

## NABSE Launches Virtual Symposiums



NABSE has launched a series of Virtual symposiums which are designed to engage and inform our members and associates of some of the challenges, strategies and success stories which are in place during this most challenging of times.

Each of the NABSE Commissions and the Regional Representatives will lead a presentation that addresses items that are specific to its charge.

Speaking of the Symposium, Dr. Nardos King, NABSE's Present-Elect and Conference Chair stated, "As the leading organization addressing issue facing children of color across the world, NABSE is responding to the needs of our stakeholders by bringing subject matter experts together to participate in our NABSE Symposium 2020. We hope that you will join us by registering each week and participate in this important dialog amongst educators."



Details and registration information regarding the series can be found on the NABSE website at the

following link: <https://www.nabse.org/nabse-symposium-2020/>



## Leading in Crisis: East Educational Partnership Organization/University of Rochester (EPO), Rochester NY

With the uncertainty that exists as a consequent of the Coronavirus, schools have had to become creative with the ways in which they serve and educate students. The East Educational Partnership Organization (EPO) is no exception to this challenge.

The East EPO - a collaborative partnership between Rochester City School District (RCSD) and the [University of Rochester](#) aimed at preserving and restoring the educational viability of East High School (formerly the lowest performing school, in the lowest performing district in New York State.)

In March of 2014, the RCSD was informed by the New York Stated Education Department (NYSED) that East High School was designated an "Out of Time" school, meaning the school had undertaken every improvement intervention offered by NYSED and had still failed to make appropriate progress. The district was given five choices for the school:

- Closure
- Conversion to a Charter School
- Phase Out
- Operation under the Supervision of the State University of New York (SUNY)
- Operation under the supervision of an EPO

The concept of an EPO is a product of Section 211-E of the Education Law. It allows the EPO to act as superintendent for a "failing school" and as such, to "assume the powers and duties of the superintendent of schools for purposes of implementing the educational program of the school, including but not limited to, making

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*recommendations to the board of education on budgetary decisions, staffing population decisions, student discipline decisions, decisions on curriculum and determining the daily schedule and school calendar...consistent with applicable collective bargaining agreements.”* In other words, the EPO is the superintendent and reports directly to the Board of Education.



In March of 2014, the RCSD Board of Education President approached the University of Rochester (UR) to become the EPO for East High School. After numerous meetings, UR agreed, consistent with Section 211-E of the Education Law. Commissioner John King accepted the preliminary UR application without alteration. Acting Commissioner Beth Berlin accepted the full application on February 11, 2015.



UR participation as EPO was contingent upon several actions by the RCSD and its employee associations. For faculty, these included

reapplication for all positions, a longer workday, ten days of summer professional development, curriculum, instruction and assessment practices consistent with evidence based best practice, daily collaborative planning, posting of daily and unit lesson plans, participation in daily social emotional development support and agreeing to a school day that is totally devoted to teaching, learning and support.

These agreements were the foundation of successful practices at East. The U of R began the work of the EPO on July 1, 2015. This partnership has seen growth over the past five years that has more than doubled the graduation rate (33% to 70%), dramatically reduced school suspensions and positively increased the climate (<https://www.rcsdk12.org/east>) and culture of the entire school community.



At East, we endeavor to become a community school, one that meets the academic, physical and social-emotional needs of our students, parents and families. As such, we have focused on providing learning opportunities that push student thinking, both inside and outside of the classroom.

This is particularly pertinent in our current situation as we utilize on-line media, such as Google Classroom and Zoom as well as through the provision of books and novels for our middle and high school students. We also have ensured that there is equity and access in resources for our scholars, like those that you would find in most

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suburban school districts. For example, our administrative team distributed Chromebooks to every middle school student in need to ensure that during this pandemic, our students were able to stay connected to our curriculum through the use of dynamic on-line learning opportunities, which includes the ever-changing world around them.

Realizing that tools without access is not enough, we also provided resources that allow for internet access for our students as well as their parents/families. Many of these provisions are taken for granted in other districts, but for our students, these necessities may make the difference in a student moving on to the next level or being held back from future success.

Academics is just one aspect of our efforts to serve our students and families during these unprecedented times. We understand our role as a consistent presence in our students' lives. In order to ensure some semblance of normalcy in our scholars' daily existence, our principals created spaces for staff to reach out to every student in our school, to make certain that every child has been in touch with at least one adult during these extraordinary times. School staff clearly identify through close monitoring and daily tracking, which students have been successfully connected with and develop a plan for those, which have not. Connections have been made by phone calls, video-chats, home visits, and the utilization of our community partnerships. Additionally, our Family Group structure (which focuses on developing staff and student connections and relationships – see:

<https://www.rochester.edu/warner/cues/restorative-practices/>), enables staff to easily reach out to 10-12 scholars in their “family groups” in effort to make this a manageable task for all.

Ensuring the academic and social-emotional needs of our students are met is just a part of meeting the needs of the whole child. The East EPO has also been designated as a food distribution site that serves meals to our community daily resulting in

the provision of over 400 meals per day. We have also expanded the capacity of our on-site food pantry, which is generously stocked by private donors as well as one of our community partners – Food Link, to ensure that our students and families who may be experiencing food insecurity, have access to nutritious meals and supplies throughout this ordeal.



We understand better the needs of our school and the community at large, by anticipating, responding to, and monitoring our current efforts. Delivering meals, food and supplies, as well as, Chromebooks and mi-fi/resources to access the Internet and curricular platforms, to those scholars/families in need is our way of staying connected during this time of social distancing. As we continue to navigate this ever-changing landscape, it is critical that we learn from this experience so that we finish stronger than we began.

Dr. Shaun Nelms, Superintendent EPO; William & Sheila Konar Director of the Center for Urban Education Success.

Dr. Stephen Uebbing, Associate Professor University of Rochester, Project Director of the East Education Partnership Organization.

Lorna Washington, Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Planning, EPO.

**From the Field**  
**African American Superintendents**  
**Respond to Covid-19**



In Rush-Henrietta, our team has been incredible. We are serving more than 1,000 meals a day. Our teachers have been volunteering to deliver meals to the homes of families who do not have transportation. We have deployed more than 800 Chromebooks to students in need and are helping families connect with companies who provide internet services at a reduced rate. We are currently maintaining more than 6000 student and staff devices. Our teachers are providing robust virtual learning opportunities through Google Classroom and Google Meet. We also hold weekly Superintendent’s Learning Challenges which provide fun, engaging activities for students to try!



**Arizona Alliance of Black School Educators  
Writes Arizona’s Governor and the State’s  
Superintendent of Public Instruction.**

The following is the text of a letter from the Arizona Alliance of Black School Educators (AzABSE) to Governor Doug Ducey and Kathy Hoffman, Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Dear Superintendent Hoffman and Governor Ducey:

During this trying time to determine the best efforts to support the learning process of students who are out of school for the remainder of the year, the Arizona Alliance of Black School Educators (AzABSE) is seeking ways to support families and children. As we know, it is crucial we continue our efforts to reduce the Achievement Gap in the United States.

Specifically, to Arizona’s equity, diversity, and inclusion endeavors, we must find ways to not lose valuable time debating the resources but use the immediate resources we have. AzABSE believes that one way to ensure the Achievement Gap does not further displace minority students in education is to release a collaborative message

imploping that stakeholders get involved. Although we know work is being done, getting this message out to communities is our way of showing our support by providing information beyond the educational system’s process that may not be reaching every family.

As such, we are writing to ask that, as the Governor and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, you support our efforts in communicating outwardly, urging districts and community services to collaborate and support continued educational growth. To that end, we ask that you support all the following objectives:

- Districts: Please utilize your technology to support at-home services by providing at minimal, one computer per family of the students that you serve.
- Business Community: We appreciate your support in education during these trying times and are looking for sound, salient solutions to maintain the continuous learning and instruction for our students in Arizona. Please assist the educational system by providing any internet services that your ‘cafe-style’ businesses provide to customers on a regular basis.
- Families: Various internet companies have offers that can support your home with internet services. We strongly urge that you seek out those available services.

We would like to share this information with districts and the community at-large within the next week. We request your endorsement either by way of a collaborative letter, depicting our various letterhead symbols to show our solidarity in generating this message, or by your release of an additional support notice to accompany ours through various media outlets.

We look forward to hearing from you concerning this request.



## Former NABSE Board Member Appointed to Academic Position

Dr. Kimberly McLeod has recently been appointed as the Academic Dean of Texas A&M University-Commerce.

A career educator, McLeod has served in multiple educational roles, including public school teacher, counselor, administrator, assistant superintendent, professor, executive director and dean at Texas Southern University (TSU) in Houston, Texas. Of the appointment, A&M-Commerce Provost John Humphreys said, “We are very pleased to have Dr. McLeod join us as dean of our storied College of Education and Human Services. She is an accomplished educator and dean with a substantial statewide network of colleagues and associates in education, industry and politics.”



McLeod has built numerous partnerships with leading education groups, such as the Texas Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents, the Texas Caucus of Black School Board Members, and the Mexican American School Boards Association.

Through her volunteer and professional work, she has raised over \$20 million in philanthropic, federal, state and local grant dollars. Additionally, as president of the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators, she created the Texas Educational Policy Institute, which established an instructional

pipeline for public educators to learn effective practices related to policy and governance.

“With her broad experience in education and counseling, and a keen understanding of the Texas education system, we are confident that Dr. McLeod can be an effective academic leader for Texas A&M University-Commerce,” Humphreys said.

McLeod held several academic leadership roles at TSU over her 12-year career with the institution, including executive director of academic instruction and affairs, director of the Teaching and Learning Excellence Center, and dean of the university’s Northwest Campus. She also founded the National Journal for Urban Education and Practice.

A prolific writer and public speaker, McLeod’s research on culturally responsive practices has been shared at national and international public institutions and conferences for over a decade. After requests from several school districts, she published her first book, “Creating Cultural Responsiveness,” in 2002. Since then, she has published 11 additional books for adult and child learners, along with 20 articles in peer-reviewed journals.

Senator Boris Miles of Houston noted McLeod’s positive influence in the community. “While Houston is losing a giant in advocacy and leadership in education, I’m glad to see Dr. McLeod join Texas A&M University-Commerce. She will serve the institution remarkably well.”

McLeod is excited to join the Lion family. “I look forward to working with faculty and staff, alumni, current students, and future students to continue delivering the best educational leadership in the state of Texas.” she said. “Considering the importance and value of front-line employees in our healthcare system, I’m particularly focused on showcasing how A&M-Commerce programs in nursing, health and human performance, and

mental health are having a positive impact on academic and field-based preparations to avoid future crises in the state of Texas.”



### ***Pedro Noguera Appointed Dean of the Rossier School of Education***

Pedro Noguera was recently appointed as the Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California. A sociologist, Noguera's research focuses on the ways in which schools are influenced by social and economic conditions, as well as by demographic trends in local, regional and global contexts.



He is the author, co-author and editor of thirteen books. His most recent books are *The Crisis of Connection* with Niobe Way, Carol Gilligan and Aisha Ali (NYU Press) and *Race, Equity and Education: The Pursuit of Equality in Education 60 Years After Brown* (Springer Press).

He has published over 250 research articles in academic journals, book chapters in edited volumes, research reports and editorials in major newspapers. He serves on the boards of numerous national and local organizations, including the Economic Policy Institute, the National Equity Institute and The Nation Magazine.

Noguera appears as a regular commentator on educational issues on several national media outlets, and his editorials on educational issues have appeared in the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Dallas Morning News and Los Angeles Times.

Prior to being appointed Dean of the Rossier School of Education at USC, Noguera served as Distinguished Professor of Education at the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA. Prior to joining the faculty at UCLA he served as a tenured professor and holder of endowed chairs at New York University (2004 – 2015) Harvard University (2000 – 2003) and the University of California, Berkeley (1990 – 2000).

Noguera was recently appointed to serve as a special advisor to the Governor of New Mexico on education policy. He also advises the state departments of education in Washington, Oregon and Nevada. From 2009 - 2012 he served as a Trustee for the State University of New York (SUNY) as an appointee of the Governor. In 2014 he was elected to the National Academy of Education and Phi Delta Kappa honor society, and in 2020 Noguera was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Noguera has received seven honorary doctorates from American universities, and he recently received awards from the Center for the Advanced Study of the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University, from the National Association of Secondary Principals, and from the McSilver Institute at NYU for his research and advocacy efforts aimed at fighting poverty.



### **In Memoriam**

Our friend and colleague, Erick Witherspoon passed peacefully in his sleep on April 06, 2020. He was 48 years of age.

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Erick was a passionate educator with a career in education that spanned the spectrum: classroom teacher, assistant principal, principal, district leader, and adjunct professor in Southern California.

He held many local, state and national offices in the National Alliance of Black School Educators, served on the California Staff Development Council and received many awards for his work in education. Erick received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education from Kansas Newman University, a master's degree in Educational Administration from Wichita State University and a Doctoral Degree in Leadership for Educational Justice from the University of Redlands.



Erick had a passion for equity and justice and quickly steered Generation Ready into its Cultural Proficiency consultancy. He then became the National Director of Equity and was passionate about pushing this valuable work forward not only across the country but also within Generation

Ready. Many teachers, schools and districts across the country have grown and changed in their thinking and policies because of the great work that Erick has done. His legacy of positive change will live on for years to come.

Erick was incredibly well respected in national and state education circles especially throughout California for his work around Equity and his love of people – he was a great socializer with a wicked sense of humor.

He was loved and admired by many people but especially by all those who worked with him at Generation Ready. His intelligence, commitment, and patience made him somebody that we not only looked up to but enjoyed being around. He was never judgmental and worked on instilling that virtue in others.

Erick always believed that we needed to look at ourselves before we started judging others and telling them to change – he called it “the inside out” approach to equity.

He is survived by his wife Chantal Witherspoon who is also in education as a middle school principal. Our thoughts and prayers are with Chantal and all of Erick’s family.

Erick will be missed by so many, his life brought so much happiness and enlightenment to those he touched in the world.  
May he rest in peace.

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Please send your comments and news items to:  
[executivedirector@nsbse.org](mailto:executivedirector@nsbse.org)