

Politics of State Education in the Age of ESSA

What are the core tenants of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and what do we know about where states are in the process of implementing their ESSA state plans? Are these plans a true representation of what is happening on the ground? Leaders from key national organizations will discuss these questions, along with the federal policies that are emerging in response to state plans and the politics of federal and state priorities, especially in terms of accountability and resource equity.

Speakers: **Lynn Jennings**, The Education Trust; **Lindsay Jones**, National Center for Learning Disabilities; **Maria Ferguson**, The George Washington University (moderator)

Maria Ferguson

**Executive Director, Center on Education Policy
The George Washington University**



Maria Voles Ferguson is the Executive Director of the Center on Education Policy (CEP) at the George Washington University (GWU) in Washington, DC. CEP is a trusted, nonpartisan source for education research and analysis for policymakers, educators and the public. For over 20 years, Maria has been an education thought leader, working on research, policy and practice at the federal, state and local levels. Maria began her career as a journalist and her background and experience cover almost every area of communications.

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Lynn Jennings

**Senior Director, National & State Partnerships
The Education Trust**



As Ed Trust's senior director of national and state partnerships, Lynn leads the organization's initiatives to engage and mobilize a diverse group of advocates at the national, state, and local levels who are working to forever close gaps in opportunity and achievement. The Education Trust's Field team is especially focused on state-based engagement around implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act, passed in 2015, and working to improve access to and success in college for historically underserved students.

Lynn previously served as the Senior Legislative Affairs Associate at the Ed Trust where she designed and implemented federal and state legislative campaigns around the organization's K-12 and higher education equity work. In this position, she worked with several federal and state decision makers to inform and further policies that will increase the academic performance of low-income students and students of color.

Before joining Ed Trust, Lynn worked for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, where she directed the foundation's professional fellowship programs for young professionals working on Capitol Hill. She was responsible for the strategic management of all of the foundation's education programs.

Lynn has a rich history in education. She taught English, African American studies, and women's studies courses at varied institutions of higher education including Spelman College, Columbia College Chicago, and University of Wisconsin-Madison. She received a B.A. in English from Spelman College and her Ph.D. in English from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Lindsay Jones

CEO

National Center for Learning Disabilities



Lindsay E. Jones is the President and CEO of NCLD, a national nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the lives of the 1 in 5 individuals with learning disabilities and attention issues. Lindsay has been with NCLD for over 5 years and previously served as NCLD's Vice President, Chief Policy & Advocacy Officer. In that role, she designed and implemented NCLD's legislative strategy in Washington, DC, aimed at advancing government policies that support the success of individuals with learning and attention issues in school, at work and in life. She also developed advocacy campaigns and worked closely with NCLD's grassroots network of committed parents.

Before joining NCLD, Lindsay was the senior director for policy and advocacy at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), where she led CEC's federal legislative advocacy and worked with dedicated educator advocates across the country. She was instrumental in developing and pushing forward many policies at CEC that supported classroom teachers in their work with children with disabilities and their families.

Lindsay has a lifelong passion for education. She grew up in a family of advocates committed to working for individuals with disabilities. Prior to her national policy work, she was a partner with the law firm of Gust Rosenfeld in Phoenix. As a practicing attorney, she advised schools and families on special education compliance and litigation. Her practice included Office for Civil Rights investigations, state department of education complaints, IDEA and Section 504 due process hearings and litigation. She is admitted and has litigated before the US Supreme Court, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, and the federal district courts and state and administrative courts in Arizona.

Lindsay earned her undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Arizona and has a master's degree in Latin American studies from the University of New Mexico. She lives in Virginia with her husband and son, who attends public school.

