

# EQUITY SUMMIT

## DEVELOPING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE DISTRICT LEADERS IN PENNSYLVANIA

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9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

### REGISTRATION OPEN

Coffee/tea bar available for attendees

10:00 – 10:15 a.m.

### WELCOME AND SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE SUMMIT

**Dr. Heather Bennett**

*Director of Equity Services | PSBA*

10:15 – 11:30 a.m.

### PANEL DISCUSSION: LEADING TRANSFORMATION:

#### Developing and supporting inclusive leaders

**Dr. Damaris Rau** | *Superintendent* | The School District of Lancaster

**July Haywood Esq.** | *School Board President* | Cheltenham School District

**Tyler Titus LPC** | *School Board Director* | Erie Public School District

**Ken Nickson Jr., M.Ed.** | *Coordinator of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion* | Erie Public School

**Waldo Alvarado, M.S.Ed.** | *Director of Equity and Diversity* | Reading School District

To develop a school environment that meets the needs of students, it is essential that school leaders reflect and support the growing diversity of cultures, experiences and identities that make up our student body in Pennsylvania. The practice of equity is both an internal and external work. It requires leaders to self-reflect on their own personal educational journey and to be critical about policies and practices that impact student opportunity and achievement. This panel is made up of transformative education leaders who are focused on social justice and inclusion and represent the growing diversity of students in Pennsylvania. This session focuses primarily on the personal journeys of these educational leaders and explores the hardships and successes of developing a culturally responsive equity agenda in their districts and communities.

11:30 a.m.

### BUFFET LUNCH

11:50 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

### KEYNOTE | WITH DIGNITY AND INTEGRITY: Toward a model of culturally responsive leadership

**Dr. Valerie Kinloch** | *Renee and Richard Goldman Dean* |

*University of Pittsburgh School of Education*

12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

### STRUCTURING EQUITY: Developing a culturally responsible equity plan

**Dr. Nikole Y. Hollins-Sims** | *Consultant on Special Assignment to PDE* |

*Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)*

**Davelyn Smeltzer** | *Senior Director of Governance Services* | PSBA

**Dr. Heather Bennett** | *Director of Equity Services* | PSBA

Being culturally responsive is an ongoing endeavor to ensure that all areas of student life, both academic and extracurricular, recognize and include the culture of all students. To aid in this ongoing process, it is important for districts to embed equity and culturally



responsive pedagogy and practices into the structure of the education system. This session focuses on the process of developing a systemic, district-wide, culturally responsive equity plan by discussing equity audits, action plans and policy.

1:30 - 1:45 p.m.

**BREAK**

1:45 – 2:45 p.m.

**PANEL DISCUSSION | LIFTING UP STUDENT VOICE AND ENGAGEMENT: Developing an education practice that is for students and done with students**

**Moderator | Dr. Todd Mealy | *Social Studies Teacher* | Penn Manor School District**  
**PA students from: Penn Manor School District, Harrisburg School District, Upper Dublin School District and the School District of Lancaster**

Developing culturally responsive school environments requires the uplift and prioritization of student voice. Student voice is a powerful tool for district leaders to improve teaching and learning; assess if school policy and practice are working; and provide context to how students experience their schools, neighborhoods, and communities. This panel focuses on the voices of students from across the commonwealth to address how their cultural identities shape their school experiences. This panel will also discuss best practices to improve student achievement, opportunity and belonging in schools.

2:45 – 3:00 p.m.

**CLOSING | PURSUING AND ACHIEVING EQUITY IN PENNSYLVANIA**  
**Dr. Heather Bennett | *Director of Equity Services* | PSBA**

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**ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS:**

Documentation has been shared from panelists and presenters for attendees to review during and after this program. To access these documents, please refer to the attendee email sent prior to this event for the link to resources.



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**Valerie Kinloch, Ph.D.** | *Renée and Richard Goldman Dean* |  
University of Pittsburgh School of Education  
**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

Dr. Valerie Kinloch began her tenure as the Renée and Richard Goldman Dean of the University of Pittsburgh School of Education on July 1, 2017. Kinloch has dedicated herself to strengthening the school's commitments to urban education, equity and justice, diversity and inclusion, and community engagement, while also enhancing school culture and broadening alumni participation. A highly respected educator and scholar, Kinloch's areas of research focus on the literacies, languages, cultures, and community engagements of youth and adults, both inside and outside of schools. Kinloch's academic endeavors have received support from the U.S. Department of Education, National Council of Teachers of English, Corporation for National and Community Service, the Fulbright-Hays Program and Spencer Foundation, among other notable organizations. She also is the author of numerous books on race and literacy, including the critically acclaimed *Harlem on Our Minds: Place, Race, and the Literacies of Urban Youth* (Teachers College Press, 2010), which received the 2012 Book of the Year Award from the American Educational Research Association (AERA). At this year's 2019 American Educational Research Association conference, Kinloch was inducted into the prestigious AERA Fellows Program. Kinloch will begin her tenure this November 2019 as vice-president of the National Council of Teachers of English.

**Waldo Alvarado, M.S.Ed.** | *Director of Equity and Diversity* | Reading School District

Waldo Alvarado is the director of equity and diversity at Reading School District. He is a certified school principal and secondary school counselor in Pennsylvania. Alvarado is a consultant and trainer certified by Corwin Publishing Co. and the American School Counselor Association. He has presented several professional learning workshops on educational, equity and culturally responsive practices across the country. During his tenure as director of equity, the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium recognized the Reading School District with the 2017 Courageous Institution Award.

**Heather N. Bennett, Ph.D., J.D.** | *Director of Equity Services* | Pennsylvania School Boards Association

Dr. Heather Bennett is the director of equity services at the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA). In this role, she assists public school boards and districts with equity-focused tools, programming and research. Bennett received her doctorate in educational leadership at Penn State University. She also obtained her law degree from Penn State Dickinson Law and is barred to practice law in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

**Nikole Y. Hollins-Sims, Ed.D.** | *Educational Consultant on Special Assignment to PDE* | Co-Statewide Lead - Behavior Initiative, Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)

Dr. Nikole Y. Hollins-Sims is an educational consultant for the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) in Harrisburg. She currently serves as the co-statewide lead for the behavior initiative as well as an active member of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) initiative. In addition, she is the statewide lead for equitable practices in partnership with the Office of Safe Schools for the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Hollins-Sims is also involved in the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) with a focus on increasing the graduation rates of students with disabilities. Finally, she is a Pennsylvania certified school psychologist with a specific interest in social justice. She has also conducted research around caregivers of children of incarcerated parents and their motivation to engage in family-school partnerships.

**Julie Haywood Esq.** | *School Board President* | Cheltenham School District



Julie Haywood is a 22-year resident of Wyncote, Pennsylvania, and a practicing attorney with more than 30 years of experience. She is serving her second term on the School Board of Cheltenham School District. Haywood acted as vice president in 2014 and 2015 and is currently in her second year as president of the board. Haywood is co-chair of the Policy Committee and board liaison to the Montgomery County School Board Legislative Committee. She is helping lead the board's efforts in implementing the district's strategic plan and adopting a district-wide Educational Equity Policy. Haywood has been actively involved in improving the district's schools. She participated in the Strategic Planning Committee of the Cheltenham School District to develop a six-year strategic plan to facilitate the district's mission.

**Ken Nickson Jr., M.Ed.** | *Coordinator of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion* | Erie Public School District

Ken Nickson Jr. is a native of Erie, Pennsylvania, and a 1996 graduate of Central High School. His professional career began in Pittsburgh, when he was hired as an emotional-support teacher during his final semester of student teaching for Clarion. It was there that Nickson began to fuse his formal education with his life experiences to impart knowledge and impact the lives of the 10 middle-school-aged boys under his tutelage. Nickson has worked for Erie's public schools for 17 years and currently serves as coordinator of diversity, equity and inclusion.

**Damaris Rau, Ph.D.** | *Superintendent* | School District of Lancaster

With more than 35 years of experience in public education, Dr. Damaris Rau has extensive experience setting the standard for student achievement. Known for her passion in urban education and commitment to equity for all students, she has a proven track record of reducing the achievement gap, increasing graduation rates, expanding early childhood programs, implementing programs to reduce bullying behaviors and successfully turning around low-performing schools.

**Davelyn S. Smeltzer** | *Senior Director of Governance Services* | Pennsylvania School Boards Association

Davelyn Smeltzer is the senior director of governance services for the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA). She is in her 28th year with PSBA, spending the majority of her career in policy services. Davelyn lives in the Central York School District with her husband and two sons, who are in college.

**Tyler Titus, LPC** | *School Board Director* | Erie Public School District

Tyler Titus is a licensed professional counselor, advocate, trauma specialist and elected school director. Titus became the first openly transgender elected official in Pennsylvania in November 2017. He currently serves on the Advisory Council for Greater Erie Alliance for Equality. He was appointed to co-vice chair of the state's first LGBT Commission of Affairs created by Governor Tom Wolf during the summer of 2018. In addition, Titus regularly presents at local and national conferences on the topics of trauma, suicide and ways that communities can reach out to underserved populations. He is currently completing his doctorate in social work at the University of Southern California.

