



KANSAS EARLY LEARNING FORUM

Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2019 • Hyatt Regency Wichita • Cypress A

Speaker Biographies

Benjamin Horowitz is a senior project manager at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. His work centers on efforts to strengthen the community development sector in the bank's district, which often focuses on issues related to early care and education. He has written a number of articles on policy issues and best practices in the field. Previous to the Minneapolis Fed, he worked with a nonpartisan organization researching and advocating for improved child care policy in Minnesota. Horowitz received a master of public affairs from Princeton University.

Sarah Lytle is the director of outreach and education at the Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences (I-LABS) at the University of Washington. Lytle's team communicates the latest science of child development to those who can act on it. In recent years, the team has reached hundreds of thousands of parents, educators, policymakers, and opinion leaders, both locally and nationally. Under Lytle's leadership, the Outreach and Education team launched an online library of free training modules designed to make science accessible to a broad audience. Lytle has a B.A. in psychology and Spanish from the University of Notre Dame and a Ph.D. in developmental psychology from Temple University, where she studied the role of social cues in infants' and toddlers' language learning from screen media. Sarah is a member of the ZERO TO THREE Academy of Fellows.

Alison May is a policy associate with the early care and education project at NCSL. May joined NCSL in early 2011 and leads NCSL's Early Learning Fellows Program and tracks home visiting legislative efforts in the states and territories. She also authors a quarterly newsletter on early childhood policy topics and often contributes to NCSL's Blog. Before NCSL May worked at the American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado and at a small non-profit located northeast of Denver that focused on civic engagement. She earned a bachelor of science degree in psychology from Rochester Institute of Technology.

Jennifer Palmer is a policy associate with the early care and education project at NCSL. Palmer first joined NCSL's Education team in 2017 where she worked on afterschool and K-12 school climate and safety issues. Her interest in early learning led to her transition to NCSL's Children and Families team where she tracks legislation and authors policy briefs on a range of early childhood topics including child care, early childhood mental health and the early education workforce. Prior to joining NCSL, Palmer worked at the Iowa House of Representatives and with an international education nonprofit serving foreign exchange students. She earned her bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Iowa and master's degree in public administration from the University of Colorado Denver.

Amanda Petersen is director of early childhood at the Kansas State Department of Education. As the state strives to lead the world in the success of each student, the KSDE Early Childhood team supports districts in ensuring that each student enters kindergarten at age five socially, emotionally and academically prepared for success. The team is responsible for administering several state preschool programs (Preschool-Aged At-Risk, Kansas Preschool Pilot, and Early Childhood Special Education) and Kansas Parents As Teachers. She holds

bachelor's degrees in economics and political science and a master's degree in public administration, all from the University of Kansas.

Melissa Rooker was named executive director of the Kansas Children's Cabinet and Trust Fund in February of 2019. Before joining the Cabinet, Rooker served three terms in the Kansas House of Representatives, representing House District 25 between 2012 and 2018. Her work in the legislature focused on children's issues and public education. Rooker recognized that high quality early childhood interventions led to student success and made funding those programs her priority. She played a lead role in drafting a new school finance formula for K-12 public education that includes an expansion of the preschool at-risk program and full funding for all-day kindergarten.

Prior to running for office, Rooker spent 15 years as a development executive at Clint Eastwood's Malpasso Productions. She retired in 2001 to raise her kids. Over the years, Rooker served in a variety of leadership positions with local, regional and state PTA in Kansas, and as a legislator served on the Johnson County Education Research Triangle Authority Board, Shawnee Indian Mission Advisory Board and the Kansas Forestry Service Advisory Council. Rooker has her bachelor's in art history from the University of Kansas with a BFA in Art History.

Margaret Wile is the senior policy specialist for Health and Human Services State- Federal Affairs at NCSL. Before to her work in D.C., Wile worked for NCSL's Denver office where she worked on maternal and child health and behavioral health in the Health Program, State Reach Division. Prior to NCSL, she worked for the Massachusetts Legislature as the research analyst for the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Recovery. In 2015 she received "Legislative Staffer of the Year" award from the National Association of Social Workers, Massachusetts chapter for her work on behavioral health policy. Simultaneously to her work in the legislature, Wile worked as adjunct faculty at Simmons College in the social work department where she taught a course on macro social work for two years. Wile has her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of New Hampshire and her master's in social work from Salem State University.