

# 18<sup>th</sup> Annual MELLFIN Conference Workshop Descriptions and Bios

**Session I: 10-11 AM**

**Session II: 11:10-12:10 PM**

**Session III: 1:55-2:55 PM**

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## The Rights of English Learners and their Parents in the Public Schools (Session I and III)

**Roger Rosenthal, Executive Director, Migrant Legal Action Program**

English Learners (and their parents) often face hurdles in the students gaining entry to public schools and, once in school, gaining access to high-quality ESL/bilingual programs and other school programs and activities. This session will discuss the obligation that public schools have towards these students and their parents and the students' and parents' rights vis a vis the schools. Practical examples will be provided. The issue of Special Education and English Learners will also be covered briefly.

### **Presenter Bio:**

**Roger Rosenthal**, an attorney, is the Executive Director of the Migrant Legal Action Program, a nonprofit support and advocacy center located in Washington, DC. Mr. Rosenthal is well-recognized as one of the foremost experts in the country regarding the rights of English Learners and Immigrant Students in public schools. He is known for being able to explain complex legal issues in understandable terms.

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## Multilingual Parent Leadership Programs (Session II)

**Min Woo, Multilingual Family Services Specialist, Howard County Public School System**

Research points to parent engagement as a crucial component in the success of students. Learn how local counties are providing programs tailored to their specific communities in order to empower their parents. Hear specific strategies to talent spot and grow a pool of parent leaders.

### **Presenter Bio:**

**Min Woo** is a child of immigrants from Korea and learned to speak English as a 10-year-old child in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade in Baltimore County. She studied Journalism at the University of Maryland and received her Master's in Social and Cultural Anthropology from the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. Min started her journey in January of 1999 in Howard County and has returned after sojourns in Korea, Belgium, and Denmark.

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## Supporting EL & Immigrant Students & Families: It's More than Just Language (Session I)

**Laura Gardner, MSW, Founder & CEO, Immigrant Connections**

Students who are learning English are more than just language learners – they are usually

members of immigrant families who are navigating core stressors such as acculturation, trauma, resettlement, and/or isolation while also building on their strengths and developing resiliency. In this session, we will examine our students' and families' strengths and needs with a holistic, social-emotional lens. In addition, we will consider the importance of building the capacity of ALL staff to support and instruct immigrant and English Learner students so they are cared for by a whole team.

#### **Presenter Bio:**

**Laura Gardner** has 20 years of experience working in education, refugee resettlement, and social work. While in education, she worked as a district-level manager for immigrant family and community engagement, as well as a school social worker. Laura also worked for Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS), managing their national technical assistance initiative for federal Refugee School Impact Grantees. Laura holds a Master's degree in Social Work from Columbia University and founded Immigrant Connections in 2017.

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### **Maintaining the Balance: Language Access in the Educational Ecosystem (Session II)**

**Dr. Jennifer Love, Supervisor, Language Access and Engagement, Prince George's County Public Schools**

Language access is rooted in equitable practice and is a critical point of socially just practice and is directly connected to meaningful access in the educational ecosystem. Honoring families' cultural and linguistic diversity and valuing each of them as allies and collaborators is central in supporting student success. Given the critical role parents play in seeking and securing educational opportunities for their children, our shared responsibility is grounded in our ability to facilitate intentional and meaningful family connections. Schools and school systems must establish sustainable processes and procedures to meet language access needs while elevating and establishing integrated practices in interpreting and translation for families. This workshop will focus on strategies to increase access and opportunities, focusing on systemic attention to the interaction between stakeholders, individual and organizational culture, structures, systems, and the allocation of resources to promote equity and sustainable balance.

#### **Presenter Bio:**

**Dr. Jennifer Love** is a district leader in Prince George's County Public Schools, focused on language access and equitable engagement. Her commitment to public education has spanned over two decades, as she has served in various instructional and leadership roles in which she has connected with staff, motivated students, and opened doors to family and community engagement, especially within various cultural communities. She currently leads a dedicated team of more than 100 interpreters and translators and directs language access resources for thousands of families and has spent over a decade committed to building an equitable and sustainable professional language access community. She brings a unique trifecta of perspective with linguistic, classroom and administrative experience in the field and is dedicated to increasing parent education and family engagement for immigrant families to positively impact student achievement.

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## Meet the Families Where They Are: Survivors to Leaders - Stages of Immigrant Parent Involvement (Session III)

### Young-chan Han, MELLFIN President

Immigrant families come from a variety of backgrounds with varied life experiences, and their needs vary depending on the stages of their involvement - survivor, learner, connector, and leader. The stages provide insight into the family's life experiences and the support needed at each stage. This workshop will navigate through the four stages of immigrant parent involvement, share strategies to support families in each stage and identify ways to tailor practices and programs to meet the families where they are.

#### Presenter Bio:

**Young-chan Han**, a child of immigrants from Korea, came to the U.S. at age 12. For the past 25+ years, she has worked at the local, district, and state levels in the areas of family engagement, language access, and leadership development. She is committed to empowering and equipping immigrant parents, educators, and community leaders to advocate for linguistically and economically challenged families. Young-chan is a founding member of MELLFIN and currently serves as the MELLFIN Board President.

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## Family (Re)Unification: Observations from Our Schools (Session I and II)

**Eric Haber, LCSW-C, School Social Worker, Baltimore City Public Schools**  
**Carey Haberman, LCSW-C, School Social Worker, Baltimore City Public Schools**  
**Julio Calderon, LCSW-C, Clinician, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services**

In this session, we will explore a variety of provider perspectives on the issue of Family Reunification, something experienced by many immigrant-origin families throughout Maryland. Session participants will define the issue and its impact on students and families, review a variety of important considerations when developing a programmatic intervention to address these concerns and be oriented to the workshop model developed by the Newcomer Support Team of Baltimore City Public Schools. We will also learn about the successes and struggles of responding to concerns due to separation from a mental health program's perspective. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service launched its mental health program to provide immigrants who are uninsured access to therapy, and many clients are students or their parents. This workshop will provide participants with many helpful perspectives on the needs of children and their families and ideas for developing a program to address this important issue in their districts.

#### Presenter Bio:

**Eric Haber** has been a school social worker with Baltimore City Public Schools since 2014, where he is part of the Newcomer Support Team, providing support services to immigrant and refugee students and families in City Schools. Previously, Eric was a school social worker in Brooklyn, NY. The Newcomer Support Team is an initiative of the Baltimore City Public Schools Related Services Unit, launched in SY 2014-15, with the goal of assessing the needs and developing support services for new immigrant students, their families, and schools.

**Carey Haberman** has been a school social worker with Baltimore City Public Schools since 2013. In 2015 she joined the Newcomer Support Team, where she provides clinical and case management support to newcomer immigrant students and their families enrolled (and enrolling in) schools throughout the district. The Newcomer Support Team is an initiative of the Baltimore

City Public Schools Related Services Unit, launched in SY 2014-15, with the goal of assessing the needs and developing support services to new immigrant students, their families, and schools.

**Julio Calderon** was born and raised in Maryland to Salvadoran parents. An undergrad internship co-teaching GED night classes for adults in Spanish inspired a few years of teaching. Next, Julio went to UMB to obtain his MSW and then worked in CPS for a few years. Having seen firsthand the best of love and the lowest of lows, he became a therapist to play a more active role in healing. His approach to therapy is through a family-centered, trauma-informed, and motivational interviewing lens.

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### **SEL Programming and Classroom Interventions for the ELL Population (Session III)**

**Beth Hood, LCSW-C, School Social Worker, International High School at Langley Park**  
**Christine Gilliard-Arthur, PE & Health Educator, International High School at Langley Park**

SEL programming for EL (and all!) students can provide the framework for teaching students about managing their own emotions in response to life stressors - be it acculturation to a new country, frustration related to English Language Learning, or depression due to a recent loss. Using CASEL's (Center for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) five SEL competencies as a framework, Ms. Hood and Ms. Gilliard have led International High School at Langley Park's SEL Committee in supporting and modeling teacher-led interventions. In this workshop, you will learn about whole school, classroom-based, and individual interventions and resources that support self-awareness and self-regulation.

#### **Presenter Bio:**

**Beth Hood**, LCSW-C, has worked extensively with English Learners for most of her career as a clinical social worker. She has worked in both mental health and school settings and is currently a clinical social worker at International High School at Langley Park. Ms. Hood has led SEL programming and interventions for the high school EL population, including integrated trauma-informed practices and Circle Process training in order to address the orientation, acculturation, and mental health needs of immigrant youth. She has seen the tremendous impact of such interventions in facilitating post-traumatic growth and is constantly amazed at how, with the right support, youth courageously and creatively persevere.

**Christine Gilliard-Arthur**, NBCT, has 24 years in the Prince George's County Public School System. She is the founding health and physical education teacher that opened the International High School at Langley Park in 2015, a high school for recently arrived immigrants and refugee children. She is so passionate about SEL that she trained with Breathe for Change and is a 200-hour certified Yoga Instructor and SEL Facilitator. Ms. Gilliard co-leads the school-based SEL committee with Ms. Hood. Ms. Gilliard provides SEL coaching and mentoring for all, SEL professional development, as well as mentors for PGCPs and MSDE NBCT candidates.

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### **Next Generation Learning: Supporting 21st Century Skills Outside of School (Sessions I and II)**

**Jenny Portillo-Nacu, Senior Education Equity Specialist, Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium**

How can educators build multilingual learner family and caregiver capacity around 21st Century Learning Skills and project-based learning to support their children's education? Today's K-12 students need 21st-Century Skills to help them succeed in school and tackle real-world problems.

Project-based learning is an educational approach that can support the development of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills while also empowering students to engage in authentic learning opportunities. These approaches to learning can also support meaningful language development while leveraging the assets of multilingual learners and their families. This session will provide participants with resources, including MAEC's recent publication, *21st Century Learning at Home: A Guide for Families and Caregivers of English Learners to Support Project-Based Learning at Home*, for building family and caregiver capacity around 21st Century Skills and project-based learning. This session will also provide participants with culturally responsive strategies to support multilingual learner families and caregivers in providing authentic learning experiences for their children within their homes and communities that build 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills.

#### **Presenter Bio:**

**Jenny Portillo-Nacu** serves as a Senior Education Equity Specialist for the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC, Inc.) and has over ten years of experience in public education. As a Senior Education Equity Specialist, Jenny supports the work of the Center for Education Equity, one of four regional Equity Assistance Centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Jenny has previously held positions as a dual language and general education teacher, teacher evaluator, instructional coach, professional development facilitator and curriculum designer. Jenny holds an Ed.M in School Leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education; an MA in Curriculum and Teaching from Teachers College, Columbia University; and a BA in English and History from Fordham University.

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### **Guiding High School English Learners on the Path to College (Session III)**

**Erin Sullivan, Founding Board Member, The Chesapeake Language Project**  
**Tema Encarnacion, Founding Board Member, The Chesapeake Language Project**

In this session, the presenters will share the story of the transformative power of The Chesapeake Language Project's mentorship program in empowering immigrant youth. CLP is a small non-profit organization that supports the unique gifts and needs of English learners and helps them to overcome systemic barriers that result in the denial of access to higher education to students who are academically successful and self-driven. The Chesapeake Language Project was founded to overcome these barriers by first supporting English learners' high school experience and by continuing to support them through each step of the college preparation, application, and adjustment process. This session will focus on the impact of mentoring, the CLP's program model, challenges in mentoring, and the life-changing impact of mentorship on students.

#### **Presenter Bio:**

**Dr. Erin Sullivan** leads the Office of ESOL in Baltimore County. Erin has also worked as an ESOL educator in Baltimore City and Anne Arundel County, where she built relationships with other educators which led to the formation of the Chesapeake Language Project, a nonprofit that supports immigrant youth.

**Tema Encarnacion** works as a multilingual educator at Annapolis High School in Anne Arundel County. Prior to that, she supported the ESOL program as the ESOL Specialist in Baltimore County Public Schools. Tema has worked with immigrant students and families in various capacities.

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## Belonging: Integration of Refugee Youth into Our Communities (Sessions I and III)

**Hailee Pipes, Youth Program Supervisor, International Rescue Committee**

**Kamille McKinney, MSW, Youth Services Coordinator, International Rescue Committee**

Maryland is the 14th largest state for resettlement in the United States, with over 6,000 refugees and other humanitarian immigrants starting their lives in the state over the last three years. Of the 6,000, at least 50% are school-aged, entering schools and classrooms across communities in Maryland each year. These children join Maryland's already multilingual and diverse populations but also bring unique experiences, traumas, and varied educational experiences that require a network of support and enrichment. As the White House administration aims to bring 145,000 new refugees to the country next year, the International Rescue Committee in Silver Spring will provide a refugee 101, discuss approaches and challenges in working with this population, and offer an interactive space to create practice techniques to bring back to your classroom. In this session, the International Rescue Committee in Silver Spring (IRC-SIL) will guide you through the journey a refugee child takes to get to the United States, their unique needs, and the support required to support their academic journey and integration into your communities. Presenters will review the Youth Program offered across two counties, including school orientations for parents, activities to promote feelings of belonging and well-being, and professional development support for teachers and school staff in order to ensure they have appropriate resources and capacity to provide a culturally responsive environment. The Belonging workshop will identify practical ways schools can help integrate refugee youth into their new school systems and work together to continue to make Maryland a welcoming place.

### Presenter Bio:

**Hailee Pipes** (she/her) is an experienced project manager with professional experience in the fields of international development and education. She has extensive experience in youth development and coordinating academic and social programs for under-resourced youth, including in her previous role, where she brought groups of students to Jackson Hole in Wyoming each summer for outdoor enrichment opportunities. At the IRC, she oversees the youth program, where she helps support new refugees to enter the school system and ensure their successful academic journey and integration into communities. She received a bachelor's degree from Texas Christian University (TCU) in Environmental Science, where she developed a passion for mission-driven work and making a positive impact on the environment.

**Kamille McKinney** (she/her), MSW, is an experienced social service provider with over 10 years of experience working with youth. She received her Master of Social Work from Indiana University with a focus on youth and community development. Kamille currently serves as the Youth Services Coordinator with the International Rescue Committee in Silver Spring, MD, where she leads a team of dedicated case workers to provide quality programming to students who are newly arrived in the United States. She is passionate about creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment that empowers students to reach their full potential. Kamille lives in Washington, DC, with her partner and their plethora of pets.

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## How Will Maryland Evolve Existing Policies and Practices to Ensure a Best-in-Class Education for Multilingual Learners? (Sessions II and III)

**Ilhye Yoon, English Learner/Title III Coordinator, Maryland State Department of Education**  
**Laurel Williams, Coordinator of Multilingual Education, Maryland State Department of Education**

This session will provide an overview of the five pillars of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, data on Maryland's English learner population, and an in-depth look into the final report of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future: Workgroup on English Learners. Participants will leave the

session with a better understanding of the Workgroup on English Learner's final recommendations and how they serve as the catalyst for transforming the quality of education for Maryland's multilingual learners.

#### **Presenter Bio:**

**Laurel Williams** is the Coordinator of Multilingual Education for the Maryland State Department of Education. She began her career as an ESOL teacher in 2004 and has made multilingual learners the beacon of her work for nearly 20 years. She's served in many different roles over the years, including teacher, instructional coach, teacher specialist, and educational specialist. Laurel holds a master's degree in Instructional Systems Development and Teaching English as a Second Language from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. She taught abroad at the International School of Curacao, and her island time solidified her love of the ocean.

**Ilhye Yoon** has been working as an English Learner (EL) and Title III coordinator at the Maryland State Department of Education since January 2011. In this position, Ilhye provides leadership, coordination, and assistance to local education agencies on programs, assessments, projects, and activities that promote ELs' academic achievement and family involvement. Prior to joining MSDE, Ilhye taught ELs and worked as an ESOL teacher specialist in Anne Arundel County Public School System. In that role, she taught many professional development courses, supported both content and ESOL teachers, and managed ESOL data and assessments. She received an Administration I certificate from Goucher College in 2009 and a Master of Arts degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from Notre Dame of Maryland University in 1999.

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#### **Elevating Achievement for English Learners with Exceptionalities (Sessions I and II)**

**Drew Fagan, Ed.D., Associate Clinical Professor, Applied Linguistics and Language Education, College of Education - University of Maryland**

As the total number of English learners (ELs) increases throughout Maryland (105,653 for 2022-2023, compared to 56,027 in 2013-2014), so does the number of ELs with exceptionalities, i.e., special education needs, gifted and talented needs, or both. Following the 2018 Maryland Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan, which stipulates that ALL teachers, not just ESOL specialists, are responsible for ensuring ELs obtain academic achievement and language proficiency across the curriculum, this workshop will be divided into two parts. First, we will discuss and workshop (a) pre-lesson planning strategies that all teachers across the curriculum should consider when preparing to work with ELs who have exceptionalities, and (b) activities that connect the students' second language acquisition, cross-cultural, and exceptional needs. Second, we will discuss and strategize bringing ELs' families and communities into the learning process (a) by ensuring they have a complete understanding of what it means for their children to have exceptional needs, and (b) by providing them with tools to advocate for their children within the Maryland school system.

#### **Presenter Bio:**

**Dr. Drew Fagan** is an Associate Clinical Professor of Applied Linguistics and Language Education, Coordinator of the TESOL Program, and Associate Director of the Multilingual Research Center at the University of Maryland, College Park. He is the 2023-2024 Immediate Past-President of the Maryland TESOL Association and most recently, was a member of the Maryland State Department of Education's Blueprint for Maryland's Future- Workgroup on English Learners in Public Schools. Dr. Fagan is the recipient of the 2023 Teacher of the Year Award from the TESOL International Association and National Geographic Learning.

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## Family Engagement for All: Supporting the Families of Dual-Identified Students (Session III)

**Tammy Chisholm, Family Support, Carroll Springs School**

**Kristin Kreit, Dual Language Assessment Specialist, Carroll County Public Schools**

In this workshop, the presenters will discuss ways to involve all families in your community with a focus on families of students who are English learners and have identified special needs. This practitioner-friendly presentation will discuss ways to include families as part of the team advocating for the needs of dually identified students. The presenters will also discuss using technology to communicate with greater ease, community partnerships, and breaking barriers with families to allow families to feel more comfortable in building relationships.

### Presenter Bio:

**Tammy Chisholm** is currently in her fifth year as Family Support for Carroll County Public Schools, ages birth through 21. Tammy assists families with a variety of resources, hosts Family Supports Nights with workshops or presentations on various topics, meets with families to assist with paperwork regarding special education waivers and more. Prior to this role, over the course of 22 years, Tammy taught special education in grades kindergarten through 7th.

**Kristin Kreit** is in her twentieth year with the ESOL department as a Dual Language Assessment Specialist in Carroll County Public Schools, grades PK-12, bridging ESOL and special education services. Kristin researches students' backgrounds, bilingually tests, and works with teams of teachers to determine difference vs. disability within the IEP process. She also supports classroom and ESOL teachers with education and suggestions to support students that are dual-identified. Prior to this, she spent over 10 years teaching bilingual education in California and three years teaching education classes at Carroll Community College.

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## Many Barriers, Many Voices, Many Pathways: Unifying Multi-level Learners Through Adult Education and MD Department of Labor Resources (Sessions 1 and III)

**Douglas Weimer, Supervisor of Adult Instructional Services, Maryland Department of Labor**

**Ahu Moser, Adult Education Program Specialist, Maryland Department of Labor**

As our schools and adult education programs serve learners and their families from diverse cultures, our students and their families encounter barriers in their daily lives and educational journeys in our programs. From the perspective of former educators, the presenters will outline MD Labor's services, including Title II (Adult Education) and the work of the Skilled Immigrant Task Force, and how MD Labor seeks to remove barriers for multilevel learners and their families. Come and join us in a facilitated discussion on how we can remove barriers for our students and their families and become better acquainted with how MD Labor can be a part of this work!

### Presenter Bio:

**Ahu Moser** is currently employed as an Adult Education Program Specialist in the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) at the Maryland Department of Labor. Her focus areas are English Learners, Refugees, and Immigrants. Ahu has taught ESL and EFL adult education learners overseas and stateside and has managed the academic programming of a local non-profit recently. Ahu holds a Master of Education degree in Educational Management. She is currently pursuing her Education doctorate degree in Curriculum and Instruction at the

American College of Education. Ahu can be contacted at [ahu.moser@maryland.gov](mailto:ahu.moser@maryland.gov).

**Douglas Weimer** is the Supervisor of Adult Instructional Services in the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) at the Maryland Department of Labor. Doug has worked in education for over 20 years, including ESL and EFL in the United States and Japan, as well as working as a community college administrator and now as an administrator at the Department of Labor. Doug has a Master of Science degree in Management, and his current area of special interest is the usage of data analysis in program improvement. Doug can be contacted at [douglas.weimer@maryland.gov](mailto:douglas.weimer@maryland.gov).

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## Family Engagement Post-Covid: What Does It Look Like Now for Our Youngest Learners? (Session II)

**Cyndi La Marca Lessner, Program Manager, Judy Center Early Learning Hub, Howard County**

**Lourdes Salazar, Bilingual Program Assistant, Judy Center Early Learning Hub, Howard County**

The Judy Center serves families with children 0-5 years with the ultimate goal of having children ready for school. The COVID Pandemic impacted all of us differently, especially our youngest learners of our immigrant families. Children entering PreK for the 2023-2024 school year were born in 2019, meaning they had minimal opportunities for socializing with others and spent much of their first years in some form of isolation. This session will explore what schools and programs are experiencing as our youngest learners and immigrant families begin to enter schools and early learning programs. We will focus on strategies to better engage our families to work in partnership to support all our children.

### Presenter Bio:

**Cyndi La Marca Lessner** has worked in Early Childhood Education for 25 years and is currently Program Manager at the Judy Center Early Learning Hub in Howard County. Previously, she worked as the Collaboration and Program Improvement Branch Chief at the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood, where she provided oversight for several projects and initiatives including the State Early Childhood Advisory Council, Head Start State Collaboration, Family Engagement Initiative, and the Early Childhood Mental Health Initiative. Cyndi began her career in Head Start, where she worked for 14 years in various positions, including teacher, program director, and Mental Health Disabilities Coordinator. Cyndi earned her M.S. Ed. from Johns Hopkins University in Special Education/Early Childhood Education and her BA from Arizona State University, majoring in Psychology.

**Lourdes Salazar** is a former Judy Center and Cradlerock Elementary School parent and envisions every child walking into school ready to learn to get a head start in life! Lourdes moved to the United States from Mexico in 1997 and has been with the Judy Center since 2009, first as a parent and then as a staff member. Lourdes provides several services to the Judy Center's Spanish-speaking families, including assisting families with young children and connecting them to high-quality early childhood programs, supporting families through the registration process for various programs, including Head Start, PreK, and Kindergarten, connecting families to needed health services in the community, and informing parents of community and school events that benefit the family. Lourdes uses her own experiences from when she moved here from Mexico to help families feel welcomed into the community and connect them to the necessary support to ensure their success.

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## Creciendo Juntos, Growing Together: Leveraging the Community School Strategy to Support ML Families (Session I and II)

**Sarah Daniels Larson, Community School Program Manager, Tyler Heights Elementary School**

**Julia Walsh, Principal, Tyler Heights Elementary School**

Participants will learn how the use of the Community School Strategy addresses the needs of multilingual families and how the implementation of one program has helped to establish a community of life-long learners. Creciendo Juntos, Growing Together, is a program designed to connect young families with community resources. Through a series of weekly, hour-long sessions, we provide support across the domains of the Community School Strategy, help participants to expand their parenting toolkits, and build relationships that will continue to grow for years to come.

### Presenter Bio:

**Sarah Daniels Larson** is the Community School Program Manager at Tyler Heights Elementary School in Annapolis, Maryland. She has been an educator in Anne Arundel County for 17 years. Her background is in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

**Julia Walsh** is the Principal at Tyler Heights Elementary in Annapolis, Maryland, which is designated as a Title One and Community School. She has been an educator in Anne Arundel County for 19 years. She is passionate about serving underserved populations and high academic achievement for multilingual learners while maintaining a positive school culture for all.

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## Unique Challenges EL Students Who Identify as LGBTQ+ Face and Ideas for Supporting Them (Sessions I and III)

**Ying Matties, Ph.D. (she/her/hers), President of Community Allies of Rainbow Youth (CARY)**

**Stacy Huh, MDiv. (she/they), HCPSS Multilingual Achievement Liaison & World Language Interpreter, Secretary of Community Allies of Rainbow Youth (CARY)**

This session is presented by Ying Matties and Stacy Huh from Community Allies of Rainbow Youth (CARY). Ying and Stacy will share their own journey into supporting LGBTQ+ youth, present basic LGBTQ+ definitions and foundational understanding of gender and sexuality, and discuss specific challenges EL students who identify as LGBTQ+ might face in their communities. Best practices and resources for students, families, and school communities will also be shared with participants.

### Presenter Bio:

**Ying Matties** was born and raised in Beijing, China, and immigrated to the United States in 1991 to pursue her graduate degree in Chemistry at the University of Cincinnati. Many people become community activists because of a deeply personal cause. That is the case with Ying as well. One of her children came out as non-binary a few years ago. Watching her own child struggle in a world where non-binary identity is not well understood or fully embraced inspired Ying to become an advocate for the LGBTQ community. She and a few other parents of LGBTQ youth founded Community Allies of Rainbow Youth (CARY) in 2019 with the vision of a world where all children are free to be themselves, regardless of their gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation. In April of 2022, Ying was recognized with the prestigious Friends of Education Award by the Howard County Board of Education.

**Stacy Huh** grew up in the United States and South Korea with a complicated immigration timeline. She went to divinity school and served as a church pastor of the Korean immigrant community for 18 years. During her ministry career, Stacy saw the growing need for a better understanding of LGBTQ+ youth in the conservative immigrant community. In 2021, Stacy left her pastoral role and now serves the broader immigrant community of Howard County Public School System as a Multilingual Achievement Liaison and through HCPSS Interpreting Services. They have collaborated with various LGBTQ+ affirming organizations and branched out in their personal journey. Stacy and her partner are proud parents of two beautiful children who are free to grow into their own identities and follow their dreams.

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## Creating a Sense of Belonging for Newcomers through Enrollment to Graduation (Session II)

**Margarita I. Bohórquez, J.D., M.Ed., N.B.C.T., Supervisor, International Admissions & Enrollment, Montgomery County Public Schools**

**Norka Padilla, M.Ed., N.B.C.T., Instructional Specialist, International Admissions & Enrollment, Montgomery County Public Schools**

**Norca Yarborough, ML Therapeutic Counselor, International Admissions & Enrollment, Montgomery County Public Schools**

Participants will engage with a community of culturally affirming professionals who, in collaboration with schools and community partners, help build and strengthen positive relationships with children and their families, especially those who may be facing language, cultural or economic barriers. International Admissions and Enrollment of Montgomery County Public Schools proudly welcomes thousands of new international students and their families into Maryland's most diverse community throughout the year, connecting them to their school communities so they can fulfill their social and academic aspirations with pride and joy. Participants will gain access to best practices, processes, and information that is immediately relevant to school communities.

### Presenter Bio:

**Margarita Bohórquez** has worked as an educator in MCPS for over 25 years. She has 15 years of teaching experience with a focus on Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) and four years as an ESOL Instructional Specialist providing instructional support and professional development opportunities. She is currently in her sixth year as supervisor of the MCPS International Admissions and Enrollment office, leading the enrollment and support of thousands of international students each year. Support ranges from enrollment of families, direct support to schools, connecting families to community resources and mental health services to

Emergent Multilingual Learners (EMLs). A New York City native, she lived and studied abroad before starting her teaching career in Maryland. She earned a Juris Doctorate from the D.C. School of Law and a Master's in Secondary Education - Second Language Acquisition from George Washington University. Ms. Bohórquez also achieved National Board Certification in English as a New Language (Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood, ages 11-18+) in 2004 and renewed in 2014.

**Norka Padilla** has over 30 years of experience as a curriculum and assessment writer, PD designer, online facilitator, teacher trainer, instructional specialist, classroom teacher, and supporting transformative school improvement with a focus on international newcomers. She is also NBCT, English as a New Language Specialist K-12, with two master's degrees and administrative certification. In her current role, she collaborates with a team enrolling and creating a sense of belonging for thousands of international students and their families from all over the

world. Norka also serves on the University of Maryland's College of Education Alumni Network Board and supports national organizations with educational equity. She recently served as an Equity Commissioner with the New Teacher Center, is GLEAM badged by UnboundEd, and conducts standard alignment studies with WebbAlign.

**Norca Yarborough** is an experienced mental health professional who has worked for over 15 years with EML students and families. As a trauma-responsive, culturally sensitive first responder, she is trained in welcoming newcomers, reunification needs, family separation dynamics, crisis response, and culturally affirming practices. She has a Master's degree in Social Work with a concentration in Children and Families, is certified as a Circle Keeper and Joven Noble facilitator, Neurosequential Model for Educators, PrePARE Crisis Responder, and restorative justice practices. She enjoys providing safe spaces for children to identify themselves and honor their gender and cultures, collaborating with school staff and leaders on providing equitable practices and environments. As the leader of the EML Therapeutic Counseling team, Norca continues to engage the ETCs in Antiracist professional learning.

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