United Way Education Impact Panel Event
Wednesday, July 20
8:30 – 10 am.
United Way Office

Meet Our Panelists!

Brad Franklin has been a longtime employee of Fargo Public Schools (FPS). After starting his education career in Benson, Minnesota as a fifth grade teacher in 1995, he joined FPS in 1997 as a sixth grade teacher at McKinley Elementary School. He transitioned to administration in 2001 when he became the assistant principal and activities coordinator at Agassiz Middle School. In 2006, Franklin was part of the administrative team that opened Carl Ben Eielson (CBE) Middle School and served as the CBE assistant principal and activities coordinator. In 2008, Franklin assumed position as principal of Jefferson Elementary School. During his 13-year tenure at Jefferson, he implemented the Jefferson Neighborhood Connectors Project and piloted the first Positive Behavior Interventionist Program for the District. He is also currently leading Jefferson through its third year as one of three schools in North Dakota designated as a Full-Service Community Schools demonstration site. Franklin holds a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a master's degree in educational leadership, both from Minnesota State University Moorhead. Franklin is just completing his first year as head principal at Carl Ben Eielson Middle School.

Dr. Cory Steiner is currently the Superintendent of the Northern Cass School District. He has been an administrator for 16 years. In his current role, he has served on the Governor’s Task Force on Innovation which has challenged North Dakota’s education system to think differently. He is currently serving on the board of The Village Family Service Center and Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB). He believes in learner-centered education and it is a moral imperative we change our educational system. He is married to his wife, Jess, and has two children, DelRae (19), and Kelsa (17).
**Heather Simonich**, M.A., earned her master’s degree in Counseling Psychology from Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. She currently serves as an Operations Director for Nexus-PATH Family Healing; a treatment foster care and family-based services organization located in Fargo, North Dakota. Previously, Heather spent 14 years with the Neuropsychiatric Research Institute where she served as the Program Coordinator and Trainer for the Treatment Collaborative for Traumatized Youth (TCTY). She routinely provides trauma-informed care training and consultation to child and family serving organizations. Most recently, Heather partnered with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction to develop and disseminate a professional development curriculum for educators titled, *Trauma Sensitive Schools: A New Perspective on Student Learning and Behavior*. She is a 2012 Bush Leadership Fellow and a Licensed Professional Counselor.

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**Keely Ihry** serves as the Project Manager for the ND Full-Service Community Schools Consortium and currently Leads Child Care Aware of ND. She works for the South East Education Cooperative (SEEC), a Regional Education Association, located in Fargo, ND that serves 40 districts. Keely also supports health and wellness programming which strives to improve the physical, social and emotional health of all students. Over the past 10 years, Keely has worked in both the public and private sectors to assist schools, communities and organizations to increase physical activity and healthy eating and decrease tobacco-use and exposure through policy, systems and environmental changes.

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**Thomas Hill** is originally from Bismarck, ND, and graduated from Minnesota State University Moorhead in May of 2008 with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies and Spanish. Prior to his time at United Way of Cass-Clay (UWCC) he served four years in the United States Army and Army National Guard where he was stationed in Korea (2001) and deployed to Bosnia (2003-2004). Thomas has been part of the United Way of Cass-Clay (UWCC) team since September of 2008. In his role as the Vice President of Community Impact he leads organizational efforts to develop the community impact strategy. Working in close partnership with the President & CEO, Thomas manages all activities associated with the community impact department including, creating greater alignment, strategic focus, and shared measurement to accelerate impact areas and investment in the community. He coordinates and convenes other community change makers, including volunteers, to increase understanding of and increase community involvement in achieving results through effective solutions and execution. In his free time and when the weather cooperates, he enjoys spending time outdoors, hiking, camping and canoeing with his wife Lindsey, children Vera & Shepherd and dog, Agnes.