



2026 Community Conversation - Speaker Bios



C.J. Stewart

**Co-Founder & Chief Visionary Officer,
L.E.A.D. Center For Youth**

C.J. Stewart is an Atlanta native, former Chicago Cubs outfielder, Amazon #1 best-selling author, nationally respected baseball player development professional, and co-founder of L.E.A.D. Center For Youth. In 2007, C.J. and his wife, Kelli, founded L.E.A.D. Center For Youth in Atlanta. Today, L.E.A.D. partners with Atlanta Public Schools and uses baseball and tennis to help Black youth develop academically, athletically, professionally, and civically. Whether working with professional athletes or Atlanta students, his focus remains the same: helping people recognize their potential, develop their agency, and pursue lives of purpose and significance.



Dr. Cheryl Watson-Harris

President/Executive Director, Achieve Atlanta

Throughout her 30-year career, Dr. Cheryl Watson-Harris has demonstrated outstanding skills and knowledge of teaching and learning, professional development, and community partnerships that remove barriers to success and create empowering opportunities for children and their families.

Dr. Watson-Harris has a wide range of expertise in the college access space. In Boston Public Schools, New York City Department of Education, and DeKalb County School District she strengthened the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiatives within these districts. She's co-founder of the Girls' Empowerment Movement (GEM) that empowers girls to own their leadership stories and pave a path to postsecondary opportunities.



Dr. Tim Renick

**Executive Director/CEO,
National Institute for Student Success**

Named one of the World's 50 Greatest Leaders by Fortune magazine.

Timothy Renick is the founding Executive Director of the National Institute for Student Success and Professor at Georgia State University. Between 2008-2020, he directed the student success efforts of the university, overseeing a 70% improvement in graduation rates and the elimination of all equity gaps based on students' race, ethnicity, or income level. Dr. Renick has testified on strategies for helping university students succeed before the both the U.S. Senate and House, and he has twice been invited to speak at the White House.

His work has been covered by the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Time, and CNN and cited by former President Barack Obama.



Zakia Dowdy

Achieve Atlanta Scholar at Kennesaw State University

Zakia Dowdy is an Achieve Atlanta Scholar, Ambassador, and inaugural member of the Scholar Advisory Committee. Currently pursuing a degree in Political Science with a minor in Public Administration at Kennesaw State University, she is a dedicated student leader involved in the Student Government Association, the Civic Leadership & Engagement Scholars Program, and Collegiate 100. Through her leadership and service, Zakia champions community engagement and youth advocacy while working to create meaningful opportunities that inspire, support, and empower others to succeed.



Marcus Daniels

Achieve Atlanta Scholar at Morehouse College

Marcus Daniels is a second-year student at Morehouse College, where he is a Michael Lomax Scholar and Honors Program student majoring in Education Studies with minors in Political Science and Leadership Studies. An Achieve Atlanta Scholar, Resident Advisor, and mentor with the 100 Black Men of Atlanta Project Success Program, Marcus is passionate about education, leadership, and service. He hopes to pursue a career in education, policymaking, and school leadership, creating greater opportunities for students to succeed.



Dr. Greg Vaughn

**Achieve Atlanta Board Chair
Leadership Consultant; Spencer Stuart**

Dr. Greg Vaughn is a trusted, highly regarded physician executive with over 30 years of experience in healthcare. He provides valuable leadership and career advice to CEOs, senior executives, and board directors. Building on foundational experiences across healthcare sectors, he offers deep knowledge of exceptional talent and tailored approaches to leadership challenges and governance matters. His distinctive expertise spans physician executive and senior clinician executive leadership advisory, bringing unique insights to organizations across the healthcare landscape.



Naomi Spears

High School Student, Atlanta Public Schools

Naomi Spears is a junior attending the Coretta Scott King Young Women's Leadership Academy who is dually enrolled at Georgia State University. With her engagement in her school's Student Government Association, taking on roles as Vice Chair and Public Relations Officer, and her participation in the APS Student Advisory Council (SAC), serving as Vice Chair, she demonstrates a deep passion for advocacy and public policy. She strives to tackle prevalent issues in her school and community through meaningful discussions with her peers and district officials in order to make lasting improvements.



D'Anna Curlett

High School Student, Fulton County Schools

D'Anna Curlett is a senior at Creekside High School and serves as the Battalion Commander of Creekside's Army JROTC program. She is an active student leader involved in National Honor Society, Beta Club, Rho Kappa, Student Government, and AVID. Throughout high school,

D'Anna has demonstrated a strong commitment to academics, leadership, service, and involvement within her school community.

As she prepares for life after high school, she looks forward to continuing her education and building upon the leadership skills she has developed throughout her high school experience.