



Panelist Biographies

Dick Pryor - Panel Moderator

Dick Pryor is general manager of KGOU Radio, which serves more than one million Oklahomans with news, public affairs, and entertainment programming. Pryor has more than 40 years of experience in television, radio, public relations, law, and government service. He began his career at KGOU while a student at the University of Oklahoma and returned in November 2016. For 25 years, Pryor served as deputy director, managing editor, anchor, and host of news and public affairs series and programs for OETA, Oklahoma's public educational television network. He has won numerous broadcasting awards, including three regional Emmy Awards.

In addition, Pryor has been a sports anchor/reporter and talk show host, public relations director for Oklahoma City's professional baseball team and chief of staff for the lieutenant governor. As a lawyer, he provided employment law counsel and business coaching to corporate executives, managers, and human resource professionals. A native of Norman, Pryor earned a B.A. in Journalism and a J.D. from the University of Oklahoma. In 2015, he was chosen a Distinguished Alumnus of the Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication at OU. Pryor was inducted into the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame in 2009.

Tuesday, August 22, 2017 (Morning Panel):

The Changing Landscape of the State Educational Support System

Blake Flanders

Dr. Blake Flanders serves as President and CEO for the Kansas Board of Regents. The Board is the governing authority for the State's six universities and the statewide coordinating board for the State's 32 public higher education institutions (six state universities, one municipal university, 19 community colleges, and six technical colleges). Most recently, Blake served in roles connecting postsecondary education to economic and workforce development. His scope of responsibility included developing a policy agenda for postsecondary technical education, curriculum evaluation, system funding, and the management of federal initiatives. He also led targeted workforce issues including the expansion of engineering and nursing programs.



The Central and South Central Comprehensive Centers at the University of Oklahoma are funded by the United States Department of Education (PL1943).

Johnny Key

On March 25, 2015, Commissioner Johnny Key was approved by the Arkansas State Board of Education to be the Chief School Officer of the Arkansas Department of Education. Governor Asa Hutchinson recommended Mr. Key for the leadership position. Under Mr. Key's leadership, the agency focused the vision on transforming Arkansas to lead the nation in student-focused education. The mission is to provide leadership, support, and service to schools, districts, and communities so every student graduates prepared for college, career, and community engagement. The value statements and goals guide the daily work within the agency. Prior to being named commissioner, Mr. Key served as Associate Vice President for University Relations at the University of Arkansas System, a position he had held since August 2014. Mr. Key began his career in public service in 1997 when he was elected to serve as a Justice of the Peace on the Baxter County Quorum Court. He was elected to three two-year terms in the Arkansas House of Representatives, followed by a tenure in the Arkansas Senate that began in 2008.

While in the Senate, Mr. Key served as chair of multiple committees: Senate Education Committee, Arkansas Legislative Council Administrative Rules and Regulations Committee, Joint Retirement and Social Security Committee, and Arkansas Lottery Commission Legislative Oversight Committee. Mr. Key graduated from Gurdon High School and received a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering in 1991 from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. Mr. Key and his wife, Shannon, live in Little Rock and have one son, Ryan, and one daughter, Rachel.

Alan Morgan

Alan Morgan is the former New Mexico State Superintendent of Public Instruction where he oversaw 89 school districts and 36,000 public-school employees, with an annual operating budget of \$2 billion. During his tenure as State Superintendent, Dr. Morgan served as President of the Council of Chief State School Officers, Chairman of the National Indicators Panel for the U.S. Congress, and chaired or served on 15 national boards and panels. He chaired the board of directors for Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, the Agency for Instructional Technology, the Educational Testing Service Visiting Committee, and served a dozen years as a Commissioner for the Education Commission of the States.

Dr. Morgan began his career in education as an elementary school teacher and was formerly vice president of U.S. Government Relations for Pearson, Inc., the largest education products and services company in the world. Dr. Morgan also leads a professional consulting and government relations practice specializing in state educational policy support, product development advice, and government program support. As president of High Desert Government Relations, Inc., he serves as the senior policy advisor to several leading education-committee companies and national organizations.

Christopher Ruskowski

Mr. Ruskowski joined Governor Susana Martinez, Secretary Hanna Skandera, and the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) in April 2016 as Deputy Secretary, Policy and Program. In this role, he oversaw the State's academic priorities, policy agenda, and research agenda. The portfolio of work included state standards and assessment, school accountability, school turnaround, educator quality, college and career readiness, early childhood/early literacy, STEM, and the charter school division. In 2017, he co-led the development of the New Mexico State Plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Previously, he served for nearly six years at the Delaware Department of Education under Governor Jack Markell, building the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness Unit (TLEU) as Chief Talent Officer/Associate Secretary and co-leading the implementation of the State's Race to the Top (RTTT) plan. He collaborated with districts and charter schools across the State in developing their local strategies and activities, launched multiple innovative programs with non-profit organizations and institutions of higher education, and worked with the Professional Standards Board and State Board of Education in constructing policy frameworks for RTTT implementation. During his tenure in Delaware, his team focused on improving policies and practices across the educator effectiveness continuum: educator preparation, licensure/certification, recruitment, placement, evaluation, professional learning, and teacher-leader career pathways. Throughout his time in Dover, the State invested significant resources in job-embedded coaching for principals and school-based professional learning for educators, including protected time for teacher collaboration and multiple new teacher-leadership opportunities at the school, district, and state levels.

Born in Chicago, "CR" is a first-generation American whose father arrived in the U.S. in 1950. Raised Greek Orthodox, his mother was also born and raised in Chicago and is a flight attendant—she has been with Delta Airlines for 45 years. He is uncle to Niko and Andres, the sons of his sister Ashley Martinez. Mr. Ruskowski is the product of K-12 public schools, and began his education career as a middle school social studies teacher and basketball coach at John F. Kennedy Middle School in Miami, Florida. He then worked in a variety of district, non-profit, and charter school contexts, supporting and training novice teachers at multiple TFA Summer Institutes, working within Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the Louisiana Recovery School District with TNTP, and serving within the San Francisco Unified School District as a fellow with Education Pioneers. Mr. Ruskowski attended the University of Minnesota on an Evans Scholarship and holds a B.A. in Political Science. He represented the State of Minnesota as a Finalist for the Rhodes Scholarship. He also studied politics and government at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, where he wrote his senior thesis on the country's democratization efforts. He holds an M.A. in Educational Policy, Organizational, and Leadership Studies (POLS) from Stanford University.

Tuesday, August 22, 2017 (Afternoon Panel):
The Changing Landscape of the Local Educational Delivery System

Denise Airola

Denise T. Airola, Ph.D., is the Director of the Office of Innovation for Education (OIE) at the University of Arkansas. The OIE is a research and service office with a focus on enabling and accelerating innovative education policies and practices to address barriers to educational equity and student success. OIE staff work with schools, districts, and the Arkansas Department of Education to build capacity for improving student-focused learning and leadership practices. Dr. Airola accepted the directorship at OIE after serving two years at the Arkansas Leadership Academy as the Academy's research specialist. She led the research agenda for the Academy, designed the program evaluation for the Academy's School Support Program, and reported to the Arkansas General Assembly on the Academy's research and evaluation projects.

Prior to joining the Academy, Dr. Airola was the Assistant Director for the National Office for Research on Measurement and Evaluation Systems (NORMES). In her eight year tenure at NORMES, Dr. Airola served as liaison to the Arkansas Department of Education for NORMES' research and evaluation projects, as well as directing professional development in data analysis and data use for Arkansas educators. She has consulted with several state education agencies on the use of educational data to drive instructional change and systems change, and collaborated with the Oregon Department of Education to develop an instrument to assess teachers' and leaders' self-efficacy for using educational data to inform decisions. Before completing her Ph.D. in educational statistics and research methods, Dr. Airola worked for 18 years in the PK-12 public education system and maintains an active Arkansas teaching license. Her PK-12 experience includes classroom teaching at the infant/toddler, preschool, elementary, middle, and secondary levels, designing and conducting professional development, curriculum, instruction and assessment alignment, as well as implementing and evaluating PK-12 reform efforts. Her research interests include measurement and assessment, data and assessment literacy, as well as investigating the links between professional development, educator change, and student learning.

Dan Jorgensen

Dan Jorgensen, Ph.D., currently serves as the Accountability Support Manager within the Colorado Department of Education. His work focuses on statewide support and training related to the Colorado Educational Accountability Act. In addition, he facilitates the Technical Advisory Panel for Longitudinal Growth, coordinates work related to the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness accountability indicator, and supports other CDE initiatives. Dan has earned a Doctorate of Philosophy degree in Educational Policy and Administration from the University of Denver, has earned a Master of Arts degree in Experimental Psychology from the University of Nebraska-Omaha where he was a Rhoden fellowship recipient, and he received a Bachelor of Arts degree with honors from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Dan currently serves as the Aurora Public Schools Board of Education Vice-President and as a member of the Institutional Advisory Committee for Pickens Technical College. As part of his work with the Colorado Department of Education, Dr. Jorgensen was appointed by the Commissioner of Education to serve as a Regional Education Laboratory (Central States) Governing Board member (2013-Present). He has also served on the state Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board (2009-2013), the regional board for the Book Trust organization, and is a current member and past officer for the Association of Colorado Education Evaluators. Currently, he serves as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Denver and the University of Colorado-Denver.

Debra Stuart

Dr. Debra L. Stuart, Vice Chancellor for Educational Partnerships with the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, provides leadership and coordinates agency relations and interactions on academic and educational matters with state, regional, and national organizations. She currently serves as liaison to the State Regents Faculty Advisory Council and for projects with the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technical Education (CareerTech), Jobs for the Future (JFF), Complete College America (CCA), Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and The Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas (Dana Center). Stuart coordinates state and national initiatives related to student assessment, retention, enrollment management, accountability, community college improvement, course redesign, and regional stewardship.

Accomplishments include development the Math Success Initiative with CCA and the Dana Center, a state system financial aid database, involvement of higher education in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), development of the Achieve, Inc. Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), implementation of SREB 12th grade transitional courses in math and literacy, implementation of remediation reform, promotion of the ACT Career Readiness Certificate (CRC).

Previously at the State Regents, she served as Vice Chancellor for Administration, Executive Director of System Research, and Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Stuart served on the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) committees studying state profiles and the teacher report card, as well as National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (NPEC) committees on communications and student persistence. She served on the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) Learning Outcomes Technical Work Group with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and was the state coordinator for the National Forum on College-Level Learning pilot project published by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. Prior to joining the State Regents, Stuart held positions at the University of Maryland at College Park, Southern Methodist University, Iowa State University, and Grinnell College. She holds a B.A. in Geology from Ohio Wesleyan University, an M.A. in Student Personnel Work from The Ohio State University, and a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from Iowa State University.

Randy Watson

Dr. Randy Watson was named Kansas Commissioner of Education by the Kansas State Board of Education in November 2014. He assumed his role in July 2015. As the State's chief education officer, he provides leadership to the Kansas State Department of Education in carrying out the policies and programs prescribed by the State Board of Education to ensure the necessary oversight and support is provided to assist Kansas schools, educators, and students in achieving their goals. Dr. Watson began his education career in 1981 as a high school social studies teacher in Tescott, Kansas. He has served as a high school principal and provided classroom instruction at the university level.

Most recently, Dr. Watson served the community of McPherson for 22 years—working as an assistant superintendent from 1993-2005 and as superintendent from 2005-2015. A native of Coffeyville, Kansas, Dr. Watson attended Kansas State University where he earned a bachelor's degree in History and a master's degree in Science in Secondary Administration, Staff Supervision and Staff development, building level certification. Additionally, he received his Doctorate of Education in Secondary Administration, School Law, Curriculum Development and Instructional Leadership, and district level certification. The recipient of many awards, Dr. Watson was named an Alumni Fellow at Kansas State, and in 2015, he was honored by being named the Kansas Superintendent of the Year. Throughout his career, Dr. Watson has been sought out by schools, districts, education organizations and others for his educational insights as well as his clear thinking around the issues and challenges facing policymakers, educators and students.

Wednesday, August 23, 2017 (Morning Panel):

Equity for All Students in a Changing Educational Landscape

Dennis Carpenter

Dr. Dennis L. Carpenter joined the Lee's Summit R-7 School District in July 2017. Dr. Carpenter has a total of 21 years in public education with extensive experience in instruction and operations as well as in elementary and secondary schools. While working in districts within Missouri and Georgia, he served as superintendent, deputy superintendent for operations, associate superintendent for human resources and assistant superintendent for support services. In addition, Dr. Carpenter has worked as an elementary principal and middle school assistant principal. Dr. Carpenter earned his bachelor's degree in early childhood education from Georgia Southern University, his master's degree in educational leadership from Augusta State University, an education specialist degree and a doctorate degree in educational leadership and educational administration, both from Georgia Southern University. He received the South Kansas City Alliance Innovative Educational Program Award, received the Friend of the Council for Exceptional Children Award, was named Phi Beta Sigma Educator of the Year in Savannah, Ga., and was named an Emerging Leader by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Dr. Carpenter has been a presenter at numerous state and national educational conferences on topics such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education, student achievement, digital equity, racial equity and parent/community involvement. Dr. Carpenter is married to Dr. LaQuanda Carpenter, and they have two young children, Landen Drake and Layla Dee. The family lives in Lee's Summit.

Robyn Miller

Dr. Robyn R. Miller is currently Oklahoma's Deputy State Superintendent for Educator Effectiveness and Policy Research. She taught high school English for 10 years, and served in a teacher preparation program for 20 years as professor and eventually as dean. She has served the State as a commissioner for the Office of Education Quality and Accountability and the state Regents for Higher Education on the Chancellor's advisory committee. She has served locally on the Edmond Public Schools Foundation as trustee and secretary. In her current role, she oversees certification and teacher/leader effectiveness as well as prevention services, professional development, and Title IX guidance. Dr. Miller serves as co-lead in organizing the state's ESSA plan as well as the lead in implementation of Oklahoma's Equity Plan.

Latifah Phillips

Latifah Phillips is an enrolled member of the Tohono O'odham Nation and was raised in San Francisco, California. She is a first generation college graduate who is driven by the belief that education is a powerful tool for self-determination and community empowerment. Ms. Phillips spent 15 years in education as a classroom teacher, department head, college and school district administrator before transitioning to her role as the Assistant Secretary of Indian Education for the New Mexico Public Education Department. Ms. Phillips earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Global Institutions and Communication from the University of California, Davis, a Spanish Language Proficiency Diploma from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and a Masters of Secondary Education degree from the University of Texas, Pan American. She also completed her Master of Arts degree in International Education Development from the Teachers College at Columbia University.