



## MARYLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (MECLP)

Sherman Center for Early Learning in Urban Communities

# MECLP NEWS

## Fall 2021

### Message from Louise Corwin

MECLP's second newsletter illustrates the significant progress made in the past six months to support Maryland's early childhood leadership pipeline. As a workforce initiative designed to accelerate cross sector leadership, MECLP strives to build leadership in the early childhood field. In late summer, we selected 14 outstanding early childhood *fellows* to be part of Cohort III and to become *agents of change* in Maryland and beyond. A vibrant Community of Practice (CoP) includes one-on-one mentoring for course completers; a [webinar series](#) led by Cohort I members; intimate [Leadership in Action Conversations](#); and our annual [Leadership Institute](#). For the past six months, the programming of the CoP was focused on equity and social justice in early childhood. With additional funding from MSDE, we expect to complete the development of SHER 602 - a second 3-credit graduate leadership course focused on public policy and advocacy in early childhood. Upon completion of SHER 601 and 602, *fellows* will earn their Endorsement in Early Childhood Leadership from UMBC. We expect to conduct an evaluation of MECLP and offer a Training of Trainers that will create a team of Maryland faculty poised to offer MECLP courses in additional locations, establishing MECLP as Maryland's Early Childhood Leadership Hub.

This newsletter introduces Dr. Jennifer Mata-McMahon, the new Director of the Sherman Center for Early Learning, following in the footsteps of the Sherman Center's inaugural Director Dr. Mavis Sanders. We also welcome to the team Michele Berry, MECLP's new Graduate Assistant, a master's student in Environmental Public Policy at UMBC.

On a sad note, we mention the passing of George Sherman, an outstanding individual and generous supporter of the Sherman Center and the work of MECLP.

Warm Greetings for a joyous holiday season.

*Louise Corwin*

Louise Corwin

Co-Founder - Co-Chair of the MECLP Advisory Committee

### Sherman Center Director

Dr. Jennifer Mata-Mahon is the new Director of the Sherman Center and an Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education at UMBC. She graduated with a BA in Early Childhood Education with an emphasis in Educational Leadership and Administration and received her MA, EdM, and EdD from Teachers College, Columbia University. Her graduate work included an emphasis in Bilingual/Bicultural Education. Since 1995, Dr. Mata-McMahon has been an infant, toddler, preschool, and kindergarten teacher, and has taught in middle school, undergraduate, and graduate levels, both in the US and abroad. In addition to her professional responsibilities in UMBC's early childhood program, Dr. Mata-McMahon



conducts school-based research centered on children's spirituality and bilingual education and provides professional development to in-service and pre-service early childhood educators. We are delighted to be working with Dr. Mata-McMahon.

### Cohort III Fellows

We are delighted to introduce MECLP's Cohort III:



**Amanda Beacham**, Lab School Director and Adjunct Professor, Carroll County Community College

**Tamika Blair-Staton**, Head Start Director, Anne Arundel County

**Raviv Brooks**, Preschool Lead Teacher, Music & Hebrew Specialist, Ohr Kodesh Early Childhood Center, Montgomery County

**Roshon Casey-Lee**, Director of Early Childhood Programs, Prince George's, Montgomery, Calvert, St. Mary's and Charles Counties

**Robyn Graham**, Special Education Teacher Specialist, Birth to Five, Harford County Public Schools

**Margaret (Peg) Jarboe**, Head Start Director, Anne Arundel County

**Robin Mellen**, Head Start Pre-K Teacher, Howard County

**Deanna Morton**, Associate Executive Director of Education, Head Start & Early Head Start, Baltimore City, Baltimore and Anne Arundel Counties

**Bernadine Occhiuzzo**, Teacher / Director, Cedar Lane Nursery School, Montgomery County

**Cherry Price**, Paraprofessional, Prince George's County Public Schools

**Imani Rose**, Center Director, Joshua's Place, Baltimore City; Delegating Nurse

**Lainie Santos Torres**, Montessori Teacher, Montgomery County

**Ameka Smith**, Executive Director, Y of Central Maryland, Baltimore City and Baltimore County

**Nkenge Yasin**, Center Director, Busy Bee Child Care Center, Baltimore City

## Who are the MECLP Fellows?

*"Sitting at the MECLP table with other early childhood fellows from across the state, I realize that I have the skills and ability to make a larger impact. MECLP has not only taught me about early childhood leadership, it has also empowered me to believe in myself and the power of learning from others in the field."*

- Cohort II MECLP Fellow, Kaymi Plank



Kaymi Plank is the Judy Center Community Specialist and the Team Leader for the Early Childhood Team at the Judy Center Early Learning Hub at Robert Morton Elementary School in Carroll County Public Schools. In addition, she serves as a Leadership Team Member on Carroll County's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC). Kaymi has more than 24 years experience in early care and education in Carroll County. Through her participation in MECLP, Kaymi was able to sharpen her leadership skills, learn approaches to leadership, and gain an understanding that her leadership style is situational. In addition, engaging in meaningful learning helped her gain new insight, broaden her horizons, and guide others in their own professional development. Kaymi is now better equipped to broaden her influence outside Carroll County and is empowered to bring positive changes across Maryland.

## Equity and Social Justice

During their summer virtual class session, Cohort II *fellows* heard presentations on equity in early childhood. These sessions were led by Dr. Shana E. Rochester, assistant director of the Sherman Center for Early Learning, and Karen Karten, early learning supervisor and Judy Center coordinator in Somerset County Public Schools.

Dr. Rochester reviewed NAEYC's recommendations for advancing equity and provided examples of equity-focused work in research and practice. *Fellows* also reflected on how they foster a learning community regarding equity issues in light of NAEYC's Recommendation #6 for administrators. Ms. Karten presented a picture of early childhood in Somerset County, a rural Eastern Shore county with the lowest socio-economic status in Maryland. The county uses the lens "Is all programming fair for all students?" and "Does all the programming include all students?" Programs include universal Pre-K4 and Pre-K3 inclusion programs, as well as many family engagement opportunities that meet the diverse needs of the community.

## FACTUALITY- a discussion on structural inequality

To stimulate an awareness of equity and social justice the November Leadership Institute featured Natalie Gilliard leading Factualty, a facilitated dialogue, crash course, and interactive experience that illuminates the issues of structural inequality in America.

Delivered through a two hour Zoom call, which included a debriefing session, attendees assumed the identities of characters unlike themselves, encountering a series of fact-based advantages & limitations based on the intersection of their race, class, gender, faith, sexual orientation, age, and ability.

The goal of the discussion was to acquaint participants with the intricacies of inequality's intentionally-structured foundation and its crippling cyclical nature, help participants dismantle the various preconceived biases associated with various marginalized groups, and help participants to become more self-aware of the issues around structural inequality in their programs, organizations, communities and jurisdictions.

## MECLP Fellows Webinar Series

In an effort to elevate voices from the field and share their experiences as MECLP *fellows*, four Cohort I *fellows* moderated MECLP's first webinar series - **Lifting the Voices From the Field to Bring Equity and Transformational Change in Early Education.**

Having worked for many years in early childhood education, the four *fellows* joined state and national leaders for an urgent call to action to unify the fragmented early care and education system and ensure equitable access for all. Building on the research they had done during the leadership program, they focused on four critical areas in early education:

### The Rebirth of Building Blocks Network: Supporting the Transition to Formal School

Fellow: Stephanie Geddie, Instructional Facilitator for Early Childhood Programs, Howard County Public Schools.

### Advancing the Professional Identity and Capacity of Family Child Care Professionals Through Multiple Avenues.

Fellow: Tiffany Jones, Level 5 EXCELS family child care provider in Montgomery County.

### Creating Effective Systems: Building Interest for a P-3 Alignment in Maryland

Fellow: Christina Lopez, Early Childhood Instructional Resource Teacher for PreK classrooms, Prince George's County Public Schools.

### Empowering Early Childhood Teachers to Achieve Higher Education.

Fellow: Carolina Reyes, Owner/Director of Arco Iris Bilingual Center in Prince George's County.

We invite you to view the webinar recordings on our [website](#).

## Leadership in Action: A Conversation about Equity

*"This conversation on equity was very affirming and eye opening."* - MECLP Fellow

During the fall Leadership in Action Conversations, Mariela Puentes and Carol Gant, from the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC), facilitated two conversations about equity in early childhood settings that triggered an examination of current practices and the ways in which MECLP fellows could promote equity in an intentional manner and incorporate an equity lens within their practice. In addition, they reflected on the multi-faceted nature of equity – cultural equity, racial equity, capacity equity, and language equity – and ways in which the early childhood system in Maryland is implementing an equity lens into their operating principles.