

Speaker Biographies

Mindy Binderman, Executive Director of GEEARS

Mindy Binderman is the founding Executive Director of GEEARS: The Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students. Mindy leads GEEARS' efforts to inspire and provide leadership for a statewide movement on early learning and healthy development for children ages birth to five. Mindy serves as GEEARS' lead advocate, fundraiser and spokesperson. She partners with the Board of Directors on strategic planning and works to strengthen relationships with community partners.

Mindy has had an extensive career in advocacy and government relations for nonprofits and corporations in Maryland and Georgia. She served as Director of Government Relations and Public Affairs for the Baltimore Jewish Council and as Vice President of Public Affairs for Planned Parenthood of Maryland before establishing her own successful lobbying firm based in Annapolis, Maryland in 1999. She was named one of Maryland's Top Women in 2004. Prior to coming to GEEARS, Mindy served as the Advocacy Director of Voices for Georgia's Children from 2007-2010. Mindy is a member of the Leadership Atlanta class of 2012. She chaired the Governance Council of North Springs Charter High School from 2015-17. She has served on the boards of Directors of the YMCA of Metro Atlanta, the Marcus Jewish Community Center, and Voices for Georgia's Children.

A native of Birmingham, Alabama, Mindy received her BA from Newcomb College, Tulane University and her JD from the American University's Washington College of Law. Mindy is married to Warren Binderman and has 3 children.

Nicole Patten Terry Georgia State University

Dr. Nicole Patton Terry is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, Special Education and Communication Disorders in the College of Education and Human Development at Georgia State University, where she is the Director of the Urban Child Study Center, and a member of the Center for Research on the Challenges of Acquiring Language and Literacy. She is also an Associate Editor for the Journal of Learning Disabilities, a research scientist at Haskins Laboratories, and a board member for the Society for the Scientific Study of Reading.

Her research interests concern young children with and without disabilities who struggle to acquire language and literacy skills, in particular children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and children living in poverty.

As the director of the Urban Child Study Center, Dr. Terry is responsible for creating and maintaining research-practice partnerships with diverse community stakeholders. By taking a collective impact approach and leveraging the resources of the college and the university, the Center strives to promote the overall development and school success of children and youth growing up in urban areas. Dr. Terry completed her graduate studies at Northwestern University in Communication Sciences and Disorders with an emphasis in Learning Disabilities.

Commissioner Amy Jacobs
Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Amy M. Jacobs is commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), the agency responsible for helping meet the early child care and education needs of Georgia's children and their families. As DECAL Commissioner, Jacobs oversees an annual budget of over \$800 million for programs focused on child care licensing, child and adult care nutrition, child care quality, and early childhood education, specifically Georgia's Pre-K Program.

Before joining DECAL, Commissioner Jacobs served as Senior Policy Adviser for the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB).

The Commissioner serves on the Georgia's Children's Cabinet, the Georgia Child Fatality Review Panel, the Alliance of Education Agency Heads, the 2020 Complete Count Committee, the Atlanta Early Education Leadership Council, and the boards of the Georgia Literacy Commission; Sandra Dunagan Deal Center for Early Language and Literacy at Georgia College and State University (Board Chair); Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning; and the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education.

Sydney Ahearn
Director of Early Learning, Atlanta Public Schools

Sydney Ahearn has served as the Director of Early Learning for Atlanta Public Schools since 2016. There, she oversees the district's Pre-K programs and seeks to ensure all APS Pre-K seats are high-quality, develop robust early learning pathways within the district, and work alongside partners to develop a city-wide vision for the birth to 3rd grade space.

Sydney has previously served in a number of roles related to early childhood education, teacher quality, and data/strategy with Aspire Public Schools and Memphis City Schools. She began her career in education as a teacher in Chicago with Teach For America. She holds an A.B. in History from the University of Chicago, an M.A.T. from Dominican University, and an M.Ed in Policy and Management from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She is currently an Associate Broad Resident in the 2017-2019 cohort.