

## **Wendy Waithe Simmons, Ph.D.**

Dr. Simmons is a licensed psychologist with 30 years of experience working with children and families. She is a State Services Liaison with the Build Initiative. She is also an Adjunct Professor in the Early Childhood Department at Gateway Community College; a member of the Expert Advisory Panel for the University of Connecticut's Pre-K to 3 Leadership Program; the Diversity Chair of the Connecticut Psychological Association; and a member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Taskforce for the Board of Trustees at Hopkins School in New Haven. Most recently, she was the inaugural Executive Director New Haven Children's Ideal Learning District (NH ChILD) where she was responsible for the design, development, and implementation of a bold systems change initiative in New Haven, Connecticut. NH ChILD is a place-based pilot created to ensure that every young child in New Haven has access to Ideal Learning experiences.

Throughout her career, she has engaged with children and their families through teaching, direct clinical service, consultation, program development, and research in both educational and clinical settings. She believes that all children deserve to have the opportunity to have multiple pathways towards success. She has a specific interest in developing and implementing programs for children from various backgrounds who have been experiencing social, behavioral, and/or academic challenges, particularly for children birth through five years of age. She has worked to provide support and remove barriers to access in the various contexts in which children thrive, including but not limited to family, care and education, health, and neighborhood settings.

Before NH ChILD, Dr. Simmons was the Director of Education and Equity at Connecticut Voices for Children (Voices), a research, state policy, and advocacy organization. While at Voices, she advocated for equitable policies in early care and education for children and youth from birth through college and career. Dr. Simmons was also the Director of the Connecticut College and Career Readiness Alliance and Manager of the Voices' Associate Policy Fellows Program, a program introducing and supporting recent college graduates to state policy advocacy. For almost ten years, she worked at the State Education Resource Center (SERC), where she started as a consultant providing professional learning across various settings. Professional learning content included racial equity, special education, positive behavior intervention and supports, school improvement systems and structures, professional learning communities, and data teams, as examples. She had several leadership roles at SERC, including as an Assistant Program Director responsible for the Teaching and Learning and Early Childhood Teams before becoming the Director for Development, Community Affairs, & Equity, and the first Director of the SERC Foundation.

Dr. Simmons received her doctoral training in School Psychology at the University of South Carolina and post-doctoral child clinical training at the Child Study Center at Yale University where she was also an Associate Research Scientist. She is an avid reader, a wife, and mother of two lovely daughters.