Samantha Aigner-Treworgy leads the Ounce of Prevention Fund’s work with school districts around the country. Prior to this role at the Ounce, Samantha directed special projects for Chicago Public Schools’ Office of Early Childhood Education. Her work included overseeing the Chicago: Ready to Learn! initiative, beginning with a city-wide application process aimed at ensuring that Chicago was investing in high-quality early childhood programs that meet the unique needs of Chicago’s diverse communities. Samantha had also previously worked for the Ounce with the Illinois policy team, where she coordinated the development of the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Children Birth to Age Three and focused on state-wide home visiting advocacy. Samantha has experience as a preschool teacher and early childhood social emotional consultant. She holds two master’s degrees from the University of Chicago, from the School of Social Service Administration and the Harris School of Public Policy, and a bachelor of arts in education and child studies from Smith College.

Diana Bender is a consultant and coach helping public and private children’s agencies and non-profits better align their vision and operations, solve organizational problems, develop policy solutions, start new programs and raise more money. An early adapter of the Shared Services concept, Diana co-founded and co-led Sound Child Care Solutions, a ‘deep’ shared services early childhood education alliance which grew from an idea in 2005 to a $3.5 million organization with 120 staff by 2013. She brought Early Head Start to Seattle, was the lead designer and initial Director of Seattle Early Reading First and helped start the Seattle Jobs Initiative. A highly successful fundraiser, Diana has raised more than $38 million dollars for the benefit of children, youth, and advocacy causes. At the City of Seattle, on the funder side, she led funding processes which distributed millions of dollars to non-profits in Seattle. She is active in the Undoing Racism movement in Seattle and is most proud of the fact that each year all 350+ children (of diverse income and racial backgrounds) at Sound Child Care Solutions met or exceeded educational outcomes with no achievement gap between racial groups.

Karen Berman is senior manager of Illinois policy at the Ounce of Prevention Fund. Ms. Berman manages the early childhood systems building and advocacy work in Illinois, and brings her expertise in special education to the Illinois, Chicago and national efforts. Most recently, she has focused extensively on Illinois’ Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. Ms. Berman is appointed by the governor to serve on both the Illinois Early Learning Council and the Interagency Council on Early Intervention. Prior to joining the Ounce, Karen worked at the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights where she represented children and families on education, disability, and juvenile justice issues. She has a B.A. in elementary education from University of Michigan and a J.D. from Northwestern University.
Miriam Calderon is a Senior Partner at School Readiness Consulting. Most recently, she served as a political appointee in the Obama Administration, advising on early learning policy at the Domestic Policy Council at the White House and at the Department of Health and Human Services. Prior to joining the Administration, Ms. Calderon served as the Director of Early Childhood Education at DC Public Schools, where she oversaw Head Start and pre-kindergarten programs serving nearly 5,500 children in 84 elementary schools throughout the city. She worked as the Associate Director of Education Policy at the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic civil rights organization where she focused specifically on early education policy for Hispanic and dual language learner children. She began her career in early education working as a mental health consultant in Head Start programs in Portland, Oregon. She has published several reports on early childhood education and her work is cited in both the English and Spanish media. She is a native of Washington DC and the mother of seven year old twins.

Tracey Campanini is Director the Bureau of Early Learning Services for the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). Tracey’s professional experiences include over 20 years of Head Start/Early Head Start involvement in varying roles. In addition she served for a period of 5 years as Pennsylvania’s Head Start Collaboration Director. In her current position, she oversees the implementation team for the commonwealth’s early childhood grant-funded initiatives such as PA Pre-K Counts, state funded Head Start, MIECHV and OCDEL’s federal Early Head Start grant. She also serves as the lead for Pennsylvania’s quality rating and improvement system, Keystone STARS.

Jeanna Capito is a graduate of Erikson Institute, with a Masters Degree in Child Development and Infancy Studies. Capito’s work experience includes management of child care programming, Early Head Start, Head Start, Healthy Steps, Healthy Families and Department of Children and Family Services programming. Capito’s background includes the creation of community-based collaboration through social services agencies, education systems, home visiting services, public health programming and healthcare systems. Capito currently consults in areas including management support, professional development initiatives, quality infant and toddler programming and technical assistance, collaboration building, and quality rating systems components. Capito is a co-chair at the Committee level within the Illinois Early Learning Council, guiding the work of cross system committees to produce numerous recommendations focused on increasing quality, access and coordination across state systems. As the founding Executive Director of a county-wide early childhood collaborative system, Capito did local systems building work, including developing and serving on the governing board of the first suburban Educare school.
**Jeffrey Capizzano** is President of The Policy Equity Group, LLC, a consultancy that empowers socially conscious organizations by providing advocacy, research, and communications support. Mr. Capizzano is a nationally known advocate and researcher with both private and public sector experience. Prior to founding his consultancy, he was a Senior Policy Advisor for Early Childhood Development and Education at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Mr. Capizzano served as Vice President of Research and Public Policy at Teaching Strategies, developer of a widely used early childhood curriculum and assessment system. He also worked for seven years at the Urban Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank, where he conducted policy-related research in the areas of early childhood and K–12 education, as well as youth policy. Mr. Capizzano’s work has played a role in a number of public policy debates and his research findings have been cited by numerous media outlets including *The Washington Post*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and National Public Radio.

**Mary Jane Chainski** has over 30 years of experience in early childhood program development and administration, including the start-up and early management of the Ounce of Prevention Fund’s Educare School in Chicago. As the Educare Learning Network quickly grew to 20 schools across the nation, she directed the Ounce’s technical assistance team in supporting the adoption and implementation of the Educare model at each site, while growing and managing the team’s resources, including designing and creating trainings and tools on topics such as reflective practice and supervision, continuity of care, and interdisciplinary work. Prior to her tenure at the Ounce, she developed a new Early Head Start program as well as a child care program for teenage mothers while serving as leader of a community-based program in Evanston, Illinois. She has served as a federal Head Start reviewer in the areas of program design & management and Early Head Start, and is a Brazelton Touchpoints trainer. She served as president of the board of directors of Illinois Action for Children, on the board of the Illinois Infant Mental Health Association, and on the Illinois Department of Human Services Child Care & Development advisory council. She holds a master’s degree in child development from the University of Iowa.

**Betsi Closter** is the School Readiness Coordinator for the Fairfax County Office for Children and has over 35 years of experience in early childhood education including classroom teaching, professional development, technical assistance, program monitoring, and community outreach. Betsi has also worked in the Fairfax County Office for Children as the Early Head Start Coordinator and the Head Start Administrator. In 2010, Betsi took an 18-month position with ZERO TO THREE to lead a national demonstration project on partnering Early Head Start and family child care. She is a member of the Northern Virginia Community College Early Childhood Development Advisory Committee, a former co-president of the Northern Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children, and a former member of the Fairfax County Child Care Advisory Council.
Steffani Clothier serves as Senior Policy Director for the Alliance for Early Success, providing strategic support to states and national organizations as they work to improve outcomes for young children in the early years. For nearly a decade, Steffanie led early care and education initiatives with legislatures of the 50 states and territories as program director with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). Her experience and expertise encompasses substantive policy advice tailored to states, testimony and bill ideas, developing key partnerships, and initiating new ways to engage policymakers through evaluation data and scientific research. In addition to early care and education, Steffanie also has extensive expertise in welfare reform, health care, child health, and environmental issues. She has spent the last 20 years working on state level policy issues. Steffanie earned her Bachelor's Degree from Trinity College in Hartford, Conn. and a law degree from the University of Denver School of Law.

Kathryn Colfer is the Director of Child and Family Services, Educare Maine. Kathryn Colfer has worked in the field of Early Childhood Education for the past 17 years, directing services for children, parent/family members, and staff as a trainer, facilitator, and administrator. With a strong administration and financial background, she has designed, developed, and implemented programs for children and families in both the private non-profit sector and the public sector, including center-based and family child care. Kathryn has worked in program and personnel management capacity for over 30 years. She has extensive experience in developing programming and budgets to support quality early care and education services. Currently she administers a program encompassing 102 staff, physical facilities in 9 locations throughout Somerset and northern Kennebec Counties, Maine. Kathryn has an ongoing commitment to quality programming for children, parent/family members, and staff within an environment that nurtures positive change and growth. She is an active member in several local and state collaborative venues.

Amy Fain has been in the early childhood field since 1989, serving as a teacher, mentor, site director, vice president of operation, and currently manager of the Oklahoma Early Childhood Program. Fain’s credentials include a BAED, Certified Program for Infant Toddler Care Instructor, a consultant/trainer for Oklahoma’s Center for Professional Development, Oklahoma Registry for Directors, Dr. Brazleton’s Touchpoints Early Care and Education Training Program, Council for Professional Development CDA Specialist, and Resources for Infant Educare. Fain has trained teachers in early childhood education on many levels, and has spoken at local conferences, Head Start conferences, and national conferences since 1998. Fain was recognized as one of Oklahoma’s top ten for early childhood.

Sangree Froelicher has worked at the national, regional and state level in both the public and private sectors to plan, organize and implement innovative strategies to improve policy effectiveness. She has developed and managed numerous state-level programs and multi-state projects as well as researched and conceptualized many initiatives. In her work leading others in outcome-based planning and action-oriented blueprints, she has specialized in system development initiatives as well as negotiating and managing complex projects entailing multifaceted relationships. Among her successful efforts in early learning are the development and implementation of seminal documents and reports to the Governor and Legislature in Washington State: Professional Development System: Action Blueprint; Birth to Three Report, Core Competencies, Early Childhood Standards (aligned with K-3), and the State Profile of Head Start and State Pre-K. Sangree was also a key partner in developing the Early Learning Plan, Washington’s roadmap for creating a comprehensive system of care, education, and services that support all children being successful in school and life (Birth through Third Grade).
Barbara Gebhard is the Assistant Director of Public Policy at ZERO TO THREE. As part of the organization’s Policy Center since 2006, she leads efforts to support states in the development of policies and systems to meet the needs of infants and toddlers. She oversees the development of effective materials, tools, and technical assistance for state policymakers. Barbara also oversees the work of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Technical Assistance Coordinating Center and is a senior advisor and resource specialist for Project LAUNCH, a federal initiative promoting young children’s wellness. In her previous role as the director of the BUILD Initiative, Barbara worked with nine states building early learning systems. Among her other previous positions are Deputy Director of the West Virginia Governor’s Cabinet on Children and Families, State Early Intervention Director and State Day Care Specialist in the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, and Writer/Editor for Appalachia Educational Laboratory. Ms. Gebhard holds a Master’s degree in Child Development and Family Relationships from Marshall University and a B.A. in Elementary Education from Georgetown College.

Janice Gruendel has nearly 20 years of experience in State of Connecticut government, serving under five governors. She also brings nine years in the non-profit advocacy sector and seven years in private business related to children and families. In October 2013, she completed her third tour of service within the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) as Deputy Commissioner for Operations in this $800 million comprehensive services agency for children. In both the public and private sectors, Gruendel has worked to advance early childhood comprehensive systems in Connecticut and beyond. From 2004-2009, she was Co-Chair of the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet and governor’s senior policy advisor for early childhood, and she served as a member of the Governor’s Early Childhood Research and Policy Council. Since leaving state service, Gruendel has returned to her public consulting business, Gruendel has extensive experience in policy, fiscal and data analysis, strategic planning, program management and assessment, research, early childhood data systems development, and community planning. Dr. Gruendel received her Ph.D. from Yale University in Developmental Psychology. She also holds a Masters Degree in Educational Psychology from the Rutgers University Graduate School of Education.

Deborah Hampton is director of grantee support services at the Ounce of Prevention Fund and has more than 39 years of experience with early childhood programs and Head Start. She leads a team of content experts who train and monitor delegates and partners to ensure full compliance with performance standards. Ms. Hampton supports and facilitates the Ounce’s policy council and coordinates with the policy committees and governing boards of the Ounce and delegate/partner agencies. She has taught administrative and early childhood development classes at Erikson Institute, National Louis University and in the Chicago City College system. Ms. Hampton also served as the executive director of the Ecumenical Child Care Network, a national organization serving faith-based child care programs. She was also the president of Chicago Metropolitan Association for The Education of Young Children and was on the board of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
Susan Hibbard is Deputy Director for BUILD, a national initiative that supports state efforts to create comprehensive early childhood systems. In this capacity, she oversees BUILD’s Learning Community and works to connect state leaders from the public and private sector to share strategies and information and foster development of a supportive leadership and knowledge network. The initiative supports efforts to reform existing state systems, test new models, and connect programs and services that now operate in isolation and sometimes at cross-purposes and help ensure that all young children have access to early learning systems that result in school readiness. Susan also leads BUILD’s participation in the Early Learning Challenge Collaborative, which supported state leaders as they applied for, and now as they implement, the federal Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant plan. She also works as project director for the Early Childhood Funders’ Collaborative. Susan earned a B.A. degree from Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania and an M.A. from the New School University in American Politics and Public Policy. She lives with her partner in Portland, Maine and is the mother of two rambunctious boys.

Sherri Killins is the new Director of Systems Alignment and Integration for the BUILD Initiative. Over the last year, Sherri has been providing consulting services to BUILD, the WK Kellogg Foundation, the Campaign for Grade Level Reading and Pearson Publishing. Before that, Dr. Killins was the Commissioner of Early Education and Care for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As Commissioner, she designed and implemented a statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System for early education and care as well as out of school time programs. Under her leadership, Massachusetts secured a Race To The Top-Early Learning Challenge grant to provide financial resources to accelerate the work already underway. Throughout her career, Dr. Killins has been committed to supporting families as children’s first teachers. Recently, she has focused on developing early childhood systems for children from birth to third grade. Dr. Killins resides in New Haven, Connecticut and is the mother of three daughters.

Ann Kirwan works with the Ounce of Prevention Fund’s senior leadership and key external partners to develop and advance the strategic direction of the organization. She holds a M.A. in public policy from the University of Chicago and a B.A. with distinction in history from the University of Virginia. Prior to her current position, she served the Ounce as vice president of national policy consultation, vice president of institutional advancement, and assistant director of the Ounce Illinois policy and advocacy division. She is a graduate fellow of Zero to Three. She joined the Ounce in 1996.
Joan Lombardi is one of the nation’s leading experts on child development and social policy. She currently serves as Senior Advisor to the Buffett Early Childhood Fund on national initiatives and to the Bernard van Leer Foundation on global child development strategies. She was recently named as a Distinguished Senior Fellow for the Education Commission of the States. Over the past 40 years, Dr. Lombardi has made significant contributions in the areas of child and family policy as an innovative leader and policy advisor to national and international organizations and foundations and as a public servant. She served in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the first Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development (2009-2011) in the Obama Administration, and as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and External Affairs in Administration for Children and Families and the first Commissioner of the Child Care Bureau among other positions (1993-1998) during the Clinton Administration. Outside of public service, she served as the founding chair of the Birth to Five Policy Alliance (now the Alliance for Early Success) and as the founder of Global Leaders for Young Children. She currently serves on the Board of Trustees for Save the Children and the Board of Directors for the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning. She also directs Early Opportunities LLC, focusing on innovation, policy and philanthropy.

Rima Malhotra resides in Chicago and has been working in the field of early childhood development and education, with children, families and educators, for over twenty seven years, with specific concentration in birth to five. She’s had the opportunity to study the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education and to implement the principles in child care settings with infants, toddlers and preschoolers (blended funding contexts- Early Head Start/Head Start, Action for Children, Prevention Initiative/Preschool for All). Rima likes to incorporate the idea about how our image of children, parents, and teachers determines our interactions with them and our plan for learning and curriculum. She currently works at Chicago Public Schools, in the office of early childhood- funding and supporting community child care organizations to implement state funded prevention preschool and infant toddler programs. A major initiative coming out of her office for programs administering infant and toddler childcare is the continuity of relationships/care model. All the brain research tells us that children learn and thrive in the context of trusting and secure relationships. She believes it is all of our responsibilities to ensure that young children, especially the youngest, the most vulnerable, are in learning environments that support their whole development.

Debi Mathias serves as the Director of the QRIS National Learning Network for the BUILD Initiative. Prior to her work with BUILD, Debi was the Director of Early Learning Services for the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) for seven years. Her responsibilities included design, implementation and accountability for teams responsible for a variety of programs and initiatives including Keystone STARS, Family Support programs, state Pre-K program, state Head Start program and the Head Start State Collaboration Office, the state’s professional development system, standards aligned systems, the PELICAN data base system, program evaluation and research. Debi was program Director for the SUM Child Development Inc. from 1978 to 2005, where she began a child care program that grew into a multi-site NAEYC Accredited early care and education program serving 800+ children ranging in age from six weeks to 12 years. In that role, she led a talented staff of 95+, at six early learning and eleven school age sites and collaborated with Head Start and Early Intervention.
Hannah Matthews is the director of the Child Care and Early Education team at CLASP. Ms. Matthews' expertise is in the areas of child care subsidies, cultural competency, infants and toddlers, and early childhood systems. She has written extensively about financing high quality early care and education systems, the federal child care subsidy program and its importance for low-income families, and state and local policies to create and implement high quality early childhood programs. She is the author or co-author of numerous publications, including several publications on immigrant families’ access to early education, reports on the use of Title I funds for early childhood programs, and analyses of federal and state child care subsidy policies. Ms. Matthews previously held policy analyst and senior policy analyst roles at CLASP. Prior to CLASP, Ms. Matthews held research assistant positions at the National Assembly of Health and Human Service Organizations, the Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies, and Voices for America's Children. She also worked at Human Rights Watch. Ms. Matthews earned a master’s degree in Public Policy from Johns Hopkins University and a bachelor’s degree from The George Washington University.

Maria Victoria Mayoral serves as Senior Policy Analyst at ZERO TO THREE. She works on both the federal and state teams to promote a developmental approach to early childhood policies and provide resources for federal and state policymakers and advocates on the unique developmental needs of infants and toddlers. Prior to joining ZTT, Maria worked at The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families (CHCF) and served as Director for the Early Care and Education Institute. In this role, Maria also managed a diverse funding structure including federal, state, local, and private resources to successfully execute performance-based contracts and programs. Prior to assuming her position at CHCF, Maria served as a clinical researcher at the Center for Children with Special Needs at Tufts Medical Center, the Research Institute for Learning and Development, Harvard's School of Public Health/ Massachusetts General Hospital, and Tufts University's Psychology Department. Maria earned a Master's degree in Child Development with a concentration in Clinical-Developmental Psychology at Tufts University and a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Child Development from Tufts University in Massachusetts.

Anne Mitchell is President of Early Childhood Policy Research, and co-founded the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance. She has written widely on early care and education policy, finance reform and system-building and has worked with more than half of U.S. states and dozens of foundations, as well as with federal agencies and national organizations. Previously she worked at Bank Street College of Education in New York City and directed child care centers in Massachusetts and Vermont. She has a degree in astronomy from Wellesley College and master's in education leadership from Bank Street. Anne was an elected member of the Greenville (NY) Board of Education for 18 years and is a Past-President of the National Association for the Education of Young Children. She has received awards from the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children, the Bank Street College Alumni Association, Scholastic, Inc., National Louis University, the New York State Child Care Coordinating Council and the New York State and the National Associations for Family Child Care. Anne lives in Greene County near Albany, NY.
Calvin Moore is currently the Child Care Services Division Director for the Alabama Department of Human Resources in Montgomery, Alabama. He has also served as the Deputy Director of the Office of Child Care (OCC) in the Administration for Children and Families. He worked previously as the Deputy Director for Child Development Services for the Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity (JCCEO), which operates one of the largest Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Alabama. During his tenure at JCCEO he implemented an expansion of the program, which included contracting with family child care providers and other community based child care programs. He has tirelessly advocated for the expansion of family child care partnerships in existing Head Start and Early Head Start programs. During his brief tenure at Plaza de la Raza Child Development Services, Inc., a private non-profit agency in Los Angeles, CA, where he served as Executive Director from 2006 - 2008, Dr. Moore was instrumental in conducting a $2.5 million capital project that ultimately secured the agency’s future. In 2008, Dr. Moore was the first African American elected President of the National Association for Family Child Care.

Gail Nourse is a senior policy manager, national policy team at the Ounce of Prevention Fund, where she focuses on peer learning among states and individualized state consultation to Arizona, Colorado and Florida. Prior to her work at the Ounce, Ms. Nourse served as the first director of the Pennsylvania Key, where she provided statewide leadership in the development of an integrated and coordinated system of program quality improvements and professional development supports for the field of early childhood education, as well as community outreach and business engagement. This included providing oversight and accountability in the implementation of the Head Start Collaboration Office, Keystone STARS, PA Pre-K Counts, Keystone Babies, Head Start Supplemental Program, Early Head Start and other initiatives developed in collaboration with the Office of Child Development and Early Learning. Ms. Nourse has a masters of social work from Boston University.

Abena Ocran-Jackson became Interim Senior Director of the NAEYC Academy in January 2013. She is responsible for maintaining the reputation of NAEYC Accreditation of Programs for Young Children as the gold standard of excellence in early childhood education, reflecting current evidence from research and practice. Abena and her staff ensure that NAEYC Accreditation supports continuous quality improvement, is rigorous but not burdensome, and provides a valid and reliable assessment of program quality. She also supports the work of the Council for NAEYC Accreditation, an authority delegated by the NAEYC Governing Board to ensure the equity, integrity, and accountability of NAEYC Accreditation. Throughout her career, Abena has occupied several positions for NAEYC and accrued more than 15 years of experience in NAEYC Accreditation. She holds a bachelor's degree in Human Development from Howard University and a master's degree in Nonprofit Management from Trinity University. Before joining NAEYC, she was a toddler and preschool teacher.
Kelly Perez came to the BUILD Initiative from Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper’s office where she served as the Human Services Policy Adviser. Coming to the state from a local early childhood council, Kelly brought on-the-ground experience integrating health, social emotional health, and family engagement into state early childhood system building. Kelly helped Colorado create its Office of Early Childhood and led many statewide initiatives including reducing prescription drug misuse/abuse, and the creation of the nation’s first marijuana policies using a public health framework as a guide. She has over 20 years of professional experience working in health and human services policy, and working for equity-focused organizations serving children and families. Kelly has a Master’s Degree in Social Work with a focus on Health Policy and International Studies from the University of Denver. She has three children by birth (9, 11, and 16) and two bonus boys (16 and 20) by good fortune. Kelly, her Love and the kids, live in Denver.

Dara Piltz is the owner and President of Pro Meeting Management, a meeting planning company she founded in 2009. She has been a corporate meeting planner for the past 23 years, coordinating and executing all aspects associated with events such as trade shows, conventions, product launches, business meetings and incentive travel for an independent meeting planning firm in Dallas, as well as a non-profit association in Denver. Working with fortune 500 clients, she arranged incentive group programs attending high profile sporting events such as the Super Bowl, the NCAA Final Four and the World Series. She has planned and executed incentive programs for clients traveling to Mexico, Bermuda and Paris, France. Dara has a bachelor’s degree in Hotel and Restaurant Management from Kansas State University and currently resides in Wisconsin with her husband of 15 years and her 10 year-old son and 9 year-old daughter.

Bentley Ponder is the Director of Research and Evaluation at Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). Dr. Ponder leads DECAL’s engagement in several distinct projects that include evaluating the process of determining licensing compliance, validating the state’s new Quality Rating and Improvement System, conducting a longitudinal study of Georgia’s Pre-K Program, measuring interrater reliability, and researching the implementation of new professional development for Georgia’s Pre-K teachers. He was part of the writing team that submitted and was awarded a Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge grant in 2013. Originally from Nashville, Tennessee, he completed his Ph.D. in Sociology from Georgia State University and has been with DECAL since 2005.
Karen Ponder is an early childhood consultant, a member of the BUILD team, and the former President and CEO of the North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc. She helped to create Smart Start and administered it at the state level and oversaw community partnerships in all 100 NC counties for 15 years. She helped to develop North Carolina’s pre-kindergarten plan and served on a state advisory panel to launch More at Four (now NC PreK). Karen has been involved in all aspects of early care and education, as a teacher, center director, board member, teacher educator and government policy maker. She graduated Summa Cum Laude from North Carolina State University and also studied at Anderson University and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. She is currently a member of the Advisory Boards of the McCormick-Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership, the Frank Porter Graham Executive Leadership Board and serves on the National Advisory Panel for the FirstSchool Initiative.

Libbie Poppick is a Partner in Opportunities Exchange, a nonprofit consulting group whose mission is to build quality and financial sustainability in early care and education through the formation of Shared Service Alliances. Libbie brings over twenty-five years of business and private foundation work to Shared Services, with a strong understanding of child care issues and what organizations need in order to form partnerships. In addition to her work with Opportunities Exchange, she was previously Executive Director and is currently a Trustee of The Frog Rock Foundation, a private foundation serving low-income children in Westchester County, New York. Libbie graduated with honors in psychology from Northwestern University, and holds a Masters in Business Administration from the Harvard Business School.

Elliot Regenstein leads the Ounce of Prevention Fund’s national policy consultation practice and coordinates its overall state and national policy efforts. He has extensive experience in working directly with states on policy development, and is a frequent speaker and author on topics including governance, data systems, and linkages between early learning and K–12. He also partners with the First Five Years Fund to support policy change at the federal level. Regenstein was one of the chief architects of Illinois’ 2006 Preschool for All program while serving in the governor’s office as director of education reform. Regenstein co-chaired the Illinois Early Learning Council from 2004 until April 2009 and currently serves as a member of the council’s executive committee, co–chairing its data, research and evaluation committee. He holds a bachelor of arts in history from Columbia University and a law degree from the University of Michigan, and after law school served as a clerk to the Hon. Kenneth F. Ripple on the United State Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.
Sue Reynolds has 25 years of experience working as an educator, administrator and consultant in the field of early childhood education. Currently, she coordinates the Prevention Initiative-Center Based Program for the Chicago Public Schools in the Office of Early Childhood Education. The program is a partnership with 70 child care programs in community based agencies throughout the city that serves more than 2,500 children and families. Ms. Reynolds holds a BA and M.Ed. in child development with a specialization in infancy.

Vanessa Rich brings over three decades of executive administrative experience to her role as the Deputy Commissioner. In her current position, Ms. Rich is responsible for oversight policy development and implementation of the federally funded Head Start program. Ms. Rich has an equally impressive portfolio as an educator with classroom experience from pre-school to post graduate levels and has received numerous awards including The Publicity Club of Chicago’s 2006 Golden Trumpet Award for outstanding community relations to increase Latino enrollment. Recently Ms. Rich was appointed as chairman of the National Head Start Association.

Meghan Robinson, a native of Detroit, serves as the BUILD Initiative’s Learning Community and State Services Manager, providing support to states in creating comprehensive early learning systems. Her work at BUILD includes facilitation and planning for learning community programs, website support, social media management, communications for the QRIS National Learning Network, and assisting with funding requests. She previously interned at Teaching Strategies, Inc. and Women in Government before spending three years in event management with Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants and a year as conference planner with ARAMARK, all in the Washington, D.C. area. A graduate of The George Washington University with a B.A. in Hispanic languages and literature and a minor in psychology, Meghan also studied at the Universidad de Salamanca in Spain.

Judy Reidt-Parker has worked in the early childhood field for over 30 years. She received her Bachelor’s Degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education from Wheelock College in 1985. Her first job was as staff for a parent cooperative nursery school. Over the next 11 years she developed afterschool programming, designed and implemented an intergenerational preschool and directed a multi-site child care program. Judy obtained her Masters’ Degree in Leadership and Policy from Wheelock College in 1996, while working as a program manager for the local Head Start grantee. She became the Director of Child & Family Services at that agency in 2001. In her directorship, she oversaw the home visiting and center based programming for over 300 children in Early Head Start and Head Start as well as child care services for 180 children 6 weeks to 8 years old.

From 2007- 2012, Judy was a consultant and policy analyst for the Maine Children’s Alliance. Judy provided data and analysis to state government, legislators, community leaders and philanthropists on early childhood systems issues.

In 2013, Judy worked for the John T. Gorman Foundation, helping to craft an early childhood investment plan focused on improving the quality of experiences for young children ages birth to 8 years old. In 2014, Judy returned to her role as an independent consultant. She uses her education and practical experience to help improve early childhood systems and increase positive outcomes for children and families.
Yvette Sanchez Fuentes currently serves as President for the National Alliance for Hispanic Families. She most recently served as the Director of the Office of Head Start. Prior to her appointment, Ms. Sanchez Fuentes served as the Executive Director of the National Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Association (NMSHSA). She worked with early education services, policies and resources for migrant and seasonal farm worker children and their families. Before joining NMSHSA, Yvette worked for the Education Development Center where she was the Early Childhood Specialist for the International Systems Division and provided technical assistance to projects in Honduras, El Salvador, and Egypt. Ms. Sanchez Fuentes has served as a National Head Start Fellow where she provided consultation in literacy, parent education, child care collaborations, and program improvement to Migrant and Seasonal Head Start and other early childhood education programs nationwide. Yvette began her career at Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo, Inc. where she managed the family child care initiative in the migrant and seasonal Head Start program. She received her B.A. in Liberal Arts from California State Polytechnic University.

Rachel Schumacher is an independent Early Childhood Policy Consultant and nationally recognized expert on early learning and development policy. She has consulted for agencies and organizations at the federal, state, and local levels seeking to identify and amplify policy opportunities to enhance the lives of children and families. Prior to launching her consulting business, Ms. Schumacher was a Senior Fellow at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), a leading national policy research and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the lives of low-income people. In her 11 years at CLASP, she developed policy materials and tools related to: infant and toddler child care and Early Head Start policies, state early childhood systems, enhancing quality standards, and federal law and regulation for the Child Care and Development Fund and Head Start/Early Head Start. Before CLASP, Ms. Schumacher worked both inside and outside government on early childhood policy issues in Massachusetts and Ohio. She graduated from Brown University and the Irving B. Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago. She resides in Washington, DC with her husband and two young sons.

Nancy Shier is a former vice president of Illinois policy at the Ounce of Prevention Fund, having served as its principal strategist in the areas of Illinois policy and governmental relations. Ms. Shier spearheaded the organization's legislative and administrative advocacy activities, spanning a spectrum of issues that impact very young children's growth and development, including education, health care, child care, mental health and professional development. She served as the director of the Ounce’s Kids Public Education and Policy Project (Kids PEPP) from 1989 to 2011 and was Vice President for Illinois policy from 2011 to 2013. Ms. Shier was instrumental in the creation of the Early Childhood Block Grant and the infant-toddler set aside in Illinois' Preschool for All program and continues to work as a consultant for the Ounce of Prevention Fund and the BUILD Initiative.
Mimi Toelle is the assistant director of grantee support services at the Ounce of Prevention Fund, where she has worked since January 2009. She has a master’s degree in early childhood education from George Washington University and more than 35 years of experience in early childhood education programs. Ms. Toelle began her work in the field in a full-day Head Start program in rural Montour Falls, New York. She has been working with Head Start programs ever since, except for a few years when she was the executive director of an early literacy organization that put high-quality children’s literature into the hands of teachers and children in preschool classrooms in Head Start, child care and Chicago Public Schools. She has managed networks of child care and Head Start programs in several agencies in Chicago and has experience with the braided funding of Head Start and subsidized child care. Since joining the Ounce she has focused on providing training and technical assistance to Early Head Start programs.

Louise Stoney is an independent consultant specializing in early care and education finance and policy and co-founder of both the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance and Opportunities Exchange. Louise has worked with state and local governments, foundations, national policy organizations, early care and education (ECE) providers, industry intermediaries and child advocacy groups in more than 40 states and cities. In addition to leading the national Shared Services movement, Louise is currently focused on effective Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) implementation, innovative ECE policy, and using cost-modeling techniques to inform ECE finance. Louise writes occasionally for Exchange magazine, including: The Iron Triangle: A Simple Formula for ECE Finance (March/April 2013 issue), First You Have to Pay the Bills: Training and Technical Assistance Focused on the Business Side of ECE (September/October 2012) and Shared Services: A Powerful Strategy to Support Sustainability of ECE Businesses (for the September 2009 issue). Additional publications, among many, include: Shared Services: A Support Strategy for Race-to-the-Top Early Learning Challenge; Early Care & Education Compensation and Policy Options for Louisiana; Using Tax Credits to Help Finance ECE; Sound Business Management as a Key Ingredient of ECE; and, Shared Services: A New Business Model to Support Scale and Sustainability in Early Care and Education. For more information on Louise’s work, go to www.opportunities-exchange.org or www.earlychildhoodfinance.org.

Phil Sirinides is a statistician and researcher with expertise in quantitative research methods and the development and use of integrated data systems for public-sector planning and evaluation. His interests include early childhood programming, educational leadership, program evaluation, and comprehensive school reform. As a Senior Researcher at the Consortium for Policy Research in Education at the University of Pennsylvania, he plans and conducts studies in the areas of estimating intervention impacts and measuring teacher effectiveness. Formerly, as Director of Research and Evaluation for Early Childhood at the Pennsylvania Department of Education, he developed and implemented a broad research program to inform and promote the effectiveness of Pennsylvania’s children and family services.
Yasmina Vinci is the Executive Director of the National Head Start Association (NHSA). She came to NHSA after several years as founder of EDGE Consulting Partners where she pursued a variety of projects in early education. Yasmina founded EDGE after receiving her Master’s degree in Public Administration from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. Her experience is grounded in service as executive director of an early care and education program serving low-income families. In New Jersey state government, she supervised Head Start research, administered the Dependent Care Grant, and planned for the state’s initial implementation of the Child Care and Development Block Grant. Ms. Vinci also brings to her NHSA role over ten years of executive director experience at NACCRRA (currently Child Care Aware America). She serves on the Governing Board of the Council for Professional Recognition, numerous national advisory boards and is a member of the International Organizing Committee for the World Forum on Early Care and Education.

Margie Wallen has played numerous roles in advocating for public policies and investments that promote the healthy development of children from birth to age five. As director of policy partnerships for national policy at the Ounce of Prevention Fund, she partners with and supports early childhood leaders in states as they protect, improve and grow public and private investment, policies and high-quality early learning and development services targeted to at-risk infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Prior to her current role, she coordinated the work of the Illinois Early Learning Council, which developed the Preschool for All report upon which Illinois’ birth-to-five Preschool for All program is built. She has more than 28 years of experience in public policy and has consulted on a variety of state initiatives to enhance access to high-quality early care and education, including designing and implementing a comprehensive early childhood professional development system. She is a member of the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership’s advisory board, the Center for Early Education Evaluation at HighScope’s advisory panel, and the Opportunities Exchange Shared Services advisory council. She holds a master’s degree from the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration.

Grace Whitney is a developmental psychologist and currently the director of Connecticut’s Head Start State Collaboration Office. She began her career as a preschool teacher in special education and as a home visitor for at-risk families of infants and toddlers, and has since worked in a variety of clinical and administrative positions in early childhood, community mental health, human services, and on aide teams abroad. Dr. Whitney has taught full time and as an adjunct instructor in developmental psychology, statistics, and public policy and is published on topics related to her work. She holds degrees in child and human development, family studies, and public administration and is endorsed as an Infant Mental Health Policy Mentor.
Billie Young is Senior Advisor for NAEYC’s Early Childhood Workforce Systems Initiative. Previously, she served as State Technical Assistance Specialist for the National Child Care Information Center, serving Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Prior to that, Billie was the Director of Early Learning and Family Support for the City of Seattle. Young has 30 years of experience working in education and community services involving child care, Head Start, preschool, family support, school age care and professional development. She specializes in public/private partnerships, strategic planning, cross-sector systems development, program quality improvement, early childhood finance, grant making and community engagement. Her publications include NAEYC’s Public Policy Report, Strategic Directions: Technical Assistance in State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems and co-authoring an economic impact analysis for the child care industry in Washington State. Young earned a master’s degree in social work from the University of Washington and a bachelor’s degree in education from Central Michigan University.

Karen Yarbrough is formerly the director of policy planning and knowledge at the Ounce of Prevention Fund. Ms. Yarbrough was responsible for direction, planning, and oversight of policy content and positioning across the national and Illinois policy divisions. During her tenure at the Ounce, Karen played numerous leadership roles to advance the Ounce’s policy agenda including having served as director of the Birth to Five Project, Illinois’ Build Initiative, and serving as co-chair of the infant toddler committee of the Illinois Early Learning Council. In addition to having expertise in building and coordinating comprehensive early childhood systems and funding streams, Ms. Yarbrough has a specific depth of knowledge in the area of infants, toddlers and their families and the funding streams, systems and programs supporting them. She has authored several publications on programs, services, and policies for infants and toddlers and is a frequent presenter at state, national and international conferences. Ms. Yarbrough holds a master’s degree from the University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration. She resides in Chicago with her husband and three sons.