Presenter and Panelist Bios

Osei Ampadu is a statistician at the U.S. Census Bureau. Since 2009, he has served as the technical advisor for the Educational Finance Branch of the Census Bureau, providing technical support and subject matter expertise for the Census Bureau’s public elementary-secondary (PK-12) education finance surveys. Osei collects data and provides analysis and technical guidance for three school finance surveys jointly processed by the Census Bureau and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES): the National Public Education Financial Survey (NPEFS), the School District Finance Survey (F-33), and the new School-Level Finance Survey (SLFS).

David Blowman has served as Deputy Secretary of Education for the state of Delaware since 2012. Previous to this he served as the chief financial officer for the Brandywine School District, guiding the district through three successful referenda and restoring its financial health. He started his service to Delaware as tax policy analyst in the Delaware Department of Finance. After two years he moved to the State Budget Office, where he spent more than four years as a fiscal and policy analyst, the last three of which as the senior analyst responsible for Delaware’s public education budget. He graduated from the University of Leeds with a bachelor’s of arts in economics and political science before earning a master’s of science in policy analysis from Penn State University.

Cynthia S Brown joined the RI Department of Education in 2006 after 26 years at the local school district level in administrative and operational capacities. She is responsible for overseeing and directing those programs which manage and implement statewide efficiencies such as transportation, nutrition, construction, E-Rate and school district financial data. Joining RIDE in 2006, Cindy played a key role in the development of RI’s Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA) and led its implementation. She was also involved in the development of RI’s funding formula, the orchestration of a statewide, cross-district transportation system and led the implementation of a $20M project to bring wireless infrastructure to every public school classroom/instructional space.

Stephen Cornman is a statistician at the US Department of Education, Institute for Education Sciences, NCES. He currently directs the National Public Education Financial Survey; the School District Finance Survey (F-33); and is the founder of the School Level Finance Survey. He collects, analyzes, and reports on school finance data utilized for Title I allocations by the Department of Education. He is a former assistant research professor at Georgetown University and the administrator of the School Choice Demonstration Project (SCDP). Cornman has professional degrees in public affairs and law and is a member of the DC Bar.

Nora Gordon is Associate Professor at Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy and Research Associate of the National Bureau of Education Research. Her research focuses on fiscal federalism in American education policy and especially the current and historical federal role in elementary and secondary education. Professor Gordon is an expert on Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. She testified before the Senate HELP Committee on implementation of its 2015 reauthorization. She is a member of the Expert Panel to the U.S. Department of Education on its “Study on the Title I Formula” as mandated by ESSA.

Sheara Kvarric is an attorney focusing on federal education programs. She is the co-founder of Federal Education Group, a law and consulting firm in Washington, DC that helps states, school districts and other educational organizations navigate federal laws to maximize the reach of their federal grants. Before founding Federal Education Group, Sheara worked as in-house counsel to a state educational agency and in a private law firm. She started her legal career at the Internal Revenue Service.

Brennan McMahon Parton leads Data Quality Campaign’s efforts to ensure that state leaders enact policies that get teachers, parents, and students themselves the data they need for every student to excel. She focuses on issues including educator data literacy, educator preparation, financial data, and the critical importance of effectively communicating about data and policy. Before joining DQC, Brennan worked at the State Collaborative on Reforming Education, in Nashville, Tennessee, as a research and policy analyst. During her graduate studies she worked for the Tennessee Comptroller’s Office of Research and Education Accountability.

Scott Milam co-founded Afton Partners LLC. He has over 15 years of experience providing management and advisory services for clients in the commercial and public sectors. Most recently, Scott worked with a major urban school district to help transform its budgeting and finance operation to conform to a reform-oriented strategic plan, in which all schools are to be held to the same accountability standards, with similar flexibility for their design and resource allocation.
Dean Nafziger, PhD. is a founding partner and served as CEO of Edvance Research, Inc., established in 2005. In December 2015, Edvance Research Inc. was acquired by Westat. Currently Dr. Nafziger is a Vice President - Associate Director in the Education Study Group. Since 2012, Dr. Nafziger has served as the Director of the Building State Capacity & Productivity Center (BSCP Center) for the U.S. Department of Education as part of its Comprehensive Centers program. He is a life-long educator who has participated in many aspects of the educational system. He has been a high school mathematics teacher, an Assistant Superintendent in San Diego, and a university researcher at The Johns Hopkins University.

Donna Nester currently serves as the Bureau Manager for School Financial Services at the Mississippi Department of Education. Her office oversees the funding programs for public schools in the state and provides technical support to all districts in the area of finance and operations. Prior to this, Donna worked as the School Business Administrator in the Ocean Springs Public School District for 10 years. She has worked in the area of public school finance for over 20 years.

Sharonne Navas is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Equity in Education Coalition. Previously she was Executive Director of Para Los Niños, Assistant Director of Development for NARAL Pro-Choice America, Deputy Executive Director for Ayuda, Inc., and Development Coordinator for the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. In 2010, she was appointed as Commissioner for the Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs and in 2016, she was appointed to the Board of Trustees of Green River Community College.

Marguerite Roza is the Director of the Edunomics Lab and Research Professor at Georgetown University. Her research focuses on quantitative policy analysis, particularly in the area of education finance. Recent research traces the effects of fiscal policies at the federal, state, and district levels for their implications on resources at school and classroom levels. Her calculations of dollar implications and cost equivalent tradeoffs have prompted changes in education finance policy at all levels in the education system. Dr. Roza is author of the highly regarded education finance book, Educational Economics: Where Do School Funds Go?

Carrie Stewart has spent more than ten years improving the connection between academic and fiscal strategies in America’s public schools. Her principal experience is in financial planning, financial management and operations, organizational capacity-building, school funding methodologies, and strategic planning initiatives. Carrie co-founded Afton Partners with Scott Milam in 2011, and currently serves as the firm’s CEO. From July 2005 to March 2007, Carrie helped in the rebuilding of the public school system in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

Jonathon Travers leads the consulting practice area at Education Resource Strategies and works with districts to analyze and improve resource use across systems. This work includes examining each district’s funding strategy, mapping current resource use, and advising on how to reallocate to support specific district goals. Previously, Jonathan was Vice-President of Finance and Administration at Teach For America (TFA), where he was responsible for the organization’s overall financial health and all resource allocation processes. He helped TFA more than double in size over five years while simultaneously strengthening its financial position and making substantial programmatic improvements.

David Winston is the president of The Winston Group, a Washington, D.C., a strategic planning and survey research firm. Winston has served as a strategic advisor to Senate and House Republican leadership for the past 10 years. He was formerly the Director of Planning for Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, and advises center-right political parties throughout Europe. In the private sector, he has advised Fortune 100 companies on strategic planning and brand reputation. Winston has lectured at The Wharton School of Business, MIT, Harvard, and the National War College. Winston is an election analyst for CBS News, and frequently appears on cable and network news.

Weston Young has served as the Chief Financial Officer for Indianapolis Public Schools since 2015. Prior to joining IPS, he worked for a number of financial service firms, and spent his free time volunteering and advising on finance projects for the school district. He’s a proud IPS parent and Indy resident, and is grateful for the opportunity to serve the city of Indianapolis.

Peter Zamora is Director Federal Relations for Council of Chief State School Officers. Previously he served as Senior Education Counsel for Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), a senior member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee. Prior to joining Senator Bingaman’s staff, Zamora served as Washington, D.C. Regional Counsel for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF). In this capacity, he developed and implemented MALDEF’s legislative and administrative strategies regarding federal education law and policy, voting rights, immigration, and other civil rights priorities.

Lynzi Ziegenhagen founded the technology innovation team at Aspire Public Schools in 2008 to ensure that every Aspire teacher, principal, and leader had access to timely, accurate and actionable data. Five years later, she started Schoolzilla to realize an even bigger vision: sharing the same proven data tools with every school in America. Lynzi graduated from Stanford with a degree in Symbolic Systems and holds a master’s degree in Computer Science from the Naval Postgraduate School. Prior to joining Aspire, she ran her own business creating software for nonprofit organizations, led product management at a start-up, and had stints at Microsoft, Booz Allen and The Children’s Partnership.