



**THE HUNT INSTITUTE'S
VIRGINIA EDUCATION SUMMIT**

**PROGRAM BOOK
DECEMBER 16, 2025**

AGENDA TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2025

Library of Virginia | 800 E Broad St, Richmond, VA 23219

8:00 – 9:00 AM

REGISTRATION & BREAKFAST

ORIENTATION ROOM

9:00 – 9:15 AM

WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

CONFERENCE ROOMS
A-C

- 👤 **Dr. Javaid Siddiqi**, President and CEO, The Hunt Institute
- 👤 **The Honorable Sam Rasoul**, VA House of Delegates, District 38 (2014–Present) | Hunt-Kean Leadership Fellow Cohort 11 | Summit Co-Chair
- 👤 **The Honorable Ghazala Hashmi**, Lieutenant Governor-Elect, Virginia (2025–Present) | Hunt-Kean Leadership Fellow Cohort 12 | Summit Co-Chair

9:15 – 10:15 AM

ADVANCING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN VIRGINIA

Virginia has made notable strides in early childhood education, quality and access, but persistent equity and workforce challenges remain. Legislators will gain an overview of recent progress in Virginia's early childhood system, identify current gaps in access and quality, and explore concrete policy levers to strengthen early learning outcomes, mixed-delivery systems, and school readiness for Virginia's youngest learners.

OPENING
REMARKS

MODERATOR

RESOURCE
EXPERTS

- 👤 **The Honorable Mike Cherry**, VA House of Delegates, District 74 (2022–Present) | Summit Co-Chair
- 👤 **Jenna Conway**, Chief of Early Learning and Specialized Populations, Virginia Department of Education
- 👤 **Kathy Glazer**, President, Virginia Early Childhood Foundation
- 👤 **Dr. Ebonyse Mead**, Consultant, Early Childhood Leadership Institute | Assistant Professor, Virginia State University



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10:15 – 11:15 AM

RETHINKING LITERACY REFORM IMPLEMENTATION: RESULTS, PRESSURES, AND INNOVATIONS

CONFERENCE ROOMS
A-C

Balancing accountability with teacher support ensures scientifically grounded literacy assessments are student-centered. Virginia is currently implementing new literacy assessments and programming under the Virginia Literacy Act (VLA). During this session, legislators will gain an overview of first-year results, best practice, and examine promising strategies and educator experiences emerging from this instructional shift.


OPENING REMARKS


 **The Honorable Ghazala Hashmi**, *Lieutenant Governor-Elect, Virginia (2025–Present) | Hunt-Kean Leadership Fellow Cohort 12 | Summit Co-Chair*

MODERATOR

 **Dr. Kimberly Stockton**, *Senior Education Advisor, Lexia*

RESOURCE EXPERTS

 **Dr. Scott Brabrand**, *Executive Director, Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS)*

 **Dr. Denelle Wallace-Alexander**, *Dean, School of Education, Norfolk State University*

11:15 – 11:30 AM

NETWORKING BREAK

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN VIRGINIA: BRIDGING POLICY GAPS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Like most states, Virginia's special education system currently relies heavily on federal laws such as IDEA and Section 504 to protect students with disabilities. In this session, legislators will hear from experts on recent federal findings regarding Virginia's gaps in fulfilling special education requirements. The discussion will also cover upcoming federal changes, their potential impact on Virginia, and efforts to strengthen protections and close existing gaps for students receiving special education services.

OPENING REMARKS

 **The Honorable David Suetterlein**, *VA Senate, District 4 (2016–Present) | Summit Co-Chair*

MODERATOR

 **Dr. Jacqueline Rodriguez**, *Chief Executive Officer, National Center for Learning Disabilities*

RESOURCE EXPERTS

 **Dr. Beth Ackerman**, *Senior Vice President, Rivermont Schools*

 **Dr. John B. Gordon III**, *Superintendent, Suffolk Public Schools*

 **Dr. Samantha Marsh Hollins**, *Deputy Superintendent, Virginia Department of Education*



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12:30 – 1:15 PM

NETWORKING LUNCH

ORIENTATION ROOM

1:15 – 1:30 PM

NETWORKING BREAK & TRANSITION

1:30 – 2:20 PM

PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVES WITH SUPERINTENDENTS AND PRINCIPALS

During this session, superintendent-principal pairs will participate in small-group discussions with legislators to explore current challenges and opportunities confronting school divisions. Topics will include how districts are adapting to emerging technologies—such as the use of AI in classrooms, AI-related policy and policymaking participation, and limitations on smartphone usage.

MODERATOR

RESOURCE
EXPERTS

- 👤 **Adam Garry**, *President, StrategicEDU Consulting*
- 👤 **Dr. Sarah Calveric**, *Superintendent, Caroline County Public Schools*
- 👤 **Joseph Robinson**, *Supervisor of Technology & Innovation, Caroline County Public Schools*
- 👤 **Dr. Kimberly Halterman**, *Superintendent, Alleghany Highlands Public Schools*
- 👤 **Derek Cantrell**, *Principal, Alleghany Highlands Public Schools*
- 👤 **Dr. Herbert Monroe III**, *Superintendent, Surry County Public Schools*
- 👤 **James E. Pope Jr.**, *Principal, Surry County High School*
- 👤 **Dr. Brian J. Nichols**, *Superintendent, New Kent County Public Schools*
- 👤 **Dr. Allison Strickland**, *Principal, New Kent High School*
- 👤 **Dr. Verletta White**, *Superintendent, Roanoke City Public Schools*
- 👤 **Dr. Joshua Dowdy**, *Principal, Roanoke City Public Schools*



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2:30 – 3:30 PM

APPROACHES TO ADDRESS STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

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A-C

According to research, 40% of students experience mental health challenges. The Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS) is a collective of organizations funded and led by the Virginia Department of Education to support divisions with implementing and sustaining a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). During this session, resource experts will explore Tier 1 strategies and share how broader student wellness needs can be met through strengthening this implementation.

AFTERNOON
REMARKS

SESSION
REMARKS

MODERATOR

RESOURCE
EXPERTS

👤 **Andy Cole**, Board Member, The Hunt Institute Board of Directors | Education Consultant, Wallace Foundation

👤 **The Honorable Sam Rasoul**, VA House of Delegates, District 38 (2014–Present) | Hunt-Kean Leadership Fellow Cohort 11 | Summit Co-Chair

👤 **Rachel Rees**, Chief Executive Officer, Virginia Health Care Foundation

👤 **Kait Ahlbrandt, Ed.S.**, NCSP Director of Customer Success, EmpowerU

👤 **Rachael Deane, J.D.**, Chief Executive Officer, Voices for Virginia's Children

3:30 – 3:45 PM

NETWORKING BREAK



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3:45 – 4:45 PM

SHARED GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL RESILIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Virginia's higher education system faces complex challenges amid declining federal funding and the need for strong institutional governance. In this session, Legislators will learn how shared governance structures safeguard academic freedom and effective decision-making, understand risks of potential federal funding cuts — and explore strategies to maintain institutional stability and ensure student access.

MODERATOR

 RESOURCE
EXPERTS

- 👤 **Dr. William A. Hazel, Jr.**, CEO, Claude Moore Opportunities
- 👤 **Scott Fleming**, Executive Director, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)
- 👤 **Dr. Chauncy Lennon**, Vice President for Learning and Work and Senior Strategy Advisor, Lumina Foundation
- 👤 **Ross A. Mugler**, Interim President & CEO, AGB

4:45 – 5:00 PM

CLOSING REMARKS

5:00 – 5:30 PM

BREAK AND TRANSITION



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RECEPTION AND DINNER

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Note: This portion of the Virginia Education Summit is by invitation only.

5:30 – 8:30 PM

DINNER PANEL | BUILDING VIRGINIA'S WORKFORCE: EDUCATION, INNOVATION, AND AI

This session brings together education leaders to explore how Virginia can develop an education system that aligns curriculum and instruction with the evolving demands of the workforce. This session will present a clear roadmap for integrating AI into the state's education and workforce strategies, highlighting how emerging technologies can drive innovation, close skill gaps, and shape legislative priorities. Experts will also discuss how AI is influencing diverse workforce sectors and how post-secondary curricula are adapting to meet the evolving business needs.

WELCOME
REMARKS

MODERATOR

RESOURCE
EXPERTS

MAIL HALL

- 👤 **Dr. Javaid Siddiqi**, President and CEO, The Hunt Institute
- 👤 **The Honorable Laura Novey**, Senior Vice President of State Government Relations, McGuireWoods Consulting | Board Member, The Hunt Institute Board of Directors | Secretary of Education, Virginia (2011–2013)
- 👤 **Dr. Keith Witham**, President & CEO, Ascendium Education Group
- 👤 **Dr. Makola M. Abdullah**, President, Virginia State University
- 👤 **Dr. Donna Price Henry**, Chancellor, University of Virginia's College at Wise
- 👤 **Dr. Michael Rao**, President, Virginia Commonwealth University



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CO-CHAIRS



The Honorable Mike Cherry

VA House of Delegates, District 74 (2022-Present) | Summit Co-Chair

Michael “Mike” Cherry serves in the Virginia House of Delegates representing District 74, including Colonial Heights and part of Chesterfield County. A native of Rocky Mount, North Carolina, he graduated from Roanoke Rapids High School before enlisting in the United States Air Force, where he served as a Loadmaster on C-141B and C-17A aircraft. He holds two associate degrees from the Community College of the Air Force, a Bachelor of Science from Liberty University, and master’s and educational specialist degrees from Regent University. Delegate Cherry is also a staff pastor at Life Church and Head of School at Life Christian Academy. In the House, he serves on the Education; Health, Welfare and Institutions; and Privileges and Elections Committees.



The Honorable Ghazala Hashmi

Lieutenant Governor-Elect, Virginia (2025–Present) | Hunt-Kean Leadership Fellow Cohort 12 | Summit Co-Chair

Lieutenant Governor-elect Ghazala Hashmi, Ph.D., serves in the Virginia General Assembly representing the 15th Senatorial District, which includes portions of Chesterfield County and the City of Richmond. She chairs the Senate Education and Health Committee and serves on the Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources; Finance and Appropriations; Transportation; and Rules Committees. Prior to her election in 2019, Dr. Hashmi built a distinguished career in higher education in Virginia. In November 2025, she was elected Lieutenant Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, where she continues her commitment to expanding opportunity, strengthening public education, and promoting equitable policies for all Virginians.



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The Honorable Sam Rasoul

VA House of Delegates, District 38 (2014–Present) | Hunt-Kean Leadership Fellow Cohort 11 | Summit Co-Chair

Delegate Sam Rasoul has represented the 38th District in the Virginia House of Delegates since 2014. He currently chairs the Education Committee, the Appropriations – Elementary and Secondary Subcommittee, and the Public Safety Committee. His professional experience spans the for-profit and nonprofit sectors, where he has served as an entrepreneur, business professor, chief financial officer, and chief operating officer. Delegate Rasoul holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from Roanoke College and a Master of Business Administration from Hawaii Pacific University. He and his wife, Layaly, are the proud parents of three children.



The Honorable David Suetterlein

VA Senate, District 4 (2016–Present) | Summit Co-Chair

Senator David R. Suetterlein represents the 4th Senatorial District in the Virginia General Assembly, including all of Roanoke City and Salem City and portions of Montgomery and Roanoke Counties. He serves on the Senate Committees on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources; Education and Health; Local Government; and Transportation. Before his election in 2015, Senator Suetterlein worked on the campaigns and Senate staff of former Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli and on the Senate staff of his predecessor, Senator Ralph K. Smith. He has been active in party leadership, serving the Roanoke County Republican Committee as Secretary from 2008–2012 and Chair from 2012–2016.



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SPECIAL GUESTS



Andy Cole

Board Member, The Hunt Institute Board of Directors | Education Consultant, Wallace Foundation

Andy Cole serves as an education consultant with The Wallace Foundation, focusing on strategic projects with particular emphasis on principal supervisors and leadership development. He also works as a reviewer for the Quality Measures process developed by Education Development Center (EDC), which assesses the effectiveness of educational leadership programs nationwide. Cole previously spent more than 22 years in Fairfax County Public Schools, where he held several leadership roles, including Director of Employee Performance and Development, Director of LEAD Fairfax, and Director of Leadership Development. He retired from the district in 2010 and continues to support high-quality leadership preparation and professional growth for school and district leaders.



The Honorable Laura Novey

Senior Vice President of State Government Relations, McGuireWoods Consulting | Board Member, The Hunt Institute Board of Directors | Secretary of Education, Virginia (2011–2013)

Laura Novey is a dedicated education and community engagement leader with extensive experience supporting schools, families, and local organizations across Virginia. She has built her career around strengthening systems that ensure students have access to high-quality learning environments and the supports necessary to thrive. Novey is known for her collaborative approach, strong communication skills, and ability to bring diverse stakeholders together around shared goals. Her work reflects a deep commitment to equity, student success, and building partnerships that uplift communities and expand opportunity for all.



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RESOURCE EXPERTS



Dr. Makola M. Abdullah
President, Virginia State University

Dr. Makola M. Abdullah serves as President of Virginia State University, where he has led historic gains in enrollment, retention, and graduation rates since 2016. Under his leadership, VSU has implemented a bold strategic plan centered on student opportunity, academic excellence, and institutional advancement. The university has launched new academic programs, earned national recognition, and secured record-breaking private support. A civil engineer by training, Dr. Abdullah has prioritized infrastructure improvement, equity, and civic engagement through initiatives such as the John Mercer Langston Institute and the Center for Policing Leadership and Social Justice. He is an active voice in national higher education and HBCU advocacy through service on multiple boards and advisory groups.



Dr. Beth Ackerman
Senior Vice President, Rivermont Schools

Dr. Beth Ackerman's passion for students with disabilities is evident in her personal and professional career and studies. As a teacher, principal, professor, chair, and associate dean in the field of special education, she is now the senior vice president at Rivermont Schools. There are 17 Rivermont Schools across the Commonwealth, providing educational services for over 1,000 students with autism and emotional disabilities. She is always seeking new ways to build bridges with community stakeholders in understanding our most vulnerable population, such as having also been a foster parent for children with emotional disabilities.



Kait Ahlbrandt, Ed.S
NCSP Director of Customer, Success EmpowerU

Kait Ahlbrandt, Ed.S., NCSP, is a nationally certified school psychologist and education leader with more than a decade of experience supporting students, educators, and school communities. As Director of School Partnerships at EmpowerU, she leads a team that collaborates with districts nationwide to implement evidence-based programs that build resilience, strengthen mental health, and improve student outcomes. Ahlbrandt's work focuses on creating sustainable systems of support that benefit entire school communities. She combines empathy and strategic thinking with a firm belief that prioritizing mental health allows students and educators to reach their full potential, whether she is advising school teams, shaping large-scale initiatives, or informing policy conversations at the state and federal levels.



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**Dr. Scott Brabrand***Executive Director, Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS)*

Dr. Scott S. Brabrand has served as Executive Director of the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS) since July 1, 2022. He previously spent five years as Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools, the 12th largest school division in the United States, serving approximately 180,000 students. Dr. Brabrand began his career in Fairfax County as a teacher and advanced through roles as assistant principal, principal, and assistant superintendent. As superintendent, he led efforts to return 99.5 percent of students to in-person instruction during the pandemic, increased the graduation rate from 91 to 94 percent between 2017 and 2021, and implemented systemic changes to better support the division's most challenged students.

**Dr. Sarah Calveric***Superintendent, Caroline County Public Schools*

Dr. Sarah Calveric serves as Superintendent of Caroline County Public Schools, guided by a "4P" philosophy: people, passion, performance, and process. With 28 years of experience as a teacher, administrator, human resources director, assistant superintendent, adjunct professor, and division superintendent, she is widely recognized for her leadership and commitment to access and opportunity. Dr. Calveric has served on regional and statewide boards including YMCA, UMW, Longwood, Workforce Now, VASCD, and VASS. A graduate of SUNY Geneseo (B.A.) and Virginia Commonwealth University (M.Ed., Ph.D.), she was named Virginia's 2023 Region III Superintendent of the Year, VASS 2025 President-Elect, and the University of Richmond's 2025 Iskowitz Distinguished Adjunct Professor.

**Derek Cantrell***Principal, Alleghany Highlands Public Schools*

Derek Cantrell is in his tenth year as a high school principal and currently serves as principal of Alleghany High School. He previously led Covington High School and then guided the consolidation of two longtime rival schools into one unified campus under a "Better Together" culture. His work focuses on aligning attendance, behavior, and instruction through systems like the Cougar Code (Good Standing and attendance recovery), Cougar Scholars Club (SOL success), and the Cougar Compass Seal (graduate profile). Derek also builds practical AI supports that help leaders and teachers plan aligned lessons, analyze assessment trends, and turn classroom observations into usable feedback more efficiently. He has presented on culture and AI at VASSP, Making Schools Work, and VSTE, and has shared this work on the Better Leaders Better Schools, Principal Matters, and Proud Principals podcasts.



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Jenna Conway

Chief of Early Learning and Specialized Populations, Virginia Department of Education

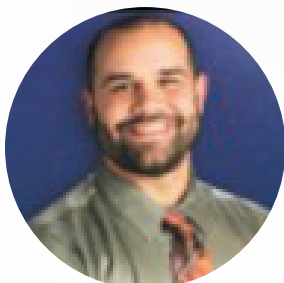
Jenna Lawrence Conway serves as Chief of Early Learning and Specialized Populations at the Virginia Department of Education, working with public and private partners to align and strengthen the Commonwealth's early childhood system. She previously led a statewide initiative in Louisiana to unify childcare, Head Start, and school-based pre-K, increasing access, improving classroom quality, and providing families with better information. Earlier in her career, she worked in children and human services in New York, including leading September 11th response efforts and improving housing and services for low-income residents. Conway holds degrees from Yale University, the Stanford Graduate School of Business, and the Broad Residency in Education.



Rachael Deane, J.D.

Chief Executive Officer, Voices for Virginia's Children

Rachael Deane is Chief Executive Officer of Voices for Virginia's Children, where she leads statewide efforts to center young people in public policy. A lifelong advocate for racial equity and economic justice, she brings extensive experience in legal aid, education reform, and community-driven change. Prior to joining Voices, Deane served as Legal Director of the Youth Justice Program at the Legal Aid Justice Center, leading campaigns to end the school-to-prison pipeline and expand school-based mental health supports. She previously investigated housing and lending discrimination at HOME of Virginia and the National Fair Housing Alliance. Named a 2021 "Leader in the Law," she is recognized for building coalitions and moving bold ideas into action.



Dr. Joshua Dowdy

Principal, Roanoke City Public Schools

Dr. Joshua Dowdy is a third-generation educator with over 20 years of experience in public education. He holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Virginia Tech, a Master of Education in Educational Leadership from Radford University, and a Doctor of Education in Curriculum, Teaching, Learning, and Leadership from Northeastern University-Charlotte. Dr. Dowdy has served as principal of James Breckinridge Middle School since 2021, following five years as assistant principal. He is dedicated to advancing instructional excellence and student success across Roanoke City Public Schools.



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**Scott Fleming***Executive Director, State Council of Higher*

Scott Fleming has served as Executive Director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) since May 2024. In this role, he leads the state agency responsible for coordinating all public and private higher education in the Commonwealth. His responsibilities include developing the statewide strategic plan for higher education, overseeing the statewide longitudinal data system, and approving or disapproving academic programs at public institutions. Fleming also manages the state's approximately \$250 million financial aid portfolio and related grant programs. He works closely with institutional leaders and policymakers to advance access, affordability, and educational attainment for all Virginians.

**Adam Garry***President, StrategicEDU Consulting*

Adam Garry is President of StrategicEDU Consulting and has more than 25 years of experience in education consulting. He helps schools design digital, student-centered learning systems and supports districts and companies across the United States and Canada with generative AI initiatives. Garry previously spent 14 years at Dell Technologies leading education innovation and strategy and has presented at conferences worldwide. A former teacher, he co-authored Teaching the iGeneration and Personalized Learning Through Voice and Choice. He holds degrees in Elementary Education and in Teaching and Learning, along with a Certificate in Administration and Supervision, and is recognized for his work in personalized learning, assessment, and leadership.

**Kathy Glazer***President, Virginia Early Childhood Foundation*

Kathy Glazer has served as President of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF), a nonpartisan public-private partnership, since 2012. Under her leadership, VECF advances innovative partnerships to ensure that Virginia's children enter kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed in school, work, and life. Previously, Glazer directed state services for the national BUILD Initiative, advising states on early childhood policy and systems-building. From 2005 to 2009, she held leadership roles in Virginia state government, including Executive Director of the Governor's Office for Early Childhood Policy and Director of the Office of Early Childhood Development. She served on the National Academies committee that developed the Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education report. Glazer holds a B.A. from the University of Georgia and an M.P.A. from Virginia Commonwealth University.



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**Dr. John B. Gordon III***Superintendent, Suffolk Public Schools*

Dr. John B. Gordon III is Superintendent of Suffolk Public Schools and a lifelong educator with leadership experience in Chesterfield, Fredericksburg, and Richmond. Known for personalizing learning to meet student needs, he draws on his background as a championship-winning high school basketball coach and accomplished team builder. Dr. Gordon was the first African American principal of James Monroe High School and the first African American chair of the Virginia High School League. He is the author of *The Teacher's Lounge* and serves as an adjunct professor at Old Dominion University and president of Schools That Inspire, LLC. His honors include Virginia Tech Distinguished Alumni and NSPRA's 2022 "Superintendent to Watch." He currently serves as President-Elect of the Virginia Alliance of Black School Educators.

**Dr. Kimberly Halterman***Superintendent, Alleghany Highlands Public Schools*

Dr. Kimberly Halterman serves as Superintendent of Alleghany Highlands Public Schools and is recognized for leading the successful 2022 merger of Alleghany County and Covington City schools. A native of the Alleghany Highlands and valedictorian of Alleghany High School's Class of 1997, she returned home after service as a teacher in Botetourt County, an administrator in Bedford County, and a specialist with the Virginia Department of Education's Career and Technical Education team. She holds a Master of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Virginia Tech and graduate credentials in Human Resources Leadership and Health Care Administration from the University of Virginia. Under her leadership, AHPS has expanded preschool and pre-professional learning opportunities and earned state and national recognition. She was named 2024 Region VI Superintendent of the Year.

**Dr. William A. Hazel, Jr.***CEO, Claude Moore Opportunities*

Dr. William A. Hazel, Jr. is Chief Executive Officer of Claude Moore Opportunities, a 501(c)(3) public charity focused on high-quality workforce development programs. He previously served two terms as Virginia's Secretary of Health and Human Resources under governors from both major political parties. In his current work, Dr. Hazel promotes "blurring the lines" between career and technical education and traditional academic pathways, as well as between K-12, community colleges, and four-year institutions, to increase the relevance and affordability of education. He holds a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Princeton University and a medical degree from Duke University. After completing an orthopedic residency at the Mayo Clinic, he established himself as a leading orthopedic surgeon in Northern Virginia.



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**Dr. Donna Price Henry***Chancellor, University of Virginia's College at Wise*

Dr. Donna Price Henry has served as Chancellor of the University of Virginia's College at Wise since January 18, 2013, after her election on December 7, 2012. As the College's eighth chancellor, she leads efforts to promote student success and advance service to Southwest Virginia. Under her leadership, UVA Wise has strengthened faculty recruitment, endowed professorships, advising, financial aid, experiential learning, and STEM-H initiatives, and has launched online and graduate programs. She spearheaded the innovate2eleVAte initiative, expanding student access to technology through iPads. Dr. Henry serves on numerous boards, including the American Council on Education, the NCAA, and regional economic and educational initiatives. A biologist by training, she previously held leadership roles at Florida Gulf Coast University and is a professor of biology at UVA Wise.

**Dr. Samantha Marsh Hollins***Deputy Superintendent, Virginia*

Dr. Samantha Marsh Hollins serves as Deputy Superintendent of Special Education and Specialized Populations at the Virginia Department of Education. She holds a Ph.D. in Special Education and Disability Policy from Virginia Commonwealth University and is a graduate of the Virginia Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities program at VCU-MCV. Her experience includes service as a special education teacher and local director of special education in Virginia public schools; adjunct professor and researcher at Virginia Commonwealth University; and policy analyst, lobbyist, and disability fellow at the Association of University Centers on Disabilities in Washington, D.C. She has also served as Educational Specialist for Autism, Intellectual Disabilities, and Assistive Technology and as Director of the Office of Special Education Program Improvement at the Virginia Department of Education.

**Dr. Chauncy Lennon***Vice President for Learning and Work and Senior Strategy Advisor, Lumina Foundation*

Chauncy Lennon, Ph.D., is vice president for learning and work and senior strategy advisor at Lumina Foundation, leading efforts to expand equitable access to high-quality short-term credentials and associate degrees through community colleges. He joined Lumina in 2018 after serving as JPMorgan Chase's managing director for workforce strategy, where he guided the firm's \$350 million philanthropic investment. Previously, he oversaw economic advancement and workforce development portfolios at the Ford Foundation. Lennon serves on the New York City Workforce Development Board and the board of Neighborhood Trust Financial Partners, and is a board observer for Edquity and Noodle. A graduate of Williams College, he holds a doctorate in anthropology from Columbia University and has taught at Barnard and Columbia.



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**Dr. Ebonyse Mead**

Consultant, Early Childhood Leadership Institute | Assistant Professor, Virginia State University

Dr. Ebonyse Mead is an Assistant Professor of Family and Consumer Sciences at Virginia State University and a consultant with the Early Childhood Leadership Institute. With more than 20 years of professional experience, she has advanced health and educational outcomes for young children through collaborative work with schools and family-serving agencies. A Certified Family Life Educator, she holds an Ed.D. in Early Childhood and a master's degree in Human Services from Concordia University Chicago, along with graduate degrees in Sociology and Family Studies. Dr. Mead is co-author of *Building Equitable Learning Programs: A Social Justice Approach* and the *Handbook of Racial Equity in Early Childhood*. She is dedicated to preparing the next generation of educators and family scientists.

**Dr. Herbert Monroe III**

Superintendent, Surry County Public Schools

Dr. Herbert T. Monroe III was appointed Superintendent of Surry County Public Schools on October 7, 2024. Prior to this role, he served in Caroline County Public Schools for nine years, including two years as Director of School Leadership and Improvement and seven years as Assistant Superintendent. In Surry County, Dr. Monroe has implemented the "4C's"—Connection, Collaboration, Communication, and Care—to support the division's mission of "Building Excellence, One Student at a Time." He remains committed to fostering strong relationships, high expectations, and equitable opportunities for all students, staff, and families.

**Ross A. Mugler**

Interim President & CEO, AGB

Ross A. Mugler serves as Interim President and Chief Executive Officer of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), where he champions best practices in institutional leadership and governance. A lifelong advocate for higher education, he previously served as Chair of the AGB Board of Directors. Mugler is the longest-serving Board of Visitors member at a single institution in Virginia, having been appointed to the Old Dominion University Board of Visitors by five governors. His tenure includes service as rector, during which he played a pivotal role in advancing the university's mission, strategic priorities, and financial stewardship. His career reflects more than three decades of leadership in higher education governance and public service.



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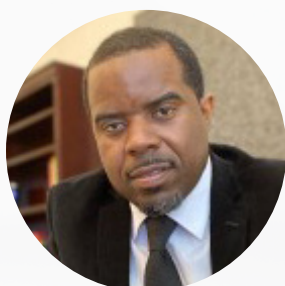
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Dr. Brian J. Nichols

Superintendent, New Kent County Public Schools

Dr. Brian J. Nichols serves as Superintendent of New Kent County Public Schools, where he leads with a focus on culture, continuous improvement, and empowering staff and students to “Win the Week.” Under his leadership, NKCPs has advanced major capital projects, strengthened school–community partnerships, and expanded opportunities for learners. A nationally recognized leader, Dr. Nichols was named a “Superintendent to Watch” by the National School Public Relations Association for his innovative communication and engagement strategies. He previously held district and school leadership roles supporting instruction, operations, and strategic planning. Dr. Nichols is committed to building a high-performing, student-centered division that reflects the values and aspirations of the New Kent community.



James E. Pope Jr.

Principal, Surry County Public Schools

James E. Pope Jr. currently serves as Principal of Surry County High School in Surry County Public Schools, a role he assumed in August 2023. He has contributed more than 14 years of dedicated service to the district, including previous leadership as Assistant Principal and Athletic Director. Pope holds a Bachelor of Science in Health and Physical Education from Norfolk State University and a Master of Education in Educational Leadership and Administration from Regent University. In addition to his work in education, he is a financial services professional with Pope & Associates in Suffolk, Virginia.



Dr. Michael Rao

President, Virginia Commonwealth University

Dr. Michael Rao serves as President of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). During his tenure, VCU has become a National Science Foundation–ranked top 50 public research university and is ranked by U.S. News & World Report in the top fifth of global universities. Dr. Rao chairs the Virginia Bio+Tech Partnership Authority and serves on the senior executive advisory committee of the Northern Virginia Technology Council. He previously chaired the Council of Presidents and has served in national higher education leadership roles. Dr. Rao’s career in higher education leadership began in 1992 when he was appointed president of Mission College in California, then the youngest college president in the nation. He later served as chancellor of Montana State University–Northern and president of Central Michigan University.



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Rachel Rees
Chief Executive Officer, Virginia Health Care

Rachel Rees is Chief Executive Officer of the Virginia Health Care Foundation (VHCF), a statewide public-private partnership dedicated to increasing access to primary, behavioral, and dental health care for uninsured and medically underserved Virginians. Prior to becoming CEO, she served as VHCF's Deputy Director for 11 years, leading statewide initiatives and overseeing operations. Earlier in her career, Rees managed the AIDS Drug Assistance Program at the Virginia Department of Health and worked in foster care. She holds a B.A. from Virginia Tech and an M.P.A. from Virginia Commonwealth University. She recently completed the University of Virginia's Political Leaders Program through the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership.


Joseph Robinson
Supervisor of Technology & Innovation, Caroline County Public Schools

Joseph Robinson is the Supervisor of Technology for Caroline County Public Schools, bringing a strong blend of technical leadership and instructional experience. Before stepping into this role, he served as the division's Virtual Learning Coordinator, guiding online learning initiatives and supporting teachers and students in digital environments. Prior to that position, Joseph worked as an Instructional Technology Resource Teacher, helping educators integrate meaningful, student-centered technology into their classrooms. He began his career as a Health and Physical Education teacher, building connections with students and fostering a positive learning culture. Before entering education, Joseph served in the United States Marine Corps, an experience that shaped his commitment to service, teamwork, and resilience.


Dr. Jacqueline Rodriguez
Chief Executive Officer, National Center

Dr. Jacqueline Rodriguez is Chief Executive Officer of the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), where she leads a team at the forefront of the learning disabilities rights movement. Her work focuses on advancing learning accessibility, equitable assessment, and evidence-based practices that improve outcomes for individuals with learning disabilities and attention disorders. A former classroom teacher and professor, Dr. Rodriguez has taught at the elementary, middle, and high school levels and served on the special education faculty at William & Mary's School of Education. She has prepared countless educators in equity-driven assessment, progress monitoring, and individualized support. At NCLD, she continues to champion policies and practices that expand access to high-quality education for diverse and exceptional learners.



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**Dr. Kimberly Stockton***Senior Education Advisor, Lexia*

Dr. Kimberly Stockton began her career over twenty-five years ago as an elementary school teacher in Southern California, where she focused on intensive reading intervention in the early primary grades to ensure that all students received the gift of literacy. Dr. Stockton later served as a Reading Intervention Specialist with an emphasis on implementing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. She has cultivated a rich and varied professional background that includes professional speaking, coaching, educator training, curriculum design, and implementation of evidence-based literacy practices. Dr. Stockton holds a bachelor's degree and a multiple subject teaching credential with an emphasis on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity. She also earned a master's degree in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment from the California State University at Long Beach. In addition, Dr. Stockton holds a doctorate in Reading Sciences and Professional Learning, with a focus on Adult Learning Theory and its application to educator development and system level literacy improvement.

**Dr. Allison Strickland***Principal, New Kent High School*

Allison Strickland serves as Principal of New Kent High School, bringing more than a decade of experience as a teacher, coach, and administrator. Before becoming principal, she spent four years as an assistant principal and ten years as a high school English teacher, while also coaching indoor and outdoor varsity track and field for New Kent County Public Schools. Strickland oversees all NKHS students and families, leads the English, Fine and Performing Arts, and Health and Physical Education departments, and serves as Freshman Transition Coordinator and Assistant Testing Coordinator. A Hampton, Virginia native, she earned her B.A. and M.A.T. from Christopher Newport University and is completing her Ed.D. in Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership at William & Mary.

**Dr. Denelle Wallace-Alexander***Dean, School of Education, Norfolk State University*

Dr. Denelle Wallace-Alexander serves as Dean of the School of Education at Norfolk State University. For more than a decade, she has been an engaged scholar and researcher, teaching and advising graduate students in Professional School Counseling and Principal Preparation programs. Her work as a faculty member in the Department of Secondary Education and School Leadership has been complemented by her leadership roles as Associate Dean and CAEP Coordinator since 2018. Dr. Wallace-Alexander holds a Ph.D. in Urban Services with a concentration in Academic Leadership and a B.S. in Elementary Education from Old Dominion University, as well as an M.Ed. in School Counseling from Georgia State University.



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**Dr. Verletta White***Superintendent, Roanoke City Public Schools*

A results-driven, student-centered, visionary leader, Dr. Verletta White was appointed Superintendent of Roanoke City Public Schools (RCPS) on July 1, 2020. She has been recognized regionally and nationally for her ability to bring together communities for the benefit of students. In 2023, she was named Virginia's 2024 State Superintendent of the Year, Virginia's Region VI Superintendent of the Year, and was also touted as one of the five superintendents in the nation to watch by K-12 Dive. Often referring to Roanoke City as "the sweetest City on earth," Dr. White is involved and engaged within the community. She serves on boards and advisory councils for many local, regional, and state organizations. Dr. White holds a Bachelor of Science degree in education from Towson University, a Master of Arts degree in leadership in teaching from the Notre Dame of Maryland University, and a Doctor of Education degree in urban educational leadership from Morgan State University. Dr. White and her husband, Sidney, are the proud parents of two grown children, Victoria and Bethany, both of whom graduated from public schools.

**Dr. Keith Witham***President & CEO, Ascendium Education Group*

Dr. Keith Witham is President and Chief Executive Officer of Ascendium Education Group. He oversees the organization's philanthropic strategy to expand opportunities and improve outcomes for learners from low-income backgrounds so they can achieve their postsecondary and career goals. Witham joined Ascendium in 2021 as Director of Education Grantmaking and became Vice President of Education Philanthropy in 2023 before assuming the CEO role. Previously, he served as Managing Director of the College Excellence Program at the Aspen Institute, leading efforts to advance community college student success. His prior experience includes faculty service at Temple University's College of Education and roles with Complete College America and the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. He holds a Ph.D. in urban education policy from the University of Southern California and master's and bachelor's degrees from the University of Chicago.



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THE HUNT INSTITUTE LEADERSHIP & STAFF



 @ChicagoCRED

The Honorable Arne Duncan

*U.S. Secretary of Education, 2009–2016 | Managing Partner, Chicago CRED
Chair, The Hunt Institute Board of Directors*

After serving as a cabinet member under President Barack Obama, Arne Duncan returned home to Chicago in 2016, committed to trying to dramatically reduce the amount of gun violence in our city and allow children on the South and West sides to grow up free of fear and trauma.

[View full bio on our website.](#)



 @Gov_Martinez

The Honorable Susana Martinez

*Governor of New Mexico, 2011–2019
Vice Chair, The Hunt Institute Board of Directors*

In 2010, Susana Martinez was elected governor of the State of New Mexico. She became New Mexico's first female governor and the first Hispanic female governor in the history of the United States. Prior to being elected governor, Martinez was a prosecutor for 25 years along the nation's southern border and served as Doña Ana County's elected district attorney for over half that time. As governor, she prioritized keeping New Mexico's communities safe, ensuring all students receive a high-quality education, and diversifying and growing the state's economy.

[View full bio on our website.](#)



 @jsiddiqi7

Javaid E. Siddiqi, Ph.D.

President & CEO, The Hunt Institute

Former Virginia Secretary of Education Dr. Javaid Siddiqi is the President and CEO of The Hunt Institute. During his tenure The Institute has more than tripled its staff and has expanded its scope of work beyond K-12 to include the entire education continuum from early childhood to postsecondary and the workforce. Javaid works with the leadership team to guide the strategic plan for The Institute and develops The Institute's relationships with partners and funders across the nation. He works with senior-level elected officials across the political aisle to help design strategy, shape policy, and drive educational improvements on the national and state levels.

[View full bio on our website.](#)

To view a full listing of our staff, please scan the QR code to the right, or visit [**bit.ly/THIStaff**](https://bit.ly/THIStaff)



 **SCAN ME**



Established in 2001, **The Hunt Institute** honors the legacy of James B. Hunt, Jr., the former governor of North Carolina who distinguished himself as an ardent champion of education.

The Hunt Institute brings together people and resources to inspire and inform elected officials and policymakers about key issues in education, resulting in visionary leaders who are prepared to take strategic action for greater educational outcomes and student success.

In 2016, The Hunt Institute became an independent, nonprofit entity and joined forces with Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy to pursue research, educational partnerships, and events related to improving education policy.

Learn more at www.hunt-institute.org.



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