



2024 Education Summit

August 8th, 2024 | 10:00AM CT

Speaker Bios

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Rebecca George, Student Intern, CHILDREN AT RISK

Rebecca George is an intern at Children at Risk. Although this is her first time working an internship directly with public policy, this is not her first time working with children. She's volunteered for many children's choirs, summer camps, and has worked in her church's VBS for many years. She is also attending Southwestern University as a Business major minoring in Data Analytics and Computer Science, where she will be a sophomore this coming fall. She enjoys writing songs, playing piano and guitar, and spending time with her best friends and family.



Dr. Martha Salazar-Zamora, Superintendent of Schools - Tomball ISD

Dr. Martha Salazar-Zamora has been an educator in Texas for over 37 years and the Superintendent of Schools in Tomball ISD since 2017, previously serving as the Chief Academic Officer. She was recognized as the 2023 Texas Superintendent of the Year and a 2024 AASA National Superintendent of the Year Finalist. Under her leadership, Tomball ISD has become a top academic district in Texas and the #1 Best School District in Harris

County for five consecutive years.

Dr. Salazar-Zamora has led numerous initiatives, including the Tomball Star Academy, a Two-Way Dual Language Academy, a P-TECH focused on healthcare, a Pre-K Center, and the Tomball ISD Stadium and Event Center. She oversees over 22,500 students and 3,100 employees across 23 campuses.

She serves on various boards, including:

- TEA Commissioner's Cabinet
- TASA (President)
- AASA Executive Committee (Texas Representative)
- Fast Growth School Coalition (President)
- The Council of Women School Executives (President Elect)

- Texas Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (Past President and Founding Member)
- HCA Tomball Board of Trustees
- Greater Tomball Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Trustees

Dr. Salazar-Zamora earned her Doctor of Education from Texas A&M University, two Master of Education degrees from Texas A&M University-Kingsville, and a Bachelor of Science from Texas A&I University. She enjoys spending time with her husband Emilio, their two daughters, and their granddaughters.

Follow Dr. Z on X @m_salazarzamora.



Andrew Baca, Deputy Director of Programs, Educate Texas

As the deputy director of Educate Texas, Baca supports Texas high schools that offer one of the TEA-designed College and Career Readiness programs.

Prior to joining CFT, Baca worked in public education as a high school special education teacher and coordinator with DC Public Schools, ensuring students had the support and services they needed to have equitable access to the general education curriculum. He also worked with Uplift Education as an instructional coach, then as the

foundling Academic Director of Uplift Heights High School in West Dallas.

In his role at Educate Texas, Baca manages the development and implementation of the organization's coaching and technical assistance strategy for Early College and P-TECH high school programs across the state. Alongside his team, Baca supported the delivery of \$10 million in services, resources and subgrants as part of the Texas Education Agency's TCLAS (Texas Covid Learning Acceleration Supports) grant program. Baca holds a bachelor's in history and a master's in special education, both from George Washington University, and he speaks conversational Spanish.



Dr. Tanya Tate, Assistant Superintendent, Lytle ISD

Dr. Tate was raised in Calgary, Alberta, Canada before moving to Texas her senior year of high school (yes, she made her parents feel awful about a move her senior year). She graduated from Friendswood High School in Friendswood, Texas. She earned her undergraduate degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from Stephen F. Austin State University (Axe Em', Jacks) and pursued both her Masters and Ph.D in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Texas, San Antonio (Birds Up!). She married her college sweetheart and he moved her to the metropolis of Waco where she began her

teaching career and he began his coaching/teaching career. She taught at the middle school level in La Vega ISD and Lorena ISD. In addition to teaching, Tanya served in her church, Tri Delta Alumnae Chapter and was an Education Consultant for McCAP (McLennan County Collaborative Abstinence Project). The Tate family moved to Boerne in 2007 where Tanya taught at Kendall Elementary before she began her

service in Administration as an Assistant Principal at Margil Elementary in San Antonio ISD and Fair Oaks Elementary in Boerne ISD. Additionally, Dr. Tate served as a Principal at Curington Elementary and she opened Dr. Ferdinand L. Herff Elementary, both in Boerne ISD. Dr. Tate joined the Lytle ISD team in the 21-22 school year and served as the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. This coming school year will be her first year in the role of Assistant Superintendent for Lytle ISD, Dr. Tate has been an active member of the Region 20 TEPSA (Texas Elementary Principal and Supervisor Association) Board where she was recognized as the TEPSAN of the Year for Region 20 in 2021. Additionally, TSCA (Texas School Counselor Association) selected Tanya as the Counselor Advocate of the Year in 2021. Her greatest accomplishments are McKayla Dawn (23) and Owen Corbett (20). McKayla is a University of Texas graduate (Hook em!) gainfully employed as a Patent Engineer and Owen is beginning his junior year as a Business major at Texas Tech (Wreck em!). Dr. Tate enjoys reading, decorating on a budget, and traveling - especially to the mountains to hike or ski.



Angelina Vega, Principal, South Early College High School

Angelica Vega is currently the principal of South Early College High School. Angelica has 20 plus years serving students and families within the Houston Independent School District. Her career began at Stevenson Middle School, where she taught for nine years and established the Duke TIP program for 7th graders and was awarded the HEB Excellence in Education Award- Rising Star Award. Ms. Vega transitioned to East Early College High School as a Dean of Students where the school was recognized as a Blue Ribbon School in 2012. Her first principalship was as the

founding principal of Middle College at HCC Felix Fraga in partnership between Houston ISD and Houston Community College in 2014. Prior to SECHS, Ms. Vega worked at Southwest Charter Schools and KIPP Public Schools as an Assistant Principal. Through her varied roles of leadership in schools and her experience as a first generation college student, Ms. Vega believes that a college degree opens doors and provides personal and financial freedom for the next generation, which is accomplished through opportunity, hardwork and support.

Angelica Vega was born in Chicago, Ill. She was raised and graduated high school in Laredo, TX. She received her B.A. in Mathematics from Texas A&M University-College Station. In 2004, Ms. Vega graduated with her Masters of Education Degree from Harvard University in School Leadership and was in the first cohort of the REEP program at Rice University in 2009 to receive her Principal Certification.

During her free time, Ms. Vega enjoys spending time with family and friends, walking her dog, and staying healthy through strength training and yoga classes. She is a world traveler with many stamps on her passport and logged miles hiking within Texas and the United States.



Asha George, Human Resources Executive

Asha George is an experienced HR executive with over 25 years of experience in compensation, business partnership, talent management, and DEI. In her most recent role, she served as the Chief Diversity Officer at Electronic Arts, where she integrated a global enterprise strategy for diversity, equity, and inclusion across the organization. Asha has an impressive track record of accelerating business performance with leading edge strategy, innovation and signature practices across the talent and culture ecosystem. Her experience ranges from

acquiring and integrating new businesses to leading business transformations. She is a passionate advocate for women in technology and a proponent of driving businesses to reach their full potential through DEI. Asha has served on the Board of Children at Risk since 2021, and has a passion for systemic change to improve children's quality of life through collaboration and advocacy. Asha, her husband Joseph and two teenage children are based in Austin, TX, where she loves to cook, read, explore new cultures, and host a weekly poker night with family and friends.



Dr. Jessica Carter, Executive Director, Parent Teacher Collaborative

Dr. Jessica Faith Carter is a native Houstonian and career educator who has served as a K-12 teacher, campus leader, university instructor, and consultant. She is the Founder and Executive Director of The Parent Teacher Collaborative, a school and community-based organization that aims to improve student outcomes by building strong collaborative partnerships between parents and teachers. Additionally, she is the Founder and Principal Strategist at J.F. Carter Solutions, an educational

consultancy that supports parents, schools, districts, and community organizations in their efforts to achieve exceptional outcomes for students.

Dr. Carter holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Rice University, graduate degrees in education from Texas Southern University, Prairie View A&M University, and Harvard University. She earned a Ph.D in Special Education from The University of Texas at Austin, and she holds an MBA from Rice University's Jones Graduate School of Business. In her spare time, Dr. Carter enjoys traveling, cooking, building Lego sets, and volunteering with youth and community-focused organizations.



**Mara Gilyard, Director of Programs and Partnerships,
Latinos for Education**

Mara Gilyard is the Director of Programs and Partnerships for Greater Houston at Latinos for Education. In her current role, Mara leads and implements the local leadership programs, expands the organization's regional partnerships, and plays a pivotal role in supporting the region's continued growth and impact on Latino leaders, students, and families.

During her time at Latinos for Education, Mara has also served as the Family and Community Organizer, supporting the development and implementation of local programs, advocacy strategy, and policy recommendations to advance the organization's national principles and local advocacy efforts. Before joining Latinos for Education, Mara was a secondary school teacher in the Kansas City Metropolitan Area, where she used her leadership and voice to represent the interests of Latino students and families.



**Coach Gaffney aka Coach Mental Health, Tier
1/Universal Mental Health supports Coach Trust Based
Relational Intervention Practitioner Family & Community
Strengths Finder and Practitioner**

Johnathane H. Gaffney Sr. (affectionately known as Coach Gaffney) is a Fort Worth, TX native with nearly 20 years of serving in various roles in public education and social service organizations. Coach Gaffney received his Bachelor's of Science from the University of North Texas and Master's in Education Administration from Concordia University. Throughout his career, coach has served as an

elementary, middle and high school teacher/coach, community liaison, parent advocate, campus administrator, district administrator, fathers and families coordinator, and most recently as a youth director in public health services. Both of his personal and professional experiences have afforded Coach the opportunity to be intimately engaged in the lived realities, perspectives, values, needs, challenges, and strengths of various communities. With this knowledge, he aims to be a part of the collective positive impact on the community



Maria Mendez, Student Advocate, Collaborative Action for Youth – Youth Voice

Hi I'm Maria Mendez, I am a student advocate and a student in the Houston Independent School District. Some things I do outside of school are like reading books or novels. Hanging out with my closest friends. Or just enjoying alone time for myself. Now I've been apart of a program since my freshmen year of high school called Legends & Legacies. We focus on a lot of issues inside of school and outside of it. More importantly we focus on mental health. Kids who are dealing with incarcerated

family members, school related issues, you name it and we probably address it in out classroom.



Dara Santiago, Wolff Center for Entrepreneurship Alumni and CMO of Vent-E

My name is Dara Santiago, I am 21 years old and a recent graduate from the University of Houston. When choosing my major for college I knew it had to revolve around my passion for law and helping people. At the University of Houston I double majored in Marketing and Entrepreneurship (the number 1 undergraduate program in the nation). From this I merged the concept of law and entrepreneurship and came to the resolve of owning my own law firm.

During the last four years I've gained experience in different areas. I've had legal internships with Baker Ripley's Immigration Center and the District Attorney's office at Fort Bend and was selected as an LSAC (Law School Admission Council) PLUS scholar. Additionally, thanks to my undergraduate program: The Wolff Center for Entrepreneurship, I was exposed to startups, projects, business plan competitions and more. I am now the CMO of my own startup with my friend's in the program and am planning to attend law school in Fall 2025.



Marvin Pierre, Co-Founder and Executive Director, 8 Million Stories

Marvin Pierre currently serves as the Co-Founder and Executive Director of Eight Million Stories in Houston, Texas. Prior to taking on the role, Marvin was selected as a Bridge Fellow with The New Teacher Project, where he focused his fellowship on developing an alternative education program he called "Eight Million Stories". His program became a reality and now aspires to upend the school-to-prison pipeline by supporting previously incarcerated youth as they re-enter school and - curbing unnecessary

referrals from schools to the justice system in Houston.

Marvin has also served as the Assistant Principal at KIPP Polaris Academy for Boys, also in Houston, Texas. Prior to joining KIPP Polaris, he served as the Dean of Students at Excellence Boys Charter School in Brooklyn, NY. Before pursuing a career in educational leadership, Marvin worked in finance at Goldman, Sachs & Co.

Marvin, a native New Yorker, holds a B.A. in Economics from Trinity College in Hartford Connecticut, and a Master's Degree in Education Administration and Supervision, from the University of Houston.

Marvin is a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., is an American Leadership Forum Fellow alumni and current board member and was selected into the inaugural class for Leadership ISD. Marvin was also recognized by the Houston Business Journal as a member of the 2022 40 Under 40 Class and was most recently named to the 2023 Black Changemakers Program, an award that highlights and trains the top 16 Black non-profit leaders.

Marvin currently serves on the Board of Trustees at Tabor Academy, a Board of Fellows member at his undergraduate alma mater, Trinity College (Hartford, CT) , a founding board member of Friends of the Children (Houston Chapter) and past board member of The American Leadership Forum.



Sarah Deckard, Principal, Vistas High School

Sarah Deckard is an experienced educator with 19 years of dedicated service in the field of education. Currently in her 5th year at Vistas High School, she has served as the Associate Principal for 2 years and are now entering their 3rd year as the Principal. Throughout their career, Sarah Deckard has demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering academic excellence and supporting the development of both students and staff. Her leadership at Vistas High School is marked by a focus on innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement, ensuring a positive and productive learning environment for all.

Thank you to our partners!

2024
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