

# 2018 ANNUAL REPORT



**SHERMAN  
CENTER**

**for Early Learning**  
in Urban Communities







## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



On behalf of the staff of the Sherman Center for Early Learning in Urban Communities at UMBC, it is my pleasure to present to you our inaugural annual report. In its first full year of operation (January – December 2018), the Sherman Center has moved from a concept to a reality. We have created a vision, mission, and theory of change; assembled an exceptional campus-wide advisory committee; hired key staff and research faculty; commissioned an evaluation framework to guide data collection and program improvement; and moved into our newly renovated suite in the Fine Arts Building. Most importantly, we have initiated a variety of programs and projects to enhance early childhood education, with a particular focus on improving literacy instruction and outcomes for young learners in and beyond Baltimore. We would like to thank Betsy and George Sherman, and all our partners, advisers, and volunteers for making this work possible. While much remains to be done, we are excited to share the results of our initial efforts with you in this report.

Dr. Mavis G. Sanders, Director

# INTRODUCTION

Established to advance George and Betsy Sherman's vision of improving learning experiences and outcomes for young children in Baltimore City, the Sherman Center for Early Learning in Urban Communities connects theory, research, and practice, and schools, families, and communities to promote the educational success of children ages three through eight. The Sherman Center's activities fall within four domains:

- Research support to expand knowledge about policies and practices that enhance the learning of young children in urban communities like Baltimore
- Professional development to provide early childhood educators with research-informed strategies to promote young learners' success
- School-based partnership activities to help build socially, emotionally, and academically enriching environments for young learners in our partner schools
- Family outreach to support parents' engagement in their young children's learning and development

**Sherman Center Vision:** Empowering schools, families, and communities to prepare Baltimore's children for lifelong success.

**Sherman Center Mission:** Through multidisciplinary research, professional development for early childhood educators, and partnerships with schools, families, and communities, the Center will help to build a strong foundation for lifelong learning among young children in Baltimore, and develop best early childhood education practices for urban schools.





## **George and Betsy Sherman**

George and Betsy Sherman have a profound belief in the power of education to create better opportunities, better communities, and stronger families. Through their foundation, they make long-term, strategic investments in programs that are scalable and have compelling evidence of helping vulnerable, economically disadvantaged children and their families achieve better outcomes in all aspects of their lives. George Sherman says about his wife, “Betsy’s lifelong commitment to child advocacy drives our family’s focus to improve the lives of children.” George and Betsy Sherman have been recognized for their philanthropy through several awards. Most recently, they were named honorees of the Baltimore Sun’s Business and Civic Hall of Fame and 2018 Maryland Outstanding Philanthropists by the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

## PARTNER SCHOOLS

Located in a historically industrial section of southern Baltimore, Sherman Center partner schools serve racially and ethnically diverse students in grades pre-K-8. The schools are characterized by dynamic, collaborative leaders, clear goals for students' learning, and family engagement. Lakeland and Maree G. Farring began as Sherman Center partner schools in spring 2018, and Curtis Bay and Bay Brook in fall 2018.

### Partner School Principals – 2018

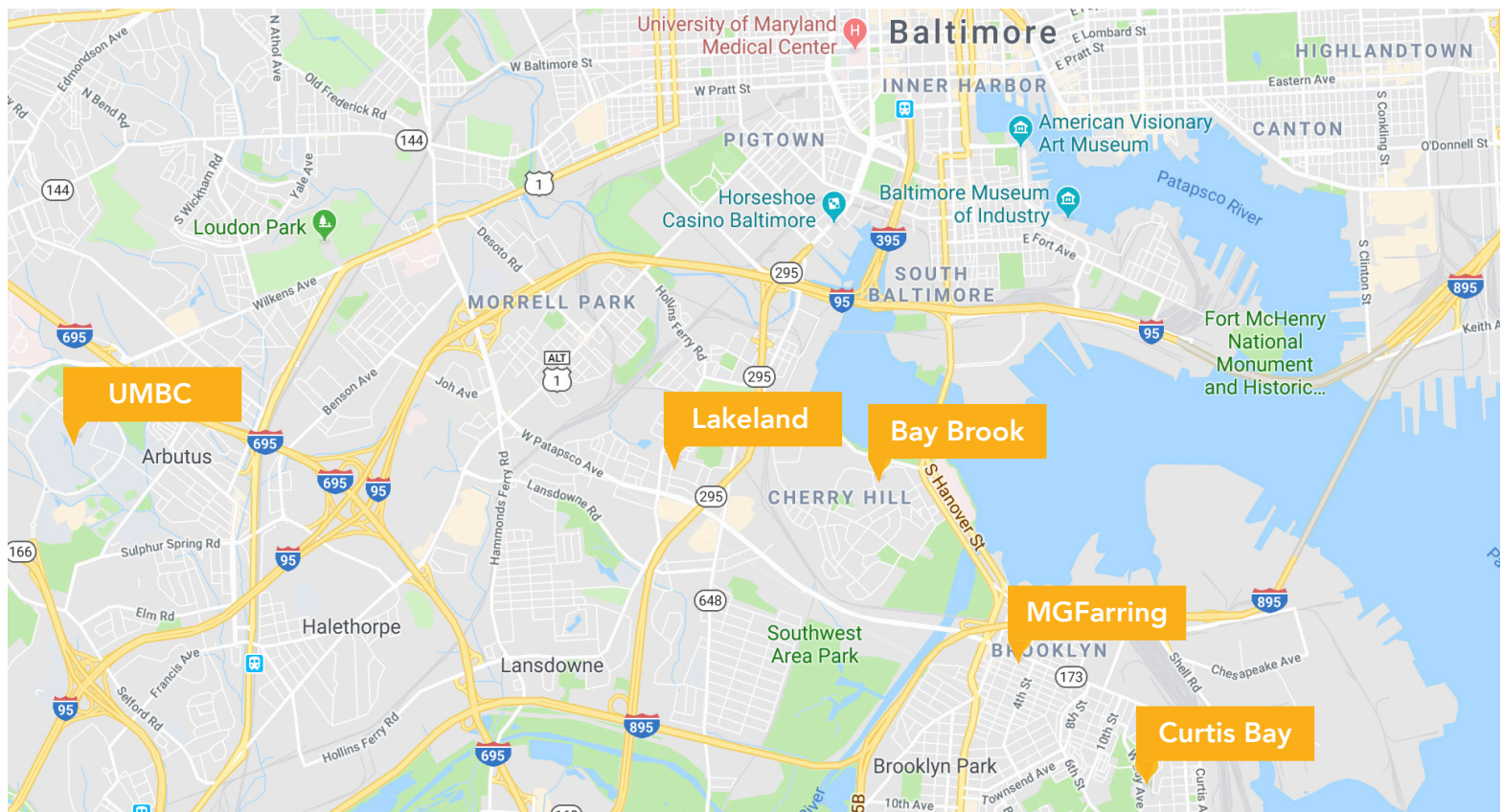
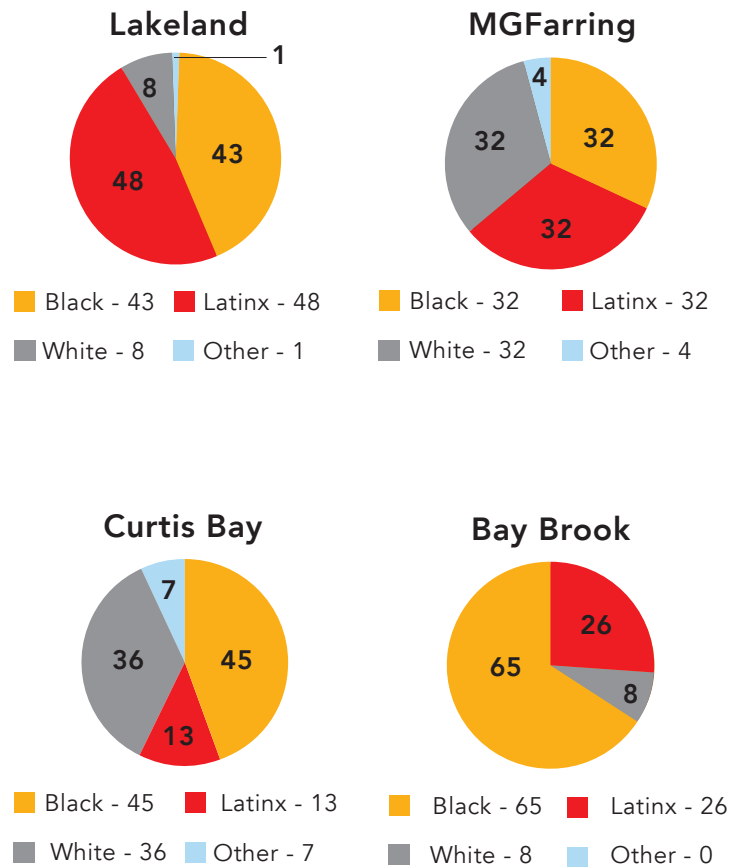
Mr. Najib Jammal –  
Lakeland Elementary/Middle School

Mr. Benjamin Crandall –  
Maree G. Farring Elementary/Middle School

Mr. Mark Bongiovanni –  
Curtis Bay Elementary/Middle School

Ms. Monique Reese –  
Bay Brook Elementary/Middle School  
(Temporary location, 2018-19)

### Student Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity, 2018







## **PRINCIPAL MONIQUE REESE**

*Bay Brook Elementary/Middle School*

### **What position did you have before coming to Bay Brook?**

*I was an Assistant Principal in District of Columbia Public Schools for 8 years before coming to Bay Brook E/M. Before going into administration I taught elementary school in both California and Prince George's County, MD.*

### **How long have you been principal at Bay Brook?**

*This is my 3rd year as a principal at Bay Brook E/M.*

### **What goals do you have for the school?**

*The Instructional Leadership Team created 3 school goals:*

- *To increase the number of students reading on grade level*
- *To increase the number of students performing on grade level in math*
- *To decrease the number of suspensions*

### **How is the Sherman Center assisting you in achieving these goals?**

*The Sherman Center has assisted Bay Brook in achieving our Literacy Goals in numerous ways. First, the Sherman Center provides student interns to assist in our primary classrooms. The interns assist teachers during the guided reading block by helping individual students and working with small groups. The Sherman Center also supports our teachers with professional development and by providing diverse books for our teachers to use during instruction.*

## PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

The Sherman Center collaborates with its partner schools to implement site-specific and cross-site projects to improve early literacy instruction, resources, supports, and outcomes. Its focus on early literacy reflects the schools' goals and a growing recognition of the importance of early literacy for young children's life-long success.

During 2018, the Sherman Center implemented three cross-site literacy initiatives: 1) Diverse Books Project, 2) Summer Teacher Institute, and 3) Sherman Center/Shriver Center Literacy Fellows Program. The Sherman Center also catalyzed research in the field of early learning through its Faculty Research Award and leadership through the Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program.



**Top left – Diverse Books Project Kickoff, spring 2018;**

**Top Right – 2018 Summer Teacher Institute;**

**Bottom – Literacy Fellows, Curtis Bay E/M, fall 2018**

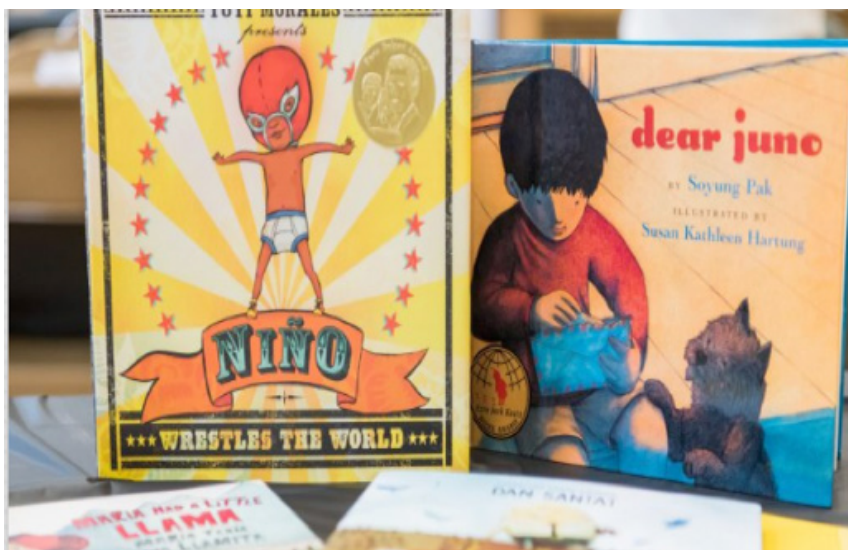


In response to teachers' expressed need for culturally diverse books and growing recognition of the importance of diverse children's literature for young readers, the Sherman Center launched its Diverse Books Project in April 2018. The goal of this project is to ensure that early childhood educators at our partner schools have access to high quality diverse children's books, and information about their effective use. Drs. Nancy Shelton and Kindel Nash, UMBC experts in the field of children's literature, curated a selection of over 60 books for this on-going project. Each grading period, early childhood educators have the opportunity to review 15 of these books, located in a designated space in their schools (the "Book Nook") and request one to six copies of a book for their classrooms. **In 2018, the Sherman Center distributed 257 diverse books to 37 early childhood educators at our partner schools.** The response has been positive; teachers have commented:

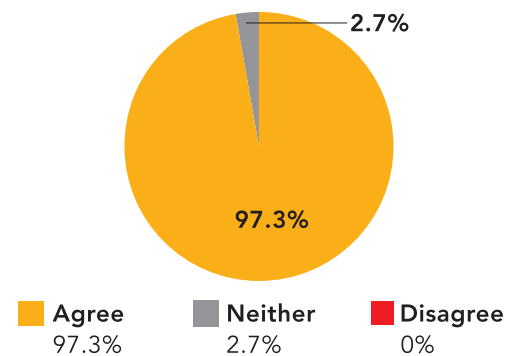
*My class has loved all the books we've read. Thank you!*  
– Sarah English, 1st grade teacher

*I'm so excited to be growing my bilingual library!*  
– Emma Safarty, 1st grade teacher

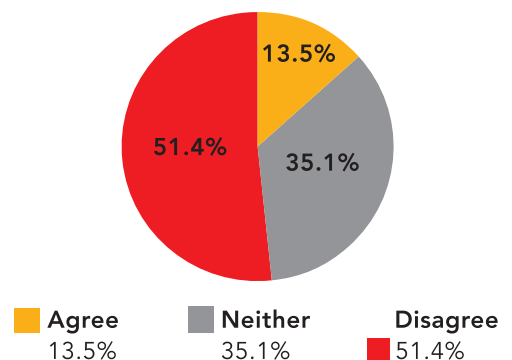
*I'm so excited to use these books.*  
– Sarah Lakarosky, 2nd grade teacher



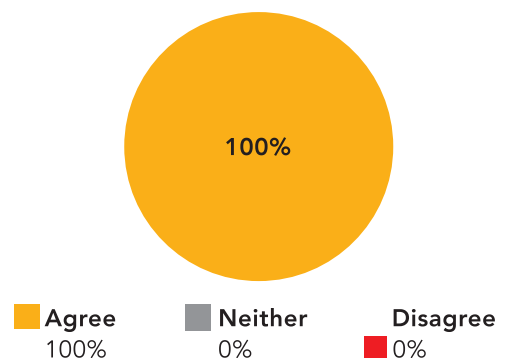
Diverse books are important for my students' learning (n=37)



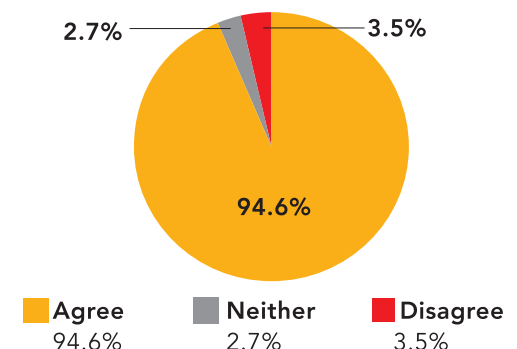
I have sufficient access to diverse books for instruction (n=37)



I would like more diverse books in my classroom (n=37)



I would like more information about how to effectively integrate diverse books into my daily instruction (n=37)



## 2018 SUMMER TEACHER INSTITUTE

Sherman Center partner schools have significant English Learner (EL) populations. To help build teachers' capacity to better serve these and all students, the professional development focus for the 2018 Summer Teacher Institute was inclusive literacy strategies for young ELs. Twenty early childhood educators from Lakeland and Maree G. Farring participated in the Institute, which was held at UMBC's Albin O. Kuhn Library, August 7-10. Kristina Robertson and Amy Faust Fraser, English language educators and outreach specialists for WIDA, provided professional development and individual teacher consultations. During the afternoon, teachers had time for collaborative planning and materials development in a maker space created for the Institute. Participants reported growth in their knowledge about literacy strategies for young ELs and the effective integration of diverse books in the early childhood classroom.

*This was one of the best professional developments I have ever received. Being in an environment with ample materials, lunch, parking, and a stipend made me feel valued in my profession. I truly believe it elevated me in my practice this week. The timing of the PD was excellent as well, the end of the summer is time when I feel refreshed and inspired to execute new ideas.*

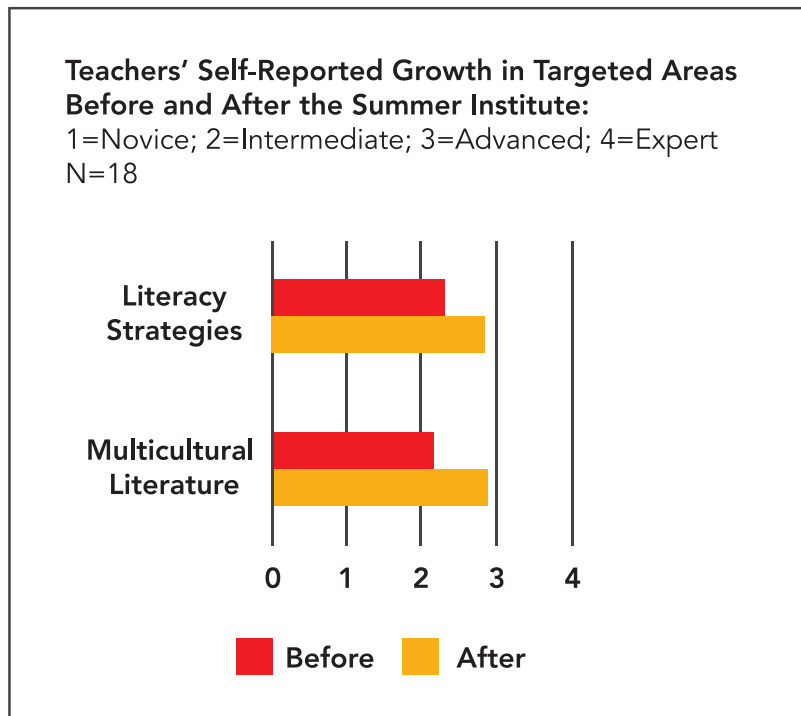
*I so appreciate the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues from my school as well as Lakeland. I got new ideas to use this year. I am so thrilled to have the time and available materials to create instructional materials for the upcoming year.*

*Thank you so much!!!  
I enjoyed the presentations so much. I think the presenters were extremely knowledgeable in current student-based strategies and it was really helpful. I really enjoyed all the time that I had to collaborate with my teammates and use the supplies provided by the Shermans and UMBC.*



**Left to Right: Kristina Robertson, Presenter; Mavis Sanders – Director, Sherman Center; Amy Faust Fraser, Presenter; Melissa Bailey – Program Coordinator, Sherman Center**





**100%** of participants agreed that the 2018 Summer Teacher Institute improved their understanding of how multicultural literature can be effectively integrated into early childhood classrooms.

**100%** of participants agreed that the 2018 Summer Teacher Institute increased their understanding of literacy practices for young English Learners.

**94%** of participants rated the 2018 Summer Teacher Institute as Excellent or Very Good.

# SHERMAN CENTER/SHRIVER CENTER LITERACY FELLOWS PROGRAM

The Sherman Center/Shriver Center Literacy Fellows Program was established in fall 2018 to provide literacy volunteers for two Sherman Center partner schools: Bay Brook and Curtis Bay. Unlike Lakeland and Maree G. Farring, Bay Brook and Curtis Bay expressed a need for volunteers to assist early childhood classroom teachers. Literacy Fellows, UMBC undergraduate students with interests in education and community service, are enrolled in The Shriver Center's Community Service & Learning Practicum (Leadership Section). They are responsible for recruiting and organizing other UMBC students to serve as classroom literacy volunteers for young learners. Literacy Fellows receive a stipend, work a minimum of four hours per week, and manage an average of six volunteers at their assigned schools. Designated school staff and UMBC faculty provide support and guidance to facilitate their work. Literacy Fellows for fall 2018 were Lydia Coley and Tamera Davis (Bay Brook) and Vrinda Deshpande and Luwam Gebreyesus (Curtis Bay).

When reflecting on their experience, the Literacy Fellows shared:

*Throughout the program, we had the chance to provide assistance to teachers in their classrooms and guide children through reading activities. The team normally succeeded in providing assistance and guidance to students when asked and successfully formed relationships with the students that made the experience worthwhile. (Bay Brook Literacy Fellows, 2018)*

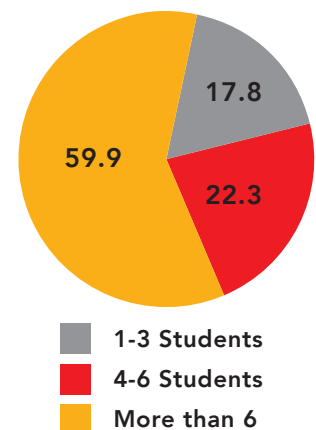
*I think we all formed really close relationships with the students where they felt comfortable enough to work with us. Many students improved in the areas of reading comprehension and pronunciation working in small groups with us. (Curtis Bay Literacy Fellows, 2018)*

Teachers and principals are enthusiastic supporters of the program, one teacher stated:

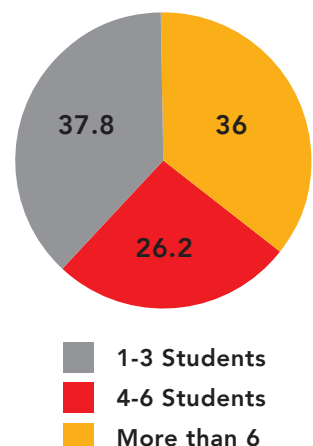
*My students and I enjoyed having [the Literacy Fellow] in our room. She was very helpful and she offered her support when needed. My students really liked her and so did I. (Marlene Harris, Kindergarten Teacher)*

	Curtis Bay	Bay Brook	Combined
Total # of Literacy Volunteers	6	8	14
Total # of Volunteer Hours	147	137	284
Total # of Early Childhood Classrooms served	6 (K-1)	7 (Pre-K-3)	13 (Pre-K-3)

**Percentage of Time Volunteers Spent Assisting One or More Students with Reading, Vocabulary, and Writing (Volunteer Self-Reports, Curtis Bay, fall 2018)**



**Percentage of Time Volunteers Spent Assisting One or More Students with Reading, Vocabulary, and Writing (Volunteer Self-Reports, Bay Brook, fall 2018)**



In 2018, Associate Professor Dr. Jennifer Mata-McMahon joined UMBC as the Sherman Center's first joint faculty hire (with the education department). In addition to her responsibilities in the education department's early childhood program, Dr. Mata-Mahon conducts school-based research and provides professional development for early childhood educators through the Sherman Center. Many of Dr. Mata-McMahon's teacher preparation courses are taught on site at Sherman Center partner schools, giving her students regular opportunities to observe early childhood classrooms. She is also conducting research with Ms. Ana Gabriela Salas, a first grade teacher at Lakeland, to investigate the development and impact of the dual language program Ms. Salas began at the school in 2016. Research funding and support for Dr. Mata-McMahon's innovative work are provided by the Sherman Center.



**Dr. Jennifer Mata-McMahon**

In 2018, Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education, Dr. Kindel Nash, and doctoral student in the School of Public Policy, Josh Michael, were the first recipients of the Sherman Center Faculty Research Award. They received \$59,300.00 to investigate the effects of a literacy intervention, "Read Two Impress" on the reading fluency and comprehension of second grade students at Maree G. Farring. The multi-year study has already yielded positive benefits for students, families, and the awardees. In addition to finding significant effects of the intervention on reading scores for participating students, Dr. Nash and Mr. Michael noted:

*Throughout project implementation, we have forged important connections with children, administrators, paraprofessionals, families, and teachers at Farring and learned a great deal about the strengths of the Brooklyn community. We now feel that we are part of the Farring community--known by teachers, families, and kids alike.*



**Dr. Kindel Nash**



**Mr. Josh Michael**



# MARYLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program (MECLP) is an initiative of a team of policy makers, education experts, and national advisers focused on developing and supporting early childhood leaders and practitioners. MECLP places special focus on improving outcomes for underserved and vulnerable children, from birth through age eight. In creating opportunities for diverse leaders in early childhood education, MECLP hopes to position Maryland as the vanguard in developing strong early childhood leaders nationally.

Following focus group input and research in early 2018, the 14-member MECLP Advisory Committee began the design and implementation phase of a pilot leadership development program in October 2018. The committee is co-chaired by Dr. Mavis Sanders, Professor of Education and Director of the Sherman Center for Early Learning in Urban Communities and Dr. Rolf Grafwallner, Program Director, Early Childhood Education, Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).



**Louise Corwin, Visiting Executive in Residence**

Louise Corwin, former Executive Director of Ready At Five, a self-sustaining program of the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education, was appointed Visiting Executive in Residence in the Sherman Center in fall 2018. In this role, Ms. Corwin, with support from Laurel Burggraf Bassett (graduate assistant, Language, Literacy, and Culture doctoral program, UMBC), spearheads MECLP's work.

## MECLP ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Afrika Burnett**, 3rd Grade Teacher, Hanover Hills Elementary School, Howard County Public Schools

**Meredith Callanan**, Chair, Ready At Five; former head of Corporate Marketing and Communications, T. Rowe Price Group

**Louise Corwin**, Visiting Executive in Residence, Sherman Center, Retired ED, Ready At Five

**Lisa Davis**, Director, Program Innovation and Student Well-Being, Howard County Public Schools

**Dr. Rolf Grafwallner**, Program Director, Early Childhood Education, CCSSO; formerly Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Early Childhood Development, Maryland State Department of Education

**Dr. Nancy Grasmick**, Presidential Scholar, Towson University; Board Chair and Director, Center for Innovation and Leadership in Special Education, Kennedy Krieger Institute; formerly Superintendent, Maryland State Department of Education

**Dr. Lisa Herbst**, Program Director, Pearl Education, Inc.; Adjunct Faculty, Department of Early Childhood Education, Towson University

**Steven Hicks**, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Early Childhood, Maryland State Department of Education

**Tracy Jost**, Owner, Kid's Campus Early Learning Center; Senior Policy Advisor, Center for Early Education Learning Outcomes (CEELO)

**Susan Magsamen**, Executive Director, International Arts and Mind Lab of the Brain Science Institute at Johns Hopkins University

**Dr. Gilda Martinez**, Assistant Dean, College of Education, Towson University

**Dr. Mavis Sanders**, Director, Sherman Center for Early Learning in Urban Communities; Professor, Department of Education, UMBC

**Dr. Blair Slaughter**, Vice President, T. Rowe Price Group

**Dr. Michele Stites**, Assistant Professor, Early Childhood Education, UMBC

Dr. Mavis Sanders  
*Director and Professor of Education*

Ms. Melissa Bailey  
*Program Coordinator*

Ms. Louise Corwin  
*Visiting Executive in Residence/MECLP*

Dr. Jennifer Mata-McMahon  
*Sherman Center Research Faculty/Associate Professor of Education*

Ms. Laurel Burggraf Bassett  
*Graduate Assistant, Language, Literacy and Culture Doctoral Program*

### **Campus Advisory Committee**

Dr. Linda Baker  
*Professor of Psychology*

Dr. James Bemby  
*Associate Professor of Social Work*

Dr. Chris Curran  
*Assistant Professor of Public Policy*

Dr. Anita Komlodi  
*Associate Professor of Information Systems*

Dr. Jeff Leips  
*Professor of Biology*

Ms. Marie Lilly  
*Director, Community Engagement*

Ms. Rehana Shafi  
*Director of Sherman STEM Teacher Scholars Program*

Dr. Michele Stites  
*Assistant Professor of Education*

### **Steering Committee**

Dr. Philip Rous  
*Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs*

Dr. Scott E. Casper  
*Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*

Gregory Simmons  
*Vice President for Institutional Advancement*



# SHERMAN CENTER

**for Early Learning**  
in Urban Communities



**Sherman Center Campus Advisory  
Committee Member – Dr. Linda Baker**

An enthusiastic member of the campus advisory committee, Dr. Baker conducts research broadly concerned with factors influencing the educational achievement of students from pre-K through college. Specific areas include reading and language development, motivation for reading and learning, metacognition and comprehension monitoring, and instructional interventions and innovations to promote achievement. She has been a faculty member and campus leader at UMBC for 39 years and is a Fellow of the American Educational Research Association and the American Psychological Association.

**For more information, visit us at:**  
**[shermancenter.umbc.edu](http://shermancenter.umbc.edu)**

