

Keynote Speakers



A passionate social justice and civil rights advocate and inspiring educator, John B. King Jr. is the tenth U.S. Secretary of Education and the CEO and President of the national nonprofit organization, The Education Trust, which seeks to close opportunity and achievement gaps for students of color and students living in poverty. Dr. King's personal story is proof of the transformative power of an excellent education and great teachers. After losing his mother due to illness at age eight, school became a haven of stability and support that sustained Dr. King during his father's struggle and death from Alzheimer's disease. Parentless at age 12, Dr. King credits New York City public school teachers with saving his life and giving him hope for the future.

When President Obama named him to become Secretary of Education at a White House ceremony, Dr. King spoke powerfully about a core belief that has driven him throughout his career: Education is at the very heart of America's promise of opportunity. In tapping him to lead the U.S. Department of Education, President Obama called Dr. King "an exceptionally talented educator," citing his commitment to "preparing every child for success" and his lifelong dedication to education as a teacher, principal, and leader of schools and school systems.

As Secretary, Dr. King focused on advancing educational excellence and equity from preschool through college; supporting educators and elevating the teaching profession; and improving college access, affordability, and completion. Before becoming Secretary, Dr. King carried out the duties of the U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education, overseeing all policies and programs related to early learning, elementary and secondary education, English learners, special education, and innovation. In this role, Dr. King also oversaw the agency's operations and led the cross-agency work of President Obama's My Brother's Keeper initiative, which focused on creating pathways to opportunity, especially for boys and young men of color.

Dr. King joined the Obama administration following his tenure as the first African-American and Puerto Rican to serve as New York State Education Commissioner. At the state-level, Dr. King focused on raising standards for teaching and learning, strengthening teacher preparation and professional development, expanding access to quality early learning, advanced coursework, and career and technical education, and promoting socioeconomic diversity in schools. Prior to joining the New York State Education Department, Dr. King served as managing director at Uncommon Schools, a nonprofit charter management organization comprising some of the highest-performing urban public schools in New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts.

Dr. King began his career in education as a high school social studies teacher in Puerto Rico and Boston, and as a middle school principal. Today, he continues to teach undergraduate students, serving as a visiting professor at the University of Maryland College Park. He holds a B.A. from Harvard University, an M.A. and Ed.D. from Teachers College at Columbia University, and a J.D. from Yale University.

Bringing a moving personal narrative and experience that ranges from classroom teacher to U.S. Secretary of Education, Dr. King is a strong voice for equity, justice, and opportunity. Whether speaking to educators, policymakers, philanthropists, business and community leaders, or activists, Dr. King leaves audiences feeling inspired by and invested in the promise of a strong national future built upon the foundation of a high-quality education for all.

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Luis Ortega

Luis Ortega is a multidisciplinary storyteller, social practice artist, and the founder and director of Storytellers for Change. Luis' storytelling focuses on amplifying historically unheard narratives as a mechanism to foster empathy, inclusion, and equity. His work has been featured at the Harvard DACA Seminar, the Seattle Design Festival, and HBO's "Where Do You Exist?" podcast. Luis is a W K. Kellogg Foundation Community Leadership Network Fellow and was named a 2019 Disruptor Series Speaker by the Kauffman Foundation. Luis' work is informed by a belief in the power of radical empathy to build a world of belonging.

Follow Luis' work: @storytellersforchange



Chris Holmes

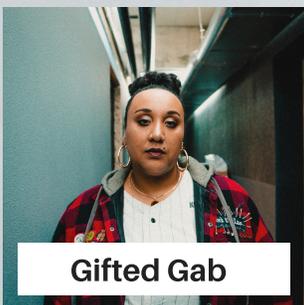
Chris Holmes listens to teenagers. He brings "student voice" to the conversation about curriculum design, instructional change, and student engagement. This past summer, Chris completed a project he calls "Backtracking Apathy," hundreds of interviews with teenagers across the country about why they lack motivation and what schools could do to increase it.

The 2015 Missouri Teacher of the Year, Chris has earned recognition for his work with students on the verge of dropping out, students with intellectual giftedness, and students with social and learning challenges. In 2016, he helped found a high school for students who learn differently.



Ann McMahon

Dr. Ann McMahon holds BS and MS degrees in mechanical engineering from Washington University in St. Louis and a PhD in science education from the University of Missouri at St. Louis. She has practiced as an aerospace engineer, a K-12 science teacher, a university science teacher, and as a director of PreK-12 STEM education programs based in formal and informal education institutions. Her research addresses how to integrate engineering design processes into K-12 education and teacher professional development in ways that foster social and emotional growth. Her 2015 TEDxSnolsleLibraries talk focuses on empathy in engineering. In that talk, Ann reveals that she chose the engineering field because it helped her heal her childhood adversities through finding value, belonging, and mastery of circumstances as she worked to design planes and satellites with her engineering and education teams. Ann is currently the Executive Director of Research Strategy for Broad Impact at the University of Washington - Bothell. In that role, she continues her own research in engineering education and helps other researchers translate their research into meaningful community experiences. Ann presents her work at national and international conferences and provides keynote presentations about empathy and healing through engineering. Ann's advice for young people pursuing STEM fields is to value, cultivate, and capitalize on your social skills as you learn and practice your STEM discipline. They are what will set you apart as a leader as you mature in your career.



Gifted Gab

Gabrielle "Gifted Gab" Kadushin was born and raised in Seattle, WA's Central District. Growing up in the church and singing in the choir, she was composing melodies and playing instruments at a young age. As well as music. Freestyle rapping in elementary school turned into Gab professionally showcasing her skills in major venues and festivals across the US. She's opened for legends such as DJ Quik, Rakim, Cam'ron & Slick Rick as well as write ups in major publications like XXL, VH1, Dope & TIME magazine. Gab released her 6th project "Cause And Effect" on April 20th 2019 which premiered on Ambrosia For Heads. She has two videos 'Eye On Em' and 'PSA' off her latest project.