



# Diversity's Role in Student Achievement

 @Education\_AIR @NASBE #EdDiversity

Tuesday, June 9, 2015 | Washington, D.C.

## Schedule

Noon – 1:15 p.m.

- **Welcome & Introduction**

**Kris Amundson**  
Executive Director, NASBE

- **Presentation**

**Sami Kitmitto**  
Principal Researcher, AIR

- **Discussion**

**Peter Cookson**  
Director, The Equity Project at AIR  
(moderator)

**Chris Braunlich**  
President, Virginia Board of Education

**Kimberly Charis**  
Director of School Climate, Discipline  
and Equity, NASBE

**Leticia Smith-Evans**  
Senior Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense  
Fund

- **Q&A**

## BIOGRAPHIES

### **Kris Amundson**

Executive Director, NASBE



Hon. Kristen Amundson brings more than two decades of experience as a policymaker to NASBE. She represented the 44th District in the Virginia General Assembly from 1999-2009. During that time, she was a member of Virginia's P-16 Council and the Southern

Regional Education Board (SREB). Before successfully running for an Assembly seat, Amundson—a former teacher—served for nearly a decade on the Fairfax County, Va., School Board, including two years as its chairwoman.

Most recently, Amundson was the senior vice president for external affairs at Education Sector, an independent think tank. She writes frequently on education issues and has been published in the *Washington Post* and the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, among others.

## Chris Braunlich

President, Virginia Board of Education



Chris N. Braunlich was appointed to the Virginia Board of Education in July 2011 by Gov. Robert F. McDonnell. Braunlich was elected president of the board February 2014.

He is vice president of the Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy, and has worked in public policy for a variety of organizations since 1980. He served as a member of the Fairfax County School Board from January 1996 to December 2003 and currently serves on the Board of College Access Fairfax.

A graduate of Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York, he resides in the Alexandria area of Fairfax County with his wife, Eileen. They are the parents of four children, Christian, Stephen, Brian and Catherine.

## Kimberly Charis

Director of School Climate, Discipline and Equity, NASBE



Kimberly Charis is the director of NASBE's school climate, discipline and equity portfolio. She provides strategic direction for the organization's advocacy work to ensure that all students receive equal educational opportunities. This includes strengthening the capacity of state boards of education to create policies that improve student outcomes and reduce their involvement in the juvenile justice system. She also works to foster collaborative partnerships between stakeholders in state and local governments and within nonprofit and private sector organizations.

Charis' work focuses primarily on monitoring the progress of states' school climate and discipline policies and providing technical assistance to eliminate

disciplinary disparities. She also promotes innovation and business development for NASBE's Center for Safe and Healthy Schools and is currently working to expand strategic partnerships around youth sports concussion "return-to-learn" policies. She holds a bachelor of arts degree in psychology from Spelman College and a master of science degree in social policy and law from University of Pennsylvania.



## Peter Cookson

Director, The Equity Project at AIR

Peter W. Cookson, Jr., is a principal researcher and director of The Equity Project at AIR. His knowledge of schools and education comes from a lifetime of teaching, researching and working to improve the quality of education for all children. Dr. Cookson teaches courses in educational policy, inequality and social innovation in the sociology department at Georgetown University.

Dr. Cookson is the author or co-author of more than 15 books on education reform and policy. His most recent publications include: *Class Rules: Exposing Inequality in America's High Schools* (Teachers College Press 2013—winner of the best book of 2014, The Society of Professors of Education), *Hearts on Fire: Twelve Stories of Today's Visionaries Igniting Idealism in Action* (2013 Random House); *The Red Cadillac* (Amazon Single 2013); and *Sacred Trust: A Children's Education Bill of Rights* (Corwin, 2011). Currently, he is completing books on blended learning and equity and education.

He is on numerous editorial boards including the Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education (Sage 2012). He blogs regularly for AIR and contributes to popular and scholarly journals and publications. His most recent research focuses on the effects of positive school cultures on students' educational mobility. Dr. Cookson holds a doctorate in the sociology of education from New York University and a master's degree in religion from the Yale Divinity School.

## Sami Kitmitto

Principal Researcher, Education Program, AIR



Sami Kitmitto is a principal researcher at AIR. He is an economist and quantitative analyst specializing in quasi-experimental model development and analysis. He is currently project director for the National Evaluation of Magnet Schools. He is also deputy project director on the NAEP-State Analysis project with the U.S. Department of Education where he is leading two tasks: one measuring the change in inclusion rates of students with disabilities on NAEP and a second analyzing achievement gaps using NAEP data.

Dr. Kitmitto has worked on numerous education finance and policy projects including project director for the Educational Opportunities and Performance of Military Students Research Study and on an evaluation of the federal Impact Aid program for ED. Additionally, he recently developed an efficiency index for California public school districts as part of a project documenting how districts have coped with the state's current fiscal crisis and has authored a book chapter on California's paid family leave program. Dr. Kitmitto earned his doctorate in economics with a multi-disciplinary emphasis in economy, justice and society from the University of California, Davis.

## Leticia Smith-Evans

Senior Counsel, NAACP Legal Defense Fund



Dr. Smith-Evans is one of the nation's leading civil rights advocates. She is currently an attorney with the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc. where she uses legal and policy advocacy to ensure access to equal educational opportunities at the pre-K through higher education levels. She is a strong proponent of using multi-stakeholder approaches to close educational opportunity gaps.

Prior to joining LDF, Dr. Smith-Evans was a litigation associate at O'Melveny & Myers LLP, a judicial law clerk to the Hon. Dickinson R. Debevoise of the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey, and a policy advisor and agency liaison to former Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle. She has served as adjunct faculty at a number of educational institutions, including the University of Pennsylvania Law School and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Graduate School of Education. She is also a former public elementary school teacher.

Dr. Smith-Evans received a J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School, Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and B.A. from Williams College. She serves on a number of nonprofit boards and committees. After a national search, Dr. Smith-Evans was recently appointed to the position of Vice President for Institutional Diversity and Equity at Williams College. She will assume the position on July 1, 2015.