



# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PANEL DISCUSSION

## Agenda

- 9:00AM**      **Welcome- Chereese Miller-Odukwe & Henry Rondon**  
**Welcoming Remarks - Dr. Mary Joscelyn-Gadd**  
**Student Moderator- Julia McPhee**
- 9:10AM**      **Panel Discussion #1**
- 9:55AM**      **CHS Vocal Jazz Ensemble Performance**
- 10:05AM**      **Break**
- 10:15AM**      **Panel Discussion #2**
- 11:00AM**      **Networking & Dismissal**



### **JULIA MCPHEE - MODERATOR**

Senior at St. Paul Catholic High School  
Attending Connecticut College in the fall and majoring in behavioral neuroscience  
Played volleyball for 7 years  
CIAC SAAB, Sportsmanship Committee, and Class Act Council  
Bristol Sports Hall of Fame Athlete 2022-2023  
High School Leadership Conference Panel Moderator

# Panel 1



## DR. MARY JOSCELYN-GADD

Dr. Mary Joscelyn-Gadd has been an educator in both private and public secondary schools for thirty-one years. She is the Principal of Cheshire High School, and prior to her tenure in Cheshire, she held several school leadership roles including English Department Chair and Assistant Principal in Bristol, Connecticut, as well as Principal of Granby Memorial High School. She has presented papers and research on topics ranging from educational theory to the importance of creating a culture of collaboration at professional conferences including: the New England Philosophy of Education Society, various New England Association of Schools and Colleges conferences, and the American Association of School Administrators conference.



## DR. YVETTE MARTAS

Dr. Yvette Martas is a first-generation Puerto Rican from the South Bronx practicing Obstetrics and Gynecology for 30 years. She started this journey after graduating from Yale and then receiving her medical education from Albert Einstein College of Medicine. She trained in OB-GYN at NYU-Bellevue and remained on the clinical faculty modeling the care essential to achieve quality health care for women of color.

While at NYU Bellevue (faculty practice and resident training) she ran the Women's Health portion of the NYU medical school student health program and directed the Bellevue Teen Pregnancy clinic. She also initiated her work in global health with medical missions in Central and Latin America. Most of her time has been spent in clinical work as well as a current board member with Grounds for Health; an NGO whose mission is to eradicate cervical cancer.

She's now in private practice at Mansfield Ob GYN Associates for 13 years. She is also currently an Adjunct Professor at UCONN Storrs through EL Instituto where she teaches her course in Women's Health issues in the Latinx and African American communities. Yvette has lived through these experiences accompanied by her wonderful husband Anthony Johnson.



# KATHERINE TOMASEK LOISELLE



SIMPLY K STUDIOS

Owner of Simply K Studios ([simplykstudios.com](http://simplykstudios.com))

Kathy Loiselle is a travel and destination photographer based out of New England. Within the past year she has photographed in Key West, Maui, Germany, Orlando, and Maine. With a master's degree in business education and 10+ years of experience running her own business, Kathy is a mentor to other business owners in the wedding industry and loves to build her network of business professionals.



# LYNN SOSA, MD

Dr. Lynn Sosa earned her medical degree from Harvard Medical School and completed an internal medicine residency at Massachusetts General Hospital. She then completed a two year fellowship with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the Epidemic Intelligence Service. Dr. Sosa has been with the Connecticut Department of Public Health since 2007 where she has served in many roles including medical director of the Tuberculosis and Sexually Transmitted Diseases Programs, deputy state epidemiologist and during the pandemic, oversaw all COVID-19 surveillance activities. Dr. Sosa currently serves as the Acting Director of Infectious Diseases and the Acting State Epidemiologist.



# MELINDA LU

Melinda Lu is a senior at Amity Regional High School in Woodbridge, CT. Starting in 2019, she joined CAS-CIAC's Student Equity Advisory Board (SEAB) and is now also a part of the State Student Advisory Council for Education (SSACE). Along with activities with SEAB, she has spoken at many conferences, such as Education Equity Summits, State Education Resource Center (SERC) Conferences, and CT Association of Boards of Education (CABE) events. She has focused on making student's voices heard and promotes a stronger communication link between students and administrators.

At her own school, Melinda is the co-founder of Amity Asian Activism, a student organization that provides a platform for Asian American students to voice their opinions. She has worked with her school's administration in coordinating their Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging curriculum audit and has collaborated with members of the #MakeUsVisible CT Campaign and AAPI New Haven to support the now-passed bill HB5282, a funded mandate to integrate Asian-American history into general history classes. Outside of supporting the diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative, she is a student researcher at Yale's Alzheimer's Disease Research Unit and the dance captain of her studio's competition team.

# Panel 2



## KIM TRAVERSO

Kimberly Traverso is a core team member of the CSDE Office of Student and Organizational Effectiveness Team. Her work is grounded in integrated systems of support and coherence. She leads the work on social-emotional learning, school discipline and disproportionality, school counseling, and behavioral health. Kimberly is the Bureau of Special Education program manager for the State Performance Indicator 4. She assures that procedural safeguards and standards are followed and that the quality of the programming for students with disabilities is achieved regarding suspension and expulsion. In addition, she is the Project Manager on the School Climate Transformation Grant. Currently, Kimberly is attending the University of Connecticut pursuing a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology.



## KAREN LYDECKER

Attorney Karen Lydecker was born and raised in Vernon, CT and now resides in South Windsor, CT. She graduated from Rockville High School, Central Connecticut State University, with a Bachelor of Arts degree, and Western New England School of Law, with a Juris Doctorate.

Attorney Lydecker is admitted to practice law in the Connecticut state courts, New York state courts, United States District Court for the District of Connecticut and the United States Supreme Court.

Attorney Lydecker worked as a law clerk with the Connecticut Appellate Court for one year after law school and worked as a state public defender, handling criminal matters, for approximately six years. She also worked in a few civil litigation firms.

In 2018, Attorney Lydecker opened her own solo law practice, and now handles matters pertaining to Department of Children and Families Child Protection and Criminal Defense. She is a successful trial lawyer having handled both criminal jury trials and child protection juvenile trials.

Attorney Lydecker is also very active in her community and serves as an elected official on the Town Council. As a Town Councilor, Attorney Lydecker is part of a 9-member governing body of the town, which sets policy, ordinances and goals for the town, as well as finalizing and approving multi-million dollar budgets. Attorney Lydecker also serves as a parent volunteer for her children's schools, which includes running the school book fair, chaperoning field trips, and assisting in the classroom.



## CATRINA HAWLEY-STEWART

Catrina Hawley-Stewart has just completed her 20th year as the Hillhouse High School Girls Basketball Head Coach. She has led the Academics to over 350 wins including six state championships, with a perfect (6-0) record in title games.

Following a high school career that saw her jersey number retired at West Haven High School, Hawley-Stewart played in the Big East at Providence College. She has coached over 25 students who went on to play college basketball. Hawley-Stewart was named the 2011 New England Coach of the Year and was inducted into the New England Basketball Hall of Fame in 2015.

Catrina is a Youth Coordinator for The Justice Education Center Inc., New Haven Region, where programs are provided such as Career Pathways Technology Collaborative that provide students with pre-apprenticeship credentialed technology training to at-risk, over-age, and under-credited 16-24-year-olds who are attending traditional and alternative high schools, adult education programs, as well as youth who are no longer attending school, where students can receive certifications in OSHA 10, First Aid/CPR, and Serv-Safe. She is also a restorative specialist - an approach to conflict resolution, working with high school students that have conflict, focusing on repairing the harm that has been done, and aiming for increased student performance.



## DR. MELISSA YENNIE STJUSTE, ED.D

Dr. Yennie StJuste's life has been rooted in leadership and service. As a youth, she co-founded South End Knight Riders Youth Center - currently known as COMPASS Youth Collaborative/Peace Builders in the City of Hartford. Throughout middle and high school she maintained an active role in COMPASS, athletics, and the community at large. After graduating high school, Dr. Yennie StJuste pursued her B.S.ED in Physical Education and Health with a minor in Psychology and later obtained her Masters in Educational Leadership at CCSU. She received the Graduate Studies Academic Award in Educational Leadership for the research she conducted on Growth Mindset in Urban Educators. In May 2020, she graduated from CCSU with her Doctorate in Educational Leadership.

In addition to her educational accomplishments, Dr. Yennie StJuste currently serves in various leadership roles. She is a Wellness Teacher Leader for Hartford Public Schools, where she writes district curricula and facilitates professional development for Health and PE teachers. She is also the Third Vice President of the Hartford Federation of Teachers Union, where she advocates daily for educators' needs. Most recently, she has taken on the role of Athletic Director of Classical Magnet School. She joyfully leads her school and community, while also being a proud mom to two boys, Lucas (4) and Elijah (1).



# KRUTI DHARSANDIYA

Kruti Dharsandiya is a highly driven and disciplined student who is involved in numerous extracurricular activities related to leadership, business, and her community. She expresses her strong leadership skills through the roles she holds as the youngest Co-Chair of the Million Women Mentors Connecticut Chapter, President of Future Business Leaders of America and the Class of 2023, SEL Advocate and Student Representative for the State, a member of the CAS-CIAC Advisory boards, to name a few. She is also a part of the highly selective Elite 10 program in the Greater Hartford area.

Kruti is consistently trying to build relationships and help channel others' leadership skills within the roles she holds. She is passionate about the business world and wants to double major in Finance and Marketing, pursuing a career as an Investment Banker or Financial Consultant to eventually lead her to a C-Suite position. She has already begun to start her career and immerse herself in the business world by working as a Financial and Accounting Assistant at C&C Financial Firm since July of 2021, holding an internship at Moore Basketball Clinic for Social Media Marketing, and attending the highly selective Leadership in the Business World Summer Program at the Wharton School of Business. But most importantly, Kruti is constantly giving back to her community because she values living generously. She is a member of numerous town boards, such as the Student Representative Governance Council and the Greater Hartford Grant Foundation, which she is the Chair of. Additionally, she is always volunteering at community events, such as the toy drive and hosting fundraisers to help local residents.

Currently, she is working on a five-week financial literacy workshop with the YWCA for single mothers, minority women, and young girls. A common pattern through everything Kruti partakes in is her commitment and unwavering mindset of doing everything to the best level she can. At the end of the day, her purpose that keeps her persisting and delivering to the highest level is to make an impact on others lives and empower individuals to be their best selves.

## Cheshire High School Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Vocal Jazz is one of the select choirs at CHS, and is comprised of only treble voices. They focus on all genres of jazz, showtunes, and modern arrangements of pop music.

