

# Current Context: Informing Future Work

## Session 4: Navigating Federal Education Policy

### Background and Context:

The current administration has issued a series of executive orders challenging the rights of students and the very landscape of K-12 and higher education. The Minnesota Office of the Attorney General (AGO) has been responsive to these orders, providing legal guidance to state and local government agencies, as well as higher education institutions. The Board has invited representatives from these three areas (higher ed, K-12, and the AGO) to have a facilitated discussion on navigating federal education policy today.

### Facilitators/Speakers:



**Dr. Yohuru Williams, Distinguished University Chair, Professor and Founding Director of the Racial Justice Initiative**

Dr. Yohuru Williams is the Distinguished University Chair and Professor of History and Founding Director of the Racial Justice Initiative at the University of St. Thomas. He received his Ph.D. from Howard University in 1998. Dr. Williams is the author, co-author, and editor of eleven books, including *Call Him Jack: The Story of Jackie Robinson*, *Black Freedom Fighter* and *More Than A Dream: The Radical March on Washington for Jobs & Freedom*, which was longlisted for the National Book Award in Young People's Literature. Dr. Williams has appeared on a variety of local and national television and radio programs,

including the History Channel, CNN, Fox Business News, NPR, BET, and ABC. His scholarly articles have been published in the American Bar Association's *Insights on Law and Society* and the *Journal of Civil and Human Rights*.



**Erin Farmer, J.D., Assistant Attorney General**

Erin Farmer has been an Assistant Attorney General in Health and Teacher Licensing since 2023. Along with her work for PELSB, Erin primarily represents the Board of Social Work, the Board of Pharmacy, the Behavior Analyst Advisory Council, and the Board of Nursing; and assists with matters for a variety of other licensing boards. In addition, Erin serves on special working groups at the Attorney General's Office, including a working group dedicated to election-year litigation, and currently co-chairs the Office's Anti-Discrimination Working Group. Before joining the Attorney General's Office, Erin served as a judicial clerk for the Honorable Sarah I. Wheelock's first term on the Minnesota Court

of Appeals, as a judicial clerk in Hennepin County district court, and as a law clerk and student attorney for the Ramsey County Attorney's Office. Erin is a graduate of Mitchell Hamline School of Law. Originally from Iowa,

Erin has resided in Saint Paul for over twenty years and formerly worked in marketing and management for performing arts organizations.



**Keith Ellison, J.D., Minnesota Attorney General**

Keith Ellison has served as Minnesota’s Attorney General since being sworn in on January 7, 2019. From 2007 to 2019, Keith Ellison represented Minnesota’s 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District in the U. S. House of Representatives, championing consumer, worker, environment, and civil- and human-rights protections for Minnesotans. He served for 12 years on the House Financial Services Committee, where he helped oversee the financial services industry, the housing industry, and Wall Street, among others. His legislative accomplishments include passing provisions to protect credit-card holders from abusive practices and protect the rights of renters and tenants. While in

Congress, he founded the Congressional Antitrust Caucus and the Congressional Consumer Justice Caucus. He also served as co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, which he helped build to more than 100 members. Prior to being elected to Congress, Attorney General Ellison served four years in the Minnesota House of Representatives. Before entering elective office, he spent 16 years as an attorney specializing in civil-rights and defense law, including five years as executive director of the Legal Rights Center. As the leader of this public-interest law firm, he oversaw a team of attorneys focused on delivering justice for Minnesotans who had nowhere else to turn. He was also a noted community activist. Attorney General Ellison received his law degree from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1990. He is the proud father of four adult children: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, and Amirah. He is the first African American and the first Muslim American to be elected to statewide office in Minnesota.



**Dr. Stacie Stanley, Superintendent of Saint Paul Public Schools**

Dr. Stacie L. Stanley started as Superintendent of Saint Paul Public Schools on May 12, 2025. Prior to her appointment in SPPS, she served as the superintendent of Edina Public Schools. Stacie has served in a variety of education roles including math teacher, school principal, director of curriculum, assessment and instruction & prior to serving as superintendent she served as the associate superintendent of Eden Prairie Schools. Dr. Stanley fervently believes that the “answer is in the room” and building leadership capacity through dignity supports organizational transformation.

Dr. Stanley earned a doctorate degree from Bethel University in St. Paul, where she researched the impact of intercultural development on K-6 administrative leadership practice. She is a fierce advocate for creating safe spaces of belonging for each and every student that allows them to know their worth and thrive. Dr. Stanley is the co-author of *Leading While Female: A Culturally Proficient Response for Gender Equity*. Dr. Stanley also served as a contributing author for the text *Innovative Voices in Education: Engaging diverse communities*.

Dr. Stanley is a doctoral program adjunct faculty member and advisor at Bethel University in Minnesota. Stacie lives in a multi-generational home with her husband and 95-year-old father, and enjoys being an empty nester, power walking, and spending time with their grandchildren.

# Appendix 1: Minnesota Attorney General's Office Communications on Federal Education Policy

February 20, 2025 - [Barring students from participating in extracurricular activities consistent with their gender identity would violate the Minnesota Human Rights Act](#)

March 5, 2025 - [Attorney General Ellison issues multistate guidance for schools on legal diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility initiatives](#)

March 5, 2025 - [Joint Guidance for Higher Education and K-12 on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)

March 13, 2025 - [Attorney General Ellison sues to stop dismantling of Department of Education and protect students](#)

March 24, 2025 - [Attorney General Ellison continues the fight to stop Trump from shutting down the Department of Education](#)

April 9, 2025 - [In SCOTUS brief, Attorney General Ellison defends use of LGBTQ-inclusive books in public schools](#)

April 22, 2025 - [Attorney General Ellison sues to 'stop Trump from bullying vulnerable children' in Minnesota](#)

April 25, 2025 - [Attorney General Ellison sues Trump Administration over unlawful conditions on funding for K-12 schools](#)

## Appendix 2: Executive Orders Pertaining to Education

[Executive Order: Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity](#)

[Executive Order: Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families](#)

[Executive Order: Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling](#)

[Executive Order: Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism](#)

[Executive Order: Keeping Education Accessible and Ending Covid-19 Vaccine Mandates in Schools](#)

[Executive Order: Restoring Public Service Loan Forgiveness](#)

[Executive Order: Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities](#)

[Executive Order: Advancing Artificial Intelligence Education for American Youth](#)

[Executive Order: Reinstating Common Sense School Discipline Policies](#)

[Executive Order: White House Initiative to Promote Excellence and Innovation at Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#)

[Executive Order: Reforming Accreditation to Strengthen Higher Education](#)

[Executive Order: Transparency Regarding Foreign Influence at American Universities](#)

[Executive Order: Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future](#)