Literacy for All:

Equitable Practices for

Reading & Dyslexia

Presenter Biographies

Kelli Cummings, **Ph.D., NCSP, Assistant Professor of Special Education at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD)**. Dr. Cummings' research specialty is on data-based decision making and intensive intervention planning. Her studies evaluate and improve the reliability, validity, and accuracy of assessment tools that are used to evaluate student progress. She also focuses on areas of school improvement (e.g., MTSS) in academics and behavior. All of her work is guided through the lens of implementation science, which is the "...scientific study of methods to promote the systematic uptake of research findings and other evidence-based [interventions] into routine practice" (Eccles & Mittman, 2006). Dr. Cummings recognizes that efficacious practices that do not take into account school need, education policy, or the infrastructure required to implement the practice at scale are likely to result in low levels of adoption (Horner et al., 2014).

Dr. Cummings also conducts research within the UMD's Language and Literacy Center (LLRC). The LLRC brings together faculty and students to focus on language and literacy issues in education from different perspectives. This center is part of a larger campus initiative, the Language Science Center (LSC), which focuses on advancing language science at the University of Maryland and beyond, through integrated research and training that links fundamental science with applications in education, technology, and health. Prior to her appointment at UMD, she worked as a Research Associate and Director of Measurement and Evaluation (University of Oregon) and an Assistant Professor of School Psychology (University of Montana). She also worked in the field as a special educator in reading and math (Grades 3 – 5) and a school psychologist (certified from birth – Age 21).

Sarah Sayko, **M.Ed.,** is the Deputy Director of the National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL) and leads NCIL's parent and family strand of work. She is a Senior Research Associate at RMC Research Corporation in Arlington, VA. Sarah has 14 years of experience as a technical assistance provider supporting states, districts, and schools in implementing evidence-based practices in education. As a literacy content specialist for the Center on Instruction (COI), she developed evidence-based resources for practitioners, and as a member of the National Reading Technical Assistance Center (NRTAC), she delivered professional development to them on the implementation of multi-tiered systems of support for reading (MTSS-R). For seven

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years, Sarah was both an elementary reading coach and literacy specialist in two public school districts and is a certified K-12 literacy specialist.

Jess Surles, **M. Ed.** is a Research Assistant and Expert Literacy Coach at the Center on Teaching and Learning (CTL), University of Oregon. Jess has over thirteen years of experience in delivering classroom instruction, collaborating with educators and leadership to support program implementation, and designing professional development on literacy and educational practices. As a member of the technical assistance team for both Lead for Literacy and the National Center on Improving Literacy, Jess develops curriculum and provides technical assistance across the nation. She partners with literacy experts and university researchers to integrate current research and instructional practice for educators, leadership, and educational agencies. Jess provides training, on-site coaching, and virtual support to assist with implementation of evidence-based literacy practices.

Winifred Winston, State Leader for Decoding Dyslexia Maryland, is an enthusiastic speaker, passionate advocate, best-Selling author and founder of Dyslexia Advocation. After working as an administrator for a special education school in Baltimore and going through the IEP process with her daughter, she realized parents needed additional support and information about dyslexia and reading. As a Baltimore City resident committed to service, Winifred leads the Baltimore City chapter and served on several local nonprofit boards to help individuals who face social or economic challenges. Her mission is to educate, empower, and equip parents with the tools to successfully advocate for their children with dyslexia and other language learning differences. When Winifred is not helping parents, you can find her and her daughter on the track or running trail.

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