

Speaker Biographies

Sessions organized by The PEAL Center

SESSION 10

CATHERINE BELASCO

Educator, Student & Sibling

Catherine (Cat) Belasco holds a Bachelor's degree in psychology and is currently studying for a Master's in early intervention with a specialization in autism. Her background includes seven years working for an early intervention program supporting students with challenges related to Autism Spectrum Disorders. Cat shares a home with her brother who has disabilities.

SESSION 10

CEIL BELASCO

Parent & Teacher

Ceil is both a teacher and a parent of an adult with disabilities. Her background includes 35 years as a special education teacher and six years as Director of Training for the PEAL Center.

"We all bring gifts to the table"

SESSION 9

SCOTT A. DOUGHERTY

M.Ed., Educational Consultant
PaTTAN

Scott A. Dougherty, M.Ed. is certified as a teacher in the areas of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (N-12) and Elementary Education (K-6) and as an Instructional Technology Specialist (K-12) in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. He completed his undergraduate work at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, graduate work at Waynesburg University, and an Assistive Technology Applications certificate at California State University, Northridge. In addition to his work as an Educational Consultant at PaTTAN, Scott has taught at a residential school for the deaf, worked as an intermediate unit consultant in assistive technology, and taught at the undergraduate and graduate levels in the areas of assistive technology, instructional technology, and American Sign Language.



KEYNOTE & SESSION 7

TORRIE DUNLAP

CEO, Kids Included Together

Torrie Dunlap is an educator who found her life's purpose when she taught a theater class for children that included a boy with Down syndrome. This is also how she came to know the work of Kids Included Together, a national non-profit where she started as a volunteer and today is the Chief Executive Officer. Torrie has delivered keynotes and trainings on inclusion around the United States and in Europe, and she has been published in textbooks, professional journals, trade magazines and digital media. She has contributed to the advocacy website Think Inclusive, the SWIFT schools blog SWIFTtalk, the Disability.gov blog and was a frequent guest host on the podcast The Inclusive Class.

Torrie is a Certified Professional in Learning and Performance and in 2013 was selected as a Social Innovation Fellow at Stanford's Graduate School of Business. In October 2014 she delivered her first TEDx talk, and will be speaking at SXSWedu in Austin in March 2016. Torrie represents KIT as a special consultant to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

SESSION 1

JUDITH GRAN

Esq. Partner, Reisman, Carolla,
Gran LLP

Judith Gran specializes in disability and education law. She has represented children and adults with disabilities in eighteen states, including Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Judith has brought a number of class action and system change lawsuits designed to improve special education and community services and secure the right of persons with disabilities to inclusion and full participation in schools and communities.

Many of her cases have resulted in the closure of state institutions and the creation of high quality community services for former institutional residents. These cases include the landmark class action case, Halderman v. Pennhurst, in which Judith served as lead counsel for the Arc of Pennsylvania during the last twelve years of implementation. As a result, Judith has played a major role in improving community services for individuals with disabilities nationwide. Her cases addressing inclusive education include Gaskin v. Commonwealth, a state-wide class action suit to require the Pennsylvania Department of Education to require compliance by local school districts with IDEA's implementation mandate.

SESSION 8

RON HAGER

Esq. Senior Staff Attorney
National Disability Rights
Network

Ron provides training and technical assistance to the P&A/CAP network on special education and assists in overseeing training and technical assistance to CAP. He has specialized in disability law, particularly special education, since 1979 when he started his legal career in Buffalo as a VISTA attorney. After that, he was a Clinical Professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo Law School for nine years, supervising the Education Law Clinic. In 1991, Ron moved to Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS) where he represented clients in a wide variety of disability-related cases. As part of NLS's National AT Advocacy Project, Ron also was a frequent author on disability law-related issues. He was co-chair of the New York State Bar Association's Committee on the Rights of People with Disabilities for four years, and was the President of the Board of Directors of Autistic Services, Inc., in Western New York for 10 years. Ron earned a B.A. in Psychology from the State University of New York at Binghamton and a J.D. from the State University of New York at Buffalo Law School.

SESSION 5

PAT HOZELLA

CEO, Kids Included Together

Patricia "Pat" Hozella has served as the Director of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Special Education (BSE) since February 2014. Prior to her appointment as Bureau Director, Ms. Hozella held several positions including Assistant Director for the PA Bureau of Special Education; State Contact at the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP); Division Chief for the PA Bureau of Special Education; and Special Education Advisor for the PA Bureau of Special Education. Previously, Ms. Hozella taught emotional support classes for thirteen years. Ms. Hozella has a Bachelor's Degree in Special Education with an emphasis in Behavior Disorders and has completed the coursework for an Education Doctorate in Special Education.



SESSION 11

NANCY KLUTCHER

School Psychologist
& Education Consultant

Nancy is a nationally certified, School Psychologist. She earned her M.S. Ed. and Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in School Psychology from Duquesne University. She is also a licensed attorney, having received her JD degree from Temple University. She is currently working toward certification in the School Neuropsychology Post Graduate Certification Program. Nancy has experience working in public and charter school settings, and with diverse populations. Nancy specializes in Independent Educational Evaluations as well as private educational and neuropsychological evaluations. She conducts assessments for learning disabilities, dyslexia, autism, ADD/ADHD and behavioral/emotional disabilities. As a consultant, Nancy advises parents about their educational options for their child. She advises parents regarding independent educational evaluations, as well as IEP and 504 plan development and implementation, utilizing targeted, evidence-based interventions and curriculums. Nancy is a member of the National Association of School Psychologists, the Association of School Psychologists of Pennsylvania, the International Dyslexia Association and the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates.

SESSION 2

MICHELLE "SHELI" REYNOLDS

Ph.D.

Dr. Reynolds' passion, knowledge, and experience come from growing up as a sibling of a brother with developmental disabilities. She is Director of Individual Advocacy and Family Support at the UMKC Institute for Human Development (UCEDD) where she has worked for over 20 years. Her work focuses on transformation of state systems through implementation of the Supporting Families LifeCourse Framework and Tools. Nationally, she is able to impact state systems in her role as the co-principal investigator on the National Community of Practice on Supports to Families grant from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities in collaboration with National Association on State Developmental Disability Directors. In May 2014 she was appointed to the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID).

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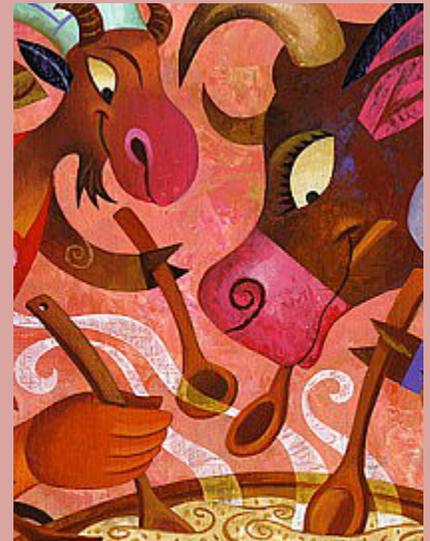
SESSION 3

GLORIA RODRIGUEZ-RANSOM

Licensed Professional Counselor

Gloria is native to Puerto Rico and received a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from La Roche College in 1995. She furthered her studies at Duquesne University, achieving a M.S.Ed. in School and Community Counseling in 1998 and received National Board Counselors Certification in 2002. Gloria J. Rodriguez-Ransom began her career by providing Residential Treatment Services and Drug and Alcohol Treatment in Allegheny County for several years. Mrs. Rodriguez-Ransom worked as a caseworker for Children, Youth and Families in 1998, provided Mental Health Services in Allegheny County and surrounding areas, and became a Licensed Professional Counselor in 2004. As a private practitioner Gloria has provided individual, couple and family counseling in and out of the office setting. In 2006 she became a Student Assistance Consultant and provided consulting services to non-public schools in Allegheny County through the Non-public School Program at the Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3. As a Student Assistance Consultant, Gloria provided educational in-services, resources, referrals and made available a network of services to all participating schools. For the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Gloria instructs the following courses: Barriers to School Success;

How to teach a high risk student, Classroom Interventions, Bullying/Cyber bullying, Mean Girls/Relational Aggression, Getting your Assets Moving/Resiliency, Truancy, Trauma, Stress Management for the Teacher, and Autism Spectrum Disorders. In 2008 Gloria was hired as the Parent Network Coordinator at the Office of Child Development, through the University of Pittsburgh. As the network coordinator, Gloria created outreach opportunities to Family Centers across Pennsylvania in order to achieve one common goal—advocate for families and children in their communities. After this project, Gloria became the Project Coordinator for the “Real Help, Real Time” Emergency Fund for families who are in financial crisis and reside in the communities of Allegheny County. In the summer of 2009, Gloria became an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant for the Office of Child Development at the University of Pittsburgh and now offers the same supportive consulting services to the 0-5 year old population, their families and the center’s staff. Gloria J. Rodriguez-Ransom is committed to improving the life of a child one family at a time by reaching out to families in need. Gloria does this all by providing Mental Health/Education – Prevention Services in a culturally competent manner to the English and Non-English speakers.



The mission of the Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership (PEAL) Center is to ensure that children, youth and adults with disabilities and special health care needs lead rich, active lives and participate as full members of their schools and communities. Each person brings a special gift to their communities, and much like the animals and farm girl in the story, the community we create together when everyone is included is that much richer. This year’s conference offers sessions on inclusion, intervention, support, education, advocacy, fostering friendships, employment, technology, and so much more! Make plans now to join this wonderful community gathering.