

BETTER TOGETHER!
Region 2 and Region 3 Conference
August 7-10, 2017
Austin, Texas

Speaker Biographies

Rene Averitt-Sanzone

Rene Averitt-Sanzone has been working in the area of special education advocacy for over twenty-five years. She has held a variety of roles in the field of special education – Parent Educator, Early Childhood Behavior Specialist, Evaluator, Technical Assistance Provider, and Charter School Administrator. Rene is currently the Executive Director of Maryland's Special Education and Health Information Center at The Parents' Place of Maryland. PPMH is a nonprofit organization whose mission empowers families as advocates and partners in improving education and health outcomes for their children with disabilities and special health care needs. Rene has conducted presentations at the local, state and national levels on topics related to advocacy, best practices, and special education. She is also the mother of two grown daughters with disabilities.

Joanne Cashman, EdD

Dr. Cashman is currently 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.

Joyce Chastain

With many years of senior-level human resources experience in the private sector environment, Joyce Chastain brings practical know-how to each engagement. As a human resources consultant with The Krizner Group, she specializes in talent development, employee relations, internal investigations, employment law compliance, and affirmative action plans. She is a frequent guest speaker for professional associations and academia covering a wide array of human resources

topics. Ms. Chastain holds a Business Administration degree from Emmanuel College, Franklin Springs, GA; was awarded Senior Certified Professional designation, Senior Professional in Human Resources designation and holds an Advanced Certificate in Internal Investigations. Ms. Chastain was selected as one of the "Twenty-five Women You Should Know in Tallahassee" and was honored with the designation of the Florida Human Resources Professional of the Year. She has also been featured by the Florida Trend Magazine as a Trendsetter in Human Resources.

Diana Cruz

Diana Cruz serves as a Dispute Resolution Specialist for CADRE, the National Center on Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education. She brings considerable experience working at the LEA level, fostering home school partnerships, and employing child-centered decision making. Diana has expertise in IEP facilitation and is a certified trainer in Conflict Resolution and IEP Facilitation. Prior to working for CADRE, Diana was the Coordinator for Due Process for Broward County Public Schools, the 6th largest district in the country, responsible for the management of all dispute resolution complaints filed on behalf of students with disabilities, and was instrumental in establishing the use of IEP facilitation district-wide. She received both her bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Miami in elementary education and exceptional student education. When she is not busy with work, Diana is exploring Oregon with her husband and 7-year-old son.

David Emenheiser

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.

Whitney Emerson

Whitney Emerson is Training Coordinator of Formed Families Forward. Whitney is the proud mother of two teenagers who joined her family through international adoption. Her son introduced her to the world of special education and she has learned to navigate systems to improve services for her children. In her former life, Whitney worked as a certified meeting and event planner for associations in the

DC area and earned a certificate in Event Management from George Washington University. Whitney plans and oversees training events and conducts outreach activities to formed families and professionals.

Rorie Fitzpatrick

Rorie Fitzpatrick is Program Director at WestEd, overseeing training and technical assistance in support of children and youth (birth-22) with, or at risk for disabilities, and their families. WestEd partners with state and local education and human service agencies to build local capacity to improve developmental, academic, and behavioral outcomes for children and youth. Fitzpatrick also serves as the Director of the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI), the largest single TA investment by the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. Prior to joining WestEd, Fitzpatrick held posts as Superintendent of Public Instruction, Chief Deputy Superintendent, and State Special Education and Federal Programs Director in Nevada, having worked with that state department of education from 1998-2013. She received an MEd in early childhood special education from the University of Nevada, Reno.

Misty Goosen, Ed.S.

Since 1994, Misty Goosen has worked as the Project Coordinator for the Kansas Inservice Training System (KITS). In this role, she has and continues to provide training, technical assistance and consultative services to adults working with and families of infants/toddlers and young children with disabilities at the national, state, and local level. In addition, she is currently acting as the Part C SSIP Coordinator in Kansas. Misty has served on the Council of Exceptional Children Division of Early Childhood Executive Board, is a Past Kansas Division of Early Childhood President, and received the 2008 KDEC Award of Excellence for making significant contributions to the field.

Kori Hamilton

Kori J. Hamilton has over 10 years of experience in instruction, education policy, and technical assistance. She is the founder of JustEducators which provides technical assistance and professional development to schools and school districts nationally, specializing in cultural proficiency, special education, school culture and climate, harassment prevention, and alternative discipline practice. Currently, she serves as a Senior Policy and Practice Consultant for the National School Climate Center, providing coaching, training, and technical assistance to regional and district leaders focused on sustainable school climate reform. She also supports schools and districts in Mississippi, California, Florida, Georgia, New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Ms. Hamilton supports numerous districts on the resolution of compliance agreements with the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, Department of Justice, as well as other state compliance agencies. She has served as a Co-Creator/Course Instructor of Methods for Teaching Students with Diverse Abilities at the Arizona State University and a professional development provider for Teach for America corps members (Phoenix, AZ). Ms.

Hamilton has published numerous works on equity-centered leadership and equitable education. Ms. Hamilton holds a M.A. in Education from the University of California, Los Angeles, Center X and a B.A. from Georgetown University.

Carolyn Hayer

Carolyn Hayer has been working in the area of special education advocacy for over twenty years. She is currently the Co-Director of New Jersey's Parent Training and Information Center at the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network. In this role, Carolyn has conducted presentations at the local, state and national levels on topics related to advocacy and special education. In addition, she serves as the Co-Director of the Region 1 PTAC and the REACH for Transition RSA funded project. In the past she has served as a Girl Scout troop leader, PTA president, Recreation & Cultural Board member, local Education Foundation trustee, School Board president, NJ State Special Education Advisory Council member, Mary McLeod Bethune Scholarship Committee member, Co-Chair of local Special Education Parent Advisory Committee, Disability Rights NJ Board member, and was appointed by the Governor to serve on the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities and the NJ State Rehabilitation Council. She continues her volunteer service as the current Chair of the Arc of Bergen & Passaic Counties, Inc. Board of Trustees. She is a past recipient of the Phi Delta Kappa, Delta Nu Chapter 2007 Community Service Recognition Award, the Arc of Bergen & Passaic Counties 2007 Professional of the Year Award and a recipient of the Hackensack Education Foundation's 2013 Distinguished Citizen Award.

Aimee Heintz

Aimee became a Salesforce certified administrator in 2007. She enjoys using her communication skills to understand client's vision and translating it into a CRM application. She has extensive experience implementing Salesforce for social service organizations. She is most proud of her work on a simultaneous nationwide deployment of a custom Salesforce configuration for more than 20 parent services organizations. After availing herself of the services offered by her local parent center when her son was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, she personally created the Connected Families packages. These packages help streamline parent service organizations data and simplify reports so they have more time to focus on what really matters – helping families. Aimee is a graduate of the University of Arizona and works out of Sputnik Moment's headquarters in Phoenix, AZ.

Kelly Henderson

Kelly Henderson, Ph.D., is Executive Director of Formed Families Forward, a northern Virginia non-profit family organization that trains and supports foster, adoptive and kinship care families raising children and youth with special needs. Formed Families Forward operates a Community Parent Resource Center. A special educator by profession, Kelly is a former public school teacher of students with emotional and behavioral disorders, and has worked in national special education policy and federal research settings. Kelly is also adjunct faculty of special

education at George Mason University, Fairfax, VA. Kelly's family is formed in part through public foster care and adoption. Her three sons, ages 13- 19, have a range of disabilities and special needs. Kelly trains and consults with adoptive, foster and kinship families and agency personnel on special education-related needs of children and youth. She serves on a number of non-profit boards and public agency advisory bodies.

Glenda Hicks

Glenda is a consultant and trainer to nonprofit organizations. She operates a firm in Marietta, Georgia where she services clients throughout the Southeast United States. Utilizing her credentials as a BoardSource Certified Governance Trainer and a Certified Public Accountant, Glenda exclusively serves nonprofit organizations in the areas of board development, board governance, financial management, and financial leadership through training, consulting, executive coaching, and assessment services utilizing her nearly 30 years of professional experience. Glenda's mission is to provide organizations with "Best Practices for Becoming the Best Nonprofit". 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. She is also a former finance committee member of MUST Ministries and a graduate of Leadership Cobb class of 2010.

Mary Jacob

Mary Jacob has been with the Louisiana PTI for the past 24 years and has held almost every position in the agency. She became the Executive Director after Hurricane Katrina destroyed their office and the current ED took a long leave of absence and ultimately resigned. Mary's priority was to create a sound business plan that would be sustainable for many years to come. Part of this plan included diversifying income streams, creating reserves equal to 6 months of operating expenses, and change the culture of the current board of directors. In the past ten years, she has worked hard to successfully change the culture of the board and create a 6-month reserve account. Most recently she created an investment portfolio with \$500,000 of cash she amassed primarily from fee for service contracts and fundraising and is proud to say her operating bank account never falls below six figures. Before joining the PTI, Mary worked in Banking and Real Estate and believes non-profit leaders need business experience as much as they need a passion for the cause. Mary is the proud mother of 2 adult daughters, Megan and Brooke and the super proud Mimi of Liam and Lily, her five-year-old grandchildren.

Eric Jacobson

Mr. Jacobson is the executive director of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) — a federally funded, independent state agency that advocates on behalf of Georgians and families living with developmental disabilities. Jacobson

leads GCDD on its mission to collaborate with Georgia citizens, public and private advocacy organizations and policymakers to positively influence public policies that enhance the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities and their families. Eric Jacobson was named one of the 100 most influential Georgians by Georgia Trend Magazine in its February, 2007 and February 2008 editions, and received honorable mention in 2009 and 2010. Mr. Jacobson is a past-president of the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, the national trade association representing Developmental Disability Councils. He has been a member of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Home and Community-Based Services, and served on the steering committee for implementation of the Olmstead decision. He is also a member of the Statewide Interagency Coordinating Council. His volunteer activities have included being a founding member and co-president of the AMIT Community School. He was a member of Jewish Family and Career Services Disability Task Force. He was a member of the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta's Disability Task Force. Eric was also a 2000 participant in American Jewish Committee Black-Jewish Young Leadership Coalition retreat. He lives in Marietta, Georgia with his wife, Terri. They have twin 21 year olds, Jonah and Hilit.

Debra Jennings

Debra leads SPAN's national efforts promoting the capacities of the approximately 100 Parent Centers in each state, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam and Palau. 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. 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.

Joe LaBelle

Joseph La Belle is a young man with ADHD and learning disabilities. He is a graduate of Florida State University with a bachelors in Criminology and a Public Service research fellow, having worked in human rights advocacy in Latin America. Service, education, and human rights advocacy have been big parts of his life. Being successful with his learning disabilities has been a struggle every day. Joseph has works for Family Network on Disabilities as the Assistant Director of the Parent Education Network (PEN) PTI. Joe has spoken nationally on the importance of youth self-advocacy and how to empower students to find their voice as a self-advocate.

Despite adversity, learning the right tools and strategies has led to the success he has had in his life today.

Patrice Linehan

For the past 20 years, Patrice has worked at The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), where she is a Project Director. She leads the Communication and Collaboration team for the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI), which supports state efforts to engage practitioners and families in learning partnerships to improve results for children and families. Before joining NASDSE, Patrice taught English language learners and special education students for about 10 years. In addition to teaching, she has worked in the fields of counseling, curriculum development, publishing/testing, higher education research, and public policy.

Jena Martin

Jena Martin currently serves as the Director of Special Populations and Quality for Family Connection of South Carolina, ensuring our underserved and at risk children receive appropriate and timely special education services. She is a wife and mother to four through adoption, her second son living life with special health care needs to the fullest ability. Jena is an advocate for the deaf and hard of hearing and is a therapeutic foster parent. Serving on multiple local and statewide boards for the well-being of children, she represents both a parent and professional voice, hoping to impact system changes for our most vulnerable. Jena graduated from The University of South Carolina with a BA in English and a minor in Early Childhood Education in 2004. She completed her Child Life Internship at Palmetto Health Children's Hospital and received her Child Life certification in 2005. Jena worked as a Certified Child Life Specialist at Palmetto Health Children's Hospital for six years, with experience in the Pediatric ICU and inpatient Hematology/Oncology unit and palliative care. Jena previously supervised the child life clinical experience with Columbia College and Palmetto Health as an adjunct professor.

Tery Medina

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.

Larissa Neale

Larissa's specialty is implementing Connected Families, a package developed and offered exclusively by Sputnik Moment. Having worked on the client side of an extensive CRM implementation in her former career, she understands the challenges and frustrations that arise with the adoption of new technology. She became a Salesforce certified administrator in 2014, and since she began working with Sputnik Moment has completed more than 30 Connected Families implementations. Her favorite part of working on the Connected Families is hosting the office hours calls, which offer an informal setting for parent services organizations to collaborate and share best practices. Larissa is a graduate of the University of Arizona and lives in the greater Washington DC area.

Jana Rosborough

Jana Rosborough joined WestEd in 2015 as a Senior Program Associate with Learning Innovations. Rosborough's work focuses on assisting states in transforming systems of early intervention and special education to improve outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities. Prior to this role, Rosborough was an Assistant Director on the Early Childhood, Special Education, and Title Services team with the Kansas State Department of Education. With a focus on student outcomes, Rosborough provided consultative and directive services in the area of education requirements and best practices in accordance with federal and state law. Rosborough led the work in the alignment of State general supervisory responsibilities with Federal accountabilities across Title programs. This resulted in a risk-based, outcome-focused monitoring system to maximize the provision of technical assistance and leverage areas of opportunities and areas of strength across the State. Rosborough provided ongoing technical assistance and professional learning opportunities for the field, including work with the Multi-System of Support (MTSS) core team to support system change. Rosborough is a licensed attorney in Kansas and Missouri and has experience teaching students with high-incidence disabilities who accessed the general education curriculum in general and special education settings at the secondary level.

Eliana Tardio

Eliana Tardio is a successful blogger and activist who started her career thirteen years ago with the birth of her first child, Emir, who was diagnosed with Down syndrome in utero. Three years later, her second child, daughter Ayelen, was born with the same condition. As a way to both vent and record the growth of her two children and her role as a mother, Eliana started a bilingual blog about parenting

children with special needs. The blog is now one of the biggest of its kind worldwide with more than 300k followers. Through her strong presence on social media and innovative community approach, Eliana's goal is to make information accessible for everyone, and with this, promote the full inclusion of children with disabilities. Eliana was named one of top 6 Latino Story Tellers by YouTube on 2016, Best Latino Advocate Through the Use of Technology on 2016 by Latism in an initiative with the White House, one of the top 100 Mom Bloggers by Disney, and one of the Top 6 Latina Leaders changing history in the U.S. by Café Moms.

Kathy Whaley

Kathy Thompson Whaley is a Technical Assistance Specialist for the Early Childhood TA (ECTA) and DaSy Centers and supports state Part C and Section 619 Coordinators in implementing the IDEA. She is the early childhood transition issue specialist at the ECTA Center and has worked on national transition initiative and within states since 1994. She co-facilitates a national IDEA early childhood inclusion community of practice for Part C and 619 Coordinators and co-coordinates the ECTA Inclusion TA Team. She was one of the coordinators of the National Expanding Opportunities Interagency Inclusion Initiative from 2005 -2012 which provided extensive support to cross-sector state-level interagency teams.

And our Closing Keynote Speaker...

Bradley Scott

Bradley Scott, Ph.D., was an IDRA senior education associate, and brought more than 45 years of experience to the field of education. At IDRA, he served as director of the IDRA equity assistance center, the South Central Collaborative for Equity. The center worked with school districts in Texas, New Mexico, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Arkansas, in the implementation of educational equity plans that increase equitable educational opportunity and greater access to high quality instruction for all students regardless of their race, gender or national origin; the preparation and adaptation of desegregation and unitary status plans and settlement agreements to decrease and eliminate racial isolation in public schools; community, parent and student involvement in the diverse school setting; establishment of nondiscriminatory policies; elimination of racially bias curricular materials, establishment of safe/non-hostile school environments, and the reduction of bullying, harassment and school violence for all students; and the creation of alternative materials development of human relations activities to promote racial harmony and an appreciation for diversity in public schools.

Dr. Scott earned his doctor of philosophy with a concentration in educational administration from the University of Texas at Austin. His received a bachelor's degree in French and education from Grove City College in Pennsylvania and a master's degree in early childhood and elementary education from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Dr. Scott is proficient in both English and French.

Dr. Scott has conducted training and provided technical assistance in human relations, intrapersonal and interpersonal communication, management and leadership skills development, civil rights and non-discrimination in education,

effective leadership in diverse and desegregated settings, multicultural education, training for diversity, developing cross-cultural competence, and creating educational excellence for all through systemic change based on the *Goals of Educational Equity* which he created as a researched-based approach to transforming the public educational experiences for all diverse learners in public schools. His broad background was instrumental as he provided technical assistance and training to public school districts, school personnel, students in those schools, parents and community persons in the development and implementation plans to cope with educational issues emerging from the desegregation, unitary status, and settlement agreement processes and the effort to create educational equity and excellence for all learners in public schools.

Dr. Scott has authored and co-authored numerous publications including *Magnet Schools: Pockets of Excellence in a Sea of Diversity* and *It's a Matter of Race: Race Relations in a Desegregated Setting*. He also co-authored IDRA's gender equity curriculum for middle school students, *Minority Women in Science: Forging the Way*. He authored, the national EAC network publication on Response to Intervention, *Response to Intervention: An Equity Perspective*, and is the creator of the document, *The Goals of Educational Equity and School Reform*.