

**Texas State Board of Education Learning Roundtable  
Educating the Children of Poverty – September 12, 2016**

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**Invited Presenters**



**Lorimer Arendse**

Principal  
Grand Prairie High School  
Grand Prairie Independent School District  
<http://www.gpisd.org/>

Strategic and purposeful with a heart for positively developing both his staff and students, Mr. Lorimer Arendse is an expert educator with a passion for excellence. He emigrated from South Africa to Ohio, where he finished high school and attended college. Mr. Arendse has worked with students grades 6-12, serving as classroom teacher, assistant principal, and principal. Currently, Mr. Arendse is in his third year as principal at Grand Prairie High School, a 6A urban high school in North Texas that serves middle-to low-income students. Over the course of his time at GPHS, student performance has continued to increase; 2016 STAAR/EOC results showed success in each of the state's four accountability indexes, with excitement for increased success for the upcoming school year. Mr. Arendse's developer mindset is what challenges his students and teachers to continue to excel, even in the wake of success.

**Donna Bahorich**

Chair  
State Board of Education  
[http://tea.texas.gov/About\\_TEA/Leadership/State Board of Education/Board Members/SBOE Member District 6/](http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/Leadership/State_Board_of_Education/Board_Members/SBOE_Member_District_6/)

Donna Bahorich chairs the 15-member State Board of Education, an elected board whose major duties include creating state curriculum standards, reviewing and approving instructional material, and overseeing the country's largest educational endowment, the \$30 billion Permanent School Fund. Mrs. Bahorich was first elected to the board in November 2012 and is currently seeking re-election. Gov. Greg Abbott appointed her chair of the board on June 18, 2015. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Virginia Tech University and a Master of Arts degree from Liberty University.

**Adeeb Barqawi**

President and CEO  
ProUnitas  
<http://www.prounitas.org>

Adeeb Barqawi is currently the president and chief executive officer of ProUnitas, a system based organization that facilitates the effective entry, coordination and implementation of Houston's existing educational, social and health services in underserved school feeder patterns. ProUnitas provides the tools for a community to play a crucial role in solving its own problems and ensures that programs are not working in silos but are rather parts of a greater community vision with a focus on student outcomes. He holds graduate degrees in Physiology and Biophysics from Georgetown University and Brain Based Education from Johns Hopkins University. Prior to ProUnitas, Mr. Barqawi was a 2012 Teach for America Houston Corps Member and worked for Pfizer Pharmaceuticals.

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**Invited Presenters**

**Dr. Kathleen Budge**

Associate Professor  
Boise State University  
Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies  
<https://www.boisestate.edu/>

Kathleen Budge is an associate professor at Boise State University, where her research and scholarly activity focuses on educational leadership, leadership development, rural education, school improvement, and poverty. She also coordinates Boise State's Executive Educational Leadership Program. She has conducted numerous presentations at national and state conferences as well as published several journal articles on her research interests. She is co-author with William Parrett of the 2012 award-winning book *Turning High-Poverty Schools Into High-Performing Schools*. She earned her doctorate from the University of Washington in 2005. With 26 years in P-12 education, Dr. Budget continues to maintain that her most important and significant work has been teaching first graders to read.

**Dr. Martha Burns**

Director of Neuroscience Education  
Northwestern University  
<http://www.northwestern.edu/>

Dr. Martha Burns is a joint appointment professor at Northwestern University and has authored three books and more than 100 journal articles on the neuroscience of language and communication. Dr. Burns' expertise is in all areas related to the neuroscience of learning, such as language and reading in the brain, the bilingual brain, the language-to-literacy continuum, and the adolescent brain. Dr. Burns is a Fellow of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and the Director of Neuroscience Education for Scientific Learning Corporation.

**Dr. Luzelma G. Canales**

Executive Director  
RGV FOCUS  
<http://rgvfocus.org/>

Dr. Luzelma G. Canales is the founding executive director for RGV FOCUS, a collaboration with Educate Texas. In this capacity, she is providing leadership for a large-scale collective impact initiative launched to transform college readiness, access, and success across a four-county region in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. The collaborative is comprised of more than 40 partners, including four postsecondary institutions, 11 school districts, two workforce boards, private funders, and numerous community-based organizations and nonprofits. Prior to joining Educate Texas in 2013, Dr. Canales served as a community college and university administrator for more than 25 years. Dr. Canales also served as the lead for numerous national reform initiatives including *Achieving the Dream*, *Breaking Through*, and several *Excelencia in Education* initiatives. She serves on local, state and national boards related to closing equity gaps in voter turnout and educational attainment. Dr. Canales holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from Pan American University, a Master of Business Administration from the University of Texas – Pan American, and Doctorate of Philosophy in Human Resource Development from Texas A&M University – College Station.

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**Invited Presenters**

**Robert Carreon**

Vice President for Public Affairs in Texas

*Teach For America*

<https://www.teachforamerica.org/>

Robert Carreon joined Teach For America as a 2003 Rio Grande Valley corps member, where he taught world history at Jimmy Carter High School in La Joya. After three years in the classroom, Mr. Carreon joined the Teach For America - Rio Grande Valley staff as manager of teacher development and district partnerships. He served as the region's executive director between 2008 and 2014. During this time, the region significantly increased its corps diversity, successfully developed public funding strategies from the State of Texas and developed an innovative partnership with a traditional school district and a public charter district. In July 2014, Mr. Carreon transitioned to the role of vice-president for Public Affairs in Texas, leading and coordinating external affairs efforts for the Teach For America network in Texas. Mr. Carreon is a graduate of Washington University in St. Louis.

**HD Chambers**

Superintendent

*Alief Independent School District*

<http://www.aliefisd.net/>

HD Chambers has devoted the past 30 years to public education in Texas. Prior to taking on the leadership role as superintendent of schools for the Alief Independent School District in the spring of 2011, Mr. Chambers served as superintendent for the Stafford Municipal School District. He has also taught in the Aldine Independent School District and served in various administrative roles in the Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District. Mr. Chambers serves on many boards as a member and an officer. He is the only superintendent to receive the Friends of Public Schools Ambassador of the Year in 2013-2014, 2014 Superintendent of the Year for Region 4, and the Region 4 Special Honoree Award for 2015. Region 4 serves a seven-county area composed of 50 school districts and 50 charter schools, representing more than 1.1 million students, 84,000 educators, and 1,600 campuses. He has also received the Children at Risk Voice for Children Award as well as the Rhosine Fleming Outstanding Counselor Advocate Award from the Texas School Counselor Association.

**Karin Chenoweth**

Writer-in-residence

*The Education Trust*

<https://edtrust.org/>

As writer-in-residence at The Education Trust, Ms. Chenoweth leads the organization's efforts to learn from and write about successful and improving schools with significant populations of children of color and children living in poverty. She co-authored, with The Education Trust Director of Research Christina Theokas, [\*Getting It Done: Leading Academic Success in Unexpected Schools\*](#) (Harvard Education Press, 2011), a careful study of the beliefs and practices of effective leaders of high-poverty and high-minority schools. *Getting It Done* builds on two previous books by Chenoweth, [\*"It's Being Done:" Academic Success in Unexpected Schools\*](#) (Harvard Education Press, 2007) and [\*How It's Being Done: Urgent Lessons from Unexpected Schools\*](#) (Harvard Education Press, 2009). She writes a regular column for [\*The Huffington Post\*](#) that focuses on schools and education.

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**Invited Presenters**

**Susan Dawson**

President and Executive Director

*E<sup>3</sup> Alliance*

[www.e3alliance.org](http://www.e3alliance.org)

Susan Dawson is a Texas entrepreneur, business and civic leader. She founded and leads the E3 Alliance (for Education Equals Economics), a regional collaborative to increase economic outcomes by aligning our education systems to fulfill the potential of every student. E3 Alliance has been recognized across the country for its ground-breaking work in systemic change for education. Ms. Dawson has led multiple successful technology firms and served as chair of the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce. Her many awards include the Leadership Austin Polly Scallorn Award for Lifetime Achievement in Community Trusteeship, Austin Under 40 “Austinite of the Year,” Hero for Children by the State Board of Education, Austin Profiles in Power “Profile Leader,” Ernst and Young “Entrepreneur of the Year,” and the UT McCombs School “Trailblazer Award” for the distinguished woman alumni trailblazer in business and community. In 2011 the Austin Business Journal named Ms. Dawson one of “Austin’s 30 Most Influential” leaders who have shaped Austin’s economy and culture in the last 30 years. She has a Bachelor of Science Cum Laude from Princeton University and a Masters of Business Administration with Highest Honors from the University of Texas McCombs School of Business.

**Dr. Pauline Dow**

Chief Instructional Officer

*North East Independent School District*

<http://www.neisd.net/>

Dr. Pauline Dow is the chief instructional officer for the North East Independent School District in San Antonio, an urban school district of more than 67,000 PK-12 students. Prior to this, she served as the chief academic officer for the Austin Independent School District, a school district of 85,000 PK-12 students. Additionally, she was the associate superintendent for academics in Ysleta ISD, and a deputy superintendent in Canutillo ISD. Dr. Dow is a former bilingual education director and bilingual teacher. As a public school educator for 28 years, she has focused on establishing meaningful standards of excellence, strengthening school-community partnerships and building a culture of collaboration at all levels. Much of her research, training and methodology were born and nurtured during her W.K. Kellogg Foundation National Leadership Fellowship from 1995 to 1997. She is a member of the 2016 Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessment and Accountability.

### **Invited Presenters**

**Mike Feinberg**

Co-Founder

*KIPP*

[www.kipp.org](http://www.kipp.org)

Mr. Mike Feinberg is co-founder of the KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) Foundation and executive vice chair of KIPP Houston, which includes 26 public charter schools: 10 primary schools, 12 middle schools, and four high schools serving nearly 14,000 children. To date, 90 percent of the KIPPsters who have left the KIPP Houston middle schools have gone on to college, and 51 percent of those former middle school KIPPsters have graduated from college compared with a national college graduation rate for low-income children of eight percent. Mr. Feinberg received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Pennsylvania in 1991 and a Masters of Education from National-Louis University in 2005. He received an honorary doctorate of Humane Letters from Yale University in 2010 and from Duke University in 2015. In 1994, he co-founded KIPP with Dave Levin and established KIPP Academy Houston a year later. In 2000, he co-founded the KIPP Foundation to help take KIPP to scale. Today, KIPP is a network of 200 high-performing public schools around the nation serving 80,000 children, with 10,000+ alumni in college.

**Chris Fraser**

Dean

*Relay GSE Texas*

<http://www.relay.edu/campuses/houston>

As dean of Relay GSE Texas and founding dean of Relay Houston, Chris Fraser oversees all aspects of teacher preparation in Houston and supports Relay deans in Dallas-Fort Worth, Denver, and San Antonio. Relay Houston currently trains 120 teacher residents and 40 teachers in a Master of Arts in Teaching cohort across 11 public districts in the Houston area. Mr. Fraser is an experienced Texas educator who most recently taught core pedagogy and secondary social studies to graduate students at Relay's Newark campus, and served as a Ferguson Education Leadership Fellow in Revere Public Schools. He began his career in education as a Teach For America corps member in the Houston Independent School District, winning the Symantec Award for Innovation in Teaching in his second year. Fraser earned an Ed.M. in education policy and management from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a Bachelor of Science in finance from the University of Florida.

**Kati Haycock**

Chief Executive Officer

*The Education Trust*

<https://edtrust.org/>

Kati Haycock serves as the chief executive officer of The Education Trust. Established in 1996, Ed Trust works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, pre-kindergarten through college. Known for years as a powerful force on education policy, Ed Trust is often described as “the most important truth teller” in American public education. But the organization also works hand in hand with educators and civic leaders in their efforts to transform schools and colleges into institutions that serve all students well. Before coming to The Education Trust, Ms. Haycock served as executive vice president of the Children's Defense Fund, the nation's largest child advocacy organization. A native Californian, Ms. Haycock founded and served as president of The Achievement Council, a statewide organization that provided assistance to teachers and principals in predominantly minority schools in improving student achievement. She also served as director of Outreach and Student Affirmative Action programs for the nine-campus University of California system.

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**Invited Presenters**

**Dr. Lupita Hinojosa**

Chief Academic Officer

*Spring Independent School District*

<http://www.springisd.org/>

Born to immigrant parents and raised in South Texas, Dr. Lupita Hinojosa is a first generation Mexican American. Dr. Hinojosa is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and holds a Masters and a Doctorate of Education from the University of Houston. She also holds certifications for Superintendent, Mid-Management, Elementary Pk-6 and Bilingual/ESL Pk-6 endorsement. In her 23-year career with the Houston Independent School District, Dr. Hinojosa has been a bilingual teacher, elementary principal, middle school principal, executive principal, assistant superintendent and school services officer. She has coached and supported teachers, principals, and emergent leaders. As the school services officer, Dr. Hinojosa supported the day-to-day operations of 282 schools in the Houston Independent School District. She oversaw the School Support Office which included the departments for External Funding, Federal and State Compliance, School Accountability, School Choice, and Parent and Community Liaison. In her current role as chief academic officer in the Spring Independent School District, she oversees the daily operations of the departments of Curriculum and Instruction, Multilingual, Special Education, Career and Technical Education, Gifted and Talented, Performing and Visual Arts, Athletics, Guidance and Counseling, Health and Medical Heath Services, Student Support Services, Research, Accountability, and Testing, Data Management and Compliance, Federal and State Compliance and the Office of School Leadership that oversees the 38 schools in Spring ISD. Dr. Hinojosa has been a visiting professor at the University of Houston, teaching courses in both the Masters and Doctoral programs of Education in Administration and Supervision. She is a past president of the Houston Area Association for Bilingual Association and the Texas Association for Bilingual Association. She has served on the board of the Association of Hispanic School Administrators and is a member of the National Association for School Administrators.

**Adam Hutchison**

Provost

*Texas State Technical College in Waco*

[www.waco.tstc.edu](http://www.waco.tstc.edu)

Mr. Hutchison is the Provost at Texas State Technical College in Waco and joined Texas State Technical College (TSTC) in 2000 as a faculty member in Harlingen before moving to the Waco campus in 2013. In addition to teaching, he has held a number of administrative positions at TSTC including leadership of the College's workforce training division, chief of staff, vice president for student learning, and executive academic officer. He serves on advisory councils and committees for workforce education issues in Waco and statewide, and he regularly presents on technical integration pathways in post-secondary institutions, competency based learning, and project management in higher education. Mr. Hutchison has completed two undergraduate degrees in aviation, a Master's degree in management, and additional graduate education in systems engineering and community college leadership.

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**Invited Presenters**

**Dr. John Jenkins**

Executive Director of New Site Development

*New Leaders*

<http://www.newleaders.org/>

Dr. Jenkins is an educational leader who believes every school can improve its capacity to teach all students if there is a strong, competent, transformational leader supported by a talented and committed leadership team at the helm. As executive director of regional program management at New Leaders, Dr. Jenkins brings 25 years of experience as an educator to supporting the national management of a portfolio of programs to recruit, train and support experienced educators to deliver high quality instruction; build team capacity and lead schools in our nation's highest needs communities. Dr. Jenkins has devoted his career to developing and sharing his passion for urban education as a teacher, facilitator and administrator in New York Public Schools. Before joining New Leaders he served as national vice president of programs at the School Leaders Network where he led a national team to develop strong learning communities for aspiring and experienced leaders. Dr. Jenkins also served as the instructional program manager for the Diploma Plus New York City Network of schools. Dr. Jenkins is also a certified diversity practitioner and has traveled internationally facilitating diversity, social justice and anti-oppression work with National Training Laboratory's (NTL) Diversity Leadership Certification Program. Dr. Jenkins has also served on the faculty of Mercy College's New Teacher Residency Program and New York University's Administrative Leadership Program. He received his doctorate degree in Education Administration from New York University.

**Dr. Danny King**

Superintendent

*Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District*

<http://www.psjaisd.us/>

A public school superintendent for the last 18 years, Dr. Daniel P. King was named the 2013 Texas Superintendent of the Year by the American Association of School Administrators and was the 2006 Superintendent of the Year for the Texas Association of School Boards. Since July of 2007, he has led the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District (PSJA). Under his leadership, PSJA has made tremendous progress on some of the most significant challenges that face Texas and the nation. A border school district serving more than 32,000 students (99 percent Hispanic and 89 percent economically disadvantaged), PSJA ISD had a dropout rate almost double the state average. The number of annual dropouts has been cut dramatically, and the dropout rate is now less than half the state rate. The number of annual high school graduates has doubled and the four-year graduation rate and overall high school completion rate has increased from 62.4 percent to 90.1 percent during his tenure, surpassing the state average. PSJA has become a state and national model for dropout prevention and recovery, inspiring state legislation (SB 975) and replication of its innovative initiatives across Texas and the nation. In the meantime, PSJA has undertaken an even bolder initiative College<sup>3</sup> (All students: Ready. Connected. Complete.™) Initiating and scaling up a network of Early College High Schools, concurrent and dual enrollment opportunities, and college and career connected career pathways, PSJA is determined to offer every single student the opportunity to earn at least 12 college hours by high school graduation, with hundreds of students earning more - up to an Associate's Degree.

**Invited Presenters**

**Dr. Susan Landry**

Director and Founder and Professor of Pediatrics

*The Children's Learning Institute*

[ChildrensLearningInstitute.org](http://ChildrensLearningInstitute.org)

Dr. Susan H. Landry is a developmental psychologist, the Albert & Margaret Alkek Distinguished Chair in Early Childhood, and the Michael Matthew Knight Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Texas Health Science Center - Houston. She is director and founder of the Children's Learning Institute (CLI) at the University of Texas. She served on the *Shaping a Healthier Generation Advisory Council* of the National Governors Association Centers for Best Practices. Dr. Landry is the past chair of the Head Start National Reporting System Advisory Panel, an appointment from the secretary of the U. S. Department of Health & Human Services and was a member of the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP). She served as expert panelist for the development of Pre-Kindergarten Standards for states of Florida and California and directed the revision of the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines. Her continued research makes use of new approaches to provide parents and teachers with resources that are effective in supporting young children's development. More than 140 peer-reviewed publications, 30 chapters, an Edited Book and a monograph *Effective Early Childhood Programs: Turning Knowledge Into Action* describe the findings of these research studies.

**Sterlin McGruder**

Principal

*Gus Garcia Young Men's Leadership Academy*

*Austin Independent School District*

<https://www.austinisd.org/>

Before Sterlin McGruder joined Austin ISD, he served as the principal of Grand Prairie ISD's Young Men's Leadership Academy at Kennedy Middle School when it reopened as a single-sex school. As principal at YMLA, his goal is to create a culture focused on college readiness and leadership. Students have a chance to participate in project-based learning through Project Lead the Way and get involved in STEM classes (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). Mr. McGruder's primary objective is to prepare young men for lives of responsibility and leadership in a globally competitive world. The students who graduate from YMLA will uphold the values of service, brotherhood and acceptance of responsibility for their actions.

**Mike Morath**

Commissioner of Education

*Texas Education Agency*

[http://tea.texas.gov/About TEA/Leadership/Commissioner/Commissioner s Biography/](http://tea.texas.gov/About%20TEA/Leadership/Commissioner/Commissioner%20s%20Biography/)

Mike Morath, a product of the Texas public schools, serves as the Texas commissioner of education where he oversees the Texas Education Agency and provides oversight to the state's 1,200 school districts and charter schools. Mr. Morath was appointed to the state's highest public education post on Jan. 4, 2016 by Gov. Greg Abbott. He is a former member of the Dallas Independent School District's Board of Trustees. Mr. Morath, a businessman, previously served as chair of Morath Investments and as president and chief operating officer of Minute Menu Systems, a company that provides information systems to help districts manage child nutrition programs.

**Invited Presenters**

**Lynn Musel**

Principal

*Capistrano Elementary School*

*Ysleta Independent School District*

<http://capistrano.yisd.net/>

Lynn Musel graduated from Bowling Green State University with a Bachelor of Science in Education and the University of Texas at El Paso with a Master of Education. Additionally, she attended the Lamar University Principal Academy X and the Harvard Graduate School of Education National Institute for Urban School Leaders. Ms. Musel has worked in the Ysleta Independent School District for more than 30 years as a teacher, assistant principal and principal. With more than 20 years as a principal at three different elementary schools and a Prekindergarten Center, she has recently secured a STEAM Designation at her current campus. She is most proud of leading her 97 percent economically disadvantaged student population from this little school on the border to be avid readers, eager learners and future leaders.

**Victor Obaseki**

Policy Coordinator

*Institute for Urban Policy Research & Analysis (IUPRA)*

<http://liberalarts.utexas.edu/iupra/>

Victor O. Obaseki, JD, is the policy coordinator for the Institute for Urban Policy Research & Analysis (IUPRA), the Black Studies policy institute at the University of Texas at Austin. Mr. Obaseki is an attorney who researches, speaks, and lectures about education law and policy and other social justice issues, in addition to helping IUPRA connect with community members and policymakers. His current research varies, including the intersection of local, state, and federal education issues; Mellon Foundation-funded research on mental health privacy laws and policies; and governmental agencies dedicated to racial equity. Prior to joining IUPRA, Mr. Obaseki was a drafting attorney at Texas Legislative Council, where he advised and wrote legislation for Texas state legislators on a nonpartisan basis. He also formerly worked as an education and public affairs newspaper reporter before attending The University of Texas School of Law.

**Kelvey Oeser**

Partner

*The New Teacher Project*

<http://tntp.org/>

Kelvey Oeser is a partner on the client team at The New Teacher Project (TNTN), where she leads the organization's work focused on recruiting, training and supporting great teachers in Texas. A graduate of Emory University, Ms. Oeser began her career as a middle school English teacher in East Los Angeles. She holds a Master's degree in secondary education from Loyola Marymount University and a Master's degree in public affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. Ms. Oeser worked at the Texas Education Agency, where she launched the \$30 million Texas STEM Initiative, in which she supported the creation of 35 new STEM-themed academies across the state of Texas serving low-income students. As the vice president of staff training design at Teach for America, Ms. Oeser led a team of designers who created leadership and staff development opportunities to 600+ instructional staff members across the country. Ms. Oeser also serves on the board of Montessori for All, an Austin-based, public charter school.

**Invited Presenters**

**Dr. William Parrett**

Director

*Boise State University*

*Center for School Improvement and Policy Studies*

<https://csi.boisestate.edu/>

Dr. William H. Parrett has received international recognition for his work in school improvement related to children and adolescents who live in poverty. He has co-authored nine books, the past three being best-sellers. His most recent, the award-winning *Turning High-Poverty Schools Into High-Performing Schools*, with Dr. Kathleen Budge, has provided a Framework For Action that has been adopted throughout the nation to guide lasting improvement and student success in high-poverty schools. As director of the Boise State University Center for School Improvement & Policy Studies for the past 20 years, Dr. Parrett coordinates funded projects and school improvement initiatives that currently exceed \$5 million annually. He is a frequent speaker at international and national events. His work with state and regional educational organizations, districts, and schools spans 44 states and 10 nations. Throughout his career, Dr. Parrett has worked to improve the educational achievement of all children and youth, particularly those less advantaged. These efforts have positively impacted the lives of thousands of young people, many of whom live in poverty.

**Marta Plata**

Principal

Manuel Jara Elementary

Fort Worth Independent School District

<http://www.fortworthisd.org/>

Marta Plata graduated from the University of North Texas with a degree in early childhood and from Texas Women's University with a Masters of Education. She has served the Fort Worth Independent School District as teacher, bilingual specialist, Spain Teacher Project specialist, early childhood specialist and instructional team member since 1996. She is currently the principal of Manuel Jara Elementary. In 2013 she created the framework for a parent university and founded the first FWISD Parent University. She operates the parent classes and childcare completely free, with the help of her staff and community volunteers. Through this work, the school has experienced an increase in parental involvement resulting in an increase in attendance, increase in academic and language scores as well as a decrease in discipline problems. Several principals from FWISD, as well as principals from neighboring districts, have visited the parent university and duplicated the model. They are experiencing the same degree of success. Mrs. Plata has received several recognitions for her Parent University work, including the Women of Distinction Award, Hispanic Education Initiative Award and a Community Service Recognition from Fort Worth Mayor, Betsey Price. This year 22 FWISD schools will be duplicating the model on their campuses.

### **Invited Presenters**

**Alison Reis-Khanna**

Executive Director

*Texas Partnership for Out of School Time (TXPOST)*

[www.txpost.org](http://www.txpost.org)

Alison Reis-Khanna is the executive director of the Texas Partnership for Out of School Time (TXPOST). She joined TXPOST in the fall of 2013 as the director of partnerships and quality initiatives and worked to facilitate the development of the Texas Standards for High Quality Afterschool, Summer and Expanded Learning Programs. Prior to joining TXPOST, Ms. Reis-Khanna worked with the Department of Human Services funded Out of School Time system in Philadelphia, PA. In this position, she facilitated professional development, conducted program evaluations and participated in numerous city wide quality improvement initiatives. She has worked with a number of non-profit organizations in Philadelphia and Chester, PA, and Washington, DC. Ms. Reis-Khanna holds a master's degree from the Heller School of Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University and was a FLAS Fellow at Ohio University. She completed her undergraduate degree at Denison University. Ms. Reis-Khanna began her career as a Peace Corps Volunteer in South Africa and has worked with community based organizations in Grenada and Ghana.

**Tom Torkelson**

*CEO and Founder of IDEA Public Schools*

<http://www.ideapublicschools.org/>

Upon graduating from Georgetown University with a degree in economics in 1997, Mr. Torkelson joined Teach for America and taught fourth grade in Donna, Texas for three years, after which he successfully launched the IDEA Academy in 2000, serving as the first board president and founding principal. At 24 years of age, he was then Texas' youngest-ever charter school founder. Tom has since led the replication efforts of the original school. There are now 29,000 students enrolled in 51 schools across the Rio Grande Valley, Austin, and San Antonio. The mission of IDEA Public Schools is to prepare students from underserved communities for success in college and citizenship. IDEA is on track to continue the tradition of 100% college acceptance and matriculation for its graduates. IDEA was recently named America's Best Charter School Network and boasts national rankings on The Washington Post and U.S. News & World Report's top high schools lists. Mr. Torkelson is often called upon to provide expert testimony to state and local officials on issues of education policy and school choice.

**Dr. David Vroonland**

Superintendent

*Mesquite Independent School District*

<http://www.mesquiteisd.org/home/>

Dr. David Vroonland grew up in Iowa, earned his bachelor's degree from Centenary College of Louisiana, his master's degree from Midwestern State University and his doctorate from the University of North Texas. Dr. Vroonland has been an educator for 30 years. He was a teacher and coach in Carrollton-Farmers Branch from 1986 – 1990. DuVall High School in Lanham, MD in 1991, Keimei Gaukuen High School in Akishima, Japan from 1992-1995, and Wichita Falls from 1995-1999. He moved into school administration in 1999, serving in Wichita Falls and Allen before being named superintendent in Frenship ISD in 2009. He became superintendent in Mesquite ISD in July 2015.

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**Todd Williams**

Executive Director

*Commit! Partnership*

[www.commit2dallas.org](http://www.commit2dallas.org)

Todd Williams serves as the founding chairman and executive director of the Commit! Partnership, based in Dallas-Ft. Worth and representing the nation's largest educational collective impact organization. He serves as the education policy advisor to Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings, and is a current trustee and former board chair for Austin College, current board member and founding chair of the regional advisory board for Teach for America DFW and is the former chair of the Citizen Budget Review Commission for Dallas ISD. Mr. Williams in 2007 helped establish the Williams Preparatory School, a K-12 free tuition public charter school operated by Uplift Education that educates more than 1,500 primarily low-income children in northwest Dallas. Mr. Williams is a Dallas ISD graduate, earned an Masters of Business Administration with distinction from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Austin College.

**Dr. Esperanza Zendejas**

Superintendent

*Brownsville Independent School District*

<http://www.bisd.us/>

Dr. Esperanza Zendejas began her second term as superintendent of the Rio Grande Valley's largest school district, Brownsville ISD, on June 25, 2015. She previously held the same position from 1992-1995 before leaving to assume the leadership of the Indianapolis Public Schools. She has more than 35 years of experience at all levels of education having held positions as a teacher, counselor and school principal. She has more than 20 years of experience as a school superintendent. Her primary focus since her return to Brownsville has been to boost academic performance and to increase community involvement. Dr. Zendejas has pioneered several new initiatives to enhance and enrich the educational programs within Brownsville ISD. Open enrollment at all 37 elementary schools and an Extended Day Enrichment Program at key locations in the community were initiated to support the needs of the families and to complement the educational experience of the students. Additionally, she has worked vigorously to establish and formalize partnerships with local, state, national and business organizations to support students and employees with scholarships and grants. Under her leadership in Brownsville, the district is increasing the number of dual-enrollment courses. Dr. Zendejas is also leading the way by creating more Career and Technical Education opportunities for students. This year, a Fire/EMT program was initiated to prepare students for future career opportunities. Dr. Zendejas holds a doctorate from Stanford University in Administration and Policy Analysis and a Master's degree from the University of San Diego. She is the author of several books, including *Tame Cactus* and *Infallibility*.