

## **Excellence Christian School Governing Board Bios**

The Excellence Christian School Governing Board consists of Spirit-led individuals, with diverse experience and expertise, who are committed to making a positive difference for the Excellence Christian School community. Working with the school leadership, we strive to ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and solid reputation of Excellence Christian School through the establishment of sound policy, provision of sufficient resources, and assurance of a quality educational program for all of our students. We invite you to meet our Board members who are all “soaring for excellence through grace and knowledge.”



**Chrystal Benson**

Chrystal Benson received her Bachelor of Science in Math Education from Southern University in Baton Rouge, LA. and her Master of Education in Secondary School Administration from Bowie State University. Ms. Benson continues to remain abreast of current trends and practices in education through additional graduate level courses, local and national trainings, workshops, seminars and conferences.

Ms. Benson is currently the Student Engagement and Conduct Officer for Charles County Public Schools. Prior to this appointment, she served Charles County Public Schools as a High School Principal for twelve years. Ms. Benson has also served as an Assistant Principal and Mathematics Teacher. Throughout her tenure, Ms. Benson has received local, state and national recognition. Her awards and recognitions include 2015 Principal of the Year (Maryland Association of Student Councils), Vice Principal of the Year (Charles County Public Schools) and the AIMMS Award (MSDE Office of Minority Achievement). Ms. Benson has also served as an adjunct instructor at Trinity University in the area of School Administration.

Ms. Benson has served on the Governing Board for Excellence Christian School for over 9 years. It is evident that Ms. Benson takes her role as an educational leader very seriously and views it as a way to give honor and glory to God. Ms. Benson's goal is to provide all students with equal access to learning and provide them with supports to reach their goals.

Chrystal Benson is the proud mother of two college students. When her schedule allows, she enjoys traveling with her family.



**LaVerne Blagmon-Earl**

Dr. LaVerne Blagmon-Earl, a retired professor of mathematics from the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), serves as chair of the board for Excellence Christian School (ECS). Dr. Earl received her Ph.D. in mathematics education from the Catholic University of America with a specialty in mathematics problem solving. In addition to being a professor at UDC, she was the chair of the mathematics department, assistant dean in the College of Arts and Sciences, and assistant vice president for student services and enrollment management.

A self-described “life-long learner with a passion for teaching” Dr. Earl believes in the value and benefits of students growing academically, spiritually, and socially in a Christ-centered classroom and physically-safe environment like the one provided by Excellence Christian School.

Born in Bronx, New York LaVerne Blagmon-Earl is an avid puzzle solver, whether jigsaw, crossword, anagrams, sudoku, logic or digital brainteasers. She and her husband William serve on the deacon and deaconess boards of Cornerstone Peaceful Bible Baptist Church. Together they have a blended family of 3 children and 5 grandchildren.



**Doris Gilliam**

Doris Gilliam is Associate General Counsel at AARP as well as General Counsel for Cornerstone Peaceful Bible Baptist Church. In her position at AARP, Mrs. Gilliam serves as the lead attorney for the State Group in the Office of General Counsel, providing the legal infrastructure for the largest business unit in the organization, including staff at headquarters and field offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The State Group handles issues ranging from intellectual property and advocacy to tax and membership. Mrs. Gilliam, as General Counsel of Cornerstone Peaceful Bible Baptist Church, advises and provides legal guidance to the organization on a wide range of legal areas.

Mrs. Gilliam was named to the Minority Corporate Counsel Association's 2015 List of Rising Star Attorneys, and AARP received the 2014 In-House Innovators Award based on the State Group's achievements from the WMACCA Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel. Mrs. Gilliam received her J.D. from George Washington University Law School and holds two Bachelor of Arts degrees from Howard University, one in Political Science and the other in Classical Civilization.

Mrs. Gilliam began her service on the Excellence Christian School Board in 2015 and believes in the blessing of Christian education and the unique opportunity to provide a rigorous education, in an environment where a strong relationship with Jesus Christ is encouraged daily.

In Mrs. Gilliam's free time, she loves traveling with her husband, son and daughter and making unforgettable family memories.

### **Rev. Daniel T. Mangrum**

Pastor Daniel T. Mangrum received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in the field of Education from the University of Maryland, College Park. He received a Masters of Divinity Degree from Howard University Graduate School of Religion. Rev. Mangrum worked for ten years as a Social Studies teacher in Fairfax Public schools at George Marshall High School and W.T. Woodson High School. During his tenure as a Public-School teacher, Rev. Mangrum served on the Superintendent's Teacher Advisory Board chosen to advise the Superintendent on Educational policy for Fairfax Public Schools. In addition, Rev. Mangrum was nominated by his school for the Washington Post Agnes Meyer Teacher of the Year Award.

This background in education led to his desire to found the Excellence Christian School. His vision was to establish an educational institution that emphasized academic excellence and sound Christian moral values. There were three cornerstones to his educational strategy. They were to assemble a highly qualified educational staff, maintain small class sizes and have an accelerated challenging educational environment for students to learn. Pastor Mangrum believes instruction on the Bible and practicing our faith is critical to a quality education. In his own words, *"Understanding the Bible and practicing our faith is what allows what we learn to have meaning in terms of how we use a quality education to make the world a better place for others."* He has served on the Board since its inception and eagerly participates in the work of the Board.

Pastor Mangrum serves presently as the Senior Pastor of Cornerstone Peaceful Bible Baptist Church. He has served in this capacity for 33 years. Excellence Christian School was birthed from the need to serve the community and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pastor Mangrum is married to the Rev. Sabrina Mangrum since September 11, 1982. In addition to serving as co-Pastor, she was the co-founder of Excellence Christian School. They have two children, Danielle and Diamond. Both Danielle and Diamond attended Excellence Christian School. Danielle is a graduate of Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia and Diamond is presently a student at North Carolina A & T University, Greensboro, North Carolina. Pastor Mangrum is an avid golfer and fisherman. One of the highlights of the year is working on the Excellence Christian School Golf classic that raises money for the School.



**Rev. Lesley Poole**

**Lesley Poole is the Chief Executive Officer at The SEED Foundation, where she is responsible for the overall health and vitality of the SEED network of public, college-preparatory boarding schools and their mission-critical college success programming. Lesley joined The SEED School of Washington, D.C. 18 years ago as a founding faculty member and has held positions ranging from Director of Admissions to Director of Parent & Community Relations to Head of School for Student Life. Since transitioning to The SEED Foundation, Lesley has served in several management positions, including the Director of Outreach and Government Relations, before becoming CEO.**

**Lesley began her career in education as a mathematics instructor. Later, she served as the service area director for the School Division of the San Francisco Educational Services (SFED), where she oversaw five programs for inner-city children with special needs in San Francisco. She received her bachelor degree, from Patten College in organizational management.**

**Lesley remains heavily involved in both the SEED community and the greater Washington community; she serves on the board of Educare, an early childhood education school and community center in Ward 7, as well as Excellence Christian School, located in Upper Marlboro.**



**Marisha Wright**

Dr. Marisha Wright was born in Washington, D.C. and raised in Silver Spring, Maryland. She began her pursuit of knowledge in 1991 at Montgomery College. After graduating from Montgomery College, Dr. Wright transferred to University of Maryland, College Park and received a Bachelor's of Arts in Hearing and Speech Sciences. After so many years, Dr. Wright was not satisfied with only a Bachelor's degree and pursued higher degrees. In 2006 Dr. Wright received her Master's degree in School Counseling with a specialization in Mental Health from Gallaudet University and in 2011 her PhD in Human Services with specialization in Counseling from Capella University. She enjoys her pursuit of knowledge. Her motto to her students is "it never matters where you start but that you finish what you started." She has worked as the Co-Chairperson/School Counselor at a high school in Prince George's County for the past 10 years. Prior to her school counseling career, Dr. Wright worked as a Sign Language Interpreter at a local community college for 8 years. In addition, Dr. Wright interprets for deaf and hard-of-hearing members and visitors at her church and in the community. Over her 18 years working in education, Dr. Wright has mentored young people to believe in themselves and go after their dreams. She believes everyone has a purpose in life and wants to help young people believe that they were born for a purpose.