

## Presenter Bios

### **Robert Balfanz**

Robert Balfanz is a principal research scientist at the Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University. He is the Co-director of the Talent Development Secondary Project, which is currently working with over 100 high poverty secondary schools to develop, implement and evaluate comprehensive school transformation and turnaround. His work focuses on translating research findings into effective reforms for high poverty secondary schools. He has published widely on secondary school reform, high school dropouts, middle grade on-track indicators, chronic absenteeism, and instructional interventions in high poverty middle and high schools. Recent works include Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenges in Ending the Dropout Crisis. He is the Director of the Everyone Graduates Center launched in February 2009 which engages in analytic, tool and model development, and capacity building efforts aimed at ending the nation's graduation rate crisis. Dr. Balfanz is also the Co-Operator of the Baltimore Talent Development High School, a Baltimore City Public School System Innovation High School and Director of the Talent Development/Diplomas Now US Department of Education Investing in Innovations (I3) validation grant project.

### **Leslie Cornfeld**

Leslie Cornfeld was appointed Chair of Mayor Michael Bloomberg's Interagency Task Force on Truancy, Chronic Absenteeism & School Engagement in June 2010 when it was announced. She previously served as Director of the Mayor's NYC Task Force on Child Welfare and Safety. Cornfeld is a former federal prosecutor, and was twice the recipient of the U.S. Justice Department's Directors Award for Superior Performance as an Assistant U.S. Attorney. Prior to that, Cornfeld served as the Deputy Chief of the Commission to Investigate Alleged Police Corruption (the "Mollen Commission") where she supervised investigations of alleged police corruption and brutality, and the anti-corruption systems of the NYPD. Before then, Cornfeld was a litigation associate at the law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison; and had previously served as a law clerk to the Honorable Pierre N. Leval, U.S. 2nd Circuit. Prior to that, she was Special Assistant to Senator Daniel P. Moynihan in Washington, DC. Cornfeld has served on a number of non-profit and other boards, including trustee of the Children's Defense Fund, Washington, DC; the Dalton School; the NYC Hospital For Special Surgery; and the Harvard Law School Association of NYC. She has contributed articles in publications including, The New York Times, Newsweek magazine, New York Newsday, and New York Law Journal; television appearances include Dateline, ABC's Turning Point, and other news programs. She is a graduate of Harvard College, and Harvard Law School.

### **William R. Hite, Jr.**

In April 2009, William R. Hite, Jr. was appointed superintendent of Prince George's County Public Schools in Maryland, a district with more than 135,000 students and 200 schools. Hite had served as interim superintendent since December 2008. Prior to this role he served as chief of staff for the district. Before joining Prince George's County Public Schools, Hite served as area assistant superintendent for the Cobb County School District in Atlanta. In this role, Hite supervised 15 high school, middle school and elementary school principals and was responsible for the instructional program for more than 18,000 students. Before moving to Cobb County, Hite served as director of middle school instruction for the Henrico County Public School System in Richmond, Va. He also has served as an urban middle and high school principal and was named Henrico County Instructional Leader of the Year in 1996. Hite has a master's degree in educational leadership from the University of Virginia, and a bachelor's degree and doctorate in educational leadership from Virginia Tech. Hite is a graduate of the 2005 class of The Broad Superintendents Academy.

### **Becky James-Hatter**

Becky James-Hatter has served for 17 years as the president and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri (BBBSEMO). Presently, BBBSEMO is the largest youth mentoring organization in the State of Missouri and the 9th largest Big Brothers Big Sisters of America affiliate (there are 470 affiliates). Her hard work and dedication have led to the agency's designation as one of eight nationwide flagship Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies, responsible for the research and development of new practices and programs in youth mentoring. Most recently, under James-Hatter's leadership, BBBSEMO launched the ABC Education Initiative, which is working to improve education within the St. Louis and Cape Girardeau Public Schools. She has also started Big Brothers Big Sisters Amachi Missouri. Prior to that, she was the vice president of program for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Atlanta. She is also the founder of the Central Louisiana chapter of Big Brothers Big Sisters. In addition, she has served as a member of several local Boards of

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Directors including, Forest Park Hospital, RESPOND and Vision for Children at Risk, and has served as the Chair of the United Way Women's Leadership Giving Initiative for non-profits. In 2006, James-Hatter graduated from Leadership Missouri and was appointed to the Missouri Community Service Commission by Governor Matt Blunt. James-Hatter holds a Bachelor's degree in education from Northwestern State University.

#### **Christopher Wagner**

Christopher Wagner is a policy analyst for Civic Enterprises, LLC, where he works on issues relating to education and youth development. Wagner has broad experience in the education sector. He is a former classroom teacher who has taught in private, vocational, and traditional public schools, and his work has spanned the elementary, middle, and secondary grade levels. Following completion of his graduate studies, Wagner served as a teaching fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Education with responsibility for instructing and advising future teachers. After settling in Washington, D.C., Wagner founded and continues to serve as a board member of a local non-profit that provides college-preparatory arts programming to students in the D.C. area. His work on education has covered school completion, K-12 curriculum and instruction, transitions to college, arts education, teacher training, educational access, school counselors, early warning systems, and youth health services. Wagner holds an Ed.M. in Teaching and Curriculum from the Harvard Graduate School of Education and a B.A. from the University of Virginia.