



NATIONAL CONFERENCE  
of STATE LEGISLATURES

## NCSL Early Learning Fellows

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Minneapolis, MN



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### Early Learning Fellows: Building on State Leadership

#### Minneapolis Convention Center

#### Speaker Biographies

**Carol Burnett** is founder and Executive Director of the Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative and serves as the Executive Director of Moore Community House, a nonprofit community center providing early childhood and comprehensive family programs for poor and low-income families in east Biloxi. Carol served as Director of the Mississippi Department of Human Services Office of Children and Youth, where she administered Mississippi's federally funded child care subsidy programs. During her tenure, Mississippi used more federal funds for child care than any year before or since. She currently serves as a member of the Boards of Directors of the ECD Hope Community Credit Union, Hope Community Development Agency, the Mississippi Religious Leadership Conference, and on the Advisory Board of Mississippi Building Blocks. She is the recipient of the Ms. Foundation Gloria Award, Outstanding Woman of the Gulf Coast award, the Mississippi Religious Leadership Conference Founder's award and the MS State NAACP Vernon Dahmer award. Carol is an ordained United Methodist minister in the Mississippi Conference of the United Methodist Church and has a Masters Degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York, NY.

**Douglas H. Clements** is the Kennedy Endowed Chair in Early Childhood Learning and Professor at the University of Denver in Colorado. Doug has published over 125 refereed research studies, 18 books, 80 chapters, and 300 additional publications on the learning and teaching of early mathematics; computer applications; creating, using, and evaluating research-based curricula; and taking interventions to scale, mostly with colleague and wife Julie Sarama. He served on the U.S. President's National Mathematics Advisory Panel, the Common Core State Standards committee, and the National Research Council's Committee on Early Mathematics, and is co-author of each of their reports.

**Senator Julie Lassa** represents the 24<sup>th</sup> Senate District of Wisconsin. Senator Lassa served in the Wisconsin State Assembly from 1998-2003 until she was elected to the State Senate. She currently serves on the: Committee on Economic Development and Local Government (ranking member), Committee on Financial Institutions and Rural Issues (ranking member), Committee on Agriculture, Small Business, and Tourism. Additionally Senator Lassa serves as: Chair of the Senate Democratic Caucus, member of the Legislative Council Steering Committee for Supporting Healthy Early Brain Development, member of the Wisconsin Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board, member of the Tomah Veterans Administration Mental Health Executive Advisory Subcommittee, member of the Wisconsin Oral Health Coalition Steering Committee, member of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute Advisory Board, and board member of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. Senator Lassa authored and passed a resolution calling for the Wisconsin Legislature to take the impact of toxic stress on brain development into account and note

that early intervention and investment in the early childhood years are important strategies to achieve a lasting foundation for a more prosperous and sustainable state by investing in human capital. Senator Julie Lassa represented Wisconsin as a NCSL Early Learning Fellow in 2013.

**Representative Joe Mullery** has represented north Minneapolis for more than 16 years. He chairs the House Committee on Early Childhood and Youth Development and co-chairs the Children and Youth Development Legislative Caucus. He was recently asked by the National Alliance on Mental Illness to establish and chair a Legislative Caucus on Mental Illness. Representative Mullery has a J.D. and B.A. from the University of Minnesota, is in private practice as an attorney and is a former member of the Board of Directors of the Minnesota Bar Association. In addition to practicing intensive family law practice for many years, he also served as a Board member and officer of the Minneapolis Citizens Committee on Public Education and in leadership positions for several dozen other community and social service organizations. Representative Mullery was selected as one of two NCSL Early Learning Fellows representing Minnesota in 2013. Representative Mullery is also an active member of several NCSL Standing Committees, including Health and Human Services, Law and Criminal Justice, Labor and Economic Development.

**Philip A. Peterson** is a partner at Aon Hewitt, specializing in global retirement strategies, stock option valuation and human capital metrics development. Phil joined Aon in 1987 and has more than 30 years of employee benefit consulting experience. He formerly managed Aon's Retirement Practice in Philadelphia, managed the Philadelphia office and chaired the National Defined Benefit Practice Council. He now leads Aon's national state and local government consulting practice. Phil helped co-create with Child Care Matters, the Aon/United Way of Southeastern PA Hand-in-Hand Award for quality child care in the business community. He has also testified before the House Education Committee of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives on the importance of child care to the business community. Phil has served on the boards of the Economy League of Greater Philadelphia and the state board of the Pennsylvania Economy League. Currently, Phil is the co-chair of the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission, and the co-chair of the Advisory Board of ReadyNation. Phil earned a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics at Dickinson College and he is a fellow of the Society of Actuaries and an Enrolled Actuary.

**Arthur Reynolds** is co-director of the Human Capital Research Collaborative at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, the University of Minnesota. Arthur studies the effects of early childhood intervention on children's development from school entry to early adulthood focusing more broadly on school and family influences on children's development, the evaluation of social programs, prevention science, intervention research and the determinants of economic and social well-being in early adulthood. He also investigates family and school influences on children's educational success. Evaluation research and prevention science are key aspects of his projects.

**Art Rolnick** is senior fellow and co-director of the Human Capital Research Collaborative at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, the University of Minnesota. Art is working to advance multidisciplinary research on child development and social policy. He previously served at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis as a senior vice president and director of research and as an associate economist with the Federal Open Market Committee—the monetary policymaking body for the Federal Reserve System. Art's essays on public policy issues have gained national attention; his research interests include banking and financial economics, monetary policy, monetary history, the economics of federalism, and the economics of education. His work on early childhood development has garnered numerous awards, including those from the George Lucas Educational Foundation and the Minnesota Department of Health, both in 2007; he was also named 2005 Minnesotan of the Year by Minnesota Monthly magazine. A native of Michigan, Art has a bachelor's degree in mathematics and a master's degree in economics from Wayne State University, Detroit; and a doctorate in economics from the University of Minnesota.

**Senator Dave Senjem** represents District 25 which includes most of Dodge County in southeast Minnesota, plus portions of Olmsted County including half of the City of Rochester. Senator Senjem was first elected to the Minnesota State Senate in 2002 and was elected by his caucus to serve as Senate Republican Minority Leader in 2006, and as Senate Majority Leader in 2012. Presently, he serves as the minority lead member of the Capital Investment Committee, and member of the Tax, and Transportation Committees. Before joining the legislature, Senator Senjem built up an impressive resume of public policy work, which includes 11 years on the Rochester City Council, four years as a Park Board member, and six years as a member of the Olmsted County Environmental Commission. Additionally, he spent 16 years on the Minnesota Emergency Response Commission, spent four years on the Minnesota OSHA Advisory Committee, and served as Vice Chair for the Community and Economic Development Committee of the National League of Cities. Senator Senjem joined Mayo Clinic in 1964 where he worked as an institutional biosafety officer and was responsible for all aspects of environmental regulatory compliance. Senator Senjem retired after forty-four successful years at Mayo.

**Stephanie Schmit** is a policy analyst for the Child Care and Early Education team at CLASP. Her work focuses on quantitative and qualitative analysis of data, as well as technical assistance and policy analysis. Prior to joining CLASP, Stephanie worked at the National Center for Parents as Teachers in St. Louis focusing on policy and advocacy for young children. She has also previously worked in direct practice doing home visits through an early childhood program in Cincinnati, OH. Stephanie has a bachelor's degree in Social Work from the University of Cincinnati and a master's degree in Social Work with a concentration in children, youth and families from Washington University in St. Louis.

**Tom Schultz** is the project director for Early Childhood Initiatives at the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) where he works with states to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for young children. Prior to joining the CCSSO, Tom worked at the Pew Charitable Trusts, where he co-authored a recently completed report, *Taking Stock: Assessing and Improving Early Childhood Learning and Program Quality*, based on the work of the National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force. From 1995–2005, he served as a senior manager in the Head Start Bureau, where he led the development of initiatives in the areas of child assessment, program evaluation, professional development, family and community partnerships, and collaborations with other early care and education programs. He has also worked as a research manager in the U.S. Department of Education, as an early childhood project director with the National Association of State Boards of Education, as a Head Start program team leader in the Region V Office of Child Development, and as a teacher in the Chicago Public Schools. Tom has served on the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Head Start Quality and Expansion and on the editorial board of the *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. He holds degrees from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Oberlin College.

**Ken Sikkema** is a senior policy fellow at Public Sector Consultants (PSC). His areas of concentration at PSC include public finance, environment, and energy policy. His background in state government and experience in the legislature are particularly useful to organizations seeking to move the state's public policy agenda forward in innovative and creative ways. Prior to joining PSC, Ken served in the Michigan House of Representatives for six terms and in the Michigan Senate for two terms. In the House he served as Majority Floor Leader from 1995-96 and as the Republican Leader from 1997-98. In the Senate he served as the Senate Majority Leader from 2002-06. Prior to his service in the Michigan Legislature, Ken was market manager for Herman Miller Inc. in Zeeland, Michigan. He has also served as both an adjunct and visiting professor at Grand Valley State University. Ken is a cum laude graduate of Harvard University with a B.A. in History. He received his MBA with distinction from the University Of Michigan School Of Business Administration.

**Richard W. Stanek** is the 27<sup>th</sup> Sheriff of Hennepin County and is serving his second term in Minnesota's largest county with 1.2 million residents. He was first elected in November of 2006, and was re-elected in 2010. A 30-year veteran of law enforcement, Sheriff Stanek began his career in the Minneapolis Police Department; he rose through the ranks from Patrol Officer, Detective, Commander of Criminal Investigations, to Precinct Commander. While a police officer, Sheriff Stanek was elected five times to the Minnesota State Legislature. In 2003, the Governor appointed him Commissioner of Public Safety & Director of Homeland Security for Minnesota.

Sheriff Stanek currently serves in leadership positions with several national organizations and on several national boards: National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) Executive Committee, chair of the NSA Homeland Security Committee, and vice-chair of the NSA Global Policing Affairs Committee. He serves on the Committee on Terrorism for the International Association of Chiefs of Police and was recently elected Vice President of the LinCT Alumni Association Executive Team. He is the immediate past president of the Major County Sheriffs' Association (MCSA). Sheriff Stanek earned a Criminal Justice Degree from the University of Minnesota and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Hamline University. He completed training at the National Sheriffs' Institute, the FBI's National Executive Institute and Leadership in Counter-Terrorism, and the U.S. Army War College, National Security Seminar, 57<sup>th</sup> Session.