

Keynote Speaker Biographies



Andrew N. Meltzoff is a graduate of Harvard University, with a Ph.D. from Oxford University; Dr. Meltzoff now holds the Job and Gertrud Tamaki Endowed Chair and co-directs the Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences at the University of Washington. Dr. Meltzoff is a world leader in child development between 0–5 years of age. His discoveries about infant imitation revolutionized our understanding of early learning and the brain. His research on the preschool period shows the power of social role models for children. He is co-author of a popular book about 0–5, *The Scientist in the Crib*. Dr. Meltzoff works nationally to connect brain research to concrete programs that make a difference to parents, caretakers, and society. His work is widely covered by the media,

including PBS, NBC, ABC, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *New York Times*. Dr. Meltzoff is the recipient of numerous prizes, and is an elected member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.



Dr. Dana Suskind is a Professor of Surgery at the University of Chicago, Director of the Pediatric Cochlear Implant Program, and Founder and Director of the Thirty Million Words® Initiative, a program dedicated to harnessing the power of language to build a child's brain and impact his or her future. Dr. Suskind is also the author of *Thirty Million Words: Building a Child's Brain*, published in September 2015.

A well-known study by Betty Hart and Todd Risley in 1995 found some children heard thirty million fewer words by their fourth birthdays than others. The children who heard more words were better prepared when they entered school. They had bigger vocabularies, stronger reading skills, and higher test scores. Dr. Suskind learned of this thirty million-word gap while she was working as a cochlear implant surgeon at the University of Chicago Medical Center. Intrigued and alarmed by the study, she began the Thirty Million Words® Initiative in response to this word gap and is actively working to close this ever-widening achievement gap.

In her book and keynote presentations, Dr. Suskind details the critical importance of early language exposure on a developing child's brain and encourages parents to take an active role in this development. Drawing on her own experiences with patients and the compelling research on the neuroscience of brain plasticity, Dr. Suskind explains that the most important, and astoundingly simple, thing that one can do for a child's future success in life is to talk to him or her.

Dr. Suskind and the Thirty Million Words® Initiative have been profiled by numerous media outlets, including the *New York Times*, NPR, *The Economist*, and Slate.com, and they have received support from The Department of Education and The Hemera Foundation. She also received the University of Chicago Medical Faculty Award for "Distinguished Leader in Program Innovation."



Dowell Myers, Ph.D., is a professor of policy, planning, and demography in the Sol Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California. Professor Myers is a specialist in demographic trends and their relation to all areas of policy and planning. He is a leading expert on the California and the U.S. population. Dr. Myers's work emphasizes the current generational transition underway between the aging baby boomers, who are beginning to retire, and a younger, more diverse generation now being educated to replace them in the work force, among the taxpayers, and in the housing market. His recent study for the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health focused

on the "doubled importance" of children in the post-Great Recession era. Dr. Myers is the author of the award-winning book *Immigrants and Boomers: Forging a New Social Contract for the Future of America*. He holds his Ph.D. from MIT, a Master of City Planning from UC-Berkeley, and a B.A. degree in anthropology from Columbia University. Many of Dr. Myers' publications are available at <http://popdynamics.usc.edu/>.



Ajay Chaudry, Ph.D., is the author of *Putting Children First: How low-wage working mothers manage child care*, and co-author of *Cradle to Kindergarten: A new plan to combat inequality* as well as articles related to child poverty, children of immigrant families, and U.S. social and economic policies. He is currently a Visiting Scholar at New York University, and previously served in the administration of President Barack Obama as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Services Policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at HHS (2012–15). Prior experiences include Senior Fellow & Director of the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute (2007–12); Deputy Commissioner for Early Childhood Development at the New York City Administration for Children Services

(2004–06); and faculty at the New School for Social Research. Dr. Chaudry completed an A.B. degree at Columbia University, and an MPP and Ph.D. at Harvard University.



A renowned physician and researcher, **Dr. Vincent J. Felitti** is one of the world's foremost experts on childhood trauma. Leading the charge in research into how adverse childhood experiences affect adults, he is co-principal investigator of the internationally recognized Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, a long-term, in-depth analysis of over 17,000 adults. Founder of the Department of Preventive Medicine for Kaiser Permanente, Dr. Felitti served as the chief of preventive medicine for over 25 years. Under Dr. Felitti's leadership, his department provided comprehensive medical evaluations to 1.1 million individuals, becoming the largest single-site medical

evaluation facility in the western world. Dr. Felitti also has served on advisory committees at the Institute of Medicine and the American Psychiatric Association. A noted expert on the genetic disease hemochromatosis, as well as obesity, he educates audiences around the country on these two very common, deadly maladies. Drawing on his years of experience, he has become an important voice advocating for the wellbeing of children everywhere. Dr. Felitti helps show audiences how we can understand these physical and mental traumas, and ultimately, prevent them.