

## SPEAKER BIOS



**David Van Elslander** serves on the Board of Directors for the A.A. Van Elslander Foundation, carrying forward the philanthropic legacy of his father, Art Van Elslander. David Van Elslander learned the value of hard work by helping in his father's business, Art Van Furniture, after school and on weekends since the age of nine. Van Elslander built his career in key roles with the company, leading teams in sales, merchandising, distribution, and customer service, and was President of Art Van Pure Sleep when the company was sold in 2017. Van Elslander is also a member of the Board of Directors of Mi BANK and has served on the board of the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital. Van Elslander and his wife, Sue, are the proud parents of four adult children and reside in Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan. To learn more about the Van Elslander Foundation, please visit <https://www.vanelslanderfoundation.org/>



**Pamela Good** is cofounder and CEO of Beyond Basics, a nonprofit organization offering structured literacy interventions to students in Metropolitan Detroit. Good's first encounter with students, delivering coats to students in an underserved public school, revealed that the children needed much more than coats. This led Good to cofound Beyond Basics to provide enrichment activities, soon discovering that many of the children could not read. Beyond Basics then developed intensive one-on-one tutoring and literacy enrichment programs for K-12 students in Detroit and the metropolitan area. The Beyond Basics data-driven, multisensory program achieves academic grade-level movement in an average of six weeks. [Beyond Basics'](https://www.beyondbasics.org/) proven method unlocks the power of reading to open a new world to those who need it most. Under Good's leadership, Beyond Basics has established a tutoring model that helps students who are not yet reading at grade level. What began as a volunteer initiative has grown to become a \$10 million organization that partners with Detroit area schools serving vulnerable communities. Beyond Basics works to ensure that high school students can read before they graduate so that they can connect to workforce or college opportunities. To learn more about Beyond Basics, please visit <https://www.beyondbasics.org/>



"Empowering students to positively impact the world." Entering her 22nd year as an educator, **Principal Tanisha Manningham** has spent 16 years as a Denby Tar, the last seven years as Principal. She came to Denby High School as a Special Education teacher in 2005 and has been dedicated to the Denby students, parents, and community ever since. Manningham is excited to lead the educational charge with the awesome staff that has been established! What is the charge? To provide the students of Denby High School with a structured academic environment that will produce successful student outcomes and prepare them to be competitive once they matriculate from high school. Manningham has created a culture for staff and students that is data driven, cohesive, collaborative, community oriented, and where all stakeholders have a voice.

Through her work, Manningham has served on several leadership panels, co-authored an op-ed titled Principal Wellness, served as a mentor principal, presented to her leadership peers about retaining enrollment, was awarded the principal with the most school spirit in 2020 and through Caught Up Mentoring, she had an award named after her, the Tanisha Manningham Empowerment Award. This annual award goes to a male mentee who's been empowered to make his community a better place.

Manningham holds a B.A. in Women's Studies from the University of Michigan, a master's in Teaching from Wayne State University, and endorsements in elementary education, K-12 special education-learning disabilities, and K-12 administration. She is currently working on an Education Specialist (Leadership) in Central Office Administration at Grand Valley State University.



**Dr. Nikolai Vitti** was appointed as Superintendent of Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) on May 23, 2017 on a five-year contract. On December 8, 2021, the School Board extended his contract by an additional three years until June 30, 2025. In strong partnership with the School Board, Dr. Vitti has rebuilt the school district after two decades of disinvestment under Emergency Management and was most recently named a finalist for Urban School District Superintendent of the Year. Through the development and implementation of a Strategic Plan, along with hundreds of community and family engagement sessions over the years, DPSCD has experienced improvement for the first time in decades in the areas of enrollment; student achievement; student attendance; teacher recruitment, retention, and pay; leadership development and stability; student programming, including expansion of the arts; and financial stability. This improvement has led to reduced levels of financial and program oversight and monitoring by the federal and state government. To learn more about Dr. Vitti, visit <https://www.detroitk12.org/superintendent>



**Taylor Rice** is Beyond Basics' Program Manager at Denby High School, overseeing the implementation of our program there. Taylor is a Beyond Basics alumna who received Beyond Basics tutoring services when she was a seventh grader at the Barbara Jordan Middle School (now the Palmer Park Preparatory Academy). She said her student experience ignited a love of reading that motivated her to grow.

Taylor graduated from Wayne County Community College with an Associate of Arts degree in 2020. She now helps students develop as confident readers in pursuit of their own learning. Taylor was featured in the 2021 PBS documentary "Right to Read" about parents' pursuit of their children's right to read, which focused on Beyond Basics' solution. She says the Beyond Basics program "works wonders, and I am proof that it does."



**Unique Johnson** is a 12<sup>th</sup> grader at Denby High School who achieved six grade levels of movement in reading during her Beyond Basics experience last year. English is her favorite subject, where she enjoys essay writing. Outside of school, she likes to cook, play basketball, and read and play with her siblings.



**Xavier Johnson** is an 11<sup>th</sup> grader at Denby High School. He advanced four grade levels in reading as part of the Beyond Basics program last year. One of four children, Xavier enjoys algebra, watching sports, and plans to pursue a real estate career after earning a college degree.