



Spring 2026 Business/Civic Leadership Forum

SPEAKER

DR. MELANIE JOHNSON

President and CEO, Collaborative
for Children

Biography

Dr. Melanie Johnson has served as President and CEO of Collaborative for Children since 2018. For more than 37 years, the non-profit has provided systems of quality learning opportunities for under-resourced children ages birth to five. She leads the state's largest ecosystem of early learners in strategic digital transformation and child care systems building to improve school-readiness outcomes. She delivers metrics-driven outcomes through her innovative development of the first early childhood database that demonstrates the learning progress of our youngest Houstonians. Her outstanding early education leadership has garnered Collaborative for Children recognition as a member of the United Nation's Economic and Social Council.

Previously, she served as President and CEO of the John P. McGovern Museum of Health and Medical Science, where she led the museum to become a Smithsonian Affiliate. Prior to that appointment, Dr. Johnson served as NASA's Space Center Houston's Director of Education where she was awarded the esteemed Nancy Hanks Award by the American Alliance of Museums for her transformative work in the industry.

She has been named a Top 25 Alumni of the Center for Houston's Future, Women Who Mean Business honoree, and a "Most Admired CEO" by the Houston Business Journal. She is featured on MSNBC, Authority Magazine and the Travel Channel's Mysteries at the Museum.

Dr. Johnson serves on the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the Greater Houston Partnership, The Community Advisory Council of The Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, a former Board member of HCA-Medical Center Hospital, University of North Texas' Library Board, and a current member of University of Houston's College of Education Advisory Board and the Texas Southern University Foundation Board. Since 2019, she has served as a governor-appointed Commissioner on the Texas Animal Health Commission.

She holds a B.A. from Auburn University, a Master's from the University of Houston, and a Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from Texas Southern University in Houston. With Dr. Johnson's direction, Collaborative for Children is becoming the change agent in 21st century early childhood education. Achievements before age 5 mean a greater chance at success for the rest of a child's life. Dr. Johnson wants to give every five-year-old the best chance for that success.