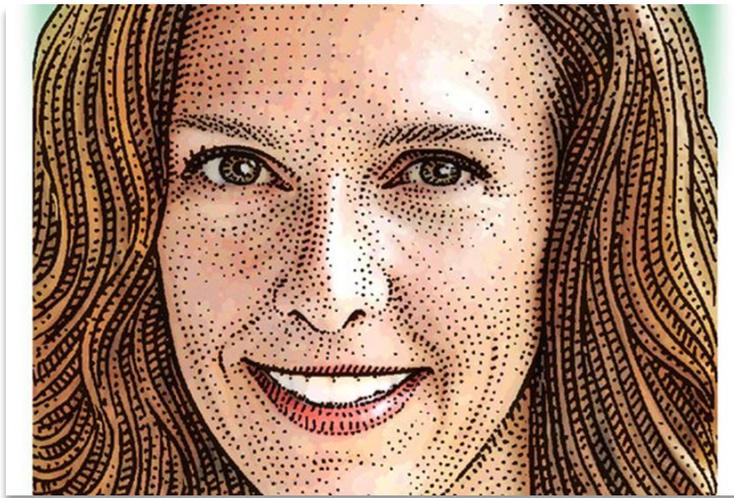


## A 'Home' for Donors Interested in Education Reform

### *A Family Foundation Invests in Trust for Learning*

*Marianna Kulak McCall believes the first five years of educating a child are the most crucial for a lifetime of learning. She has recently invested \$150,000 from the McCall Kulak Family Foundation in the newly launched Trust for Learning.*

*By Melanie Grayce West, Wall Street Journal, August 12, 2013*



Marianna Kulak McCall

---

To Marianna Kulak McCall, the first five years of educating a child are the most crucial for a solid, lifetime of learning.

To that end, Ms. McCall has recently invested \$150,000 from her family's Fairfield, Conn.-based McCall Kulak Family Foundation in the newly launched Trust for Learning, a collaborative fund that promotes innovative approaches to children's learning. Ms. McCall is a trustee in her family's foundation with her husband, Mark McCall, a managing director and the chief financial officer of Lime Rock Partners, a private-equity firm in Westport, Conn.

The Trust for Learning focuses on early education models that help children to become self-motivated, mature problem solvers. Hands-on exploration, a self-paced curriculum and independence are cornerstones of the model the trust

promotes. Ms. McCall and other representatives of the Trust for Learning believe that Montessori education, for example, is a good model that should be available to all children. (The McCall Kulak Family Foundation also supports the Montessori Leaders Collaborative.)

Ms. McCall, 45 years old, previously worked in international development for Save the Children and has been involved in education reform for several years. On one of the education reform visits she attended in Connecticut, she saw the public Montessori schools in Hartford, which serve many children who live in poverty.

“It was walking into those schools and seeing that they felt very much like the schools I had chosen for my own children,” she recalled. “It felt like home to me. It felt like this is possible for all children.”

And that is when the questions started. Once Ms. McCall saw what was possible in inner-city Hartford, she wondered why a Montessori-type of education isn’t more widely available to more children. “It so clearly works,” she said.

Trust for Learning was born out of the idea that an infrastructure is needed to grow the idea that a human development-based approach to learning, like Montessori, is possible for all children. The trust is intended to be the “home” for other like-minded donors interested in education reform, says Ms. McCall.

One of the hurdles to expanding developmentally informed education in the public sector is changing the way people think about education. Another barrier is the coordination around developmental-education research. One of the first grants that Trust for Learning has made is to coordinate existing research with lifting data from schools that focus on development education “so that we have the robust information we need to go to policy makers and school districts to show them how effective these models are,” says Ms. McCall.

“What we have found is that there is widespread agreement now about brain development and about what children need,” she says. “But I think that there is a lack of imagination about what is possible...people underestimate what children can do.”

**Write to** Melanie Grayce West at [Melanie.West@wsj.com](mailto:Melanie.West@wsj.com)