

## Summit Speakers

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### **Sarah Abernathy**

*Deputy Executive Director, Committee for Education Funding*

Sarah Abernathy has close to 30 years of experience working on education and budget issues in both Congress and in the Administration, including at the Department of Education, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Department of Health and Human Services. For 18 years prior to joining CEF in 2016, Sarah worked on the House Budget Committee Democratic staff, most recently serving as Senior Policy Coordinator focusing on budget issues relating to education, social services, and job training as well as environmental issues. Earlier in her career she spent 6 years as a legislative assistant for Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY) and Rep. Jim Moody (D-WI).

From 1994-1998 Sarah worked at the U.S. Department of Education where she focused on rehabilitation services and adult and vocational education issues. During that time, she was detailed to the Office of Management and Budget's education branch where she supervised policy and budgets for special education and vocational rehabilitation. She was also detailed to the Health and Human Services' regional office in San Francisco where she worked on child care and Head Start programs. Sarah graduated from Williams College and later earned a Master's in Public Affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University.



### **Annie Baldauf**

*Manager, Communications, Council for Exceptional Children*

Annie Baldauf is the Communications Manager at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). As Communications Manager, Annie develops content and messaging for communications initiatives and supports the development and implementation of CEC's marketing campaigns. She also manages the communication platforms and channels for all of CEC's communications including, email, websites, and social media while striving to expand the reach of CEC's mission. Prior to joining CEC in 2016, Annie was the Digital Communications Coordinator at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the Marketing and Communications Coordinator at the North American Insulation Manufacturers Association as well as served as a Teach for America Corps Member in

Arkansas. Annie holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History from American University. Beyond the communications and marketing arena, Annie volunteers with the Northern Virginia Girls on the Run Program and is an avid runner.



## **Mary Brownell**

*Professor of Special Education, University of Florida and Vice President, Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children*

Mary Brownell is a Professor of Special Education at the University of Florida. She has spent much of her research specializing in issues relating to teachers who work with students with disabilities. Recently, she has studied how school districts can prepare, develop, and retain high quality special education teachers. Her recent research efforts focus on improving the reading instruction of both general and special education teachers and improving the induction of beginning special education teachers into the classroom. In collaboration with her colleagues from UF, she has received over \$11,000,000 in funding from OSEP and IES.



## **Johnny W. Collett**

*Assistant Secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education*

Johnny Collett is the assistant secretary in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the United States Department of Education. In this capacity, he serves as the advisor to the U.S. education secretary on matters related to the education of children and youths with disabilities, as well as employment and community living for youths and adults with disabilities. The mission of his office is to improve early childhood, educational, and employment outcomes, and to raise expectations for all people with disabilities, their families, their communities, and the nation.

Prior to joining the department, Collett served as the program director of special education outcomes at the Council of Chief State School Officers. Collett also served at the Kentucky Department of Education as the state's special education director, as an assistant division director, and as an exceptional children consultant.

Collett, a former high school special education teacher and church pastor, graduated from Georgetown College in Georgetown, Kentucky in 2005 with a Master of Arts in education. In 1994, he graduated with a bachelor's degree from Clear Creek Baptist Bible College and in 1991 he received an associate degree from Southeast Community College, at that time a part of the University of Kentucky college system. Collett also holds a certification in learning and behavior disorders from Kentucky.



## **John Draper**

*Consultant, National School Public Relations Association*

John Draper is the son of two teachers and a product of public schools. After graduating from college and working several years in business, he realized that he was an educator at heart. He began as a middle school science and math teacher in Calera, Alabama, and still enjoys middle school students a great deal!

One of his favorite positions was middle school assistant principal, after which he became the first principal at Oak Mountain Middle School in Shelby County, AL. From there he served just one year as principal at Homewood High School before he was chosen to lead the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools, a non-profit association representing all school administrators in the state.

After serving 9 years as the Executive Director for CLAS, John was named CEO of the Educational Research Service--a national, non-profit, research company. He now serves as a National Consultant for NSPRA, the National School Public Relations Association, working to expand support for the nation's public schools. NSPRA is a membership organization helping school leaders and school districts engage more effectively with communities. John lives in a Virginia suburb of Washington, DC with his wife, Kathy. They have three grown sons.



## **Maggie Garrett**

*Legislative Director, Americans United for Separation of Church and State*

Maggie Garrett has worked on church-state separation issues for over a decade. Her work in the public policy arena precedes a career that once involved working as a civil liberties litigator. For the past ten years, Maggie has lectured and presented on church-state issues for both television and radio appearances, public presentations, as well as been quoted in numerous major newspapers.

Currently, she represents Americans United before the US Congress and present Administration. Maggie's other roles include oversight of the state legislative program, leading the National Coalition for Public Education (NCPE), the national coalition that opposes school voucher legislation, and chairing the Coalition Against Religious Discrimination (CARD), which is the national coalition that fights to repeal the Bush Faith-Based Initiative.

Maggie graduated from Hamilton College, cum laude before graduating with honors from the George Washington Law School. At George Washington University she was the Production Editor of the George Washington Law Review. In 2000, Maggie became the first Madison Fellow in the Legal Department of Americans United. Afterwards, she moved south to the ACLU of Alabama and then to the ACLU of Georgia. At the ACLU of Georgia, she litigated high-profile cases on issues including the separation of church and state, free speech, reproductive rights, and voting rights. While there, Maggie also served as the Legislative Director, lobbying the Georgia General Assembly on all ACLU issues, before returning to Americans United.



## **Alex Graham**

*Executive Director, Council for Exceptional Children*

Alex Graham has 26 years of association management experience. Prior to joining the CEC in October 2013, Alex served as the executive director of the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AG Bell). Through advocacy, education, research and financial aid, AG Bell helps families, health care providers and education professionals understand childhood hearing loss and the importance of early diagnosis and intervention. In addition to earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Lynchburg College in Lynchburg, Virginia, Alex

has earned a Master's of Science degree in organizational effectiveness and a Masters of Business Administration degree from Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia.

Alex is the father of two young adults with learning disabilities and he knows firsthand the critical role that special education professionals play in students with special needs being able to reach their potential. Alex's wife Melissa is an Advanced Academics Specialist with Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia.



## **Erin Maguire**

*Director of Student Support Services for the Essex Westford School District*

Erin Maguire is a 17-year veteran of the CASE organization. Currently, Erin serves in dual capacities as a local special education director in Essex, Vermont and as the Policy and Legislative Chair for CASE. Erin has served in a variety of functions for CASE including, as her CASE Unit's legislative chair, president and board member as well as participated as a member of the CASE Policy and Legislative Committee. For the past 18 months she has had the opportunity to chair the committee and co-lead the Special Education Legislative Summit with CEC. National leadership regarding policy and legislation has been an active aspect of Erin's focus throughout her time as a director. In one of her most

recent honors, Erin was named the Vermont Special Education Administrator of the Year in 2017.

Erin earned her Master's Degree in Special Education from Castleton University and completed her Certificate in Advanced Education Leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She is completing her Doctorate in Education with a focus on education policy and leadership at the University of Vermont. Erin has been an educator for 20 years in many roles including special education administrator, special educator, middle school science teacher and paraeducator. Her advocacy has included a focus on high quality supports for through Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). Equity is of great importance to her as an educator and this focus guides her as an active member of her local, state and national communities. Erin is a strong proponent of proactive and preventative supports and interventions in our nation's public education system.



## **Myrna Mandlawitz**

*President of MRM Associates, LLC and Legislative Consultant to the Council of Administrators of Special Education*

Myrna Mandlawitz serves as legislative consultant to the Council of Administrators of Special Education and four other national organizations. She has worked in Washington for over 20 years as a consultant/lobbyist on special and general education policy and legislation. Ms. Mandlawitz is a former president of the Committee for Education Funding, a coalition of 113 national organizations supporting increased federal investment in education. In addition, she served for 12 years as co-chair of the National Alliance of Specialized Instructional Support Personnel. Previously, she held the position of Director of Government Relations for the National Association of State Directors of

Special Education.

Ms. Mandlawitz's publications include, among others, *Special Education After 40 Years: What Lies Ahead* (ASCD, 2016), *What Every Teacher Should Know about IDEA 2004 Law and Regulations* (Pearson, 2007), *Special Education Law* (Co-author, Pearson, 2008), and *A Tale of 3 Cities: Urban Perspectives on Special Education* (Center on Education Policy, 2003). She is also a contributing author to *Social Policy for Children and Families: A Risk and Resilience Perspective, Third Edition* (SAGE Publications, 2015) and the *Handbook of Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders-3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (Wiley, 2005).

A native of Virginia, Ms. Mandlawitz spent fourteen years as a classroom teacher and assisted in the development of Virginia's program for infants and toddlers with disabilities. She holds a master's degree in Early Childhood Education from Boston University and a law degree from Temple University.



## **Megan McCoskey**

*Senior Product Owner, CQ Roll Call*

Megan is the senior product owner for CQ and works closely with nonprofits, trade associations and corporate clients to help them leverage tools to make the most of their advocacy platforms.



## **Luann Purcell**

*Executive Director, International Council of Administrators of Special Education*

Luann Purcell is the Chief Executive Officer of an international professional organization of school administrators whose primary responsibility is in leadership of special education programs for children. Dr. Purcell's major job responsibilities include: consulting and advising administrators on best practices for leadership and development of quality programs for students with disabilities; assisting members in developing networking systems through state, provincial, and country units in order to provide better services to members; advocating at the governmental level to assure appropriate legislation to facilitate the development and maintenance of quality programs for students with disabilities; and providing Keynote/breakout sessions/etc. at state/provincial and regional conferences on leadership, legislative/policy updates, attitude adjustment, the passion in compassion, and other current education issues. In the last 16 years, she has keynoted and led sessions in over 45 states and 3 other countries on IDEA, NCLB and the development of proactive leadership skills in times of change.

Luann has had a variety of experiences throughout her 46 years in public education including general education teacher at the high school and middle school levels, teacher of students with emotional and behavioral disorders, coordinator at a regional educational service center, and assistant superintendent for pupil services in a local district of 25,000+ students. This July marks the completion of 16 years as Executive Director of CASE.



## **Kimberly M. Richey**

*Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services*

Kimberly Richey serves as advisor to the U.S. secretary of education on matters related to the education of children and youth with disabilities, as well as employment and community living for youth and adults with disabilities. The mission of her office is to improve early childhood, educational, and employment outcomes, and to raise expectations for all people with disabilities, their families, their communities, and the nation.

Prior to joining the Department, Richey served as the managing director of federal advocacy and public policy at the National School Boards Association. Formerly, she served as the general counsel for the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE), where she represented OSDE, the State Board of Education, and the state superintendent of public instruction.

Prior to her work at OSDE, Richey served as the general counsel and associate director of the Oklahoma Council on Law Enforcement Education and Training, a postsecondary education agency focused on peace officer training. From 2004 to 2009, she served at the U.S. Department of Education as the counselor to the assistant secretary in the Office for Civil Rights. During that same time, Richey also served as acting chief of staff in the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs.

Richey is a native of Corpus Christi, Texas, and holds a bachelor's degree in education from Southern Nazarene University and a juris doctorate degree from the University of Oklahoma. She is a certified teacher and is licensed to practice law in Oklahoma, Texas, and the District of Columbia.



## **Kelly Vaillancourt Strobach**

*Director, Government Relations – National Association of School Psychologists*

Kelly Vaillancourt Strobach is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist and is currently the Director of Government Relations at the National Association of School Psychologists. Prior to assuming this role, Kelly was a school psychologist in Loudoun County Public Schools (VA) where she also served as a member of the District PBIS Coordination Team and the District Crisis Intervention Team. Dr. Strobach has developed, authored, and coauthored numerous articles and resources, including NASP's Framework for Safe and Successful Schools, and has presented nationally on issues related to school safety, school mental health, effective discipline policies, and the relationship between education policy and school practices.



## **Laurie VanderPloeg**

*Director, Special Education at Kent Intermediate School District*

Laurie VanderPloeg has the responsibility to ensure the needs of over 14,500 students with disabilities in her 20 local school districts, 23 charter schools and 60 Non-Public Schools is met. Laurie is also an Adjunct Professor at Grand Valley State University in the Special Education Administration program and a member of the Equity Coalition for the National Center for Charter Schools in Special Education. Laurie served on the Michigan Council for Exceptional Children Board for ten years, the Council for Administrators of Special Education (CASE) Executive Committee for ten years and was the CEC IDC Chair. Laurie is the President of the Council for Exceptional Children.



## **Phyllis Wolfram**

*Executive Director, Missouri Council of Administrators of Special Education*

Phyllis Wolfram is the Executive Director for MO-CASE and resides in Springfield, Missouri. She has worked in the field of education for 35 years. Phyllis' administrative experience spans 29 years in the field of special education administration at the local level. She has been a local special education director in three different districts ranging in size from a small rural district to the largest urban district in the state of Missouri. In addition, she has experience in the area of gifted education, Section 504, ELL and early childhood.

Phyllis is currently the President of CASE. Prior to this position she served as the chair of the CASE Policy and Legislative committee for three years. She has also

chaired the CASE Ad Hoc Committee on IDEA Reauthorization in 2010, and served as a member of the CASE Task Force, Design for the Future, 2005. In her home state of Missouri, Phyllis serves on the Governor's Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders and has served on various state level committees including Early Childhood Special Education, Electronic IEP Development, Missouri's RTI initiative, Transition from School to Work and the Elementary English Language Arts Advisory Committee. Phyllis has also served on the Board of Directors for the Council for Exceptional Children and the CEC IDEA Reauthorization Workgroup.



## **Deborah Ziegler**

*Director, Policy and Advocacy, Council for Exceptional Children*

Deborah A. Ziegler is the Director for Policy and Advocacy at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), one of the world's premier education organizations. She has broad public policy experience at the international, national, state and local levels. Ziegler works to further the overall goals of CEC through improving policies affecting exceptional children and youth and the professionals who work with them, at all levels of government. In her position, she is responsible for providing leadership and direction for the association's public policy agenda, including policy development, implementation, and analysis; information collection and dissemination; and maintaining a grassroots network of Children and Youth Action Network (CAN) Coordinators. She works closely with the White House, the United States Congress, and the Federal Agencies including the U.S. Department of Education to advocate for policies that guarantee a free appropriate public education and early intervention services for children and youth with disabilities and gifts and talents.

Ziegler has worked as a special education teacher, special education and early intervention administrator and faculty at the university level. She has consulted widely and written extensively in the policy arena.