



# Washington, DC's Next Generation of Education Data and Research

## *Speaker Biographies*

**Adam Barr** is the Washington, DC, regional director at Democracy Builders. He works with clients in the DC area on student recruitment, family engagement, and voter awareness. Barr has been organizing DC communities since 2007, when he founded DC for Obama, a grassroots group that grew to 21,000 members and knocked on over 175,000 doors during the 2008 presidential campaign. Barr later cofounded the Grassroots Education Project, which empowers communities to serve their neighborhood schools and improve outcomes. Before joining Democracy Builders, Barr worked with the Institute for Responsible Citizenship, Deloitte Consulting, and GreatSchools DC. Barr has a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of California, Davis.

**Alexandra Beatty** is a senior program officer for the Board on Testing and Assessment at the National Academies. Since 1996, she has contributed to many projects, including an evaluation of Washington, DC, public schools, a panel on education excellence and testing equity, and studies of science assessment, teacher preparation, and National Board certification for teachers. She has also been an independent education writer and researcher. Before joining the National Academies, she worked on the National Assessment of Educational Progress and College Board programs at the Educational Testing Service. She has a BA in philosophy from Williams College and an MA in history from Bryn Mawr College.

**Soumya Bhat** is a policy analyst at the DC Fiscal Policy Institute, where her work focuses on improving the fiscal transparency and equity of public education in Washington, DC, including early care and education. She provides research and analysis to help DC residents better understand school finance and the effects of education policies on the city's low- and moderate-income students. Formerly, Bhat worked at The Finance Project, where she conducted state fiscal mapping studies and provided research and technical assistance to state leaders on how to sustain early childhood and out-of-school programs. She also conducted research for the New America Foundation's education and early education policy programs. Bhat holds a master's degree from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.

**Josh Boots** is the founder and executive director of EmpowerK12, a Washington, DC, nonprofit supporting the implementation of data best practices across multiple education agencies in DC. Before that, Boots spent 14 years in education: he was a 7th grade math teacher in a DC public school, director of the KIPP DC data team, and a member of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education's assessment and accountability team. Boots is a recognized leader in DC assessment and data analytics. He has served on multiple school accountability system task forces and leads the EdFuel Data Professional Learning Community. He is a consultant for multiple charter local education agencies on their integrated data systems and for FOCUS on analytical projects. School leaders and teachers use his dashboards to analyze student academic, behavior, attendance, and assessment trends. Boots has also consulted with My School DC—DC's common lottery system—on creating its first demand reports and data business rules.



**Isaac Castillo**, deputy director of the DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative, oversees efforts to improve outcomes in the Kenilworth-Parkside community. Castillo is a recognized thought leader in nonprofit performance management and evaluation, and he has over 15 years of nonprofit and evaluation experience. His work has been highlighted in publications such as the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, *Youth Today*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. He also authored the essay “First Do No Harm...Then Do More Good” in Mario Morino’s book *Leap of Reason*. Previously, Castillo was a senior research scientist at Child Trends, where he worked with nonprofits throughout the United States to develop and modify performance management systems and evaluation designs. Castillo was also director of learning and evaluation for the Latin American Youth Center, where he led the organization’s evaluation and performance management work.

**Matthew Chingos** is a senior fellow in the Income and Benefits Policy Center at the Urban Institute, where he studies education-related topics at both the K–12 and postsecondary levels. Chingos’s areas of expertise include class-size reduction, standardized testing, teacher quality, student loan debt, and college graduation rates. His current research examines the effects of state policy on student achievement and whether better information on college quality affects where students choose to enroll. Before joining Urban, Chingos was a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. His book *Crossing the Finish Line: Completing College at America’s Public Universities*, coauthored with William Bowen and Michael McPherson, was published by Princeton University Press in 2009. His work has also been published in academic journals, including the *Journal of Public Economics*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, and *Education Finance and Policy*. He has received support from the US government and several philanthropic foundations. Chingos received a BA in government and economics and a PhD in government from Harvard University.

**Mary Filardo**, is the founder and executive director of the 21st Century School Fund, which was founded in 1994 to provide Washington, DC, and other urban communities with leadership, research, innovative financing solutions, and public policy analysis of school facility issues. She is a national authority on school facility planning, management, and public-private development. She has helped plan several innovative projects in DC, including the J. F. Oyster Elementary School public-private partnership in 2001; Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School campus development in 2005; School Without Walls high school, university, and public partnership in 2008; and Savoy and Thurgood Marshall Academy Sports and Learning Center in 2009. She has written extensively on public school facility issues and developed software to support long-range facilities master planning. In 1994, she advocated for and led the first citywide educational facilities planning process in DC in nearly 30 years, leading to the Preliminary Educational Facilities Plan in 1995. In 2001, Filardo founded the Building Educational Success Together collaborative, a learning community of urban education reform organizations dedicated to building the public will and capacity to improve urban school facilities. She received a BA in philosophy and mathematics from St. John’s College and a MA in public policy and finance at the University of Maryland. She is a 1979 Truman Scholar.



**Megan Gallagher** is a senior research associate in the Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center at the Urban Institute. Her research focuses on efforts to improve housing and educational opportunities for children in low-income families. She studies how housing and neighborhood initiatives affect schools and how schools and education policies affect neighborhoods. Her current projects include a pilot demonstration to improve low-income parents' information about their children's educational opportunities and an analysis of school- and neighborhood-level predictors of school closures. Gallagher also provides research and technical support for place-based initiatives that seek to improve educational outcomes. In DC's Kenilworth-Parkside neighborhood, she provides research support to a federal Promise Neighborhoods grantee that is building a school-centered, neighborhood-based, cradle-to-career continuum for children and families. In Prince George's County, Maryland, Gallagher is providing research and analytic support to TNI@Schools initiative, a collaborative effort between the school district and the county that provides wraparound services for students in school. Before joining Urban, Gallagher studied the impacts of welfare programs on adult, child, and family well-being at Child Trends. While there, she cowrote several publications on child well-being and employment among low-income mothers. She holds a bachelor's degree in sociology and social welfare from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and a master's degree in public policy from Georgetown University.

**Adam Gamoran** is president of the William T. Grant Foundation, where he is leading a new initiative to support research on programs, policies, and practices to reduce inequality, and continuing the foundation's ongoing efforts to improve the use of evidence in decisionmaking. Previously, he held the John D. MacArthur chair in sociology and educational policy studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he directed the Wisconsin Center for Education Research and led an interdisciplinary graduate training program in education sciences. In a research career spanning three decades, Gamoran conducted many studies focusing on inequality in education and school reform. Gamoran is the lead author of *Transforming Teaching in Math and Science: How Schools and Districts Can Support Change* and editor of *Standards-Based Reform and the Poverty Gap: Lessons for No Child Left Behind*. He also coedited *Methodological Advances in Cross-National Surveys of Educational Achievement* and *Stratification in Higher Education: A Comparative Study*. He chaired the Independent Advisory Panel of the National Assessment of Career and Technical Education for the US Department of Education, and he chairs the Board on Science Education of the National Academies. He is an elected member of the National Academy of Education and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and he was twice appointed by President Obama to serve on the National Board for Education Sciences.

**Shavonne Gibson** is director of instruction for Center City Public Charter Schools, where she supports campus leaders and teachers with day-to-day instructional delivery, districtwide professional development, and management of the teacher leadership pipeline. Previously, Gibson was principal of the Center City Public Charter School Brightwood Campus for four years. Gibson has worked in New York City public schools and Washington, DC, charter and independent schools as a teacher, administrator, assistant principal, and principal. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science, a master's degree in adolescence education in urban schools, and a master's degree in educational leadership.



**David Grosso** is chairperson of the education committee of the Council of the District of Columbia. Under Grosso's leadership, the committee's work is collaborative and forward thinking. From early childhood education to adult learning, Grosso is committed to the well-being of students, ensuring that they are in the best position to succeed. In addition to his focus on education, Grosso is committed to addressing inequities within the criminal justice system, improving health outcomes throughout the city, promoting transparency and open government, strengthening the creative economy, and further engaging residents in the political process.

**Allison Hagaman** is the data manager at Raise DC, where she provides technical assistance and supporting programs for Raise DC's Change Networks, compiles data, and produces the organization's annual report card. Previously, Hagaman was a marketing analyst for Red Ventures, a marketing and technology firm. She then taught high school math and marketing in Charlotte, North Carolina, for two years before joining Raise DC. She holds a BA in economics from Wake Forest University.

**Robert Hauser** is the executive director of the Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education at the National Academies and the Vilas research professor and Samuel Stouffer professor of sociology, emeritus, at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He codirected the 1973 Occupational Changes in a Generation study, which was the last, large-scale survey of intergenerational social mobility in the United States. He has been an investigator on the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study since 1969 and led the study from 1980 to 2010. The study, which began as a study of postsecondary education, has followed the lives of more than 10,000 Wisconsin high school graduates (class of 1957) and is now a national resource for research on health and retirement. While at UW–Madison, he directed the Center for Demography of Health and Aging, the Institute for Research on Poverty, and the Center for Demography and Ecology. Hauser's research interests include statistical methodology, trends in educational progression and achievement, the uses of educational assessment as a policy tool, and changes in socioeconomic standing, cognition, health, and well-being across the life course. Recent publications include National Academies reports and journal publications about grade retention, educational expectations, social mobility, obesity, cognitive functioning, end-of-life planning, mortality, and genetic effects and noneffects on health and cognitive functioning. He is a member of the National Academies, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, National Academy of Education, and the American Philosophical Society.

**Kaya Henderson** is chancellor of DC Public Schools (DCPS). Under her leadership, DCPS has become the fastest-improving urban school district in the country. Henderson has championed the launch and expansion of several innovative programs to increase academic achievement for all students. Henderson joined DCPS in 2007 as deputy chancellor, overseeing the Office of Human Capital. She was chief negotiator for the 2010 contract between DCPS and the Washington Teachers' Union, and she led the development of IMPACT, the school system's professional development and assessment system. Before joining DCPS, Henderson was a partner at The New Teacher Project, responsible for helping urban school districts recruit and retain effective teachers. Before that, Henderson was national admissions director and recruiter at Teach For America and executive director of Teach For America–DC. She began her career in education as a middle school Spanish teacher in the South Bronx. Henderson earned her bachelor's degree in international relations and master's degree in leadership from Georgetown University. She also holds honorary doctorate degrees from Georgetown University and Trinity University.



**Natalie Hopkinson** is a writer, scholar, and fellow of the Interactivity Foundation, where she leads its Urban Initiative. She has published essays about Washington, DC, education policy in *The Root*, *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*. She coorganized a series of discussions on race, class, and education reform in 2013 and moderated the 2014 DC mayoral debate on education.

**Hanseul Kang** is Washington, DC's state superintendent of education. She was previously chief of staff for Tennessee's Department of Education. A seasoned leader and former high school teacher, she reorganized and restructured the department to reflect strategic priorities and created a more streamlined budget process that allowed for improved personnel decisionmaking and better use of resources. Kang was part of the team that implemented policies and offered support to districts and schools that resulted in Tennessee becoming one of the fastest-improving states in the nation in student achievement outcomes. Before joining Tennessee's education department, Kang worked for Teach For America. She led a team of program directors supporting middle and high school teachers in schools across DC and Prince George's County, Maryland. She is a member of Chiefs for Change and serves on the governing board of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers. Kang holds a bachelor's degree in international politics from Georgetown University and a juris doctor degree from Harvard Law School, and she was a Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Graduate Scholar.

**Jennifer Niles** is Washington, DC's deputy mayor for education. She develops and implements Mayor Bowser's vision for academic excellence and creates a high-quality education continuum from early childhood to K-12 and postsecondary education to the workforce. Niles is the founder and former head of school at E. L. Haynes Public Charter School. She is a graduate of New Leaders for New Schools, a year-long program to prepare principals in urban schools. Before that, Niles was director of education initiatives at The Ball Foundation in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. Before that, she headed the charter school office for the Connecticut State Department of Education. She also taught science and directed service-learning programs at middle and high schools in California and Massachusetts. In 2010, Niles was named a Donaldson fellow at the Yale School of Management. Niles is a fellow of the third class of the Pehara-Aspen Education Fellowship and a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network. She holds a bachelor's degree from Brown University, a master's degree in public and private management from the Yale School of Management, and a master's degree in public administration from Trinity University.

**Jeffrey Noel** works with nonprofits and schools around the country to better use data, research, and evaluation to improve educational performance. Previously, he oversaw data operations at the Washington, DC, Office of the State Superintendent of Education. Noel has over 19 years of educational technology and data experience and has won awards and recognition for his visualizations of educational data. He has led efforts to make data accessible to educators, parents, and the open data community. Noel has a BS from Western Governors University and has completed graduate coursework in educational leadership at the George Washington University.



**Scott Pearson** is executive director of the DC Public Charter School Board. Under his leadership, the board has pioneered new strategies, tough and rigorous oversight, and best practices that other authorizers around the nation are adopting. Previously, Pearson served in the Obama administration as the deputy of the Office of Innovation and Improvement for the US Department of Education. He also cofounded Leadership Public Schools, a network of college-prep public charter high schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. Pearson has a long career in business. At America Online, he was responsible for acquisitions and strategic planning as the company's vice president for corporate development. At Bain and Company, he provided strategic management consulting services to clients in education, health care, media, and aviation. He is the board chair of the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. Pearson holds a BA in history from Wesleyan University, an MPA from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and an MBA from the Harvard Business School.

**Eugene Pinkard Jr.** currently serves as the deputy chief for school turnaround and performance as well as instructional superintendent for middle schools in DC Public Schools. Pinkard holds degrees in government and theology from Georgetown University, and school administration from Trinity University. He began teaching in rural South Africa, returning to DC to teach social studies at Archbishop Carroll High School, where he later became director of admissions. He has served as executive director of the nonprofit mentoring/scholarship program Capital Partners for Education and as principal of Maya Angelou Public Charter School. During his tenure, Maya Angelou PCS attained Middle States Accreditation and achieved national top ten percentiles in academic growth. Within DCPS, Pinkard has served two schools: Bell Multicultural High School as assistant principal and Marie Reed Elementary as director of curriculum and principal. Under Pinkard's leadership, Marie Reed earned "Reward" status for student growth. Currently, as instructional superintendent, Pinkard is working with middle school principals to engage adults and students in discourse on educating the whole child, leading common core instruction, and increasing alternatives to suspension.

**David Tansey** is a math teacher at Dunbar Senior High School in Washington, DC. Since becoming a mentor for middle school students in Prince George's County, Maryland, while in college, Tansey helps students use what they learn in school to explore and navigate real-world situations. Beyond the classroom, Tansey has been active in citywide education policy debates. He regularly testifies before the DC Council and has been a member of numerous education-themed task forces. He is part of the Math for America community as a Master Teaching fellow.

**Margery Austin Turner** is senior vice president for program planning and management at the Urban Institute, where she leads efforts to frame and conduct a forward-looking agenda of policy research. A nationally recognized expert on urban policy and neighborhood issues, Turner has analyzed residential location, racial and ethnic discrimination and its contribution to neighborhood segregation and inequality, and the role of housing policies in promoting residential mobility and location choice. Among her recent publications is the book *Public Housing and the Legacy of Segregation*. Before joining Urban, Turner was deputy assistant secretary for research at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from 1993 through 1996, focusing HUD's research agenda on racial discrimination, concentrated poverty, and economic opportunity in America's metropolitan areas. During her tenure, HUD's research office launched three major social science demonstration projects to test different strategies for helping families from distressed inner-city neighborhoods gain access to opportunities through employment and education. Turner has a BA in political science from Cornell University and an MA in urban and regional planning from the George Washington University.



**Ruth Wattenberg** is a parent, school activist, education reformer, education policy wonk, and 30-year resident of Washington, DC. She is the Ward 3 member of the DC State Board of Education. She was the chair of Deal Middle School’s Local School Restructuring Team in the 2009–10 school year, the first year that Deal enrolled sixth graders. Before that, she chaired Janney Elementary School’s Spanish committee, which brought Spanish instruction to the school. She is an education policy consultant, conducting evaluation and research projects in support of high academic standards and a curriculum rich in history, social studies, science, and the arts. She serves on the board of trustees of the Core Knowledge Foundation. For many years, Wattenberg worked at the American Federation of Teachers as the director of its educational issues department and as editor of *American Educator*, its quarterly magazine.

**Natalie Wexler** blogs about public education at *DC Eduphile* and was the education editor for *Greater Greater Washington* for three years. She chairs the board of The Writing Revolution—a nonprofit that brings analytical thinking and writing strategies to high-poverty schools—and serves on the board of DC Scholars Public Charter School. In addition, she chairs the DC Leadership Council for Urban Teachers and has been a volunteer tutor in DC Public Schools. She is a trustee of a small family foundation that invests in educational initiatives designed to narrow the achievement gap, with a particular focus on Washington, DC. Wexler has a BA from Harvard University, an MA in history from the University of Sussex, and a JD from the University of Pennsylvania.