



Thursday, February 20, 2025

Second Annual NASLEE Leadership Academy Cohort Announced
Ten State level Early Education Leaders Selected from Around the Country

Today, the National Association of State Leaders in Early Education (NASLEE) announced that ten state level early education professionals were selected to participate in the 2nd Annual NASLEE Leadership Academy. The 10-month executive leadership academy is designed to strengthen state early education leaders' skills, knowledge, and organizational capacity to implement effective programs and policies in their home states. "NASLEE is thrilled to welcome this exceptional group of professionals to our second Leadership Academy cohort," said Mandy Sorge, executive director of NASLEE. "Each participant brings unique expertise and a wealth of experience in early education, enriching the collective learning and growth of the group as they work to strengthen programs and policies in their states."

Participants in the 2025 NASLEE Leadership Academy are:

Nicole Boone, North Carolina. Nicole is the Birth to Age 3 Policy Advisor/Preschool Development Grant (PDG B-5) Manager and Project Team Lead for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services: Division of Child Development and Early Education. Nicole's role at the division is to conduct research, analyze data and review policies related to best practices to ensure high-quality services are accessible to children and their families, provide technical assistance and oversight to agencies receiving federal child care & PDG B-5 funding for the support of children in early childhood settings and provide ongoing communication and collaborative planning with internal and external partners related to early care and education quality initiatives.

Ami Brooks, Alabama. Ami serves as Director of the Pre-K-3rd Grade Partnership at the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education. In this role, she leads the Alabama Pre-K-3rd Grade Integrated Approach to Early Learning as well as oversees the state-approved pre-K assessment tool, Teaching Strategies GOLD®. With 25 years of experience in early childhood education, Ami is a National Board Certified - Early Childhood Generalist and was a finalist for Alabama Teacher of the Year.

Carolyn Green, Pennsylvania. Carolyn is the Chief of Staff at Pennsylvania's Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). In this role, she oversees OCDEL's five bureaus and is responsible for developing the office's goals, objectives, and priorities. Some of her current projects include the implementation of the Child Care Development Fund Final Rule, execution of activities funded by the Preschool Development Grant, and support Pennsylvania's child care and Early Intervention workforces.

Neda Nicole Hall, California. Neda is a Child Development Consultant with the Early Education Division of the California Department of Education. In her role, she oversees the implementation of an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant, which supports 10 rural partner agencies across California.



Kris Meyers, Virginia. Kris is the Director of Quality Measurement and Improvement in the Office of Early Childhood at the Virginia Department of Education, directing the implementation and management of the Virginia Quality Birth to Five (VQB5) system. In her role, she works closely with state and regional public-private partners to use data to evaluate and improve the measurement and improvement system for Virginia's birth-K programs, to ensure positive school readiness outcomes, and to differentiate quality among programs to enable families to choose the best option for their children.

Sarah Parks-Reese, Indiana. Sarah is the Assistant Director of Kindergarten Readiness at the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE). In this role, Sarah coordinates support for school-based early learning programs, provides educator and administrator professional development, promotes innovation and best practice both internally and externally, oversees the cyclical review of Indiana's Early Learning Standards, provides content expertise, data analysis, and technical assistance to the field, and support to Hoosier families.

Amy Reyes, Wyoming. Amy serves as the State Early Learning Specialist for the Wyoming Department of Education. In this role she manages the TANF grant and the 14 PreK sites that are funded through it. She is the department's state early literacy specialist and outdoor learning expert. Amy oversees all things related to early childhood at the state level, including early intervention.

Angela Shelton, Georgia. Angela is the Workforce Supports Supervisor for the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). In this role, Angela leads the Workforce Supports Team which develops and implements strategies to recruit and retain high-quality early childhood educators. She oversees Georgia Training Approval, the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards, and the state's ECE Workforce Knowledge and Competencies.

Annette Sutfin, Arizona. Annette is the Senior Regional Director for the Phoenix/Gila River Indian Community regional area at First Things First, Arizona's early childhood agency. In this role, she oversees strategic planning, supports regional councils, and collaborates with diverse stakeholders to advance equitable early childhood systems that address local and statewide priorities.

Brenda Vronko, Michigan. Brenda is an education consultant with the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential, within the Office of Early Learning and Family Services. In this capacity, she partners with Intermediate School Districts to administer Michigan's state-funded PreK program for four-year-olds. Additionally, Brenda facilitates workgroups focused on policies, early childhood multi-tiered systems of support, and communication.

About NASLEE

The National Association of State Leaders in Early Education (NASLEE) is dedicated to improving outcomes for young children through early care and education by supporting leaders working in state government agencies across the U.S. NASLEE offers members unique resources for learning, collaboration, and professional development.