

2022 Strengthening Connections: Improving Student and Staff Emotional Wellbeing in the Virtual and Real Worlds

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

Tracy Winn Banks



Tracy Winn Banks was appointed to be the Chief Deputy Director of the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services in March 2022 by Governor Glenn Youngkin. She graduated from Rice University with B.A. before going onto Regent University to earn her juris doctorate. She was admitted to the Virginia Bar in 1991. Her law practice areas and experience included First Amendment

Litigation and client representation in federal and state courts involving criminal and civil matters since 1991. Mrs. Banks is a graduate of the Lead Virginia Executive Management Program and a retired legal educator. Her public service has included non-profit administration, advancing efficient government operations, and advocating for balanced public policy. Mrs. Banks and her husband have 11 children and she is very active in her church. She enjoys reading, traveling, attending historical events, public speaking and visiting antique shops.

Kim Bearden



Kim Bearden is the co-founder, executive director, and language arts teacher at the highly acclaimed Ron Clark Academy, an innovative middle school and educator-training facility in Atlanta. Over 85,000 educators from around the world have visited Ms. Bearden's classroom and have attended her workshops to learn better ways to engage students, build relationships, foster academic excellence, enhance communication, and create a climate and culture for success. In 2016, Ms. Bearden was honored at the White House for being inducted into the National Teachers Hall of Fame. She was selected from over 70,000 nominations to be honored as the Disney American Teacher Awards Outstanding Humanities Teacher, and the Milken Family Foundation selected her to receive the Award for Excellence in Education. She is the winner of the InfluencHer Award, the University of Georgia Outstanding Educator Award, and the Turknnett Character Award for Servant Leadership. Mercedes-Benz recognized her in their Greatness Lives Here campaign, and Women Works Media Group has named her one of Georgia's Most Powerful and Influential Women. Ms. Bearden has spoken at hundreds of in-person events across the country as well as in South Africa, London, and China. Additionally, she is a sought-after virtual speaker and trainer. Her newest virtual course is available through Premiere University. Over the past thirty-four years, Kim has been a teacher, instructional lead teacher,

curriculum director, school-board member, staff-development trainer, and middle-school principal. Ms. Bearden is a bestselling author of three books: *Crash Course: The Life Lessons My Students Taught Me*; *Talk to Me: Find the Right Words to Inspire, Encourage, and Get Things Done*; and her newest book, *Fight Song: Six Steps to Passion, Power, Peace, and Purpose*.

Betsy Bell



Betsy currently serves at the K-12 Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Programs Coordinator at the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), in the Division of Public Safety Training and the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety. She coordinates programs and training on a variety of mental health topics

for school personnel and law enforcement. She also collaborates with other state agencies and programs to support the mental health of Virginia's youth. She has a degree in Education from the University of Virginia and a degree in Counseling and Development from George Mason University. Mrs. Bell has a background in school counseling, school administration, and youth mental health and suicide prevention.

James Christian



James Christian is the Manager of the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety at the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services. Mr. Christian manages a K-12 team that is responsible for School Resource Officer and School Security Officer training and certification, the school safety

audit, behavioral threat assessment training, crisis management and critical incident, several federal grants, suicide prevention and mental health, and school safety best practices. He has previously served in the army, law enforcement, and education.

Shellie Evers



Shellie Evers currently serves as the Virginia Center of School and Campus Safety Supervisor for DCJS in the Division of Public Safety Training and the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety. In partnership with DCJS team members supports the Mental Health & Suicide Prevention and Behavioral Threat Assessment programs and

plans the "School Safety Training Forum" and "Strengthening Connections Climate Summit" as well as the "Threat Assessment

Conference for Educational Institutions". Mrs. Evers also manages the division's budget and assists with special projects and resource development. Before coming to DCJS in 2012, she spent 16 years in Hanover County Public Schools where she was responsible for emergency planning, facility use, energy conservation, and safety related training. She has a Bachelor's degree in Business from Averett University and a Master's degree in Public Administration from Norwich University.

Paul Harris



Dr. Paul Harris currently serves as an educational consultant. He previously served as an Associate Professor of Education at The Pennsylvania State University and the University of Virginia, and as a high school counselor in Newport News, and Loudoun County, Virginia. He earned his Bachelor's degree in Health and Physical Education

with a concentration in Sports Medicine, his Master's degree in School Counseling from the University of Virginia, and his Ph.D. in Counselor Education from the University of Maryland. He also holds a Master of Divinity degree from Virginia Union University. His work centers on the mental health and college and career readiness of underserved students, especially Black youth, and promoting the healthy identity development process of Black male student-athletes in particular. He conducts trainings across the country with diverse groups including, but not limited to, K-20 students, teachers, professors, counselors, school administrators, governing boards, athletes, coaches, and churches, on topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in social emotional learning. Dr. Harris is the former president of the Virginia School Counselor Association and the former board member of the Board of Directors for the American Counselor Association. He currently serves on the Senior Advisory Board for the Professional Counselor Journal. His contributions to the field have been acknowledged by the American School Counselor Association, American Educational Research Association, Southern Association of Counselor Education and Supervision, and Education Trust.

Gerard Lawson



Dr. Gerard Lawson is a Professor in the School of Education at Virginia Tech, and was the 66th President of the American Counseling Association, having served in that office from July 2017–June 2018. Dr. Lawson is also past-president of the Association for Counselor Education and

Supervision (ACES) and past-president of the Virginia Counselors Association. Since joining the faculty at Virginia Tech, Dr. Lawson has published his research in prestigious journals including the *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *Counselor Education and Supervision*, and *The Clinical Supervisor*. He has presented at national and international conferences on a range of topics including counselor wellness, crisis response and resilience, and clinical supervision. Dr. Lawson is the Principle Investigator on \$1.6 million in grants from the National Institute of Justice, to explore influences on the School to Prison Pipeline. He has been involved in training and consulting across the country to help keep kids in the classroom, and out of the courtroom. Dr. Lawson has been a

disaster mental health volunteer with the American Red Cross since 2001, and has supported numerous national, state, and local disasters. He was instrumental in helping to coordinate the counseling response to the tragic shootings at Virginia Tech in 2007, and he is the author of Virginia Tech's Disaster Behavioral Health Plan. He has helped many institutions prepare for crisis response, and works frequently with counselors who have responded, providing debriefing and supportive services. Dr. Lawson's focus is on building resilience in the individuals (including counselors) and communities that are affected by disasters. His published work includes articles exploring the experiences of professional counselors and clinicians in the aftermath of natural disasters such as the Gulf Coast hurricanes Katrina and Rita and traumatic events such as the shootings at Virginia Tech. Dr. Lawson was the chair of the ACA Taskforce on Crisis Response Planning and has authored several articles on counselor wellness and resilience, particularly when working in disaster mental health. He is a Licensed Professional Counselor, a Licensed Substance Abuse Treatment Practitioner, a National Certified Counselor, and an Approved Clinical Supervisor.

Steven MacDonald



After receiving a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Victoria, Mr. MacDonald specialized in language analytics and artificial intelligence for major media corporations in the Tech Industry. His experience and knowledge in both technology and the world of social media have enabled him to have a greater

understanding and a more hands-on approach to working with school-aged children with the ability to assist in data collection and accurate threat assessments for school districts nationwide. As a trainer, Dr. MacDonald is passionate about providing presentations and workshops to students, staff, and parents on social media awareness, the importance of creating a positive digital footprint, cyberbullying, and online safety.

Shekila Melchior



Dr. Melchior is a Nationally Board-Certified Counselor, an LPC-MHSP (TN) and a licensed Professional School Counselor in Virginia. Prior to her faculty appointment, she was a high school counselor in Bassett, Virginia. Dr. Melchior has also worked as a mental health therapist on inpatient

psychiatric units. She is currently an Assistant Professor and Academic Program Coordinator at George Mason University as well as a clinician at The Wise Family. She received her Ph.D. from Virginia Tech in 2017 and holds a Master's degree in School Counseling from North Carolina A&T. Dr. Melchior currently serves as a member of the Counselors for Social Justice Curriculum Taskforce and serves as the School Counselor representative on the board. She is currently the president of the Virginia Alliance for School Counseling, a division of the Virginia Counselors Association. Dr. Melchior's research interests include social justice identity development, undocumented students/immigrants, the professional identity development of school counselors and human trafficking.

Donna Michaelis



Donna Michaelis has been working in the area of school safety since 1985. She began her career as one of the first Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) officers in the Commonwealth of Virginia with the Chesterfield County Police Department. She also served as the county's first Child Safety Coordinator working in 37 elementary schools and 11 middle schools,

developing the Success Through Education and Proactive Policing (STEPP) prevention curriculum. In 1998, she joined the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services as a youth safety specialist in charge of school resource officer training. She is currently Director of the Division of Public Safety Training and the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety. Throughout the years, Mrs. Michaelis has worked with many state agencies to partner and collaborate for the school and campus safety professionals she serves. She has also worked on many Governors' initiatives to include 4SAFE VA, KIDSafe Virginia, Prevention Comes First, Governor McDonnell's School and Campus Safety Task Force, and Governor McAuliffe's Task Force on Combatting Campus Sexual Assault.

Horacio Sanchez



Horacio Sanchez is the President and CEO of Resiliency Inc., an agency leader in helping schools improve school climate, instruction, and discipline. Mr. Sanchez is recognized as one of the nation's prominent experts on promoting student resiliency and applying brain science to improve school outcomes.

The Maladaptive Council (Academy of Science) recognizes him as a leading authority on emotional disorders and resiliency. He is a highly sought-after speaker and has keynoted many national conferences. Mr. Sanchez has been a teacher, administrator, clinician, mental health director, and consultant to the Department of Education in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and other states. His diverse education and background have helped him to merge research, science, and practice. Mr. Sanchez sits on True Health Initiative Council of Directors, a coalition of more than 250 world-renowned health experts committed to educating on proven principles of lifestyle as medicine. He has authored several articles and books on the topics of resiliency, closing the achievement gap, and applying neuroscience to improve educational practices and outcomes. He is the author of the best-selling book, *The Education Revolution* published by Corwin Press, which applies brain science to improve instruction, behaviors, and school climate.

Tori Stone



Dr. Tori Stone has more than 20 years of experience as a school counselor, counselor educator, and national presenter. As an Assistant Professor of Counseling at George Mason University, she trains both School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling students in counseling skills and theories, creative counseling interventions, and practical, theory-based approaches to work with children and teens. Dr. Stone has delivered more than 100 presentations at the local, state, and national level on Teen Brain Development, Creativity in Counseling, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Trauma Informed Education and Social Justice, and many other related topics. She works in consultation with several local schools and school divisions to provide practical training for counselors, teachers, parents, and students to help them to turn down stress at home and school with the aim of increasing mental health.

Monique Williams



Monique Williams, MA, is a Professional Speaker, Consultant, and Trainer. She has developed and facilitated numerous trainings and workshops on trauma-informed practice for the Virginia Department of Education, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, Virginia Department of Corrections, and local agencies that serve youth in foster

care, residential care, and early childhood education. She offers consulting to schools, public and private agencies, and nonprofits to strengthen youth and family engagement at all levels of service. Her experience in the field of mental health has greatly impacted the services provided to youth and families involved in multiple systems including social services, behavioral health, juvenile justice, and criminal justice. In her experience, she has provided expertise within the State Office of Children and Family Services at the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and has served on national demonstration projects funded by the Office of Victims of Crime that focused on the identification and coordination of care for children, youth, and transitioning young adults who have been victimized by a broad spectrum of crimes and other traumatic violent events. As a Training Faculty with the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance Training Institute, Ms. Williams is often requested to facilitate trainings, workshops, and webinars centered on adverse childhood experiences and trauma, resiliency, intergenerational violence and historical trauma, and services to support communities of color. She most recently began statewide facilitation of the *Essential Elements of Collaboration: Behavioral Health & Domestic Violence*, a continued advocacy training intended to help build capacity and improve collaboration between domestic violence programs and Community Service Boards in Virginia. As a Nationally Certified Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Instructor and Certified Positive Discipline Educator, Ms. Williams also provides consultation, workshops, and trainings on the use of discipline and behavioral strategies for managing children and adults suffering from mental health crisis and behavioral dysregulation. Her work has been adapted in community-based settings for both families and professionals.