

Ken Morris, Jr. is a seasoned equity leader, bridge-builder, and doctoral candidate in education at Drake University who has devoted his career to creating spaces where all students and families can thrive. He currently serves as the Executive Director of Family and Community Engagement for the Ankeny Community School District, where he leads initiatives that center belonging, equity, and student voice in one of Iowa's most rapidly diversifying communities.

Ken's professional journey spans PK–12 schools as well as public and private colleges and universities, where he has served in senior diversity roles, advanced multicultural initiatives, and co-authored the chapter *Making Meaning Through Multicultural Initiatives* in *New Directions for Student Services*. He is a Certified Diversity Executive (CDE®), a qualified administrator of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI®), and a certified Youth Mental Health First Aid Instructor. These credentials reflect his commitment to equipping leaders and educators with tools to foster culturally responsive, inclusive environments.

Beyond his district leadership, Ken's service extends to the broader community. He has been a commissioner with the Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans, served on the 6th Judicial District Cultural Competency Advisory Board, and held appointments with statewide boards committed to racial equity and cultural competency. He is also a proud member of the newly formed Iowa Association of Black School Educators, where he uplifts and advances the voices of Black educators and leaders across the state.

In 2023, as part of the African American Leadership Academy Cohort, Ken contributed to *Through the Lens: Visionaries of Mental Wellness*, a documentary and community project that celebrates the strength and beauty of the African American spirit while calling attention to the importance of mental wellbeing. The debut screening was paired with a mental health resource fair and later shared in communities across Iowa, expanding access to dialogue, healing, and support. This project reflects Ken's holistic view of leadership, one that recognizes the link between educational equity, cultural affirmation, and mental wellness for African American communities and beyond.

Ken's leadership has also been felt nationally as a facilitator, speaker, and thought partner on inclusive leadership and organizational transformation. He has presented at conferences and professional gatherings across the country, offering strategies for building affirming school cultures, advancing equity initiatives, and strengthening partnerships with families and communities. His ability to connect research, lived experience, and practice has made him a sought-after mentor to those who share his passion for equity-driven change.

Rooted in both scholarship and practice, Ken's work reflects a commitment to advancing systemic equity through actionable strategies and collaborative leadership. His doctoral research focuses on equity-oriented educational leaders, ensuring that those who create affirming spaces for students of color are supported, sustained, and empowered. For Ken, this is not just professional work but a calling to open doors of opportunity, nurture belonging, and honor the brilliance of every student. His journey stands as a testament to the power of vision, resilience, and community in advancing opportunity and justice for all learners.