



## **LOWER SCHOOL FORUM SUMMARY**

### ***Healthy. Connected. Engaged.***

The McLean School of Maryland  
October 22, 2019

## **WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

PCW President Susan Newell opened the event, welcoming attendees and introducing the program host and panelists:

❖ **Mike Saxenian, Head of School, The McLean School of Maryland**

After a warm welcome and introduction to The McLean School, Mr. Saxenian welcomed PCW's first annual Lower School Forum as an opportunity to hear about best practices demonstrated in the lower school setting.

Panelists:

- ❖ **Scott Lawrence, Head of School, The Primary Day School**
- ❖ **Edwin P. Gordon, Head of School, Congressional School**
- ❖ **Anna Carello, Associate Head of School, Beauvoir School**
- ❖ **Frankie Engelking, Director of Student & Community Wellness, McLean School**

## **PANELIST PRESENTATION SUMMARIES & TAKEAWAYS**

### **PARENT & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT (Scott Lawrence, The Primary Day School)**

- **Cross-Collaboration**. Key ingredients to The Primary Day School's 75-year success with children in Prekindergarten through Second Grade -- across teachers, parents, and staff -- are authenticity, commitment, clarity, passion, and engagement.
- **Valuing Stories**. Families/students have their own stories filled with honesty and joy.
- **Mission-Integration** is important to forming a true partnership among the stakeholders in the school, and shared commitment is contingent upon shared decision-making.
- Parents and administrators must ask and engage themselves in three questions:
  - What are you deeply passionate about?
  - What are you best at?
  - What drives your economic engine or makes your school sustainable?

## **Takeaways for Parent & Family Engagement**

- Don't underestimate the importance of embracing families and your community. Authentic connections are a requirement, not an option.
- It is in our collective commitment to children and their families that we realize our abundance.
- Collaborations that ignite a synergy of ideas, opportunities and actions are borne of trusting relationships.
- Taken together, candid conversations, shared initiatives and passionate involvement assure institutional success.
- We must be both resolute and courageous. Real service demands this.
- Great teaching, the heart and soul of great schools, is enabled by a focused mission.
- Honesty and joy are important to the uniqueness of the story. Be mindful of your unique story – past, present and future – and work to connect the dots.
- Engage in nimble, focused thinking. Consider *Mission Integration* as a way forward.
- Above all, be clear. *What are you best at? What are you deeply passionate about? What drives your school's engine?*

## **FACULTY ENGAGEMENT (Edwin P. Gordon, Congressional School)**

- Independent Education has gone through a sea change and it is critical to address how faculty play a role in and help shape student success.
- Faculty challenges include:
  - expectations have grown and working across disciplines is the new normal;
  - finding work/life balance is critical to ensuring faculty do not burn out; and
  - adequately addressing new faculty development with more emphasis on child-centered teaching and on-going professional development.

## **Takeaways for Faculty Engagement**

- The array of changing roles and responsibilities will require faculty to engage in ongoing professional growth. As the faculty ranks lean more toward younger faculty, mid-career and part-time, schools will need to look at ways to develop and sustain the vitality of the faculty and involve parents in the conversation.
- As the student body becomes more diverse across many sectors, this places significant demands on faculty members. Schools will need to explore how they can support faculty with students who learn most effectively in different ways. In short, ensuring our learning spaces are more inclusive.
- As the landscape for teaching and learning changes, so must our investment in the resources provided to our schools. Schools will need to find resources required to address a more student-centered learning, technology-driven, and assessment-based landscape in our schools.

## **MULTIPLE LITERACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE (Anna Carello, Beauvoir School)**

- Contemplate what it means to be literate, especially for young learners who are not reading yet.
- At Beauvoir, children are taught the concept of “mirrors” and “windows.” It is important for a child to see himself or herself reflected back in books and in the community, like a mirror. It is also important for a child to get to know and learn from others who may be different from him or her, like looking through a window.
- Suggestions include:
  - curating libraries that reflect the world we want students to see;
  - “unplugging” to engage in programming that is not on screens; and
  - teaching consent with media using the example, “May I take a picture of you?” It is important to instill the idea of giving children a voice.

## **Takeaways for Multiple Literacy Development in the Digital Age**

- Before children learn to read the word, they read the world. What does that mean to you as a parent? What “world” is your child currently “reading”?
- Leverage your school librarian, public librarian, and your own self in order to curate knowledge that supports healthy concepts, habits, and self-image for your child.
- What windows would you like to open for your child? What mirrors would you like them to see reflected back?
- Computer science is the fastest growing industry in the world. How will you engage your child in the field?
- What are the benefits of technology at home and at school? What are the detriments?
- What should you know as a parent of a child growing up with the knowledge of humankind accessible in mere seconds on a mobile device? How will you connect your child to knowledge?

## **STUDENT & COMMUNITY WELLNESS (Frankie Engelking, The McLean School)**

- The McLean School developed a grade by grade Mindfulness curriculum with an emphasis on beginning mindfulness at a young age with some core beliefs built-in, including:
  - The more I **thank** about the more I **think** about;
  - Incorporating families in building empathy;
  - Failure is a part of life;
  - Meet students where they are across the spectrum; and
  - Responsive classroom experiences give students a voice and create community-building.

## **Takeaways for Student & Community Wellness**

- There are statistically significant associations between social, emotional learning skills (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making) in kindergarten and key outcomes for young adults years later.
- Practicing mindfulness consistently is one of the best ways to lower a child's anxiety by keeping your child's baseline stress level down.
- Empathy is at the heart of what it means to be human and key to preventing bullying and many other forms of cruelty. Children are born with the capacity for empathy, but it needs to be nurtured throughout their lives.
- 'Role modeling is one of the most powerful tools you have in your parenting tool belt to influence the direction of our children's character, whatever their age. When used to best advantage, you can pass on the values you want your children to adopt so that they become the adults you would like them to be.' *By Audrey Krisbergh, Certified Parenting Educator*

## **PANELIST BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Anna Carello, PhD Associate Head of School Beavoir School**

Anna Carello is Associate Head of School at Beauvoir, the National Cathedral Elementary School serving co-ed students ages 3 months to third grade. She received her doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania. Her published and recognized research on multiple literacy development in early childhood examined the growing tension between technology and school libraries today. Anna previously served as Director of Professional Development and Programming for the School District of Philadelphia; Assistant Head of Lower School at Pine Crest School in Florida; and has more than fifteen years of independent school teaching experience as an upper school history teacher, middle school American Government teacher, and lower school teacher in three states. She earned a bachelor's degree in History and Spanish from Marquette University, a master's degree in Educational Administration from Boston University, and a graduate specialist certificate in Mind, Brain, and Teaching from The Johns Hopkins University. Although she is Boston-born, Anna grew up in San Diego, California and Ann Arbor, Michigan, but Washington, D.C. is her favorite home.

### **Frankie Engelking Director of Student & Community Wellness The McLean School of Maryland**

Frankie Engelking serves as Director of Student and Community Wellness at The McLean School. Having devoted the past 25 years to the promotion of health and wellness, her prior

roles include Patient Educator at Washington Adventist Hospital; Community Health Education Coordinator at the Baltimore Area Health Education Center; host and producer of a health-focused radio program, and consultant on substance abuse prevention education and training to over 22 schools. Frankie earned a master's degree in Education from The Catholic University of America and has held various roles at The McLean School, such as Health Education Coordinator for grades K-12, Middle School Dean of Students, and Interim Head of the Middle School. She created and instituted McLean's nationally recognized Mindfulness Education K-12 Curriculum, working with students, faculty and parents for the health and well-being of all.

**Edwin P. Gordon, PhD**  
**Head of School**  
**Congressional School**

Edwin P. Gordon, Head of Congressional School since July 1, 2019, has a distinguished career in independent and higher education. Dr. Gordon received his bachelor's and master's degrees in English from Baylor University and a doctoral degree in Educational Administration from Cornell University. He has served as Head of School at Palm Beach Day Academy in Florida; summer Academic Dean for grades 7-10 at the Center for Talented Youth at John Hopkins University in Baltimore; Head of Lower School, River Campus at Riverdale Country School in New York City; and Executive Director of K-12 Executive Education Program (Mid-Career Doctorate Program) for the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Dr. and Mrs. Gordon have two adult children living in New York and Georgia. Dr. Gordon enjoys running, reading, spending time with his wife on long walks, visiting with his two children, and listening to opera and jazz.

**Scott Lawrence**  
**Head of School**  
**The Primary Day School**

An educator of young learners for over thirty years, Scott is privileged to serve as Head of School at Primary Day, a post he has held since 2016. From 2011 until 2016, he worked as the Head of Lower School at Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart. Prior to his tenure at Stone Ridge, he served as Principal at Seymour Elementary School, Head of St. Thomas School, and Lower School Head at Chase Collegiate School, all in Connecticut. A former Pre-Kindergarten teacher, Kindergarten teacher, elementary librarian and reading consultant, Mr. Lawrence also served on the faculty of St. Joseph University for 19 years, where he taught graduate level courses in *Educational Leadership*, *Curriculum Development* and *Educational Research*. Twice named a Fulbright Scholar, Scott earned his undergraduate degree in Elementary Education and Social Studies from The College of St. Rose and advanced degrees from both the University at Albany and the University of Connecticut.