

2023-2024 LEVERAGE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE FELLOW PROFILES



Leslie Bonner

Principal
ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
St. Louis, Missouri

Leslie Bonner, a native and lifelong resident of St. Louis, Missouri has served as the proud principal of Jefferson Elementary School for four years. Prior to joining the Jefferson Elementary School team, she spent six years as the middle school principal at Yeatman-Liddell Middle School. Both schools are in the St. Louis Public School District where she began her career as a high school social studies teacher. She has prior experience as a high school assistant principal and middle school teacher.

After earning her undergraduate degree from the University of Missouri-Columbia, Leslie attained her teacher certification in middle and high school social science from Harris-Stowe State University. Teaching in high school and middle school settings sparked her interest in making a greater impact on the lives of young people and the overall community by attaining a Master's in Special Education from Fontbonne University, a Master's in Education Administration from McKendree University, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Maryville University.

A lifelong learner, Leslie has been an active participant in the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Leadership Academy for the past two years. She has a wealth of experience in school transformation as she led both Yeatman Middle School and most recently Jefferson Elementary School through Missouri's School Improvement Grant process.



Sue Brennan

School Director
UNITED SCHOOLS NETWORK - COLUMBUS COLLEGIATE ACADEMY
MAIN STREET
Columbus, Ohio

Sue Brennan is the School Director of Columbus Collegiate Academy – Main Street, the flagship school of United Schools Network located in Columbus, Ohio. Sue joined the school in 2014 as an 8th grade ELA teacher and has held several instructional leadership positions within the school and network. She began her career in Indianapolis, Indiana as a high school English teacher. In Indianapolis, she was a member of Indianapolis Teaching Fellows and a Teach Plus fellow.

Sue holds a B.A. in English and Women's Studies from Drew University in Madison, New Jersey; a Ph.D. in Women's Studies from The Ohio State University; and an MAT from Marion University in Indianapolis.

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Dr. Herminder Channa

Regional Director
OASIS COMMUNITY LEARNING
Birmingham, England

Dr. Herminder Channa is currently Regional Director for Oasis in the Midlands, Chair of Trustees for Prince Albert multi academy trust, a National Leader of Education (NLE), and a Magistrate.

Herminder's work on Character Education with the University of Birmingham's Jubilee Centre has been formally recognised and in July 2022 Herminder was awarded "Ambassador for Character" status from the Jubilee Centre.

Herminder's chapter titled "Authentic Leadership" in The Birmingham Book - Lessons in Urban Education Leadership and Policy from the Trojan Horse Affair has received much attention from the educational sector. In September 2022 Herminder was conferred as an Honorary fellow at the University of Birmingham's Faculty of Education engaging in research focusing on school improvement through character education.

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Christine Diaz

Leadership Development Partner
LiberatED Way - Academy for Urban School Leadership
Fort Worth, Texas

Christine is a Leadership Development Partner for LiberatED Way. She coaches and builds leadership capacity across school districts in Texas and brings a wealth of experience in systems leadership, change management, and leadership development and is most passionate about serving the underserved. Christine brings 20 years of K-12 educational leadership experience across both district and charter schools with a strong record of results. She has served in a variety of leadership roles that include Principal, Chief Education Officer and most recently, VP of Schools.

“Good is the enemy of great” is a quote Christine Diaz lives and breathes by. She models, inspires, and coaches schools to be excellent-bound, anchored in vision for self and community. She has an unwavering belief in standing in your brilliance and unapologetically being your authentic self. Christine holds a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Florida Institute of Technology, a master’s in educational leadership from Northeastern Illinois University and is a proud alumnus of New Leaders and the Surge Institute.



Matt Dunne

Director of Teaching School Hub
ARK SCHOOLS
Birmingham, England

Matt Dunne is the Director of the Ark Teaching School Hub, a centre of excellence for teacher and leader professional development based in Birmingham, UK. Matt established the Ark Teaching School Hub in September 2021 following successful designation from the Department for Education. As a Teaching School Hub leader, Matt works with more than 175 schools on early career teacher development, national professional qualifications and instructional leadership.

Prior to joining Ark 4 years ago, Matt had been a senior leader in two secondary schools and had also held pastoral and academic middle leadership positions. Matt, and the teams he has led, has a strong track record of high pupil achievement in disadvantaged communities in Birmingham.

Matt is also a Chair of Governors of a Catholic primary school, sits on two strategic education boards, and coaches children’s rugby at his local rugby club.

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Ana Fernandez

Principal

HAWTHORNE ELEMENTARY: DALLAS ISD
Dallas, Texas

Ana Fernandez is the Principal of Nathaniel Hawthorne Elementary School, a Title I school located in Dallas, Texas where she has served for 10 years, first as a Reading Instructional Coach, then as an Assistant Principal, and now as Principal. Ana's background and experiences as an ELL and immigrant provided her with the opportunity to connect, understand, and support parents and the community around her campus.

With over 20 years of experience, Ana has worked as a Kindergarten Teacher, 5th grade Reading/Social Studies Teacher, and Instructional Coach for Social Studies in Middle School and as New Principals' Mentor through the LEAD program in Dallas ISD.

In addition to her work as a leader, Ana is working on her Doctorate in Education on School Governance at PCU. Outside of her commitments to educational leadership, she is a proud parent of three young adults and enjoys spending time with them and her husband.



Chris Garcia

Partner, Regional Leadership Programs, Texas

RELAY GSE
Dallas, Texas

Chris Garcia serves schools and systems leaders as the Partner of Regional Support at Relay GSE. In this role, he provides on-the-ground coaching and delivers professional development to school and systems leaders.

Chris has worked in education for over twenty years, serving communities abroad in Japan, El Paso, TX, and the Dallas-Fort Worth areas. Prior to joining Relay, he was a teacher at the primary, middle and high school levels and served as a Road to College Counselor and Advanced Programs Coordinator for a North Texas Charter school. His leadership journey began as an elementary school principal and the lead Director for the K-12 campus of Uplift Peak Preparatory. In that time the team was able to maintain exemplary school ratings and students graduated and earned college acceptance at a 100%. Following his tenure as a school leader, Chris became a Leadership Development coach and program manager in the non-profit sector for five years, focusing his efforts on training and coaching district/school leaders and teams in Leverage Leadership content. Most recently Chris worked for the Region 10 Education Service Center where he was coaching and supporting schools to create sustainable schools of excellence utilizing the Leverage Leadership content.

Chris earned a Bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Austin and a Master's degree in Education Leadership from Southern Methodist University. He resides in Dallas, TX, with his two beautiful children and incredible wife.

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Trennis Harvey

Principal
ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Atlanta, Georgia

Trennis Harvey has been in the field of education for more than 20 years. He has served as a 3rd and 5th grade teacher, a Curriculum/Instructional Specialist, and is currently the Principal of Heritage Academy, a Title I school located in Atlanta Georgia. During his tenure as Principal of Heritage Academy, Trennis has guided the school off of the State Identified Focused Schools List, led instructional initiatives that resulted in increases in the percentage of students meeting and exceeding annual growth targets in Reading and Math, as well as increases in proficiency. He had the honor of being selected as Atlanta Public Schools' 1st "Principal of the Year" for the 2015-2016 school year. Trennis currently serves on the district Principal Advisory Committee and as a Principal Mentor for new principals to the school district. Trennis is passionate about ensuring that every student who comes through the doors of Heritage Academy is given the best educational opportunity that anyone in the city, state, country, and world can have. His goal is to have a school that creates excellent readers, dynamic mathematicians, critical thinkers, and responsible citizens committed to making their communities a better place to live.

Trennis received his Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education from Morehouse College, Master of Science in Middle Grades Math & Science Education from Brenau University and has completed post graduate work in Educational Leadership at State University of West Georgia and Relay School of Education. Trennis has been married to his wife, Tiffany, for 19 years and has two high school aged daughters.



Dr. Susan Hernandez

Executive Director, School Leadership & Lead District Coordinator for School Improvement
FORT WORTH ISD
Fort Worth, Texas

Dr. Susan Hernández currently serves as the Lead District School Improvement Executive Director, as well as, Principal Manager for ten secondary schools for the Fort Worth Independent School District. With over 24 years in education, Dr. Hernández has successfully led elementary, middle, and high schools out of Texas State Accountability as a campus principal and executive director. Additionally, she piloted the Texas Education Agency's Effective Schools Framework (ESF) for the state of Texas.

Due to implementation of the Leadership Levers (Paul Bambrick-Santoyo), curriculum and instructional planning, direct observation and feedback for campus leadership teams, and principal development, the campuses she serves all gained sustained success and turnaround accolades from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Her doctoral research explored turnaround principals' perceptions of effective district supports that lead to sustainable change. She is passionate about providing a quality education for all students and building the capacity of instructional leadership teams to best serve students.

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Lisa Hill

Principal
ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Atlanta, Georgia

Lisa Hill is a native of Atlanta, Georgia and a product of Atlanta Public Schools. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Physics and Masters of Science in Physics from Clark Atlanta University where she was an Office of Naval Research Scholar. Immediately following graduation, she began teaching Physics and serving as the Director of Science, Engineering, and Mathematics Pre-College Programs at Morehouse College in Atlanta.

Lisa transitioned to Atlanta Public Schools where she became the project manager of a One-to-One Laptop initiative sponsored and funded by the State of Georgia. Seeing the powerful impact of technology on teaching, learning, and school climate, she completed a teaching certification program at the University of West Georgia and became a middle school mathematics teacher in Atlanta Public Schools. Lisa became an Instructional Technology Specialist and was quickly promoted to Lead Instructional Technology Specialist for the South Region of Atlanta Public Schools. In this position, she continued to support administrators, teachers and students, developed technology conferences and trainings, and created a district electronic data dashboard used to monitor progress and interventions.

Lisa obtained an Educational Specialist in Educational Leadership from Kennesaw State University and served as Dean of Academics at Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy Middle School. She recently completed twelfth year as Principal of Crawford W. Long Middle School. Under Lisa's leadership, Long Middle School has been removed from the Atlanta Public Schools' Turnaround List and became Cognia STEM Certified.



Audrey Johnson

Principal
JOURNEY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
Memphis, Tennessee

Audrey Johnson has been an educator for over 27 years. During her tenure she has served as an elementary teacher, School Counselor, and Literacy Coach. She also served as a SPA Nola Leadership Coach for three years. Currently she serves as the principal of Journey East Academy. During her first role as principal, the school was on the priority list and part of Shelby County Schools' Striving School pilot. During her tenure, Ms. Johnson and her team moved the school from the priority list in 2 years. The team was able to lead the school to become a 3-year Reward school. She has continued to serve students that are in high poverty areas and worked in turn-around work. She has a passion for educating students in these areas. Seeing her students turn other people's thoughts of impossibility into possibility is what she lives for in this work.

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Kristen McCarthy

Principal
UNCOMMON SCHOOLS - NORTH STAR ACADEMY
Newark, New Jersey

Kristen McCarthy currently serves as the Principal of North Star Academy West Side Park Elementary School, a public charter school in Newark, NJ which is part of the Uncommon Schools network.

Under Kristen's leadership, West Side Park has led Uncommon Schools in reading growth and has performed in the top 10% of Uncommon elementary schools on interim assessments. During her tenure, Kristen has developed a team of secondary leaders who have expanded their reach across Uncommon through professional development, curriculum writing, and model instructional videos. Prior to her current role, Kristen served as Dean of Curriculum and Instruction and Instructional Leader at another North Star elementary campus.

Kristen received her undergraduate degree, with honors, from Princeton University and earned a Master of Arts in Teaching, with distinction, from the Relay Graduate School of Education. Kristen has also done postgraduate work with the Relay National Principals Academy Fellowship.



Jessica Mullins

Principal
DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Denver, Colorado

Jessica Mullins is an elementary principal at Trevista at Horace Mann in Denver Public Schools. She has been a part of the successful turnaround of the school as a teacher, instructional coach, assistant principal, and now principal. As the school leader, Jessica has successfully led the implementation of a dual language Spanish Immersion program while continuing to improve the traditional program to serve the diverse neighborhood and unique needs of the community. Jessica has cultivated a strong staff culture and prides herself in the loving space that welcomes each of her students and the consistent high expectations with strong connections that exist within the learning community to ensure exceptional growth year after year.

Jessica received her teaching degree from Arizona State University, her masters in elementary education from Northern Arizona University, and her principal licensure from the University of Denver.

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Megan Murphy

Founder & Head of School
CIRCLE CITY PREP
Indianapolis, Indiana

Megan Murphy is the Founder and Head of School of Circle City Prep, a public charter school on the Far Eastside of Indianapolis, Indiana.

After graduating Trinity University, Megan started her career in education as a 1st and 5th grade teacher in the Normandy School District in St. Louis through Teach For America. In 2012, she moved back home to Indianapolis and served as a Manager, and subsequently Director, of Leadership Development. Megan joined the Building Excellent Schools (BES) Fellowship in 2015 to support the design and founding of Circle City Prep in her hometown.

Circle City Prep has grown from a staff of 8 people in 2017 serving 78 scholars to 350+ scholars and 42 staff members today. In two years of state testing, Circle City Prep has outperformed their neighborhood schools by 20% and is considered one of the top 6 schools serving Black and Brown students in Center Township, Indianapolis.

Megan enjoys playing flag football, reading a good book over coffee Saturday mornings, and eating at the best local restaurants in each city she visits.



Luke Naegele

Head of Schools
KIPP NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS
Wilmington, North Carolina

Luke Naegele has been a Head of Schools for KIPP North Carolina since its founding in 2021. Before joining the KIPP NC regional team, Luke was the Director of School Leadership Development at the KIPP Foundation. From 2011 – 2017, he was school leader at KIPP Believe College Prep and KIPP McDonogh 15 (now KIPP Morial) Middle School in New Orleans, Louisiana. Before this, he taught math at KIPP Gaston College Prep in Gaston, North Carolina, and worked as a high school history teacher as a Teach for America Corps Member in Charlotte, NC.

As a Head of Schools with KIPP NC, he is grateful to work alongside such a talented group of school leaders as they work with families and communities to build more joyful, academically excellent, and equitable schools throughout North Carolina.

Luke lives in North Carolina with his family, which includes his partner, Elizabeth, and two young kids.

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Charles Newborn

Program Director - Office of Leadership Development
MEMPHIS-SHELBY COUNTY SCHOOLS
Memphis, Tennessee

Charles M. Newborn II has 26 years of experience in the field of education. He has worked as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, and is currently serving in the role as the Program Director of Leadership Development within the Memphis-Shelby County School District. The duration of his career was spent as principal in the Raleigh community in Memphis, Tennessee for 18 years. His tenure in the principalship allowed him to experience serving the students of students and the greater community at-large.

Charles holds a Bachelor's Degree from Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, a Master's Degree from Arkansas State University, and a Educational Specialists Degree from Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. Charles has served as mentor to a myriad of school leaders within the Memphis area through several different programs. In his present role, he works with new and novice principals in developing their leadership expertise.



Kendra Randle

Elementary School Principal
ADELANTE SCHOOLS
Indianapolis, Indiana

Kendra Randle is the proud principal of Emma Donnan Elementary School located in Indianapolis, Indiana. For 7 years she taught 1st-5th grade in both Memphis, TN and Indianapolis, IN. She is currently entering her 11th year in education. Kendra is a proud alumna of Kentucky State University where she obtained her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and her Masters of Arts in Education from Union University.

After serving as a classroom teacher for 7 years, she realized that she wanted to dive deeper into the social emotional support for her students. Discovering this path opened up the door to allow her to serve as the elementary school dean and Principal Fellow at Emma Donnan Elementary. Kendra is driven by the desire and passion to give her scholars access to the world that they live in. She is grateful for the opportunity to learn, grow, and truly learn the essence of leadership.

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Dr. Anabel Ruiz

EC-6 Principal
RICHARDSON ISD
Richardson, Texas

Dr. Anabel Ruiz is a School Principal at Carolyn Bukhair Elementary in Richardson ISD. She is entering her 8th year as a principal, and five of those years were in Dallas ISD. Prior to becoming a principal, she taught grades 3rd-5th. Under her leadership, Carolyn Bukhair went from a projected “F” rating to a “B” rating through the Texas Education Agency accountability rating system in one year due to high student academic growth. The progress made at the campus is due to strong practices in professional learning communities, data meetings, and focus on individual students.

Dr. Ruiz has a bachelor’s in Business Administration with a minor in French and a Master’s in Educational leadership from The University of Texas at Arlington, as well as a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Southern Methodist University. She is eager to continue her growth journey with RELAY, to impact the communities that she serves.

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Christopher Shaffer

Senior Principal
UNCOMMON SCHOOLS - ROCHESTER PREP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 3
Rochester, New York

Christopher Shaffer is the founding principal at Rochester Prep Elementary School 3, Uncommon Schools. Under his leadership, Rochester Prep Elementary School 3 has been a model school for SEL, staff and student culture, and academic excellence. Christopher and his team have been filmed to codify best practices for Uncommon on several occasions. In 21-22 Christopher was a finalist for Uncommon's Elementary Principal of the Year and Founder's Mindset awards.

Before becoming a school leader, Christopher was a second-grade teacher and later the Dean of Curriculum and Instruction at Uncommon's first elementary school in Rochester. He also served as a Principal Fellow before opening Rochester Prep Elementary School 3 in 2016. Christopher now serves as a Senior Principal where he continues to lead his founding school while coaching and supporting other leaders across his region. Previously, Christopher worked as a teacher in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Christopher received his Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from West Liberty University, his Master of Science in Educational Leadership from St. John Fisher College and has completed post graduate work in education in the Relay National Principals Academy Fellowship.



Amanda Tyner

Relay Principal Supervisor
PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ROBESON COUNTY
Lumberton, North Carolina

Amanda Tyner currently serves as an elementary school principal and a Relay Coach for three elementary principals. She has worked for the Public Schools of Robeson County since 2002. During her career with PSRC her roles have changed from a classroom teacher, to a curriculum specialist, then an Assistant Principal and now as a Principal for the last 7 years.

She is a mother to a soon to be thirteen-year-old son and has two step sons. When she is not working, she enjoys the outdoors with her family. Education is what she knows, coaching is something she feels she is good at and now with her almost two years into the work with Relay and having a coach of her own she sees clearly the positive impact the work has on students, teachers and principals.

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Tommy Usher

Associate Superintendent
ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Atlanta, Georgia

An intuitive, well-rounded leader with over 20 years of experience in educational leadership, Mr. Tommy Usher became an Associate Superintendent in Atlanta Public Schools on July 1, 2016. Previously, he served as Principal of Garden Hills Elementary School, an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program and Dual Language Immersion School. He joined Atlanta Public Schools in July 1998, serving in various roles as Classroom Teacher, Instructional Specialist, Comprehensive School Reform Specialist, Data Coach and Program Administrator. A proud native of Atlanta, Georgia, Mr. Usher graduated from Clark Atlanta University with a Bachelors in Elementary Education. He went on to pursue graduate studies and leadership certification from Central Michigan University, Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction Design, and Georgia State University, Educational Leadership Certification. He has also participated in and completed the Harvard Turnaround Leader Institute, Harvard Data Wise Institute and KIPP's Leadership Design Fellowship (KLDF).

Since becoming an Associate Superintendent, Mr. Usher has been laser focused on supporting and guiding the school improvement efforts of principals and their school teams. A few hallmark accomplishments of this work include expanding Dual Language Immersion Programs, schools achieving year-over-year achievement gains on state assessments, and several schools removed from the state's Comprehensive School Improvement (CSI) list. Mr. Usher is known as a warm demander, driven by his deep commitment of service to school leaders, and measurable improvements that impact the lives of students.