



# EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DOCTORAL PROGRAM NEWSLETTER



## Message from Jerry Steele, EDL Chair

I recently read Jane Goodall's most recent book, *The Book of Hope; A Survival Guide for Trying Times* (2021), which is an interview with her conducted by Douglas Abrams. The context is set against the ongoing pandemic, the implications for the future of our planet, and why there is hope for the future. As leaders navigating these trying times, we must rely on our own sense of who we are and have the confidence in our ability to create a vision for others to follow. In an of itself this is not an easy task. Nevertheless, it is something we must do even if everything seems hopeless.

During the interview with Jane, Abrams asked her what is hope? Jane responded saying that "hope is what enables us to keep going in the face of adversity. It is what we desire to happen, but we must be prepared to work hard to make it so" (Goodall, 2021, p. 8). We have all hoped for the end of the pandemic, but unfortunately it still consumes our thoughts and actions as leaders. As educational leaders, we want to ensure that our school communities are safe for our children. However, we know that this seems like a daunting task especially as gun violence continues to take the lives of school children. Nevertheless, we must resolve ourselves to create the environment we want to build a better future.

During this interview, Abrams uncovered Goodall's four reasons why hope is so important. First "the amazing human intellect, the resilience of nature, the power of youth, and the indomitable human spirit" (2021, p. 35). I would like to focus on "the power of youth" and "the indomitable human spirit." The "power of youth" led Jane to begin the *Roots & Shoots* program with twelve Tanzanian high school students who were concerned about the environment and the poor treatment of children. According to Goodall, "every single individual matters, has a role to play, and makes an impact on the planet – every single day" (p. 113). At first, this group of students were ridiculed for working to clean a beach. However, with this first step, volunteerism in Tanzania became widespread and *Roots and Shoots* programs have spread throughout the world.

The "indomitable human spirit" according to Goodall provides the resilience we all need to move forward. She tells the story of two Chinese friends Jia Haixia and Jia Wenqi. Haixia was blind and Wenqi had lost his arms in childhood. Their village was experiencing the ravages of industrial pollution which affected the land surrounding their community. Wenqi had the idea that he and Haixia should plant trees to mitigate the effects of this environmental disaster. Haixia had no idea how to accomplish this until Wenqi told him that "he would be Haixia's eyes and Haixia would be his arms" (p. 167). Ultimately, ten thousand trees were planted by these two friends.

These continue to be challenging times. As true leaders we must project "the indomitable human spirit." As Margaret Wheatly (2017) noted,

When there is no shared reality and people are flailing for ground, whoever declares a reality that promises to reduce fear becomes the leader. It is always this way, and this is where we are now. This is the reality that summons us to be Warriors for the Human Spirit. (p. 293)

**THE HAPPIEST MAN I EVER KNEW**

Our first important lessons in life come from our parents.

That's where I first learned WHY.

Especially from my father.

When I was a young boy growing up in Queens, a borough of New York City, my father was a truck driver. He worked many, many long hours driving his truck in and around New York City. He'd get up early – 4 or 5 in the morning – and wouldn't come home until 10 or 11 at night.

And yet . . .

I never heard my father complain.

Not once.

Never.

Not only that, but as I think back over my life, I realize that my dad was probably the happiest man I ever knew. He never complained, he was always happy, always pleased with what was going on around him.

And he always had a saying.

He would always say to my sister and me “You know, some day – after you go to school and get more education than I had – you guys will do BETTER.”

That's what he believed: “You guys will do BETTER.”

And he really and truly believed that we would.

You see, my dad had a WHY.

He knew why he did what he did.

He knew what his life was all about.

And despite living a difficult life in many respects, his WHY made it all work for him.

He never complained.

He was always happy.

**“You guys will do BETTER.”**

**And he really and truly believed that we would.**

Yes, he worked long hours. He worked very long hours. He worked in the rain, snow, and sleet. And he knew that he'd never have a big title or a lot of money or a big house. We never even had a house – we always lived in an apartment.

But in his mind my dad knew that his children would do BETTER than he did. He believed that. Encouraged that. He supported that. He lived to see it happen.

And that was his WHY.

He knew his WHY.

And because he knew his WHY he was a happy, content fellow for 69 years.

He had figured it out.

When things would go wrong in our family or there were problems, he would always say, “Let's just work it out and make it BETTER.”

And that was how he did it. That was how he lived his life.

He wasn't into being the top guy or Number One.

Having a lot of material possessions didn't matter that much to him.

Because what mattered was that he knew his kids would do BETTER.

He knew his WHY.

He had it.

He understood it.

That's why he lived a good, fulfilling, fruitful, happy, and positive life.

And that's what knowing your WHY can do for you.

*John J. Pelizza, Ph.D.*

Dean, Esteves School of Education

**Welcome to the Educational Leadership Program!**

Please welcome Albany Cohort 15, NYC Cohort 9 and our first cohort in a new location- Mid Hudson Valley

**Albany Cohort 15**

Elisa Alvarez, Eric Bell, Cecilia Dansereau-Rumley, Justin Gardner, Matt Slattery, Dan Kalbfliesh, Carrie Phelan

**Mid Hudson Valley Cohort 1**

Patricia Balbuena, Jilliane Beradi, Michele Cohen, Kelly Gelfer, Peter Harris, Amy Moselhi, Erik Wright

**NYC Cohort 9**

Neeta Ahmed, Luis Amaya, Elisa Brown, Kimberly Casaburi, Carry Chan, Paulette Christie, David Cintron, Stacie Harris Clement, Grecian Harrison, Reginald Higgins, Jeffrey Jacobs, Kavita Jagarnath, Myrtelle Mehu, Sherise Michael-Coleman, Lenice Nelson, Lisa Reiter, Roxana Toro, Rachel Velasquez, Shirley Wheeler-Massey

## Highlighting Research into Practice

### Dr. Josephine Yeboah-Van-Ess, NYC Cohort 7



Dr. Josephine Yeboah-Van-Ess is the Deputy Superintendent of Community School District 23 in Brooklyn. Her dissertation was entitled **A Phenomenological Study of the Professional Development Needs of Millennials Principals in Leading a Multigenerational Staff in the Northeast Region of the United States.** Josephine

writes: I entered the Sage EDL program to deepen my capacity as a leader by engaging in purposeful and meaningful research. I wanted my study to be connected to my "why," my work, and my journey as a leader. My research focused on what seemed to be a variable that commonly defined my leadership- my age and status as a *millennial leader*.

I often felt perplexed when asked, "How old are you?" wondering why my age was of question, discussion, and curiosity. Depending on the context in which the question was asked, it was either rooted in admiration or contention. When starting this program, I was a principal who finally found her "sea legs" in navigating the waves while being a millennial principal supporting forty-three staff members of varying ages, beliefs, capacities, and perspectives. In my transition from a principal to a deputy superintendent, I reflected on my experiences with pride, joy, and success. I was able to create a culture of change founded on collaboration and respect. However, galvanizing my staff to work with one accord with a leader that was unlike the leaders they had experienced in the past (in age, race, and gender) was challenging. There was no toolkit, roadmap, or professional learning on the best practices of addressing the age variances between myself and my staff and how generational gaps were potentially impacting the culture of my community.

Many authors recognize the influx of millennials becoming leaders in the workforce and how they require support to successfully lead generationally diverse staff and personnel (e.g., Balda & Mora, 2011; Lewis & Wescott, 2017, Whitacre, 2007). Thus, my dissertation explored the lived experiences of millennial principals in leading multigenerational staff to provide insight on the best strategies for delivering professional development and builds millennial principals' instructional leadership capacity. My literature review also explored multigenerational beliefs, preferences, and culture. As a result, I can engage my leaders in a variety of professional learning that includes providing one-to-one coaching and mentoring to address a principal's individual needs, data-informed and specifically designed learning, and opportunities for collaboration in our new "Aim Higher" principal-to-principal social network initiative. It is exciting to be on the other side as a researcher, utilizing elements of my study and investigating with my recommendations to see how they come to life. I am forever grateful to the program, my dissertation chair, Dr. Alemu, and my professors for the opportunity to stretch, learn, and grow as a student and researcher. I am a more informed and intuitive leader who supports other leaders from a place of reflection and data.

### Dr. Giovanni Virgiglio, Albany Cohort 13



Dr. Giovanni Virgiglio is the Superintendent of the Diocese of Albany Catholic School System. His dissertation is entitled **Exploring the Role of the School Superintendent in Crisis Management.** Giovanni's dissertation utilized one-on-one interviews with twelve superintendents of school districts throughout New York State. All participants experienced

and led their school district through high-profile crises during their tenure. The research sought to determine what behaviors and actions superintendents took when faced with a crisis and which of those behaviors and actions were perceived to be most effective in promoting organizational resilience. Further, data were collected and analyzed to determine if and how superintendents' behaviors and actions varied with internal and external stakeholder groups when managing a crisis.

While the likelihood and probability of school districts encountering major crises remain unknown, superintendents need to anticipate and prepare for such events that have the potential to threaten their organization. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the behaviors and actions of New York State public school superintendents before, during, and after varying crises within their school districts. The research will analyze superintendents' behaviors and actions using Pearson and Mitroff's (1993) five-stage theoretical framework for crisis management and how those behaviors and actions promote organizational resilience.

The overall findings indicated that many of the behaviors and actions superintendents had taken to lead their school districts through a crisis were similar, including 1) crisis detection, planning, and preparation; 2) crisis containment and limitation; and 3) crisis recovery and learning. Superintendents identified communication as a central theme when engaging stakeholders inside and outside the organization. Superintendents' engagement with stakeholder groups varied by 1) crisis communication strategies; 2) crisis communication delivery; and 3) school board engagement. Although there was no clear consensus among the participants as to what behaviors and actions were perceived to have promoted organizational resilience, most superintendents discussed post-crisis recovery, including 1) community building; and 2) community healing.

Several recommendations came from this research but none more critical than the need to amend the existing New York State Education Law relative to school safety. Such amendments should promote post-crisis reflection and action by expanding the role of the district-wide school safety team and charging safety teams to develop comprehensive crisis plans by conducting tabletop exercises to prepare for unanticipated crises that may impact school districts. Moreover, given the increasing threats crises pose to schools, it is clear school districts require the assistance of professional associations to provide professional development for district leaders on how to assess and strengthen the resiliency of their organization. Recommendations for future research are also offered.

## Congratulations to the Newest Sage EDL Graduates May 2021 Graduation

Due to the COVID19 pandemic, May 2021 graduation ceremonies were held in a number of small ceremonies on the Albany campus at Sage. Graduates from both 2020 and 2021 were invited to walk across the stage.

Congratulations to the following graduates from Albany Cohort 12 and NYC Cohort 6.

### **New York City Cohort 6**

Dr. Tessa Alleyne  
 Dr. Kevin Arnold  
 Dr. George Badia  
 Dr. Asheena Baez  
 Dr. Iris Blige  
 Dr. LaWrence Burroughs  
 Dr. Darlene Cameron  
 Dr. Clarence Ellis  
 Dr. Allison Farrington  
 Dr. Jessica Goffredo-Englehart  
 Dr. Mellissa Miller  
 Dr. Adofo Muhammad  
 Dr. Lisette Olivo  
 Dr. Roderick Palton  
 Dr. Greer Phillips  
 Dr. Maria Quail  
 Dr. Vincent Resto  
 Dr. Peta-Gay Tomlinson  
 Dr. Melanie Williams



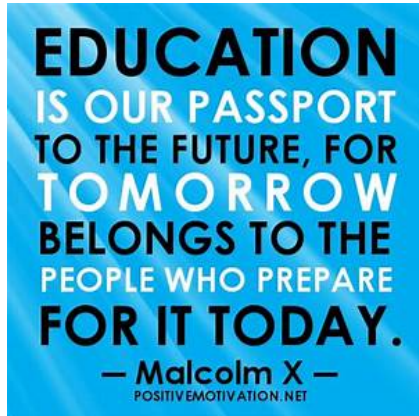
### **Albany Cohort 12**

Dr. Shylah Addante  
 Dr. Tim Callahan  
 Dr. Brita Donovan  
 Dr. Jennie Evans  
 Dr. Christine Jordan  
 Dr. Michael Klugman  
 Dr. Denise Fernandez- Pallozzi  
 Dr. Ady Pina  
 Dr. April Prestipino  
 Dr. Joseph Slichko  
 Dr. Kimberly Stein  
 Dr. Matthew Wentworth  
 Dr. Anne Young

**Dr. Cathie Allain, Albany Cohort 1** retired from the Berlin School District in June of 2020.

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**Dr. Lori Caplan, Albany Cohort 2** retired from Watervliet CSD as Superintendent of Schools.



**Dr. Darlene Westinghouse, Albany Cohort 2** retired from Saugerties CSD as Assistant Superintendent. She recently became a certified grief counselor and facilitates professional development.

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**Dr. Peter DeWitt, Albany Cohort 2** has published a new book in September 2021. *Collective Leader Efficacy: Strengthening Instructional Leadership Teams* from Corwin is available at [Amazon link](#)

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**Dr. Douglas Huntley, Albany Cohort 3** retired from the Queensbury Union Free School District in February of 2020. He was recently appointed as the Interim Superintendent of Schools at the Lake George Central School District. In addition, he co-directs the NYSCOSS Future Superintendents Academy and their New Superintendents Institute.

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**Dr. Barbara Malkas, Albany Cohort 3** was recently nominated and elected to the position of Vice President of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents.

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**Dr. Kimberly Wilkins, Albany Cohort 3**, former superintendent of Albany City School District and current Deputy Commissioner of P - 12 Instructional Support at NYSED. The Board of Regents and State Education Department honored Deputy Commissioner Wilkins with a resolution thanking her for her dedicated service to students across New York State.

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**Dr. Chris Wojeski, Albany Cohort 4** was appointed as the Assistant Superintendent for the Gloversville Enlarged School District in July 2021.

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**Dr. Gary Furman, Albany Cohort 4** has been the NYSCOSS House of Delegates representative for the ONC BOCES since July 2019. In addition, this summer he was awarded the William Deming Award by the NYS Rural Schools Association.

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**Dr. Thomas Reardon, Albany Cohort 4** joined Schalmont Central School District as Superintendent of Schools in July 2020

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**Dr. Richard Rose, Albany Cohort 4** retired from the NY State Education Department in July of 2018. He is teaching Leadership and Ethics and a Seminar in Research Methods at the University at Albany, College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cyber Security. He also received the DAR Medal of Honor for Leadership, Patriotism, and Service in 2018; and was very pleased to be honored by the University at Albany Women's Soccer Team on Faculty Appreciation Night in 2019. In late 2019, he gave some guest lectures on Native Peoples in Upstate New York for the Union College Academy of Lifelong Learning.



**Dr. Vincent Porfirio, Albany Cohort 4**, Department of Defense, was invited to attend the Flight 93 National Memorial's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary September 11<sup>th</sup> (9/11) Remembrance event in Shanksville, Pennsylvania on Saturday, September 11, 2021. The annual event is held for family members of those who perished on Flight 93 during the terrorist attacks. This year's event expanded attendance to approximately 100 special guests ranging from first responders, airline associations leadership, and US Navy Sailors from the USS Somerset (named after the county in Pennsylvania). The keynotes for the event were former President George W. Bush and Vice President Kamala Harris. In his current role with the Department of Defense, Dr. Porfirio has spent the last several years working on training and leadership programs with all three of the 9/11 attack sites to include the Pentagon National Memorial and the New York City 9/11 Memorial and Museum. He has created the program for senior leaders to educate them on the national security impacts of the terrorist attacks that occurred two decades ago. "I was honored and humbled to attend this important event. September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, changed the world and we must do everything we can to "Never Forget and Always Remember!" That is why educating future leaders within the Department of Defense is absolutely critical...we must never repeat that fateful day."

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**Dr. Cosimo Tangorra, Albany Cohort 5**, joined New Hartford School District as Superintendent of Schools as of October 2021. [News Article](#)

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Dr. Cheryl Venettozzi, Albany Cohort 6, joined Holland Patent Central School District as Superintendent of Schools as of December 1, 2021. [News Article](#)

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Dr. Kevin Calacone and Dr. Cheryl Nuciforo, Albany Cohort 7 developed research to examine the effects of COVID-19 in NYS schools. SAANYS published their research "Lessons Learned" in their Vanguard Extras section [Article](#) and they presented *Change without Crisis- What Does it Take?* at SAANYS annual conference in October 2021.



Dr. Lisa Patierne, Albany Cohort 7 and Dr. Brian Bailey, Albany Cohort 8 High School Principal and Superintendent of Ravena Coeymans Selkirk Central School District, recently presented at the State of New York Police Juvenile Officer's Association (SNPJOA). Dr. Patierne was the keynote speaker on day 1 and presented "Guarding the Guardians Through RESPONSIVE Leadership." Designed to help police understand and manage their own trauma, so they can understand the trauma in the community in which they serve. Dr. Bailey presented on leadership and school/police/community/relationships

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Dr. Lisa Patierne, Albany Cohort 7 recently became a #1 International Best-Selling Author with her book Women Who Shine. This co-authored book highlights 30 amazing women who dared to share their stories of overcoming adversity in order to bring light into the world. She is also co-authoring another book entitled RESPOSIVE Leadership (coming soon) with the Associate Athletic Director of the United States Military Academy at West Point. Both books can be found on her website <https://lisapatierne.com/>

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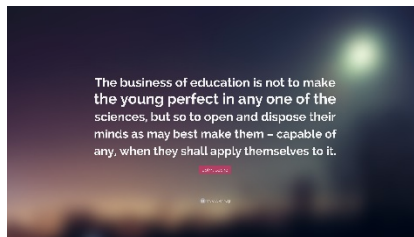
Dr. Maria Suttmeier, Albany Cohort 7, Superintendent of Hudson City School District is retiring in January 2022.

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Dr. Wendy Diefendorf, Albany Cohort 10 accepted a position as the first Director of Enrollment Management at Academy of The Holy Names in Albany, a private, all-girls school serving grades 6-12.

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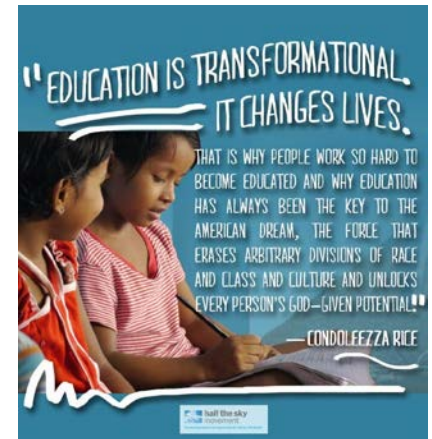
Dr. Freya Mercer, Albany Cohort 10 is now the Middle School Principal at Coxsackie-Athens School District, moving over from the high school.



Dr. MaryEllen Symer, Albany Cohort 10 retired from Burnt Hills Ballston Lake School District. She reports: "In addition to being the best possible Gigi to our four grandchildren and trying to enjoy retirement while living through a pandemic, I have been supervising Clarkson MAT students that are pursuing their Business and Marketing Education teaching certification. I have also been mentoring new administrators through SAANYS."

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Dr. Susan Breton, Albany Cohort 11, District Director for SEL and CCR, District Homeless Liaison for Mount Olive School District, NJ, is working on a consultant basis for the Foundation for Educational Administration in New Jersey as a professional development presenter. Her main presentations are around the areas of trauma informed practices, stress management and finding balance for leaders.



Dr. Shylah Addante, Albany Cohort 12 presented at the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association's annual conference in November 2021 on her dissertation research and its implementation for practical and strategic application of BIT best practices at institutions of higher education. [Conference](#)

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Dr. Denise Fernandez-Palozzi, Albany Cohort 12 was awarded the CTE Administrator of the Year for NYS ACTE (Association for Career and Technical Education). She was moved to the regional competition and in April 2021 received the ACTE Region 1 Excellence Award and then to the National Competition. This was a result of her work in developing the first youth apprenticeship program in New York State that meets the NYS DOL registered apprenticeship requirements. She presented this work at a NYS ACTEA (Association for Career and Technical Administrators) conference where awards followed.

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**Dr. Ady Piña, Albany Cohort 12** was promoted to the Schenectady High School Cohort Principal, Class 2023

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**Dr. Anne Young, Albany Cohort 12**, was appointed Superintendent of St Regis Falls Central School District [News Article](#)

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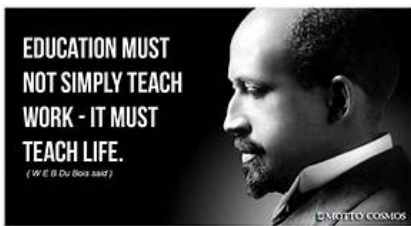
**Dr. Erin Elkins, Albany Cohort 13**, had paper presentations accepted at both at AERA 2022 in April 2022 and Combined Sections Meeting (CSM) in February 2022 on *Doctoral Student Mental Health and the Utilization of Services: Review of the Healthy Minds Study*.

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**Dr. Don Stevens, Albany Cohort 13**, was appointed Superintendent of Schools at Watervliet City School District effective October 2021. [News Article](#)

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Current student **Carmen Diaz, Albany Cohort 14** was appointed as the Watervliet City School District's Assistant Superintendent



Current student **Nichol Dickson, Albany Cohort 14** was appointed as the Assistant Principal of Griffin Elementary School, Albany City School District

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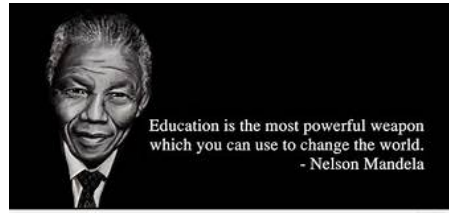
**Dr. Alex Marrero, NYC Cohort 1** was selected as the Superintendent of Denver Public Schools beginning in 2021-22 school year. [News Article](#)  
[Follow up news article](#)

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**Dr. Mauriciere DeGovia, NYC Cohort 3**, Executive Superintendent of Queens South NYCDOE, was a panelist in April 2021 at the Russell Sage College Women's Institute presentation titled: The Pandemic and Social Equity: A Multidisciplinary Perspective

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**Dr. Joel Heckethorn, NYC Cohort 3** collaborated to write and publish *Empowering Teacher Growth* with Michael Giovacchini and Kristina J Doubet in ASCD [Journal Article](#)



**Dr. Patricia King, Albany Cohort 3** is the principal of MS 267 Math Science & Technology.

U.S. News ranked her school as the highest in the state among schools in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn. For the inaugural list, U.S. News published rankings and data on more than 80,000 public elementary and middle schools across the United States. To determine the rankings, U.S. News used data from the U.S. Department of Education to analyze Math and Reading proficiency and performance.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Dr. Anissa Reilly, NYC Cohort 4** recently published a book titled *The Five Buckets of Leadership: Speaking in the Moment*. The book is for those individuals who engage in public speaking and want to enhance their skills, add to their skills, or are simply nervous/afraid of public speaking. The book can be found on Amazon as well as her website [askdreilly.com](http://askdreilly.com). She is also a contributing writer for the soon to be released anthology titled *Fighting the Good Fight: Narratives of the African American Principalship* with a foreword by Dr. Muhammad Khalifa. It is a collection of actual accounts from African American school leaders across the nation as they lead.

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**Dr. Danika Rux, NYC Cohort 5**, former superintendent of Manhattan's District 5, became acting Manhattan Executive Superintendent [Article](#)

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**Dr. Hoa Tu, NYC Cohort 5**, was appointed Deputy Superintendent of Brooklyn North District, New York City Department of Education.

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**Dr. Asheena Baez, NYC Cohort 6** and coauthors Kiyomi and Malakhi Baez published a 2 series children's book- *Mindfully Me: A Culturally Responsive Scholar Series*. Available on Amazon. [Amazon Link](#) She is also partnering the Contentment Foundation with Columbia University and working in NYCDOE. [You Tube Video](#) She also was recently named to NYC Mayor Elect Eric Adams' Education Transition Team. [News Article](#)

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**Elisa Brown, NYC Cohort 9** is the principal of PS 249 –The Caton School, Brooklyn, NY. She is one of eight principals from the 2021 cohort of National Blue Ribbon Schools was honored during an awards ceremony on November 4, 2021. When Principal Brown first came to PS 249, The Caton School, in 2000 she was charged with raising student performance and teacher effectiveness. PS 249 is a Title I school with a diverse student population in Brooklyn, New York. Over a period of approximately ten years, she led the school's transformation to a high performing school, receiving an "A" rating. By 2012, 99% of the school's third graders were proficient or above in math. Recently, the school partnered with the Child Mind Institute to support parents and teachers as the school moves toward becoming a healing-centered and trauma-informed care school. The school offers multiple ways for families to engage throughout the school year, including translation services. College awareness is a common theme throughout PS 249 and students develop a passion to pursue higher education as the school celebrates the value and opportunities it can bring. [News Link](#)



Please share your promotions, lateral moves, successes with our program:

Albany Contact:  
Francesca Durand  
[duranf@sage.edu](mailto:duranf@sage.edu)

NYC Contact:  
Marlene Zakierski  
[zakiem@sage.edu](mailto:zakiem@sage.edu)

**STUDENT AWARDS**



**Outstanding Student Awards**

Albany Cohort 13-  
**Dr. Giovanni Virgiglio**

NYC Cohort 7-  
**Dr. Josephine Yeboah-Van-Ess**

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**Anthony Clement Awards**

Anthony Clement, Albany Cohort 4, was an EDL candidate who died before completing his doctoral program. This award is given annually to an EDL candidate from each cohort who exemplifies the following qualities:

- Inspirational to cohort colleagues
- Actively encourages the success of all candidates in the cohort; and
- Embodying the qualities of acceptance, collaboration, and community building.

Albany Cohort 13-  
**Dr. Michele Whitley**

NYC Cohort 7-  
**Dr. Ruth Stanislaus**

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**Broughton Award**

The Broughton Award is from Russell Sage College for outstanding graduate research. Winners receive a grant to fund research expenses, wear a blue cord at graduation, and present at the Graduate Research Day at Sage.

Two members of Albany Cohort 13 were chosen by the Broughton Committee for the excellence of their individual dissertation research.

**Dr. Erin Elkins**

**Dr. Giovanni Virgiglio**

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**IN MEMORIAM**



**Dr. Demian Singleton-  
Albany Cohort 1**

Dr. Singleton had a long and outstanding career at the Guilderland Central School District. He joined the district in 1996 as a seventh-grade science teacher at Farnsworth Middle School, later becoming an Instructional Administrator for Math, Science and Technology, and then Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. [Obituary](#)



**Dr. Rita Levay-  
Albany Cohort 3**

Rita was recruited and worked for 18 years and in many roles for the New York State Education Department, her last role was as Assistant Commissioner for Special Education. She then championed the needs of children in the Bethlehem, Schenectady, and Capital Region BOCES and acted as a consultant in almost a dozen other school districts. [Obituary](#)



**FACULTY NEWS**

**Dr. Daniel Alemu** was promoted to Full Professor in 2021. He also was co-author on the article:

Demissie, D., **Alemu, D.**, and Rorissa, A. (2021) An Investigation into user Adoption of Personal Safety Devices in Higher Education Using the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). *The Journal of the Southern Association for Information Systems*, 8(1) 50-68.  
<https://aisel.aisnet.org/jsais/vol8/iss1/3/>

**Dr. Francesca Durand** was honored with a Distinguished Service Award for Consistent Outstanding Service as a Faculty Member at Russell Sage College in 2021. She also has an upcoming presentation at a virtual conference in Spring Semester 2022:

AAQEP Quality Symposium-March 2022 – Presenting: *Alumni surveys: Development and use in educator preparation programs.*

A forthcoming article is published online now and in print February 2022.

Durand, F. T., Wilcox, K. C., Schiller, K. S., & Lawson, H. A. (2022) Framing leaders’ discourses on college and career readiness. *American Journal of Education*. Online December 15, 2021



Please congratulate Albany Cohort 13 and NYC Cohort 7 on successfully completing both their individual dissertation research projects and their team colloquium presentations and written Conference Proposal/Journal Article document. Albany Cohort 13 presented in person on the Albany Campus and NYC Cohort 7 presented virtually via Zoom.

**NYC Cohort 7**

- Bernard Addo
- Monique Allen-Davy
- Steve Dorcely
- Derrick Harrison
- Marlin Hoggard
- Katia Jean-Jacques
- Beverly Logan
- Carlen Padmore-Gateau
- Ronda Phillips
- David Pretto
- Ruth Stanislaus
- Madelene Taub-Chan
- Josephine Yeboah Van-Ess
- Joan Vetere

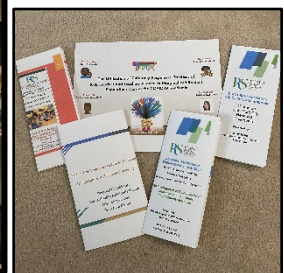
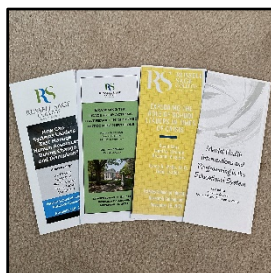


**NYC Cohort 1**

- Shawna Hansford

**Albany Cohort 13**

- David Collins
- Lisa Cutting
- Erin Elkins
- Kerry Houlihan
- Valerie Lovelace
- David Marr
- Melanie Roman
- Dotan Schips
- Jennifer Steimle
- Donald Stevens
- Giovanni Virgilio
- Michele Whitley



## Spotlight on an EDL Graduate

Dr Alex Marrero was a member of NYC Cohort 1 and graduated in December 2015 from the EDL program. This year, Dr Marrero was appointed the Superintendent of Schools for Denver Public Schools in Colorado. Alex is leading a district with 207 schools, more than 93,000 students, and more than 14,000 employees. The faculty asked Dr. Marrero to tell us about his leadership path.



\*\* Little Alexcito was born and raised in the Bronx, New York City to an immigrant mother of the Dominican Republic and a refugee Cuban father. After overcoming many struggles and obstacles in his childhood, Dr. Marrero earned his Bachelor of Science from Fordham University with a major in Business Administration, Dual Concentrations in Finance and Management, Dual Minors in Economics and Spanish, and a specialization in International Business. He then earned a master's degree and three Professional Diplomas from Manhattan College in Counseling, School Building Leadership, and Advanced District Leadership. Dr. Marrero was the recipient of the Outstanding Student Award from the inaugural

cohort of New York City doctoral candidates in Educational Leadership from the Russell Sage College. His dissertation: *Dominican Parents Involvement in Children's College Aspirations and Achievement Motivation* was published in November 2015. Most recently, Dr. Marrero received a certificate in Advanced Education Leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Dr. Marrero has been part of many Educational Leadership Programs, including the Urban School Leadership Program at Harvard University, the Urban Education Leaders Collaborative at Columbia University's Teachers College, The Center for Creative Leadership. During the summer of 2015 while a doctoral student, Dr. Marrero was invited by the Brazilian Consulate to deliver workshops to their principals and superintendents in Sao Paolo, Rio De Janeiro, and El Salvador, Bahia. In 2016, he was honored as the Outstanding Administrator at the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Scholarship Gala for the Latino Caucus of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA) and inducted into the New York Academy of Public Education. In 2017, he was the recipient of the Leadership and Excellence in Education Award at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Scholarship Gala of the Association of Dominican-American Supervisors and Administrators (ADASA). In 2018 he was recognized as the Latino Administrator of the Year by the Association for Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS). Most recently he was honored as a Rising Star in New York's 40 Under 40.

Dr. Marrero has been very active in both local, state, and national boards, serving as an Executive Board member of the ALAS and the New York State Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents. Most recently, Dr. Marrero has been invited by the Colorado Governor to serve on the Business Experiential-Learning Commission to integrate experiential learning opportunities into Colorado's talent development network.

As Assistant Superintendent at East Ramapo Central School District, he supported schools to be in Good Standing and increased graduation rates. He served in New Rochelle as the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction and then led the district in the unprecedented year of 2020-2021 as Acting and then Interim Superintendent. He currently serves as the Superintendent of Denver Public Schools, the largest school district in the state of Colorado, serving over 90,000 students.

Since earning his most treasured degree from Russell Sage, Alex has been laser-focused on expanding his reach - first at the state and now at the national level. "For many years, as a child, student, and even as a practitioner, I figured my life revolved around the Bronx, specifically the Fordham Road area. It was due to the professors at Russell Sage that I became open to the idea that there are "little Alexcitos" in other parts of the state. That made me leave the (NYC) system that I only knew." It was during his time in the New York State Council of School Superintendents' Superintendent Leadership Academy where he developed several relationships and strengthened the relationship with his former Dissertation Chair, Dr. Robert Bradley who was at the time Executive Director. During that time, there were very few opportunities for Superintendentcies. Alex also knew that the NYCDOE functioned very differently

than districts in the state. In NYCDOE there is no governing board, quite possibly the most important relationship that a superintendent needs to have to be successful. Knowing that there was still some learning that needed to happen, he leaped into East Ramapo Central School District.

After a couple of years Alex was courted to take on another challenge at the City School District of New Rochelle. In New Rochelle, Alex adopted many of the strategies he observed throughout the years and those that he adapted throughout his journey.

Soon after his arrival, the district was impacted with the index COVID-19 case which prompted the Governor to reach out and declare a Containment Zone, impacting some of the schools in the district. Alex felt strongly that as a unified district, part of the district should not be forced to close while the others remained open during a time where stress and uncertainty was rampant. As a result, it was determined to close all schools in New Rochelle. The county, region, state and then the nation soon followed. In anticipation of that, Alex was in charge of building the student engagement and district operating plan. As such, he created the Prevention, Responsiveness, Education, Physical Spaces (PREP) Plan that was ultimately adopted by the New York State Department of Education. After the PREP Plan, he created the Distance Learning Program and then the revamped version that led the district through the pandemic.

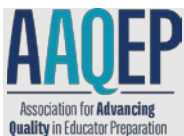
At the start of the 2020-2021 school year, CSDNR Board named Alex as the Acting Superintendent. Soon after, he was named the Interim Superintendent and fearlessly led the district during the unprecedented year, leading the charge for students to return safely in-person. During that time he was invited to many national panels and forums to share his approach with districts across the nation.



It was during that year that he realized how impactful courageous leadership can be, in particular for those who are historically marginalized and/or underrepresented. After some words of encouragement from leaders serving some of the largest school systems in the nation, Alex applied to the Denver Public Schools. After a rigorous interview process that involved over 80 stakeholders, Alex was named the Superintendent on June 3, 2021.

Alex is incredibly humbled and honored to lead a district of over 90,000 students, over 14,000 staff, and to oversee a budget of over 1.2 billion. The community at Denver has embraced his leadership and he just finished his Listening & Learning Tour and launched his Transition Team, a group composed of members from across the Denver community and internal stakeholders.

Since day one of the Russell Sage expansion to New York City, Alex has been an avid supporter and promoter of the program. At every opportunity, Dr. Marrero shares how proud he is to be part of the inaugural group of Doctoral Candidates from the New York City Cohort.



## Accreditation

Russell Sage College's Educational Leadership Department in the Esteves School of Education has been awarded full accreditation by AAQEP through June 30, 2028. Full accreditation acknowledges that a program prepares effective educators/leaders who continue to grow as professionals and has demonstrated the commitment and capacity to maintain quality. The [Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation \(AAQEP\)](#) is a national accrediting organization recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.