

## Speaker Bios

### **Judge Jay Blitzman (Middlesex County Juvenile Court)**

Judge Blitzman was appointed to the Juvenile Court in 1996 and was appointed First Justice of the Middlesex Division in 2008. Prior to his judicial appointment, Judge Blitzman was a founder and the first director of the Roxbury Youth Advocacy Project, a community-based interdisciplinary public defenders unit that created the basis for the development of a statewide division. Judge Blitzman also co-founded Citizens for Juvenile Justice (CfJJ). Judge Blitzman teaches at Northeastern University School of Law and at UMass Lowell School of Criminology and Justice Studies. He is a Team Leader in Harvard Law School's Trial Advocacy Workshop. He received his undergraduate degree from Union College and his [J.D.](#) from Boston College Law School.

### **Valerie Ann Bonds**

Valerie is a teacher, coach and mentor. She has taught in Cambridge, Brookline, and for the Archdiocese of Boston. She has also coached athletics in the middle school, high school and Division I Collegiate levels and has helped introduce restorative practices into schools. After 28 years, Valerie retired from the Boston Public Schools in January 2016. She is a graduate of the Boston Public Schools and Boston State Teacher's College.

### **Dr. Robert Brooks**

Dr. Brooks has lectured nationally and internationally to audiences of parents, educators, mental health professionals, and business people on topics pertaining to motivation, resilience, family relationships, the qualities of effective leaders and executives, and balancing our personal and professional lives. He is the author or co-author of 16 books including *Raising Resilient Children*; *The Power of Resilience: Achieving Balance, Confidence, and Personal Strength in Your Life*; and *Understanding and Managing Children's Classroom Behavior: Creating Sustainable, Resilient Classrooms*. Dr. Brooks received his Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Clark University and did additional training at the University of Colorado Medical School. He is on the faculty of Harvard Medical School and has served as Director of the Department of Psychology at McLean Hospital, a private psychiatric hospital.

### **David Bulley (Van Sickle Middle School, Springfield)**

David Bulley has written on restorative practices for *The Boston Globe Magazine*, *Edutopia.com*, and other journals. He spearheaded a move to restorative practices at Turners Falls High School where they saw a dramatic decrease in suspensions. He is currently the Dean of Student Culture at Van Sickle Academy Middle School in Springfield. He received his B.A. in English from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

### **Sara Burd (Reading Public Schools)**

Sara Burd has joined Reading Public Schools as the District Administrator of Support Services, which is a multi-faceted position and involves direct service to students, parent and staff training, and evaluation of students and programs. Mrs. Burd joins Reading with experience in public, pilot and charter schools as well as Massachusetts licensure in Guidance Counseling (5-12), Adjustment Counseling (all levels) and

training in Drama Therapy as a Registered Drama Therapist. Mrs. Burd has also been a member of the Task Force on Behavioral Health in Public Schools since 2008.

**Andrea Cameron (North High School, Worcester)**

Andrea Cameron is an English Language Arts Teacher at North High School. This is her ninth year teaching ninth grade ELA and her third year teaching at North High. Andrea grew up in Worcester and received her B.A. in English & Education from Anna Maria College. She also has an M.A.T. in Education with a concentration in English from Fitchburg State University. Andrea is trained in Restorative Justice Circles and incorporates them into her classes daily.

**Commissioner Mitchell D. Chester (MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education)**

Mitchell Chester began serving as Commissioner of the Massachusetts public schools in May 2008. Dr. Chester began his career as an elementary school teacher in Connecticut, and later served as a middle school assistant principal and district curriculum coordinator. From there he moved to the Connecticut State Department of Education where he oversaw curriculum and instructional programs. In 1997, he was named the Executive Director for Accountability and Assessment for Philadelphia. In 2001, he moved to Ohio, where he served as the Senior Associate Superintendent for Policy and Accountability for the Ohio Department of Education. Dr. Chester holds a doctorate in Administration, Planning, and Social Policy from Harvard University, as well as advanced degrees from the University of Connecticut and the University of Hartford.

**Yuisa Pérez Chionchio (Goddard School of Science and Technology, Worcester Public Schools)**

Ms. Pérez Chionchio is currently the Acting Principal of the Goddard School of Science and Technology in Worcester, MA, an elementary school with a diverse group of 500 students. Ms. Pérez Chionchio has taught all grade levels from elementary to middle to high school. After leaving the classroom, she worked within the Central Office for the Worcester Public Schools. She is a graduate of UMASS - Amherst and Clark University.

**Susan Cole (Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative/Harvard Law School)**

Susan Cole is the director of the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI), a joint program of Harvard Law School and the non-profit children's rights organization Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC). At Harvard she holds a joint appointment as Education Law Clinic Director and Lecturer on Law and is Senior Project Director at MAC. Ms. Cole's work is based on research at the intersection of psychology, education and law that links traumatic experiences to a host of learning, relational and behavioral difficulties at school. She holds a J.D. from Northeastern University, a Master's in Special Education from the University of Oregon, and a B.A. from Boston University. Prior to becoming a lawyer she taught in Watertown, MA and Woodstock, CT public schools – experiences that continuously inform her work.

**Dr. Claire Crane (Salem State University)**

Claire Crane was for 25 years the Principal of the Ford School in Lynn. The wearer of many educational hats in the Lynn Schools for 54 years, Dr. Crane received numerous local and national awards and presents nationally on the community school model. Dr. Crane is a graduate of Salem State and teaches in

the Psychology and Education Departments. She received her doctorate from Nova Southeastern University and is currently working on developing a Center for Community Schools at Salem State.

**Matt Cregor (Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice)**

Matt Cregor joined the Lawyers' Committee in 2014, and handles a variety of education matters including school discipline, special education, and student assignment. Before that, Matt worked as a staff attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF). Matt has served on education and school discipline-related advisory boards for the Council of State Governments, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, and the New York State Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children. Prior to his time at the Lawyers' Committee and LDF, Matt worked on local, state, and federal education matters as a Staff Attorney with the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama. He is a 2006 graduate of the Georgetown University Law Center.

**Rob Curtin (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education)**

Rob Curtin is the Director of the Education Data Services Unit and the Center for School and District Accountability at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. He has been with the department for 14 years and overseen the development and rollout of its major data initiatives along with being a lead developer of the district and school accountability system. Rob also serves on the General Statistics Permanent Standing Task Force that advises the U.S. Department of Education on data collection and analysis issues and is a member of the Management Board of the Schools Interoperability Framework Association.

**Larry Dieringer (Engaging Schools)**

Larry Dieringer has been Executive Director of Engaging Schools for over twenty years. Engaging Schools collaborates with educators to create school communities where each and every student develops the skills and mindsets needed to succeed and make positive contributions in school, work, and life. Larry is an experienced school consultant, professional development leader, and university lecturer and has worked nationally with schools on issues including schoolwide discipline and student support, social and emotional learning, advisory development, continuous school improvement, and systemic reform. Larry began his career as a Secondary School Social Studies Teacher and Youth Wilderness Program Director, and has an Ed.M. from Harvard University.

**Judge Carol Erskine (Worcester Juvenile Court)**

A Juvenile Court Judge for 13 years, Judge Erskine works daily with the youth of Worcester through civil cases, child abuse and neglect cases, and many diversion programs. In 2006, she was appointed the First Justice of the Worcester Juvenile Court and she has been involved in diversion and prevention programs with local schools and hospitals. Judge Erskine attended Quinsigamond Community College (QCC), Clark University, and Suffolk University Law School. She taught at QCC for 10 years as a tenured professor in the Respiratory Therapy Program.

**Rebecca Holland (Youth on Board/Boston Student Advisory Council)**

Becca Holland graduated from Boston Latin Academy (BLA) and is now enrolled at Lesley University where she is majoring in Secondary Education and English. During her time at BLA, Becca worked with 7th graders for 5 years, starting in her 8th grade year continuing up until her senior year. She continues to

work with the BLA community through teacher assistance, observation, and mentoring work with the students. She was a committed member of the Boston Student Advisory Council in her last two years of high school.

**Emanuela "Emma" Hoxha (North High School, Worcester)**

Emma Hoxha is a 10th grade student in the Chapter 74 Health & Science Academy at North High School. She played for the girls volleyball team and plays for the girls basketball team at North High. Her goal is to graduate top in her class, go to college and enter the medical field where she can continue to help others through her profession. She has been a Restorative Justice Peer Leader for two years at North High, serving as a co-facilitator of Circles and a positive role model for her peers.

**Robert Jennings (Worcester Public Schools)**

Robert Jennings is the Wraparound Zone Manager for the Worcester Public Schools. He previously was the Principal of Sullivan Middle School for eight years and was also the Assistant Principal there prior to that. Robert was the Worcester Public Schools Teacher of the Year in 2001 and awarded the Thomas S. Green Award by the City of Worcester in 2004. He is a graduate of Assumption College and received his Master's of Education from the University of Massachusetts.

**Jennifer Jimenez (Burncoat Preparatory School, Worcester Public Schools)**

Jennifer Jimenez is a Wraparound Zone Coordinator at Burncoat Elementary School in Worcester, MA. Prior to her work in Wraparound, Jennifer worked as an Education Advisor for the GEAR UP College Readiness Program at Worcester East Middle School. She has also worked as an Academic Coordinator for the Girls C.H.O.I.C.E. mentoring program and as a Program Director for the One Circle Program at Worcester Youth Center. In addition to this, Jennifer has taught English to adults through Worcester's Adult Learning Center and is currently an Adjunct Professor at Quinsigamond Community College in the Human Services Program. She received her B. A. in Sociology and a Master's in Public Administration from Clark University.

**Teena-Marie Johnson (Youth on Board/Boston Student Advisory Council)**

Teena-Marie Johnson began her work with Youth on Board in her junior year of high school as a Boston Student Advisory Council representative for Madison Park Technical and Vocational High School. She graduated from Suffolk University, majoring in Government and International Relations. She is also an organizer for the YOUNG Coalition, fighting for education reform and youth rights.

**Fania Joseph (Youth on Board/Boston Student Advisory Council)**

Fania Joseph is in the tenth grade at Boston Community Leadership Academy, and has been a representative on Boston Student Advisory Council for one year. She hopes to become a Psychologist or a Teacher in order to continue supporting students.

**Omar Longus (Salem State University)**

Omar Longus coordinates Salem State University's (SSU) Project SAEL, a national professional development grant, aiding teachers in obtaining additional licensure in English as a Second Language (ESL). He teaches adult ESL classes at Salem High, and is an officer and member of several community boards, including the Latino Leadership Coalition and North Shore YMCA. A member of the Executive

Committee of SSU's Center for Community Schools, he has a BA in International Relations from Tufts and an MAT in ESL from SSU.

**Chief Justice Amy Nechtem (Massachusetts Juvenile Court)**

The Honorable Amy L. Nechtem is the Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Juvenile Court. Chief Justice Nechtem served as an Associate Justice for thirteen years prior to her appointment in July 2014. She is the Past President of the National Association of Women Judges (NAWJ), the country's leading voice for women jurists committed to diversity and equality in the system of justice. She was recently awarded the Justice Joan Dempsey Klein Award. Chief Justice Nechtem has served on the NAWJ Board of Directors for over ten years, and currently serves as the national Chair of the Juvenile Justice/Child Welfare Committee. Chief Justice Nechtem is a recipient of the Massachusetts Judges Conference Judicial Excellence Award. She was also awarded the Outstanding Community Service Award from her alma mater, Simmons College, for her lifelong public service and commitment to women, children and her devotion to issues affecting the fair and equal access to justice in our courts. Chief Justice Nechtem served as a Suffolk County Assistant District Attorney for many years prosecuting child abuse and major felony cases. She is a graduate of Simmons College and Suffolk University Law School.

**Kalise Osula (Youth on Board/Boston Student Advisory Council)**

Kalise Osula was a freshman at Boston Community Leadership Academy (BCLA) when she joined Boston Student Advisory Council. During the past five years, Kalise also gave back to her community through her work at the Food Project. Kalise currently attends Bunker Hill Community College where she is studying to become a Mechanical Engineer.

**Faustina Owusu (North High School, Worcester)**

Faustina Owusu is an 11th grade student in the Chapter 74 Health & Science Academy at North High School. She is an athlete in cross country and track. She has been a Restorative Justice Peer Leader for two years at North High. She wants to be able to graduate top of her class, attend college and become someone who actually makes a difference.

**Dr. Maria Pacheco (New England Equity Assistance Center, Brown University)**

Dr. Pacheco is the Executive Director of the Education Alliance at Brown University, a Reform Support Organization that provides services to states and schools nationwide. She is also the Director of the New England Equity Assistance Center and Adjunct Assistant Professor of ESL and Cross-Cultural Studies at Brown. She has held adjunct faculty positions at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, Wheelock College, Providence College, Rhode Island College and Fitchburg State College. She served on the faculty of the International Center for the Enhancement of Learning Potential in Jerusalem, Israel for three years. She holds Master's Degrees in Bilingual/Bicultural Education and School Administration and a doctorate in Leadership in Schooling. A native of the island of Flores, Azores, she immigrated to the US in 1970.

**Lilyvette Perez (Chandler Magnet School, Worcester)**

Lilyvette Perez is a Wraparound Coordinator at Chandler Magnet School. She is a Licensed Mental Health Clinician who previously worked in private practice and at MSPCC providing clinical treatment to children, adolescents, adults, and families. She is trained in Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral

Therapy and previously worked in providing support to victims of domestic violence. She has completed All But her Dissertation (ABD) in the Doctoral Psychology Program at Capella University.

**Carlos Rojas Alvarez (Youth on Board/Boston Student Advisory Council)**

Carlos Rojas Álvarez, Youth on Board's Education Policy Organizer and Boston Student Advisory Council alum, is an Undocu-Queer organizer, advocate and policy consultant born in Medellín, Colombia and raised in Boston. Carlos attended the Boston Public Schools and graduated from the Boston Latin School in 2012. Carlos became the Education Policy Associate at YOB and currently works closely with the Youth Organizers United for the Now Generation (YOUNG) Coalition.

**Susan Maze Rothstein (Our Restorative Justice/Northeastern University School of Law)**

Susan Maze-Rothstein is a founding member of Our Restorative Justice and a professor at Northeastern University School of Law where she directs the Legal Skills in Social Context Program, its signature social justice course. She also co-chairs the Boston Public Schools Code of Conduct Advisory Council Subcommittee. Professor Maze-Rothstein also co-chairs the Massachusetts Restorative Justice Coalition Policy Committee where she has been instrumental in crafting legislative language to expand restorative justice work throughout the Commonwealth. She received her B.S. in Nutritional Science from Cornell University and her J.D. from Boston College Law School.

**Sara Jane Shanahan (MA Appleseed Board of Directors/Sherin and Lodgen LLP)**

Sara Jane Shanahan is a partner at Sherin and Lodgen LLP and Chair of the firm's Litigation Department. Active in the community, Sara serves as secretary for The Wellesley Club and is a proud Girl Scouts Troop Leader for her daughters' troop. Since 2009, she has been proud to serve on the Massachusetts Appleseed Board of Directors. In the legal community, Sara is a member of the Boston Bar Foundation's Society of Fellows, the Joint Bar Committee, and is presently serving a three-year term on the Boston Bar Association's Council. She received her B.A. in Economics from Bowdoin College and her J.D. from Harvard Law School.

**Liz Sullivan-Yuknis (Dignity in Schools)**

Liz Sullivan-Yuknis is a Coordinating Committee Member with the Dignity in Schools Campaign. She works with parents and advocates to promote policy change in public education to guarantee students' right to dignity and a quality education. She has worked as a consultant with Human Rights Education Associates and as Project Coordinator at the Center for Economic and Social Rights, where she authored the report *Civil Society and School Accountability: A Human Rights Approach to Parent and Community Participation in NYC Schools*. She holds a B.A. from Brown University and a Master's Degree in Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

**Whitney A. Taylor (ACLU of Massachusetts)**

Whitney A. Taylor is the Political Director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts. Whitney has been building advocacy campaigns at the local, state and national level for over 20 years. She received her B.A. in Criminal Justice and an M.S. in Public Policy from American University in Washington D.C.

**James Vega (North High School, Worcester)**

James Vega is a 10th grade student in the Health & Science Academy at North High School. He is actively involved in the NJROTC program, where he holds a Petty Officer 1st Class ranking. James enjoys playing soccer and lacrosse. James wants to one day become a Child Psychologist. He has been a Restorative Justice Peer Leader for two years and a co-facilitator of Circles.