



# Let's Meet In the Middle!

## Region 3 and Region 4 Parent Center Conference

### June 19-21, 2018

### Speaker Bios

#### **Diana MTK Autin, JD** [diana.autin@spanadvocacy.org](mailto:diana.autin@spanadvocacy.org)

Diana MTK Autin, JD, is Executive Co-Director of the SPAN Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN). She co-directs the National Center for Family-Professional Partnerships which provides capacity-building to 51 Family to Family Health Information Centers, as well as NE-PACT, the Region 1 Parent Technical Assistance Center. She directs the National Center for Parent Leadership, Advocacy, and Community Empowerment (National PLACE), advocating to ensure a place at the table for every family and family organization. She worked with the IDEA Partnership in development of Leading by Convening: The Partnership Way and the Creating Agreement collection. She serves as a Senior Consultant and Wisdom Council member for the National Center for Cultural Competence. She is a member of the Board of the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. She has authored numerous guides for families on partnering with professionals and advocating on behalf of their children across systems. She received her BA degree with Honors from the University of Michigan, and graduated from the University of Michigan Law School in 1977. She was a Revson Fellow at Columbia University and a Wasserstein Public Interest Fellow at Harvard Law School.

#### **Kori Hamilton Biagas** [kori@justeducators.com](mailto:kori@justeducators.com)

Kori Hamilton Biagas has over fifteen years of experience in instruction (K-12 and Higher Ed), education policy, and technical assistance. Kori has a unique and broad perspective of the interworking of education from the classroom to the national policy level. She has held various roles with national centers focused on supporting students with disabilities and connecting students in rural communities with opportunities in college and career. Her work at regional centers addressed educational inequity on the basis of religion, race, gender, national origin, and socioeconomic status; the implications of implicit & explicit bias on school culture and climate; school transformation from an equity lens; alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices; and the use of data to interrupt pathways from schools to prisons. Ms. Hamilton Biagas is the founder of JustEducators, a consulting firm that provides technical assistance and professional development to schools and school districts nationally. Currently, she uses that expertise to provide support to schools, districts, and state education agencies across the country as a trainer, thought partner, and advocate for equity.

#### **Shirley J. Burks** [sbufford@uwm.edu](mailto:sbufford@uwm.edu)

Shirley J. Burks holds a bachelor's degree in business administration and a master's degree in organizational management. Her educational background includes numerous professional development programs such as: Project Management, Essentials of Management Development Certificate, Faculty College (UWM), Microsoft Office User Specialist (MOUS) certification, Train the Trainer Certificate and various continuing education topics related to capacity building issues. Burks currently serves as the Coordinator of Partnerships and New Initiatives within the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee's School of Continuing Education. Her training experience spans various educational levels; from primary school through adult continuing education. Burks has presented trainings for numerous organizations including the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Solutions Inc. (Cairo, Egypt), The Neighborhood House of Milwaukee, Girl Scouts of Milwaukee Area, Goodwill Industries of Southeastern Wisconsin, Employee Solutions Inc., YMCA Community Learning Centers, Milwaukee Business Technical College, Milwaukee Public School System and The New Opportunities Program (teen pregnancy services).



**Joanne Cashman, EdD** [joanne.cashman@nasdse.org](mailto:joanne.cashman@nasdse.org)

Dr. Cashman is a state technical assistance provider for the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) and served for 15 years as the Director of The IDEA Partnership at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). Joanne has a unique blend of academic preparation and practice knowledge. For 27 years she worked as a teacher, building principal and director of special and alternative education and dropout prevention for the Shikellamy School District in Sunbury, Pennsylvania. Before joining NASDSE, she was the project director of The Interdisciplinary Doctoral Training Program at George Washington University (GWU). Dr. Cashman is a frequent presenter for state and national audiences and has authored articles, practice manuals and book chapters that bridge policy and practice. Her research interests include: organizational learning; system convening, adaptive leadership, stakeholder engagement and communities of practice. She received her doctoral degree in special education from the George Washington University, Washington, DC.

**David Emenheiser** [David.Emenheiser@ed.gov](mailto:David.Emenheiser@ed.gov)

David E. Emenheiser has been employed in OSEP's Secondary Transition and Postsecondary Team (STPT) since August 2010. His discretionary grant portfolio includes model demonstration projects on the reentry from juvenile justice facilities, PROMISE (Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income) consortium project called ASPIRE, Parent Centers of Region 3 and Region 4, and the Native American Parent Technical Assistance Center. He also leads the OSERS Corrections Education and Juvenile Justice Reentry Workgroup and represents OSERS on the Department of Education Rural Education Workgroup. Prior to employment in ED, he worked with adolescents with disabilities, mainly emotional and behavioral disabilities, for 16 years. He held every special education job from paraprofessional to high school principal during those years. He earned his doctorate in special education and disability studies from The George Washington University, researching the Relations Between Academic Achievement and Self-Concept Among Adolescent Students with Disabilities Over Time. He lives in Annapolis with his husband, Eric, and three poodles.

**Carolyn Hayer** [chayer@spanadvocacy.org](mailto:chayer@spanadvocacy.org)

Carolyn Hayer is the Director of Parent & Professional Development at SPAN Parent Advocacy Network. In this role, Carolyn presents at the local, state and national levels on topics related to advocacy and special education. She is Co-Director of the Region 1 PTAC, the NJ PTI, and the RSA REACH for Transition Project. Carolyn has served on various boards and committees: local Education Foundation trustee, School Board president, State Special Education Advisory Council member, Special Education Parent Advisory Committee Chair, Disability Rights NJ Board member, Arc of NJ Governmental Affairs Committee, NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities member, NJ State Rehabilitation Council Treasurer, Chair of local Arc Board of Trustees.

**Glenda Hicks** [glenda@gyhickscpa.com](mailto:glenda@gyhickscpa.com)

Glenda Hicks is a consultant and trainer exclusively serving nonprofit organizations. She operates a CPA firm in Marietta, Georgia where she utilizes her credentials as a BoardSource Certified Governance Trainer and a Certified Public Accountant, to serve clients in the areas of board development, board governance, financial management, and financial leadership through training, consulting, executive coaching, and assessment services. Glenda has served on various nonprofit boards and committees. She is a former officer and board member of the Cobb Community Collaborative, Girls on the Run of Atlanta, National Legal Aid and Defender Association (NLADA), and the Girl Scout Council of Tropical Florida. Glenda is a former finance committee member of MUST Ministries, Treasurer of the West Cobb Business Association and a graduate of Leadership Cobb class of 2010. Glenda is a graduate of Florida State University and the University of Miami having earned a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree, respectively. Glenda is also a former adjunct professor for the graduate business schools of Brenau University and the University of Miami.



**Debra Jennings** [debra.jennings@spanadvocacy.org](mailto:debra.jennings@spanadvocacy.org)

Debra Jennings leads SPAN's national efforts promoting the capacities of the approximately 100 Parent Training & Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers assisting families with children with disabilities. These projects provide Parent Centers with the information and materials that support their individual parent advocacy efforts and systemic improvement activities. Debra's experience as an advocate and leader includes organizing and supporting grassroots parent advocacy organizations and efforts around general and special education issues. She joined SPAN in 1997 to lead its "Parents Engaged in Public Policy Project." On several state and national advisory committees, Debra is committed to ensuring that the voices of parents/families and communities are not left out of discussions of policies and practices impacting children and families. Debra is a graduate of Northwestern University with a degree in Economics and has completed coursework in business, finance, public administration and non-profit management at the Kellogg School of Management and Seton Hall University Center for Public Service. Debra also served on a local school board. She is the mom and first advocate of two daughters, one of whom received special education services and the other who participated in Title I Basic Skills. Both are college graduates. She lives in New Jersey with her husband, a middle school administrator.

**Leslie Lipson** [lipson.advocacy@gmail.com](mailto:lipson.advocacy@gmail.com)

Leslie Lipson has an active national consulting practice where she conducts strategic planning for specific advocacy and special education issues and further leads trainings for parents and advocacy groups on topics relating to special education law and advocacy. Leslie earned her undergraduate and law degrees from The University of Georgia and soon after started work at the Georgia Advocacy Office (GAO), a nonprofit organization that protects people with disabilities from abuse and neglect and advocates on their behalf. In her 16 years at the GAO, she has provided assistance with the Department of Justice in its investigation of a parallel, segregated system in Georgia for educating children with disabilities; led the Safe Schools Initiative, a multi-agency advocacy effort aimed at ending restraint and seclusion in Georgia public schools; coordinated the Parent Leadership Support Project, which assisted approximately 10,000 families; and directed a program that helps people with psychiatric disabilities. Leslie is co-counsel in a class action lawsuit filed in federal court October 11, 2017 alleging that the state of Georgia, by denying students with disabilities the opportunity to be educated with their non-disabled peers in neighborhood schools through a system called "GNETS", violates the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Leslie currently is Director of Outreach at the GAO.

**Tery J. Medina** [TJMedina411@gmail.com](mailto:TJMedina411@gmail.com)

Tery J. Medina is a freelance consultant and a veteran educator with 30+ years of experience. She holds an M.A.Ed. degree in Diagnostic Teaching with a minor in Bilingual Education, and an M.A.Ed. in Administration and Supervision with a minor in TESOL. Ms. Medina has a wide range of experience. She has been a teacher of the Learning Disabled, Gifted, Pre-K, Elementary and Adult ESOL. As an adjunct instructor, she has taught courses in ESL Methodology, Curriculum Development, Bilingualism, Cross-Cultural Issues, and English. She has delivered training and technical assistance to numerous State Departments of Education, Community Based Organizations, Local Education Agencies, and other professional groups in the areas of Diversity and Cross-cultural Education, Equal/Equitable Education, The Hispanic Cultures, Human Relations, Special Education, Parental and Community engagement, and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. She is the former Associate Director for the Southeastern Equity Center. She participates in several professional organizations and is involved in advocacy to provide equal and equitable educational opportunities for language minority students and their families. Tery came to the U.S. as a Cuban refugee. She has devoted much of her professional life to building bridges across cultural differences towards mutual respect and understanding.



**Daniel Parker** [Daniel.parker@dpi.wi.gov](mailto:Daniel.parker@dpi.wi.gov)

Daniel Parker is the Assistant Director of Special Education, with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Before joining the administrative team, Daniel's prior roles on the Special Education team included autism consultant, grant director for the Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative (WSPEI) as well as grants supporting family engagement through Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training, and Support (WI FACETS), supporting the Indicator 8 family engagement survey process, and development of revised IEP guidance for College and Career IEPs: Improving Outcomes for Students 3 through 21. Daniel has a unique blend of home based, general and special education teaching, and administrative background at the school, district, and statewide levels. His interests include data analysis, self-determination, family engagement, positive behavior interventions, cross agency/organization collaboration, and highlighting implementation of evidence based strategies to support improved student outcomes across Wisconsin. Daniel received a Master's Degree in Human Development and Family Life and a Master's Degree in Special Education both from the University of Kansas. He has a wife, Sarah, a cat, Lily, and the cutest dog in the world, ZuZu.

**Nelsinia Ramos** [nramos@wifacets.org](mailto:nramos@wifacets.org)

Nelsinia Ramos is Region 4 PTAC's Multicultural Specialist housed at WI FACETS to provide technical assistance to Parent Centers in the Midwest (8 states). Nelsinia received her B.A. in Business & Management from Alverno College; an Associate's Degree in Social Work from Milwaukee Area Technical College and a Non-Profit Management professional certification from UW-Milwaukee. She is the parent of a young adult with social and intellectual needs and is also founder of the Latino Autism Support group. She currently serves on the National Military Parent TA Center Advisory Board and volunteers for the Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee as legal Guardian for 2 elder with disabilities.

**Dr. Mariola Rosser** [mariola.rosser@nasdse.org](mailto:mariola.rosser@nasdse.org)

Dr. Mariola Rosser is a Senior Associate at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). For the past 17 years, Dr. Rosser worked for the IDEA Partnership, an OSEP's investment in the stakeholders' expertise, convening learning partnerships among 50+ national organizations and family groups committed to improving outcomes for students with disabilities. She currently serves as a TA facilitator for the National Center for Systemic Improvement, working with both Part C and Part B programs. Mariola holds a doctorate in special education from George Washington University. Her primary areas of interests are social and emotional development/mental health, self-determination and stakeholder engagement.

**Jan Serak, M.A.** [jan.serak@wi.rr.com](mailto:jan.serak@wi.rr.com)

Jan Serak, M.A., has over 27 years of experience with nonprofit management, including 23 as founder and CEO of WI FACETS. She was the Co-Director of WI FACETS' PTI and Region 4 PTAC. Having retired in 2017, she now is a contracted TA Consultant for Region 4 PTAC. Jan has served on many local, state, and national Boards of Directors. She led the Development Team of the Parent Center Board PD Tool Kits.

**Nora Thompson** [norat@matrixparents.org](mailto:norat@matrixparents.org)

Nora Thompson is the Region 6 Parent Technical Assistance Center Director and the Executive Director of Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center, a Parent Training and Information Center in Northern California. She has worked over the past 20 years of providing TA to translate best practices in nonprofit management, program and board development and finding effective methods to evaluate services into manageable parent center language. Nora feels she has probably made the most common mistakes in running a parent center so would like you all learn what NOT to do.



**Jacey Tramutt** [jaceytramutt@gmail.com](mailto:jaceytramutt@gmail.com)

Jacey Tramutt works as a Technical Assistance (TA) specialist for PEAK Parent Center in CO. In her TA role she assists parent centers in Region 5 in all dimensions of running a nonprofit. In addition, Jacey has a private psychotherapy practice in Golden, CO, specializing in anxiety disorders, and is an adjunct faculty member at Naropa University where she teaches mindfulness meditation. For more information on Jacey you can visit: <http://www.cultivateconfidence.com>

**Laura Weber** [lweber@ecacmail.org](mailto:lweber@ecacmail.org)

Laura J. Weber, Ph.D., Executive Director, Exceptional Children's Assistance Center, is a highly accomplished, results-driven leader with extensive experience in designing and implementing strategic planning and program management and operations. Laura has a deep commitment to family leadership. She has provided family leadership trainings, created, and implemented family-centered curricula to service workers, provided technical assistance and support to family-run organizations, and advocated for policies that support the empowerment and inclusion of families and youth. Laura co-founded the N.C. Family Resource Coalition, a public-private nonprofit committed to engaging families in systems change and to helping practitioners develop deeper skills in family support and family empowerment. Laura is on the board of National PLACE, national non-profit organization committed to helping family-led organizations and individual families acquire the knowledge and skills needed to effectively "sit at the table" and influence the policies and decisions that impact the lives of children, youth, and families. Laura earned her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations, and her Master's degree in Public Health Education. Prior to coming back to ECAC as the Executive Director, Laura was a Senior Project Director for the Center for Creative Leadership, a global, top-ranked leadership development organizations focusing on youth leadership.

**Dr. Travis Wright** [travis.wright@wisc.edu](mailto:travis.wright@wisc.edu)

Dr. Travis Wright is an Assistant Professor of Counseling Psychology and Early Childhood Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he is the founder/director of the BASES Project, a school and community-based intervention for preschool students experiencing homelessness, their families, and teachers. During the 2015-16 academic year, Wright was on leave to serve as the Deputy Chief of Early Childhood Education for Washington, DC Public Schools, where he oversaw implementation of one of the largest Head Start programs in the nation. Blending developmental, clinical, and educational perspectives, Wright studies how schools influence social-emotional and identity development for children and teachers navigating challenging circumstances. Previously, he worked as a school-based mental health counselor, public school teacher, and early childhood educator in Washington, DC and Boston Public Schools.

***Please be sure to take a moment to thank your presenters who worked tirelessly to prepare the best possible sessions for you!***