

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

[Nichelle Adams](#) | Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF)

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[Brett Schmidt](#) | Learning Cross, Inc.

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[Dana Jo Stanton](#) | Northwest Kansas Economic Innovation Center, Inc.

[Logan Stenseng](#) | Thrive Allen County

[Cornelia Stevens, Chair](#) | TOP Early Learning Centers

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

[Tara Taylor](#) | USD 470 Arkansas City Public Schools

[Marie Treichel](#) | Kansas Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (KAIMH)

[Cora Ungerer](#) | Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) – System of Supports

[Jateice Vieux](#) | USD 226 Meade Elementary and Junior High School

[Tricia Waggoner](#) | Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) Bureau of Family Health

[Dr. Stephanie Wiggins](#) | Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO), Kansas Infant Toddler Specialist Network (KITS)

[Christie Wyckoff](#) | Kansas Children’s Cabinet and Trust Fund

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Nichelle Adams

Kansas Department for Children and Families
Early Education and Child Services Assistant Director



I currently work as the Early Education and Child Care Services Manager for the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF). I have been with DCF for 15 years in various positions, including serving as a business analyst for our benefit eligibility system, staff development specialist for Economic and Employment Services (EES) programs, and determined eligibility for EES human services programs. Prior to that, I determined eligibility for most state medical programs that involved children. I was a home visitor for Early Head Start and Healthy Families in the past. I have also been a director at a child care center.

I will serve on the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel as the representative of the state agency responsible for child care. DCF is the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) lead agency. The main focus of the CCDF funds is to increase the availability, affordability and quality of child care. The work we do with CCDF funds ultimately serves to help improve the lives of Kansas children and this is also the central role of the Kansas Early Childhood Recommendations Panel. Helping children is my true passion.

I love oil painting, fishing, cooking and my family, including my husky.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Kristen Alhareedi

Sedgwick County Health Department
Healthy Babies Program Manager



Throughout my academic and professional careers, I have worked with vulnerable and historically excluded communities. As a mother with 3 children, all with learning differences—including a child currently in early learning—I have worked tirelessly to become more proficient in best practices.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Marites Altuna

Kansas State School for the Blind
Statewide Birth to 3 Program Coordinator for Vision Services



As the Program Coordinator, my primary responsibility is to oversee and coordinate vision services for children from birth to three years old who are blind or visually impaired. Prior to this role, I served as the Director of the Kansas DeafBlind Project, where I provided technical assistance to families and educators working with individuals ages birth to 21 with combined hearing and vision loss. I have extensive experience working with young children as an early intervention provider and an early childhood special educator. I was also a teacher of students with visual impairments serving students from preschool to 12th grade.

I earned my Master's in Early Childhood Special Education and Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Kansas. I received specialized training in deaf-blindness from Utah State University and visual impairments from Missouri State University.

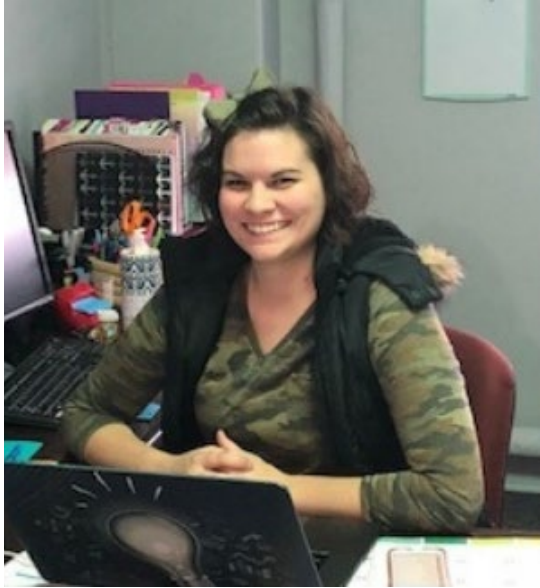
Outside of my professional roles, I enjoy volunteering in the community. I serve as a member of the Juniper Gardens Children's Project Community Advisory Board, Assistive Technology for Kansans Advisory Council, and the YMCA of Greater Kansas City Diversity, Inclusion, and Global Council. I am also the current Chair of the Women's Chamber Network of the Kansas City Kansas Chamber of Commerce and serve on the board of the KC Blind All-Stars Foundation.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Mallory Arellano

Newman University

Early Childhood Unified Program Coordinator/Assistant



I am married and a mother to two children who will be five and seven this summer. My work experience is in education where I have taught preschool, special education, and general education in the early childhood grades. I am now in charge of the early childhood unified program at Newman University. I am a passionate advocate for children and have dedicated my career to providing quality education and care for young children, from birth through age 8. I have experience in early childhood education and development, curriculum planning, and classroom management. I have a strong knowledge of child development and behavior and am committed to creating a safe and nurturing learning environment for all children.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Brenda Bandy

Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition, Inc.

Co-Executive Director



I am the Co-Executive Director of the Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition (KBC) and oversee the KBC's programs which includes work with child care providers and the early childhood system in Kansas. I am excited to bring our 9 years of experience working with child care programs to my work on the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel. We have educated over 5,000 child care providers about their unique & powerful role in supporting breastfeeding families. I also look forward to bringing our cross-sector, systems-level approach to this work. I am an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant and a retired La Leche League Leader with a passion for bringing people together to build a culture of breastfeeding support in Kansas. When not talking about breastfeeding, I can be found working on a puzzle or reading a book, waiting for one of my four young adult children to text me back.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Emily Barnes

Barnes Child Care
Child Care Provider



I am a family child care provider in Olathe, KS and the Vice President/Advocacy Chair for CCPC. My professional background includes special education and applied behavior analysis. I love providing care to children and their families and I also participate in advocacy work on behalf of family child care providers. This has offered me the ability to testify to committees in both the KS Senate and House of Representatives. I have enjoyed the past 3 terms on the Recommendations Panel and look forward to the work we will continue to do.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Sheila Bertelsen

Dodge City Public School-Bright Beginnings Early Childhood Center
Education Specialist



I am beginning my ninth year as Education Disability Specialist for Bright Beginnings Early Childhood Center-Dodge City Public Schools. I oversee the education and disability components of our federal Head Start grant and Kansas At-Risk grant. I work to align with Dodge City Public School initiatives to promote a Birth to Grade 12 alignment of high-quality education for all of the students in our community. Other duties include CLASS observer of 0-5 classrooms, primary LEA, oversight of curriculum, and assessment database systems, Kindergarten Transition Data Manager, and management team member of program oversight.

I initially worked in the family plumbing/HVAC business for ten years and felt called to the vocation of teaching. I worked to obtain my degree as a mother of four, at the age of 30, while working full-time. I graduated Magna Cum Laude from Newman University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education. I worked two years as a preschool teacher, four years as a Kindergarten teacher, and another four years as a second-grade teacher. I received my Master's degree in Educational Leadership from Kansas State University.

I am remarried and am a mother of six children in a blended household. We currently have three children in college (KU, K-State, NWOSU), one daughter in cosmetology school, one son in the workforce, and the eldest daughter is an educator/Head VB Coach at Maize South. We are officially empty-nesters. I love to take pictures and have documented all of our children's sports activities and life events. This will continue, as I have one son playing college football.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Dana Book

Kansas Children's Service League

Training Specialist



As a father of four, I've had an interest in early childhood outcomes for over 30 years. However, as my children have gotten older, my perspective has shifted to helping other parents & caregivers provide supports to their children and families. After more than 25 years in retail and food service management, I joined KCSL in 2018 as a Parent Engagement & Leadership Coordinator, and since April 2021, I have worked as a training specialist focused on ACEs, resilience and Family-Friendly Workplaces.

I currently live in my hometown of Topeka with my wife and 2 daughters, cat, hamster and hedgehog. My free time is consumed wondering how to use all the cool crafty things I've accumulated, watching the Royals lose and the occasional trip to Colorado or Seattle.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Tanya Bulluck

Child Start, Inc.
Executive Director



I am an accomplished professional with more than 20 years in the field of early childhood education. As the Executive Director at Child Start, I am responsible for overseeing the organization's mission to provide high-quality education and care to young children. My passion for early childhood education stems from my belief that every child deserves the best possible start in life. I have dedicated my career to advocating for policies and programs that support children's development and well-being. I earned a bachelor's degree in Organizational Leadership from Southwestern College and a Master of Leadership from Southwestern College.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Eldonna Chesnut

Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE)
Division Director of Child Care Licensing



Eldonna Chesnut, RN, BSN, MSN is employed by Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) as Division Director of Child Care Licensing since 2001. She has a master's degree in nursing administration, a bachelor's degree in nursing, and a graduate level certificate in Public Health Ethics. She is also a member of the inaugural class of Kansas Public Health Leadership Institute and served on their advisory board after program completion.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Kristina Cullison

Frontenac Public Schools

Pre-K Teacher



Currently I am in my 7th year teaching for Frontenac Public Schools. I have been in Pre-K for 4 years and taught Kindergarten for 3 years. I have had the unique opportunity to begin work on a new early learning facility for my community in conjunction with my 501c3, New Foundations, the school district, and a local manufacturing plant, SugarCreek. We hope to open in January 2024 and will serve 210 children. In addition to my professional experience, I am a mom of 3 kiddos who are 4, 3 and 1 and am due in 5 weeks with baby number 4! I am in the trenches of building a child care facility because of necessity for myself, but also more early learning opportunities for the families I serve.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Jarvis Doleman

Kansas Department for Health and Environment (KDHE)
Child Care Licensing Director



I am the Section Director for Early Care & Youth Programs/Child Care Licensing for the Department of Health and Environment. I have been in my role since September of 2022. Prior to coming to KDHE, I was employed for 12 years at Prairie Band Casino and Resort serving as a Surveillance Shift Manager. I obtained my bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, with a minor in Social Work from the University of Tennessee at Martin. Outside of work I serve as the Program Director for a youth mentoring group called Young Minds Determined to Be Great (YMDG) which is a part of Topeka's own non-profit organization Omni Circle Group. I am married with 4 children, a three year old as well as three teenagers who are all currently in middle school. The non-profit work and the children's activities all keep me on the go! I am excited to be a part of this group which plays a large role in solving the issues and furthering the great work already being done in early childhood throughout the State of Kansas.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Nick Engels

Little's Early Learning

Owner



Nick Engels, a former educator turned entrepreneur, boasts an impressive career trajectory that reflects his dedication to both education and business. With 12 years of experience in the classroom, Mr. Engels made a significant transition by establishing a property management and construction company, which he continues to successfully run to this day. Leveraging his extensive background in public education and property management, he identified a compelling opportunity in the childcare sector, igniting a newfound passion for this domain.

Together with his wife, Nick Engels currently owns and operates a childcare center in Benton, KS, showcasing their commitment to providing top-notch childcare services to the local community. Additionally, they have forged a meaningful partnership with USD 375 - Circle Public Schools, offering essential services such as summer care, opposite Pre-K half-day care, and latchkey care within the school's premises.

Driven by a desire to make a positive impact in the childcare industry, Mr. Engels and his wife are proactively exploring further opportunities to expand their reach and influence. Their vision involves building and/or acquiring additional childcare centers, working with school systems and businesses, with the aim of offering exceptional care and early childhood education to a broader demographic.

With a solid foundation in education and business, Nick Engels exemplifies the qualities of a visionary entrepreneur. His passion for childcare, coupled with a track record of success, positions him as a significant player in the field, contributing to the well-being and development of young minds in the communities he serves.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Kerri Falletti

KDC-Office of Rural Prosperity
Grassroots Strategy Developer



Kerri Falletti has worked as the Grassroots Strategy Developer in the Office of Rural Prosperity (ORP) with Kansas Department of Commerce since December 2021. The ORP was created to target and address issues facing rural communities across the state in the primary focus areas of housing, childcare, broadband and infrastructure, healthcare, workforce, and community development. A goal of the ORP is to equip communities with the tools and training to work on making progress in the areas. Previously, she worked for Cowley First – Cowley County Economic Development Partnership for 18 years, serving as director for 12 years. As a countywide partnership, she led the organization's dedication to providing services and program creation to support local entrepreneurs and small businesses, in retention, expansion and recruitment of businesses, workforce development services, and supporting community development initiatives.

She earned her bachelor's degree from Friends University in Business Administration and has served as a business consultant. She is a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD), is a member of National Rural Economic Developers Association (NREDA) and has served on several local, regional and state boards including Kansas Economic Development Alliance (KEDA) and Team Kansas. Throughout her career and experiences, Kerri has been passionate about supporting businesses and in making connections for communities to thrive and grow. She is married with three children and grandmother of three.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Bronwyn Fees

Kansas State University

Professor and Associate Dean



I am a professor in early childhood education and associate dean for academic affairs in the College of Health and Human Sciences at Kansas State University. Since 1998, I have taught in pre-service teacher education and graduate studies and engaged in research, publishing, and presenting on children's physical activity in the early childhood classrooms. As associate dean, I am responsible for the coordination of academic processes, courses and curriculum within the college including distance programs and coordination/integration with larger academic systems across the university. As part of my role, I also provide leadership for several national organizations.

Prior to K-State I taught in as well as administered programs for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in university settings as well as provided direct services to neurodiverse youth and their parents (also neurodiverse) in a home visiting program designed to support basic living skills. I am a board member for and PI of Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc. (KCCTO) and currently lead the implementation planning process for the Career Pathway for Kansas Early Care and Education.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Lyda Fincham

Hopeful Beginnings Counseling Services, Inc.

Owner/Therapist



I am a mother of two amazing children, daughter age 12 and son age 4. Due to some hearing difficulties that led to speech delays/regression and social emotional struggles we sought out early childhood services for him around age 2 1/2.

Not only do I have the experience of being a parent of a child who received early childhood services, I am also a Marriage and Family Therapist and have been practicing for 15 years. I work with children of all ages, including ages 0-5. I am trained in play therapy and also Theraplay which is a therapy focused on building attachment or strengthening attachment in children and primary care givers.

I hope my experiences both as a mother of a child who received services and also as a therapist working with children are helpful to the panel. I look forward to working with you.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Kelly Frantz-Langford

TARC

Director of Children's Services and Assistive Technology



I have worked in the field of early childhood for over 18 years in Kansas. After graduating with a master's degree in early childhood special education from the University of Kansas, I began my career with TARC's tiny-k program as an early childhood special education teacher. After 8 years, I took a leadership position with TARC where I established connections with many early childhood programs in the community and across the state. I obtained my building leadership license and became the director of TARC's Children's Services. This work requires the oversight of four programs, including tiny-k, that are designed to support individuals of many abilities in accessing and fully participating in their early childhood communities.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Amy Gottschamer

Googols of Learning Child Development Center
Owner/Executive Director



I opened Googols of Learning Child Development Center in Lawrence in 2008. I have an M.A. in History and an M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education with an emphasis in Administration. I hold a KDHE Program Director's license for over 100 children, and a National Director's Credential. I have served on state board of KSAEYC since 2016 and served as the Past President of the Lawrence Chapter for 4 years. I've worked on the Workforce Development Advisory Group, including various subcommittees, and served 2 years on the Recommendations Panel. Locally, I've worked with the Lawrence School District, as an advisor for their Teacher Cadet program and received some of their student interns until COVID set in. My pet projects are the Unifying Framework and Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education initiatives, by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). For the last three years I have facilitated a PDG/All in for Kansas Kids grant opportunity in Douglas County for providers interested in learning about teaching Anti-Bias Education (ABE) in early childhood education settings. Each year, I enabled a new cohort of participants to receive free ABE training, and classrooms materials and I hosted monthly Community of Practice meetings to enhance their learning. My personal interests are: History, Genealogy, Quilting, Reading, Political Podcasts, and Audiobooks.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Kim Kennedy

Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF)

Head Start Collaboration Office Director



I work for the Department for Children and Families (DCF) as the Head Start Collaboration Director (HSCO). My career at DCF began in 2004 in the Economic Employment Services division with determining eligibility for DCF human services programs. Prior to that I worked as an early childhood special education teacher.

I will serve on the panel to assist the efforts of Head Start agencies to engage in effective coordination and collaboration. The role of the HSCO is to collaborate with entities involved in state and local planning processes to better meet the needs of low-income children from birth to school entry, and their families. The Early Childhood Recommendations Panel will provide Kansas with the opportunity to improve this coordination and delivery of early childhood education and development services. Early intervention is key to making a difference in the lives of children and families. As a member of the Panel, I look forward to being part of this work.

My personal interest includes: baking, reading, gardening and spending time outdoors. Most of all I enjoy spending time with my family.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Tanya Koehn

Child Care Aware of Kansas

Director of Families and Community Services



I currently work as the Director of Families and Communities Services for Child Care Aware of Kansas (CCA KS). I have been with CCA KS for 18 years in various positions, currently I oversee on with their Referral Center to assist families looking for child care, their early childhood data collection to partner with other early childhood state partners to look at the early childhood landscape, and with their community engagement work. I have always had love for the early childhood world, I worked in a preschool in high school, worked for Head Start and ran my own family child care program. I am excited to serve on the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel and partner with other early childhood experts to enhance early childhood services to families, child care providers and communities.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Hilary Koehn

Kansas Parents as Teachers Association (KPATA)

Interim Executive Director/Quality Implementation and Affiliate Director



Hilary is an early childhood professional who believes strongly in providing high-quality, intentional support to early childhood staff, students, and families in Kansas. She is currently working for Kansas Parents as Teachers Association as the Interim Executive Director as well as the Quality Implementation and Affiliate Director. In her former role as Early Childhood Lead for Wichita Public Schools, she provided leadership in program development and implementation of early childhood programs, especially Parents as Teachers and At-Risk PreK. She has been working with PAT for over 15 years. She also works as an early childhood consultant.

Hilary has had the incredible opportunity over the last 22 years to work in various roles within the early childhood spectrum including classroom teacher, parent educator, curriculum coach and early childhood leadership/management. These different roles and experiences in early childhood programs have enabled her to work with multiple ages of children and parents from a variety of different demographic backgrounds. The vast majority of her experience has been in working with preschoolers and toddlers. She previously served as a member of the Kansas Parents as Teachers Association Board, the Sedgwick County Early Childhood Coordinating Council and the Kansas Preschool Program Leadership Team.

Hilary believes that by providing parents, educators and program leaders with research based professional development, support and early childhood resources, we can accomplish the mission of strengthening early childhood services across the state of Kansas to better prepare our young students for lifelong success. She is a strong advocate for community partnerships that help early childhood programs to thrive in their communities.

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Katrina Lowry

Russell Child Development Center
Early Childhood Programs Director



Katrina Lowry is the Early Childhood Programs Director at Russell Child Development Center, overseeing multiple early childhood programs across 19 counties. These programs include the Triple P Positive Parenting Program, Learn & Play Parent Child Interaction Groups, Growing Together Home Visiting Program, the ABC Program, Finding the Light, and the Cribs for Kids Program. Katrina is passionate about providing quality early childhood and family resource services in rural and frontier areas, particularly in Southwest Kansas.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Karen MacCrory

Mitchell County Partnership for Children
School Readiness Specialist



A passion for early childhood has been the driving force behind my transition from childcare worker, to center director, to licensed educator with a degree in Early Childhood Unified. I currently serve early childhood as a school readiness specialist for Mitchell County Partnership for Children, an ECBG funded organization. As a school readiness specialist I serve both childcare and preschool classrooms in four rural counties in north central Kansas, completing IGDIs, P-3 and myIGDI's assessments. I work directly with children to support their development helping ensure they enter kindergarten meeting developmental benchmarks. I also provide mentoring and training to early childhood educators, including conducting CLASS observations and engaging in learning focused coaching conversations with them. I meet with district leadership to discuss the importance of quality early childhood experiences and how they fit into the framework of Kindergarten readiness in our state. I assist in writing and managing early childhood grants for the organization as well. I recently completed the National P-3 leadership course, and that experience highlighted for me the importance of collaboration. I am interested in being a part of the ongoing discussions regarding early childhood in our nation. Our state is focused on Early Childhood and this panel is a wonderful opportunity to be a part of discussions that will help shape the future.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Malissa Martin

SparkWheel, Inc.

President/CEO



I'm the President and CEO of SparkWheel, Inc., which was previously Communities In Schools of Mid-America, which is headquartered in Lawrence and serves multiple states. I've been in this position since 2007 and have been thrilled to be a Kansan since 2005. I was with the Communities In Schools network in different places since 1999, beginning in Houston and working at the local, state and national levels. On July 1, 2023, Communities In Schools of Mid-America became SparkWheel. Our name changed, but our commitment remains the same for our work in the early childhood through post-secondary spaces. We will continue to place staff on school campuses to provide prevention and intervention services.

In my career and life, I've had the opportunity to work and live in urban, suburban, rural, and frontier communities, which gives me a broad perspective. I am deeply interested in children and family issues, and most of my career has focused on that, although I began in the corporate and small business arena.

Being a part of the panel is very exciting for me. I hope that my experience and perspective are a benefit to the group, and as a lifelong learner, I am looking forward to learning a lot.

I'm also a creative person, and I spend a lot of time quilting, gardening, and designing things in my head. I have two grown sons, a daughter-in-law, and two grandsons in the KC Metro and spend as much time with them as possible. I have a close-knit family still living in Texas and visit there or have them here frequently.

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Natalie McClane

Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE)

Education Program Consultant, Early Childhood Team



I am Natalie McClane, an Education Program Consultant on the Early Childhood Team at KSDE. I oversee the Preschool-Aged At-Risk and Kansas Preschool Pilot Grant programs across the state. I've worked in the Early Childhood field for about 20 years and love the collaboration the Recommendation Panel allows me to have with Early Childhood Programs across the state.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Cheisa Myles

Blessed Assurance Daycare

Owner/Lead Teacher



I am a licensed child care professional with over 20 years of childcare experience. I own/operate my in home daycare, Blessed Assurance Daycare, and live in Manhattan KS with my two sons, Braxton 17 and Desmond 11, and my husband, Randy. I am a recent graduate from the University of Kansas with a degree in Leadership Studies and Diversity Equity and Inclusion. My passion is teaching and advocating for all children and helping parents along the way.

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Dr. Leigh Anne Neal

USD 512 Shawnee Mission School District

Chief of Early Education/Sustainability



Dr. Leigh Anne Neal is currently serving as the Chief of Early Childhood Education and Sustainability for the Shawnee Mission School District. Currently in her 29th year in education, she has spent the past seven years overseeing early childhood programming and previously served as Associate Superintendent for Communications. She began her career as a special educator and elementary (third grade and kindergarten) classroom teacher before being promoted to a district-level administrative role. Neal has held other positions during her career including director of public information and building principal at the early childhood education center.

Neal earned a doctorate in educational leadership from Baker University; a master's degree in educational leadership from Pittsburg State University; a bachelor of science degree in elementary and special education from Avila University; and a bachelor of arts degree in broadcast journalism from Southern Methodist University.

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Stephanie Parks, PhD, OTR/L

University of Kansas Department of Special Education
Associate Teaching Professor in Early Childhood Unified



Stephanie is an Associate Teaching Professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of Kansas. She teaches courses in the blended initial licensure Early Childhood Unified teacher preparation program and is the Coordinator of Field Experiences, supervising graduate and undergraduate students in their student teaching experiences. Stephanie previously worked for the Early Childhood Personnel Center to provide technical assistance to states in developing their early childhood personnel development systems. As a practitioner, Stephanie has served children and families in Part C and 619 programs as an occupational therapist and early childhood special educator for over 20 years in the Kansas City Metropolitan area.

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Patty Peschel

Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc. (KCCTO)
Director



As the Director of Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO), I have experience working with multiple early childhood quality improvement projects at both the state and national level for 20 years. I oversee two grant funded projects which include the Workforce Professional Development System and the KCCTO-KITS Infant Toddler Specialist Network. Both projects focus on supporting the early childhood workforce, programs, and system.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Tabatha Rosproy

Kansas Parent Information Resource Center
Early Childhood Project Coordinator



Tabatha Rosproy is a 13-year early childhood educator, and the first pre-school teacher to ever be named National Teacher of the Year. She was awarded this honor in 2020 and has spent the last several years speaking for organizations around the country, elevating the work of early childhood educators and the students and families they serve. Tabatha is passionate about social-emotional learning, working with families, and empowering educators to be advocates for their field. Tabatha is well-known for helping to create a full-day public pre-school classroom inside of a nursing home in Winfield, Kansas called “Cumbernauld Little Vikes” and loves to work with schools to create intergenerational partnerships. Tabatha has transitioned into a new role with Kansas Parent Information Resource Center where she travels the state training schools on best practices in Early Childhood Education and Family Engagement. She resides in Olathe, KS with her husband, Tim.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Bethany Samuel

Department for Children and Families (DCF)

QRIS Supports Manager



I am part of the DCF Links to Quality team as well as manage the CCDF consumer education website. This connects me to several other consumer education and provider support efforts around the state. Before joining the Links to Quality team, I worked at DCF as an EES Human Service Supervisor, managing the application teams for SNAP, TANF, and Child Care Assistance for my county. I have my master's degree in Intercultural Studies, and I love learning about different people groups. My education, together with my previous and current job experience, brings together my passions of learning about people and figuring out how best to serve them.

I live in Johnson County with my husband, our two children, and our family dog. We enjoy hiking, board games, and spending family time together.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Brett Schmidt

Learning Cross Inc.
Executive Director



I am the Executive Director and Founder of Learning Cross Inc., a multi-site intergenerational Child Care. I have been focused on early childhood from teaching as a Kindergarten and 1st grade teacher, child care provider coach, preschool teacher and child care director. I graduated with a B.A. in Early Childhood Education from Marietta College and received my M.S. in Brain-Based Teaching and Learning from Nova Southeastern University.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Lisa Schmidt

Women's Community Y Child Development Center
Executive Director



My journey to early learning has had some extended detours. My bachelors is in Family and Consumer Science and after college I spent over 20 years in sales both wholesale and retail. These career deviations have prepared me for my current position as the Executive Director of the Women's Community Y in Leavenworth, Kansas. I became familiar with the Y when our twins (that are now juniors in college) attended preschool here. I then was asked to serve on the board of directors and when the previous Executive Director retired, I received a call from a board member.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Heather Schrotberger

Kansas Head Start Association
Executive Director



Heather Schrotberger, a life-long Kansan, has worked for nearly 25 years in the early education field. Most recently, as an early childhood consultant, she has provided strategic planning, project management, facilitation, and grant writing services to local, state, and national early education organizations. Prior to that, she served as the Director of Project Eagle/Educare Kansas City at the University of Kansas Medical Center, an early education program serving children ages birth to five, and their families, in Wyandotte County, KS. She has participated in numerous collaborations and efforts to promote excellence and innovation in the field of early education and enjoys working with diverse groups of individuals committed to making a difference for young children and their families. Heather resides in the Overland Park area with her family.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Dana Jo Stanton

Northwest Kansas Economic Innovation Center, Inc.
Childcare Program Specialist



I am the current Childcare Program Specialist for the Northwest Kansas Economic Innovation Center. It is my job to provide support for communities trying to address child care needs and for professionals working in the field. I started this job in July 2022. Before that I was a grant writer and program supervisor for the USD 489 Early Childhood Connections program. I held that position for 17 years.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Logan Stenseng

Thrive Allen County

Policy and Strategic Initiatives Coordinator



(is cut off on excel spreadsheet) up in El Dorado, KS and graduated from high school there in 2017. I then attended KU, completing my Bachelor's degree in public administration and public policy. For six years I have been very involved in civic engagement and advocacy efforts, where my passion for community organizing in Kansas grew. I have had work experiences in local government, state government, and higher education which I have learned a great deal from. I currently reside in Iola, KS and plan on staying in Kansas for the duration of my public service career and life.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Cornelia Stevens, Chair

TOP Early Learning Centers
Executive Director



Cornelia Stevens is the Executive Director of TOP Early Learning Centers. Cornelia has more than 20 years of experience developing collaborative partnerships, creating opportunities for new business development, assessing and identifying needed services, program development, and monitoring the quality and effectiveness of programs and services. Cornelia received her education at Ohio University with a degree in Music Therapy, and at Baker University with a Masters in Business Administration.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Tara Taylor

USD 470 Arkansas City Public Schools

Head Start Director



I became the USD 470 Director for Head Start in July 2020 after 25 years in special education as well as building and district level administration. I have a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Southwestern College, and Master's Degrees in Special Education and Building/District Leadership from Emporia State University.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Marie Treichel

Kansas Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (KAIMH)

Program Manager



I am the project manager for KAIMH, currently working on a DCF grant to expand Infant Mental Health Endorsement® opportunities to early educators. I have worked in integrated early learning classrooms, family child care programs, and as a provider services manager at Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas where I oversaw grant work and provided direct services (coaching and education) to early learning educators. I am currently involved in project work for CCAEKS that includes community engagement, professional development and coaching.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Cora Ungerer

Kansas Department of Health & Education – System of Supports (KDHE)

Family and Consumer Partnership Program Coordinator



My position at KDHE is to help build partnerships with families from all over the state with different experiences and backgrounds. A large part of my position is to organize and manage our Family Advisory Council which focuses on improving services for the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) populations. Because of this, I hear a lot about what works and where gaps are for families in different areas with different needs.

Outside of my professional experience with communities, I have 3 kids of my own. Their ages are currently 4, 6, and 12, the younger two were both born in Kansas and have grown up here, the 12yo has lived here since he was 5.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Jateice Vieux

USD 226 Meade Elementary and Junior High School

At Risk Preschool Teacher



This year will be my second year as an At-Risk preschool teacher serving 3-5 year old students. Before returning to school to earn my Early Childhood Unified degree I was an in-home child care provider for 11 years. So I may be new to teaching preschool, but I am not new to working with young children and their families. I have been serving the Birth-5+ year old population within my community for many years and I am passionate about making sure these kids and their families have access to as many opportunities for success as possible. When I'm not in the classroom, my husband and I can be found at one of the numerous activities our 15 year old son and 11 year old daughter have decided to participate in.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Tricia Waggoner

Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)
Part C Coordinator



Tricia has an Associate's Degree in Fine Art, a Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology with a minor in History, and a Master's Degree in Anthropology. She has worked for the state for 16 years in a variety of roles for educational and statutory programs. She lives in Topeka with her partner Eric, dog River and her cat Bast. She has two adult children, a daughter named Cheyenne and a son named Jack.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Dr. Stephanie Wiggins

Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO), Kansas Infant Toddler Specialist Network (KITS)
Technical Assistance Specialist



Dr. Stephanie Wiggins is currently a Technical Assistance Specialist with the Infant-Toddler Specialist Network, part of the Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities program. She has worked extensively in the field of early childhood, with more than 15 years of professional experience as an infant teacher, toddler teacher, center director, college instructor, and her current role as a coach for early childhood providers throughout the state of Kansas. Her areas of interest include leadership, behavior and guidance, and anti-bias.

She holds a Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D in Human Development and Family Sciences, and has experience with the Environmental Rating Scales, CLASS observations, and Conscious Discipline. Her career focus includes increasing the capacity and empowerment of childcare providers.

2023-2024 Early Childhood Recommendations Panel Members

Christie Wyckoff

Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund
Coordinator



Christie Wyckoff joined the Children's Cabinet in May 2023. She graduated from Kansas State in 2008 with a BS in Management and Marketing. Before working in School Finance at KSDE for almost 5 years, she worked in the custom apparel industry through college and 10 years after.

Christie likes to volunteer and was a big sister through Big Brother Big Sisters for 6 years until she aged out of the program (but nothing has changed since then as they still talk all the time!) Her family, friends (and their families) are Christie's motivation for her professional and community work.

She has been a K-State Football & Basketball season ticket holder for 20+ years and will travel almost anywhere to watch them. Christie also loves to garden and work on projects for her historic home. Summers on the lake, travelling, and live music are also big passions.