

Arkansas State Senate Education Committee
Hearing on February 16, 2022
“The University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform: Its Research and
Policy Implications for Arkansas”

Presenter Titles and Bios

Panel 1: Flexible and Customizable Education – parent involvement, school choice, and distinctive schooling models

Patrick J. Wolf, Ph.D.

Dr. Wolf is a Distinguished Professor of Education Reform and the 21st Century Endowed Chair in School Choice. He joined the Department of Education Reform in 2006, having previously served on the faculty of Georgetown University and Columbia University. Wolf has authored, co-authored, edited, or co-edited five books and over 200 journal articles, book chapters, book reviews, and policy reports on school choice, civic values, public management, and special education. He has received eight awards for the quality of his research including the Top Cited Article Award from *Social Science Quarterly*, the Best Paper Award from the *Journal of Private Enterprise*, and the Best Article Award of the Academy of Management’s Division on Public and Nonprofit Management. For more than a decade, Wolf has been ranked among the most influential education policy scholars by *Education Week*. He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Harvard University in 1995.

His recent work includes:

- Erickson, H. H., Mills, J. N., & Wolf, P. J. (2021). [The effects of the Louisiana Scholarship Program on student achievement and college entrance](#). *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 14(4): 861-899.
- Shakeel, M. D., Anderson, K. P., & Wolf, P. J. (2021). [The participant effects of private school vouchers around the globe: A meta-analytic and systematic review](#). *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 32(4): 509-542.
- DeAngelis, C. A., Burke, L. M., & Wolf, P. J. (2021). [When being regulated is a choice: The impact of government policies on private school participation in voucher programs](#). *Journal of School Choice* 15(3), 417-440.
- Wolf, P. J., Greene, J. P., Ladner, M., & Paul, J. D. (2021, March). [Education freedom and student achievement: Is more school choice associated with higher state-level performance on the NAEP?](#) School Choice Demonstration Project, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR.

Robert (Bob) Maranto, Ph.D.

Dr. Maranto is a Professor of Education Reform and the 21st Century Endowed Chair in Leadership in the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas. He came to the University in 2008, after teaching Political Science for a decade at Villanova University. Since 2008 his children have attended Fayetteville public schools, where he served on the elected

school board (2015-2020). He also has served on a cyber charter school board, the Arkansas Advisory Committee for the U.S. Civil Rights Commission (2020-), and in the federal government. Dr. Maranto has done fieldwork in over 200 public schools, chiefly in Arkansas, Arizona, Texas, and Oklahoma. Since 2015 he has edited a scholarly journal, the *Journal of School Choice*. With others, he has written and edited 15 books including [Educating Believers: Religion and School Choice](#) (New York: Routledge). He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Minnesota in 1989.

His primary research and service in recent years has focused on three key areas:

1. **Closing achievement gaps**, particularly in high poverty settings like the Arkansas Delta. Three accessible pieces are: [Lessons from KIPP Delta](#), *Phi Delta Kappan*; [The softer side of 'No Excuses' - Education Next](#); and, [How do we get them on the farm? Efforts to improve rural teacher recruitment and retention in Arkansas](#), *The Rural Educator*.
2. **Cyber schooling and how to improve it**, including the recently published [Choosing cyber during COVID](#), *Phi Delta Kappan*.
3. **Reforming educational leadership** to better serve all students. See, for example [A Political Scientist Runs for School Board](#), *PS: Political Science and Politics*.

Albert Cheng, Ph.D.

Dr. Cheng is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Education Reform in the College of Education and Health Professions at the University of Arkansas, where he teaches courses in education policy and philosophy. He is the Director of the Department's Center for the Study of Classical Education, where he conducts research on the effects of classical education on character formation. He is an affiliated research fellow at the Program on Education Policy and Governance at Harvard University and a Senior Fellow at Cardus. Dr. Cheng serves on the governing board of Anthem Classical Academy and on the editorial board of the *International Journal of Christianity and Education*. He began his foray into education as a math teacher at James Logan High School in Union City, California after completing his undergraduate studies in pure mathematics from the University of California, Berkeley. He later returned to school, receiving a master's degree in education from Biola University in 2012 and his Ph.D. in education policy from the University of Arkansas in 2016.

Recent Scholarly Activity:

- Cheng, A., & Greene, J. P. (2022). [The Civic Education We Need](#). *National Affairs*, 50, 135-147.
- Cheng, A., Djita, R., & Ebben, C. (2022). The Role of Poetry in Cultivating Attentiveness, Curiosity, and Affinity in the Science Classroom [Working Paper]. Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas.
- Cheng, A. (2021). [Dr. Albert Cheng discusses the role schools can play in kids' character development](#). *EdYOUcate Podcast*. Albany State: Center for Educational Opportunity, December 1.
- Cheng, A. (2021). [On the Moral Architecture of Socioemotional Skills](#). In B. Orrell (Ed.), *Minding our Workforce: The Role of Noncognitive Skills in Career Success*, pp. 38-54. Washington DC: American Enterprise Institute.

Panel 2: Supporting the Educator Workforce – the teacher pipeline, burnout, and creating a supportive environment

Gema Zamorro, Ph.D.

Dr. Zamorro is a Professor of Education Reform and Economics (by courtesy). She holds the 21st Century Endowed Chair in Teacher Quality. She joined the Department of Education Reform in 2014, having previously worked as a senior economist at the University of Southern California Dornsife Center for Economic and Social Research, as a senior economist at the RAND Corporation, and as an Assistant Professor at Tilburg University in the Netherlands. Dr. Zamorro has performed research in the areas of education policy and labor economics with a focus on teacher quality and teacher labor markets. Her current education research focuses on the unequal effects of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the measurement and development of character skills in the classroom, and the study of the determinants of teacher turnover decisions. Dr. Zamorro has published over 40 journal articles and book chapters. She received the Significant Research Award of the College of Education and Health Professions at the University of Arkansas in 2016 for the quality of her research evaluating the effectiveness of Dual Language Immersion programs. Her research has been featured over 80 times in the media and it has helped inform policy at the [federal](#) and [local](#) level. She received her Ph.D. in Economics *cum laude* from CEMFI (Bank of Spain Foundation) in 2006.

Her recent work includes:

Zamorro, G., Camp, A., D. F., McGee, J. (2021). [How the pandemic has changed teachers' commitment to remaining in the classroom](#). Brookings.

Camp, A., Zamorro, G. (2021). [Determinants of Ethnic Differences in School Modality Choices during the COVID-19 Crisis](#). *Educational Researcher*.

Zamorro Rodriguez, G., Prados, M. J. (2021). [Gender Differences in Couple's Division of Childcare, Work, and Mental Health during COVID-19](#). *Review of Economics of the Household*, 19: 11-40.

Fuchsman, D., Sass, T., Zamorro, G. (forthcoming) [Testing, Teacher Turnover and the Distribution of Teachers Across Grades and Schools](#). *Education Finance and Policy*.

Fuchsman, D., Zamorro, G. [Local Labor Market Conditions, Principals' Leadership, Conscientiousness, and Beginning Teacher Turnover: A Study During the Great Recession](#). Paper Under Review.

Josh B. McGee, Ph.D.

Dr. McGee is an economist who is a faculty member in the Department of Education Reform and Associate Director of the Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas. McGee also serves as the [chief data officer \(CDO\) for the State of Arkansas](#). His work focuses on helping governments and nonprofits use data and evidence to make better decisions. His research investigates issues related to retirement policy, K–12 education, and economic development. He has published in popular media outlets and scholarly journals. McGee has extensive experience working in leadership roles in education, government, nonprofits, and philanthropy. He also currently serves on a U.S. Department of Education funded [National Academies of Sciences](#),

[Engineering, and Medicine panel](#) tasked with developing a vision and roadmap for education statistics.

Dr. McGee is a native Arkansan who holds a B.S. and M.S. in Industrial Engineering and a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Arkansas. He lives with his wife, who is a high school teacher and coach, and daughter in Fayetteville, AR.

His recent work includes:

Zamarro, G., Camp, A., Fuchsman, D., & McGee, J. B. (2021). [Understanding how COVID-19 has Changed Teachers' Chances of Remaining in the Classroom](#). Education Reform Faculty and Graduate Students Publications. Summarized on the [Brookings Institution Brown Center Chalkboard blog](#)

McGee, J. B., Mills, J., & Goldstein, J. (2021). [The effect of school district consolidation on student achievement: Evidence from Arkansas](#). EdWorkingPaper: 21-347, Annenberg Institute at Brown University, Providence, RI.

McGee, J. B., & McKenzie, S. C. (2020). [Computer science teacher survey](#). *Arkansas Education Reports*.

Sarah Moore, Ph.D.

Dr. Moore, Arkansas State Board of Education Vice Chair, has a background in elementary education and education policy. A native of Little Rock, she received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Duke University and a doctorate in education policy from the University of Arkansas' Department of Education Reform. Moore taught elementary school in the Stuttgart School District and then worked at the Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas, as a Doctoral Academy Fellow. In addition, she has worked with non-traditional teaching programs to train and develop teachers.

Moore served as the education policy advisor to Gov. Asa Hutchinson for three years, focusing on K-12 education issues, including the Computer Science Initiative. In this role, she saw firsthand that Arkansas' students will be better prepared for their future and will exceed when provided high-quality opportunities, such as computer science. Gov. Hutchinson appointed Moore to the State Board in July 2018. Her term expires June 30, 2025. Moore lives in Stuttgart with her husband, James, and their two children.

Panel 3: The Future of Education - recent trends, challenges, and opportunities in PK-12 education

Robert M. Costrell, Ph.D.

[Dr. Costrell](#) is Professor of Education Reform and Economics (by courtesy) and holds the 21st Century Endowed Chair in Education Accountability. Dr. Costrell has both an academic and policy-making background. Since arriving at the University of Arkansas in 2006, his career has featured seminal publications on teacher pension policy in the leading journals on education finance and policy, as well as the *Wall Street Journal*, *Education Week*, and *Phi Delta Kappan*. From 1999 to 2006, Dr. Costrell served in major policy roles for three governors of

Massachusetts, including policy research director, chief economist, and education advisor to Governor Mitt Romney. He represented the administration on the Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (2001-03). Dr. Costrell is the 2020 recipient of the [Steven D. Gold Award](#) for contributions to public financial management in the field of intergovernmental relations and state and local finance. Dr. Costrell was a professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts from 1978 to 2000. He received his B.A. in economics from the University of Michigan and his Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University.

Selected references include:

- Robert M. Costrell, 2022, "[The Three R's of Teacher Pension Funding: Redistribution, Return, and Risk](#)," forthcoming *Educational Researcher*.
- Robert M. Costrell, 2022, "[Reforming Teacher Pension Plans: The Case of Kansas, the 1st Teacher Cash Balance Plan](#)," forthcoming, *Education Finance and Policy*.
- Robert M. Costrell. September 11, 2018, "Arkansas Teacher Retirement Plan: Risks, Redistribution, and Remedies. Presentation to the Arkansas Legislature," Testimony to Joint Committee on Retirement. ([video](#), [slides](#))
- Robert M. Costrell and Josh McGee, 2010, "[Teacher Pension Incentives, Retirement Behavior, and Potential for Reform in Arkansas](#)," *Education Finance and Policy*, (Vol. 5, no. 4), 492-518.

Jonathan Wai, Ph.D.

Dr. Wai is an Assistant Professor of Education Reform and Psychology and the 21st Century Endowed Chair in Education Policy at the University of Arkansas in the Department of Education Reform. He held prior positions at Case Western Reserve University and Duke University. Broadly, Wai studies education policy through the lens of psychology, with a substantive focus on improving gifted education in Arkansas, nationally, and globally. He has published over 100 journal articles, book chapters, policy reports, book reviews, and news articles and has received 10 awards for the quality of his research. He serves on five journal editorial boards, two boards of scientific societies, and three working groups focused on improving the use of research evidence in education policy in different domains. He received his Ph.D. in Psychology from Vanderbilt University in 2009.

Some recent publications include:

- Tran, B., Wai, J., & McKenzie, S. C. (2021). [Gifted education in Arkansas: A longitudinal study of gifted status and academic growth](#). *Office for Education Policy, University of Arkansas, Arkansas Education Report, 18(9)*, 1-46.
- Tran, B., Wai, J., McKenzie, S. C., Mills, J. N., & Seaton, D. (in press). [Expanding gifted identification to capture academically advanced, low income, or other disadvantaged students: The case of Arkansas](#). *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*.
- Wai, J. (2020). [How research can help find the missing Einsteins](#). *Forbes*.
- Wai, J., & Worrell, F. C. (2020). [How talented low-income kids are left behind](#). *Phi Delta Kappan, 102(4)*, 26-29.

Sarah McKenzie, Ph.D.

Dr. McKenzie is Executive Director of the Office for Education Policy and a Research Assistant Professor. She joined the Department of Education Reform in 2015, having previously worked as the Director of Assessment, Research, and Accountability for Fayetteville Public Schools. McKenzie's passion is helping educators and policymakers understand student data in order to make decisions that increase learning for all students. She has taught from the PreK to the university level, is a certified Curriculum Auditor, and provides training and consulting to public school districts. McKenzie serves as a subject matter expert for the US Department of Education (USDOE), as a Governing Board Member for the USDOE Regional Education Lab Southwest, as a member of the Arkansas Leadership Evaluation Committee, and as a member of Arkansas' ESSA Steering Committee. She received her Ph.D. in Educational Statistics and Research Methods from the University of Arkansas in 2009.

Her recent work includes:

- McKenzie, S. (2022). [Examination of School Value-Added Growth by Student Population](#). *Policy Brief, Office for Education Policy, 19(1)*, February.
- Anderson, K. P., & McKenzie, S. (2022) [Local Implementation of State-Level Discipline Policy: Administrator Perspectives and Contextual Factors Associated With Compliance](#). *AERA Open, 8(1)*, 1-20.
- Reid, C., & McKenzie, S. (2021) [2021 Outstanding Educational Performance Awards: Highlighting High-Growth Arkansas Schools](#). *Arkansas Education Report, 18 (11)*. Fayetteville, AR: Office for Education Policy.
- Ritter, G., & McKenzie, S. (2019). Making Progress? Education Reform in Arkansas. In *Readings in Arkansas Politics and Government, 2nd edition* (pp. 387-404). Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press.

Jennifer Ash, Ph.D.

Dr. Ash is the Director of the National Center for Rural Education Research Networks (NCRERN) at the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University. NCRERN's mission is to expand the use of evidence-based decision-making in rural school districts. Prior to joining the Center for Education Policy Research, Dr. Ash served as an education researcher at Abt Associates, where she held leadership roles on studies of programs designed to promote college enrollment and success. Previously, she served as the Managing Director of the Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas, where she managed the production of research reports, policy briefs, and blog posts about rural education policy issues in Arkansas. While at the University of Arkansas, Dr. Ash participated in a number of projects focused on rural school districts, including serving on the selection committee of a program that trains and places teachers in rural districts with teacher shortages, and leading a study of a college scholarship program based in a rural district. She also taught middle school language arts and served on the board of Young Education Professionals-Boston. Jennifer received a Ph.D. in education policy from the University of Arkansas in 2015.

Her recent work includes:

- Ash, J., Swanson, E., & Ritter, G. (2020). [A promise kept? The impact of the El Dorado Promise Scholarship on student achievement.](#) *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, Online First.
- Nicola, T., Gable, A., & Ash, J. (2020). [The response of rural districts to the COVID-19 pandemic.](#) National Center for Rural Education Research Networks, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, July.
- Opalka, A., Gable, A., Nicola, T., & Ash, J. (2020). [Rural school districts can be creative in solving the internet connectivity gap—but they need support.](#) Brown Center Chalkboard, The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, August 10.