



The Alliance for Excellent Education Presents
A High School Achievement Forum

Informing Federal Education Policy Through Lessons from New York City

Monday, January 25, 2010 ♦ 11:30 am – 3:30 pm
Washington Court Hotel, Ballroom
525 New Jersey Ave, NW, Washington, DC

Speaker Biographies

Vanda Belusic-Vollor

Executive Director, *Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation, New York City Department of Education*

Since October of 2009, Vanda Belusic-Vollor has served as the executive director of the Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation (OMPG) for the New York City Department of Education. As executive director, Ms. Belusic-Vollor leads efforts around ensuring that over-age, under-credited students graduate from high school ready to successfully pursue the postsecondary pathway of their choice. Prior to joining OMPG, Ms. Belusic-Vollor served as the principal of South Brooklyn Community High School, a successful New York City transfer school, which served as the model for transfer schools opened under the leadership of New York City schools' chancellor, Joel Klein. Ms. Belusic-Vollor's work has been featured on *CBS World News Tonight*, in the *Boston Globe* ("Tuning In Can Stop Dropping Out," November 2007) and in *Time* magazine ("Stopping the Exodus," May 2007.) While leading South Brooklyn, Ms. Belusic-Vollor also served as a New York City Leadership Academy mentor for eight aspiring principals who went on to lead new transfer schools in New York City. She is a nationally acknowledged leader in fields including the education of over-aged and under-credited youth, the integration of instruction and youth development, and collaborative leadership. She holds a deep belief that schools can be created where students can succeed regardless of their prior history. Ms. Belusic-Vollor holds a master's degree in educational leadership and supervision and a master's degree in modern British literature from Brooklyn College.

Ruth Curran Neild, PhD

Research Scientist, *Everyone Graduates Center, Center for Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University*

Ruth Curran Neild is a research scientist at the Everyone Graduates Center. Her scholarly interests focus on improving educational outcomes for urban youth through transforming their school experiences. She has published in the areas of high school choice, teacher quality, the ninth-grade transition, high school reform, and high school graduation and dropout. Dr. Neild is committed to communicating clearly about research findings to practitioners and policymakers and is a frequent presenter at conferences and workshops.

Dr. Neild holds a BA in history and sociology from Bryn Mawr College and a PhD in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania.

John Q. Easton, PhD

Director, *Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education*

John Easton, the president's nominee for director of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), was confirmed by the U.S. Senate on May 21, 2009, for a term of six years. IES is the research arm of the U.S. Department of Education. It encompasses the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, the National Center for Education Research, and the National Center for Special Education Research.

Dr. Easton came to IES from Chicago, where most recently he was executive director of the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago. He was affiliated with the consortium since its inception in 1990, and became its deputy director in 1997. Dr. Easton had a long association with the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), serving in several research capacities, including as the director of the department of research, analysis, and assessment. He also served as director of research for the Chicago Panel on School Policy, where he led a study on the effects of decentralization on CPS.

Dr. Easton served a term (2003–07) on the National Assessment Governing Board, which sets policies for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the "Nation's Report Card." In 2008, he was awarded a presidential citation from the American Educational Research Association for "research leadership and evaluation studies focused on improving the nature and quality of education in a large urban city."

Dr. Easton holds a PhD in measurement, evaluation, and statistical analysis from the University of Chicago; a master's degree from Western Washington University; and a bachelor's degree from Hobart College. He is the author or coauthor of numerous reports and articles, and two books: Charting Chicago School Reform: Democratic Localism as a Lever for Change and Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago, published by the University of Chicago Press in fall 2009.

Robert L. Hughes

President and Chief Executive Officer, *New Visions for Public Schools*

Bob Hughes was appointed president and chief executive officer of New Visions for Public Schools in September 2000. Under his leadership, New Visions has created ninety-six public schools in New York City, provided mentoring services to 633 new principals, developed school-based certification programs for teachers and principals, and created an inquiry process functioning in 1,500 New York City public schools.

Mr. Hughes, an attorney, has worked on public education issues for his entire career. He served as cocounsel in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity versus the State of New York, challenging the constitutionality of New York State's educational finance system. Plaintiffs prevailed and secured a \$5 billion remedial decree for operating aid and a \$13.5 billion decree for capital construction for the New York City public school system.

Mr. Hughes clerked for Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson of the Wisconsin Supreme Court. He has authored articles on public education for the *New York Times*, the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, the *Yale Law & Policy Review*, and the *Connecticut Law Review*. He served as chair of the Committee on Education and the Law at the Association of the Bar of City of New York and chair of the board for Advocates for Children of New York, where he was previously executive director.

Mr. Hughes was also on the board of the Center for Architecture and currently serves on the boards of Urban Teacher Residency United, the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, the Fund for Teachers and TransAtlantic School Innovation Alliance, a partnership between New York City public schools and the British government. Mr. Hughes received his undergraduate degree from Dartmouth College and his law degree from Stanford Law School.

Joel I. Klein

Chancellor, *New York City Department of Education*

Joel Klein is chancellor of the New York City Department of Education. As chancellor, Mr. Klein oversees a system of 1,631 schools with 1.1 million students, 136,000 employees, and a \$21 billion operating budget. In 2002, he launched Children First, which is a comprehensive reform strategy that has brought coherence and capacity to the system and resulted in significant increases in student performance. In the next phase of Children First, Mr. Klein will build on this progress by cultivating teacher talent; expanding school choices so that students attend schools that best meet their individual needs; and innovating to ensure students are prepared for rigorous, real-world opportunities in the twenty-first century.

Formerly chairman and chief executive officer of Bertelsmann, Inc., a media company, Mr. Klein served as assistant U.S. attorney general in charge of the antitrust division of the U.S. Department of Justice until September 2000 and was deputy White House counsel to President Clinton from 1993 to 1995. Mr. Klein entered the Clinton administration after twenty years of public and private legal work in Washington, DC.

Mr. Klein attended New York City's public schools and graduated from William Cullen Bryant High School. He received his BA from Columbia University where he graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa in 1967, and he earned his JD from Harvard Law School in 1971, also graduating magna cum laude.

Michael Mulgrew

President, *United Federation of Teachers*

Michael Mulgrew was elected president of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in July 2009, effective August 1. Prior to his current position, Michael was elected vice president for Career and Technical Education (CTE) High Schools in 2005 and became the union's chief operating officer in 2008.

A Staten Island native, Mr. Mulgrew began his teaching career as a substitute at South Richmond High School IS/PS 25, instructing students with special needs. He also volunteered weekends at the City University of New York (CUNY), teaching creative writing to at-risk high school students. Mr. Mulgrew became a full-time teacher at Brooklyn's William E. Grady High School in 1993 and served as the school's chapter leader from 1999 to 2004. Under his stewardship—and through the hard work of the UFT committee and school staff—Grady HS emerged as one of the UFT's strongest and most unified chapters. The staff's hard work won the Grady HS UFT chapter a Trachtenberg Award in 2002.

Upon his election as vice president for CTE in 2005, Mr. Mulgrew expanded and enhanced CTE programs around the city, as well as reorganized the union's Safety and Health Department to better track and respond to school safety and environmental concerns. Those improvements were in evidence this past spring in the department's rapid response and monitoring of the H1N1 virus in public schools.

In addition to his UFT responsibilities, Mr. Mulgrew is a vice president of the American Federation of Teachers and an executive board member of the New York State United Teachers, chairing its statewide committee on CTE programs. Mr. Mulgrew has received many prestigious awards including the Albert Lee Smallheiser Award for his service on behalf of the teaching profession, the first Sandra Feldman Award for his service to UFT members, and the NAACP's Centennial Freedom Award for his efforts to improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

Mr. Mulgrew earned a bachelor's degree in English literature and a master's degree in special education, both from CUNY's College of Staten Island.

Roberto J. Rodríguez

Special Assistant to the President for Education, *White House Domestic Policy Council*

Roberto Rodríguez serves in the White House Domestic Policy Council as special assistant to President Obama for education. Previously, Mr. Rodríguez was chief education counsel to U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee. In this capacity, he managed the Democratic education agenda for the Committee and led policy development and strategy for legislation addressing early childhood education, elementary and secondary education, higher education, and adult education.

Mr. Rodríguez began his tenure on Capitol Hill working for the Senate HELP Committee on the development of the No Child Left Behind Act. He has worked on various reauthorizations of federal legislation, including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Head Start, Child Care, Higher Education, and the America COMPETES Act.

Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Mr. Rodríguez worked as senior education specialist at the National Council of La Raza, where he conducted research and analysis of federal and state education reform issues, as well as the development and evaluation of community based education programs. Mr. Rodríguez is a native of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and a graduate of the University of Michigan and of the Harvard Graduate School of Education in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Adria Steinberg

Vice President, Pathways to Postsecondary, *Jobs for the Future*

Adria Steinberg leads Job for the Future's program and policy development efforts to improve the educational options and prospects of young people who have disengaged or disconnected altogether from the educational system. Ms. Steinberg and her team work with state and federal policymakers to improve graduation rates and support states and districts in the creation and scale-up of high-quality pathways for off-track and disconnected youth. Pathways include "back on track" high schools and GED to College programs, as well as Career First programs that offer pathways to family supporting careers and postsecondary credentials for older youth who have obtained a diploma or GED but are not college ready.

Ms. Steinberg's team works with intermediary and school district leaders in large- and medium-sized cities at the forefront of implementing successful back-on-track school designs for struggling and out-of-school youth. Her team also participates in a national postsecondary success initiative of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, providing strategic support to select schools or programs in the networks of YouthBuild USA and the National Youth Employment Coalition as they enhance their programming to include a stronger pathway to postsecondary credentials.

Ms. Steinberg graduated with honors from Swarthmore College with a bachelor of arts degree. She also holds a master's degree in education from Boston University.

Josh Thomases

Deputy Chief Schools Officer for Academics, *New York City Department of Education*

Josh Thomases has served as an academic leader at the New York City Department of Education for five years and is currently the deputy chief schools officer for academics in the Division of School Support (DSS). Mr. Thomases is responsible for building and implementing a coherent and effective strategy for school improvement across the district. He is also responsible for the direct management of the Office of Charter Schools, District 79 (for alternative programs), the Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation, and the Office of Partnership Support Organization, which works with six external vendors providing school support services to 210 New York City public schools.

Between 2004 and 2009, Mr. Thomases served as the chief academic officer in the Office of New Schools and Office of Portfolio Development, and was primarily responsible for the creation of nearly three hundred new district schools and the leadership of the New School Intensive program, which trained and coached over two hundred new principals in partnership with the New York City Leadership Academy. Mr. Thomases began his career in education as a founding teacher and ultimately became the coleader of El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, a small school developed in partnership with New Visions for Public Schools. Mr. Thomases graduated from Bank Street College of Education with a master's degree in educational leadership.

Bob Wise

President, *Alliance for Excellent Education*

Bob Wise is president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia. He is author of the book *Raising the Grade: How High School Reform Can Save Our Youth and Our Nation* and chair of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Since joining the Alliance in February 2005, Governor Wise has become a sought-after speaker and advisor on education issues. He has advised the U.S. Department of Education, White House Transition Team, 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 and created the Governor's Helpline for Safer Schools. During his administration, West Virginia saw a significant increase in the number of students completing high school and entering college. From 1983 to 2001, Governor Wise served in the U.S. House of Representatives representing the 2nd District of West Virginia, where he aggressively worked to preserve federal financial aid for students to attend college.

Governor Wise serves on the board of directors of the Public Education Network and C-Change. He is an advisory committee member for several organizations including, the Springboard Project, Campaign for Educational Equity, Editorial Projects in Education, the National High School Center, the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools, and the Moffitt Cancer Center. Governor Wise earned a BA degree from Duke University and a JD degree from Tulane University School of Law.

Michelle Yanche

Director of Public Policy, *Good Shepherd Services*

In January 2010, Michelle Yanche joined Good Shepherd Services where she serves as director of public policy. Previously—from 1993 through 2009—Ms. Yanche worked at Neighborhood Family Services Coalition (NFSC) as staff director. In this position, she had primary responsibility of coordinating and overseeing all NFSC work.

Ms. Yanche serves on the advisory council to the Youth Development Institute (YDI), the Partnership for After School Education (PASE), and Jobs First NYC, as well as the board of directors of the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus and the New York State Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families. During her tenure at NFSC, she served as a member of a number of governmental advisory groups including the U.S. Department of Education's Middle School Success Advisory Group, the City Council Middle School Task Force, the Commission on Economic Opportunity's Education Workgroup, and the Mayor's Out-of-School Time Advisory Group.

Ms. Yanche holds a master of public administration degree, with a specialization in public finance, from New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and a bachelor of arts degree from Fordham University.