Rebecca Bell

ARLINGTON | TEACHER ADVISORY CABINET

My name is Rebecca Bell and this is my 15th year as a classroom teacher at the John A. Bishop School in Arlington, Massachusetts. I teach 5th grade, serve as a Literacy Leader and Mentor for 5th grade teachers in the district, and am the co-founder and co-leader of our school’s Parent/Teacher Diversity and Inclusion Group. Additionally, I serve on the Leadership Team and School Advisory Council. This year, I am conducting my principal internship to complete an Educational Specialist Degree in Administration, Planning, and Policy and to earn my principal/assistant principal license. I am also in the process of earning a graduate certificate in Trauma and Learning.

I earned my B.S. in Social Policy from Northwestern University and M.Ed. in Elementary Education from Lesley University. Before becoming a teacher, I worked on a presidential campaign and for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In my free time, I am a dedicated mom to a 9-year old son and love to read, run, and engage in community service and social justice activities.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
Teaching is one of the most powerful ways to create positive change in the world. When teachers build caring, respectful classroom communities and acknowledge students’ unique identities, strengths, challenges, needs, and interests, students feel a sense of belonging, grow in confidence and motivation, and experience academic and social success. Teaching is also a powerful tool to instill values such as integrity, a love for learning, a growth mindset, respect and empathy for others, dignity, and responsibility. These values are critical for creating a more just, merciful, and anti-racist society where everyone has equal opportunities for success. Finally, I am passionate about educational policy as a way to shape the values that schools teach students and the priorities and approaches teachers and administrators pursue. I believe that research-based educational policy promotes growth and progress for schools, educators, and students.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
As an aspiring school leader and lifelong learner, my best teachers have always been other school and educational policy leaders and teachers. I am excited to have the opportunity to learn from and build relationships with talented educators from across Massachusetts. Great ideas grow out of collaboration, especially among people with diverse backgrounds and experiences. I hope that my voice strengthens the collaborative work we engage in this year.

Ana Rebeca Chaverri

HOLYOKE | TEACHER ADVISORY CABINET

Ashley Davis

LOWELL | TEACHER ADVISORY CABINET

Ashley Davis, a 30 year old Cincinnati, Ohio native, graduated from Kentucky State University in May of 2013 with a major in English Literature and a minor in Journalism. At Kentucky State University, Ashley joined the prestigious Lambda Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Incorporated where she served as Vice President for years. Upon graduation, Ashley moved to Boston and taught 9th Grade English for 5 years while also leading as a Varsity Cheerleading Coach, Classroom Climate Coach & Leadership Team Liaison, and Journalism Elective Teacher. Now a second year principal at the Pauline A. Shaw Elementary School (a Boston Public School) in Mattapan, Ashley has her Master's Degree in Effective Teaching and recently completed the Lynch Leadership Academy for Educational Administration at Boston College.
Why are you passionate about education and policy?
I am passionate about education and policy because I believe that the intentional intersection of both will lead to equity for our most marginalized communities.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
I am excited to collaborate with like-minded colleagues, learn more about context outside of my own building and district, and impact change in the state of Massachusetts at large.

Purnima Demorais
FRAMINGHAM | PRINCIPAL ADVISORY CABINET

I am currently the principal of the Woodrow Wilson Elementary Public School in Framingham, Massachusetts. I have worked for over 25 years in education as a teacher, vice principal, department chair and principal for grades K-12. I am truly excited to join this talented team.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
I strongly believe education is the golden gate for opportunity to a better life for all students and families regardless of their economic, racial and cultural background. It is critical to have policy that allows for these diverse and often marginalized populations to have equitable access to high quality instruction.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
I am excited to collaborate with like-minded individuals who are passionate about making changes in educational policy to meet the needs of underprivileged populations of students and families in a way that fosters their social-emotional as well as academic needs.

Ricardo Dobles
FRAMINGHAM | PRINCIPAL ADVISORY CABINET

Ricardo Dobles has served as Vice Principal of Barbieri Elementary School in Framingham for the last 5 years. Prior to Barbieri, he was a Wraparound Outreach Coordinator at Woodland Academy Elementary School in Worcester. Ricardo earned his Ed.D. and M.Ed. at Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, Mass., and his Bachelor of Arts degree from Columbia College, Columbia University, in New York City. Co-editor of Learning as a Political Act: Struggling to Learn and Learning to Struggle (Harvard Educational Publishing Group, 1999), he has taught at College of the Holy Cross, Trinity College, and Harvard University. For over 25 years Ricardo was a proud Co-Director of Andover Bread Loaf Writing Workshop, a summer retreat for young artists and activists from Lawrence, Massachusetts.

Christopher Dodge
ORANGE | PRINCIPAL ADVISORY CABINET

Christopher Dodge is currently the Principal of the Orange Elementary Schools in Orange, MA, serving 550 students in grades PreK-6. He began his career as a grade 5 and 6 educator in Petersham, MA. Christopher’s passion as an educator included differentiating mathematics instruction for all students. Christopher is an advocate for adult and student social-emotional well-being, and the impact it has on student achievement. Under his leadership, the Dexter Park Innovation School has moved to an inclusion school, servicing students through a co-teaching model of instruction and he presented his work at the National Association for Elementary School Principals (NAESP) summer conference in Philadelphia. Christopher has served on the Board of Directors as the Elementary Committee Chairman for the Massachusetts School Administrators Association (MSAA). He most recently served on the Commissioner’s Teaching and Learning subcommittee for reopening
schools. He is a connected educator who utilizes social media to make family and community connections, and is passionate about educators using social media as a form of ongoing, personalized professional development. He is the coordinator of EdcampNQ in Orange, MA. You can follow him on Twitter and Instagram @PrincipalDodge1, on Voxer @cdodge33, and read his blog: http://oesleadlearner.blogspot.com/.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
I am passionate about education and policy, specifically as it relates to underserved rural communities in the state.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
I am excited to serve on the Cabinet to give a voice to leaders and educators who are doing incredible work during such a challenging time.

Amy Emma

ABBY KELLEY FOSTER CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOL | PRINCIPAL ADVISORY CABINET

I have worked in education for over twenty years. Throughout that time, there have been many changes in the field of education, but the one constant has been the importance of caring for students and the monumental difference it can make in their lives. **"Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For indeed, that's all who ever have."** -Margaret Mead

I have worked at Abby Kelley Foster Charter School in Worcester, MA for 14 years as an Elementary Principal. I work with incredible people each day and together we are committed to providing the best educational experience for our students. This is something that will also be a work in progress because there is always room for improvement and growth.

Prior to working at Abby Kelley, I was an Assistant Principal and classroom teacher in grades PK, K, 2, and 4.

I am also the Co-Founder of TeacherLock with my husband, Sal. We have been married for 28 years and have two beautiful adult children; Connor, 25, and Taylor, 27, along with a fantastic son-in-law, Keaton, and our first and only grandchild, Emmett. I also love to hike, travel, bake, and spend time with family and friends.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
Participating in educational policy will help to develop a framework for action in order to make the needed changes that will govern our educational system.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
There is a wonderful opportunity to network with fellow educators and to collaborate on improving the learning outcomes for all students.

Christina Gavin

LEXINGTON | PRINCIPAL ADVISORY CABINET

Christina Gavin is an Assistant Principal in Lexington, Massachusetts. Her 20+ years as an educator includes: Elementary School Teacher, Special Educator, Inclusion Specialist, and Instructional Coach. Christina has a passion for school leadership, innovation, equity, inclusion and various nerdy topics. Christina is a creative at heart and enjoys acrylic pour painting and playing piano.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
Teachers are some of the most hardworking and committed individuals on the planet. They deserve systems and policies that support their work with colleagues, students and families, as well as tools to advance their own professional growth. Policy directly or indirectly impacts the work that we do each and every day as professionals, as well as influences the school experience for students and
families. I’m passionate about advocating for the voices who are not always at the table when decisions are being made. It’s an honor to participate on PAC, where voices “from the ground” are heard and considered when shaping education policy.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
I am excited for administrators to join with teachers this year, with a narrowed focus on elementary. There are many educators who seek opportunities to weave inclusion and equity into their practice; these tools, which support the evaluation process, help to move that work forward.

Lisa Hanifan
MALDEN | TEACHER ADVISORY CABINET
I teach first grade at the Linden Steam Academy in Malden. I am a K-2 Humanities Team Leader, serve on my school’s diversity and equity team (RIDES program), School Site Council, and mentor newly hired teachers. I am also a DESE Literacy Champion and CURATE and Teach Plus alumna.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
I pride myself on cultivating a first grade community that is accepting and inclusive of all cultures. I want to give my students a voice and instill in them that their voice matters.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
I am excited to serve on the 20-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet because I want to collaborate with other educators, share experiences and work toward a common goal of shaping policy.

Denise Hatch
MAYNARD | TEACHER ADVISORY CABINET
Hi, I am Denise Hatch! I have worked in the Maynard Public School District for over 30 years in various capacities. I began my career as a paraprofessional and then as a long term substitute. Since 1992 I have held teaching positions; I have worked as an instructional coach, classroom teacher, interventionist, and a reading specialist. I am currently in the classroom teaching fifth grade, mentoring new teachers, and overseeing the Title I Program in my building. I consider myself fortunate to have worked for over thirty years alongside the most amazing educators, who have always put student needs at the center of our work. I am passionate about literature and getting diverse books into the hands of all of my students. I recently attended an event focused on diversity in literature sponsored by the International Literacy Association, which has inspired me to share my passion for diversity in literature with my colleagues.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
I have always been passionate about teaching and learning, and consider myself a lifelong learner. Throughout my 30 year career in education, I have witnessed how policy can directly impact teachers and therefore their students. I believe that my vast experience in the various roles I have held will help me to contribute positively to conversations around education and policy.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
I am excited to serve on the DESE Teacher and Principal Elementary Advisory Cabinet because I would like to have a voice in how to best support teachers around the importance of embedding culturally responsive lessons into all teaching practices. I look forward to collaborating with, and learning from, educators from around the state of Massachusetts.
Sarah Marie Jette grew up in Lewiston, Maine, in a house filled with books. A graduate of Mount Holyoke College, she served in the Peace Corps in Mongolia, studied rehabilitation counseling, and now has the best job in the world: teaching fourth graders. When she's not teaching, she's writing children's books, crafting with her kids, and snuggling with her 4 cats.

**Why are you passionate about education and policy?**
As the daughter and granddaughter of former public school teachers, education is in my blood.

**Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?**
In order to meet the needs of all students, we need to reflect on best teaching practices beyond our school districts. I have served on my school's Leadership Team and my district's Superintendent's Advisory Council. This felt like the next step to take.

Stacey Johnson

**Why are you passionate about education and policy?**
I am passionate about education and educational policy because of the impact that it has on the lives of our students.

**Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?**
I am excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet because I want to increase my impact as a classroom teacher.

Cynthia Kennedy

**Why are you passionate about education and policy?**
Education is the path to everything. Ensuring clear policies for equity and access to educational opportunities are key for helping students to achieve and become productive and engaged citizens in society.

**Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?**
I love learning and I love to talk about teaching and learning.
Ruby Maestas
CARVER | PRINCIPAL ADVISORY CABINET

I have been living and working in Massachusetts since 1990. I started my career in education in Western Massachusetts as a Spanish teacher at the middle school level. I eventually became a school counselor and then moved to the South Coast where my husband and I raised our children. I am proud to say that I am now in my 23rd year in education and have been working as a building principal at the elementary level for the past 11 years.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
I have always been passionate about education and policy. However, in my entire adult life, I don't recall a time as pressing as now to advocate for children. The challenges that our children and their families face have increased in the past few years.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
Going through the pandemic and working in a school system, I am even more compelled to be on a team of leaders who assist in the decision-making process toward improving educational outcomes for children. One of my professional goals is to assist in the process of closing the educational gaps for students and place them in the best possible position to excel.

Sarah McLaughlin
LAWRENCE | PRINCIPAL ADVISORY CABINET

Sarah McLaughlin is the very proud Principal of the Frost Elementary School in Lawrence. As the leader since 2014, she is grateful to work with a talented team of educators and amazing students and families. Prior, she worked in the Boston Public Schools as a Principal and at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as a manager of school innovation and redesign. She taught elementary school in Washington, D.C. and worked at a middle school in the Bronx following graduate school. She recently earned her doctorate in Educational Leadership from Boston College focused on culturally responsive family engagement practices.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
I am a public school K-12 graduate (across several states). Of my experiences, elementary school was my most memorable and rewarding. I struggled in middle school and high school to engage and feel the relevance of what I was learning. During this time, I leaned towards independent projects and internships that captured my interest outside of the standard curriculum. I was fortunate to have a strong reading, writing and math foundation that allowed me to participate in these types of experiences. Every child should have this type of opportunity and I feel a tremendous responsibility to serve elementary students and their families in acquiring strong foundational skills as well as a deep love for learning.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
I look forward to connecting with other educators across the state and thinking through critical and timely issues. I learn best from others in the field.
Alanna Melendez Seiferth

My name is Alanna Melendez Seiferth and this is my 8th year as a K2 Inclusion classroom teacher in Boston Public Schools. I currently teach K2 Inclusion at the Patrick J. Kennedy School in East Boston. I am the Early Childhood Lead Teacher. As Lead Teacher, I serve on the Instructional Leadership Team, where we make decisions and set goals to better serve our school community. I earned my bachelor’s degree from Stonehill College, where I double majored in Early Education and Gender and Sexuality Studies. While at Stonehill I was a leader of the ALANA-A Brothers and Sisters program that focused on the experience of students of color at Stonehill, planning social justice activities, and working to make our school a more inclusive environment. I am a proud mom and wife, and I love to be outdoors.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
I am passionate about education and policy because I strongly believe that we can always do better. We need to have voices from all angles, including students, families, teachers, principals, superintendents, etc. Our students deserve for those that make decisions for them to have their best interest at heart. As an educator it is my job to ensure that I am teaching to the whole child, and I will not ever settle for mediocrity.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
I am excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet because I want to hear the experience of other educators and leaders from Massachusetts as well as sharing my own experiences as an educator. By sharing our experiences, we will be able to truly support each other as decisions are made for our students and families.

Alice Mitchell

Alice is a Director of Curriculum and Instruction at her school with almost a decade of teaching experience in schools with historically marginalized students. As a leader of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee at her school, Alice focuses on facilitating professional development sessions that equip teachers to engage in culturally and community compatible instruction and classroom culture techniques. She also helps lead discussions that challenge practitioners to explore their own internal biases. Additionally, Alice emphasizes advocacy with her students, aiming to help them understand how their voices and academic excellence can work to erode the systems of oppression in which we are all steeped.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
In order to demolish systems of oppression in schools we need direct avenues to disrupt racist and oppressive policies. The two are interlinked so I am passionate about using policy as a vehicle to liberation.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
I am excited about people who have everyday touch points with students being at the table to make change. The cabinet seems reminiscent of early grassroots campaigns for change.
Steven Moguel
HOLYOKE | PRINCIPAL ADVISORY CABINET

Steven Moguel is completing his third year as a principal at Morgan Full Service Community School in Holyoke. Prior to working at Morgan, he was an assistant principal for 2 ½ years in Albany, NY at Delaware Community School; the only dual language school in the City School District of Albany. He has always been an elementary educator, starting his career in PreK-8 building as a teaching assistant in 2007. In 2010, he received his first teaching experience at Henry Johnson Charter School, teaching 4th grade for two years. He went on to teach 6th and 2nd grade before moving on to his leadership experience. His focus on building relationships and implementing systems has led to long lasting impact at all the jobs he has held.

Steven completed his undergraduate studies at the State University of Albany, received his masters from the Sage Colleges, and received his school building leadership certification from St. Rose.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
I am passionate about this work because dismantling the inequities that are inherent in our schools start with being at the conversations that help shape the policies that are implemented throughout education. Education has been and continues to be the path that has helped me explore and experience the work at large. It gives every child the opportunity to enjoy the world. What's happened over time is that our schools have replicated our societies’ inequities and purposeful way of placing some people and students over others. My passion is about dismantling that, giving all students the same opportunities and experiences I have had, and acknowledging the policies and practices that limit our marginalized students and families.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
I am excited to work on the Cabinet because often the people who are the "loudest" don't use their voice to move the work. I think this is a personal challenge to myself to not "just be loud" but also help to move the work in the right direction. Being in the Cabinet, I think, will allow for me to have a voice that can help shape policies that diminish the inequities in our school systems. It's also important for me that I am around other educators who can push my thinking and get me to process in ways I have never been able to.

Desiree Robinson
SPRINGFIELD | PRINCIPAL ADVISORY CABINET

Born and raised in Springfield, I am a proud graduate of Central High School. I attended local universities, Westfield State and Western New England, and always knew that I wanted to teach in the city that I grew up in. I began my career as a paraprofessional, working in a substantially separate classroom with elementary school students. After just a few years, I earned my bachelor’s degree and became a teacher. Graduating was a huge accomplishment, but this was no easy journey; I worked during the day and took classes at night. I enjoyed being in the classroom, but I knew that I could make a greater difference by taking on a leadership role. In 2016, I became a math Instructional Leadership Specialist (ILS). Currently serving in this role, I am able to lead the mathematics instruction for an entire elementary school. I strengthen teacher practice by coaching with a culturally responsive teaching focus. I've been involved with Paradigm Shift, supporting Black and Latinx paraprofessionals in becoming teachers, since 2018, serving as a member of the leadership team. I am grateful to be an educator. I truly enjoy the work that I do inside and outside of the classroom.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
I am passionate about education and policy because I know the value of a quality education and I aim to ensure that all students receive excellent instruction. When the right policies are put in place, an education holds the potential to be priceless. Education opens doors, decreasing the inequities in our society today. I believe that education is the key to a successful future and all children deserve the best educational experience possible.
Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
As an educator, I can affect so many lives. I choose to honor this responsibility by taking advantage of leadership opportunities in which I can ensure that they are affected positively, not only by myself, but all educators, which is why I am thrilled to serve on the Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet this year.

Asa Sevelius
BROOKLINE | PRINCIPAL ADVISORY CABINET

Dr. Asa Sevelius, Ed.D., is the principal of the Heath School in Brookline, Massachusetts. He is the first out transgender principal in the Commonwealth and amongst the very few out transgender school leaders nationwide.

As an educator, Dr. Sevelius has a clear commitment to issues of social justice, closing opportunity gaps, high-quality early childhood education, and fair assessment and evaluation practices. School culture and professional development are particular passions of his.

Before leading Heath School, Asa was the Principal of the Conservatory Lab Charter School in Boston.

In 2016, Dr. Sevelius earned his doctorate in Educational Leadership from Boston College. Before that, he earned degrees from both Lesley University (M.Ed.) and Indiana University (BA).

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
I believe that public schools are the locus of social change. Being a school leader that can and will help to cultivate a public school space where equity, liberation, and social justice are a community's guiding principles is extremely motivating for me.

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
As a principal, it is very easy to get in – and stay in – the weeds of daily routines specific to my school community. Serving on the Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet allows me a chance to immerse myself in the work from another perspective.

Luis Soria
HOLYOKE | PRINCIPAL ADVISORY CABINET

Luis R. Soria is the Principal of Dr. Marcella R. Kelly School in Holyoke. Originally from Chicago, Luis moved to Western Mass in 2016 to serve in Holyoke Public Schools. His journey as an educator began as a teacher of English learners, returning with pride to the neighborhood elementary school he attended in the Little Village community in Chicago. In 2000, he was the first Latino in Illinois to pursue and achieve National Board Certification. Since then, he has served children as a Bilingual Lead Teacher, Mathematics-Science Coach, Reading Coach, Management Support Director, Principal, and Chief Academic Officer.

Prior to joining Holyoke Public Schools, Luis served as one of thirteen Regional Superintendents for Chicago Public Schools. There he led thirty-three elementary school administrators and staff in the Network of Chicago with the highest population of low-income students and English learners. Luis earned his doctoral degree in May 2020 from Boston College.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
In May 2020, I earned my doctoral degree from Boston College after successfully defending my dissertation focused on district and school supports for marginalized student populations, including students who identify in the LGBTQ community. As a Latinx professional in education, I strive to offer a unique and critical perspective for educators and school leaders regarding identities, equity, and inclusion in the school setting.
Marc Swygert

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
I look forward to collaborating with other leaders, particularly regarding culturally responsive school leadership and teaching. I also look forward to collaborating with other diverse cabinet members who can share a specific perspective regarding how to meet the needs of traditionally marginalized student populations.

Marc Swygert begins his 23rd year in education as the Principal of Maurice A. Donahue School in Holyoke. This is Marc’s fourth year as Principal and his fifth year serving as an administrator in Holyoke Public Schools. Prior to coming to Holyoke, Marc was the Director of Elementary and Middle School Programs for the social-emotional learning non-profit Center for Responsive Schools based in Turners Falls. Prior to coming to Western Massachusetts, Marc was a teacher and principal in Rock Hill, South Carolina. A first generation college student, Marc found his passion for teaching and providing opportunities for students while completing his undergraduate degree at Caninus College in his hometown of Buffalo, New York. Throughout his career Marc has continued his family legacy of community service. He has volunteered with multiple community organizations and served in multiple capacities, including leadership positions.

Marc currently resides in Springfield with his lovely wife, his two awesome children, and his faithful dog.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
I am passionate about providing learning opportunities to as many students as possible in an equitable way that helps them develop skills to build positive relationships and have success in PreK-12 and beyond.

Maria Valarezo

Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
I am excited to add my voice to the conversation, especially during these uncertain times.

Ms. Maria Veronica Valarezo is an early childhood special education and ESL educator that is passionate about promoting literacy to families in the Greater Boston area. Additionally, she is dedicated to guiding families as they raise children with special needs. She is particularly interested in helping families navigate the process after they have been informed that their child has been diagnosed with a disability. Ms. Valarezo graduated from Boston University with a bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education in 2011. Afterwards, Ms. Valarezo was admitted into the renowned Donovan Urban Teaching Scholars Program in Boston College. In 2012, Ms. Valarezo graduated with her master’s degree in Special Education. Ms. Valarezo has taught in the Boston Public Schools for eight years. Presently, she teaches in a pre-kindergarten inclusion classroom at the Haynes Early Education Center. In her role as an inclusion and ESL educator, Ms. Valarezo works arduously to form strong relationships with the families of her students and to ensure that the students she serves have a rewarding, intellectually stimulating preschool experience.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
I believe that an enriching, rigorous, and joyful education is a tool for all students to reach their highest potential. I am passionate about providing an education that empowers all children, especially those from diverse and underprivileged communities. As a Latina immigrant that was raised in a low-income household, I learned about how educational policies affected my own school experience and observed that these policies were not always inclusive of people of color. By becoming well-versed in educational policy, I can help make a difference in the lives of children and families that have felt ignored by educational institutions.
Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
I am excited to serve on the 2020-2021 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet because I will be able to analyze state level education policies and learn about how they are impacting students in districts within the Greater Boston area. Furthermore, I am honored to be able to collaborate with my colleagues and develop ideas to promote long-lasting change in our school communities.

Melissa Zeitz

SPRINGFIELD | TEACHER ADVISORY CABINET

Melissa Zeitz is in her 19th year as a teacher, working the past 15 years at Liberty Elementary School in Springfield, Massachusetts. Melissa specializes in special education and instructional technology. Melissa’s work also extends beyond the classroom, working both within and outside of her district, training teachers on how to integrate technology and computer science into their curriculum. Melissa has led the way in her district bringing computer science to all students in her school. Currently, Melissa is the technology and resource coordinator for the CSforAll Springfield grant, working with teachers on integrating computer science into their curriculum. Melissa is passionate about spreading her love for creativity through computer science and physical computing. She loves how excited the students are when they know they are going to be doing computer science. Melissa believes that collaboration, creativity, and problem solving are the foundation for students to become college and career ready. She creates an environment where failure is ok as long as you persevere. This environment has allowed many of her students to step out of their comfort zone and try new things without being afraid to fail.

Why are you passionate about education and policy?
All too often teachers feel that policies change without the voice of teachers. I am passionate to be part of education and policy groups to help give teachers a voice. Being part of this group gives teachers a voice in education plans and policies that will affect them down the road.
Why are you excited to serve on the 2020-21 Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet?
This is my second year being part of this amazing opportunity to collaborate with teachers from around Massachusetts. This year I am even more excited because we can work closely with principals and we will have a better understanding of their perspectives on what challenges they have seen with in their district as a leader of their schools. Also, I personally want to have the hard conversation about what are equitable, culturally responsive, inclusive schools. Being part of this Cabinet, I can have these hard conversations with a diverse group of people and see what this looks like in different parts of Massachusetts and how can we support each other creating an environment that is culturally responsive.