



2025 Equity & Inclusion Conference

Skills for the Practice and the Practitioners

Monday, October 20 and Tuesday, October 21
The Drury Plaza, Arlington, Texas

October 20

October 20 | 8:00 – 8:30 a.m.

Coffee, continental breakfast, and conference check-in

October 20 | 8:30 – 10:00 a.m.

Implementing an Identity-Conscious Practice

Our school missions often include values of diversity, inclusion, and belonging. While many of us chose education for its commitments to discourse and diversity, we have also faced challenges in the current social-political climate to limit, restrict, or rebrand the work. How can educators continue an identity-conscious practice while also responding to the chaotic changes in the social landscape? Join Dr. Liza Talusan as we take the foundations of an identity-conscious practice and learn helpful frameworks that lead to more equitable conditions.

Liza Talusan, LT Coaching and Consulting, LLC

October 20 | 10:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Break

Snacks and beverages available

October 20 | 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

My Voice, My Story, My Power: I am . . .

Storytelling is a pathway to empowerment, helping us learn from each other, build community, and establish connection and bridges in the living story of history.

In this workshop, practitioners will explore the personal and communal impacts of narrative. How can we use storytelling as a restorative tool to build an inclusive community?

Lauryn Whitney, Authentic Global Voices



October 20 | 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

Lunch together at the hotel

October 20 | 1:30 – 2:45 p.m.

D+E+I=? Navigating the New Landscape: Executive Orders, Challenges, and Responses for K-12 Equity Leaders

Join this interactive session as we examine the rapidly evolving legal and policy environment surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion work in K-12 schools. Following the Trump administration's executive orders focused on DEI programs, school professionals are facing unprecedented challenges, grappling with unanswerable questions, and, perhaps, exploring new opportunities. Through collaborative large group discussions, small group breakouts, policy review, and Q&A, participants will share questions, challenges, and practical approaches, while exploring emerging trends and risk management strategies for maintaining inclusive environments within a shifting legal landscape.

Megan Mann, Founder of The Approach Group

October 20 | 2:45 – 3:00 p.m.

Break

October 20 | 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

My Voice, My Story, My Power: Building the Bridge

Lauryn Whitney, Authentic Global Voices

October 20 | 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Table Top Discussions

Topics to be decided

October 20 | 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Reception

October 20 | 6:00 p.m.

Dinner and evening on your own in Arlington



October 21

October 21 | 7:30 – 8:30 a.m.

Breakfast is included with your hotel room if you are staying at The Drury – please enjoy a hot breakfast on the first floor before sessions begin today.

For those not staying at the hotel coffee, tea, and muffins are in the meeting space.

October 21 | 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

Unconference

At the beginning of the session all participants will brainstorm together about topics they wish to discuss. Each topic will be assigned to a table, and participants may attend as many discussions as they wish during this block. There will be 10 minutes at the end for sharing insights from the discussions with the entire group.

October 21 | 9:30 – 9:45 a.m.

Break

October 21 | 9:45 – 11:45 a.m.

What This Moment Affords Us: Critique & Correction

As teachers/active researchers/leaders, we work in evolving places and we work with humans who are becoming. We therefore welcome critique in our DEIB work that would help us to hone the message of purpose and sharpen our strategic approach. Attack, however, is off limits. This session will help practitioners and others discern the difference and offer careful definitiveness coupled with a commitment to continual improvement.

André Withers, Consultant, The Educators Collaborative

October 21 | 11:45 a.m.

Adjourned

October 21 | 12:00 p.m.

Optional campus visit to The Oakridge School – information will be sent separately about this event.

Speakers

Liza Talusan



Dr. Liza Talusan is an educator, strategic change partner, leader, writer, leadership coach and parent. With over 25 years of experience in PreK-20 education and organizational leadership, Liza is an engaging facilitator in conversations about diversity, anti-racism, bias, privilege and power and creates environments that allow for people to build skills for difficult conversations. Liza's approach is focused on empowering individuals to create a more inclusive organization, environment, community and team.

Dr. Talusan has been invited to more than 350 organizations across the country and internationally to deliver keynote addresses and facilitate dialogue groups, training workshops, strategic planning, and change management. Certified as a Professional Coach by the Institute for Professional Education in Coaching (iPEC), Liza helps individuals and organizations achieve their goals by centering values, strengths, and vision.

Talusan earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Child Development from Connecticut College; Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration from New York University; Ph.D. in Higher Education from University of Massachusetts Boston; Certificate in Human Resources, Stonehill College; and PCC Coaching Credentials.

Liza's cumulative research interests include identity-conscious practices; the experiences of underrepresented populations; Asian American and Pacific Islander students; socialization to graduate programs; navigating academic parenthood; interracial relationships; recognizing and reducing unconscious bias; and the impact of federal financial aid policies. She has integrated scholarship and research by conducting equity audits and organizational focus groups.

In addition to her work at the national level with corporations, non-profit organizations, and schools, Liza serves as a faculty member in the Department of Educational Leadership at the University of Massachusetts Boston where she teaches in both the Masters and Doctoral programs. Liza's book, "The Identity Conscious Educator: Building habits and skills for more inclusive schools" published by Solution Tree Press, is the 2023 Gold Medal Recipient of IPPY Awards. Her new book "Identity-Conscious Practice in Action" was released in November 2024.

Lauryn Whitney



Lauryn Whitney stands as a transformative force—a storyteller, educator, and "soul creative" who serves as the catalyst behind meaningful movements for change. Lauryn is the founder of Authentic Voices Global: a storytelling platform and community. With her foundation in theater and unwavering dedication to education and social justice, Lauryn's work through AVG exists at the powerful intersection of History, Education, and Community—three pillars that form the foundation of her mission to amplify historically unseen and overlooked voices and challenge systemic injustices.

Featured In: ABC National News | Access Hollywood | Parents Magazine | Inside Edition | and More

Lauryn's approach is uniquely solution-oriented. Through her work, she creates accessible and safe spaces where people can reconnect with their history and ancestry. Her educational storytelling workshops empower individuals to heal and express themselves through creativity. Her community impact extends through collaboratively curated social events designed with established community organizations and influencers to maximize authentic engagement and lasting change.

At the core of Lauryn's mission is her belief that true change requires more than accolades; it demands action. She states, "I truly believe it does not matter how many accomplishments I list if I have not activated an atmosphere of change or created a space of freedom and authenticity. I am a changemaker, here to disrupt the systems and narratives that no longer serve us. I am creating a better and brighter tomorrow by making space for stories to be heard and authentic change to manifest."

Lauryn's work is intrinsically connected to the Ubuntu philosophy—"I am because we are"—which she brings to life through her Ubuntu Archive and salon experiences. These spaces serve as living embodiments of her philosophy: "Change happens when hearts and souls do the listening. For every story is a Brick. Brick may be used to build a wall, but let us use our bricks to build a bridge that connects us all."

Lauryn Whitney's unwavering dedication to fostering connection through shared narratives, along with her commitment to uplifting communities, serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration in a world striving for equity and inclusion. She doesn't just tell stories—she creates the conditions for transformation.

Megan Mann



Megan Mann is the founder and principal of [Approach](#), a consulting group that specializes in independent school leadership and crisis management, employee training, investigations, and governance support.

Prior to founding Approach, Megan served as General Counsel and Vice President of Legal Education and Support for the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) for five years, where she managed NAIS's legal needs and counseled independent schools on a variety of matters. Prior to joining NAIS, Megan was an employment and independent school attorney, where she served as general counsel to independent schools across the country. Earlier in her career, Megan enjoyed her work in the television and print media arena, along with voice over work that she continues to pursue as a hobby.

Megan serves as a trustee for St. Michael's School (VA) and volunteer on the strategic planning committees of Riverside School (VA) and The New Community School (VA). She and her family (including two fabulously awkward dogs) live in Richmond, Virginia, where her two children attend independent schools. Megan enjoys a juicy fiction novel, a slow jog, and gazing at pretty much any body of water.

André Withers



Originally from Indiana, André Withers has been in independent schools for over 20 years. The initial foray into the world of independent schools was The Orchard School in Indianapolis, IN. He found an immediate home as a Middle School teacher and Advisor. As the School grew and as opportunities arose, André was able to also find that his gifts and talents were aligned with an additional role of Director of Diversity. Those roles brought tremendous growth and preparation for the role of Director of Middle School that he assumed in 2001. While teaching and running the division, there were significant additions introduced as part of his tenure including enhancements in Advising, Student-led conferencing and technology standards. Concurrent to the work at those two schools, André was invited to serve on the board of ISACS (Independent Schools Association of the Central States) where he chaired the Equity Committee and served on accreditation teams. That valuable work also led to additional service with NAIS. André was a faculty member of the Summer Diversity Institute and subsequently worked as the director of that professional development opportunity for three years.

In 2004 André was named Assistant Head of School at The Lowell School in Washington, DC. While at Lowell André served a term on the Board of AIMS (Association of Independent Maryland Schools) while also being a regular



presenter at PoCC and NAIS' Annual Conference. Upon completing five years at Lowell, André was hired as the Director of Madeira's signature experiential program, Co-Curriculum. With immediate success in that role André was named Assistant Head of School. That role came with a portfolio that included Athletics, Summer Programs, Technology, continued oversight of Co-Curriculum and a host of special projects, most notably, point person for the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

André joined Educators Collaborative in 2022. Having become a Certified Executive Coach, he will be active in not only leadership searches for schools but also supporting schools and their leaders evolve in ways that can ensure institutional success.