

Molly Branson Thayer
President Elect
Deputy Director, Cultivate Learning
University of Washington, College of Education

I am currently the Deputy Director of Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington's (UW) College of Education. I also teach literacy courses in UW's teacher education programs. My career in education spans twenty-five years and has focused on improving the quality of education and experiences for our most vulnerable populations such as, children of color, Dual Language Learners (DLLs), and low Socio-Economic Status children across the country. In pursuit of these quality improvement efforts, I have had the opportunity to work with school networks and districts nationally to implement high quality prek-12 literacy instruction, develop educational tools that inform evidenced-based instruction, contribute to research that promotes high quality educational experiences, and lead systemic educational improvement efforts.

My career started with eight years as a classroom teacher in large urban school districts. As my experience in education grew, so did my desire to understand the science behind instructional practices and teacher expertise and development. I earned a doctorate in Reading and Language, and have been committed to ensuring that research findings are not only relevant to education researchers, but are pursued in collaboration with school practitioners, and ultimately translated to be practical, usable, and accessible to all practitioners.

Since accepting an appointment at the UW in the summer of 2014 I have presented repeatedly at WERA, both the annual Winter conference (2014, 15, 16, 17, and 18), as well as the Spring P-3 Symposium (2015, 16, and will present this Spring 2017). In 2015, I joined the WERA P-3 Symposium Planning Committee, which I served on for two years as well. I am in the third year of Board service on the WERA Board where I led the Spring Symposium in my first two years and am joining the winter WERA conference planning committee. I have been so impressed with WERA's presence in the state of Washington, and its dedication to bridging research and practice. I am honored to be considered to serve as a Board President, and join the many amazing educators that have preceded me in this role.

I hope to see WERA continue to be a place where educational professionals convene to network, learn, and present their work. WERA's commitment to serve educators through relevant themes and strands, and to maintain a high caliber of presenters and keynote speakers is a large part of past success. Moving forward, I would love to see an approach to the annual conference that will allow attendees to have a very clear sense of the learning and development they will come away from the conference with. One of the most important aspects of maintaining high quality education for all, is for teachers and administrators to have access to evidenced based best practices- high quality research that translates well to practice, and a theme that allows us to tailor the speaker and sessions to be high quality information on that theme. As a Board President, I will work hard to ensure that WERA continues to serve the WA education community with access to high quality educational experiences. I will also help to identify Washington's most relevant educational issues and address them through responsive research-based and practice friendly conferences.

Dr. LaWonda Smith-Marshall
Board Member-at-Large
Muckleshoot Tribal School Elementary Principal

I have been in service to education for 28 years. My current role is that of an elementary principal at unique culturally relevant K-12 campus, Muckleshoot Tribal School. My career additionally encompasses that of public elementary teacher and building administrator of ethnically and economically diverse high-need schools in the Road Map region, as a Title I and LAP Program Manager at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, as a Seattle University adjunct professor, and lastly as a Director of System and School Improvement, English Language Arts Program and as the Executive Director of Race to the Top Road Map at Puget Sound Education Service District.

Additionally, my doctoral work, "Improving Disproportionality of Students of Color in Highly Capable Programs" is published in the November 2015, Washington Educational Research Association Journal and in the April 2016, University of Washington Educational Law and Policy Society Journal, aligns with WERA's mission.

It is my core belief, supported by my educational experience, that when educators are skilled at transforming a school culture through professional development, social justice methodologies and research based practices, students are better prepared for a global world. Given the opportunity, I will partner with WERA to collaborate and convene around the theory, practice and the art of teaching.