Early Learning Fellows Kickoff Meeting: Building State Leadership

Sheraton Seattle Hotel • 1400 6th Avenue, Seattle, Washington 98101

Speaker Biographies

**Steven Barnett, Ph.D.** is Board of Governors Professor and director of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University. His research includes studies of the economics of early care and education including costs and benefits, the long term effects of preschool programs on children’s learning and development, and the distribution of educational opportunities. Dr. Barnett earned his Ph.D. in economics at the University of Michigan. He has authored or co-authored over 160 publications including 16 books. His research interests include the economics of human development and practical policies for translating research findings into effective public investments. His best known works include: reviews of the research on long-term effects of early care and education programs; benefit-cost analyses of the Perry Preschool and Abecedarian programs; randomized trials comparing alternative approaches to educating children including length of day, mono-lingual versus dual-language immersion, and the Tools of the Mind curriculum; and, the series of *State Preschool Yearbooks* providing annual state-by-state analyses of progress in state-funded pre-K.

**Melanie Berry, Psy.D.** obtained her doctoral degree in clinical psychology at the PGSP-Stanford Psy.D. Consortium. She has extensive clinical experience with high-risk children and families. Dr. Berry is currently a postdoctoral research associate at Fisher Stress Neurobiology and Prevention (SNAP) laboratory at the University of Oregon and the Oregon Social Learning Center. Research in the SNAP lab focuses on the impact of early adversity on the brain, the development of targeted interventions to improve outcomes for high-risk children, and translating the results of research into policy relevant communication.

At the SNAP lab, Dr. Berry is a core member of the team that has developed the Filming Interaction to Nurture Development (FIND) program, an innovative video coaching program for parents and other caregivers of high-risk children. As a FIND consultant, Dr. Berry provides training and consultation to FIND teams across the country. Connected to her work with FIND, she is also involved with Frontiers of Innovation at the Center on the
Developing Child at Harvard University, an initiative to promote positive outcomes for vulnerable children.

Ellen Frede is a widely published researcher and former teacher with extensive experience in early childhood program implementation and administration. Frede joined the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2015 from Acelero Learning, where she oversaw all education and research initiatives. She also served as co-director of the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University, where she investigated the relationship of program quality to child outcomes, the longitudinal effects of preschool, and early education policy.

Frede previously served as assistant to the commissioner for Early Childhood Education at the New Jersey Department of Education, which oversaw the implementation of high-quality preschool in more than 150 school districts, serving 50,000 children and their families. As an associate professor at the College of New Jersey for more than 16 years, she taught applied child development and early childhood teaching methods courses to prospective and practicing teachers.

Ron Haskins is senior fellow at The Brookings Institution and co-director of the Center on Children and Families. He is a senior consultant at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the senior editor of The Future of Children and has written on welfare and economic mobility. His most recent book is titled Show Me the Evidence: Obama’s Fight for Rigor and Results in Social Policy. Haskins was a senior adviser to President George W. Bush on welfare policy and staff director of the House Ways and Means Human Resources Subcommittee for 14 years. The National Journal selected Haskins as one of the 100 most influential people in the federal government in 1997. Haskins holds a doctorate in developmental psychology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, a master’s degree in education, and a bachelor’s degree in history.

Megan Irwin is early learning system director in Oregon. She oversees the state’s early learning division which has regulatory, administrative and quality improvement responsibility for the state’s child care and pre-school system, home visiting services and respite care for at risk families. Additionally, the division is responsible for aligning the early learning system with both the health care system and the K-12 education systems and for supporting Oregon’s Early Learning Hubs, a network of 16 community based coordinators of early learning services. Prior to becoming the Director, Irwin served as the Director of Policy and Programs for the division, where, among other responsibilities, she oversaw Oregon’s $30 million Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant.

Before entering the public service sector, she served as the National Expansion and Program Director for Stand for Children. Irwin, a first generation college student, holds a bachelor’s degrees in journalism and mass communications and political science from Arizona State University.
Noa Kay is a research associate at the Washington Institute for Public Policy, a non-partisan research group that conducts studies at the request of the Washington State Legislature. Kay works primarily on meta-analyses and benefit-cost analyses of education and public health programs. Before beginning her career in policy research, Kay taught middle school mathematics and science. Her academic credentials include an MAT from Western New Mexico University and an MPH from the University of Washington.

Kate Nass is deputy director of finance for the Oregon Health Authority. For the past five years, Nass prepared the Governor’s Budget and provided financial policy oversight of budget execution for the Oregon Health Authority as Oregon implemented Health System Transformation and Coordinated Care Organizations. During this time, Nass also took on the responsibility of the Governor’s Early Learning Program budget as agency programs aligned to create the Oregon Early Learning Division, and served as the Interim Early Learning Division Chief of Staff while establishing the community based Early Learning Hubs. She recently transitioned from Governor’s budget and policy work to the Deputy Director of Finance at the Oregon Health Authority. Nass spends much of her time trying to keep up with her two active girls, ages one and five, while challenging herself to bike, hike and golf more.

Charles Sallee is deputy director of the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee (LFC), which examines budgets and reviews the management and operations of state agencies, higher education institutions, and public schools as well as assesses the finances and effectiveness of state-funded programs. Prior to serving as the Deputy Director of the LFC, Sallee served as the Program Evaluator and Manager of the LFC. Sallee has also served as a Policy Analyst in the Texas Sunset Commission with the Texas Legislature, as the Executive Director of CASA in New Mexico, and as an Analyst in the House and Human Services Committee in the Texas Legislature. Sallee holds a master’s degree in social work from Texas State University with a focus in Administration and Supervision as well as a bachelor’s in social work from New Mexico State University.

Representative Tana Senn was appointed to serve as a state representative for the 41st Legislative District in 2013 before being elected to a full term the following year. She now serves on the Early Learning and Human Services Committee as well as on two fiscal committees: Appropriations and the General Government and Information Technology, where she serves as Vice Chair. As a state representative, Senn has introduced legislation to address important issues facing Washington state ranging from gender pay equality to social emotional learning in schools. In 2014, she served as a National Conference of State Legislature’s Early Learning Fellow, working with state legislators across the country on early learning-related issues. Additionally, Representative Senn serves as a legislative liaison to the State Building Code Council.
Chief Steven D. Strachan was appointed by Bremerton, Washington Mayor Lent in February of 2013 and has over 27 years of law enforcement experience. Prior to becoming Bremerton's Chief, Strachan served the King County Sheriff’s Office from 2011-2012 as the Chief Deputy and as the Sheriff. From 2006-2010, Strachan was Chief of Police in Kent, Washington, and from 2004-2006 Strachan was Chief of Police in Lakeville, Minnesota, where he started his law enforcement career 19 years earlier. During his law enforcement career, Strachan has served as a Patrol Officer, DARE Officer, School Resource Officer, Detective, Administrative Sergeant, Patrol Sergeant, SWAT Team Member, and SWAT Team Commander.

In 1996, Strachan was elected to the first of two terms as a City Council Member in Farmington, Minnesota. In 2002, Strachan was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives, where he served on the Judiciary, Government Operations, and State Government Finance Committees. Strachan holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of Minnesota, and a master's Degree in Public Administration from Minnesota State University.

Senator Brice Wiggins represents the 52nd District of Mississippi, including Jackson. Senator Wiggins is the Chair of the Ports and Marine Resources Committee and also sits on the Appropriations, Congressional Redistricting, Corrections, Education, Environment Protection, Conservation and Water Resources, Judiciary, Division B, Legislative Reapportionment, and Public Health and Welfare Committees. He is a member of the Rotary Excel By 5 - Pascagoula - Chair, Singing River Soccer Club - President, Jackson County Bar Association, Mississippi Bar Association, and EMERGE Pascagoula. Senator Wiggins was born in Irving, Texas on August 8, 1971. He is married with two children.