

LEADERSHIP PROFILE



Director of the Rollins Center for Language and Literacy The Atlanta Speech School Atlanta, GA

“To help each person develop his or her full potential through language and literacy”

– Atlanta Speech School mission statement



The above video has been viewed more than 90 million times and outlines the work of the Atlanta Speech School and the Rollins Center. Click to play video.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Many analysts lament our nation’s continuing illiteracy epidemic, as fewer than 35 percent of our children continue to leave 3rd grade as proficient readers. Not many moments offer the right leader the chance to address this problem at scale, backed by a strong institution, deep relationships with national brain development experts and partner organizations, a dedicated staff of more than 40 PhD and Masters

level educators and digital experts, and 10 abidingly committed charitable foundations. If you think you might be that leader or know that leader, please read on.

The Rollins Center for Language and Literacy of the Atlanta Speech School is in a unique position to address the nation’s illiteracy crisis. The Center has gained rising traction in both the online and live-coaching worlds thanks in part to its work so far -- deeply grounded in Head Start/Early Head Start settings and highly diverse public school systems. It is also deeply grounded in the Atlanta Speech School itself, which serves as the educational equivalent of a teaching hospital and – with its four schools and four clinics -- has helped to empower tens of thousands of children each decade across most

of its 80-year history. The Rollins Center was created to extend the reach of this environment beyond the physical campus and to attack the shameful fact that language and literacy proficiency in the United States is too often distributed based



on Zip code, race and ethnicity. More than 33,000 members have joined the Cox Campus – a digital and interactive professional development platform for teachers of children from birth through 3rd grade and for other influential adults. The annual rate of growth for the still-developing Campus has quadrupled in the past two years and the potential for future acceleration across the United States and beyond far exceeds the current rate. One recent Cox Campus introductory video (highlighted on page one) went viral, with more than 90 million views on Facebook so far and wide-ranging use by schools and school systems in their professional development programs. Our potential for impact is further reflected by the Cox Campus membership of teachers from all 50 states and 24 other countries, small as most of those beginnings in each place might be now.

To capitalize on and optimize this powerful engine for change, The Atlanta Speech School seeks **a leader who is driven to close the access divide to early childhood literacy and who will confront this challenge with passion, urgency, optimism, practical wisdom and a collaborative spirit with our 100-plus partner organizations in this work.** S/he will bring a deep knowledge of the spectrum of academic research that defines the attention required from the last trimester of pregnancy through age 8 to build each child's reading brain. S/he will also bring the courage and tenacity to see that this research is continuously transformed into practice at scale and to provide and foster the skills, energy and emotional intelligence necessary to effect ambitious and critically necessary outcomes across a complex landscape.

The opportunity for the Director is bold and compelling: to radically change the face of childhood literacy in America by delivering to teachers, state system and public school leaders, public health professionals and other adults the tools needed to build strong language abilities and reading skills early in life rather than remediating the myriad societal problems that occur later when these skills are lacking. The primary vehicle for this transformation at scale is our [Cox Campus](#) (a free, web based application that is accessible on any mobile device, including tablets and smart phones). The Campus aims to distill the research of the nation's leading literacy and child development experts and is organized by the imperative to "build the reading brain" of each child across all age domains (in utero, infant/toddler, preschool/PreK, and K-3), with additional emphasis on coaching supports, dual language learners and the

opportunities for “language nutrition” provided in public health settings through the Talk With Me Baby initiative which our partnership in Georgia is driving.

For a framework – distilled from the latest research and our own experience -- capturing how we see the work of building each child’s reading brain across the full continuum, please click [here](#). The Cox Campus takes this framework for online professional development to a higher level by videoing each course in the real-life settings with which Rollins coaches and their teachers have grappled. A core belief: theoretical power points and stand-and-deliver presentations have not produced adequate changes in practice. Another: the Campus must commit to the cutting edge and always evolve as emerging technology provides new opportunities for impact. The power of this approach has been embraced by the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) which recognizes for child care center licensing the online Campus’ 0-5 coursework for required professional development units. K-3 coursework is now beginning to roll out on the Cox Campus, with the enthusiastic engagement of the Georgia Department of Education.

THE ORGANIZATION

Rollins Center
for Language & Literacy

Empowering Children's Lives Through Language
Teachers of Children Birth to 8 are Critical for
Language and Literacy Development

65%
of Georgia's 3rd graders
can't read on grade level

Children in low-income families experience
30 MILLION
fewer words by age 3 than wealthier children

3rd Grade
is the
transition
from
Learning
to Read to
Reading
to Learn

CHILDREN WHO DON'T MEET 3RD GRADE READING LEVEL STANDARDS ARE MORE LIKELY TO:

- Drop out of high school
- Be arrested by age 18
- Be unemployed throughout life

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES are directly linked to 3rd grade reading ability

The Rollins Center Trains Educators to...

- Be Language and Literacy Experts
- Empower Children's Voices
- Build Children's Vocabulary and Comprehension Skills
- Put Children on a Path to Grade Level Reading

The Evolution of Language Skills

- Listening: vocabulary, comprehension, world knowledge
- Speaking: drawing inferences, storytelling, self-questioning
- Reading: decoding, understanding, critical thinking
- Writing: creative writing, expression of meaning in print

GROWING INTO READING

- Birth: language nutrition (words) sparks brain development
- Age 3: vocabulary predicts future reading comprehension
- Age 5: pre-literacy skills make a child "ready to read"
- Age 8: children should be able to read and comprehend

OUR 2020 PROMISE By 2020, every early childhood educator in Georgia will have the skills to prepare children to meet 3rd grade level reading requirements.

Professional Development for Georgia's Early Childhood Educators
Help Us Ensure Teachers Throughout Georgia Get the Training, Tools and Support to be Agents of Change
www.AtlantaSpeechSchool.org/Rollins • www.ReadRightfromtheStart.org

Founded in 1938, **The Atlanta Speech School** was launched to realize the vision of a school where children who are deaf or hard of hearing could learn to speak and read, regardless of their family’s financial means. Dyslexia later joined deafness as a critical focal point. The School knows that intergenerational lack of access to language and literacy fits inside a fundamental continuum with the challenges its leaders targeted in the beginning. The phrase “regardless of means” still rings true at the heart of the mission, grounded in the core belief that every child should be given the opportunity to decide his or her own future.

Now with a staff in excess of 200, an annual operating budget of 18.8M and an endowment of



49.7M the Atlanta Speech School has become one of the nation's most comprehensive centers for early language and literacy. Each year, the bricks-and-mortar school impacts the lives of approximately 1,400 children and adults through its [four schools](#), [four clinics](#) and [summer program](#).

The 15-year-old **Rollins Center for Language and Literacy**, with a \$5.2 million budget, now seeks to take the Speech School's historic principle of equity to a higher scale by continuing to move earnestly but now ever more robustly outside its physical home. Rollins seeks to help all children and their families overcome barriers to literacy and learning through live coaching and groundbreaking professional development approaches and tools that empower teachers, families and others. The Center's live training program serves more than 8,000 students throughout the state of Georgia annually.

It is difficult to accurately calculate the number -- to the second or third power -- of children positively influenced by the online Cox Campus and its 33,000 members. An independent evaluation conducted with guidance from the Frank Porter Graham Institute at the University of North Carolina, however, showed the practice of member teachers improved significantly as a result of course completion. Plans for a second independent evaluation, a randomized controlled trial, are now underway. The Cox Campus, which provides professional development at no charge thanks to the insistence of its primary funder, was launched in 2013 through the generous support of the James M. Cox Foundation.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Director is charged with leading all aspects of the Rollins Center, working closely with the Speech School's top leadership and Rollins' Director of Strategy and Operations. S/he will bring extraordinary abilities and a matching relentless commitment to join with others to attack our nation's illiteracy epidemic.

More specifically, the Director will:

1. **Set the bar and the pace for the Rollins Center.** While guiding the growth of Rollins as a leader in professional development in language and literacy in the United States, the Director will ensure that the content and approach of Rollins's work continues to capture best practices and to strive for innovation, impact and **distribution** of

solutions on a scale that responds to the urgency of the literacy mission at hand. Rejecting a slow and incremental approach, Rollins will strive to surmount the traditional barriers to literacy through superlative planning, strategy, technology, people, and an acute focus on solutions at scale. Most fundamentally, s/he will work to make certain that the onsite and virtual work of the Center provides effective, accessible and transformative strategies for teachers and other key adults everywhere.

2. Facilitate the professional development of the Center and its team.

S/he will build and lead the people and programs that help to further develop a staff of already strong facilitators - a core driver of the success of the Rollins Center to date. The Center already has assembled an extremely impressive leadership team and constellation of talented individuals; the Director will work to galvanize the expertise and activities of the entire Rollins staff while tapping into the expertise of the other 100 PhDs and Masters' level professionals working across the Atlanta Speech School to ensure the success of the mission.

3. Prove and promote the work of the Center to ensure measurable outcomes and progress.

The Director will be a nationally visible leader capable of practically sharing the path to universal literacy enabled by Cox Campus technology and Speech School expertise -- bolstered by new relationships and continuing interactions with experts at Harvard, Yale, the University of Washington, Vanderbilt, the University of North Carolina, Georgia State University and other existing alliances and friendships from which we are drawing. S/he will rely upon data – both internal and externally evaluated – to advance the success of the enterprise. S/he will help to drive with enthusiasm the advance of our larger partnerships on which success hinges throughout the relevant local, state and national communities and promote a sense of criticality about both the need for action on a national scale and the effectiveness of programs and approaches developed by Rollins, its collaborators within the Speech School and its many partners.



4. Lead, coordinate and synchronize the work and culture of a highly talented and dedicated team with poise, a sense of humor and exceptional judgment. The Director will be an accessible, three-dimensional leader with a broad skill set that includes leading teams and

providing support and facilitation in a complex organizational structure, balancing competing priorities, effectively applying data and being adept at rapidly shifting between macro and micro issues. This individual will bring gifts as an academic thinker, charismatic leader, strategist and advocate who has the quiet confidence and security to balance deliberate convictions with an openness to ideas and approaches and continuous learning and growth. S/he will embrace technology and always wonder what the next turn of the wheel – from simulation to artificial intelligence – might bring to strengthen our work. S/he will promote a culture where roles and systems are organized, voices are heard and expectations are clear.

THE CANDIDATE



The ideal candidate will have a proven track record of leadership and driving outcomes; personal assets will include integrity, significant respect in the field of language and literacy and outstanding relationship and interpersonal skills. S/he also offers:

- Contagious commitment to the mission of taking research to practice on a transformational scale, breaking the cycle of illiteracy and helping prepare young people to decide their own futures and make the greatest difference possible in the lives of others.
- The appropriate balance of confidence, humility and humor.
- A fearlessness about failing quickly in an innovative environment.
- An understanding of professional development models and the capacity to effectively analyze and apply data to move programs forward.
- A compelling, energizing and inviting presence, with high emotional intelligence, listening and communication skills.
- The ability to lead and drive best practices in education and research-based instructional strategies that have been proven to increase teacher effectiveness in the classroom
- A strong background in early literacy content and pedagogy – with specific emphasis on knowledge and implementation of construction of the reading brain
- Ph.D. preferred, Master's degree required in Language and Literacy Education or closely related field, with at least 10 years of experience in language and literacy coaching and teacher training
- 7+ years of experience in leadership is preferred

THE PLACE

The Atlanta Speech School is located in Atlanta, GA; the 102,000 square-foot campus is in the heart of the city and within close proximity and access to Interstate I-75. Atlanta is home to more than six million residents, the world's busiest airport, six major institutions of higher learning, fifteen *Fortune 500* companies and some of the nation's most visible nonprofit organizations. Most important to our mission, it is the home of Martin Luther King, whose legacy demands that all of us help all of our children to discover the power of their voices for a lifetime.

For more information about the Atlanta Speech School, the Rollins Center for Language and Literacy or the Cox Campus, please go to:

www.atlantaspeechschool.org.

For more information about the region, go to www.atlanta.com

For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email

Rollins@BoardWalkConsulting.com

or call **John Sparrow** or **Ayanna Grady-Hunt** at 404-262-7392



Rollins Center
for Language & Literacy
A Program of the Atlanta Speech School

The Atlanta Speech School is an equal opportunity employer, and a diverse slate of compelling candidates is being sought.

