

GSBA Senior Staff

Valarie Wilson
Executive Director

Mrs. Valarie Wilson joined the Georgia School Boards Association in the summer of 2015 as its fifth Executive Director.

Mrs. Wilson was elected to the school board of the City Schools of Decatur in 2002 and became the moving force behind the establishment of the College Heights Early Childhood Learning Center, acting on research that shows that early childhood education is critical to success in the K-12 years.

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**Tony Arasi**
Director of Board Development

Mr. Arasi has served as the Director of Professional Development for GSBA for 11 years. Responsibilities include organizing the two conferences held annually as well as organizing and conducting regional workshops, and whole board governance training for individual school districts. He also coordinates/facilitates school district strategic planning process in partnership with GLISI. Mr. Arasi has held positions of Assistant and Associate Superintendent in Cobb County Schools, a large suburban school district outside Atlanta. Previously a middle school science teacher, Mr. Arasi also served as a high school principal for 10 years, five years at Osborne High School and five at Walton High School, which is a National School of Excellence and was rated by *U.S. News & World Report* (1/18/00) as one of the top six high schools in the nation. Mr. Arasi also has taught graduate courses in educational leadership at both Georgia State University and Kennesaw State University.

**Zenda Bowie**
Director of Field Services

Zenda Bowie was named director of field services for GSBA in September 2006. Her responsibilities include oversight of the mentoring program, the Federal Relations Network and support of GSBA's Board Development activities. Zenda served 17 years as an elected school board member in Fulton County. She is a past president of GSBA. She brings 27 years of experience with the American Lung Association, Southeast Region where she was progressively promoted from health educator in 1979 to chief operating officer in 1999. During her 30+ years in Atlanta she has served on numerous nonprofit organization boards and has been the recipient of several awards, including the 11Alive Community Service Award. Her current memberships include the National Association of Parliamentarians, Georgia Association of Parliamentarians - Atlanta Unit and the board of directors of Communities in Schools - Georgia. She is president of the Talladega College National Alumni Association.



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Charlton Calhoun **Director of Finance**

Charlton was named Director of Finance in July 2017 after serving as Controller since March 2009. He is a Certified Public Accountant with over 20 years of professional experience. He takes special interest in enhancing accounting procedures and efficiency through technology. Throughout his career, he has designed and implemented business solutions that leverage software, spreadsheets, databases, and custom automation to solve business problems – with the objective of improving accuracy and increasing productivity.

Before coming to GSBA, Charlton earned his Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Accounting from Georgia Southern University and held positions in public accounting and private industry. He served as an adjunct instructor for eight years at Southeastern Technical College, teaching various accounting and computer application courses. Charlton has instructed continuing education (CPE) courses with the Georgia Society of Certified Public Accountants since 2006, and leads the popular “bring your own laptop” hands-on series of technology courses.

Charlton is a Certified Information Technology Professional and member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Georgia Society of Certified Public Accountants.



Cliff Cole **Director of Risk Management**

Cliff Cole was named director of Risk Management Services in July 2017. He began his teaching career in 1987 in Cobb County where he served as a teacher, coach and assistant administrator. Mr. Cole came to Paulding County in 1997 as an assistant principal at New Georgia and Hiram Elementary. He later served as assistant principal at Nebo Elementary and Principal at Shelton Elementary. In 2003, Cole was named the Middle School Operations Director and Athletic Director for the Paulding County School District. He has served as Assistant Superintendent of Operations, Associate Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent in Paulding County. He was appointed Superintendent of the Paulding County School District in April of 2010.

Two years later, Mr. Cole was faced with one of the District’s most difficult challenges when an EF-3 tornado struck Poole Elementary School on the evening of March 2, 2012. After a weekend of hard work by Cliff and district employees, Poole Elementary School was open and ready for students first thing Monday morning, just two days after the twister hit. Mr. Cole was nominated and honored with the Georgia School Superintendents Association President’s Award for his leadership in weathering the aftermath of that storm.



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Dr. Stanley W. DeJarnett **Director of The Georgia Vision Project**

Dr. DeJarnett's career as an educator includes successful tenures as a music educator, principal, curriculum specialist, and district leader. His most recent post prior to leading the Vision Project was as Superintendent of the Morgan County Schools in Madison, Georgia. Morgan County Schools have been recognized regionally and nationally for their innovation and record of student performance.

He remains active in many professional organizations, having served on the National Governing Board of the American Association of School Administrators and the Executive Board of the Georgia School Superintendents Association. Dr. DeJarnett has also served as President of the Georgia Association of Curriculum and Instructional Supervisors and as an executive board member for the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders and the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education. He has served as Chair of the Georgia Council of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools/AdvancEd. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Music Education at Western Carolina University and his Doctorate in Educational Leadership at the University of Georgia.

He currently serves on the boards of the Morgan County Foundation for Excellence in Public Education, the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy, and the Boys & Girls Club of Morgan County. He was selected by the Georgia Chamber of Commerce as a member of the Class of 2001 for Leadership Georgia.



Dr. Samuel T. King **Director of Superintendent Searches/Training & Curriculum Manager**

Dr. Samuel T. King joined Georgia School Boards Association in July 2016 as Training and Curriculum Manager in School Board Governance. He has 32 years of public education experience. Prior to retiring in 2015, he served as Superintendent of Rockdale County Schools, Georgia and Norfolk City Schools in Virginia's Tidewater region. Dr. King was named Superintendent of Schools in 2005. He served as president of the Georgia School Superintendents Association, and Metro Atlanta RESA Board president. While superintendent in Rockdale, he had the honor of being named GA's 2011 Superintendent of the Year and Georgia Association of Education Leaders (GAEL) Outstanding Educator in 2008. While superintendent in Norfolk, he secured national superintendents certification by completing the National Superintendents Certification Program delivered by the Association of School Administrators (AASA). He is currently a member of the steering committee at the national level for the AASA Urban Superintendents Academy in partnership with Howard University, and consults for the program as Lead Superintendent Instructor. He has been an active member of The National Center for Educational Research and Technology (NCERT) as an emeritus superintendent.



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Nancy McLellan**Administrative Assistant**

Nancy McLellan is the GSBA Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director and serves as general office manager. She provides support for the Executive Director with meetings, events and activities for the GSBA Board of Directors and also coordinates meetings and activities for GSBA staff. Nancy came to GSBA in 2013 bringing 20+ years' experience in administrative and management skills from several sectors.

**Angela Palm****Director of Policy and Legislative Services**

Angela Palm is Director of Policy and Legislative Services for the Georgia School Boards Association. She leads the team assisting local boards with policy issues, review and development and directs the state and federal advocacy programs.

Prior to GSBA, Ms. Palm was executive director of the Georgia School Council Institute (GSCI), a nonprofit created to train and support the local school advisory councils. She has conducted workshops on parent involvement, politics, education policy and data analysis for a variety of groups across the state and at national conferences.

Ms. Palm has 15 years of corporate management experience. She has a B.S. in Psychology and English from Judson College and an MBA from the University of Nebraska. A native of Alabama, she has lived in Atlanta for over two decades and has been an active volunteer in her community.

**Justin Pauly****Director of Communications**

Justin currently serves as the Director of Communications for the Georgia School Boards Association. Prior to GSBA, Justin worked as the Liaison to the Georgia State Board of Education where he was responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the State Board of Education including, but not limited to, communications, administration, policy and law; media relations, and managing the statewide Local Board Governance Training program for local boards of education.

Justin also served as assistant to the State School Superintendent, where he managed the daily activities of the Superintendent including communications, logistics, special projects and research.

Justin is married to Dr. Melinda Pauly, a pediatric hematologist/ oncologist at Children's Health Care of Atlanta. The Pauly's have two daughters, Hadley and Ellis. Justin holds a Bachelor's of Science in Political Science and Public Administration from Lander University in Greenwood, SC. He brings a wealth of knowledge in communications, public relations, project management and marketing.



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Bill Sampson**Board Development Specialist**

Bill began working for GSBA in 2004. He represents GSBA in the Southern part of Georgia in Board Development, Superintendent Searches and Strategic Planning. During his tenure with GSBA, Bill has served as search leader in over 50 superintendent searches for Georgia School Boards and has been involved with Board development sessions and Strategic Planning initiatives throughout Georgia.



Prior to joining GSBA, Mr. Sampson spent 34 years in public education in Georgia. He served as principal of Crisp County High School from 1974 to 1986, Principal of Lee County High School from 1986 to 1998 and as Superintendent of Cook County Schools from 1998 until his retirement in 2003. During that time he was active in the Georgia Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the Georgia Association of Educational Leaders and the Georgia School Superintendents Association. A long time practitioner and advocate for continuous improvement, Bill is committed to assisting school boards understand and implement this process.

Mark Willis**Assistant Executive Director**

Mark Willis serves as Assistant Executive Director of the Georgia School Boards Association. Working with the Association since 1995, Mr. Willis oversees the organizations finances and technology as both CFO and CIO and is COO of the Association's technology subsidiary eBOARDsolutions.



As a long time advocate for the effective use of technology at the board governance level, Mr. Willis has worked directly with numerous boards to integrate technology with the district Leadership Team (Board and Superintendent). Georgia is considered one of the leading states in the effective use of technology at the board governance level. Mr. Willis is a product of public education and earned his bachelor of science in business administration at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Mr. Willis is a member of the Georgia Society of Association Executives, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants and the Georgia Society of Certified Public Accountants.

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As Decatur City Schools Board Chair from 2005-2011, Mrs. Wilson along with the other members of the board, helped to turn around the finances of the district. Through reorganization, the district was able to move forward during the recession with no teacher furloughs or shortening of the school year.



Mrs. Wilson joined the board of the Georgia School Boards Association in 2009 and was its president in 2012-2013. She helped create the Georgia Vision Project, an educational framework for boards that included input from board members, superintendents, teachers, teaching colleges, elected officials, parents and students. Over 80 percent of the state's school boards have agreed to support the Vision Project's recommendations.

As GSBA president, Mrs. Wilson was involved in leading the association and improving the grassroots network in influencing statewide policy. She has also served on Governor Deal's Education Advisory Board and was a member of the Decatur Education Foundation.

Mrs. Wilson was the Executive Director of the Atlanta BeltLine Partnership, Inc. and Director of the Human Services Department in Fulton County, responsible for an annual budget of \$26 million and directing programs that serve the elderly, children and youth. She has also been Director of Fulton County's Office of Aging.

In 2014, Mrs. Wilson ran for the Office of State School Superintendent.

A native of Swainsboro, Georgia, Valarie is a graduate of Clark College and completed coursework graduate studies in public administration at Troy State University. She now lives in Decatur with her husband Carter. Mrs. Wilson has one son, Nicholas.