



INSTITUTE FOR EARLY EDUCATION  
LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION



MARYLAND  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

*Sherman Center for Early Learning in Urban Communities*

## 2019/2020 MECLP INAUGURAL COHORT MEMBERS

**Jennifer Arnaiz:** Jennifer is the Director of the Child Care Resource and Referral Center in the Early Childhood Services Division, Department of Health and Human Services, Montgomery County Government. A member of the Child Care Advisory Council, in the Division of Early Childhood, MSDE, Jennifer is eager to be a MECLP fellow to learn skills, tools and strategies to be a more functional partner for change management and innovation in early childhood. Jennifer is eager to provide leadership opportunities to early childhood professionals to advance their careers. Jennifer has a B.A. in Early Childhood Education.

**Erin Bonzon:** Erin is an Administrator in the Office of Children and Families, Department of Community Resources and Services, Howard County Government. New to Maryland, Erin's passion is to improve the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable children, reduce inequity and improve early childhood outcomes. Erin has a B.S. in Psychology and a M.S. in Social Work/Public Health, Maternal and Child Health.

**Dawn Cockran:** Dawn is Dorchester County Public Schools' Expansion Grant All-Day PreK Lead Teacher and a MSDE Master Teacher. As a MECLP fellow, Dawn wants to delve deeper into the areas of diversity, communication, resilience, networking, and conflict resolution, gaining the fundamental skills for administrative leadership and education policy to support early childhood leaders. Dawn has a B.S. in Elementary education; a M.S. in Early Childhood Education, a Post Master's Certification in Administration Supervision, and is considering enrolling in a doctoral program.

**Leslie Frei:** Leslie is a Teacher Specialist in Early Childhood Education, Frederick County Public Schools. Leslie is interested in the impact of "collective wisdom" on young children. Her experience working in an inner-city school with 90% EL children with incarcerated caregivers motivated her to become interested in larger societal issues; to build a stronger early childhood workforce and to become active in policy issues to support young children. Leslie has a B.S. in Early Childhood/Elementary Education; M.S. in Early Reading and Literacy, and a Post-Master's - ILPD Administrator I Certificate

**Stephanie Geddie:** Stephanie is an Instructional Facilitator for Early Childhood Programs, Howard County Public School System. A 2015 Howard County Teacher of the Year and a 2016 Maryland State Teacher of the Year finalist, Stephanie wants to learn how to use data efficiently, learn about resources that support family engagement, and become knowledgeable about research and studies on the impact of early childhood to affect change through policy and the legislative process so that all children "achieve greatness" and "feel valued". Stephanie has a B.A. in Early Childhood Education; a M.ED in Educational Studies, a Certificate in Administration/Supervision and in Leadership in Family, School and Collaboration.

**Cheri Helmstetter:** Cheri is the Birth - Age 4 Literacy Coach for the Allegany County Public Schools' Striving Readers Grant. Through participation in MECLP, Cheri is eager to gain the skills to support all children using the KRA data more robustly, improve relationships with families, and play a role in advancing Maryland as a leader in early childhood. Cheri was a 2009 Teacher of the Year at Northeast Elementary School and a 2009 Teacher of

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the Year Finalist for Allegany Public Schools. Cheri has a B.S. in Early Childhood -Elementary Education; a M.S. in Administration and Supervision and is enrolled in a Doctorate of Education Program.

**Candise Hill:** Candise is a First Grade Team Lead at Brehms Lane Public Charter School in Baltimore City Public Schools having previously been both a First grade and Third grade teacher. Candise is excited to be part of MECLP to have a greater impact on early learners and early childhood educators, gain further knowledge about early childhood and effective practices, current research, policy and advocacy. Ultimately, Candise aspires to become an Assistant Principal. She has been involved in Teach for America and the Emerging Leaders Program through BCPS. Candise holds a B.S in Education and Social Policy and a M.S.in Urban Education.

**Laura Hutton:** Laura is an Associate Professor and Education Department Coordinator at Harford Community College. Laura hopes participation in MECLP will help leverage her skills to create a vision of better supports for children and parents, engage in actions to promote the welfare of at-risk young children, and establish a support structure for parents of young children with special needs. Laura would like to expand innovation and growth within HCC's course offerings while establishing the college as a premier source of training for child care professionals. Laura holds a B.A. in Elementary Education/Special Education; a M.S in Special Education/Early Childhood Education and is pursuing her doctorate in Special Education with a special emphasis on cultural diversity.

**Tiffany Jones:** Tiffany is a Level 5 EXCELS family child care provider in Montgomery County. She is Director/Vice Chair of the Head Start Parent Policy Council, serves on Montgomery County's Community Action Board, and is the Head Start representative on the County's 5-year Strategic Planning Committee. Tiffany is deeply committed to diversity and equity and wants to "raise the bar" for family child care providers by being recognized as a leader, a model and an inspiration for other child care providers. Tiffany has an Associate Degree and a B.A. in Early Childhood/Special Education.

**Tomeaka Jupiter:** Tomeaka is Director of Healthy Families Baltimore County, a program of the non-profit Abilities Network. Tomeaka's short term goals include expanding her knowledge of early childhood utilizing data and research to inform quality improvement efforts, and gaining the ability to communicate and build relationships with legislators, funders, non-profit, for-profit and government organizations. Tomeaka's long-term goals include working collaboratively to develop a prenatal and early childhood continuum of services and a referral system to support prenatal parents with access to community services and resources. Tomeaka has a B.A in Sociology/Elementary Education and Women's Studies; a M.S. in Social Work and a Post-Masters – Psychotherapy Certificate.

**Christine Lopez:** Christina is an Early Childhood Instructional Resource Teacher for PreK classrooms in the Early Childhood Office in Prince George's County Public Schools and the current President of MDAEYC. Christina hopes MECLP will help her gain core competencies to lead system level changes and to be part of creating a more equitable system that recognizes the value of the whole child and the role of community. Christina has a high level of commitment to early childhood and is interested in connecting theory to practice by designing high-quality professional development for teachers. Christina holds a B.S. in Child Development and Early Childhood

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Education; a M.S. in Education; a Certificate in Educational Leadership and Administration and is pursuing a doctorate in Early Childhood Leadership and Advocacy.

**Carolina Reyes:** Carolina is the Owner/Director of the Arco Iris Bilingual Children’s Center (AIBCC) in Prince George’s County, a bi-lingual child care center that serves 61 children including part-time children. Carolina wants to acquire leadership skills in advocacy, public speaking and help in developing an “elevator” speech on the importance of education and to encourage immigrant leaders to speak out and build a leadership network. Carolina has a B.S. in Business Administration achieved through a heartwarming path illustrating a person’s commitment to the importance of education.

**Naina Schneiderman:** Naina is an Infant and Toddler Special Educator in Montgomery County’s Infant and Toddler Program. Naina wants to learn skills to make systemic changes to help diverse families through the early intervention process through collaboration, innovation and public policy and by increasing access to interpreters/translators for non-English speaking families. Naina has a diverse multi-cultural background and is passionate about helping disadvantaged families and their vulnerable children. Naina has a B.S. in Special Education; a Master’s in Education/Special Education and a Certificate in Early Childhood, Special Education – Infant and Severely/Profoundly Disabled children.

**Rebecca (Becky) Vivrette:** Rebecca is a Clinical Psychologist, Assistant Professor at the Taghi Modarressi Center for Infant Study, University of Maryland School of Medicine. Through MECLP, Rebecca hopes to increase her knowledge and political savvy to effect change in mental health policy so that mental health becomes a central component of early childhood programs and services and streamline ECMH-related coursework for early childhood programs. Rebecca has a B.A. in Psychology; a M.A. in Psychology, and a Ph.D in Clinical Psychology/Multicultural community.

**Rudi Zelman:** Rudi is a Program Manager at the non-profit Literacy Lab, in Baltimore City. Rudi was previously a Kindergarten Teacher in Baltimore City Schools and a Professional Learning Community Specialist for Teach for America. Rudi wants to be a MECLP fellow to develop skills, knowledge and networks to create systems-level change to improve outcomes for young learners and their families. Rudi feels it is critical to develop a pipeline and meaningful development for the early childhood professional community. Rudi is a graduate of Teach for America’s (TFA) Propel leadership program. Rudi has a B.S. in Journalism and Political Science, and a M.S. in Urban Education and Early Childhood.

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### **Application Process**

- Application released in mid-May to over 200 people, organizations, and associations
- Received 44 applications
  - 2 applicants withdrew
  - 6 applications were incomplete
  - 5 applications were not scored
  - 31 applications were reviewed and scored
  - 12 applications were scored but applicants were not scheduled for interviews
  - 19 applicants finalists were interviewed and provided a real-time writing sample
- Five Advisory Committee members reviewed the support documentation on each of the finalists and astutely identified the 15 person composition of the cohort.

### **Cohort Diversity**

#### **Ethnicity**

- 3 - Latinx/Hispanic
- 1 - Prefers not to disclose
- 7 - Caucasian
- 4 - African American

#### **Geographic Diversity – 9 jurisdictions represented**

- 1-Allegany
- 3-Baltimore City
- 1-Baltimore County
- 1-Dorchester
- 1-Frederick
- 1-Harford
- 2-Howard
- 3-Montgomery
- 2-Prince George's

#### **Affiliations**

- 1-Center Director/owner
- 1-Family Child Care provider
- 6 -School systems
- 2-County government
- 2-Non-profit community
- 1-Statewide advocacy organization
- 1-Community College
- 1-University School of Medicine

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