

# Great First Eight Curriculum

Kindergarten through Second Grade Curriculum Development Team



## Co-Directors and Domain Leads

**Co-Directors:** Nell K. Duke, Marisha Humphries **Domain Leads:** Nell K. Duke, Anne-Lise Halvorsen, José Martínez Hinestroza, Marisha Humphries, Naomi Jessup, Debi Khasnabis, Eve Manz, Michelle Salgado



**Nell K. Duke**  
Co-Director,  
Infant–Grade 2;  
English Language  
Arts and  
Literacy Lead

Nell K. Duke, EdD, is a professor in Literacy, Language, and Culture and also in the Combined Program in Education and Psychology at the University of Michigan. As of September, 2022, Duke serves as executive director of the Center for Early Literacy Success at Stand for Children. Duke’s work focuses on early literacy development, particularly among children living in poverty. She has served as Co-Principal Investigator of projects funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, the National Science Foundation, the Spencer Foundation, and the George Lucas Educational Foundation, among other organizations. Duke has been named one of the most influential education scholars in the U.S. in *EdWeek*. She has received a number of awards for her work including, in 2018, the International Literacy Association’s William S. Gray Citation of Merit for outstanding contributions to research, theory, practice, and policy. Among other roles, she serves as an advisor for the Public Broadcasting Service/Corporation for Public Broadcasting Ready to Learn initiative. Her Twitter handle is @nellkduke.



**Marisha Humphries**  
Co-Director,  
Pre-K–Grade 2;  
Social and Emotional  
Learning Lead,  
Pre-K–Grade 2

Marisha L. Humphries, PhD is an associate professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago and a licensed clinical psychologist. Dr. Humphries’ research seeks to develop an integrated approach to studying African American children’s normative and prosocial development, and utilizing this basic research to create culturally and developmentally appropriate school-based behavior promotion programs. Specifically, she examines African American children’s emotional and social competence, and the ways in which schools can support children’s development in this area. Dr. Humphries’ work in social and emotional competence also extends to higher education. This work includes developing and implementing a race-infused social emotional learning training curriculum for preservice elementary and school social work interns. She also engages with university faculty to facilitate their learning regarding the connection between social emotional competence, diversity, and learning in college classrooms. Dr. Humphries’ work considers the contextual and cultural factors associated with children, families, and schools. Her research has been published in *Early Education & Development*, *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, and *Infant Mental Health Journal*.



**Anne-Lise Halvorsen**  
Social Studies Lead,  
K–2

Anne-Lise Halvorsen, PhD, is an associate professor in the Department of Teacher Education and PhD Coordinator of the Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education Program at Michigan State University. Her research interests include elementary social studies education, historical inquiry, project-based learning, the history of education, the integration of social studies and literacy, and teacher preparation in the social studies. She is the co-author of *Reasoning with Democratic Values: Ethical Issues in American History* (Teachers College Press, 2018), co-author of *Powerful Social Studies for Elementary Students* (Cengage, 2018) and the author of *A History of Elementary Social Studies: Romance and Reality* (Peter Lang, 2013). Her work has been published in *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *Teachers College Record*, *Theory and Research in Social Education*, *Social Education*, and *Social Studies and the Young Learner*; and has been funded by the George Lucas Educational Foundation, the Michigan Department of Education, and the Spencer Foundation. Halvorsen was awarded the Michigan Council for the Social Studies College Educator of the Year in 2017. She is a former kindergarten teacher and a former curriculum writer for the State of Michigan.



**José Martínez Hinestroza**  
Mathematics Lead,  
Kindergarten

José Martínez Hinestroza, PhD, is an assistant professor in elementary mathematics education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Texas State University. A former kindergarten and elementary school teacher, Martínez's work focuses on bilingual mathematics education, including teaching and learning in language immersion classrooms and the preparation of preservice teachers to teach bilingual children. Through his participatory research, he has engaged in prolonged collaborations with teachers, including teachers of recent immigrant children from Central and South America. He has published both research and practitioner-oriented papers in peer-reviewed journals and edited books, one such article was co-authored with a teacher who was one of the three finalists for the 2018 Linking Research and Practice Outstanding Publication Award from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.



**Naomi Jessup**  
Mathematics Lead,  
Grades 1–2

Naomi Jessup, PhD is an assistant professor of Mathematics Education in the Department of Early Childhood Elementary Education at Georgia State University. She teaches mathematics content and methods courses for prospective teachers in the elementary education bachelor's degree program and doctoral courses focused on critical issues in education. Her research focuses on using sociocultural and critical theories that examine mathematics teaching practices, curriculum, and parental partnerships with prospective and in-service teachers. Additionally, Dr. Jessup focuses on reengineering mathematics education spaces amid and post the COVID-19 pandemic that are rehumanizing, and honors the voices, knowledge, and contributions of Black students, parents, and their communities. Her work has been supported by the National Science Foundation and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. She currently serves as an advisory board member for a K–5 Mathematics Curriculum Consortium and the New Georgia Mathematics Standards Commission. Prior to her work at Georgia State University, Dr. Jessup was an elementary teacher, K–8 mathematics instructional coach, district administrator, and K–12 formative assessment coach in a metropolitan city in North Carolina.



**Debi Khasnabis**  
Family Engagement  
Lead, K-2

Debi Khasnabis, PhD, is a clinical professor of Educational Studies at the University of Michigan. She teaches courses on multicultural and multilingual education and conducts research on pedagogies of teacher education that support culturally responsive teaching. Within this area, she focuses on supporting both preservice and inservice teachers to examine their own biases, to develop racial literacy, to develop family engagement efforts, and to address the trauma-related needs of students, all while attending to systemic inequality. She is a recipient of the Award for Diversity, Inclusion, Justice and Equity at the U-M School of Education. Dr. Khasnabis has served as Co-Principal Investigator on projects funded by the Spencer Foundation and U-M's Transforming Learning for the Third Century initiative, Ginsberg Center and Center for Research on Learning and Teaching. She is a leadership team member for the Mitchell Scarlett Teaching and Learning Collaborative, where she has designed professional development for teachers and family engagement programs that aim to build connections between families and schools. Prior to her work at the University of Michigan, Dr. Khasnabis was an elementary bilingual teacher (Spanish and English) in southwest Detroit. She is orally fluent in Bengali and Spanish.



**Eve Manz**  
Science Co-Lead  
Grades K-1;  
Science Lead,  
Grade 2

Eve Manz, PhD, is an associate professor of Science Education at the Boston University Wheelock College of Education & Human Development. Her research focuses on understanding how to design and orchestrate learning environments that apprentice young students into science practices such as modeling, argumentation, and explanation. Manz works closely with elementary teachers and instructional leaders to develop new approaches to science teaching and learning that center student and teacher sense-making. She draws from her experience as an elementary school teacher and educational director of a science and engineering museum. Her work has been funded by the James S. McDonnell Foundation, the George Lucas Educational Foundation, and an early career research grant from the National Science Foundation. She is the recipient of the 2019 Early Career Research Award from the National Association for Research in Science Teaching. Her twitter handle is @eveimanz.

## Writers and Coordinators

Jennifer Banks, monét cooper, Genelle Diaz-Silveria, Julie Emra, Stephanie Englehaupt, Noncy Fields, Julia Karant, Amber Lawson, Julia Lindsey, Megan Marsal, Melanie McCormick, Ceily Moore, Nia Nickerson, Andrea Pisani, Katie Revelle, Michelle Salgado, Betül Demiray Sandiraz, Alessandra Ward, Brittany White, Allie Whitford, Crystal Wise



**Jennifer Banks**  
Writer Specializing  
in Mathematics, K-1;  
Curriculum Reviewer,  
Grade 1

Jennifer D. Banks, PhD, is the Mathematics and Science Coordinator for Washtenaw Intermediate School District. Dr. Banks has worked in the field of education for 18 years serving as a teacher and instructional leader at various levels. Over the past 10 years, she has intently worked to expand K-12 educators' understanding of culturally responsive instruction, specifically in the area of mathematics. In her capacity at the WISD, Jennifer developed and launched the Responsive Teaching Institute, a professional development series that focuses on examining instruction from an equity perspective. She is also a participating member of the Michigan Early Mathematics Task Force, helping to develop a set of early mathematics essentials that are culturally responsive to students and their families. Her research has focused on the experiences of African American high school students in the mathematics classroom. Jennifer is passionate about empowering educators and learners, to ensure that all students have equitable access and opportunities to learn and engage in high-quality rigorous mathematics.



**monét cooper**  
Writer Specializing  
in Professional  
Learning, K

monét cooper is a doctoral student in the Joint Program in English and Education at the University of Michigan. Prior to joining the academy, she spent 11 joyous years serving middle and high school students in DC, Maryland, and Virginia. She uses interiority, Black queer theorizations of selfhood and futurity, and ethnographic methods to learn about the literacy experiences of African American and Latinx genderqueer students and trans and queer girls in their secondary English classrooms and schools. She also researches the impacts of internalized anti-blackness on African American educator relationships with themselves, students, and families, curriculum and instruction, perceptions of student potential, and school policy. She has work forthcoming in *This House Will Not Dismantle Itself: Critical Future in Education*.



**Genelle Diaz-Silveria**  
Writer Specializing  
in Science, K-2

Genelle Diaz-Silveira is a PhD candidate in Educational Studies at Boston University. Her interests include designing learning environments that foster inquiry and exploring the effects of student-scientist collaborations on scientific literacy and civic engagement. She has 6 years of classroom teaching experience and holds an M.S. in Biology from New York University and a B.A. in Environmental Studies from Amherst College.



**Julie Emra**  
Writer Specializing in  
Family Engagement,  
K-1;  
Writer Specializing in  
Family Engagement,  
Literacy, & Social  
Studies, Grade 1-2

Julie Emra is a curriculum writer, certified reading specialist, and a former elementary school teacher. She is a previous grant recipient of the 1619 Project Education Network's inaugural cohort, who is committed to teaching, leading, and designing anti-bias and anti-racist curriculum. Through her teaching experience in grades K-5 in New York City, India, and Michigan, Julie has worked with diverse populations of students and designed curriculum where students see themselves represented. Julie received her BA in Elementary Education from the University of Michigan and an MA in Literacy Studies from Western Michigan University.



**Stephanie Englehaupt**  
Writer Specializing  
in Mathematics,  
Grade 1

Stephanie Englehaupt is a mathematics curriculum consultant. Her work focuses on applied mathematics with children that builds culturally responsive foundational skills through hands-on experiences. Currently she is developing and implementing an applied mathematics curriculum for young gifted children. Stephanie earned her BA in Elementary Education with a minor in mathematics from University of Illinois and an MA in Educational Leadership from National Louis University. She is honored to have been an elementary school teacher working with teams of children and teachers as a mathematics specialist.



**Noncy Fields**  
Writer Specializing  
in Mathematics, K-2

Noncy Fields has taught first through fifth grades over the past 29 years. She serves as the Vice President of Elementary Education on the boards of the Michigan Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the Detroit Area Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Noncy's accomplishments include receiving a curriculum writing grant awarded by the 1619 Project and the NYT Pulitzer Center. Her focus was on supporting students as they utilize critical thinking and historical analysis skills to build an understanding of American History that is honest, accurate, and honors all perspectives. Noncy also co-authored the Identity Resource Screening Tool (IRST) which is designed to decrease curriculum violence by providing guidance on choosing developmentally-appropriate/culturally affirming teaching material when incorporating historical figures and movements into the elementary curriculum. Noncy holds a BA in Elementary Education, Social Studies and Mathematics, from Michigan State University and a MA in Educational Psychology from Eastern Michigan University. Noncy Fields is currently a doctoral candidate at Michigan State University.



**Julia Karant**  
Project Coordinator,  
K-2

Julia Karant is a recent graduate of the University of Michigan Masters in Educational Studies program, where she focused on design and technologies for learning across cultures and contexts. Prior to coming to U of M, Julia taught 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade in Chicago Public Schools. She supports the Great First Eight project in a variety of ways, but is particularly passionate about looking for opportunities within lessons to help children make interdisciplinary connections across the content areas.



**Amber Lawson**  
Writer Specializing in  
Literacy Foundational  
Skills, 1-2

Amber D. Lawson is a doctoral student in Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education at Michigan State University. She is a two-time graduate from Michigan State University, earning a Bachelor of Arts in elementary education with a double minor in Spanish TESOL and a Master of Arts in education with a literacy concentration. Lawson's research interests include foundational literacy and urban education. Her work focuses on providing culturally diverse children rich and meaningful opportunities to advance their academic growth and supporting teachers in implementing culturally responsive pedagogies in their classrooms. She is a former kindergarten and first-grade teacher in the Detroit Public Schools Community District.



**Julia Lindsey**  
Writer Specializing in  
Literacy Foundational  
Skills, K–1

Dr. Julia Lindsey is a literacy consultant and foundational skills expert. Her research and work focuses on foundational literacy instruction, primarily by creating, implementing, and evaluating research-based, practical, and culturally responsive foundational skills curricula and texts. At present, she is working with various districts, non-profits, teachers, publishers, and other curriculum developers to find innovative solutions to improve early literacy instruction. Julia earned a BS from Davidson College, an MAT from Relay Graduate School of Education, and a PhD from the University of Michigan’s School of Education. She is a proud former elementary teacher.



**Megan Marsal**  
Writer Specializing in  
Literacy Foundational  
Skills, K–2

Megan Marsal is a foundation director based in New York City in addition to her work on Great First Eight. She received a Bachelor of Arts in elementary education and social studies from the University of Michigan and a Masters of Arts in Early Childhood Education from Oakland University where she focused on the benefits of art participation on social-emotional and English language arts development. She taught kindergarten and second grade in New York City and Ann Arbor public schools.



**Melanie McCormick**  
Writer Specializing in  
Social Studies,  
K–2; Coordinator of  
Piloting, K–1

Melanie M. McCormick is a doctoral student at Michigan State University’s Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education program. She is a graduate of the University of Michigan, earning a Bachelor of Science in elementary education as well as a Master of Arts in educational leadership and policy. Melanie’s research focuses on elementary social studies and literacy. She aims for her research to create more inclusive, just, and equitable learning opportunities for students, especially those who are marginalized in schools. She is a former kindergarten and first-grade teacher as well as social studies curriculum team leader in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



**Ceily Moore**  
Writer Specializing in  
Social and Emotional  
Learning, K–2

Ceily Moore is a doctoral student in Educational Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her work focuses on culturally responsive-sustaining practices and identity development among Black youth. Specifically, Ceily is passionate about supporting teachers in providing exceptional classroom experiences to Black students. Currently Ceily is an Evaluation Coach at Planning Implementation and Evaluation (PIE) Org where she supports schools and community-based organizations in measuring the outcomes that matter most to the organization and demonstrate their full impact. Ceily earned a B.S. in Health Sciences from Howard University and MEd in Youth Development from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is a former second and fourth grade teacher in Chicago, IL.



**Nia Nickerson**  
Writer Specializing in Professional Learning and Language Diversity, K-1

Nia Nickerson is a doctoral candidate in the Combined Program in Education and Psychology at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is interested in language, literacy, and brain development, with a specific focus on cultural processes. Her primary research explores the neural organization for language and literacy in bilingual and multi-dialectal populations of young children. She holds a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Maryland, College Park and an M.S. in Psychology from the University of Michigan.



**Andrea Pisani**  
Writer Specializing in Professional Learning and Mathematics, K-1; Writer Specializing in Professional Learning and Science, Grade 2

Andrea Pisani is the president and co-founder of The Variis Institute, an educational nonprofit serving Southeast Michigan, and co-director of uniteSTEM, an integrated STEM education center in Ypsilanti, Michigan. With over 20 years of experience as an educator, Pisani has worked with K-12 learners, preservice teachers, and practicing educators. She has designed course content and high-impact professional learning to help teachers employ research-based best practices in their classrooms. Her professionalism, and her passion for her role as an anti-racist teacher and instructional leader, along with her commitment to deepening her understanding of issues of equity and access as it relates to mathematics and student learning, fuel her commitment to supporting educators in creating equitable learning opportunities for all students.



**Katie Revelle**  
Writer Specializing in Professional Learning, K; Writer Specializing in Literacy, Grade 1

Katie Z. Revelle, PhD, is the director of Community Collaboration in the Department of Education at the University of Vermont. In this role, she aims to foster equitable and long-term partnerships that create enriching educational experiences for UVM students and communities throughout Vermont. Katie's research has explored how to support elementary school teachers' integration of literacy and social studies instruction in ways that provide equitable, engaging, and humanizing learning opportunities to all students. She has taught undergraduate and master's level methods courses in elementary literacy and social studies at the University of Michigan and the University of Vermont, and she has supported several school districts in their development of project-based curricula. In her teaching, research, and curriculum development work, she draws on her experience as an elementary school teacher in Vermont and North Carolina and on her university-community partnership work at the University of Pennsylvania.



**Michelle Salgado**  
Co-Domain Lead, Science, K-1; Writer Specializing in Science, K-2

Michelle Salgado has a PhD in education from the University of Washington and is a National Board-Certified Teacher. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Michigan and currently serves as a director of Teacher Development at the Exploratorium in San Francisco. Michelle's research focuses on designing science education curriculum design, cultivating knowledge building communities in classrooms, and documenting the learning experiences of young children engaged in collaborative science learning.



**Betül Demiray Sandiraz**  
Writer Specializing in Social Studies, K-1

Betul Demiray Sandiraz is a doctoral student in Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education at Michigan State University. She is a two-time graduate of the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara, Turkey, earning a Bachelor of Science in early childhood education, including a minor in psychology, and a Master of Science in curriculum and instruction. She is a former graduate assistant at METU and currently a Fulbright grantee. Her research interests focus on providing quality early childhood education for all children, especially children living in poverty, and civic engagement among young learners.



**Alessandra Ward**  
Project Coordinator, K;  
Writer Specializing in  
Social and Emotional  
Learning, K;  
Writer Specializing  
in Science and  
Literacy, K–2

Alessandra Ward, EdD, is an assistant professor of Education at Wheaton College, Massachusetts. Her work focuses on the reading motivation and engagement of young learners, particularly in contexts providing culturally responsive and sustaining literacy education. On the Great First Eight team, Alessandra writes the social and emotional learning portions of the curriculum, as well as the literacy portions of the curriculum within science-led projects. Prior to coming to Wheaton, she was a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Michigan. She is also a former classroom teacher, reading specialist, and literacy coach.



**Brittany White**  
Writer Specializing  
in Mathematics,  
Grade 1

Brittany White is a former third-grade teacher. She now serves as coordinator for Project NURTURE at Georgia State University. She is committed to preparing teachers empowered to effectively educate diverse students in urban schools. Brittany is a PhD student studying Early Childhood and Elementary Education at Georgia State University. She plans to focus on culturally relevant pedagogy within mathematics instruction. She coaches and provides professional development to the teacher residents in the county. Brittany also writes for the Educator's Room and Education in Atlanta. Lastly, Brittany serves on the executive team for Black Girls Teach, an organization that aims to increase Black teacher retention by providing Black women educators opportunities to feel empowered, supported, and developed through workshops, coaching, curated events, and affinity spaces.



**Allie Whitford**  
Writer Specializing  
in Social Studies, 1–2

Dr. Alyssa Whitford is a former elementary teacher and current assistant professor at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. Her areas of expertise are literacy and social studies, and she is currently researching how critical literacy pedagogy can be used to teach social issues, particularly issues of gender, in elementary classrooms. Her work is especially focused on how students perceive the social world and the power of literacy to elicit, challenge, and expand student thinking. Alyssa earned a PhD in Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education from Michigan State University and is passionate about working with preservice teachers to create powerful, engaging experiences for elementary students.



**Crystal Wise**  
Writer Specializing  
in Literacy and Social  
Studies, K–1

Crystal N. Wise, PhD, is a visiting clinical assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her work focuses on early literacy development, developing and testing assessment and instruction for supporting young children's skill in using word-learning strategies to ascertain the meaning of unfamiliar words from context. She has co-authored journal articles on effective literacy instructional practices and literacy methods instruction for preservice teachers. She is also a former kindergarten and second-grade teacher.

## Organizational & Practitioner Partners

Wayne-Westland Community School District



**Sue Carnell**  
Interim  
Superintendent  
Wayne-Westland  
Community  
School District 2020



**John Dignan**  
Superintendent  
Wayne Westland  
Community School  
District



**Shelley Holt**  
Superintendent  
Wayne Westland  
Community School  
District\*

\*2019



**Christie Brewster**  
Kindergarten Teacher



**Kate Brohl**  
Executive Director of  
Standards, Learning,  
& Innovation



**Jen Curry**  
Assistant  
Superintendent of  
Standards, Learning,  
& Innovation,  
Wayne-Westland  
Community  
School District



**Lindsay Dugan**  
Kindergarten Teacher



**Kristen Duran**  
Instructional Coach\*

\*2019-2020 academic year



**Alexis Finger**  
Kindergarten  
Teacher\*

\*2019-2020 academic year



**Jessica Garcia**  
Kindergarten Teacher



**Amy Gee**  
Principal



**Shavonna  
Johnson**  
Executive Director,  
Climate, Culture, &  
Social Emotional  
Learning\*

\*2019-2020 academic year



**Mark Miller Sr.**  
Director,  
Student Services\*

\*2019-2020 academic year



**Danielle Wincent**  
First-Grade Teacher



**Malarie Wludyka**  
First-Grade Teacher

## Organizational & Practitioner Partners Continued

Wayne-Westland Community School District



**Maria Mitter**  
LMSW, MSBA  
Supervisor of  
Family and  
Community  
Engagement



**Heather VanAken**  
Instructional Coach



**Andraé Townsel  
PhD**  
Assistant  
Superintendent,  
Climate, Culture, &  
Social Emotional  
Learning\*

*\*2019-2020 academic year*



**Seth Wenzel**  
Executive Director,  
Instructional  
Technology &  
Innovation

## Organizational & Practitioner Partners

New York City Department of Education



**Fatimah Ali**  
Principal



**Ilene Altschul**  
Executive Director.



**Lisa Darress**  
Assistant Principal



**Cynthia Crespo**  
Kindergarten Teacher

**Seymonnia Cutkelvin**  
Kindergarten Teacher



**Irene Fung**  
Dual language  
Teacher

**Norah Lovett**



**Amanda Noel**  
Kindergarten Teacher



**Grace Reyes**  
Kindergarten Teacher



**Megan Rice**  
Kindergarten Teacher



**Kamar Samuels**  
Superintendent

**Susan Tynan**



**Jen Yonkers**  
Senior Director

## Organizational & Practitioner Partners

District of Columbia Public Schools



**Lewis D. Ferebee**  
Chancellor,  
District of Columbia  
Public Schools



**Scott Abbott**  
Director, Social  
Studies



**Tameron Colbert**  
Kindergarten Teacher



**Emily Hammett**  
Director, Elementary  
English Language  
Arts



**Ebony London**  
Math Interventionis



**James Rountree**  
Director, Science



**Na'imah  
Salahuddin**  
Principal



**Ms. Tolliver**  
Kindergarten Teacher



**Alison Williams**  
Deputy Chief,  
Content and  
Curriculum

### State of Louisiana



**Jill Cowart**  
Department  
of Education  
Assistant  
Superintendent for  
Academic Content\*

Jill Cowart served as the Assistant Superintendent of Academic Content for the Louisiana Department of Education, helping to ensure Louisiana's academic vision was executed in classrooms daily. In this role, Jill led the development and implementation of content standards, primarily focusing on helping educators create coherent systems with high quality curricula, limited yet informative assessments, and aligned professional development. Jill worked on a number of innovative projects such as implementing STEM pathways for high school students, partnering with local and national organizations to develop quality curricula, and implementing curriculum-aligned remediation tools for struggling students. With three kids of her own in the public school system, Jill understands the importance of a quality public school education and worked to help make that a reality for every student in Louisiana. As a teacher, school administrator, and state-level leader, Jill has spent her career working with Louisiana students and educators. She earned a BA in Education from Southeastern Louisiana University and an MA in Curriculum and Instruction from Louisiana State University

\*2019-2020 academic year

## National Advisory Board

Malcolm Butler, Kate Brohl, Sonia Cabell, Jill Cowart, Jen Curry, Beth Gonzalez, Maisie Gholson, Wendy Lewis Jackson, Robert J. Jagers, Heidi Anne Mesmer, Noreen Rodriguez, Carla Thompson Payton, Alison Williams, Camille Wilson



**Malcolm Butler**  
Science Education

Dr. Malcolm B. Butler is professor and dean of the Cato College of Education at UNC Charlotte. Butler was born in Lafayette, Louisiana. He spent his childhood in south Louisiana with his eight siblings and loving mother, Adlean F. Butler, and father, the late Lee Butler, Jr. Butler earned a B.S. in in Physics from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He also completed an MEd and PhD in Curriculum and Instruction (Science Education) at the University of Florida. Butler has taught and learned mathematics, science and life from elementary, middle, and high school students, as well as college students. He has been affiliated with several institutions of higher education, including the College of William and Mary, Texas and A&M- Corpus Christi, the University of Georgia, the University of South Florida, and the University of Central Florida. Some of his research interests include writing to learn in science, physics teacher education, and equity and diversity in science. Dr. Butler has secured over seven million dollars in funding to support his research and scholarly initiatives. He has presented his research findings and conducted workshops across the United States, as well as Canada, Japan, The Philippines, Singapore, Cyprus, South Africa and Botswana. He co-authored and co-edited three books and numerous book chapters and journal articles. He has served in leadership capacities in his profession, include board member of NARST (a global organization for improving science education through research) and Nap Ford Community Schools, Inc. (Orlando, Florida), chair of the board for the Council for Society Presidents, and president of the Association for Science Teacher Education. He is married to Rev. Dr. Vikki Gaskin-Butler, and they have one son, Malcolm Lee Butler.



**Kate Brohl**  
Organizational  
Partner District

Kate Brohl serves as the executive director of Standards, Learning, and Innovation for Wayne-Westland Community Schools. In this role, she supports the work of curriculum implementation across all K–12 schools in the district through leading the work of the Instructional Coaches, guiding the work of all District Content Teams, and providing direct support to principals while serving as their coach. Throughout her career, she has been a classroom teacher, a reading recovery teacher, an intervention specialist, a principal, and a National Writing Project consultant (Eastern Michigan Writing Project 2007). Throughout her career in these many roles, her goal has always been to have a positive impact on students. She earned a Bachelor's in Elementary Education from Bowling Green State University, a Master's in the Art of Teaching from Marygrove College, and an Administrative Certification through the University of Michigan, Dearborn. In all that she does, both personally and professionally, Kate has a mission to stay balanced, be inspired, and grow.



**Sonia Cabell**  
Oral Language  
Development

Sonia Cabell, PhD, is an associate professor in the College of Education and the Florida Center for Reading Research at Florida State University. Her work focuses on early language and literacy intervention, with a particular interest in preventing reading difficulties among children living in poverty. Dr. Cabell has authored over 30 articles in peer-reviewed journals; numerous publications for practitioners including the book *Emergent Literacy: Lessons for Success*; a multi-tiered preschool language and literacy curriculum with classroom and home components; and a kindergarten writing curriculum. She currently serves as Associate Editor for the scholarly journal *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. Dr. Cabell is the Principal Investigator on a multi-million dollar grant funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, US Department of Education, testing the efficacy of the Core Knowledge Language Arts curriculum on children's growth in vocabulary, comprehension, and knowledge as they progress from kindergarten through grade two.



**Jill Cowart**  
Mathematics and  
Science Education\*

Jill Cowart served as the Assistant Superintendent of Academic Content for the Louisiana Department of Education, helping to ensure Louisiana's academic vision was executed in classrooms daily. In this role, Jill led the development and implementation of content standards, primarily focusing on helping educators create coherent systems with high quality curricula, limited yet informative assessments, and aligned professional development. Jill worked on a number of innovative projects such as implementing STEM pathways for high school students, partnering with local and national organizations to develop quality curricula, and implementing curriculum-aligned remediation tools for struggling students. With three kids of her own in the public school system, Jill understands the importance of a quality public school education and worked to help make that a reality for every student in Louisiana. As a teacher, school administrator, and state-level leader, Jill has spent her career working with Louisiana students and educators. She earned a BA in Education from Southeastern Louisiana University and an MA in Curriculum and Instruction from Louisiana State University.

\*2019-2020 academic year



**Jen Curry**  
Organizational  
Partner District

Jennifer Curry is currently the Assistant Superintendent of Standards, Learning, & Innovation in the Wayne-Westland Community School District. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Social Science, an Early Childhood Endorsement, a Master of Arts in Literacy with a Reading Specialist Endorsement, and an Administrator's Certificate. She has taught kindergarten, 6th grade, been a middle school math coordinator, and served as an Elementary Principal, all with Wayne-Westland Community Schools. Her work focuses on improving collective teaching practices and ensuring that every classroom is a place of valuable and rich learning for all students. Jennifer is currently working on a variety of projects including implementation of instructional rounds, professional learning platforms, principal coaching, and high school redesign.



**Beth Gonzalez**  
Curriculum Alignment

Beth Gonzalez currently serves as associate superintendent of Educational Services for the Wayne County Regional Educational Service Agency. Previously, she served as assistant superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction for Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD), the largest district in Michigan. Beth and her team have made nationally-recognized contributions to the high-quality curriculum landscape by spearheading the modEL Detroit Project. Prior to joining DPSCD, Beth served as the assistant superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction at Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, FL, the 20th largest district in the nation with 130,000 students. In her four years there, the district's graduation rate improved from 67% to 78.8%; the district's accountability grade improved from a C+ to a B; and academic achievement continued to increase. After the Spring 2017 administration of NAEP TUDA, Duval County scored first in the nation for the following groups: all students in fourth-grade math; African American students in fourth-grade math and eighth-grade reading; students with disabilities in fourth-grade math; and eighth-grade math. Prior to serving as assistant superintendent, Beth led K-12 Mathematics as executive director. Beth also previously served as both a data captain for the Bureau of School Improvement and Student Achievement and as a school improvement specialist and data coach at the Florida Department of Education. Beth began her career as a district instructional coach and classroom teacher, which were roles she loved and still holds in high regard.



**Maisie Gholson**  
Mathematics  
Education

Maisie L. Gholson, PhD, is an associate professor in Educational Studies at the University of Michigan. Within a Black feminist framework, Gholson's research seeks to understand how Black children and adolescents' identity and social development mediate participation patterns and educational achievement, particularly in mathematics. Her current projects examine how social networks (i.e., relational ties) among young Black girls create different sources of power and privilege, including physical, racial, gendered, and social, and provide different learning trajectories within the mathematics classroom community. She recently received a prestigious Early CAREER grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and is serving as a Co-Principal Investigator of a second NSF grant. She is also a recipient of the Early Career Publication award from the American Educational Research Association in the Research in Mathematics Education Special Interest Group, the National Academy of Education/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship, and the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship in STEM Education Fellowship. She is also a former high school mathematics teacher and prior to that a patent writer in her hometown of Houston, Texas. She received her PhD in curriculum and instruction in 2016 from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). She received her BS in electrical engineering from Duke University in 2001.



**Wendy Lewis Jackson**  
Community  
Development  
Early Childhood  
Education

Wendy Lewis Jackson is managing director for the Detroit Program. She co-leads The Kresge Foundation's efforts to revitalize Detroit and to strengthen its social and economic fabric. Her work supports organizations providing economic opportunity for low-income people and addresses the needs of vulnerable children and families. Prior to joining Kresge in 2008, Wendy was a program director for Children and Family Initiatives and executive director for education initiatives at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation in Grand Rapids, Mich. She taught at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Mich., and has co-authored and assisted in the publication of several reports and publications that address community needs and problem solving. Wendy is an American Marshall Memorial Fellow of the German Marshall Fund of the United States; the Association of Black Foundation Executives named her an Emerging Leader in 2008. Wendy earned a Bachelor's in Political Science and Communications from the University of Michigan. She also holds a master's degree in social work from U-M, with a concentration in community organization and social policy and planning.



**Robert J. Jagers**  
Social and Emotional  
Learning

Robert J. Jagers, PhD, is the Vice President of Research at the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Among his various CASEL duties, Dr. Jagers is leading work with partnering districts to explore how social and emotional learning can be leveraged to promote equitable learning environments and equitable developmental outcomes, especially for students from under-served groups. He has a particular interest in transformative approaches to SEL and their implications for the civic development of children and youth. Prior to joining CASEL, he was a faculty member in the Combined Program in Education and Psychology at the University of Michigan, a Co-PI of the Center for the Study of Black Youth in Context (CSBYC), and the founding director of Wolverine Pathways, a university-sponsored diversity pipeline program for qualified secondary school students. Dr. Jagers earned his PhD in Developmental Psychology at Howard University.



**Heidi Anne Mesmer**  
Foundational Literacy  
Skills Education

Heidi Anne E. Mesmer, PhD, is a professor in Literacy in the School of Education at Virginia Tech. She has studied beginning reading materials, text difficulty, and struggling readers since 1999. Her research has appeared in *Reading Research Quarterly*, *The Educational Researcher*, *Elementary School Journal*, and *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. She has written and directed eight grants aimed at improving reading instruction in K–5 classrooms. Dr. Mesmer is the recent author of *Letter Lessons and First Words: Phonics Foundations that Work* (Heinemann, 2019), and *Teaching Skills for Complex Text: Deepening Reading in the Classroom* (Teachers College Press, 2016). Her research has been supported by a National Academy of Education/Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship, and an American Educational Research Association/Institute of Education Sciences grant. She is the recipient of the Outreach Award from the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences at Virginia Tech, and the Promising Scholar Award from the School of Education, Virginia Tech. She delivered the George Graham Lecture in Reading at the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia. Her Twitter handle is @haemesmer



**Noreen Rodríguez**  
Social Studies  
Education

Noreen Naseem Rodríguez, PhD, is an assistant professor of teacher learning, research and practice in the School of Education at the University of Colorado Boulder. Her research interests include elementary educators of color, culturally sustaining pedagogies, racial literacy, the teaching of difficult histories, critical uses of diverse children’s literature, and the histories and educational experiences of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Iowa. Rodríguez was a bilingual elementary teacher in Texas for nine years, where she supported the development and implementation of K–8 Asian American studies and Mexican American/Tejano studies curriculum. She provides professional development to social studies teachers at the state and local levels and was the recipient of the 2017 Larry Metcalf Dissertation Award from the National Council of the Social Studies and the 2017 Ozy Educator Award. Her work has been published in *Theory & Research in Social Education*, *Educational Studies*, *The Urban Review*, *The Bilingual Research Journal*, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, *The Journal of Children’s Literature*, and *Literacy Today*.



**Carla Thompson Payton**  
Early Childhood  
Education

Carla Thompson Payton is vice president for program strategy at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan. In this role, she provides leadership and management for the creative and strategic direction of programming from design through implementation, evaluation, and dissemination. As a member of the executive team, she is also responsible for the overall direction and leadership of the foundation. Prior to joining the foundation in 2012, Thompson Payton was deputy director of the Office of Child Care at the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C. She was assistant superintendent for early childhood education for the District of Columbia, where she initiated the first publicly funded pre-kindergarten program. In other professional experience, she has held positions with the Department of Education and Department of Public Welfare for the state of Pennsylvania; United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania in Philadelphia; and the U.S. Department of Education. Thompson Payton holds a master’s degree in social work from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and a bachelor’s degree from Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York. She is currently pursuing a doctorate in educational leadership from the University of Pennsylvania.



**Alison Williams**  
Educator Professional  
Development

Alison Williams serves as deputy chief of the Content and Curriculum teams for the District of Columbia Public School system. With a focus on ensuring all students in the district are provided with equitable learning opportunities grounded in research-based best practices, Alison prioritizes the ongoing design, implementation, and analysis of curricular and professional learning opportunities across content areas for district leaders, teachers, and students. Over the past 10 years, Williams has focused her work on curriculum and professional learning design, while working as a reading specialist, instructional coach, and director of Elementary Literacy Curriculum and Professional Learning. Alison is committed to uncovering and disrupting systemic inequities in order to promote productive and joyous learning experiences for all students.



**Camille Wilson**  
Family Engagement

Camille M. Wilson, PhD, is a professor of educational foundations, leadership, and policy at the University of Michigan. She explores the intersections of school-family-community engagement, urban educational reform, and transformative leadership. Dr. Wilson's work has specifically highlighted the educational advocacy, activism, and school choices of families of color. She has also examined the equity-based efforts of school-based leaders committed to better serving diverse populations who are experiencing poverty. Dr. Wilson has published extensively in leading national and international journals and in many distinguished scholarly books. In addition, she actively collaborates with youth, family, and community activists in national and regional educational improvement initiatives. In 2017, her Community-based Research on Equity, Activism, and Transformative Education (CREATE) study team won an award for their partnership with a Detroit-based community organization. The CREATE study was partially funded by the Spencer Foundation. Dr. Wilson has presented her work throughout the United States and at many international venues, including as an invited guest lecturer at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa and as a visiting professor at the University of the West Indies-Cave Hill in Barbados. She has also held leadership positions within the American Educational Research Association.

## Mathematics Advisory Board

Deborah Loewenberg Ball, Marta Civil, Douglas Clements, Maisie Gholson, José Martínez Hinestroza, Danny Martin, Julia Sarama, Edd V. Taylor



**Deborah Loewenberg Ball**  
Mathematics  
Education

Deborah Loewenberg Ball is the William H. Payne Collegiate Professor of education at the University of Michigan, an Arthur F. Thurnau Professor, and the director of TeachingWorks. She taught elementary school for over 15 years, and continues to teach mathematics to elementary students every summer. Ball studies the practice of teaching as the active work of building relationships with children. She uses elementary mathematics as a context for investigating the challenges of helping children develop agency and understanding, and for leveraging the power of teaching to disrupt racism and inequity. Ball is an expert on teacher education, and her current work centers on improving the quality of beginning teaching, particularly for children of color and low-income children. She has been elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Education, and is a fellow of the American Mathematical Society and the American Educational Research Association.



**Marta Civil**  
Mathematics  
Education

Marta Civil, PhD, is a professor of Mathematics Education and the Roy F. Graesser Endowed Chair in the Department of Mathematics at The University of Arizona. She has over 25 years of experience collaborating with teachers, children, and families, primarily in working class, Mexican-American communities. Her work focuses on cultural, social, and language aspects in the teaching and learning of mathematics, linking in-school and out-of-school mathematics, and parental engagement in mathematics. Her research is grounded on the concept of Funds of Knowledge and seeks to learn from the communities to develop culturally responsive learning environments. She has led several externally funded initiatives, including a gender equity project that engaged low-income, culturally diverse children in hands-on mathematics and science explorations in informal and after-school settings; a parental involvement project that supported Latina/o parental engagement in mathematics education; and CEMELA (Center for the Mathematics Education of Latinas/os), an interdisciplinary, multi-university consortium focused on research and practice on the connections between the teaching and learning of mathematics and the cultural, social, and linguistic contexts of Latina/o students. Her most recent work includes a K–3 parental engagement mathematics project aimed at developing a two-way dialogue between home and school.



**Douglas Clements**  
Mathematics  
Education

Douglas H. Clements, EdD, Distinguished University Professor, Kennedy Endowed Chair in Early Childhood Learning, and executive director of the Marsico Institute for Early Learning at the University of Denver, is widely regarded as a major scholar in the field of early childhood mathematics education—one with equal relevance to the academy, to the classroom, and to the educational policy arena. He has published over 160 refereed research studies, 27 books, 100 chapters, and 300 additional works, including the development of new mathematics curricula, teaching approaches, teacher training initiatives, and models of “scaling up” interventions. He has served on the U.S. President’s National Mathematics Advisory Panel, the Common Core State Standards committee of the National Governor’s Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Research Council’s Committee on Early Mathematics, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics national standards committees, and is a co-author of each report. A prolific and widely cited scholar, he has earned external grant support totaling over \$25 million, including 36 major grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education. See more at [researchgate.net/profile/Douglas\\_Clements/](https://researchgate.net/profile/Douglas_Clements/).



**Maisie Gholson**  
Mathematics  
Education

Maisie L. Gholson, PhD, is an associate professor in Educational Studies at the University of Michigan. Within a Black feminist framework, Gholson's research seeks to understand how Black children and adolescents' identity and social development mediate participation patterns and educational achievement, particularly in mathematics. Her current projects examine how social networks (i.e., relational ties) among young Black girls create different sources of power and privilege, including physical, racial, gendered, and social, and provide different learning trajectories within the mathematics classroom community. She recently received a prestigious Early CAREER grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and is serving as a Co-Principal Investigator of a second NSF grant. She is also a recipient of the Early Career Publication award from the American Educational Research Association in the Research in Mathematics Education Special Interest Group, the National Academy of Education/Spencer Dissertation Fellowship, and the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship in STEM Education Fellowship. She is also a former high school mathematics teacher and prior to that a patent writer in her hometown of Houston, Texas. She received her PhD in curriculum and instruction in 2016 from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). She received her BS in electrical engineering from Duke University in 2001.



**José Martínez Hinestroza**  
Mathematics  
Education  
(for grades 1–2)

José Martínez Hinestroza, PhD, is an assistant professor in elementary mathematics education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Texas State University. A former kindergarten and elementary school teacher, Martínez's work focuses on bilingual mathematics education, including teaching and learning in language immersion classrooms and the preparation of preservice teachers to teach bilingual children. Through his participatory research, he has engaged in prolonged collaborations with teachers, including teachers of recent immigrant children from Central and South America. He has published both research and practitioner-oriented papers in peer-reviewed journals and edited books, one such article was co-authored with a teacher who was one of the three finalists for the 2018 Linking Research and Practice Outstanding Publication Award from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.



**Danny Martin**  
Mathematics  
Education

Dr. Danny Bernard Martin is professor of Education and Mathematics at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He teaches content and methods courses in the undergraduate elementary education program as well as courses in the PhD program in Mathematics and Science Education. He served as Department Chair of Curriculum and Instruction from 2006–2011 and again from 2013–2016. Prior to coming to UIC, he was instructor and professor in the Department of Mathematics at Contra Costa College for 14 years, serving as Chair for three years, and was a National Academy of Education Postdoctoral Fellow from 1998–2000. Dr. Martin's research has focused primarily on understanding the salience of race and identity in Black learners' mathematical growth. Martin is author of the book *Mathematics Success and Failure Among African Youth* (2000/2006, Erlbaum), co-author of *The Impact of Identity in K–8 Mathematics Learning and Teaching* (2013, NCTM), editor of *Mathematics Teaching, Learning, and Liberation in the Lives of Black Children* (2009, Routledge), and co-editor of *The Brilliance of Black Children in Mathematics: Beyond the Numbers and Toward New Discourse* (2013, Information Age).



**Julie Sarama**  
Mathematics  
Education

Julie Sarama, PhD, is the Kennedy Endowed Chair in Innovative Learning Technologies and Distinguished University Professor at the University of Denver. She conducts research on young children’s development of mathematical concepts, implementation and scale-up of educational reform, professional development, and implementation and effects of software environments (including those she has created) in mathematics classrooms. These studies have been published in more than 80 refereed articles, 7 books, 60 chapters, and over 100 additional publications. She is Principal Investigator on her latest IES award, “Evaluating the Efficacy of an Interdisciplinary Preschool Curriculum (EPIC),” which evaluates a curriculum produced from a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) on which she was also PI, titled “Early Childhood Education in the Context of Mathematics, Science, and Literacy.” In total, she has directed 36 externally funded projects from IES, NSF, and the National Institute of Health (NIH). Another project, funded by the Heising-Simons Foundation and the Gates Foundation, “Scalable Professional Development in Early Mathematics: The Learning and Teaching with Learning Trajectories Tool,” updates and disseminates a professional development software application ([LearningTrajectories.org](http://LearningTrajectories.org)) empirically supported in previous projects. She has taught secondary mathematics, computer science, gifted math, and methods and content courses for elementary to secondary teachers.



**Edd V. Taylor**  
Mathematics  
Education

Edd V. Taylor is an assistant professor of Mathematics Education. His research examines relationships between youths’ everyday cultural practices and mathematical thinking and the role of such knowledge in addressing issues of equity in mathematics learning and achievement. He also investigates what might be learned from this research related to mathematical cognition more generally. Dr. Taylor’s primary focus in addressing these issues has been through understanding how children and adolescents come to develop mathematical ideas, and the links between their ways of understanding mathematics that are both complementary and sometimes in conflict with standard classroom practices in math. Dr. Taylor seeks to understand how knowledge of everyday cultural practices might be used to address equitable mathematical learning in classrooms. His research related to learning in corner stores, classrooms, churches, and within professional development settings, can be found in publications such as *The Journal of the Learning Sciences* (JLS), *The Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education* (JMTE), *the Journal of Research in Mathematics Education* (JRME), and *Mind, Culture and Activity*. Dr. Taylor has served on committees and boards for the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), the Association of Mathematics Teachers Educators (AMTE), and the Jean Piaget Society.

## Other Collaborators

Caroline Adams, Authors, Children, DraeTown, Jallene Eckert, Family & Community Members, Featherstone, Fran Fenelon, C. Felice Gonzales, Kaylee Holman, Alison Huguley, Illustrators & Graphic Designers, Aya Isaac, Sydney Janecke, Julia Karant, Carson Krome, Jialu Liu, Maria Quinonez, Dana Nickson, Garret Potter, Julia Putnam, Pamela Saca, Carolyn Seiger, Elliott Soloway, Dana Steiner, Dani Williams, University of Michigan School of Education



**Caroline Adams**  
Curriculum Reviewer,  
K; Focus Group  
Leader, Grade 1

When working with Great First Eight, Caroline G. Adams was a PhD student in the Educational Studies program at the University of Michigan - Ann Arbor. A native of Milwaukee, WI, she holds a BA in Political Science and an MA in Educational Leadership from Clark Atlanta University, as well as an MA in Teaching from The University of the District of Columbia. She began her career in education as a lobbyist and has served as a K–12 educator, a teachers’ union representative, and an early childhood education advocate in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Her research focus is on the advocacy and activism of Black women educators.



### Authors

Many creative writers shared their knowledge and talents with the Great First Eight team as authors of our Wonder Books. For kindergarten, we acknowledge the contributions of: Dr. Malcolm B. Butler, Dr. Sandra Chapman, Juan Carlos Dueueke-Perez, Dr. Nell Duke, Rev. Dr. Vikki Gaskin-Butler, Alexander Harris, Shanika Hurst, Dr. Aaron Johnson, Dr. Shelley Jones-Holt, Heather Kerrick, Rebecca Landin-Smith, David Lindsey, Dr. Julia Lindsey, Rev. Peggy Lindsey, Maddy Mayer, Melanie McCormick, Farah Nadeem, Ariane Nguyenduy, Anaelmarlon Luzayamo, Ngweni Dhvani Patel, Dr. Michelle Salgado, Shannon L. Sweet, and Dr. Crystal Wise.



### Children

Children have rich information and insights related to curriculum. Children from partner classrooms provide input and feedback regarding the curriculum through conversations with them, observations of them, and examination of artifacts they generate.



**DraeTown**  
Phonological  
Awareness and  
Phonics songs

DraeTown was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. In 2011, he burst on the scene with a hit song called “City of Gold.” The song discussed everything that was great about Detroit and debuted on YouTube as a music video receiving thousands of views. The song’s popularity gained local attention by Stephen Clark of WXYZ 7, where DraeTown was featured on their Detroit 2020 series. DraeTown received a Spirit of Detroit Award in recognition of exceptional achievement, outstanding leadership, and dedication to improving the quality of life in Detroit. In the Summer of 2011, DraeTown was selected as Detroit’s Most Wanted artist by Hot 107.5 to perform at the city’s Summer Jamz concert at Chene Park (now known as Aretha Franklin Amphitheater). In the Fall of 2011, the Planet Green channel selected DraeTown to participate in a 3-part docu-series titled “Detroit in Overdrive.” This documentary highlighted the revitalization of Detroit and casted DraeTown in Episode 3: It Takes a Village, where “The City of Gold” song was introduced to the world. In 2015, DraeTown graduated with a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Howard University. He continued to record music and released his debut album titled *Cap and Gown* in the summer of 2018. DraeTown continues to write and record music designed to inspire, motivate, and entertain.



**Jallene Eckert**  
Design and  
Technologies  
for Learning Intern

Jallene Eckert is a recent graduate from the University of Michigan’s Educational Studies master’s program. She has a background in interdisciplinary studies - elementary education with experience teaching PreK–Grade 5. Jallene is interested in social-emotional and project-based learning. She looks forward to using culturally diverse and responsive teaching strategies in her classroom this year.



**Families & Community Members**

Families and community members have rich information and insights related to curriculum. Families and community members from the Detroit Metropolitan area provide input through formal focus groups and informal interactions.



**Featherstone**  
Web Design Team

Featherstone is a Detroit-based digital marketing and public relations agency, owned and operated by POC and immigrants, serving the needs of POC and immigrant-businesses. It was founded in 2015 as Featherstone Moments, but with time, its name, business model, and purpose shifted. As of 2021, Featherstone is on its way to become a worker-owned agency. Featherstone served as the web developer of Great First Eight. Anaelmarlon Luzayamo was the Full Stack Developer. Juan Carlos Dueweke-Pérez was in UX and the point of contact. Ashley Michelle was the Project Manager.



**Fran Fenelon**  
Assistant Writer

Fran is a 2021 graduate of the University of Michigan School of Education Elementary Education Program. Fran is a certified elementary teacher with additional certification in mathematics. She has worked with children from a variety of grade levels during her time in the teacher education program. Fran is particularly interested in project-based learning and providing students with authentic learning experiences. She is very excited to have her very first classroom of her own.



**C. Felice Gonzales**  
Project Assistant

C. Felice Gonzales, is the office and program manager for the Center for Education, Design, Evaluation, and Research (CEDER) at the University of Michigan School of Education. Felice supports the evaluation, design, and research development teams at CEDER, along with the work being done by the Great First Eight teams. Another role Felice serves in is as a co-facilitator for the University of Michigan Voices of the Staff-Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion network team. Her early career history includes being a school social work and special education coordinator in the south suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. She has a master’s of social work from the University of Chicago Social Service Administration with a clinical concentration, and a master’s of educational administration with a focus on principalship and chief school business areas from Governors State University.



**Kaylee Holman**  
Assistant Editor

Kaylee Holman is a student at the University of Michigan - Ann Arbor. She is working towards a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education. In her clinical experiences, she has had the opportunity to work with elementary and middle school students. Kaylee is passionate about empowering students through project-based discoveries and inquiry-based learning. She looks forward to having her own classroom where all students and their cultures are valued.



**Alison Huguley**  
Curriculum  
Reviewer, K

Dr. Alison Huguley is the chief executive officer of All Excel Consulting Inc., which supports schools, districts and advocacy groups in promoting racially equitable and culturally responsive leadership. She has over 25 years' experience in education as a special education teacher, literacy specialist, school leader, district administrator, and educational consultant. Dr. Huguley received a Bachelor's in Psychology and Education from Swarthmore College, a Master's in Special Education from Bank Street College, a certificate degree in the teaching of reading from Fordham University, and a doctorate in educational leadership from Harvard University.



### **Illustrators and Graphic Designers**

Great First Eight has been privileged to work with a number of talented illustrators. For kindergarten, we acknowledge the contributions of: Sarah Blacksher, Irene Chung, Daniel Hendon, Diana Galicia Heredia, Kitty Holder, Dilan Huang, Kate Kim, Michelle Kim, Mary Micallef, Gwyneth Murray, Lia New, Nia Nickerson, Kaitlyn Onela, Nia Parks, Julie Roberts, Abigail Seguin, and Sierra Smith.



**Aya Isaac**  
Design and  
Technologies  
for Learning Intern

Aya Isaac is an educator and curriculum designer. She graduated Automotive Engineering from Egypt and earned her Master's in Educational Studies from University of Michigan with a focus on Curriculum Design Across Contexts and Cultures. She is passionate about developing projects that support learners and educators find their voices. The projects she has been working on since 2010 are related to Literacy for Bilingual Speakers, Youth Social and Emotional Development, STEM curricula, and development for parents to be educators. In addition to her work with Great First Eight, she is the youth director at Al-Hidaya Center, Latham, NY, and curriculum writer at UniteStem, MI.



**Sydney Janecke**  
Assistant Editor

Sydney Janecke is a recent graduate of the University of Michigan with a Bachelor's of Arts in Political Science and a double minor in Community Action & Social Change and Education for Empowerment with a concentration in Advancing Equity through Education Policy. She previously interned under Dr. Nell K. Duke, conducting research on effective educational programming and assisting with policy guidance for developing school-based summer literacy programs. Her prior work of designing and implementing implicit bias training for the Indiana Department of Corrections is now a required education course for all Indiana state corrections staff. She plans on continuing her professional journey in the non-profit sector.



**Carson Krome**  
Assistant Editor

When working with Great First Eight, Carson Krome was a student at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor working toward her Bachelor of Science in Kindergarten through Eighth Grade Education and Integrated Science. Krome has worked closely with local non-profits in her community of Metro Detroit to develop STEAM influenced early education curriculum. Krome is focused on combining environmental and physiological science with community engagement and social justice.



**Jialu Liu**  
Design and  
Technologies for  
Learning Intern

Jialu Liu is an educator in China. She has a Master of Arts in Education with a focus on technology-assisted language learning. Working with elementary school students, Liu is interested in literacy development during early childhood. She looks forward to designing a curriculum based on multiple resources of educational technology to cultivate primary school students' habit of reading.



**Dana Nickson**  
Focus Group Leader,  
K

When working with Great First Eight, Dana Nickson was a PhD Candidate and Rackham Merit Fellow in Educational Studies with a concentration in Foundations of Education and Policy. Her research explores how the history and perception of suburban places shapes Black families' school choice decision-making in the Detroit metro region. Overall, Dana thinks about how demographic changes in U.S. metropolitan regions shape Black families and youths' access to educational opportunity. During her time in grad school, Dana has worked with two qualitative community-based research projects, seeking to support educational justice in Detroit. Prior to graduate school, Dana worked as a college counselor and served as a Princeton in Africa fellow at Equal Education, an education advocacy organization in Khayelitsha, South Africa. Dana's desire to obtain a PhD and work in the professoriate stems from her love for working with and learning from youth in schools and communities.



**Garret Potter**  
Design and  
Technologies for  
Learning Intern

Garret Potter is a Master of Educational Studies and Master of Information Science graduate student at the University of Michigan. His work focuses on Big History, public access to information, and learning experience design—providing opportunities for early learners to build global historical context. Potter is the founder of Everstory, an encyclopedia exploration environment for early learners. The past year he has joined teams who conducted qualitative research with refugee communities in schools and designed full-day, connected learning curricula for early learners in three US cities. A parent, teacher, and community volunteer, Garret enjoys time with his ecologist/evolutionary biologist spouse, lively son, newly toddling daughter, and Ann Arbor's bicycle parks community



**Julia Putnam**  
School Context  
Consultant

Julia Putnam is a co-founder of the James and Grace Lee Boggs School and has been its Principal since the school opened in 2013. Before development of the school began, she taught for five years in Detroit, including serving as writer-in-residence for the InsideOut Literary Magazine program. As a teenager, she was the first person to sign up as a volunteer for Detroit Summer, the youth volunteer program founded by James and Grace Lee Boggs. Julia wrote a regular column on education (“Learning for Life”) for the *Michigan Citizen*, which has been required reading at major Michigan universities. She attended the National Principals Leadership Institute as an Excellent Schools Detroit fellow in 2013 and was the keynote speaker at Eastern Michigan University’s 2014 Eco-Justice Conference. In 2015, Julia served as a member of the Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren. Julia was asked to give the keynote memorial lecture at the University of Michigan’s annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium in 2019 along with writer and speaker, Tim Wise. As Principal of the Boggs School, Julia works with teachers, parents, and students on developing and maintaining positive school culture while providing ambitious, place-based instruction. She has two children, one of whom attends the Boggs School. Julia holds a BA in English from Michigan State University, an MA in Liberal Studies from the University of Detroit Mercy, an MA in Education and teaching certification from Wayne State University, and administrative certification from the Michigan Association of Secondary Principals. Julia brings expertise in teaching, leadership, youth development, and community organizing.



**Maria Quinonez**  
Assistant Editor

Maria Quinonez is a student at the University of Illinois at Chicago. She is working towards a Bachelor of Arts in Urban Education with endorsements in pre-K through eighth grade education. During clinical hours, she has had the opportunity to work with elementary and middle school students. Quinonez is interested in project-based learning. In one of her methods classes, she found her passion for culturally responsive teaching. She looks forward to having her own classroom and furthering her education in a master’s degree program.



**Pamela Saca**  
Design and  
Technologies for  
Learning Intern

When working with Great First Eight, Pam Saca was a master’s student in the Educational Studies program at the University of Michigan. She is currently completing the Design and Technologies for Learning program combined with the Learning Experience Design Graduate Certificate program. Prior to this, Saca earned a Master’s in Curriculum and Instruction from Eastern Michigan University and an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education from the University of Michigan. She also spent thirteen years as an elementary teacher in Michigan and Northern Virginia.



**Carolyn Seiger**  
Designs and  
Technologies for  
Learning Intern



**Elliott Soloway**  
Initial Handwriting  
App Developer

Elliot Soloway, PhD, is an Arthur F. Thurnau Professor in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, College of Engineering, School of Education, and School of Information at the University of Michigan. In 2001, U-M undergraduates selected him to receive the "Golden Apple Award" as the Outstanding Teacher of the Year. In 2004 and 2011, students in the College of Engineering HKN Honor Society selected Soloway to receive the "Distinguished Teacher of the Year Award." Soloway has been the Principal/Co-Principal Investigator on research grants from federal (e.g., NSF, NASA), foundation (e.g., Spencer), and commercial organizations (e.g., Intel, Microsoft, Apple), and he has consulted on educational technology products (e.g., LeapFrog, Texas Instruments). Currently, Soloway is partnering with the Michigan Department of Education to support the development of curricula based on Open Education Resources, and with MSU's CREATE for STEM Institute on a Lucas Education Research grant to develop technology to support NGSS curricula for 3–5th grade. Soloway has co-founded the U-M Center for Digital Curricula to help K–12 schools with their "digital transformation."



**Dana Steiner**  
Assistant Editor

Dana Steiner is a dual-degree student at the University of Michigan, working towards a BMA in Voice in the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance and a BA in Judaic Studies in the college of Literature, Science, and the Arts. Dana has worked with high school students, directing and music directing musicals for the Ann Arbor Public Schools. Recently, she worked as a music supervisor at an overnight camp, where she taught music classes to students in 2nd through 9th grades. In her spare time, Dana is the music director of an a cappella group at the University of Michigan.



**Dani Williams**  
Videographer, K

When working with Great First Eight, Dani Williams was a University of Michigan student double majoring in Film, Television, and Media and AfroAmerican and African Studies, Dani Williams is passionate about visual storytelling and the ways media reflects and contradicts the societies from which it is produced. She plans to take a gap year after undergrad in preparation for graduate studies in Higher Education.



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