<p>Easing the Teacher Burden: Embracing AI for Efficiency and Empowerment</p> <p>Stephanie Berlind Meg Maset</p> <p>Link: https://meet.google.com/gaa-grsn-nga</p>	
2:45 – 3:45	<p>How to Become a Superhero through the use of Community Circles</p> <p>Jenifer Guay</p> <p>Link: https://meet.google.com/kxx-rnqb-fhs</p>	<p>Meetings as a Mechanism for Change</p> <p>Jared Slater</p> <p>Link: https://zoom.us/j/2851166272?pwd=OU94ZXR6eDRDc3gwNWl3amwrdUtHZz09</p>	<p>Tools for Teachers and Students: The Benefits of Mindfulness, Yoga, and Focus</p> <p>Jay Merselis, Katherine Merselis</p> <p>Link: https://us05web.zoom.us/j/86987568401?pwd=ZcEtav1ZAFDYh94VJA5e2crkU0EwFt.1</p>	
7:00 – 9:00	<p>Keynote Address</p> <p>André Lynch, Vice Provost of Equity and Belonging, MCLA Murdock 218</p> <p>Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82277905214</p>			

Sunday July 7, 2024

<p>9:00 – 9:45</p>	<p align="center">Bowman Hall Room 201 Alumni Talks <i>Transitioning from teaching to leadership and the 90-day entry plan will be woven into this discussion.</i></p> <p align="center">Tracie Derosa (2020) Tina Mitchell (2022)</p> <p align="center">Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82277905214</p>		<p align="center">Bowman Hall Room 202 Alumni Talks <i>The three (3) buckets of leadership and the topic of emotional strength will be woven into this discussion.</i></p> <p align="center">Patti Gardner (2022) Rachel Ribis (2021)</p> <p align="center">Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82277905214</p>	
<p>Time</p>	<p align="center">Bowman Hall Room 201</p>	<p align="center">Bowman Hall Room 202</p>	<p align="center">Bowman Hall Room 203</p>	<p align="center">Bowman Hall Room 204</p>
<p>10:00 – 11:00</p>	<p align="center">WINN for the Win: Using Data to Drive Targeted Instruction and Maximize Resources/Personnel to Provide Differentiated Instruction in Reading and Beyond</p> <p align="center">Karen Rowe</p> <p align="center">Link: Google - will update on the day</p>	<p align="center">Vulnerability in Leadership: Clarifying Insights on the Work of Brené Brown and Simon Sinek.</p> <p align="center">Jeffery Artist</p> <p align="center">Link: https://meet.google.com/jpn-iiyx-ixe</p>	<p align="center">Reimagining Systems</p> <p align="center">Sean Flanagan Andrew Cuthbertson</p> <p align="center">Link: https://meet.google.com/ygj-ijxo-brn</p>	
<p>11:15- 12:15</p>	<p align="center">Unlocking Empathy. Transforming Power of Story Exchange</p> <p align="center">Peter White Sarah Gomez</p> <p align="center">Link: https://moric-org.zoom.us/j/93231777232?pwd=DGEtYtaUMBDZNDhk4Ghb01p6Lr5oGe.1</p>	<p align="center">Leveling Up Education: Integrating AI into Curriculum</p> <p align="center">Christine Vilardo, Alexandria Blanchard</p> <p align="center">Link: https://us05web.zoom.us/j/84715039520?pwd=4aTnwgLxUYK4Ka6Rab8XwAxoGdebJj.1</p>	<p align="center">Influence the School Community Through Coaching</p> <p align="center">Brian Barbaccia</p> <p align="center">Link: https://meet.google.com/qqq-ospd-ite</p>	<p align="center">Building a Positive School Culture with Emotional Safety, Physical Well-Being, and Restorative Communication</p> <p align="center">Marcello Reale</p> <p align="center">Link: https://meet.google.com/tuh-tsev-syv</p>
<p>12:15 – 1:15</p>	<p align="center">Lunch</p>			

<p>1:30 – 2:30</p>	<p>Bridges Program for Teachers: Great Neck South High School and Uniondale High School Case Study</p> <p>Jilian Gollisz-Pallone Safia Fatimi</p> <p>Link: https://meet.google.com/hbw-obi-bap</p>	<p>Self-Care for the Soul: Investing in Educator Wellness</p> <p>Danielle Piel Joya Spina</p> <p>Link: https://meet.google.com/ijq-zqfz-edz</p>	<p>Think Again: How Creating a Culture of Curiosity Can Empower Teachers to Do Great Things</p> <p>Melissa Leone</p> <p>Link: https://meet.google.com/ddx-font-yoa</p>	
<p>2:45 – 3:00</p>	<p>Closing Session Bowman Hall Atrium</p>			
<p>7:00 – 9:00</p>	<p>Keynote Address Phil Fogelman, Anti-bias Education Consultant Murdock 218 Link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82277905214</p>			



MCLA

Session Descriptions

Saturday July 6	
9:00 – 9:45	Alumni Talks
10:00 – 11:00	<p>Healthy Teachers, Happy Students Jennifer Juneau-Lederman, Akira Byng- Regan</p> <p>Reducing teacher burnout is essential as it directly affects the well-being of teachers, the quality of education, and the stability of schools. Burnout can lead to serious mental and physical health issues for teachers, diminishing their job satisfaction and effectiveness in the classroom. This negatively impacts student learning and engagement. High burnout rates also contribute to teacher turnover, which is costly and disrupts students' education. By addressing burnout, we can ensure healthier, more motivated teachers who provide better education and contribute to a positive school environment, ultimately benefiting students and communities.</p>
10:00 – 11:00	<p>Let Them Be Little: How Free Play, Phone Bans, and Mindfulness Can Alleviate the Student Mental Health Epidemic Roseanne McGough, Chelsea Murphy</p> <p>What are the biggest social-emotional health concerns plaguing our schools today and how can we begin to unpack this important issue? In this presentation, attendees will understand the biggest causes of the mental health epidemic of the past decade and be able to implement collective action steps with all stakeholders. A lack of free play and the rise of screen-based childhood have given way to alarming rates of anxiety, depression, and poor executive functioning. Through partnerships with families, schools can engage in conversations about parenting in a technology- based world and institute strategies to improve social-emotional well-being.</p>
10:00 – 11:00	<p>Better Together: Building a More Connected and Emotionally Intelligent Team Amy Isenhardt</p> <p>Participants will explore strategies to build trust and connectedness through adult social and emotional learning opportunities. Creating a positive professional culture where everyone enjoys a sense of belonging, trusting relationships, and a shared sense of purpose will prepare your team to face challenges together. Collaboration will increase, attendance will improve, and turnover will lessen. Leave this session with low-risk strategies to begin this work with your own teams, and resources to help you plan your next steps.</p>
11:15 – 12:15	<p>Engaging Students in Meaningful Ways: A Historically Responsive Approach to Teaching Literacy Kewsi Burgess</p> <p>This presentation provides educators with a workshop for engaging all students using the historically responsive framework established by Ghody Muhammad. This educational approach is rooted in culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining pedagogy while harnessing the expertise and mindset of African American educators. While the framework was borne out of the experiences of African American educators and their rich history, the practices are meant to support all students.</p>

11:15 – 12:15	<p>Collaboration and Communication: Building Effective Partnerships Between Special Education and General Education Staff Season Browe, Marisa Plant</p> <p>In today's diverse educational landscape, fostering a cohesive environment between special education and general education staff is crucial for student success. This session, "Collaboration and Communication: Building Effective Partnerships Between Special Education and General Education Staff," will delve into practical strategies and proven methods for enhancing cooperation and communication. Attendees will explore how to create a unified approach to teaching that benefits all students, particularly those with special needs.</p> <p>Participants in this session will gain insights into the unique challenges and opportunities that arise when integrating special education and general education practices. Through interactive discussions and real-world examples, attendees will learn how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop Collaborative Strategies: Identify and implement collaborative strategies that foster a supportive and inclusive educational environment. - Enhance Communication Skills: Improve communication channels between special education and general education staff to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach to student learning. - Promote Inclusive Practices: Create and promote inclusive practices that accommodate diverse learning needs and encourage mutual respect and understanding among staff. <p>Attendees will be able to outline at least three effective collaboration techniques that can be immediately applied in their schools and develop a communication plan tailored to their educational setting that facilitates regular and constructive dialogue between special education and general education staff. By the end of the session, participants will have a toolkit of strategies for building stronger partnerships between special education and general education staff. They will be equipped with actionable tools and techniques to improve collaboration, enhance communication, and create a more inclusive school environment, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes for all students.</p>
11:15 – 12:15	<p>Transforming Faculty Connections: Leveraging Social Capital to Fight Teacher Burnout Matthew Funigiello</p> <p>The global COVID-19 pandemic, the rise of social media, and changes in societal norms and expectations have all contributed to unprecedented levels of disconnection in society. This lack of social connection has had a profound impact on education, a field inherently dependent on social interactions. Accelerated social disconnection in schools has exacerbated teacher burnout, which now outpaces burnout in all other industries nationwide, and is leading to an alarming rate of attrition within the profession. Educational leaders, functioning as social leaders, have an obligation to find solutions to alleviate burnout to prevent the collapse of the learning communities that drive school-related outcomes.</p> <p>This presentation will explore the vital role of social capital in transforming faculty connections and combating teacher burnout. Participants will gain insights into the importance of strong professional relationships and community within the educational environment. Through practical strategies and mindful practices, we will delve into how building and leveraging social capital can enhance teacher well-being, foster collaboration, and create a supportive school culture. With new tools and a refined focus, building leaders will enhance their capacity to create and sustain a strong social environment for teachers, who, in turn, will foster the same for their students.</p>
12:15 – 1:15	Lunch

1:30 – 2:30	<p>Supporting Chronically Absent Students Through the Use of Equitable Grading Practices Berit Erickson, Tess McCarthy</p> <p>Chronic absenteeism has become a universal concern for schools. A student is considered chronically absent when they have missed more than 10% of school days. Research shows that students' grades suffer when they miss school, and without equitable grading practices in place their grades are less likely to accurately reflect their knowledge and mastery of material. The purpose of this workshop is to examine some of the root causes of chronic absenteeism and create a forum to discuss how best to support this at-risk population through the lens of equitable grading practices as outlined in the book <i>Grading for Equity</i> by Joe Feldman. Participants can expect to empathize with what it is like to be a chronically absent student, learn about the three pillars of equitable grading, and leave with a list of supports that can be implemented immediately.</p>
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1:30 – 2:30	<p>Integrating PBIS and Restorative Practices: An Approach to Addressing Student Behavior through Empathy, Equity, and Positivity Stephanie Dockins</p> <p>As educators, we recognize that when it comes to teaching academic content, not all students respond to the same instructional approaches. And as educators, we do our best to respond to our students' varying learning needs by making adaptations, accommodations, and differentiating our instruction. So why don't we, as educators, do the same for student behavior and school discipline? This presentation will demonstrate how two highly regarded, evidence-based approaches to school discipline – Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Practices (RP) – can both be used to reduce the likelihood of problematic or challenging behaviors, increase student accountability, and promote a culture of empathy, equity, and positivity, school wide. Attendees of this session will take away an understanding of how PBIS and Restorative Practices work together, actions that can be implemented tomorrow (or in the immediate future), and a renewed perspective on how to approach challenging student behavior and school discipline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attendees will be able to identify a process for implementing PBIS and Restorative Practices (RP) in the classroom or schoolwide. - Attendees will be able to identify PBIS and RP interventions or strategies and apply them to the tiered framework of PBIS. - Attendees will understand how PBIS and restorative practices can be structured and used for disciplinary responses at every level in the school.
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<p>1:30 – 2:30</p>	<p>Easing the Teacher Burden: Embracing AI for Efficiency and Empowerment Stephanie Berlind, Meg Maset</p> <p>Are you uncertain about AI's place in education and wondering how it can support and empower teachers? Join us for a comprehensive session that delves into AI basics, emphasizing its role in streamlining tasks and reducing teachers' workloads. Reflecting on how technology has historically propelled us past laborious tasks to improve outcomes, we will explore how AI is poised to do the same in education. This session will provide strategies and philosophies for leveraging AI to increase productivity and improve student learning outcomes. We will focus on the concept of AI-assisted faculty and identify tasks where an AI assistant can be beneficial, allowing teachers to concentrate on the more critical and challenging aspects of their work. Practical guidance will be offered on designing courses, refining prompts, and feeding data sets to AI systems, along with addressing classroom assignments and creating effective AI policies for your classroom. We will also discuss the importance of understanding and overcoming AI bias and using prompt engineering to achieve more inclusive results. Furthermore, we will examine how AI can foster creativity by bypassing cultural norms that restrain innovative thinking. Participants will take away practical knowledge, including at least one use for chatbots in their daily teaching lives, strategies to navigate AI bias, and techniques for effective prompt engineering. Join us to unlock AI's potential in education and transform your teaching experience.</p>
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<p>2:45 – 3:45</p>	<p>How to Become a Superhero through the use of Community Circles Jenifer Guay</p> <p>As educational leaders, we seek to create secure environments and spaces for students to engage in open and honest communication, reflection, and self-expression which develops effective speaking and listening skills. The aim of this session is to provide you with the knowledge and skills to facilitate your own community circles in and out of the classroom.</p> <p>Circle has the power to unite generations, solve real issues, fulfill basic psychological needs, and promote a strong sense of autonomy that leads to competence while connecting others in areas of relatedness, forming strong networks of support, especially among students and peers. When constructed properly and systematically, Circle creates an environment that grows and strengthens empathetic neuropathways, resulting in one of the great places where all human skills for social and emotional health and development can be practiced.</p> <p>Attendees of this session will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grow their Empathetic Fitness: this involves perspective-taking and emotional sharing, which leads to 'empathic concern. - Practice the 5 Core Human Skills of SEL: identified as self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and relationship skills for stronger communities and learners. - Gain knowledge in Circle structure and create a framework for a beginning of the school year circle. This is where participants will learn about the superhero within!
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2:45 – 3:45

Meetings as a Mechanism for Change
Jared Slater

How many unofficial meetings after the meeting have you had to complain about the original meeting? Nothing inhibits change like meetings that are a waste of teachers' valuable time. Restructure and reimagine meetings as a way to create change, energize faculty, and shift from a culture of compliance to one of creativity, connection, and shared purpose.

2:45 – 3:45

Tools for Teachers and Students: The Benefits of Mindfulness, Yoga, and Focus
Jay Merselis, Katherine Merselis

Katie and Jay, a practitioner and an administrator respectively, have teamed up to provide an overview of hands-on techniques and a scalable overview of ways leaders can incorporate yoga, mindfulness, and breathing into the daily lives and routines of students and staff alike. A scalable approach is presented so that small successes can grow into school-wide initiatives.

Sunday July 7th	
9:00 – 9:45	Alumni Talks
10:00 – 11:00	<p>WINN for the Win: Using Data to Drive Targeted Instruction and Maximize Resources /Personnel to Provide Differentiated Instruction in Reading and Beyond Karen Rowe</p> <p>Planning and implementing interventions that meet the individualized needs of every student is no easy task! Learn how one school changed their conventional RTI approach to a model that maximizes time, resources and personnel to meet the needs of all students through data collection and analysis, adjusting master schedules and harnessing the strengths of teachers and staff.</p> <p>Participants will have an opportunity to practice tasks such as looking at assessment data, grouping students based on needs, and then assigning staff members to those groups - all of which are fundamental to implementing a WINN (What I Need Now) intervention model.</p>
10:00 – 11:00	<p>Vulnerability in Leadership: Clarifying Insights on the Work of Brené Brown and Simon Sinek Jeffery Artist</p> <p>Attendees will leave this session with a new appreciation for vulnerability as a leadership trait.</p> <p>According to Brené Brown, “Vulnerability is the core, the heart, the center, of meaningful human experiences.” By establishing vulnerability as a pathway for human connection, Brown empowers the idea that this trait - once considered a weakness - now signifies the opposite. Along with human connection comes trust, and this is the most significant area of overlap between Brown’s work and that of Simon Sinek. Much of Sinek’s work focuses on the Marines, whom he claims are so successful because their level of trust among one another eliminates all threats from within.</p> <p>Attendees of this conference will leave convinced that if the toughest soldiers on planet earth are willing to be vulnerable in battle, then we should follow suit in positions of school leadership.</p> <p>While I found the work of Brown and Sinek inspiring, I still felt that claiming “vulnerability is good in leadership” was painting with too broad of a brush. It became apparent that vulnerable leadership could inspire greatness in others, but what about the effects on the leaders themselves? Furthermore, I grew curious as to whether or not the right to be vulnerable must be earned, if there is a generational shift occurring regarding vulnerability in leadership, and if vulnerability plays differently for male and female leaders. Through the discussion of further research, professional interviews, and surveys, I hope my attendees will leave with greater clarity on these finer points.</p>
10:00 – 11:00	<p>Unlocking Empathy. Transforming Power of Story Exchange Peter White, Sarah Gomez</p> <p>Use a story exchange to give your students a chance to tell their story. Stories combat loneliness and motivate youth to make positive changes in their communities. Through the use of story exchange, students can build connections and see the world through the eyes of someone else.</p>
11:15 – 12:15	<p>Building a Positive School Culture with Emotional Safety, Physical Well-Being, and Restorative Communication Marcello Reale</p> <p>Creating a positive school culture is essential for fostering an environment where students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. This process involves prioritizing emotional safety, ensuring physical well-being, and implementing restorative communication. Together, these elements contribute to a supportive and inclusive school atmosphere.</p> <p>Emotional safety involves creating a supportive environment where students feel respected,</p>

	<p>valued, and understood. By promoting empathy and active listening, educators can build trust and reduce student anxiety.</p> <p>Physical well-being focuses on maintaining a safe and healthy school environment. This includes not only the physical safety of the school facilities but also the promotion of psychological safety and more interaction between students.</p> <p>Restorative communication aims to resolve conflicts, repair harm, and restore relationships. These practices emphasize accountability, empathy, and constructive dialogue, moving away from punitive measures and towards more collaborative problem-solving approaches.</p> <p>During this presentation, attendees will play a vital role as they are directly involved in the educational process. They will have the opportunity to actively participate through engaging in surveys, question-and-answer sessions, and breakout groups. In addition to encouraging attendee involvement, the presentation will incorporate multiple transitions to enhance the flow and keep the audience engaged. One of the key aspects of the presentation will be the emphasis on open and honest discussions about the current state of our educational system. The presentation slides will encapsulate not just data and information but also highlight the importance of emotional well-being, physical safety, and the facilitation of restorative communication.</p>
<p>11:15 – 12:15</p>	<p>Reimagining Systems Sean Flanagan, Andrew Cuthbertson</p> <p>Our “Reimagining Systems” presentation will explore reimagining systems in our schools. It will highlight our experiences with implementing change and utilizing data for decision-making. It involves working smarter – not harder – by efficiently using resources and streamlining processes. It requires challenging the status quo to adapt to changing times and find better methods to achieve goals. Effective leadership plays a crucial role in improving school experiences, academic performance, school culture, and equity.</p> <p>We'll share insights from our fieldwork, emphasizing data's importance in guiding reactionary and proactive decision-making. A reactionary approach involves using data to address immediate issues, while a proactive approach leverages data to anticipate and prevent future challenges.</p> <p>Key points will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Utilizing data to work smarter and make informed decisions. -Challenging and improving outdated systems. -Enhancing academic environments, school culture, and equity. -Supporting teachers and staff in their professional growth. -Developing proactive strategies for sustainable improvements. <p>By reimagining systems, we can foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in our schools. We look forward to discussing how you can apply these principles in your educational environments.</p>
<p>11:15 – 12:15</p>	<p>Leveling Up Education: Integrating AI into Curriculum Christine Vilardo, Alexandria Blanchard</p> <p>The integration of Artificial Intelligence in K-12 curriculum is revolutionizing education, enhancing personalized learning and preparing students for the future. This presentation explores the benefits, challenges, and best practices for incorporating AI in schools.</p>

11:15 – 12:15	<p>Influence the School Community Through Coaching Brian Barbaccia</p> <p>Join in an engaging and transformative Coaching Professional Development session designed to empower educators with the skills and knowledge to enhance their coaching practices. This session focuses on practical strategies for effective coaching, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and supporting the professional growth of educators.</p> <p>During this session, participants will engage in collaborative activities, reflective exercises, and scenario-based learning to deepen their understanding of coaching principles and techniques. Attendees will be guided through evidence-based practices, emphasizing the importance of relationship-building, active listening, and goal setting in the coaching process.</p> <p>By the end of this session, participants will be equipped with practical tools to enhance their coaching efficacy, foster professional growth among colleagues, and contribute to a supportive and collaborative educational environment. The goal is for attendees to leave with a clear action plan, a deeper understanding of effective coaching practices, and a renewed commitment to fostering continuous improvement within their schools.</p>
12:15 – 1:15	Lunch
1:30 – 2:30	<p>Bridges Program for Teachers: Great Neck South High School and Uniondale High School Case Study Jillian Gollisz-Pallone, Safia Fatimi</p> <p>The <i>Bridges for Teachers</i> program is a unique professional development opportunity that allows educators from different school districts to observe each other's schools and learn about diverse communities, classes, and school climates. Recently, Safia Fatimi and Jillian Pallone conducted a case study between Uniondale High School and Great Neck South High School to learn about each other's schools. These two districts have distinct demographic and educational environments. This initiative enables teachers to gain valuable insights, share best practices, and foster a deeper understanding of the varied challenges and strengths within different educational settings. By participating in the <i>Bridges</i> program, teachers can enhance their pedagogical skills and contribute to a more cohesive and informed educational community.</p>
1:30 – 2:30	<p>Self-Care for the Soul: Investing in Educator Wellness Danielle Piel, Joya Spina</p> <p>Join us for a mindful one-hour session focused on empowering educator wellness. In this interactive conference, we will delve into the balancing act of prioritizing self-care and well-being in the field of education. Through engaging, informative, intentional, and relatable discussions, along with interactive activities, we will explore the signs of burnout, identify effective wellness strategies, and implement them both personally and within the school environment. From brief mindfulness exercises to incorporating wellness practices into your daily routine, participants will gain valuable insights and actionable steps to cultivate resilience and thrive in their roles as educators. Come ready to renew, rejuvenate and reflect on self-care for your soul!</p>

1:30 – 2:30	<p>Think Again: How Creating a Culture of Curiosity Can Empower Teachers to Do Great Things Melissa Leone</p> <p>Educational leaders make hundreds of decisions a day, and often, the assumption is that they need to have all the answers. This session encourages leaders to recognize that not only will we not always have the answer, but that there is strength in rethinking and unlearning. Leaders who cultivate a curiosity for learning and possess humility become more approachable. This curiosity and humility create a culture that empowers teachers to take risks and present leadership with new ideas or new ways of thinking. The session will include actionable suggestions for more empowering faculty meetings, opportunities for reflection, and examples of faculty and staff creating a positive impact on school culture through collaboration with principals who are open to new ideas and ways of thinking.</p>
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2:45 – 3:45	Leadership Conference 2024 Closing Session
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Presenter Bios

Jeff Artist joined Chatham Central School District in 2013 as a member of the high school English department. He was tenured in 2016 and has taught in both the middle and high schools since. Prior to teaching, Jeff traveled extensively and worked as a freelance music journalist (emphasis on free). Since becoming a teacher, he has instructed students in courses such as AP English Literature, College & Career Readiness, and Creative Writing. He has served in the capacity of art & literary magazine advisor, soccer coach, ski club advisor, student mentor, leader of the middle school Code of Conduct & ELA Curriculum Writing Committees, as well as Teacher Leader for district-wide professional development. Jeff was recently certified in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Schools and views discipline as an opportunity to teach. Outside of school, Jeff enjoys hiking, skiing, tennis, reading, music, and food.

Brian Barbaccia

With five years of experience as a dedicated Physical Education teacher, I have passionately committed myself to fostering students' physical and mental well-being. I have successfully coached football, basketball, and lacrosse, leading teams to numerous victories and instilling values of teamwork, perseverance, and sportsmanship. Beyond traditional sports, I founded a popular fishing club, providing students with a unique and engaging extracurricular activity that promotes patience and appreciation for nature. Recognizing the diverse needs of our student body, I also took the initiative to revamp the adaptive physical education curriculum, ensuring that all students, regardless of ability, have access to quality physical education that meets their needs. My multifaceted approach to physical education underscores my dedication to creating an inclusive, dynamic, and enriching environment for all students.

Stephanie Berlind is a K-12 Instructional Technology Specialist in Bethlehem Central School District in NY, where she helps teachers and students use technology to enhance learning and create dynamic educational experiences. Prior to this position, she spent 10 years in the classroom as a secondary social studies teacher. No matter her role, Stephanie is an educator at heart and strives to inspire innovative thinking and active participation in our global society, empowering students to tackle the problems of today and tomorrow. Born in Worcester, Massachusetts, Stephanie spent 8 years of her childhood on the island of Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands. She earned Bachelor of Arts degrees in History and French from Union College, a Master of Arts in Teaching degree from Clarkson University and is currently working towards her School Building and District Leader Certifications through the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. Stephanie resides in the Capital Region of NY with her 10-year-old son.

Alexandria Blanchard joined Saratoga Springs High School's Business department in 2021. Previously, she taught at Mohonasen Central School District and worked in Human Resources at Global Foundries. Her career began as an intern in nanotechnology at Global Foundries, transitioning to Talent and Acquisition, where she led the Global Intern Program. This role ignited her passion for mentoring and education, leading her to teach courses like career management, marketing, finance, accounting, and entrepreneurship at Mohonasen. Born and raised in Gloversville, NY, Alexandria graduated from the University at Albany with a bachelor's in business administration and a concentration in Marketing, and a Master's in Education in Business and Marketing. She is pursuing a career in administration at the Leadership Academy at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. Alexandria volunteers in the community and collaborates with local leaders on infrastructure projects. She enjoys skiing and ocean outings, aiming to inspire her students to pursue their passions and fostering a nurturing learning environment.

Season Browe, a dedicated special educator, joined the North Colonie Central School District in 2017, bringing ten years of experience in preschool through fifth-grade special education. At Loudonville Elementary School, she serves as a resource room and consultant teacher, contributing to the Building Culture, Schedule, and Safety Teams while mentoring new staff and supervising graduate interns from the University of Albany. Formerly with Schenectady City School District, Season's commitment extends to students with diverse needs like communication disorders, autism, and behavioral disabilities. She holds a Bachelor of Science and a Master's in Curriculum and Instruction from The College of Saint Rose, and certifications in early childhood, childhood, and special education from birth to sixth grade. Trained in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention, Season is pursuing School Building and District Leader certificates at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. A resident of Averill Park, New York, she enjoys family activities, gardening, crafting, and camping.

Kewsi Burgess, Ph.D., joined the Albany City School District in 2016 as a sixth-grade teacher at Thomas Academy of Science and Technology. Prior to his tenure at Thomas Academy, Dr. Burgess taught sixth -grade Social Studies at Brighter Choice Middle School. Born in Guyana, South America, and raised in Albany, New York, Dr. Burgess attended Albany High School before completing his Bachelor of Science degree in Childhood Education with a concentration in Mathematics at Plattsburgh State University College. He further advanced his education by earning a Master of Science in Literacy Teaching and Learning and a Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction from the State University of New York at Albany.

Dr. Burgess is committed to continuous professional development, having engaged in training on culturally responsive/relevant/sustaining pedagogy, teacher rounds, "Teach Like a Champion," and the "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People." His dedication to teaching excellence has been recognized through the Golden Apple Award for Teaching Excellence (2020) and the Rising Star Award from the BHM "Year of Return" African American Diaspora 2020, awarded by the New York State United Teachers. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Dr. Burgess serves as a planning committee member at Wizard Wardrobe and an educational advisor at RAW Gen. He is a firm believer in the power of reflection in education, viewing it as essential to creating meaningful educational experiences.

Akira Byng-Regan joined Roosevelt UFSD in 2013 as a member of the High School Music Department. Mrs. Regan previously worked and taught in the Riverhead, and Huntington school districts. She currently serves as the 7-12 Choral Director as well as Director of Roosevelt Performing Arts, and Lead Teacher for Fine Arts. Mrs. Regan holds her BA in Music Education, an MBA in Human Resources, as well as an MEd in Music Education. Mrs. Regan will be pursuing her EdD in Transformational Leadership in Education at Long Island University beginning in September. Mom to Emmalyn, Savannah, Henry, and Charlie, she is happily in her softball mom era. She loves running, lifting weights, spending time on the field or at the beach with her kids, and going to concerts and Broadway shows. She believes if we provide an example for our students to follow, we are not only nurturing good students, we are nurturing good people. In a society where basic humanity is lost at times, every day we have the opportunity to teach young people how to listen, respect, and care for others.

Andrew Cuthbertson joined the Saratoga Springs City School District in 2015 as a physical education department member and is currently the assistant director of athletics, physical education, and health in a TOSA position. Previously, he taught for seven years in the Mohonasen Central School District as a physical education/health teacher and coach. He has extensive coaching experience in ice hockey, golf, and baseball at both collegiate and interscholastic levels. Raised in the 1000 Islands, Cuthbertson attended LaFargeville Central High School and earned a Bachelor of Science in physical education from Keene State College. He also holds a Master of Education in athletic administration from Springfield College. He actively participates in professional organizations like NYS AHPERD, NYSAAA, and the American Baseball Coaches Association. As a presenter at the 2014 National SHAPE convention, he was part of team that secured and implemented funding to improve the physical education and health curriculum at Mohonasen through the Carol M. White PEP grant. Cuthbertson enjoys cooking, spending time with family, and outdoor activities. He is a dedicated educator committed to fostering a supportive learning environment and building relationships with his students.

Stephanie Dockins joined Neil Hellman School (NHS; Albany, NY) in 2018, as a teacher on the ninth-grade special education team. Stephanie is now NHS' high school assistant principal. Prior to her tenure at NHS, Stephanie taught students with disabilities at Gerber School, in Urbana, Illinois and worked at the Therapeutic After School Program, in Boston, Massachusetts. Born in Evanston, Illinois, Stephanie earned her Bachelor of Science degree at Boston University in Health Science and holds a Master of Education degree in Special Education from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She received Neil Hellman School's Teacher of the Year Award (2019), Therapeutic Classroom of the Year Award (2019, 2022), and Team Resiliency Award (2021). Stephanie enjoys reading, traveling, being outside, and implementing the "something new" rule. Stephanie believes that all student behavior has meaning; once we, as educators, take the time to understand the meaning, learning can occur.

Berit Erickson

Berit Erickson joined Ichabod Crane Central School in 2005 as a first-grade general education teacher. Before joining ICC, she worked as the Shipping Manager for Beth's Farm Kitchen in Stuyvesant, New York, honing her organizational skills as

the company expanded. Born in Hudson, New York, Berit spent her high school years at Rift Valley Academy in Kenya. She actively supported education in surrounding villages and developed a love for diversity. Berit holds a Bachelor of Science in Childhood Education/Special Education from The College of Saint Rose and a Master of Science in Education in Literacy from The State University of New York, Albany. At Ichabod Crane Primary School, Berit has served in various roles, supporting Special Education students and English Language Learners. She piloted a reading initiative as a Reading Specialist and currently serves as the district's Literacy Coach for Primary and Elementary Buildings. Berit is an active member of ICC committees and continues her education through district-provided opportunities. She is enrolled in the Leadership Academy at MCLA, working towards becoming a district leader. Berit believes in providing every child with a dignified education and is passionate about ensuring all stakeholders feel seen and heard. Her philosophy is summed up by Antoine de Saint Exupéry's words, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood... teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

Safia Fatimi joined Great Neck South High School in 2010 as a member of the art department. Prior to her tenure at Great Neck South High School, Safia taught at Millennium High School, Lawrence High School and Paul D. Schreiber High School. She has worked with students in courses such as photography, graphic design, ceramics, studio art and filmmaking as well as serving in the capacity of advisor to both the photography club and South Asian Cultural Club. Born in Brooklyn, NY and raised in Bellport, NY, Safia attended Bellport High School, earned her Bachelor of Science degree from Rochester Institute of Technology in bio-medical photography with a concentration in commercial photography. She holds a Master of Art degree in Art and Art Education from Teachers College, Columbia University and was awarded her doctoral degree in 2021. Safia is a member of both the National Art Education Association and the Society of Photographic Educators. She has been involved with technology committees and hiring committees at her current school. Safia is currently pursuing her Educational Leadership Certification and will be completed by 2024. Safia has shown her work in various venues in and around New York City. She has been a contributor to both School Arts and Photo District News. Additionally, her commercial photography work has been published in various magazines such as People, New York Magazine, and Entertainment Weekly. She is currently a board member of the Art Guild of Port Washington, NY. Safia volunteers regularly with Living Water for Women in Glen Cove, NY and Plant a Row in Port Washington, NY. Safia enjoys photography, reading, tennis, yoga, traveling, seeing art, and cooking. Her teaching, practice centers around a student based reciprocal learning approach. Safia believes that art is a powerful form of communication and in this way all students should have access to art.

Sean Flanagan is an educator with over ten years of experience, having served as an art teacher and department chair. He grew up in Concord, New Hampshire, and currently teaches Art at Mahopac High School. He lives with his family in Westchester, NY, and is an aspiring building leader dedicated to fostering a positive, emotionally supportive learning environment by integrating Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) principles into the school culture and curriculum. His holistic philosophy emphasizes emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and self-awareness, guiding his administrative approach.

Matthew Funigiello joined the Red Hook Central School District Music Department in 2014 as a vocal music specialist and has served as the K-12 Music Department Coordinator since 2021. Funigiello is the Red Hook High School Theatre Arts Club Advisor and has had extensive experience working with students in musical theatre as director, vocal coach, and accompanist. Additionally, he is an active member of the New York State School Music Association and serves young musicians across the mid-Hudson Valley as a voice adjudicator and frequent festival chairperson. A native of New York's Capital Region, Funigiello attended Guilderland High School, earned his Bachelor of Music in Music Education from SUNY Potsdam's Crane School of Music, and Master of Music in Music Education from UNC Greensboro. His work as an educator remains centered in harnessing the power of the arts to stimulate self-discovery within a complex and dynamic world.

Sarah Gomez joined Madison-Oneida BOCES as an exercise science teacher implementing a new CTE program, Sports Conditioning and Exercise Science and partnership with NASM for students to earn a certificate in Personal Training. This coming year, she will be the Coordinator of the PTECH and PROPEL programs implemented at a local community college for early college high school students through BOCES. Born and raised in Oneida, New York, Sarah attended Oneida High School, earned her Bachelor of Health Sciences degree at University of Alaska in Anchorage. She holds a Master of Public Health Degree in Public Health Practice as well as a Master of Education Degree in Secondary Education. Sarah continues her education through graduate coursework at MCLA for a

Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Leadership. Her work in the public health realm has been published on the American Public Health Association webpage for National Public Health Week. Sarah enjoys spending time with her 5 children and husband, working out, traveling and getting outside in nature. She believes, "A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning." -Brad Henry

Jillian Gollisz-Pallone joined Uniondale High School in 2022 as a member of the History department.

Prior to her time at Uniondale High School, she worked at Dobbs Ferry High School as a US History teacher, Global 9 History teacher, 504 coordinator, and Theory of Knowledge teacher. She also advised History Bowl and Model UN. Born and raised in Mineola, NY, she attended Kellenberg High School. After graduating, she earned her bachelor's degree in social studies education 7-12 and History at Hofstra University in Uniondale, NY. Following her bachelor's, she continued on and earned a master's degree in social studies education 7-12 and Special Education 7-12/ TESOL extension at Hofstra University.

Ms. Pallone continues her education through attending a number of professional developments sessions: as NEH, BOCES Regents Preparation, and Long Island Council for Social Studies. In addition, she participates in Restorative Justice trainings with her colleagues. She volunteers her time to help her colleagues set up certain events at school such as dances and concerts. She also is volunteering as guide for a nature/beach clean-up group this summer for children, which she created.

Ms. Pallone is the recipient of the Health and Wellness award at her school. Her research and projects were published in a number of places. Her research on slavery in NY can be found in, "A Joint Publication of the New York and New Jersey State Councils for the Social Studies Summer 2019." She also published exhibits through the Hofstra University archives on local Long Islanders which can be found on the archive's website. Currently, she is a member of the Restorative Justice Circle panel, an advisor to the Bridges Program. She enjoys seeing her students thrive and develop a natural curiosity for the world around them. Her passion is helping every single one of her students succeed to the best of their abilities and helping them finding their individual path. Every day, she feels privileged to be an educator and loves to help shape future students' lives.

Jenifer Guay is a New York State Master Teacher Emeritus whose passions are social emotional learning, equity in education and teacher/student wellness. Jenifer joined Peru Central School District in 2008 as a member of the high school science department. Jenifer has worked with students in NYS Regents Science courses, as well as serving in the capacity of mentor to new teachers, SUNY Plattsburgh student teachers and as High School Science Department Chair. Born and raised in Plattsburgh, New York, Jenifer earned her Bachelor of Science degree at SUNY Plattsburgh in 2002 with a concentration in Biological Sciences.

Jenifer holds a Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction from SUNY Plattsburgh. Jenifer continues her education through a Certificate of Graduate Studies in Social Emotional Learning(Quinnipiac University), empathy training with Sweethearts & Heroes and as a certified yoga/meditation teacher and wellness coach.

Amy Isenhardt lives and teaches in the Niskayuna Central School District in Upstate New York. After nearly two decades as an inclusive elementary educator, she now serves as the district's SEL Coach and Professional Learning Coordinator. Born and raised in Buffalo, New York, Amy attended Williamsville North High School, earned her Bachelor of Music Education degree at the Crane School of Music in Potsdam, New York, and a Master of Science degree in Education from Nazareth College in Rochester, New York. In addition to continuing her education as a member of the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts 2023-24 Leadership Academy, Amy spent the past year as a CASEL Fellow where she joined forty other educational leaders from across the country to grow her capacity to lead SEL. Amy believes in the power of positive relationships and the importance of providing a safe and supportive learning environment for every student every day.

Jennifer J. Juneau-Lederman has dedicated over 27 years to special education, fostering inclusive learning environments and supporting student success. Her career began at Farmville Senior High in Farmville, NC, where she spent eight years as a special education teacher. There, she served as Special Education Department Chair and Liaison to the Pitt County Schools Director of Special Education, chaired the climate committee, and assisted with junior varsity softball. After a year at Beekmantown High School in NY, Jennifer became a cornerstone of Saranac High School's special education department, serving as Department Chair for 18 years. Her roles included School Safety Committee member, RTI Coordinator, and District Shared Decision-Making Committee member. A certified TCIS instructor, she mentors new teachers. Jennifer holds degrees from Clinton Community College and Plattsburgh State

University and an SBL certification from MCLA. She is active on the Plattsburgh State University Practitioner's Board and Mentoring Program. An Adirondack 46er and avid hiker, Jennifer enjoys outdoor activities and board games. She is married to Paul Lederman, with two sons, Noah and Elijah, and a mini schnauzer, Olive.

Melissa Leone began teaching in 2004, beginning her career at Canastota Central Schools before joining Sauquoit Valley Central Schools in 2012. As a member of the English department, Melissa has gained invaluable classroom experience working with a variety of students in grades 8 through 12, whether that be through inclusion courses, co-taught classes, or college level English programs at MVCC and Syracuse University Project Advance. She has served in several leadership roles including student response team coordinator, teacher mentor, department chair, and instructional technology coordinator. She is the founder of her school's volunteer leadership program. Born and raised in Deerfield, NY, Melissa attended Notre Dame High School and earned her Bachelor of Science degree at SUNY Brockport in 2004 in English Literature with a concentration in Adolescent Education. She holds a Master of Science degree in Inclusive Education from Utica College.

Meg Maset joined Bethlehem Central School District's English department in 2019. In her career of twelve years, she has taught at both Shenendehowa High School and Cambridge Central School, where she served as English department chair. She co-runs the Lab School Book Club, started a Creative Writing club, and has served on diversity, equity, and inclusion committees at both the district and building levels. Meg holds a bachelor's in English literature from Messiah College and a Master's in Secondary Education from SUNY Albany. She is completing her School Building and District Leader Certificates as well as her Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. Active in the Capital District Writing Project since 2019, she has been part of the Invitational Summer Institute. Meg's passion for education stems from a desire to close achievement gaps and make school more equitable for historically marginalized students.

Tess McCarthy has been an educator for 14 years and has worked at the South Colonie Central School District since August of 2016. Her first role in the district was as a middle school music teacher. Tess is currently the high school choral director at Colonie Central High School. Before working at South Colonie, Tess worked at The Albany Academies, serving students from preschool to 8th grade as a music teacher. Tess believes that an equitable and reflective approach to education is essential; not all students have the same learning style or needs. It is crucial to be proactive in supporting our most at risk students and families in their educational endeavors. In the hope of contributing to this type of educational environment, Tess sought and obtained certification as a Therapeutic Crisis Intervention in Schools trainer and is responsible for training staff at the South Colonie District. Ms. McCarthy holds an unwavering commitment to the well-being and success of students, families, and staff. Her philosophy is that people will rise to their fullest potential and meet any standard when they are met with dignity, support, and genuine caring in the face of difficulty.

Roseanne McGough joined South Glens Falls Central School District in 2007 as a Literacy Specialist at Ballard Elementary School. Mrs. McGough has worked with students and classroom teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade and was a third-grade classroom teacher for one year. She is deeply committed to empowering students to achieve academic success and personal growth. She is skilled in fostering inclusive learning environments and addressing diverse needs through engaging instruction and individualized support. She is a committed member of several district committees, including Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports, Social and Emotional Learning, Trauma Informed School Practices, and the district's Portrait of a Graduate. Her proudest accomplishment of the past year has been facilitating the development of Portrait of a Bulldog at the elementary level. In addition, she held Tier 1 workshops for classroom teachers and support staff to utilize student data to implement differentiated instruction opportunities within the classroom setting. She believes in harnessing evidence-based practices, examining student performance data, fostering partnerships with families and community stakeholders, and championing initiatives that promote equity, accessibility, and excellence in all of our students.

John G Merselis III (Jay) joined Hancock Elementary School in 2017 as the principal. Prior to his tenure at Hancock Elementary, Jay worked at the Pine Cobble School, HighCroft School, and Hoosac Summer School. Jay has worked with students in courses such as English, history, science, and math, as well as serving in a variety of administration roles including Head of the Upper School, Director of Admission, and Assistant Head of School.

Born and raised in Williamstown, MA, Jay attended Mount Greylock Regional High School, earned his Bachelor of Arts degree at Hamilton College in Clinton, NY with a concentration in Sociology and a minor in history. Jay continued his education by attending Antioch New England and earning a master's in education. He is a former board member of the Williamstown Community Chest, Williamstown Board of Trade, and the Hoosick River Watershed Association and is a current member of the Mount Greylock Ski Club board. He enjoys a wide range of outdoor activities, volunteering as a member of the national Ski Patrol, and spending time with his family and fox red lab Callie. Like John Dewey, Jay believes "We do not learn from experience ... we learn from reflecting on experience". Yoga, meditation, and mindfulness practice focus on self-reflection and emphasize awareness without a need for reaction.

Chelsea Murphy joined Scotia-Glenville High School in 2019 as a member of the English Department. Prior to her tenure at Scotia-Glenville, Mrs. Murphy taught in Chatham, NY for ten years. She has worked with students in courses such as AP English Literature and Composition, English 11, and Public Speaking as well as serving in the capacity of Track Coach and NHS Advisor. She is a committed member of several district committees, including the DEI Strategic Planning and Professional Development Committees. Her proudest accomplishment of the past year has been facilitating the development of an Alternative Education Program for her district. As a 500-hour registered yoga teacher, Mrs. Murphy is committed to mindfulness in education and trauma-informed teaching. She believes in helping every student to become the best version of themselves and that "education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world" (Nelson Mandela)

Danielle Piel has been an educator for over 17 years, joining the Troy City School District's high school English Department in 2020. She previously taught in the Lansingburgh Central School District, covering grades 7-12 in subjects including English Language Arts and English Regents preparation. Danielle has extensive experience with English Language Learners and Special Education students. She holds degrees from Hudson Valley Community College, SUNY Albany, and Sage Colleges, and is completing coursework for School Building Leader Certification at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. This summer she will be transitioning into the Assistant Principal position at Troy Middle School. Danielle excels in English Language Arts instruction, preparing students for the New York State English Regents, and working with English Language Learners. Her skills extend to summer school teaching, mentoring, and tutoring students across various content areas. She is dedicated to professional development and training, participating in workshops at Columbia Teacher's College and the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, and has been an active member of the National Council of Teachers of English. Recognized for her contributions, Danielle has been nominated for YMCA Teacher of the Year and has shared her insights through writing for The Times Union. Additionally, she is a certified Yoga Instructor. Active in her school community, Danielle serves on multiple committees, has coached cheerleading, and enjoys collaborating with colleagues to enhance student education. Danielle chooses to live by the philosophy that "[Kids] don't remember what you try to teach them. They remember what you are."

Marisa Plant is currently a second-grade special education teacher at Stearns Elementary in Pittsfield Massachusetts. In addition to teaching, she is the principal designee. She has taught at Stearns for 6 years. She has also been the varsity swim coach for Taconic High school for 15 years. Prior to her tenure at Stearns, Marisa taught preschool for 9 years. Born and raised in Pittsfield Massachusetts, Marisa attended Taconic High School, earned two Bachelors of Arts degree in Elementary and Special Education from Misericordia University, and a Master of Science in Moderate disabilities from Worcester State University. She is a published author in Language Magazine with a collaborative article titled "Increasing Student Growth in Literacy Through Student Goal-Setting and Tiered Instruction." Marisa believes that all students have the ability to learn along with their peers in an inclusive environment where everyone's voice is important.

Marcello Reale recently joined Kingston High School in 2023 as a Spanish teacher. Before working at Kingston High School, Marcello taught at Andes Central School in the picturesque Catskill Mountains of upstate New York. Although Marcello has strong ties to New York, his educational journey has taken him across three continents. In Medellin, Colombia, he founded two English language academies and provided language solutions to prominent Colombian organizations such as Avianca and Bancolombia. Marcello also

taught English to university students and elementary- aged children in Shanghai, China, and collaborated with leading global insurance companies like MetLife and Allianz. Marcello, a native of Brooklyn, New York, pursued his Bachelor of Arts degree at Ohio Wesleyan University in Politics and Government before obtaining a Master of Arts in Teaching from SUNY Empire State University. Currently, he is furthering his education in the Leadership Academy program at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

Karen Rowe joined Mount Markham CSD in 2019 as an RTI Reading Specialist and is finishing the 23-24 school year as an Instructional Coach. She will assume the role of Elementary School Building Principal starting in July 2024. Karen has worked with students to improve their foundational reading skills and supported teachers in their pursuit to effectively implement K-4 ELA and Math Curriculum, as well as served in the capacity of PBIS Coordinator, which planned and executed school wide Character Education and data driven behavior systems. She also serves as the Instructional Leadership Team Facilitator, where she creates and drives key initiatives that work to achieve Mount Markham’s Board of Education goals. Karen Rowe believes that every child deserves an impactful, high-quality education in a school that provides safe, brave spaces in every classroom. She believes our job as educators is to open the minds of children to the wonderful possibilities and places that learning can take them, while honoring the voice of every child, as well as his or her family and community.

Jared Slater has recently been hired as Trinity School’s Lower School Assistant Principal in New York City, where he previously taught fourth grade. Currently, he is enrolled in the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Leadership Academy and earning his School Building Leader licensure. In addition to teaching fourth grade at Trinity, he served as the K-4 Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator and as the Head of the Lower School’s Anti-Racist Task Force, where he led a team of parents, faculty and administrators to examine existing practices and make recommendations to the Head of School to ensure racial equity. Jared graduated from The Bank Street College of Education in New York City where he earned a Master of Science in General and Special Childhood Education; he returned to Bank Street College in 2020 as an adjunct faculty member teaching social studies curriculum development.

Joya Spina originally joined the Utica City School District in 2010, briefly left to teach in several other districts, and then rejoined in 2019, as an Academic Intervention Service Facilitator. Prior to earning tenure at Jefferson Elementary School, Joya taught at various grade levels in General and Special Education at The House of the Good Shephard, Herkimer Elementary School, and Central Valley School District. She has worked with students across all grade levels and has also worked as an AIS Facilitator for both math and ELA, a Data Specialist, and an Instructional Coach. Just recently, she served as the Interim Principal at Jefferson Elementary School. Joya has facilitated and been a member of several school committees, including the School Based Intervention Team, the Shared Decision-Making Team, the Instructional Support Team, the Committee on Special Education Member, the Crisis Management Team, the School Leadership Team, and finally, she has led several Curriculum Committees in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies. She has also created many school-wide clubs and programs for both students as well as staff. Born and raised in Utica, NY, Joya attended Utica City Schools and earned her Bachelor of Science degree at Utica University with a concentration in education focusing on both Students with Disabilities and Childhood Education. She holds a Master of Education in Special Education from Grand Canyon University and is continuing her education at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Leadership Academy to be certified as a School Building Leader and School District Leader. In 2023, the Utica City School District Board of Education presented Joya with the Excellence in Education award. Joya’s educational passion is the creating and fostering of a safe and supportive environment that is conducive to learning for all students with various needs and abilities. She also focuses on instilling foundational values in students so they strive to become kind, caring, and compassionate members of society. Joya’s teaching philosophy can perhaps best be summarized by Mary McCleod Bethune, when she states, “believe in yourself, learn, and never stop wanting to build a better world.”

Christine Vilardo joined Saratoga Springs High School's English Department in 2016. Before this, she was the Director of Education at Sylvan Learning Center and taught in the Schenectady City School District, Hoosic Valley Middle School, and Queensbury Middle and High Schools. Christine teaches courses such as Academic Intervention, English Language Arts 6-12, and AP English Language and Composition. She serves as Drama Club advisor, Class of 2024 Student Advisor, College Board Exam Rater, and Conduct and Restorative Instructional Coach. She also participates in the District Curriculum Renewal Committee and the Time and Space Committee. Born and

raised in Saratoga Springs, NY, Christine graduated from Hartwick College with a BA in American Literature and Philosophy and holds a Master's in Secondary English Education. She has advanced certifications and is a member of the New York State English Council. Christine is committed to innovative education, having secured grants for classroom enhancements and social justice programs. She enjoys skiing, hiking, boating, and supports the Army National Guard Family Welfare and Readiness Program.

Peter White joined Boght Hills Elementary School in 2019. Before that, he worked in Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Phoenix, Arizona, teaching 3rd to 5th grades and serving as a Head of School. Born and raised in South Glens Falls, New York, Peter attended South Glens Falls High School and earned a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with a concentration in Social Sciences from SUNY Cortland. He also holds a Master's in Reading and Language and is continues his education at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts Leadership Academy.

While Head of School at Community Day Charter Public School in Lawrence, the school earned a National Blue Ribbon Award for educationalexcellence. At Boght Hills, he is a member of the Building Council and Equity Team. Peter enjoys reading and traveling with his wife Katelynn and their six-year-old son Parker. He believes in high-quality instruction to help students reach their full potential.



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