Presenters:

David J. Ruff, executive director, Great Schools Partnership

David Ruff is co-founder and current executive director of the Great Schools Partnership, a non-profit education support organization located in Portland, Maine. A former high school English teacher, David’s teaching career implemented instructional strategies that increased direct student ownership of their learning activities in order to increase their engagement and deepen their achievement. David is a founding member of the New England Secondary School Consortium and its practice arm, the League of Innovative Schools, ground-breaking efforts lead by the state education agencies in CT, ME, NH, VT and RI focused on improving high school graduation rates and better preparing all student to attend college and further learning. Over the past ten years, David has focused on implementing mastery-based learning, flexible learning pathways, and quality school accountability systems to redesign our current educational systems—at scale across New England. He is a frequent speaker at state, regional and national events concerning better instructional practice, state and district policy, and community engagement.

Tony Lamair Burks II, Ed.D, senior associate, Great Schools Partnership

Tony Lamair Burks II is a senior associate with the Great Schools Partnership. A career educator, Tony has served schools and districts in roles from Teaching Fellow and School Principal to Executive Director of Atypical and Charter Schools and Area Superintendent. Tony is the founding principal of North Carolina’s first early college high school, and he assisted the National Center for Urban School Transformation as its Superintendent-in-Residence from 2011 to 2015. A fellow of the British-American Project, he is among five educators profiled in Walking the Equity Talk: A Guide for Culturally Courageous Leadership in School Communities by John Robert Browne II. Tony’s professional interests include the reframed role of grade level and department chairs as instructional leaders; student engagement and leadership development; the use of storytelling as a learning tool; and the role of missions and visions in school communities.