



The Alliance for Excellent Education
Presents a Webinar on

Going to Scale: Comprehensive Birth-Through-Grade-Twelve State Literacy Plans

Thursday, January 5, 2012 ♦ 1:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m., ET

Speaker Biographies

Sarah Bolton

Legislative Assistant, Office of U.S. Senator Patty Murray

Sarah Bolton currently serves as a legislative assistant for U.S. Senator Patty Murray, advising her on education, children's issues, civil rights, nutrition, and welfare. Prior to her time in Senator Murray's office, Ms. Bolton served on the staff of the Senate Budget Committee and interned for then-House Majority Whip Congressman James Clyburn. Ms. Bolton is a native of North Carolina. She has a BA degree in English from Appalachian State University and an MEd in higher education and student affairs from the University of South Carolina.

Melissa Colsman

Executive Director, Teaching and Learning Unit, Colorado Department of Education

Melissa Colsman currently serves as executive director of teaching and learning at the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) where she oversees academic and instructional support, including literacy; language, culture, and equity; early childhood initiatives; and health and wellness. Ms. Colsman has been with CDE since 2008 where she also served as the mathematics content specialist.

Before coming to CDE, Ms. Colsman was the district K–12 mathematics coordinator for the Cherry Creek School District in Aurora, Colorado where she also taught middle school mathematics for fifteen years. As a classroom teacher, Ms. Colsman received recognition for her expertise, including the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, which is the highest award a mathematics or science teacher can receive. As an educational leader, Ms. Colsman has spoken at numerous state, regional, and national conferences on effective instruction, especially for learners who struggle.

Ms. Colsman has a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies in mathematics, science, and technology from the University of Northern Colorado. She is working on a PhD in educational leadership and innovation at the University of Colorado at Denver.

Mariana Haynes, PhD

Senior Fellow, Alliance for Excellent Education

Mariana Haynes is a senior fellow at the Alliance for Excellent Education where she works on middle and high school policy development. Prior to joining the Alliance in March 2010, Dr. Haynes served for ten years as director of research for the National Association of State Boards of Education. In that role, she developed, directed, and evaluated grants and projects involving in-depth examinations of state education policy in a range of areas including education leadership, assessment, adolescent literacy, early childhood education, and improving low-performing schools.

Dr. Haynes has written extensively on research and policy areas and has published a number of reports subsequent to yearlong study groups comprised of state board of education members from across the country. She provided extensive technical assistance to a large network of states on the design of leadership development systems and launched state-led coalitions to build policy frameworks and capacity in advancing early childhood education and comprehensive adolescent literacy initiatives.

Previously, Dr. Haynes was the senior monitoring official at the Rhode Island State Department of Education and was responsible for ensuring statewide implementation of special education and school support policies to advance systemic reform in special and general education. She earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Delaware, a master of education degree from the University of Illinois, and a doctorate degree in special education from the University of Washington.

Jill Slack, PhD

Director, Literacy Office, Louisiana Department of Education

Jill Slack is director of literacy at the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) where she plays a lead role in the administration and implementation of Louisiana's birth-through-grade-twelve literacy efforts. Dr. Slack has vast experience managing literacy programs at the state and local levels. She is responsible for the overall management of Louisiana's Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program and also manages the activities of the State Literacy Team, which is charged with the development, continuous improvement, dissemination, and implementation of Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan.

Prior to joining LDOE in September 2008, Dr. Slack designed and provided training and ongoing support to state, local, and intermediate agencies in reading, writing, and school improvement strategies. She also served as a reading specialist, administrator, and classroom teacher; English as a second language instructor; research associate/site trainer and program evaluator for a national reform program; and an assistant professor in higher education.

Dr. Slack received a BA degree in elementary education from the University of Florida, an MEd degree with a specialty in reading from Our Lady of Holy Cross College, and a PhD degree in curriculum and instruction from the University of New Orleans. She is certified to serve as a city supervisor of instruction, principal, and district superintendent.