



Breaking Ranks: The Role of School Leaders in Preparing All Students for Postsecondary Success

Friday, April 24, 2009 • 9:00 am – 11:30 am
562 Dirksen Building, U.S. Senate • Washington, DC

Speaker Bios

Caroline Bloxom

Principal, Pocomoke Middle School, Pocomoke City, MD

Sixteen of Caroline Bloxom's thirty-one years as an educator have been spent at Pocomoke Middle School in the roles of teacher, curriculum planner, parent, community member and for the past nine years, principal. As the school's leader, Ms. Bloxom infuses her zest for education and children into the multiple-award-winning rural school—located in the southernmost town on Maryland's eastern shore—on a daily basis. Her sense of direction for the school and her passion for learning and growing is clearly contagious. For the past six years, the staff has used Ms. Bloxom's kid-friendly theme, "Respect + Responsibility = Pocomoke Pride!" on a daily basis to reinforce the academic and behavioral expectations for students.

Ms. Bloxom attended Longwood University where she majored in math and history and she received her master's degree in education from Old Dominion University. Ms. Bloxom then went on to earn her administrative credentials at Salisbury University and is presently pursuing her doctorate of education in educational leadership at Wilmington University.

Tommie McCarter

Principal, Westwood High School, Memphis, TN

Tommie McCarter is an educator with more than seventeen years of experience, having taught in DeKalb County, Georgia; Paris, Tennessee; and Memphis, Tennessee. She has served in Memphis City Schools as a science teacher, an instructional facilitator, an assistant principal, and has been principal of Westwood High School since January 2005. During her tenure as principal, the school has received several distinguished honors including being identified as the only Memphis City Schools Paragon High School, a recipient of the Laura Bush Foundation for American Libraries Grant, a Federal Express Blue Ribbon School of the Year, and as a MetLife Foundation-NASSP Breakthrough School.

Ms. McCarter believes that the education of our nation's youth is essential to the future success of our country, and if schools are to meet the challenge of the twenty-first century, its educators must meet the needs of all its students. She does not lead based on what is "popular" or satisfying to the status quo; she is a reflective practitioner who uses research-based and -proven strategies with a common sense approach to leadership. Ms. McCarter believes that each child is an individual of worth and should be respected and encouraged by the entire school staff. She insists upon maintaining an orderly and safe environment that is conducive to learning, and she seeks to offer the very best education that is available for all of her students.

Marci Shearon

Principal, Arkansas City High School, Arkansas City, KS

Marci Shearon has served as principal at Arkansas City High School in Arkansas City, Kansas for the past five years, and as assistant principal for four years. She has presented at various professional conferences, including the Kansas North Central Accreditation Annual Conference and National Association of Secondary School Principals' Annual Conference. Prior to administrative experience, Ms. Shearon taught secondary science for seven years in Southwestern Kansas.

Ms. Shearon received her master's degree from Fort Hays State University in educational leadership. She holds a teaching certificate in secondary science from Saint Mary of the Plains College, and a bachelor's degree in sociology from Southwestern Oklahoma State University. Ms. Shearon's husband is an elementary principal in Arkansas City.

Gerry Tirozzi, PhD

Executive Director, National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)

Gerry Tirozzi is a nationally recognized leader in education reform, having spent nearly fifty years working to improve teaching and learning for all students by promoting high academic standards and initiating major teaching reforms. Prior to joining NASSP in March 1999, Dr. Tirozzi held a variety of positions in the field of education including assistant secretary of elementary and secondary education at the U.S. Department of Education; professor of educational leadership at the University of Connecticut; president of Wheelock College; commissioner of education in Connecticut; and superintendent of New Haven Public Schools. Dr. Tirozzi has also served as science teacher, assistant principal, and principal.

Dr. Tirozzi serves on a number of national educational advisory boards, task forces, and professional and his public service and leadership have been recognized by a number of state and national organizations. He is the author of numerous articles on educational topics that have been published in educational and scholarly journals. Dr. Tirozzi holds a doctor of philosophy degree in educational administration and higher education from Michigan State University, a sixth year certificate in education administration from Fairfield University (CT), a master of arts degree in guidance and counseling, and a bachelor of science degree in elementary education from Southern Connecticut State University.

Bob Wise

President, Alliance for Excellent Education

Bob Wise, author of *Raising the Grade: How High School Reform Can Save Our Youth and Our Nation*, became president of the Alliance for Excellent Education in February 2005. Under his leadership, the Alliance has continued to build its reputation as a respected authority on high school policy and to advocate for reform in America's secondary education system, working to ensure that all students graduate from high school prepared for success. Since joining the Alliance, Governor Wise has become a sought-after speaker and advisor on education issues. He has advised the U.S. Department of Education and frequently testifies before the U.S. Congress.

As governor of West Virginia from 2001 to 2005, he fought for and signed legislation to fund the PROMISE Scholarship Program, which has helped thousands of West Virginia students remain in the Mountain State for college. During his administration, West Virginia saw a significant increase in the number of students completing high school and entering college. Governor Wise earned a bachelor's degree from Duke University and a JD from Tulane University College of Law.