

About Our Speakers

Donna Bahorich is the chair of the 15-member State Board of Education. A Republican from Houston, Bahorich was first elected to the board in 2012 and Gov. Greg Abbott appointed her board chair in June 2015. During her tenure on the board, she has focused on shortening and strengthening the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, making the instructional materials adoption process more transparent and supporting high-quality charter schools. The annual Learning Roundtable was Bahorich's brainchild and this is the third roundtable that has provided free training to Texas educators and policymakers. Bahorich, who worked in the telecommunications industry, holds a bachelor's degree from Virginia Tech University and a master's degree in counseling from Liberty University.

Arturo Cavazos is superintendent of the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District. He has served as a member of the State Board for Educator Certification since 2016. A recognized education leader, Cavazos is the 2017 Texas PTA Superintendent of the Year and the 2017 Region 1 Superintendent of the Year. Cavazos serves on the Future-Ready Superintendents Leadership Network and the University of Texas College of Education Advisory Council. He is active in numerous civic and professional groups. Cavazos received a bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Texas Pan-American and a doctorate from The University of Texas at Austin.

Blair Claussen is the project manager for the Texas Lesson Study initiative at the Texas Education Agency. Prior to this role, she was a digital learning specialist, a job in which she coordinated statewide projects including the Texas Gateway, Texas SUCCESS, and online professional development courses. Before her work at TEA, Claussen was a fifth-grade math and science teacher at Main Street Intermediate School in the Taylor Independent School District. Claussen began her educational career during her studies at the University of Chicago and internships in the Chicago Public Schools.

A.J. Crabill is the deputy commissioner for governance at the Texas Education Agency. Prior to his work at TEA, Crabill served for eight years on the Kansas City, Missouri school board. Crabill has provided governance training to school boards across the country. Crabill has also served on the board of the Missouri School Boards Association, the executive committee of the Council of the Great City Schools, the policy committee for the National School Boards Association, and as a visiting fellow with Education Pioneers. Prior to his work in education, Crabill was a software consultant. He attended the University of Kansas.

Macy Dale is a second-year teacher at Becker Elementary School in the Austin Independent School District. Dale obtained her Bachelor of Science in Applied Learning and Development at The University of Texas at Austin in 2016, with a specialization in reading and literacy. While at the university, Dale developed a passion for equity within education, specifically as it intersects with areas of race, class, gender, and culture. Dale has devoted her time in education to

working at Title 1 schools, and is committed to providing the highest quality instruction for all students.

Alejandro Delgado is the strategic initiatives specialist for the Office of Educator Support at the Texas Education Agency. Previously, he worked in community development and was a teacher and principal at IDEA Public Schools in Brownsville and Austin. He is a graduate of Georgetown University and The University of Texas at Austin.

Peter M. DeWitt is a former teacher and principal. He runs workshops and provides keynotes nationally and internationally focusing on collaborative leadership, fostering inclusive school climates, and connected learning. His work has been adopted at the state and university level. DeWitt works with numerous school districts and school boards on collaborative leadership around North America and the United Kingdom. He wrote a syndicated blog called Finding Common Ground, which was published by *Education Week*, for six years and now writes a monthly opinion article for the publication. A successful author with Corwin Press, DeWitt released *School Climate: Leading with Collective Efficacy* in 2017, and his 2016 release, *Collaborative Leadership: Six Influences that Matter Most*, has become a bestseller. He holds a doctorate of education from Sage College of Albany.

Jill Harrison Druessedow is chair of the State Board for Educator Certification. She was appointed to this post by Gov. Greg Abbott in 2007. Druessedow is a journalism and English teacher at Haskell High School in the Haskell Independent School District. She also chairs the high school's English department and serves as its publication director. She is a member of the National and Texas Councils of Teachers of English and the Texas Association of Journalism Educators. Druessedow received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from Midwestern State University, and completed postgraduate work at Hardin Simmons University and Abilene Christian University.

Stacey Edmonson is dean of the College of Education at Sam Houston State University, where she has been professor of educational leadership since 2000. During her 25-year career in education, she has also served as a teacher, principal, and central office administrator in Texas public schools. She chairs the Board of Examiners for the National Council of the Accreditation of Teacher Education and has been an officer and board member in several state, regional, and national organizations. This includes her current roles as president-elect of the Teacher Education Council for State Colleges and Universities and president-elect of the Texas Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (TACTE). She earned her bachelor's degree from Texas A&M University and her master's and doctoral degrees in educational administration from Texas A&M University-Commerce.

Chris Fraser is the senior dean of Relay Houston, where he oversees teacher preparation. He began his education career as a Teach For America corps member in the Houston Independent School District. He also worked as a social studies teacher for YES Prep, a Texas charter school, and worked in various rolls for Relay and Teach for America. Fraser recently taught core pedagogy and secondary social studies to graduate students at Relay's Newark campus. Fraser

earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Florida and a master's degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Allison Ashley Friedlander is an instructional coach at Becker Elementary School in the Austin Independent School District and was named the 2017 Texas Teacher of the Year. During her 10 years as a bilingual teacher, she served as a grade-level leader and represented teachers on the Campus and District Advisory Councils. As a Board Certified teacher, Friedlander has mentored candidates pursuing National Board Certification through a candidacy program in her district and Teach For America. Knowing that teachers have the power to influence policy and shape their profession, she has served as a National Teacher Fellow with Hope Street Group and a Texas Teacher Advisory Board member at Teach Plus. She holds degrees from Boston College and Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Encarnacion Garza is a professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio. During 31 years as a K-12 educator, Garza served as a teacher, counselor, director of an alternative education center, school principal, field service agent and school superintendent. He joined the UTSA faculty 13 years ago. Garza is the coordinator of the Urban School Leaders Collaborative, a partnership between UTSA and the San Antonio Independent School District which prepares aspiring school leaders. He earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Texas at Pan American and his doctorate degree from The University of Texas at Austin.

Krystal Goree has served for 15 years as the director of Professional Practice in the School of Education at Baylor University and has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in teacher education and educational psychology. Goree is the partnership liaison between Baylor and the public school districts in which Baylor teacher-preparation candidates are placed for field experiences. She oversees both teacher certification and state assessment and works closely with Baylor and public school faculty to support teacher education candidates during their clinical experiences. Goree also facilitates partnership professional development for public school mentor teachers and clinical instructors, teacher-education candidates, and Baylor School of Education faculty. She holds three degrees, including her doctorate from Baylor University.

Cassandra Herring is president & chief executive officer of the *Branch Alliance for Educator Diversity (BranchED)*. BranchED is a nationwide effort to maximize programming and drive innovation in preparing highly-effective diverse educators for all learners. The organization provides practical technical assistance to advance institutional outcomes, foster strategic alliances to spur collaboration and innovation, and amplify the unique contributions of minority serving institutions in preparing teachers who will educate America's citizens. Herring served as dean of the School of Education and Human Development at Hampton University for nearly 10 years. Herring holds a bachelor's and master's degrees from The University of Texas at Austin and a doctorate degree from Georgia State University

Jolisa Hoover is a fourth-grade teacher at Reed Elementary School in the Leander Independent School District in Cedar Park and is a Texas Teach Plus Policy Fellow. Hoover was a 2008 and 2014 Classroom Teaching Ambassador Fellow and worked to provide overall team coordination and alumni engagement as a 2015 Washington Fellow for the U.S. Department of Education. She was a semi-finalist for the 2013 HEB Excellence in Education Lifetime Achievement Award and the recipient of the 2012 Spirit of McMurry award, given to young McMurry University alumni who have excelled in their profession and served their community. Currently, she is the social studies teacher leader on her campus and serves on the Campus Site-based Planning Committee. Along with a bachelor's degree from McMurry University, Hoover holds a master's degree from Texas A&M University.

Susan Simpson Hull has been a Texas educator for 37 years, serving as a teacher, coach, principal, and superintendent. She has served as a superintendent for more than two decades, including her current decade-long assignment as superintendent of the Grand Prairie Independent School District. She was selected as the 2005 Texas Superintendent of the Year by the Texas Association of School Boards and the Texas Association of School Administrators. In 2014, Hull was appointed to the State Board of Educator Certification by Gov. Rick Perry. She was appointed to another term on the board in 2015 by Gov. Greg Abbott. Hull received her bachelor's and master's degrees from East Texas State University and a doctorate from Texas A&M University.

George Kazanas is superintendent of the Midway Independent School District near Waco. He previously served as superintendent in the Wichita Falls and China Springs school districts. Kazanas began his career as a business education teacher and later worked as an assistant principal, principal and assistant superintendent. Kazanas is active in many professional and civic organizations including serving as a board of director for the Texas Association of Suburban and Mid-Urban Schools, executive committee member of the Texas Association of School Administrators, and a steering committee member on the State Board of Education's Long-Range Plan for Public Education. Kazanas holds a bachelor's and master's degree from Baylor University and a doctorate from Tarleton State University.

Doug Lemov is the author of *Teach Like a Champion* (now *Teach Like a Champion 2.0*), a nationally recognized study of high performing urban teachers and their methods. He has also written a book on literacy, *Reading Reconsidered*, and a book on the role of practice in professional development, *Practice Perfect*. He works at Uncommon Schools—which runs 52 schools in cities around the North East—and leads a team that develops teacher training tools and workshops. Prior to his work at Uncommon Schools, Lemov was a school founder, a teacher and a principal. He has a bachelor's degree from Hamilton College, a master's degree from Indiana University, and a Master of Business Administration from the Harvard Business School.

Patricia Alvarez McHatton is the interim provost and vice president for Academic Affairs and the dean of the College of Education and P-16 Integration at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. McHatton has served in a variety of leadership positions in her tenure in higher

education, including department chair and associate dean for teacher preparation. McHatton was a member of the Texas Teacher Preparation Collaborative convened by Educate Texas, and was part of the select committee of deans and educators from Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) convened by the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics to explore developing quality teacher preparation programs that serve the needs of Hispanic students. McHatton holds three degrees, including her doctorate, from the University of South Florida.

Jessica McLoughlin serves as a program specialist for the Division of Educator Support within the Texas Education Agency, where her responsibilities include assisting programs focused on recruiting, supporting, and retaining effective educators throughout the state. McLoughlin holds degrees from Boston College and the University of Texas at Arlington. Throughout her education career, Jessica has focused on growing our youngest learners, serving as a prekindergarten teacher and assistant principal at the elementary level within the Houston Independent School District.

Tim Miller serves as the director of educator preparation and program accountability at the Texas Education Agency. Miller has more than 20 years of K-12 experience as a teacher, principal, central office administrator, assistant superintendent, and superintendent. He has taught graduate and undergraduate classes at Concordia University and the University of the Incarnate Word. He holds a bachelor's and master's degree from Trinity University and a doctorate from The University of Texas at Austin.

Mike Morath is the Texas commissioner of education. In office since January 2016, he heads the Texas Education Agency, which oversees pre-kindergarten through high school education for about 5.4 million public school students. He has worked to focus the state agency on his four priorities including: recruiting, supporting, and retaining teachers and principals; building a foundation of math and reading; connecting high school to career and college; and improving low-performing schools. Prior to becoming commissioner, Morath served on the Dallas Independent School District board of trustees for more than four years. He holds a bachelor's degree from George Washington University.

Madison Owen is a senior at the Advanced Technology Complex in the Denton Independent School District. She has been a member of the TeachDenton program for two years and this fall expects to earn her TeachDenton certificate, which will give her a head start on earning her Texas teaching certificate. Owen is also the Region 11a president of the Texas Association of Future Educators and will be competing at the state conference in February.

Marcus Nelson is currently the chief executive officer and superintendent of the Waco Independent School District. He previously served as superintendent of the Laredo Independent School District and was named the Texas Superintendent of the Year while there. Over the course of his career, Nelson has served as an elementary, middle and high school teacher, middle school vice principal, high school assistant principal, high school principal, and central office administrative roles. Nelson holds a bachelor's degree from Abilene Christian University,

two master's degrees and a doctorate in educational administration from Texas A&M University – Commerce.

Raymund Paredes is the commissioner of higher education at the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Prior to joining the Coordinating Board, Paredes was director of creativity and culture at the Rockefeller Foundation, then vice president for programs at the Hispanic Scholarship Fund. He spent most of his academic career at UCLA where for 30 years he was an English professor and served for 10 years as vice chancellor for Academic Development. In addition, he served as special assistant to the president of the University of California System in outreach efforts to improve access to higher education for students from educationally disadvantaged communities. In 2007, he was named one of Hispanic Business Magazine's 100 Most Influential Hispanics. He holds a bachelor's degree and a doctorate from The University of Texas at Austin and received a master's degree from the University of Southern California.

Fernanda Pierre is an eighth-grade Algebra teacher at Westchester Academy in the Spring Branch Independent School District. Previously, Pierre taught Algebra I at YES Prep Northbrook High School, and math and Algebra I at YES Prep North Forest as a Teach for America corps member. While at North Forest, she won the inaugural Jeremy Tucker Memorial Award for her dedication to students outside of the classroom including organizing field trips to promote girls in STEM and coordinating summer opportunities to outstanding students with limited options in their own neighborhoods. Pierre received a bachelor's degree from Rice University and her master's degree from RELAY Graduate School of Education, both in Houston.

Diana Richie is the director of strategic partnerships at the New Teacher Center, which is a nationally recognized non-profit organization whose mission is to improve student learning by accelerating the effectiveness of new teachers, experienced teachers and school leaders. Richie has worked to develop and implement results-oriented programs that increase the effectiveness of educators and improve student learning at organizations such as Hewlett-Packard, Oracle, Fuel Education, TRO Learning, and Spring Branch ISD. Richie holds a bachelor's degree from The University of Texas at Austin.

Scott Ridley is the dean of the College of Education at Texas Tech University. He is also a member of the State Board for Educator Certification and the Southern Regional Education Board Teacher Preparation Commission. Prior to moving to Texas Tech in 2011, Ridley worked for 20 years in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. As an associate professor of educational psychology, he taught courses and published research on learning and motivation theory, action research and classroom assessment. Ridley received a bachelor's degree from New Mexico State University and a master's degree and a doctorate from The University of Texas at Austin.

Melanie Rincones is a STEP UP graduate and a kindergarten teacher in the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District. While attending Harlingen CISD's Early College High School, Rincones completed her academic core requirements prior to her high school graduation. While attending the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, she became part of the

inaugural cohort of the UTRGV/HCISD Student Teacher Educator Preparation: University Partnership (STEP UP) program. STEP UP is a collaborative venture between UTRGV and HCISD that allowed Rincones and her fellow cohort members to be immersed in a one-year student teaching experience at Lee H. Means Elementary where she was later hired for her first teaching job after earning her bachelor's degree.

Rodrigo Rodriguez-Tovar is a fourth-grade dual language teacher at Cook Elementary School in the Austin Independent School District and has also worked as a writing literacy coach. A nationally-board certified teacher, he was named the National Bilingual Teacher of the Year 2017 by the National Association for Bilingual Education. Rodriguez-Tovar works with the National Education Association English Language Learners Cadre in providing professional development workshops to educators across the nation with advocacy for ELLs, standards-based instruction and lesson development for ELLs, and assessment of ELLs. He holds a master's degree from the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education.

Martha Salazar-Zamora is the superintendent of the Tomball Independent School District. She has been an educator for 28 years in Houston, South Texas, and Central Texas. Her past education experience includes serving as the Kingsville ISD superintendent, the deputy superintendent for curriculum, instruction and administration in Round Rock ISD, and assistant superintendent of school support services in Houston ISD. Salazar-Zamora holds a bachelor's degree from Texas A&I University, two master's degrees from Texas A&M University at Kingsville and a doctorate from Texas A&M University.

Gabriela Sanchez is a first-grade lead teacher at KIPP Explore Academy. A Houston native, Sanchez says she is motivated by her Mexican immigrant parents. Sanchez earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Houston. She is currently a graduate student in Relay Graduate School of Education.

Penny Schwinn is the chief deputy commissioner of academics at the Texas Education Agency where she oversees numerous key programs such as curriculum, student assessment, accountability, special populations, early childhood education and State Board of Education Support. Schwinn began her work in education as a high school economics and history teacher in Baltimore and also served as a new teacher coach in south Los Angeles. Her successful teaching efforts earned her the Peter Kannam Award for Teaching Excellence, an Americorps Service Award, the Street Law Supreme Court Summer Institute placement and the Gilder-Lerhman Fellowship. Prior to joining TEA, Schwinn served as assistant secretary for the Delaware Department of Education, and before that as assistant superintendent of performance management for the Sacramento City Unified School District. Schwinn earned a bachelor's degree from University of California-Berkeley and a master's degree from Johns Hopkins University. She holds a doctorate from Claremont Graduate University.

Angela Sherwood is a multi-classroom leader through the Opportunity Culture-Texas initiative at Terrell Wells Middle School in the Harlandale Independent School District in San Antonio. In her current position, Sherwood provides support to a team of 10 sixth-eighth grade math

teachers including co-teaching, collaborating on curriculum and resource development, facilitating professional learning communities, providing on-campus professional development with implementation support in the classroom, and planning interventions for students in need. Sherwood holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Amber Simpson is an executive master teacher at the Barrera Veterans Elementary School in the Somerset Independent School District. In her 18th year in education, Simpson, works with teachers of students from pre-kindergarten through fourth grade as a Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) master teacher. She helps facilitate weekly professional development meetings, during which she coaches faculty on systematically tracking their students' progress and developing action plans to reinforce strengths and address areas of improvement. This work is complemented by observing educators in the classroom, modeling and testing new instructional techniques, introducing curriculum and assessing students' learning. Simpson holds a bachelor's degree from Texas State University and a master's degree from Concordia University.

Shannon Terry is the director of professional learning for the Arlington Independent School District. In 2016, Terry received the Patsy Hochman Scholarship from the Learning Forward Foundation. This scholarship allows her to participate in the Learning Forward Academy, which requires a 2.5 year commitment. Her focus during the academy has been how to **advance agency** among first-year teachers through the implementation of innovative new teacher induction programs. Terry also represents Arlington as a member of the Deeper Learning Leadership Forum, a cohort-based experience funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. She holds a bachelor's degree from Texas A&M University- Commerce, a master's degree from Southern Methodist University, and a doctorate from Lamar University-Beaumont.

Michele Willis is a sixth-grade math teacher and mathematics department head at Fredericksburg Middle School in the Fredericksburg Independent School District. Throughout her 24 years in public education, Willis has always believed that building relationships with her students has been the key to her success in encouraging them to learn math, as well as other subjects she has taught. She stays actively involved in her campus by being a member of the Campus Leadership Team, the Process Champions Team that encourages use of the Capturing Kids' Hearts philosophy in her district, and has been participating in the Texas Lesson Study through the Region 13 Education Service Center this past fall and will continue this spring. Willis holds a bachelor's degree from Texas Tech University.

Martin Winchester serves as the deputy commissioner of educator and systems support at the Texas Education Agency. In his 23 years as an educator he has taught at the elementary, middle, and high school levels and is a former National Board Certified Teacher. For his work in education, Winchester has been the recipient of numerous honors including the Claes Nobel Educator of Distinction from the National Society of High School Scholars (2014); H.E.B. Excellence in Education regional teaching recognition (2012); finalist for the Kinder Excellence

in Teaching award (2006); IDEA College Preparatory Teacher of the Year (2006); and was honored by the Texas House of Representatives for outstanding achievement in education (2001). He holds degrees from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, the University of Minnesota and the University of Texas-Pan American.

Grace Wu is a project manager of educator standards at the Texas Education Agency. She oversees the process of drafting and revising standards for educators. Wu has taught middle school science, math and English II in Philadelphia, Austin, and Dallas. Immediately before joining TEA, she was an instructional coach and director of new teacher development in Dallas. Wu holds degrees from The University of Texas and the University of Pennsylvania.

Richard Valenta has served as a teacher, coach, campus administrator, athletic director, personnel director, assistant superintendent of human resources and now as the deputy superintendent for the Denton Independent School District during his 37-year career. In addition, he is an adjunct professor at Dallas Baptist University and a past president of the American Association of School Personnel Administrators. In 2008, Texas Association of School Personnel Administrators named him School Personnel Administrator of the Year. Through Valenta's leadership in 2011, while serving as Birdville ISD's director of personnel services, Birdville ISD became the first school district and non-profit organization in the country to win the Gallup Great Workplace Award. This award recognizes the most engaged organizations in the world.

Leah Zavala serves as the lead instructor for the Education and Training Internship Program based at the Advanced Technology Complex in the Denton Independent School District. Though she has been teaching for only six years, her reputation has already been established as a leader on her campus, in the district, and in the state.