Dena Kimball is the Executive Director of the Kendeda Fund. Formerly, she served as the Vice President of Network Support of Teach For All, the Vice President of Alumni Affairs and the Deputy Vice President of Admissions for Teach for America, and as the Executive Director of GirlVentures in San Francisco, a nonprofit organization with a mission to inspire adolescent girls to develop and express their strengths.

Dena holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Emory University in 1993 and a master's degree in public policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 1998. She has served as an associate director of development for Pacific Crest Outward Bound School and as program specialist at the National Economic Development and Law Center. Dena also has worked as an independent consultant, specializing in the curriculum development, management, strategic planning and development of nonprofit organizations focusing on youth.

Dena was the founding Chair of American Jewish World Service's Global Circle. She is married to Josh Kimball and they have two daughters.

Erin Hames
Dr. Nina Gilbert
Current 50CAN Fellow and Founder of Ivy Prep Charter School

Dr. Nina Gilbert has spent more than 15 years advocating for high-quality education in her home state of Georgia. She founded and opened Georgia’s first single gender charter school, Ivy Preparatory Academy in 2008 where she served for several years as the Head of School and Executive Director. During her tenure Ivy Prep grew from one school to a small network of three single charter schools serving nearly 1,300 Metro Atlanta families.

In addition to her charter school work, Nina has served as an adjunct professor and the senior advisor on education reform at Morehouse College’s Morehouse Research Institute. Previously, Nina spent several years as a Gwinnett County school administrator, teacher and educational consultant. Dr. Gilbert has completed several national prestigious national education fellowships including Building Excellent Schools, the Pahara Aspen Institute and currently is an advocacy fellow with the 50 State Campaign for Achievement Now (50CAN). She holds a B.A. Degree from the University of West Georgia, a M.Ed. from Clark Atlanta University and an Ed.D. from the University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Charles Knapp
Chairman, Governor’s Reform Commission and President Emeritus of UGA

Dr. Knapp leads the Commission tasked with studying Georgia’s education system and offering recommendations for improvement and reform, including suggestions on how to rework the state’s antiquated QBE funding formula. Their work is intended to actualize Governor Deal’s vision of expanded opportunity for all learners, increased access to education, and greater system flexibility.
Richard Woods has over 22 years of pre-k through 12th grade experience in public education. Woods was a high school teacher for 14 years, serving as department chair and teacher mentor. During his tenure, he was also selected as Teacher of the Year. For eight years Woods served in various administrative roles such as assistant principal, principal, curriculum director, testing coordinator, pre-k director, and alternative school director.

Dr. Glade Montgomery serves as Project Lead The Way's Vice President of the East Region. In his role, Montgomery works to support the implementation and growth of PLTW programs in districts across the eastern United States, while also creating partnerships with business, industry, and university affiliates.

Prior to joining PLTW, Montgomery served twenty-nine years in public education in Indiana. During that time he held roles as teacher and coach, administration including principal at a large urban high school, and assistant superintendent. Montgomery most recently served as the superintendent of schools in LaPorte, IN where he was active on numerous community boards, including co-chairing the 2012 United Way campaign in LaPorte County. While in LaPorte, Montgomery focused on improving student achievement through the use of school-wide data teams, the implementation of a district and community drug task force to contest issues of drug and alcohol use, and creating a collaborative working environment for all employees.

Montgomery earned doctoral, masters, and bachelor’s degrees from Purdue University. Additionally, he received the 2010 Norbert Nelson Outstanding Educational Leadership Dissertation Award from Purdue University, and was selected Administrator of the Year by the Indiana Association of Office Professionals in 2009. Montgomery has spoken at numerous Universities, Colleges, as well as State and National conferences on the subjects of STEM education, urban education, at-risk students, leadership, and district collaboration.
Karen L. Paty has been working in the arts and community development for more than fifteen years and was hired as director of Georgia Council for the Arts in 2011. As director, she is responsible for developing policies, procedures and programs, initiating statewide partnerships and collaborations to further the division’s strategic goals, as well as managing financial and organizational capacity to ensure the Council’s compliance with all state mandates and federal reporting requirements.

As a state arts leader, Ms. Paty has traveled throughout Georgia to engage, educate and excite audiences about the arts by speaking at events such as the Georgia Forward Conference, the Georgia Southern University Creative Economies Conference, the Atlanta Foundation Centers’ Nonprofit Issues Forum and many others. She is also responsible for bringing more awareness and visibility to the role of the arts in assisting economic development, creating vibrant communities, and contributing to a strong educational curriculum. As the agency’s first hired director she has executed several programs and projects that contribute to these goals including guidance of an annual Governor’s Award for the Arts and Humanities, inclusion of the arts in several Tourism initiatives such as the Tourism Product Development grant, and development of, “The Art of Georgia,” Georgia Council for the Arts’ first exhibit featuring the work of state artists at the Capitol. Upon being hired as director, she led the creation and implementation of a new five-year strategic plan that redefined the agency’s mission and goals to better provide an opportunity for the arts to become an integral part of the lives of all Georgians. In recognition of her valuable contributions to the arts and to the state of Georgia, Ms. Paty was named one of the 2013 “100 Most Influential Georgians” by Georgia Trend magazine.

Prior to her work at Georgia Council for the Arts, Ms. Paty worked as the associate director of civic engagement at Hands On Atlanta, a nonprofit organization dedicated to building community through volunteerism and civic engagement. While there she managed numerous local community-building and social issue awareness initiatives, designed and implemented a leadership development program for emerging grassroots leaders, and worked with organizations to underscore the power of the arts as a means of outreach and social change. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Metropolitan Studies from New York University, where she was also a recipient of the university’s President’s Award for Service.
Jennifer Curry

Lori Armistead
Program Officer, The Walton Family Foundation

Lori Armistead is a program officer in the Walton Family Foundation’s Systemic K-12 Education Reform Focus Area, where she manages the Foundation’s interests in Georgia, Tennessee, among other projects. WFF’s core strategy is to infuse competitive pressure into America’s K-12 education system by increasing the quantity and quality of school choices available to parents, especially in low-income communities. Prior to her role with the Foundation, Lori consulted with WFF and a variety of other advocacy and coalition management programs. She has served as director of state projects at the national non-profits Alliance for School Choice and Advocates for School Choice and as director of public affairs and the director of the education task force at the American Legislative Exchange Council. Lori began her career serving as the legislative advisor to Ohio’s then-Assistant Majority Leader. She currently resides in Duluth, Georgia with her husband and son.

Pam Williams
Teacher Leader, Appling County High School

Pam Williams has just begun her 25th year in public school education. For twenty-one years she taught social sciences and language arts at the elementary, middle and secondary levels. For the last four years Pam has worked as a teacher leader at Appling County High School in southeast Georgia where she supports both teachers and students in curriculum and instruction. Pam was honored to be named the 2011 Georgia Teacher of the Year and has traveled across the state and nation promoting the teaching profession. From 2011-2014 Pam served on Georgia Professional Standards Commission and has been a member of the AdvancEd Georgia State Council since 2011. Pam is currently serving on the Education Reform Commission and is the chair of the Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Compensation subcommittee.
Dr. Emily Lembeck assumed the office of Marietta City Schools (MCS) Superintendent on July 1, 2005, becoming just the 12th superintendent since 1892, leading the district's 11 schools, approximately 8,900 students and 1,200 employees.

Dr. Lembeck served as Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Operations of Marietta City Schools from 2001 until her appointment to the superintendence in 2005. As Associate Superintendent she oversaw the school system's overall instructional program. Before her successful career in school administration, she dedicated eleven years to the classroom as a teacher in Florida and Georgia. Beginning in 1991, she served as Instructional Lead Teacher at MCS' West Side Elementary for three years, followed by six years as principal of Dunleith Elementary School and then a year as principal of Marietta Middle School. In each of these positions, her student-centered approach to teaching resulted in improved test scores and increased parental involvement.

A graduate of Brooklyn College in New York, Lembeck holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of Georgia, a Masters in Administration and Supervision from Nova University in Florida, and a Bachelor in Early Childhood from Brooklyn College in New York.
David Weitnauer joined the R. Howard Dobbs, Jr. Foundation in June of 2007 as its President. He came to the Dobbs Foundation following an 11 year relationship with the Rockdale Foundation where he served as a founding Board member and its first Executive Director.

He currently serves as a trustee of Agnes Scott College and chairs the Advisory Committee of the Foundation Center Library – Atlanta. David also serves on the Advisory Committee of Grassroots Capital Management. He served previously as the Founding Chair of the Georgia Grantmakers Alliance Steering Committee and on the boards of the Southeastern Council of Foundations, Columbia Theological Seminary, the Davidson College Alumni Association, and Sanabel, The Microfinance Network of Arab Countries.

David earned an A.B. in Psychology from Davidson College (1982), a M.Div. from Columbia Theological Seminary (1986), and a Th.D. from Columbia Theological Seminary (1997).

Ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1987, David has served on the pastoral staff of four congregations and as a pastoral counselor/marriage and family therapist.

He grew up in Decatur and lives there now with his wife, Nancy. They have two children in college.

David Weitnauer

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Hunter Pierson
Investment Manager, Goldman Sachs & Co.

Hunter is an investment manager at Goldman Sachs & Co. He is responsible for managing the assets of foundations, endowments, and wealthy families across the Southeast. Prior to Goldman, he served as the Executive Director of Teach for America – Northern California. Hunter began his career as a public middle school teacher in Oakland, CA. A native New Orleanian, he earned both his AB and MBA from Harvard University. Currently, he serves on the boards of New Schools For New Orleans and Teach for America – Atlanta. Hunter cofounded Young Professionals for Educational Equity and was appointed to Governor Nathan Deal’s Education Reform Commission.
Daranee Petsod, President

Daranee Petsod, president, develops and leads new areas of work for GCIR, in addition to providing fiscal, programming, and operational planning and insight.

Daranee has worked on immigration and social and economic justice issues for more than 25 years. Prior to joining GCIR in 1998, she was a program and communications consultant for foundations and nonprofits. Daranee previously held leadership positions at the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and was a program officer at the Field Foundation of Illinois, Inc. and the Sophia Fund, one of the first women’s funds in the United States. She has served on the boards of the Donors Forum and the Heartland Alliance, both in Chicago, and the Asian American Justice Center in Washington, D.C.

Daranee has authored and co-authored numerous research reports on a range of immigration issues, as well as opinion pieces on the role of philanthropy in supporting immigration and integration issues. Daranee earned an M.A. in social policy from the University of Chicago. When not immersed in immigration and philanthropy, she enjoys the great outdoors, savoring gourmet meals, and traveling the world with her family.