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National family education nonprofit announces research advisory council

National Center for Families Learning convenes researchers from prominent organizations to inform family learning evaluation, practices, and policy context

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL) today announces the launch of its Research Advisory Council (RAC), a group of 12 experts from across the U.S. supporting NCFL’s research and evaluation efforts that are crucial to spreading and scaling effective practices and programs rooted in the needs of children and families.

NCFL, a national nonprofit that works to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families, partners with community-based organizations, school districts, and other local entities in communities on initiatives where families develop their literacy and leadership skills. Independent evaluation of these initiatives over the last 30 years has identified positive outcomes for families who have participated in NCFL programming, such as higher school attendance for participating children, increased parent and family involvement in children’s education, and increased parent confidence in themselves as their child’s first and most important teacher.

This group of researchers will serve to advance a comprehensive agenda of family literacy, family engagement, and family leadership, as well as adult learning and emerging topics of interest for the field, that can inform essential policies to support the well-being of families nationwide. The expertise of RAC members spans a broad range of areas including adult education, children’s education, technology, economics, family policy, literacy, parent education, family well-being, research and evaluation methodology, data equity, family engagement, and school and community partnerships. Each member is well-published in the field and has demonstrated a focus on equity across their research and evaluation endeavors. Collectively, the group has helped secure at least \$60 million in research and evaluation funding for their institutions.

The members are: **Dr. Lisa Gennetian**, Duke University; **Dr. Iheoma U. Iruka**, University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute and Equity Research Action Coalition; **Dr. Kimberly Kelly**, Michigan State University; **Dr. Emily Markovich Morris**, The Brookings Institution and Center for Universal Education; **Dr. Kristen H. Perry**, University of Kentucky; **Dr. Shanette Porter**, Student Experience Research Network; **Dr. Esther Prins**, Pennsylvania State University, Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy and Institute for Study of Adult Literacy; **Dr. Beth Redbird**, Northwestern University; **Dr. John Sabbatini**, University of Memphis; **Dr. Steven Sheldon**, Johns Hopkins University and Center for School, Family, and Community Partnerships; **Dr. Ivory A. Toldson**, Howard University and NAACP; and **Dr. Blaire Toso**, WestEd. Read more about the RAC members at familieslearning.org/research_council.

“Having a strong cadre of researchers to inform NCFL’s evaluation efforts ensures that we continue to meet the evolving needs of families, educators, and communities, and bridge a gap between research, evaluation, and practice,” says NCFL’s President and CEO, Dr. Felicia C. Smith. “The Research Advisory Council is an important step to help us meet NCFL’s vision of establishing coordinated and aligned family learning systems in 60

communities by 2030, built with and for families, to increase education and economic outcomes and create more equitable communities.”

“NCFL’s Board of Directors is committed to supporting and learning from our newly formed Research Advisory Council,” says Dr. Vikki Katz, who is a professor at Chapman University's School of Communication and a member of the NCFL Board. “Drawing on the expertise of this council's members will ensure NCFL stays apprised of cutting edge, cross-disciplinary research that will enhance our development of innovative practices to help children and families transform their communities.”

NCFL has a long history of bringing researchers together around critical topics in the field of family literacy, including the National Early Literacy Panel that convened in the aughts and served to conduct a synthesis of the scientific research on the development of early literacy skills in children ages zero to five. The output of the panel, a 2008 report titled “[Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel](#),” continues to be referenced today to inform interventions, parenting activities, and instructional practices that promote the development of children’s early literacy skills.

Every year, NCFL dedicates a strand of learning content at our Families Learning Conference to research and policy in order to bridge theory to practice. Convening researchers and literacy practitioners for shared learning creates a cross-sector collaborative conversation that ultimately benefits families in communities. [Dr. Esther Prins is participating](#) in this year’s event, and additional RAC members will participate in the Families Learning Conference beginning in 2023. Details about this year’s event can be found at conference.familieslearning.org.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR FAMILIES LEARNING

NCFL is a national nonprofit that supports family success and well-being through education. We believe education is a shared responsibility and collaboration among families, schools, and community members that leads to powerful learning experiences. Partnering with educators, literacy advocates, and communities, NCFL has worked for over 30 years to eradicate poverty through education solutions for families. NCFL’s vision is to establish coordinated and aligned family learning systems in 60 communities by 2030, built with and for families, to increase education and economic outcomes and create more equitable communities. When parenting adults and children are engaged in learning together, the whole family benefits, contributing to a thriving, equitable community. For more information on NCFL, visit familieslearning.org.