

Influential Women Features Tamiko Garrett, Ph.D.: Advocating for Families Navigating Invisible Disabilities

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Founder of Parents for Transition Uses Education, Advocacy, and Community Partnerships to Empower Youth and Caregivers Through Support and Understanding

Kalamazoo, Michigan — Tamiko Garrett, Ph.D., is an experienced educator and nonprofit leader with more than 20 years of experience spanning PreK–12 education, higher education, and community advocacy. Throughout her career, she has remained committed to supporting students, families, and communities by creating opportunities for growth, access, and meaningful connection.



As the Founder and Executive Director of Parents for Transition, Tamiko leads a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting youth with invisible disabilities and the caregivers who advocate for them. Through education, coaching, and community partnerships, she works to ensure families have the resources, guidance, and support needed to navigate challenges and create positive outcomes.

Tamiko's commitment to this work is deeply personal. As a single parent raising a daughter diagnosed with ADHD in first grade, she experienced firsthand the challenges families often face when seeking support and understanding. That experience inspired her doctoral research at Eastern Michigan University and ultimately led to the creation of Parents for Transition in 2018. She earned her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership in 2019, transforming her research and lived experience into a mission-driven organization focused on helping others.

After spending more than a decade in the nonprofit sector, including six years serving as Senior

Director of Site Services at Communities In Schools, Tamiko developed extensive experience partnering with school districts, strengthening student support systems, and implementing programs designed to improve educational outcomes. Her leadership has consistently centered around collaboration, advocacy, and ensuring that students and families have access to the tools they need to succeed.

In September 2025, Tamiko made the bold decision to leave her full-time role and dedicate herself fully to expanding Parents for Transition. Through the organization, she provides one-on-one coaching, develops resources, and builds partnerships with schools and community organizations to support caregivers and young people navigating invisible disabilities.

In addition to her nonprofit leadership, Tamiko serves as an Adjunct Professor in the Teaching, Learning, and Educational Studies department at Western Michigan University, where she continues to educate and inspire future teachers and leaders. She is also an active board member of ARC Community Advocates, further demonstrating her commitment to community service and inclusion. She is also a contributing author to the book *THRIVE: Breaking Free From Survival Mode in Education*. Her chapter often highlights the unheard perspectives of those impacted by invisible disabilities.

Known for her supportive leadership style, strong communication, and willingness to listen, Tamiko approaches her work with empathy and purpose. She believes meaningful change begins with understanding people's experiences and creating spaces where individuals feel heard, supported, and valued.

Tamiko attributes her success to never giving up. She recognizes that conversations surrounding disabilities, particularly invisible disabilities, are not always easy for people to acknowledge or discuss openly. However, she remains committed to keeping these important conversations at the forefront and advocating for families who may feel overlooked or misunderstood.

For Tamiko, persistence has been the foundation of everything she has accomplished. She believes that continuing to move forward, even when challenges arise, is essential to creating awareness, building support systems, and driving meaningful change.

One of the most valuable pieces of advice Tamiko has received throughout her career is that sometimes it is important to move in silence. She believes that when people are working toward building something meaningful, others may unintentionally or intentionally project their own fears and doubts onto that vision.

By moving quietly and staying focused, Tamiko believes individuals can protect their goals from outside distractions and allow their work to speak for itself. This mindset has helped her remain committed to her mission while continuing to grow and expand her impact.

Tamiko's advice to young women entering her field is to find a mentor. She encourages women

to seek out individuals who are supportive, experienced, and willing to guide their professional journeys.

She understands firsthand the importance of mentorship. For Tamiko, that person was Jane Baas, a retired professor from Western Michigan University who later became her board president. Jane believed in Tamiko's doctoral research, supported her through the dissertation process, and continued to encourage her vision when Tamiko launched Parents for Transition.

Tamiko believes strong mentorship can provide encouragement, perspective, and opportunities that are invaluable throughout a career. She encourages others to intentionally build relationships with people who can support their growth and help them navigate challenges.

One of the biggest challenges Tamiko sees in her field today is expanding awareness and reaching more families beyond her local community. While she has established a strong presence in her area, she is focused on increasing visibility for Parents for Transition and ensuring more families understand that support is available.

She also recognizes that many caregivers hesitate to seek help because they may feel uncomfortable acknowledging that their child needs additional support or that they themselves need assistance. Tamiko hopes to reduce that hesitation by creating greater awareness and reminding families that asking for help is a sign of strength.

The values that guide Tamiko in both her professional and personal life are structure, stability, calm, and peace. She believes these principles provide the foundation for how she approaches leadership, advocacy, and relationships.

Through her continued dedication to education, mentorship, and community service, Tamiko Garrett, Ph.D., is creating a lasting impact for families navigating invisible disabilities. By combining professional expertise, personal experience, and unwavering determination, she continues to build pathways of support and empowerment for the communities she serves.

Learn More about Tamiko Garrett:

Through her Influential Women profile, <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/tamiko-garrett>, or through her profile on Parents for Transition, <https://www.parentsfortransition.com/aboutus.html>

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