



NASLEE Leadership Academy 2024 Coaches



Erin Carroll

Erin Carroll is the Executive Director of Early Childhood for the Virginia Department of Education. In this role, Erin works with her team to support the statewide quality measurement and improvement system required for all publicly funded birth-to-five programs, implement high-quality curricula and assessment tools, build coordinated data systems, and manage a portfolio of federal and state funds. During her five years in this role, the Commonwealth has expanded access and enrollment in all publicly funded programs, increased quality investments in programs and teachers, and implemented the legislatively mandated unification of child care, Head Start, and school-based preschools.

Before this role, Erin worked with the Louisiana Department of Education as the Director of Classroom and Workforce Improvement, where she led initiatives related to quality improvement and educator preparation. She previously worked as a teacher in both pre-K and second-grade classrooms in San Antonio.

- M.Ed. in Education Policy and Management from Harvard University
- B.A. in Sociology from Penn State University



Demetria Joyce

Demetria Joyce is the Director of Early Childhood Strategy Implementation at the Bainum Family Foundation where she leads initiatives that improve accessibility, quality, and affordability of early childhood services, including measuring the impact and effectiveness of early childhood initiatives. Demetria formerly led the Early Childhood Policy Fellowship at Bank Street College of Education. Before that she worked as a Senior Policy Analyst at the University of Wisconsin.

Demetria spent most of her career at the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) where she served as the state administrator overseeing the Georgia Early Learning Standards, curriculum, assessment, and instruction. While at DECAL, she also worked in the role of Georgia's Pre-K Consultant. Before working in state policy and engaging in systems-level work, Demetria served as Georgia's Pre-K teacher and school administrator. Demetria is also an advanced credentialed systems thinking facilitator through The Waters Center for Systems Thinking.

- Ed.D. *Candidate.*, Curriculum & Instruction, Valdosta State University
- M.Ed., Foundations of Education, Troy University
- B.S., English Education, Brewton- Parker College



Heather Lucas

Heather Lucas is an Education Consultant at the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential in the Office of Early Childhood Education where she provides support and oversight for Michigan's state-funded preschool program for four-year-olds. Outside of state government, Heather is the Governing Board President for the Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children where she participates in various initiatives and workgroups seeking to improve opportunities for young children, their families, and the workforce. Heather is a member of the NASLEE Policy Committee and has earned the Advanced Facilitator Credential from the Waters Center for Systems Thinking.

Before her work in state government, Heather spent 20+ years in the early childhood space as a teacher, administrator, trainer, and advocate.

- M.A., Michigan State University, Child Development
- B.A., Central Michigan University, Child Development and Family Economics and Management



Sara Mickelson

Sara Mickelson is the Deputy Cabinet Secretary at the New Mexico Early Childhood Education and Care Department. She has had this role since February 2023, supporting all family/child-facing programs and policy work at the department.

Sara has previously worked in county and state government in Harris County (Houston), TX as the first director of early childhood, the Chief of Programs for the Oregon Early Learning Division, and as a workforce specialist in the Rhode Island Department of Education. She also worked in philanthropy in Washington, D.C. She began her career as a Head Start teacher.

- M.A., Urban Education Policy, Brown University
- B.A., English Literature and Philosophy, University of Minnesota



Nasha Patel

Nasha Patel is a Managing Director at Watershed Advisors. She formerly served in various roles at the Louisiana Department of Education from 2012 -2020. In her role as Deputy Assistant Superintendent of Early Childhood Strategy, she led the strategy to increase access to and quality of care and education for children in Louisiana through the state’s unified birth-to-five system. Following her tenure at the LDOE, Nasha served as a senior advisor for the Oregon Early Learning Division, supporting the state’s efforts to unify early childhood funding and programs into a single state agency.

In April 2021, Nasha partnered with former LDOE colleagues – including former State Superintendent of Education John White – to launch Watershed Advisors. Nasha has since led early childhood system and strategy projects with partners at the state and local level, including in Colorado, Missouri, Texas, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Kansas.

- M.Ed., Education Policy and Management, Harvard Graduate School of Education
- B.A., Classics, Barnard College

