



24th National School Social Work Conference – Virtual Edition

March 22-24, 2021

Presented by the School Social Work Association of America

SSWAA is proud to introduce our speakers for the 2021 National Virtual Conference:



Dr. Natasha K. Bowen is a professor at the College of Social Work at Ohio State University. Her research and community-engaged work focus on helping schools assess and address social environmental threats to student success, particularly the success of marginalized racial/ethnic minority students. She is currently revamping and updating a website that offers school practitioners free multi-domain assessments for middle, high, and elementary school students and resources for evidence-based practice. Dr. Bowen also teaches PhD students statistics and structural equation modeling.



Stephanie Carnes is the founder of Create Cultural Competence, LLC, a New York-based consultancy. In this role, she works with school districts and community organizations to fine-tune their ability to serve immigrant students and clients. She is a trauma-focused licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) and speaks fluent Spanish. She frequently presents at national conferences and workshops, most recently for the NASW-NY and NYSSBA, on topics related to cultural competence, Latinx immigrants, and trauma treatment. She holds an MSW, an LL.M. Master's of Law in International Human Rights Law, and is currently pursuing her doctorate at SUNY Albany's School of Social Welfare, where she focuses on Latinx adolescent identity development, resilience, and xenophobia.



Dr. Annette Clayton is currently an Assistant Professor and the Internship Director for the Baccalaureate Social Work Program at Virginia Wesleyan University in Virginia Beach Virginia. Her previous teaching experiences include two years as an Assistant Professor of Social Work at the United Arab Emirates University and adjunct teaching for Virginia Commonwealth University and George Mason University. Before entering academia full time, Dr. Clayton worked as a School Social Worker for many years and was the Lead School Social Worker for Newport News Public Schools for five years. Dr. Clayton completed her undergraduate education at Howard University where she majored in Psychology and minored in Zoology. She earned her MSSW degree from The University of Texas at Austin and completed her PhD studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Clayton's scholarship thus far has primarily focused on school social work practice, the overarching issue of practice efficacy, and the influence of risk and protective factors on adolescents' educational outcomes. In addition to presenting at numerous state and national conferences, Dr. Clayton has published manuscripts in *Children & Schools*, *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, and the *Journal of African American Studies*.



Dr. Brenda Coble Lindsey is a Teaching Full Professor and Chair of the Professional Educator License-School Social Work Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her teaching and research interests focus on how school social workers can integrate evidence-based interventions in their practice. Dr. Lindsey has served as a board member of the School Social Work Association of America, Illinois Association of School Social Workers, and is Chair of the School Social Work for NASW.



Anne Contreras, MACP, MFTi is Director of Programs and a national trainer for Pure Edge, Inc. She holds an MA in Counseling Psychology from Sofia University (formerly the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology) and a BA in International Relations (focus area: global development in South & SE Asia) from San Francisco State University. She is certified in both Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Advanced Group Therapy Process. She has practiced yoga for over 20 years and meditation for over fifteen. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Somatic Psychology (Embodied Scholarship) and has a foundation in trauma.



Tory Cox, Ed.D, MSW, LCSW, PPSC, Clinical Associate Professor, is the Associate Director of the Virtual Academic Center's Field Education program at USC's Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work. In 2018, he earned his Ed.D in Organizational Change and Leadership at the USC Rossier School of Education.



Caryn Curry is a social worker with over 30 years' experience working on behalf of children and families as a practitioner, program director, manager and advisor in hospital, community-based and school settings. She provides training, coaching and on-site support to schools and community organizations on social and emotional skill building, creating healthy emotional climates for young people to thrive and trauma informed practices.



Mary Jo Davis received her Master's Degree in Social Work at Catholic University in 1990 and is a license clinical social worker in Virginia since 1993. She has twenty years of school social work experience in both secondary and elementary schools between Loudoun County Public Schools and Fairfax County Public Schools. Currently, she is the Coordinator of Social Work Services in Fairfax County Public Schools since 2014. She previously worked in FCPS social work office leadership as a Program Manager and a social worker supervisor, providing program development, management, and supervision to school social workers. During her years in FCPS social work leadership, she has assisted with the development of EBP interventions in schools and tracking aggregate intervention outcome data, program

development and implementation of three community schools and coordinates system-wide initiatives in response to student mental health needs, and school-based trainings around mental health and social-emotional learning. Ms. Davis has presented at several local and national conferences to include: Advancing School Mental Health conference and School Social Work Association of America conference on Evidence Based Interventions in schools; Meeting Mental Health Needs through Data Decision Outcomes.



Christina M. Devers, LCSW, has practiced in the field of Social Work since 2001. She has been a School Social Worker with Prince William County Public Schools in Virginia since 2011. She transitioned to School Social Work after spending the first ten years of her career working with children and adolescents in foster care. Mrs. Devers is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of Virginia and has also worked in the private practice setting providing play therapy to children and adolescents. Mrs. Devers is a certified Youth Mental Health First Aid Instructor and an ACE Interface Instructor. She also holds a Pupil Personnel Endorsement through the Virginia Department of Education. Mrs. Devers is a member of both the Virginia Association of

School Social Workers and the School Social Work Association of America.



Wendy DuCasse is a school social worker for Special School District in St. Louis, Missouri, where she works alongside students and classroom staff to figure out our "why", while they all dive into problem-solving, building resiliency, and making positive contributions to the learning environment and the world. She is a licensed clinical social worker (LCSW) in the state of Missouri and has completed post-graduate work in Nonprofit Management and Leadership. Wendy works with students who have IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) and have a variety of educational diagnoses which impact their ability to learn in a traditional educational setting. Many of her students have endured tremendous losses and other traumas and work daily within their classrooms to develop coping strategies, problem solving skills, and the ability to advocate for themselves in ways that are safe and productive school setting. Wendy collaborates works with classroom teachers and other school staff to help refine their trauma-informed universal classroom strategies and supports, along with managing their own self-care.



Quyen Duong is a licensed clinical social worker serving as a Student Services Specialist with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). She provides technical assistance to Virginia local school divisions to enhance the capacity of school social workers to address social, emotional, mental health, behavioral, and familial needs. She also provides technical support and guidance to school divisions in the implementation of effective strategies to increase attendance rates and address chronic absenteeism and truancy. Prior to joining the VDOE, she worked for Fairfax County Public Schools where she has experience in both secondary and elementary schools and then as a social work supervisor. She has extensive experience in prevention and intervention services across the Virginia Tiered Systems of Support that includes collaboration with community agencies and partners.



Dr. Robert Lucio is experienced at developing models of risk and protective factors in youth providing trainings on cultural competence and serving as a national panelist looking at the impact of ethnicity and ethnicity and cultural diversity on the educational outcomes for youth with disabilities for the U.S. Department of Education.



Michael Massey received his MSW in 2017 and his PhD in Social Work in 2019 from Virginia Commonwealth University and is currently an Assistant Professor of Social Work in the National Catholic School of Social Service at Catholic University. Before becoming a social worker, he worked in k-12 education for 20 years, fifteen of which were as a middle and high school counselor. Grounded in his experiences in schools and passion for students, Massey has focused his social work lens on examining and dismantling racism in educational policy and practice. His research interests include the school-to-prison pipeline, school discipline, and critical race theory (CRT) applications to policy and practice.



Gill McClean is Director of Professional Development. She trains & hosts webinars across the country on self-care and integrating health and wellness best practices. She regularly presents at conferences to share best practices in managing stress. Prior to moving to Houston, Gill lived and worked in the United Kingdom, Colombia, United Arab Emirates, Oman and The Netherlands in a variety of roles to learn the culture and make a difference. She managed the allocation of low cost government housing, working with the homeless, as well as, founded North East Scotland's first dedicated yoga studio. During her overseas postings, Gill became a member of numerous Women's Organizations supporting local charities. Her charitable efforts include fundraising for orphans in developing countries. She holds a Higher National Certificate in Local Government Administration from Langside College, and also attended Shawlands Academy, in Glasgow, Scotland.



Christy McCoy, MSW, LICSW, has been a School Social Worker for 16 years for St. Paul Public Schools but has worked in education for 24 years. In her role as a School Social Worker, she has provided direct support to youth in alternative educational settings and for the past 11 years has worked at Agape High School which serves pregnant and parenting teen mothers. She has been actively involved with the Minnesota School Social Work Association since 2002 serving in following leadership roles: Legislative Chair 2008-2013; President 2013-2015; Secretary 2016-2018; Legislative Chair 2015-present. Christy is the current President for SSWAA and has also served on the SSWAA Board as Secretary and Legislative Chair. Furthermore, she has presented statewide, regionally, and nationally on topics including Macro-Advocacy and School Social Work, School Crisis and Mental Health: Role and Expertise of School Social Workers, Impact of Trauma on Students, Early Warning Signs of Childhood Mental Illness, New School Social Worker; What you Need to Know, etc. She has also co-presented with Leticia Villarreal Sosa Ph.D. LICSW and Carlos Evans MSW LSW COVID-19 Health Crisis: Unpacking and Addressing Underlying Equity Issues and with Dr. Leticia Villarreal Sosa at the SSWAA National Conference 2020 on the topic School Social Work Response to Current and Long-term Inequities.



Rachel Meffe earned her Master's in Social Science Administration from Case Western Reserve University. Currently, Rachel is the district School Social Worker at Cuyahoga Heights Schools outside of Cleveland, Ohio where she works closely with school teams to create PBIS programming, provides staff consultation and training on student mental health and behavior. She also conducts FBAs and creates behavior plans, conducts crisis interventions and provides ongoing mental health support to students. In addition, Rachel has served on the Ohio School Social Work Association board since 2008.



Michelle Mitchell is Director of Partnerships for Pure Edge Inc. Originally from New Jersey, Michelle completed her collegiate studies in Buffalo New York earning a BS in Sports Medicine, Minor in Sports Psychology and a Masters in Counseling & Human Services at Canisius College. Michelle has worked in her respective community in the public school setting, higher education, and the nonprofit sector. Currently, Michelle teaches stress management at George Washington University and serves on the board of directors of local nonprofits.



Stephanie Ochocki has practiced school social work in Minnesota for fifteen years. She has extensive experience and knowledge in the areas of social emotional learning, child mental health, MTSS, and the school-to-prison pipeline. Stephanie has held a variety of leadership roles to advocate for the needs of children, families and schools, and currently serves as the Midwest Representative for the School Social Work Association of America and works at the Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan School District 196 as a Student Support TOSA.



Sheri Olson is currently working toward her doctorate in Educational Leadership with an emphasis in Social Emotional Learning. She received her Master's in Social Work (emphasis school social work) from St. Ambrose University, Davenport, Iowa and her Bachelors (second) in Social Work from Illinois State University. Her first Bachelor's was in Criminal Justice from Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana. She currently holds her LCSW. She holds two additional school licenses: Director of Special Education and Administrative/Principal. She has practiced school social work in both Illinois and Colorado and has served on both the Illinois and Colorado state associations of school social work boards. She completed serving as the Western Representative on the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) board in 2019 and currently serves as the SSWAA SEL committee chair.



Michele Patak-Pietrafesa, LISW-S is a PhD candidate in the College of Social Work at the Ohio State University. Her dissertation research explores teacher perceptions and how they relate to outcomes for students of color. She teaches both in-person and online courses in research and statistics in the BSW program at OSU and conducts trainings and guest lectures on topics related to evaluating social work practice, school social work, and anti-racist practice. Michele has over 10 years of clinical experience working with children, adolescents and adults in community, school and private practice contexts and has served the profession of school social work in several roles on the board of the Ohio School Social Work Association (OSSWA).



Dr. Vincent Pompei is an education consultant and the Director of the Youth Well-Being Program at the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest civil rights organization dedicated to LGBTQ equality. Previously, he was the Project Director for the Center for Excellence in School Counseling and Leadership at San Diego State University, served as President for the California Association of School Counselors and was a National Cadre Trainer for the National Education Association. He also worked as a middle school teacher and high school counselor for ten years. In addition, Pompei authored the California LGBTQ Youth Report, was on the advisory council for Equality California's Safe and Supportive Schools Index and testified at a

congressional hearing on school safety in Washington D.C. and in 2014. Recently, he was named one of the Advocate Magazine's Top 40 Under 40, selected by the National Education Association as a Classroom Superhero and honored by the California PTA and Equality California for his advocacy work on school safety and inclusion.



Jennifer Roberts, LCSW, has been practicing in the field of Social Work for over 20 years. She began her career working in foster care and adoption initially with a private agency and then with a government agency. In 2014, Mrs. Roberts received the Children's Bureau Adoption Excellence Award and was recognized nationally for her work in the adoption field specifically with older children. She is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of Virginia and holds a Pupil Personnel Endorsement through the Virginia Department of Education. She has been a School Social Worker for Prince William County Schools since 2016. Mrs. Roberts has extensive

training in the use of art expression in the school setting and developed a school-based program that supports students accessing art based therapeutic resources during the summer break.



Martha Rodriguez is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with over 15 years of experience in both Private & Public Sectors. Martha Rodriguez serves as Florida's School Social Work and Mental Health Consultant via the Student Support Services Project in the Florida Department of Education's Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services. Before coming to the Project in July of 2020, Martha served as a School Social Worker, Field Instruction Supervisor, a Child Study Team Supervisor, and most recently, as the Service Recovery Manager for the Broward County School District. Martha earned a Master's degree in Clinical Social Work, from Yeshiva University. She enjoys promoting the understanding of mental health needs and

psychological safety affecting individuals impacted trauma, mental disorders, and abuse.



Tim Schwaller is a Licensed School Social Worker and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. He has extensive experience in School Social Work, child welfare, and clinical social work. His employment history includes 25 years as a School Social Worker in Wisconsin, and 6 years as the School Social Work Program Coordinator at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. Currently semi-retired, he is employed at Professional Services Group in West Allis, WI, as a mental health therapist. In addition to holding a Master's degree in social work, he also holds Master's degrees in Educational Leadership and in Theology. He has presented workshops at numerous local, state and national conferences.



Kevin Tan received his PhD from the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago. He received his Master's in Social Work from the Brown School of Social Work, Washington University in St. Louis, and his Bachelors in Social Work (Honors) from the National University of Singapore. He has worked as a school social worker in Singapore. He also worked in a suburban school district in the St. Louis, Missouri area. While there, he developed a district-wide universal screening approach for identifying and monitoring groups of high school students for related interventions. Professor Tan's research focuses on understanding profiles of youth risk and protective factors, developmental patterns of problems behaviors, and their social

contextual influences. Based in a person-oriented developmental psychopathology perspective, his work focuses on interventions that target pattern-specific developmental risk. He has published work in the area of youth risk and protective factors, family influences, and school social work practice. The goal of Professor Tan's work is to promote the implementation of prevention research in school settings. Professor Tan teaches courses in Social Work Practice with Children and Adolescents and Program Evaluation.



Laura Thiemann, LCSW, currently serves as a Social Worker Supervisor in Fairfax County Public Schools. She has a background in public health and is grateful for the opportunity to support trauma-sensitive schools and in-depth educational offerings for staff. Laura is an ACE Interface Master Trainer, and regularly collaborates with school and community partners to promote resiliency and hope by unpacking the science of adversity for our most powerful agents of change--our community members. Prior to working in Fairfax County Public Schools, Laura was a project administrator for Johns Hopkins Office of Community Health where she managed a community-based outreach program. She also has served as a clinician in private practice settings, providing play therapy to children in addition to individual, group and family therapies.



Bianca Vargas-Ocasio is a bilingual social worker with experience in school and community settings. Her work in this space has included clinical services, case management and delivering evidence-based group interventions to children and adolescents. She provides training and supported implementation for the group intervention Supporting Transition Resilience Of Newcomer Groups (STRONG) and works collaboratively with schools and community agencies to establish healing-centered practices in schools.



Dr. Leticia Villarreal Sosa is a professor at Dominican's School of Social Work. She practiced as a school social worker for over 14 years is the Editor in Chief of Children & Schools and board member of the School Social Work Association of America. In addition, she continues her clinical practice with a focus on healing from trauma.



Ashley Waddell is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Certified Trauma Specialist in the state of Virginia. She practices from a trauma-informed, African-centered perspective, which honors culture and recognizes the role interdependence, collectivism, and spirituality have on personal, family, and community health and wellness. Ashley has been employed as a school social worker with Henrico County Public Schools for the past four years. Ashley has served as the co-chair of the Virginia Association of School Social Workers-Richmond Region since 2018. She joined The School Social Work Association of America in 2019. Ashley is an active member of The National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) at both the national and local levels.



Shenita E. Williams is a school social worker with over 25 years of experience in the field of social work. As a licensed clinical social worker and certified trauma specialist, Ms. Williams has practiced in various settings, including private practice and academia. Using a transformational leadership approach and disruptive innovation, Ms. Williams challenges inequitable practices and policies in pk-12 public school settings. She is an adjunct faculty member of the VCU School of Social Work, and a PhD student in the VCU School of Education.