



Beating the Odds: Tapping Brain Potential (Deep Dive Session)

Wednesday, August 5 - 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. / Washington Convention Center Room 608-609

Speaker Biographies

Jackie Bezos, president and co-founder of Bezos Family Foundation, loves the intersection between a big idea and passion, what she refers to as the sweet spot of philanthropy. And for the Bezos Family Foundation, that sweet spot is the field of education from birth through high school. Through investments in research, public awareness, and programs, the foundation aims to elevate the field of education and improve life outcomes for children. At the core of the foundation's work is a belief that rigorous, inspired learning environments will allow students of all ages to put their education into action. Bezos has pioneered initiatives such as Vroom, a national effort to highlight the science behind early brain development and empower parents to turn everyday routines into brain-building moments through innovative tools and partnerships; the Bezos Scholars Program at the Aspen Institute and The Aspen Challenge, which inspire civic leadership among high school students, and Students Rebuild, a platform for students worldwide to take collective action on critical, global issues. Bezos serves on the board of directors for the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences, Robin Hood, Families and Work Institute, the American Museum of Natural History, the Character Lab, and the emeritus board of Thrive Washington. She also serves as an Advisor to TED-Ed and on the Advisory Board of Global Nomads Group. But her most prized position is "Creator of Chaos" at her annual grandmother-run summer camp for her 11 grandchildren.

R.J. Gillespie, MD, MHPE is a practicing pediatrician with the Children's Clinic in Portland, Ore., and is also the Medical Director of the Oregon Pediatric Improvement Partnership. He graduated from Oregon Health Sciences University in 1997, and completed his residency training at Rush Children's Hospital in Chicago, Illinois in 2000. He completed a year as chief resident at Rush in 2001, and has also received a Master of Health Professions Education from the University of Illinois - Chicago. He spent three years as the Medical Director of Quality Improvement for the Children's Health Foundation, and has been active with the Oregon Pediatric Society's Subcommittee on Quality Improvement, where he helped develop and implement the START (Screening Tools and Referral Training) program, which teaches providers to implement standardized screening for developmental disabilities, autism, and peripartum mood disorders. He has also taught Quality Improvement and Efficiency at Portland State University for the school's Healthcare Management Certificate Program.

Rob Grunewald is an economist at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minnesota where he conducts research on regional economic and community development issues. In 2003, he co-authored "Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return" and several subsequent articles on the economic impact of investing in early childhood education. Grunewald serves on the board of directors for Think Small: Leaders in Early Learning, the advisory board for First Children's Finance Growth Fund, is a former board member of the Minnesota Visiting Nurse Agency and is a past president of the Minnesota Economic Association. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics and religion from St. Olaf College and a master's degree in applied economics from the University of Minnesota.

Representative Ruth L. Kagi is a small-business owner representing the 32nd District, including North King and South Snohomish County in Washington State. She chairs the House Early Learning and Human Services Committee. Nationally, she is the past-chair of the National Conference of State Legislature's Human Services Committee. Representative Kagi's long history of community and public service includes serving as Vice President of the League of Women Voters of Washington. She received her B.A. from the University of

Washington and M.P.A. from Syracuse University. First elected to the House in 1999, she has focused on improving the quality of early learning and child care, strengthening foster care, and reforming the state's drug sentencing and truck safety laws.

Senator Steve Litzow is long-time resident of Mercer Island, where he was twice elected to the city council before being chosen in 2010 to represent Washington's 41st Legislative District in the state Senate. Litzow, an education-policy leader whose 2012 accomplishments included spearheading the Senate's passage of new teacher-evaluation standards, serves as chairman of the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee. Litzow also serves on the Transportation and Financial Institutions and Insurance Committees. Litzow is active in the community and serves on boards for Thrive by Five, an early learning group; the Puget Sound Partnership, a broad coalition working to restore Puget Sound; and a variety of other education, environment, and transportation groups.

Deborah Phillips is Professor of Psychology and Associated Faculty in the Public Policy Institute at Georgetown University. She was the first executive director of the Board on Children, Youth, and Families of the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine and served as study director for the Board's report: *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Child Development*. She also served as President of the Foundation for Child Development, director of Child Care Information Services at the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and Congressional Science Fellow (Society for Research in Child Development) on the staff of Congressman George Miller. Her research focuses on the developmental effects of early childhood programs for both typically developing children and those with special needs, including research on child care, Head Start, and pre-Kindergarten programs. Her most recent work has involved evaluating the Tulsa, Okla. school-based preschool program, including impacts on children with special needs and an 8th grade follow-up, and designing a preschool intervention that integrates a focus on self-regulation and early math development. An additional line of research examines the adult work environment of early childhood care and education settings as it affects the stability and quality of care for children. Dr. Phillips currently serves on the National Board for Education Sciences for the U.S. Department of Education. She is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, the Eastern Psychological Association, and the American Psychological Society. In 2011, she received the Distinguished Contributions to Education in Child Development Award from the Society for Research in Child Development.

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