

Exploring the Landscape of Career Development Opportunities in Washington, DC, Public Schools

Speaker Biographies

Welcome

Dara Zeehandelaar Shaw is the director for the DC Education Research Collaborative, where she oversees and manages the Collaborative's research agenda and project pipeline, community advisory board, and relationships with city agencies, education providers, and community members. The Collaborative is a research-practice partnership whose past and current projects range from work on career development, chronic absenteeism and attendance, equitable discipline, access to prekindergarten, and youth participatory action research. Previously, she was the founder and executive director of the Office of Research and Strategic Data Use at the Maryland State Department of Education, where she led the department's research and evaluation work, designed and executed the agency's research agenda, and promoted a data-driven culture throughout the agency and the state. She also worked as the national research director at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a Washington, DC-based education policy think tank. She started her career in education as a high school mathematics teacher for District of Columbia Public Schools. Shaw holds a bachelor's degree in astronomy from Cornell University and a master's degree in astrophysics from the University of Maryland. She earned her doctoral degree in urban education policy with a concentration in quantitative methodology from the University of Southern California

Opening Remarks

Glenn Starnes II, the eldest son of an educator who served as his 8th Grade Teacher, Glenn Starnes II learned the values of dedication, commitment, and passion for children at an early age, which launched his immersion into public education. For nearly two decades, Glenn has enriched the lives of students, families, educators, and communities as an educational pioneer and leader of change. With equity and innovation as the backdrop for his school leadership efforts, Mr. Starnes has marshaled students and staff members alike toward academic and instructional excellence. Glenn began his journey as a middle school math teacher and high school business teacher in Richmond, VA., and has served as a Department Chair, Assistant Principal, Principal, and Head of Schools, in both public and public-charter educational systems across the country, exemplifying his relentless belief in the benefits of high-quality education and producing results for students, regardless of a zip code. Currently, Glenn serves as the Principal at Harry P. Harding University High School in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. Prior experiences include founding Head of Middle and High Schools with KIPP North Carolina Public Schools, Principal at South Mecklenburg High School in Charlotte, NC and Principal at Julian Gibson Elementary School in Winston-Salem, NC. In addition to his service in K-12 education, Mr. Starnes has held an appointment as Professor at Northern Virginia Community College and Director of Student Activities and Leadership at Virginia Union University,

his alma mater. While at Principal at Gibson, the school increased proficiency by double digits in all end-of-grade subject areas for two consecutive years and exceeded expected growth after trends of not meets growth, resulting in being removed from the state low performing list after five consecutive years of being listed as an F school. While at South Meck, the third largest school in the state, the school increased the number of minority students enrolling in advanced course work and saw a significant increase in the four-year cohort graduation rate, even during the pandemic. Mr. Starnes earned a Bachelor of Science in Business and Secondary Education. Shortly thereafter he earned a Master of Education in Educational Leadership from Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA. Known by his colleagues as a mover and shaker, Glenn has completed the RELAY Graduate School of Education National Principals Academy Fellowship, the National Institute for Urban School Leaders Institute at Harvard University Graduate School of Education, the Distinguished Leadership in Practice Institute. Committed to service in the community, Mr. Starnes is member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., Urban League of the Central Carolinas, and even finds the time to serve his neighborhood as a HOA Board Member.

Mashonda Smith serves as the Dean of Workforce Development and Lifelong Learning for the University of the District of Columbia since January 2020. Prior to her appointment, Dr. Smith served as the American Job Center Operator in Prince George's County, Maryland where she coordinated with local workforce system core partner agencies and organizations to implement and achieve a broad range of required state plan (workforce development) activities. She has developed and implemented evidence-based youth programs and curricula across numerous venues including providing summer youth employment programs to District youth and serving as a licensed clinical community counselor, predominantly serving justice involved populations in urban and rural communities. Dr. Smith's prior work experiences include serving as: a senior career counselor at Washington State University's Academic Success and Career Center, a Lead post-secondary instructor for career development, life skills, work preparedness/readiness courses within college and community settings, and a Principal Investigator on a national, multi-state youth development pilot study. In her current role, key aspects of Dr. Smith's responsibilities include providing strategic organizational leadership and building productive community-based partnerships that address local workforce and labor market needs through programmatic implementation of cost-effective and student-centered programs. Smith's primary research area focuses on the development, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring of evidence-based (and/or -informed) public workforce development systems, organizational processes, and programs. Dr. Smith's professional career also includes working within the federal government for approximately 10 years as a Program, Management, and Budget Analyst and a Senior Contract Officer. Dr. Smith's educational background includes earning a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science and Policy from the University of South Florida, a Master's Degree from American University in Public Administration with a specialization in public program development and management, a Master's Degree from Johns Hopkins University in Clinical Community Counseling with a specialization in the development of therapeutic programs, and a Master's Degree in Prevention Science from Washington State University. Lastly, Dr. Smith holds a doctoral degree from Washington State University in Prevention Science.

Presentation Findings

Chelsea Coffin is the Deputy Director of the D.C. Policy Center, leading the Education Policy Initiative. She joined the D.C. Policy Center in September 2017. Her research focuses on how schools connect to broader dynamics in the District of Columbia. She has authored reports on diversity in D.C.'s schools, the D.C. schools with the best improvement for at-risk students, and the transition after high school in D.C. Chelsea has also conducted planning analysis at the D.C. Public Charter School Board, carried out research at the World Bank, and taught English in a secondary school with the Peace Corps in Mozambique. She currently serves on the boards of Higher Achievement, Maya Angelou Public Charter Schools/See Forever Foundation, and District Bridges. Chelsea holds a Bachelor of Arts from Middlebury College and a Master of Arts from Johns Hopkins University (SAIS) in International Economics and Development.

Rebecca A. Johnson is an Assistant Professor at the Georgetown McCourt School of Public Policy, where she is affiliated with the Massive Data Institute and the Department of Sociology. Her research studies the empirics and ethics of how social service bureaucracies use a mix of data and discretion to decide who deserves help, with applications including K-12 school resources, waitlists for housing vouchers, and contrasts between category-based prioritization and algorithmic prioritization. It has been published in outlets including the American Sociological Review, PNAS, and Nature Human Behavior. She received a PhD in Sociology and Social Policy, with a specialization in Demography, from Princeton University after receiving a B.A./M.A. from Stanford University. More information can be found here: <https://www.rebeccajohnson.io/>

Career Development for All: Building a Comprehensive Landscape of Opportunities for DC Public Schools Students

Regina McClure is an accomplished CTE leader specializing in STEM program management, student leadership development, and industry partnership-building. As the Career-Technical Education STEM Director at Jackson-Reed High School, she oversees three NAF academies and supports more than 475 students annually. Regina is known for strengthening programs through systems-thinking, collaboration, and a deep commitment to educational equity. She has expanded work-based learning opportunities, built internship pipelines with key industry partners, and led all three STEM academies to earn NAF Distinguished Academy status. Previously, she directed the NAF Academy of Health Sciences at Eastern Senior High School, where she helped launch an accredited EMT program. Regina holds master's degrees in School Counseling and Transition Special Education and began her career as a special educator at Calvin Coolidge Senior High School. She has received multiple awards for her contributions to college access and student success and remains dedicated to advancing high-quality, equitable pathways that prepare students for college, career, and lifelong achievement.

Candice Mott is a proud Memphis native and seasoned leader in Career and Technical Education (CTE), dedicated to advancing student success across secondary and postsecondary pathways. In her current role at the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) in Washington, D.C., she manages the District's CTE programs of study and career and technical student organizations (CTSOs), working to

elevate high-quality, equitable programming for all students. Candice's commitment to the CTE profession is reflected in her active leadership at the state, regional, and national levels. Candice currently serves as the president of the D.C. Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), advisory board member of the CTE Research Network, and maintains membership with the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS). She also serves as an adjunct professor at Montgomery College and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and consults nationally on inclusion, access, equity, and diversity (IAED) in CTE. Candice's work is deeply personal, grounded in her values, lived experiences, and an unwavering belief in the transformative power of education. Candice is also the proud mother of Jamison, an 18-year-old future doctor who plans to specialize in genomic medicine and gynecology, and who, like her mother, is fiercely passionate about advocacy, equity, and building a better world.

Jennifer Niles has a demonstrated track record of innovation, coalition-building, and problem-solving. Since 2019, Jennie has served as President, CEO, and co-founder of CityWorks DC, a nonprofit venture to dramatically improve the early career outcomes of DC youth by fostering the creation of local talent pipelines into high-wage, high-demand careers. CityWorks DC launches innovative programs, e.g. CareerWise DC and ASU Local, accelerates systems change by aligning education, workforce, and employment in DC and Maryland, and co-convenes industry sector partnerships in construction and hospitality with the Federal City Council. Prior to CityWorks DC, Jennie was Washington D.C.'s Deputy Mayor for Education from 2015 to 2018 where her responsibilities included oversight of DC Public Schools, Office of the State Superintendent of Education, DC Public Charter School Board, University of the District of Columbia, DC Dept of Parks and Recreation, and the DC Public Libraries. Previously, Jennie founded the acclaimed E.L. Haynes Public Charter School which serves 1,100 PK-12 students from across Washington, DC. During her 12-year tenure as Head of School at Haynes, Niles built innovative programs focused on improving urban education citywide, including cross-sector initiatives to build a teacher pipeline, race and equity seminars, and ongoing professional development for teachers. Niles began her career teaching science and directing service-learning programs at schools in California and Massachusetts. She holds two master's degrees in management and public administration, completed the New Leaders for New Schools fellowship, and is a Pahara-Aspen Education Fellow.

Marian Wilkins serves as the Principal of Johnson Middle School in Washington, DC, where she leads with the vision "One Band. One Sound. One Johnson." With nearly two decades of experience in education, she has dedicated her career to transforming middle school experiences through rigorous instruction, authentic relationships, and innovative Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming. Before joining Johnson, Ms. Wilkins served as Assistant Principal of Mathematics and CTE at Sousa Middle School, where she launched the school's first CTE Academy and led initiatives that increased math proficiency by 500%. A former classroom teacher, instructional coach, and adjunct professor, she is deeply committed to ensuring every student is future-ready and exposed to meaningful college and career pathways. Ms. Wilkins holds an Education Specialist (Ed.S.) in Educational Leadership and Supervision from The George Washington University, a Master of Arts in Teaching from North Carolina A&T State University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Middle Grades Education from North Carolina Central University. She is also the proud mother of two sons, Jaedyn, a senior at New York University majoring in Film and Television Production, and Jayson, a freshman at Penn State University majoring in Hospitality Management.

Jennifer L. Steele, as a Professor of Education at American University, Dr. Jennifer L. Steele teaches science-based decision making to aspiring policymakers. Her research examines the effects of educational opportunities on life outcomes, with recent studies on school-to-workforce transitions and the labor market effects of Artificial Intelligence. She has worked as a policy researcher at the RAND Corporation and as a K-12 teacher and has served as a François Chevalier Fellow at the Madrid Institute for Advanced Study. Her public writing has appeared in The Washington Post, The Hill, Fast Company, and Salon, and she has served as a television commentator for NBC, CBS, CGTN, and other outlets.

Closing Remarks

Clara Botstein serves as Chief of Staff for the DC Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), where she advances the office's strategic priorities for DC's education and workforce development systems. Clara previously served as the DME's Senior Director of Policy, leading efforts to expand college and career pathways for students and overseeing the office's legislative and political priorities. Prior to the DME, Clara worked in leadership at the Bard Early College, a network of public early colleges that allow high school students to earn college credits up to an associate degree, free of charge, alongside a high school diploma. Clara established new schools in Baltimore, Cleveland, and Washington, D.C. and led policy and advocacy work at the local, state, and federal levels. Clara has nearly two decades of experience in policy and advocacy work in the field of education and youth development. Clara holds a Master of Public Policy degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Bachelor's degree in history from Princeton University. She lives in Petworth neighborhood of Washington, D.C. She co-founded Petworth PorchFest, DC's largest neighborhood music festival, and serves on the board of the Uptown Main Street.