

Lauren Wells, Ph.D.

Dr. Lauren Wells is an educator, researcher, and community organizer known for her comprehensive, systemic, and collaborative approaches to change in schools and communities. She began her work in education twenty years ago while undergraduate student at Temple University. She then went on to become a high school English teacher in the Bronx. In both roles, Dr. Wells experienced how the structure of society and the structure of schools organize opportunities and learning such that opportunity gaps create the so-called achievement gaps. This led her on a quest to understand how social and structural inequality impacts communities and schools and to mediate those structures whenever and wherever possible. Her research and practice lies at the intersections of social and structural inequality, education policy, pedagogy, and community organizing.

Dr. Wells is trained in qualitative research and uses an interdisciplinary approach to understanding communities and schools including economics, sociology, and history. She applies this background not only to the work of school transformation, but also to transforming how communities, educators, and policy makers think about, approach, and undertake school change. She utilizes research-based strategies to disrupt the impacts of poverty and racism both the processes and outcomes of public education in urban communities and schools. Specifically, she works to increase inclusiveness and democracy for those marginalized from decision-making and to foster integrated strategies that reconnect schools with communities and that link educational outcomes to indicators across systems.

Since 2006 Dr. Wells has based her work in New Jersey. From 2006 to 2009 she was the Project Coordinator of a statewide education policy coalition called the New Jersey Education Organizing Coalition. In 2009, Dr. Wells became the Director of the Broader Bolder Approach to Education at the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education at New York University (NYU) where she led the design and implementation of a major school reform initiative in Newark called the Newark Global Village School Zone. Dr. Wells co-founded 211 Community Impact a non-profit organization in Newark. In 2014, Dr. Wells was appointed Chief Education Officer for the City of Newark. Dr. Wells is an educational consultant and speaker who works with schools and communities across the U.S.

Dr. Wells received a BA in English from Temple University, an MA in Educational Leadership from Teachers College, Columbia University, and PhD in Urban Schooling from the University of California Los Angeles.