

School-Family-Community Partnerships

Jump into this interactive session putting the family into school-family-community partnership policies and practices. Using the [Dual Capacity-Building Framework](#) and [A Nation at Hope report](#) as discussion guides, panelists will facilitate a dialogue among participants about how districts set up partnerships and nurture relationships to align their strategies to support students. Explore together how districts are effectively bringing systems and structures together to address equity issues, with examples from the DCPS Office of Family and Public Engagement

Shanita Burney

**Chief of the Office of Family and Public Engagement
District of Columbia Public Schools**



Shanita Burney serves as the Chief of the Office of Family and Public Engagement for the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). The Office of Family Engagement supports parents and families in developing strong home/school relationships, fosters business and community partnerships, and spearheads stakeholder engagement efforts, including the facilitation of focus groups, community taskforces, and other public meetings to inform district-level policies and initiatives. Prior to this role, Burney was responsible for leading the Community Engagement division within the office and before that, led the afterschool programs across DCPS in the Office of Out-of-School Time Programs. For 12 years, Burney led out-of-school time programs in DC's nonprofit sector, most notably with the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation and Covenant House Washington. At these organizations, she worked to build and deliver an integrated and coordinated out-of-school time system that assured high-quality opportunities for DC students so that they would engage fully in their development and learning, and enter high school, college, and beyond. She received her B.A. in Psychology from Winthrop University, her M.A. in Counseling Psychology from Bowie State University, and an Executive Masters in Leadership from Georgetown University.

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Merita Irby
Co-Founder & Executive Vice President
Forum for Youth Investment



Merita is a chief architect of both the Forum and its signature initiative, Ready by 21®. Having founded the Forum with Karen Pittman in 1998, she is managing partner of Big Picture Approach Consulting and a coach to state and local partnerships. Merita works with leaders in school districts, governmental departments, community collaboratives and non-governmental organizations nationwide. Merita began her career as a classroom teacher in Central America and inner-city schools in the United States. As a senior research associate at Stanford University, she worked on a five-year study of community-based urban youth organizations and co-authored *Urban Sanctuaries: Neighborhood Organizations in the Lives and Futures of Inner-City Youth*. Teaming with Karen

Pittman at the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, Merita directed a multi-site study on school collaboration with youth organizations. In 1995, she joined Karen in starting the President's Crime Prevention Council, chaired by Vice President Al Gore. They then joined the International Youth Foundation, charged with creating its Learning Department to facilitate learning among the foundation's Global Partner Network and developing a U.S. strategy – work that later gave rise to the Forum. Merita has also served on the boards and advisory committees for numerous organizations, including the American Camp Association and the Civic Mission of Schools. Merita earned a master's degree in Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

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S. Kwesi Rollins
Vice President for Leadership and Engagement
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A member of IEL's Senior Leadership Team, Kwesi Rollins guides IEL's portfolio of programs designed to develop and support leaders with a particular emphasis on Family and Community Engagement, Early Childhood Education and Community-based Leadership Development. Kwesi directs the District Leaders Network on Family and Community Engagement and Leaders for Today and Tomorrow, an initiative that designs and delivers professional learning and support opportunities for school and district leaders. Kwesi has years of experience working with local communities and state agencies to improve cross-sector collaboration and service delivery systems supporting children, youth

and families. Mr. Rollins provided technical assistance and training to a range of state and county agencies, school districts, local schools and community-based organizations in projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Working with young people is also a personal passion for Kwesi who has special expertise in resiliency and youth development. He has been recognized as the Big Brother of the Year in the District of Columbia and is an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of the National Capitol Area. He holds an MSW degree from the University of Maryland at Baltimore School of Social Work where he was a Maternal and Child Health Leadership Training Fellow.

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