

# Condition of Education in the Commonwealth

Thursday, January 28, 2021 | Virtual Event

## AGENDA

### WELCOME

**Celine Coggins** | Executive Director, Grantmakers For Education & Board Chair, Rennie Center For Education Research & Policy

### OPENING REMARKS

**James A. Peyser** | Massachusetts Secretary of Education

### RESEARCH PRESENTATION: CONDITION OF EDUCATION IN THE COMMONWEALTH

**Chad d'Entremont** | Executive Director of the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy

### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS: COMMUNITY PANEL

*Introduced by:*

**Jessica Boston Davis** | Director of Equity and Excellence, Somerville Public Schools

*Moderated by:*

**Pam Y. Eddinger** | President, Bunker Hill Community College

*Featured Panelists:*

**Almudena Abeyta** | Superintendent, Chelsea Public Schools

**Anne Kandilis** | Director, Springfield WORKS

**Tiffany Lillie** | Director of Community Resource Development, Framingham Public Schools

### PANEL DISCUSSION

*Moderated by:*

**Meghan Irons** | Education Reporter, Boston Globe

*Featured Panelists:*

**Samantha Aigner-Treworgy** | Commissioner, MA Department of Early Education and Care

**Jeffrey C. Riley** | Commissioner, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

**Carlos Santiago** | Commissioner, MA Department of Higher Education

### CLOSING REMARKS

**Chad d'Entremont** | Executive Director of the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy

## SPEAKER BIOS

### **SAMANTHA AIGNER-TREWORGY | Commissioner, MA Department of Early Education and Care**

Samantha Aigner-Treworgy was sworn in as Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care in August 2019. Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy began her career in early education and care in the classroom, serving as a preschool teacher in Western Massachusetts and the Chicagoland area. After some time as a teacher coach and social-emotional consultant to child care agencies, she began focusing on the development of early education policies that benefited children and families. Ms. Aigner-Treworgy helped to advance federal- and state-level initiatives at the Ounce of Prevention Fund, including the Illinois Infant & Toddler Early Learning Guidelines and ExceleRate, the Illinois Quality Rating and Improvement System. Later Ms. Aigner-Treworgy worked with the City of Chicago and Chicago Public Schools to develop an innovative early childhood strategy focused on quality and access, and with the Ounce of Prevention Fund helped launch a national policy initiative that focused on supporting school districts to effectively implement early learning strategies in collaboration with local communities.

Most recently, Ms. Aigner-Treworgy was the Chief of Early Learning for the City of Chicago where she was the key architect of the City's early childhood strategic plan, which focused on reducing barriers for families and identifying administrative efficiencies across agencies. In this role she oversaw approximately \$350 million in early childhood funding across multiple City agencies, including coordination of birth-to-five services in schools, community-based organizations, libraries, and health and human service programs. While working for the City of Chicago Ms. Aigner-Treworgy also reconfigured the early childhood financing structures, oversaw the City's design for providing universal full-day pre-kindergarten to all four-year-olds, and launched the pilot of a universal nurse/home-visiting program with the City's Department of Public Health.

Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy was born and raised in Massachusetts and graduated from Smith College in Northampton with a Bachelor of Arts in Child Development and Sociology. Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy received a Master of Public Policy and a Master of Social Work from the University of Chicago, where her studies concentrated on education and families. Commissioner Aigner-Treworgy is a Boston resident and in her free time she enjoys running along any body of water, spoiling her nieces and nephews, and baking elaborate cakes for special birthday celebrations.

### **ALMUDENA ABEYTA, Ed.D. | Superintendent, Chelsea Public Schools**

Dr. Almudena (Almi) Abeyta has spent 24 years working to improve teaching and learning for students in urban education. Dr. Abeyta grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico and is a proud product of public schools.

Prior to her appointment as Superintendent of Chelsea Public Schools, she worked as an assistant superintendent for teaching and learning in several districts: Somerville Public Schools (2017-2019), Santa Fe Public Schools (2012-2017), and Boston Public Schools (2009-2012). In 2015, she was

awarded the first Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS) Latina Administrator of the Year award.

Dr. Abeyta was the principal of the Donald McKay K-8 School (McKay) in Boston Public Schools from 2004-2008. She led the McKay to improvement by focusing on data to improve instruction. Her work is documented in *Data Wise in Action: Schools Using Data to Improve Instruction*. After four years of leading her school, the McKay was recognized by the Mauricio Gastón Institute, an institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, as an exemplar for educating Latino students. In 2007, *El Planeta*, the largest circulated Spanish newspaper in Massachusetts and New England, named Dr. Abeyta among the 100 Most Influential People in the state's Hispanic Community. Before becoming a principal, Dr. Abeyta taught kindergarten.

Dr. Abeyta completed her bachelor's degree in Communication and Journalism at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and holds two master's degrees and a doctorate degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

#### **JESSICA BOSTON DAVIS, Ed.L.D. | Director of Equity and Excellence, Somerville Public Schools**

Dr. Jessica Boston Davis is an educator committed to equity with a variety of experiences in traditional public schools, charter schools, philanthropy, and higher education. Jessica is currently the Director for Equity and Excellence at the Somerville Public Schools in Somerville, Massachusetts. As the Director for Equity and Excellence, Jessica works closely with school leaders, educators, students, and community members to identify strengths and areas of growth through a lens of equity, and develop improvement strategies that will best serve each school community. She is also currently adjunct faculty at Lesley University where she teaches Culturally Responsive Teaching with the Lesley University and Somerville Public Schools partnership. Jessica is a 2019 graduate of the Doctor of Education Leadership (EdLD) program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. While at Harvard, Jessica served as the president of the Black Student Union. She was awarded with the Harvard University Certificate of Distinction in Teaching for her work as a teaching fellow at Harvard College. She was also awarded with the Torch Bearer Award for Excellence in Leadership within the Black community at Harvard. Prior studying at Harvard, Jessica was the founding principal of Life Academy, a turn-around school in Newark, New Jersey. While Jessica served as principal, Life Academy was recognized as a "proof-point for an effective restart" and Life Academy was profiled by the Wall Street Journal for the academic growth made by students. Prior to becoming a principal, Jessica taught in Newark, New Jersey and Brooklyn, New York. She earned an Ed.M. in Education Policy and Management from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Jessica also earned a M.S. in Teaching at Hunter College. Jessica is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Spelman College. She is a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. In her free time, Jessica loves to spend time with her husband Justin, and their two-year-old son, Daniel, who will be a big brother in April!

**CELINE COGGINS, Ph.D. | Executive Director, Grantmakers For Education & Board Chair, Rennie Center For Education Research & Policy**

Celine has been an educator for more than two decades, with a track record as an innovator, leader, and connector. Celine began her career as a middle school teacher in Worcester, MA and went on to serve in a number of education policy leadership roles, including assistant to the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education. Celine's work has always been deeply connected to teachers and disadvantaged schools. In 2007, she founded Teach Plus, a nationwide network of top-performing teachers, where she spent the next decade as CEO. Under Celine's leadership, Teach Plus grew to over 30,000 participating teachers and offered groundbreaking programs in leadership development and advocacy. Celine was recognized by President Obama at the White House for her organization's impact on public education.

A nationally recognized expert on teacher leadership, education policy standards and accountability, and union politics, Celine has addressed audiences at the Philanthropy Roundtable, the Askwith Forum at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and on NBC's Education Nation. She appears regularly in the media and has been interviewed by The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Atlantic, among many others. She is the author of three books, including her most recent, *How to Be Heard: Ten Lessons Teachers Need to Advocate for Their Students and Profession*.

Celine earned her Ph.D. in education policy analysis at Stanford University and holds an appointment as a lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. As a young person, Celine's life and educational trajectory were profoundly altered by an anonymous donor. That experience made fighting for quality educational opportunities for disadvantaged students her life's work. It also taught her the power of philanthropy, which started her on the journey to this role.

**CHAD D'ENTREMONT, Ph.D. | Executive Director, Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy**

As Executive Director, Dr. Chad d'Entremont is responsible for shepherding the Rennie Center's mission to improve public education through deep knowledge and evidence of effective policymaking and practice. In this capacity, he has co-authored numerous articles, book chapters, and reports on reform strategies ranging from early childhood education to early college designs, as well as launched multiple initiatives to support local communities in the implementation and evaluation of evidence-based practice. In 2012, he helped found the Massachusetts Education Partnership, a unique coalition of labor and management leaders committed to working collaboratively to advance sustainable school improvements. In 2014, he helped found the Massachusetts Institute for College and Career Readiness in partnership with Boston University, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and MassINC and supported by a \$1 million cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences. d'Entremont began his career as a teacher, serving high-needs students in both urban and rural settings. He is the former Assistant Director of a nationally renowned research center at Teachers College, Columbia University and, from 2007-2011, was the Research & Policy Director at Strategies for Children, as well

as project manager for Massachusetts' successful application for a \$50 million Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge award. He has a Ph.D. in Education Policy and Social Analysis and an MA in the Sociology of Education from Teachers College, Columbia University.

**PAM Y. EDDINGER, Ph.D. | President, Bunker Hill Community College**

Pam Eddinger is president of Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC), the largest of 15 community colleges in Massachusetts. Dr. Eddinger began her tenure at BHCC in 2013, and previously served as president Moorpark College in Southern California from 2008.

Dr. Eddinger's service in the Community College movement spans more than 25 years, with senior posts in academics and student affairs, communications and policy, and executive leadership. Dr. Eddinger serves on a number of boards and commissions, including the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), WGBH Boston, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, the Boston Foundation (TBF), the Massachusetts Workforce Development Board, the Boston Private Industry Council, Achieving the Dream (ATD), the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy, and the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU). Dr. Eddinger was honored in 2016 by the Obama White House as a Champion of Change. She earned a bachelor's degree in English from Barnard College and her masters and doctorate in Japanese Literature from Columbia University.

**MEGHAN E. IRONS | Education Reporter, Boston Globe**

Meghan serves on the Globe's Great Divide team, which focuses on race, class, and opportunity in our public schools. She was a lead reporter on the Globe's Valedictorian Project, which chronicled the lives of Boston's top students from 2005 to 2007. That project was a Pulitzer Prize finalist for local reporting in 2020. As a Globe journalist, Meghan has covered a range of topics that touch on how culture, politics, and social issues intersect with everyday life. She was also a member of the award-winning project 68 Blocks and was the paper's City Hall bureau chief for nearly five years. Prior to the Globe, Meghan worked at The Providence Journal, The Baltimore Sun and the Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette in Indiana. She was raised in Dorchester and Mattapan, and currently lives in Hyde Park.

**ANNE S. KANDILIS | Director, Springfield Works**

Anne S. Kandilis leads the Western Mass WORKS/Springfield WORKS Working Cities Challenge Initiative, one of five Massachusetts Boston Federal Reserve recipients to receive the Working Cities Challenge grant in 2016, to promote economic growth in low income communities.

Ms. Kandilis' passion for workforce development and education grew from her board work with the Neighborhood Rebuild Plan after a 2011 tornado devastated her neighborhood. Before joining the EDC, she assisted the Irene E. & George A. Davis Foundation in the launch of a \$14 million early education and care center, Educare Springfield, in the Old Hill neighborhood of Springfield, MA, one of the most impoverished in the city. Her work with Educare led to her commitment to implement a

Two-Generation/Whole Family Approach to Careers model for workforce development to promote economic opportunity for families in the region.

Prior to her work in workforce development and education, Ms. Kandilis was a Senior Executive at a Fortune 100 Insurance Company in Corporate Strategy/Mergers & Acquisitions. During that period, she also led Federal Government Relations in Washington, DC. Previous professional accomplishments include a career as a Tax Partner with a “Big Four” Accounting/Consulting Practice in Boston.

Ms. Kandilis is a native of Springfield, attended Springfield Public Schools, a first generation college student, and resides in Springfield, MA. She graduated from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and holds a Massachusetts Certified Public Accountant license.

#### **TIFFANY LILLIE | Director of Community Resource Development, Framingham Public Schools**

Tiffany Lillie currently serves as the Director of Community Resource Development (CRD) for Framingham Public Schools. In her role, Tiffany manages the Out of School Time programs for over 2500 students and 200 employees. The department works with over 30 local non-profits and community partners to provide equity and access for all students and programs. Prior to joining the MetroWest community, Ms. Lillie has worked around the state with several community-based organizations and municipal government for over 10 years including You Inc., YWCA, Girls Inc, and the City of Cambridge.

Tiffany’s educational background includes a bachelor's degree in Neuroscience Psychology from the University of Massachusetts Boston and a master's degree in Urban Planning from Boston University. Ms. Lillie also serves on the board of RIA House and Pelham Lifelong Learning Center Advisory Board. Beyond her love for community, Tiffany also enjoys photography, cooking, and traveling.

#### **JAMES A. PEYSER | Massachusetts Secretary of Education**

As Massachusetts Secretary of Education, James Peyser directs the Executive Office of Education, which oversees early education, K-12, and higher education. Secretary Peyser sits on each of the boards governing the Commonwealth’s education agencies, as well as the University of Massachusetts system. He is Governor Charlie Baker’s top advisor on education and helps shape the Commonwealth’s education reform agenda. Before serving as Secretary, he was the managing director at NewSchools Venture Fund. He supported innovative education entrepreneurs in popular urban communities to transform public education. Secretary Peyser was the Massachusetts Board of Education's chairman from 1999 to 2006. He also served as education advisor to Governors Bill Weld, Jane Swift and Mitt Romney. He developed state policies of standards and assessments, school accountability, and charter schools.

### **JEFFREY C. RILEY | Commissioner, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

Jeffrey C. Riley was appointed Massachusetts' 24th commissioner of elementary and secondary education in early 2018 and began serving as commissioner on April 5, 2018. A Massachusetts native, Riley's experience spans urban and suburban districts and includes teaching in Baltimore, MD, being principal of Tyngsboro Middle School, and being principal of Boston's Edwards Middle School. In January 2012, Commissioner Riley was appointed superintendent/receiver of the Lawrence Public Schools. During his more than six years there, he led a team that brought major improvements by shifting more resources and autonomy to the school level, expanding the school day, increasing enrichment opportunities, and ensuring all schools had great leaders and teachers. Commissioner Riley holds a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Pomona College in California, a master's degree in counseling from Johns Hopkins University in Maryland and a master's degree in school administration, planning and social policy from Harvard University.

### **CARLOS E. SANTIAGO, Ph.D. | Commissioner, MA Department of Higher Education**

Carlos E. Santiago is Commissioner of Higher Education for Massachusetts, appointed to this position by the Board of Higher Education (BHE) in July 2015. Working with the BHE, he is responsible for providing overall direction to public higher education in Massachusetts and helping shape state-level policies that maximize the benefits of higher education to the Commonwealth and its citizens. Santiago joined the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education in April 2013 as the Senior Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs. His past academic appointments include that of Chancellor of the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee (Wisconsin's second largest research university). He brings over 30 years of experience in public higher education. Santiago also served as provost and chief operating officer at the University at Albany (SUNY). He was a professor of economics at UWM and SUNY-Albany and holds a Ph.D. in economics from Cornell University. Santiago is also the author or co-author of six books and has published dozens of articles and book reviews, of which many focus on economic development and the changing socioeconomic status of Latinos in the United States. On two separate occasions, in 1996 and 2011, Santiago has been named one of the 100 most influential Hispanics in the United States by Hispanic Business magazine.