

# Speaker Profiles

## Dr. Marion Wilson

Superintendent  
District 31 - NYCDOE



Dr. Marion Wilson has been in education for over 23 years and has worked for the NYC Department of Education for the past 16 years. She believes in excellence and educational equity. She is committed to ensuring that all students can achieve their full potential in order to succeed beyond the K-12 system. In her current role as Superintendent for District 31 in Staten Island, New York she supports the district and school teams with her expertise in instructional leadership, strategic data analysis, evaluative feedback, equity initiatives, and organizational and systems thinking. District 31 comprises 72 community schools and 12 early childhood centers (3k and Prek) serving Kindergarten - 12th grade with approximately 55,000 students.

Prior to her current role, Dr. Wilson started as Gifted & Talented teacher in East Orange, NJ in 1999, then Literacy Coach at the Harlem Children's Zone, and the longest serving Principal of the Jackie Robinson School in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, NY for eight wonderful years. She is an Adjunct Assistant Professor for the City University of New York and has authored publications.

During her tenure as principal, the Jackie Robinson (Brooklyn, NY) school received several accolades including a N.Y.S. Proclamation from former State Senator Eric Adams acknowledging the school's removal from the persistently failing state designation to a school in good standing with dramatically increased test scores and an A+ rating. Her success story was highlighted in two books written by Alan Blankstein entitled, *Failure is Not an Option* [Second edition] and *The Answer is in the Room*.

Dr. Wilson received her Doctorate in Education in Educational and Organizational Leadership from the University of Pennsylvania (UPENN); a Masters of Science from Mercy College, NY; a Masters of Science from Pace University, NY; and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Hofstra University, NY.

# Speaker Profiles

## Christine C. Chavez

Deputy Superintendent  
District 31 - NYCDOE



Christine Chavez - educator, optimist, mother and wife - holds a record of strategic leadership spanning innovative instructional practices that support both student and adult learning. Throughout her 23 years in education, she has held progressively prominent roles that include Teacher, Reading Recovery Specialist, Literacy Coach and Assistant Principal, Principal and currently Deputy Superintendent of District 31

In her current role as Deputy Superintendent of District 31, Christine supports the collective District 31 vision of equity. To empower every student's voice to cultivate their brilliance & intellectualism, so that they think critically about the world around them, problem solve tomorrow's future, feel included in the community, value differing perspectives, advocate for themselves - to discover their inner champion, so they are successful post-secondary. (VOICE - Vision of Inclusivity & Collective Efficacy). She is guided by the beliefs: Our students WILL learn and grow, Staff DESIRE the best for all D31 students, Equity-in-action, Students SHOULD have voice and choice in their learning experiences and Parents are OUR partners. She is utilizing her knowledge as a Compassionate Systems Master Practitioner to support the Superintendent and District to simultaneously transform the climate and culture in which students learn in District 31.

As Principal of Public School 45 - The John Tyler School, she was recognized as a recipient of the United Federation of Teacher Innovation in Education Award for the work of reducing suspensions and the school-to-prison pipeline. She was a Plenary Panelist at the American Federation of Teachers Convention and a Fellow in the Teachers College Columbia University Cahn Fellowship Program. In her ongoing work she is collaborating with The College of Staten Island, New York City Department of Education District 31 Borough Field Office and the PS45 school community to create and pilot a teacher residency program that teaches current mentors and future teachers to strive for racial equity.

Christine has served as an advisor to support the leadership at the District and City level. She was selected by the former New York City Executive Superintendent Anthony Lodico to present at the 2019 Courageous Conversation Summit, and has incorporated the practices of the Courageous Conversation About Race Protocol into her former school community. She expanded on her leadership experience serving on NYC Chancellor Carranza and NYC Chancellor Porters Principal Advisory Council. Most recently she is part of the Developing Leaders and Learners for Professional and Academic Excellence EdPacesetters Cohort III. Where she is working with the Central Leadership Team to engage in a capstone project supporting Chancellor Banks Four Pillars: 1-Scale, sustain, and restore what works.  
2-Reimagine the school experience so that youth are excited about coming to school.  
3-Prioritize student health & wellness and measure its impact on student success.  
4-Intentional Engagement with parents, families, and communities.

# Speaker Profiles

**Ron Cox**  
Kincaid CEO



Ron Cox, Chief Executive Officer with The Kincaid Group received a Bachelor of Science degree in Finance and later obtained a master's degree in Business Administration.

Ron has 30-plus years in operations helping local, regional, and national organizations. Including both public and private sector companies.

In 2017, Ron retired from Public Education. Shortly after retirement Ron, Scott Kincaid and Buddy Mason became business partners in American Digital Security (ADS). ADS is one of the largest providers of access controls, visitor management and security cameras in the United States. Ron is extremely passionate about K-12 environments and ensuring staff and students have the safest learning space possible.

**Jonathan Richard**  
TNTP Leadership Coach



In his role as Partner, Jon oversees strategy across the state of Missouri. He designs and provides professional development and leadership coaching for executive, system, and school leaders on a range of topics including leadership development, diversity, equity, and inclusion, comprehensive talent management and diversification, and change management. He supports systems by designing and implementing innovative and high-impact change management and training programs that support achieving business goals. Prior to TNTP, Jon was the school principal at Sumner Academy of Arts and Science, the highest performing public high school in the state of Kansas. In Missouri, Jon was the principal at Lincoln College Preparatory Academy where it ranked as the state's second highest performing public high school and achieved a national Blue-Ribbon Award. He lives with his three teenage children in Kansas City, Missouri.

# Speaker Profiles

## Caitlin Sharp

TNTP Partner



Caitlin Sharp is a Partner overseeing TNTP's work in Nebraska and Kansas. Her work focuses on Learning Acceleration at the state, regional, and district levels, bringing increased access to the Four Resources named in the Opportunity Myth. Prior to joining TNTP, she helped build and lead the Ewing Marion Kauffman School network in Kansas City, where she managed the district's instructional and operational performance and helped found the first high school and the network team. Prior to that, she consulted for state education agencies implementing longitudinal data systems with Double Line, Inc. in Austin, TX. Caitlin taught 3rd grade in The Bronx as a TFA Corps Member and earned a Masters in Public Affairs from the University of Texas at Austin. She lives in Kansas City, MO

## Deb Zila



## Mike Seitz



Deb Zila and Mike Seitz have a combined 80+ years of governing board experience, supporting their communities, schools, and organizations by serving on volunteer, appointed and elected boards.

Deb is a graduate of Iowa State University and served on the Shawnee Mission School District Board of Education for 12½ years, with 5 years in board leadership roles. She helped bring Real World Learning to the district and currently serves in several roles, including being a mentor in the Women in Leadership program and is on the Northeast Johnson County Chamber of Commerce Foundation board.

Mike graduated from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and served 11 years on the Blue Valley School District Board of Education. He currently serves on the Johnson County Mental Health board and is on the Board of Trustees at Baker University.

They formed BOARDynamics to coach boards toward agreement of purpose, roles, goals, and behaviors. They also advise boards regarding new board member interest sessions and orientation, formation of board norms, leadership mentoring and strategic planning.

# Speaker Profiles

## David A. Smith

Chief Communications Officer,  
Shawnee Mission Schools



David A. Smith serves as the Chief Communication Officer for the Shawnee Mission School District, a position he assumed in July, 2018. Prior to that, he served for 13 years as Chief of Communications and as Chief of Staff in the Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools. Mr. Smith came to Kansas City in 1999 to serve as an Assistant Superintendent for Communications in the Kansas City, Missouri Public Schools.

Mr. Smith has also served as a Senior Research Associate at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, where he studied the relationship between schools and communities. Mr. Smith earned a master's degree in religion from Yale Divinity School, and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Yale University.

## Dan Meers

KC Wolf Mascot



Dan Meers is a man whose energy, humor and excitement not only entertains but also encourages others to strive for the best of life. Dan has served as KC Wolf, the official mascot of the Kansas City Chiefs for over 30 years. His work and experiences as a professional sports mascot have reinforced to him the philosophy that laughter and a cheerful heart are good medicine. After listening to Dan, you realize that what makes him so truly special is his genuine desire to motivate others to enjoy life as much as he does. The constant smile he wears comes from within. The humorous message he shares has inspired thousands to live life to the fullest and to enjoy it each and every step of the way.

On November 23, 2013, Dan Meers came within inches of losing his life while practicing a bungee jump and zip line stunt at Arrowhead Stadium... home of the Kansas City Chiefs. What Dan anticipated being the thrill of a lifetime ended up being the spill of a lifetime. The stunt went terribly wrong and Dan plummeted 75 feet before crashing into the stadium seats. Miraculously Dan survived. He spent 9 days in the hospital and got some really big scars. Dan smiles when he says, "Scars are just Tattoos that come with a Cool Story". Dan is the author of the book "Wolves Can't Fly" and during his powerful presentation Dan shares his incredible story and the important lessons that he has learned about leadership and about life.