

25<sup>th</sup>

Blue Ribbon Schools  
of Excellence

National Conference

Anniversary



WALT DISNEY World®

December 2-5, 2024





## **25<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE (BRSE) CONFERENCE WALT DISNEY WORLD, ORLANDO FLORIDA**

Welcome 2024 National BRSE Conference Attendees!

We are excited to welcome you to the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual National BRSE Conference. This 25<sup>th</sup> BRSE Anniversary Event brings experts and practitioners together to recharge and inspire you as we look ahead to 2025.

We thank you for joining us on what will undoubtedly be an exciting, engaging, and magical learning experience for all. We invite you to create your own dynamic learning path and choose from almost one hundred sessions focusing on highly effective practices.

Whether this is your first BRSE Conference or you have several under your belt, be prepared to learn, engage, and network with colleagues from across the nation. Our national conference is designed to meet the needs of today's educators by empowering them to learn, share knowledge, and gain tools to lead students into the future.

Celebrate with us as we honor schools that have achieved a new level of professional recognition in their journey to continuously improve education for every student. Our Blue Ribbon Lighthouse Schools and the National Blue Ribbon Schools embody Disney's philosophy of always dreaming and always improving. Through the Blue Ribbon process, schools have engaged their entire community to identify and build on strengths and overcome challenges. This is how schools continue to grow and excel. We know that great school leaders are committed to sharing their experiences and supporting all educators along the improvement journey.

Don't forget to set aside some time to discover the latest education solutions being showcased in the Main Ballroom / Exhibit Hall. While you are there, stop by the BRSE booth to learn more about our nationally recognized program and process.

I hope that you leave this conference excited to return next year and continue to be a part of our BRSE community. This annual event is an opportunity to learn, grow, and create memories that last a lifetime. Don't miss out on the magic!

Bart Teal, BRSE President and Founder

Dr. Judy Warden Fields, BRSE Chief Executive Officer and National BRSE Conference Chair

Scott Stewart, BRSE Board Chair

**25th ANNUAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS OF EXCELLENCE CONFERENCE  
SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE**

**DAY ONE - MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2024**

**7:00 AM - 11:00 AM STEM IN THE PARKS** \*Participants must have their own theme park ticket and park reservation.

**LOCATION:** Meet at the Gran Destino Tower Lobby/Concierge to ride to the Magic Kingdom

**11:00 AM - 7:00 PM**

**REGISTRATION**

**LOCATION:** South Registration Counter

**1:00 PM - 5:30 PM**

**PRE - CONFERENCE SESSIONS** \*Refreshment Break at 2:30 pm

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 1 and Yucatan 3

**7:00 PM - 8:30 PM**

**EXHIBIT HALL OPENING WITH SPECIAL GUESTS MICKEY, MINNIE, DESSERTS,  
AND LOTS OF DOOR PRIZES FOR ALL ATTENDEES**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**DAY TWO - TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2024**

**7:15 AM - 4:00 PM**

**REGISTRATION**

**LOCATION:** South Registration Counter

**8:00 AM - 9:00 AM**

**BREAKFAST AND VISIT EXHIBITORS FOR ALL ATTENDEES**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**9:00 AM - 10:30 AM**

**OPENING SESSION**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**10:45 AM - 11:45 AM**

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS A**

**NOON - 1:15 PM LUNCHEON FOR ALL ATTENDEES**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**1:15 PM - 1:45 PM**

**VISIT EXHIBITORS**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**1:45 PM - 2:45 PM**

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS B**

**3:00 PM - 4:00 PM**

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS C**

**DAY THREE - WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2024**

**7:15 AM - 4:00 PM**

**REGISTRATION**

**LOCATION:** South Registration Counter

**7:15 AM - 8:00 AM**

**BREAKFAST AND VISIT EXHIBITORS FOR ALL ATTENDEES**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**8:00 AM - 9:15 AM**

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**9:30 AM - 10:30 AM**

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS D**

**10:45 AM - 11:45 AM**

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS E**

**11:45 AM - 12:15 PM**

**VISIT EXHIBITORS**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**12:15 PM - 1:30 PM BEACON LUNCHEON FOR ALL ATTENDEES**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**1:45 PM - 2:45 PM**

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS F**

**3:00 PM - 4:00 PM**

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS G**

**DAY FOUR - THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2024**

**7:30 AM COFFEE SERVICE FOR ALL ATTENDEES**

**LOCATION:** South Registration Lobby

**8:00 AM - 10:30 AM**

**REGISTRATION**

**LOCATION:** South Registration Counter

**8:00 AM - 9:00AM**

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS H**

**9:15 AM - 10:15 AM**

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS I**

**10:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

**LIGHTHOUSE CELEBRATION BRUNCH FOR ALL ATTENDEES**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

## DAY ONE - MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2024

**7:00 AM - 11:00 AM \*Participants must have their own theme park ticket and park reservation.**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *STEM IN THE PARKS*. Magic Kingdom is one of the most magical classrooms on Earth. Each of the lands provides hidden opportunities for a unique learning experience that includes STEM, history, the fine arts, and more. Session attendees will travel to Magic Kingdom and participate in 4 different interactive STEM activities that can be modified for classroom use.

**LOCATION:** Meet Faith at the Gran Destino Tower Lobby/Concierge to ride to the Magic Kingdom

**GROUP LEADER:** Faith Plunkett, Instructional Coach, Decatur City Schools, Alabama.

**Email [faith.plunkett@dcs.k12.al.us](mailto:faith.plunkett@dcs.k12.al.us) to reserve your spot! You must pre-register.**

**11:00 AM - 7:00 PM REGISTRATION**

**LOCATION:** South Registration Counter

**1:00 PM - 5:30 PM PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS**

**1:00 PM - 4:30 PM\*Extra Charge for the Lighthouse Leadership Institute - Pre-Registration Required**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *The Blue Ribbon Leadership Institute*. Principals and other administrators will have the chance to learn from award-winning leaders and share ideas with principals across the country. The Blue-Ribbon Leadership Institute can help you by becoming a part of a network of successful school leaders. "Networking is important for everybody - particularly those who are interested in becoming a leader in their organization or industry. A well-built and maintained professional network could be one of the most powerful tools for career advancement". Harvard Business School

**PRESENTERS:** Scott Stewart, BRSE Board President; Jayne Ellspermann, 2015 NASSP Principal of the Year and BRSE Board Vice President; Dr. Akil Ross, 2018 NASSP Principal of the Year, BRSE Board Member, and Superintendent, Lexington-Richland School District Five, South Carolina; and Edward Bernetich, BRSE Board Member. All presenters are former Blue Ribbon Principals.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 1

**1:00 PM - 2:30 PM\*Included in Conference Registration**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Six Strategies to Increase Student Proficiency Rates in Low Performing Schools*. School turnaround is a process that includes the implementation of six specific strategies. The educator should identify specific reading and math deficits for each individual student, and provide additional daily instruction and support through small, skills-based instructional groups to remediate each student's deficits. This session will share information that describes the six strategies, and the procedures for implementing each strategy that will result in high student proficiency rates in low-performing schools. The presenters will demonstrate how to improve grade-level core instruction in reading and math to provide structured, rigorous instruction that is based on scientific research.

**PRESENTER:** Nancy Guzman, North Carolina, and South Carolina Distinguished Principal, National Blue Ribbon Principal, and BRSE Board Member and Senior Assessor, North Carolina and Dr. Dawn Cobb-Fossnes, Principal, Ocean Academy Charter Middle School, New Jersey.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 3

**2:30 PM - 3:00 PM**

**REFRESHMENT BREAK with Warm Mickey Soft Pretzels, Cookies, and Punch**

**LOCATION:** South Registration Lobby

**3:00 PM - 4:15 PM \*Included in Conference Registration**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *From Theory to Practice: High Impact Strategies Unveiled.* John Hattie's research is widely respected among educators as the way to make the biggest impact on student achievement. The problem is that educators need to learn how to utilize these high leverage instructional practices. Participants in this session will participate in a crash course through the top instructional practices in Hattie's meta-analysis of research, such as cognitive task analysis, alternative assessment methods, and teacher clarity. Participants will be provided with resources that can be efficiently turned around to their instructional staff to begin impacting student achievement upon their return to the classroom. The instructional practices highlighted in the session, such as cognitive task analysis, alternative assessment methods, and teacher clarity, are chosen for their high impact on student achievement. This focus aligns with teachers' core goal of fostering student learning and success. It addresses a common challenge faced by educators – translating research findings into actionable strategies. It recognizes and respects the vital role teachers play in shaping student outcomes and seeks to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom.

**PRESENTERS:** Amy Mason, Senior BRSE Assessor, 2021 NAESP National Principal of the Year, and National Consultant, Aim2Educate, LLC, Alabama and Casey Watts, Team Alignment Coach and Consultant, Catching Up with Casey, Texas.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 3

**4:30 PM - 5:30 PM \*Included in Conference Registration**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *How Your School Can Become a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence.* How does your school measure up to the highest performing schools in the nation? Where do you start and what can you expect? If you would like to become a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence this is the session for you. Find out what is a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence and learn about the process to become one. We will share all the details from the application process to being named a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. Interested in the Blue Ribbon School of Excellence process, but you are concerned because your school is not high performing. Come to this session and you will put your concerns aside. Find out how the process works for all schools.

**PRESENTER:** Jayne Ellspermann, 2015 NASSP National Principal of the Year; Educational Consultant; Leadership Coach/Trainer; and Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, BRSE, Vice Board Chair and Senior Assessor, Florida.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 1

**4:30 PM - 5:30 PM \*Included in Conference Registration**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Brown COLORS the Board of Education.* An engaging game presentation that brings history to life! Inspired by the landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court case, this interactive experience explores the fight against racial segregation in public schools. Through cooperative strategy, team-work, and thought-provoking dialogue, participants gain insights into the struggle for equality and equal opportunity. Ideal for school districts and non-profits, this presentation fosters understanding, encourages open conversations, and promotes a deeper understanding of the unique role everyone has in public education. Don't miss the chance to educate, inspire, and create change! Contact the MNPS Magnet School team –[regina.etter@mnps.org](mailto:regina.etter@mnps.org) / [jonathan.wren@mnps.org](mailto:jonathan.wren@mnps.org) for more information.

**PRESENTERS:** Dr. Regina Etter, Director of Magnet Schools, and Jon Wren, Strategic Implementation & Policy, Metro Nashville Public Schools, Tennessee.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 3

**7:00 PM - 8:30 PM \*Bring Your Family! Look Who is Dressed in BLUE RIBBON BLUE!  
EXHIBIT HALL OPENING WITH SPECIAL GUEST MICKEY, MINNIE, AND DOOR PRIZES  
FEATURING A DESSERT RECEPTION SPONSORED BY EDUCATIONAL EPIPHANY.  
LOCATION: Coronado Ballroom H-J**



**DAY TWO – TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2024**

**7:15 AM - 4:00 PM REGISTRATION**

**LOCATION:** South Registration Counter

**8:00 AM - 9:00 AM BREAKFAST AND VISIT EXHIBITORS**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**9:00 AM - 10:30 AM OPENING SESSION**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**MASTER OF CEREMONY** - Dennis W. Bega, Senior Assessor, Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, Georgia.

**SPECIAL MUSIC**

Celebration K-8 School Wind Ensemble, Osceola County School District, Florida.  
Todd Leighton, Director of Bands

**PRESENTATION OF COLORS**

Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy R. Soles, USAF (Ret) and Senior Aerospace Science Instructor, and Cadets, Celebration High School, Florida.

**NATIONAL ANTHEM**

Celebration K-8 School Wind Ensemble, Osceola County School District, Florida.  
Todd Leighton, Director of Bands

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**RECOGNITION OF THE BRSE LEADERSHIP TEAM AND BRSE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Bart Teal, President/Founder/Board Member  
Alice Teal, Vice President  
Dr. Judith W. Fields, CEO/Conference Chair  
April Stansberry, Sales Director/Conference Registration Director  
Ty Watwood, Marketing and Technology Leader  
Tiffany Kelley, Accounting Leader

Scott Stewart, Board Chair  
Jayne Ellspermann, Board Vice Chair  
Michelle Kinley, Board Secretary  
Dr. Shane Barnette, Board Member  
Ed Bernetich, Board Member  
Dr. Jim F. Chadwell, Board Member  
Nancy Guzman, Board Member  
Dr. Akil Ross, Board Member

**RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION OF THE BRSE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT TEAM**



**KEYNOTE SPEAKER:** Jack Berckemeyer

**TITLE:** *Optimism and Opportunity*. Inspiring, humorous, and applicable to all in attendance. Choosing optimism even in the face of tough challenges—helps restore the healthy interactions and positive relationships necessary for enacting real school change. Hear how teachers and school leaders can rekindle their individual and collective enthusiasm for a profession that has been progressively inundated with negativity. Be prepared to learn, to laugh, and to leave with a renewed sense of purpose. Join these teachers for a fact-based, positive approach to “taking back our profession.” Research-based strategies, practical examples, and thought-provoking scenarios will be included.



**Jack Berckemeyer** is a nationally recognized presenter, author, and humorist, Jack Berckemeyer began his career as a middle school teacher in Denver, Colorado. After only two years, he was recognized as the outstanding educator at his school and in his district. Then in 2003, Jack received the Outstanding Alumni Award from the Falcon School District. Jack has also served as a judge for the Disney American Teacher Awards and has served on the selection committee for the USA TODAY All-Teacher Team. Jack has a master’s degree in Middle Level Education as well as an administrator’s degree. For 13 years Jack served as the Assistant Executive Director for the National Middle School Association. He is the owner of Berckemeyer Consulting Group where he has presented in hundreds of school district and conference settings both nationally and internationally.

**10:45 AM - 11:45 AM CONCURRENT SESSIONS A - TUESDAY**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Transitioning from Classroom Teacher to School Principal: It's Easier Than You May Think!* This session delves into the critical transition from classroom teaching to school leadership, addressing the increasing demand for motivated and high-quality educators in administrative roles. Participants will gain essential skills and insights needed to begin a successful career in school administration. Educators contemplating a move into administration are encouraged to attend this presentation to gain a deeper understanding of the skills and knowledge necessary for successful leadership in education.

**PRESENTERS:** Scott Stewart, CEO and Founder of Leverage Leaders, LLC, has over 30 years of experience in developing and mentoring emerging leaders and serves as the Board Chair for Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, BRSE. Michelle Kinley, Vice President of School Improvement, Prometric, and BRSE Board Member, brings 25 years of educational experience. Her journey from special education teacher to educational policy expert to educational technology leader equips her with unique insights on using data to build effective roadmaps for school improvement.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Cultivating a Culture of Learning through the Continuous Improvement Process.* Leadership is the central feature of highly effective schools, and this session is designed to assist school and district leaders to embrace a culture of high expectations for continuous improvement. By shifting the focus toward a cohesive vision of continuous improvement, educational leaders can: develop a shared vision for continuous improvement among all stakeholders – students, teachers, and parents; provide a working definition and background about the importance of continuous improvement in schools; develop pathways to implement a culture of continuous improvement; and build a sustainable positive culture for all stakeholders.

**PRESENTERS:** Dr. Michael Bratcher, Director, Accreditation Services, and Dr. Annette Melton, Senior Director, Mid-Atlantic Region, Cognia, Georgia.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Unlock the Power of Your Data.* If you are ready to turn your spreadsheets into impactful stories, join me for a hands-on exploration of Google Looker Studio! In this session, you'll learn how to use Google Looker Studio to:

- **Connect to data sources** and harness the power of your information.
- **Craft stunning and interactive visualizations** that bring your data to life.
- **Build informative dashboards** to gain insights immediately.
- **Share your reports and collaborate** with ease.

If participants want to follow along and create a sample dashboard, they will need to bring a laptop and make a copy of the "Sample Testing Data" spreadsheet by visiting the following link <https://tinyurl.com/yt7ac2zu>

**PRESENTER:** Kyle Pinckard, Principal, Boaz Middle School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Reaching Hearts and Changing Minds.* Our thoughts, perceptions, and emotions shape our reality and the same is true for our students. Do you have students with fixed mindsets? This session is for you. It is my hope you will leave this session emotionally and intellectually equipped to shape your students' mindsets through the power of love. In an immersive, cooperative, brain-friendly workshop, we will cover multiple mindsets that affect our students such as Mediocrity, Insecurity, Quitter, Powerless, and Abandoned/Unloved. Then provide research based strategies that help grow these mindsets to Achieving, Self-Confident, Gritty, Empowered, and Belonging/Loved. Strategies used include, Class-building Circle (Restorative Practices), Kagan Cooperative Learning activities, Collaborative Grouping/Teambuilding, and more!

**PRESENTER:** Corey Throckmorton, Principal, Concord High School, Arkansas.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Free K-12 Digital Lessons & Lesson Plans from EVERFI: Financial Wellness, Career Readiness, Character Education, Health/Wellness, Early Readiness, and More.* EVERFI provides educators with engaging, online learning resources in topics such as financial literacy, digital literacy/citizenship, career readiness, entrepreneurship, character education, and more. All the multi-lesson digital courses are standards-aligned and free of charge to schools. Participants will learn how to integrate EVERFI's digital courses and offline lessons together, to enhance current curriculum and student engagement. During this session, we will review how educators can gain access to all EVERFI's no cost resources.

**PRESENTER:** Kassandra Soulis, Senior Communications Lead, EVERFI, New York.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Rediscover the Magic: A Workshop on Cultivating the Joy of Reading in Children.* This workshop is designed to empower educators with practical insights from "The Joy of Reading" by Donalyn Miller and Teri Lesesne. Our focus is to explore the benefits of dedicated reading time in schools, share effective strategies to encourage regular reading habits among students, and discuss ways to actively engage families as partners in fostering a love for reading in children. The session will include an introduction to the "Joy of Reading", benefits of providing time to read in school, strategies to encourage regular reading habits, engaging families as readers, and end with an interactive discussion.

**PRESENTERS:** Jennifer Carcich, Director of Learning Acceleration and Megan Cahill, Supervisor of Academic Progress, Unity Charter School, New Jersey.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Inclusive School Community and Culture through World Language Classrooms.* School communities are changing and evolving in diversity every day. School leaders are challenged to make new students and families feel welcome while providing awareness and comfort to their existing student body. Hear how school leaders have discovered world language classrooms to be the pinnacle of school culture and community building. Learn how leaders have witnessed leadership in their newcomers as well as empathy, understanding, and appreciation from their current student body. We will also highlight instruction differentiation in recognizing Spanish (or every world language) as a beautiful way to elevate the importance of our growing communities.

**PRESENTERS:** Kirk Maddox, Head of Sales and Marketing and Sean Smith, Head of School Partnerships, Meg Languages, Tennessee.

**LOCATION:** Coronado B

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Culture as the Catalyst: How Principals Drive School***

***Transformation.*** Every school has a unique culture, but not all cultures foster academic excellence and student success. As the key driver of a school's culture, the principal plays a crucial role in shaping an environment that leads to improved student outcomes. In this 60-minute interactive session, participants will engage in rich discussions, collaborate with peers from across the country, and gain practical strategies rooted in proven experiences. Drawing from over 20 years of leadership experience, including transforming a "D"-rated school into a "B"-rated institution, this session will equip administrators with actionable tools to shape both adult and student behaviors that positively influence school culture. Attendees will leave empowered and confident in their ability to cultivate a thriving school environment that enhances student achievement.

**PRESENTER:** Dr. Ajit "A.J." Pethe, Chief of Schools, Jefferson Parish Schools, Louisiana.

**LOCATION:** Coronado C

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Six Strategies to Increase Student Proficiency Rates in Low***

***Performing Schools.*** School turnaround is a process that includes the implementation of six specific strategies. The educator should identify specific reading and math deficits for each individual student, and provide additional daily instruction and support through small, skills-based instructional groups to remediate each student's deficits. This session will share information that describes the six strategies, and the procedures for implementing each strategy that will result in high student proficiency rates in low-performing schools. The presenter will demonstrate how to improve grade-level core instruction in reading and math to provide structured, rigorous instruction that is based on scientific research.

**PRESENTER:** Nancy Guzman, North Carolina, and South Carolina Distinguished Principal, National Blue Ribbon Principal, and BRSE Board Member and Senior Assessor, North Carolina.

**LOCATION:** Coronado D

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *People-Centered Leadership: A Systematic Approach.***

As the Superintendent/Principal of a 2021 National Blue Ribbon School, implementing a people-centered set of systems for instructional, operational, and dynamic leadership - coupled with a community-centered approach to communications and social media is paramount to success. Through a community-focused social media approach, the community has seen a revival in trust and perception of school-based transparency. Our school has experienced a renaissance of sorts. Participants in this session will evaluate their current school/district practices and collaboratively develop action plans to transform their workplaces and communities.

**PRESENTERS:** Al Lewis, Superintendent, Weymouth Township School District, and Mukunda Krishnaswamy, CEO, Lumos Learning, New Jersey.

**LOCATION:** Coronado E



**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Enrichment for All at PS 682, The Academy of Talented Scholars (TAOTS) “Brooklyn’s Best Kept Secret.”* PS 682, The Academy of Talented Scholars (TAOTS) was the recipient of the 2015 National Blue Ribbon School Award and in 2017 and 2022 received the Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence Lighthouse Award. TAOTS will share their ideas and secrets of success on how they provide ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES for their entire student body. You will learn how your school can incorporate the school-wide Enrichment Model of education. You will be taught “step by step” how to develop, create and implement successful Student Driven Enrichment Clusters. You will learn about scheduling, budgeting, and tapping into resources. You will walk away feeling knowledgeable and full of practical ideas to bring back to your school. TAOTS provides enrichment opportunities for ALL students by growing students’ ideas, tapping into their interests, and cultivating their talents resulting in GREATNESS for ALL students. TAOTS is a NYC public elementary school educating a diverse group of students from the Bensonhurst/Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn, New York. TAOTS continues to thrive because of the strong foundation that was created and laid out by the school’s founding principal, Josephine Sportella-Giusto, in her 2008 NYCDOE New School Proposal. TAOTS has become one of NYC’s most sought after public elementary schools. With an overall student population of 400 students, TAOTS receives over 500 kindergarten applications yearly with only 50 seats to offer.

**PRESENTERS:** Josephine Sportella-Giusto, Founding Principal and Stacy Butsikares, Assistant Principal, The Academy of Talented Scholars, TAOTS, New York.

**LOCATION:** Coronado F

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Champions Build a Culture of Collaboration and Coaching.* How are you using instructional coaches to support student achievement? This session will provide the benefits of instructional coaching for student and teacher success. Participants will learn about the relationship between administrators, coaches, teachers, and students. Participants will participate in discussions and receive resources to implement instructional rounds, individual data meetings, coaching cycles, and instructional learning walks from administrators, coaches, and teachers. A culture of collaboration and coaching leads to increased student proficiency and collective teacher efficacy. Student-centered coaching begins and ends with data and centers around learning experiences consisting of high quality instruction. The focus is always on increased student proficiency.

**PRESENTERS:** Charissa Cole, Principal; Amy Thames, Reading Coach, NBCT; and Dr. Alyssa Turner, Math Coach, Creek View Elementary School, Alabama, and Kim Bice, Structured Literacy Dyslexia Specialist and K-5 Reading Coach and Ashley Williamson, K-5 Math Coach, Alabaster City Schools, Alabaster City Schools, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado G

**NOON - 1:15 PM LUNCHEON**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**MASTER OF CEREMONY** - Dennis W. Bega, Senior Assessor, Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, Georgia.

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER** - Principal Kafele

**TITLE:** *Just One Educator Can Completely Alter the Trajectory of a Child.*

In this empowering keynote address, Principal Kafele will state emphatically to educators at all levels that each of them possesses the power toward completely altering the trajectory of a child. He will encourage them to reflect upon their initial “why” for entering the world of education and remind them of the significance their “why” holds toward student success throughout the course of each day, while ultimately taking children to heights previously unimagined. Principal Kafele’s message will remind each participant of their greatness as practitioners despite the challenges, obstacles, pressures and demands of teaching, leading and counseling.



A highly regarded urban educator in New Jersey for over twenty years, **Principal Baruti Kafele** distinguished himself as a master teacher and a transformational school leader. As an elementary school teacher in East Orange, NJ, he was selected as the East Orange School District and Essex County Public Schools Teacher of the Year and New Jersey State Teacher of the Year finalist.

As a middle and high school principal, Principal Kafele emerged as a turnaround school leader which included the turnaround of "The Mighty" Newark Tech, that went from a low-performing school in need of improvement to national recognition, including U.S. News and World Report Magazine recognizing it three times as one of America's best high schools. This culminated in Principal Kafele receiving the coveted Milken Educator Award for his leadership.

One of the most sought-after school leadership and classroom equity presenters in America, Principal Kafele is impacting America’s schools. For over 35 years, he has delivered more than 3000 conference and program keynotes, professional development workshops, parenting seminars and student assemblies. In addition to writing several professional articles for popular education journals, he has authored thirteen books, including seven ASCD best sellers. His newest book, *The Assistant Principal Identity* was released in May 2023.

Principal Kafele is the creator and host of the popular *AP & New Principals Academy*, streamed live every Saturday morning. He is the recipient of over 150 educational, professional and community awards which include the prestigious Milken Educator Award, the National Alliance of Black School Educators Hall of Fame Award, the East Orange, NJ Hall of Fame Award, recognition as one of the World’s Top 30 Education Professionals for five consecutive years (2020 – 2024) by Global Gurus Top 30, and the City of Dickinson, Texas proclaiming February 8, 1998, as Baruti Kafele Day

**1:15 PM - 1:45 PM VISIT EXHIBITORS**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**1:45 PM - 2:45 PM CONCURRENT SESSIONS B - TUESDAY**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *What Is My Value to the Teachers That I Supervise.....*

**INSTRUCTIONALLY?** Principal Kafele contends emphatically that, “The primary purpose of the supervision of teachers is student achievement and their continued improvement of instruction!” Due to the complexities of school leadership, it is easy to be so inundated by the non-instructional aspects of the work that the instructional side of leadership inclusive of instructional coaching suffers. When the instructional side suffers, it adversely impacts the entire school academically. This highly engaging presentation will provide school leaders with strategies toward maintaining a focus on the instructional side of their leadership toward increasing the probability that teacher pedagogy will improve significantly, and student achievement will soar.

**PRESENTER:** Principal Kafele, A highly regarded urban educator in New Jersey for over twenty years, Principal Baruti Kafele distinguished himself as a master teacher and a transformational school leader. As an elementary school teacher in East Orange, NJ, he was selected as the East Orange School District and Essex County Public Schools Teacher of the Year and New Jersey State Teacher of the Year finalist. As a middle and high school principal, Principal Kafele emerged as a turnaround school leader which included the turnaround of "The Mighty" Newark Tech, that went from a low-performing school in need of improvement to national recognition, including U.S. News and World Report Magazine recognizing it three times as one of America's best high schools. This culminated in Principal Kafele receiving the coveted Milken Educator Award for his leadership.

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Hoboken Public School District's Very Own Field of Dreams: If You Build It, They Will Come.* Ten years ago, the City of Hoboken had no faith in its public schools. After a major gentrification process, new wealthy, non-minority residents refused to put "their children" in school with economically disadvantaged, minority students that filled district seats. As a result, the small one-mile square city ended up with 3 free public charter schools. The traditional public school district remained predominantly minority and economically disadvantaged, while the charter schools enrolled predominantly non-special education, non-economically disadvantaged, and non-minority children. To generate a rationale for educational segregation, an on-going campaign to compare the charter schools to the traditional public school district ensued. The academic performance at the time in the public schools, as well as the programs offered, were woefully inadequate and lower performing. Conversations in the city were riddled with criticisms of the traditional public school district. In fact, admission into a charter school was deemed a "golden ticket". The negative narrative that plagued the City of Hoboken destroyed the self-efficacy of the traditional public schools' students and pitted the charter schools against the historic public school district. Coming into this environment as Superintendent required a change to that narrative. The leadership imperative was to get the entire staff and administration to put their heads down and just work hard to build unique and innovative programs so that all students in the district would benefit, but that everyone in the city would want their children to attend the traditional public schools. A dedicated team of families joined in the campaign to change the district's narrative and form a public education foundation. Now in its 7th year, the HPEF raises over \$1M per year to fund a wide array of programs for the district to equalize the playing field. Now, the Hoboken Public School District is the talk of the town. During COVID, district leaders and staff knew that it had to stay open full-time, every day for all students. Student achievement trended upward and has not stopped. The narrative has completely shifted to one that is positive and filled with pride. The traditional public school district is no longer competing with the charter schools. In fact, parents turn down charter seats every day. The Hoboken Public School District's enrollment is skyrocketing. Learn more about the Hoboken Public School District's journey from failed monitoring, declining enrollment, and corrective action plans to New Jersey High Performing Status and Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence Awards.

**PRESENTER:** Dr. Christine Johnson, Superintendent of Schools, Hoboken Public School District, New Jersey.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 1



**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Grant Writing: Keys to Being Competitive with a Dash of AI on the Side.* Writing a grant can be challenging, especially in a competitive funding environment. This session will help participants understand the funder's perspective and what makes a proposal stand out. Attendees will review keys to competitiveness and the importance of incorporating these into your grant proposals – specifically as it relates to education. Examples of "how to" do this will be provided in addition to examples of how to analyze responses to help you evaluate whether you have written a high-scoring grant narrative. The session will also include a discussion on Artificial Intelligence – how it can assist you in the “grant game” and the pitfalls. Debbie will share her experience in using AI in her grant writing – the good and the not so wonderful. AI “prompts” will also be discussed.

**PRESENTER:** Debbie Edwards has over 26 years of grant experience securing funding for the non-profit industry, state/county agencies, K-12, post-secondary/technical and corporate education. For the past 18 years she has been the primary consultant for Mesa Public Schools, the largest school district in Arizona, generating \$70 million plus in competitive grants. Her success rate is over 96% and she has achieved a 97% return on investment. She developed the internal/virtual grant support office for MPS and works closely on grant compliance. She worked for a NY grant writing company and has written grants for clients in numerous districts across the United State. She has held K-12 teaching certificates in two states and been a tenured college instructor. She is President Consulting Services of D and J Inc., Arizona, and the primary consultant grant developer/writer for the Grant Support Office for Mesa Public Schools (MPS) in Mesa, Arizona.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Stuck in the Middle: How to Create the Ideal Middle School Culture.* Do people shake their head in pity when you tell them you teach at the middle school? Do middle school kids get a bad rap, or are they truly difficult? If they need discipline, why do they rebel when teachers try to instill it? What do brain researchers tell us about brain development during adolescence? It's a challenging time for Middle School kids and educators. How can we create the ideal school culture for this age group? An internationally recognized middle school principal (who is failing at his retirement) shares some of his experience and wisdom learned over 52 years as an educator. Participants can commiserate about the challenges they face and learn some strategies and ideas about improving their middle schools.

**PRESENTER:** Edward Bernetich currently is a professor at Cleveland State University. His career spans more than 52 years as an educator; and he has gained recognition at state, national, and international levels. He's served as a second grade teacher, middle school principal, athletic director, curriculum director, university teacher education director, and college professor. Edward spent eight years with the U.S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Schools Program, and five years with the Ohio Department of Education's Academic Distress Commission. His school has received two U.S. Department of Education Blue Ribbon School Awards, an Ohio Hall-of-Fame School Award, a Harvard Business School's Excellence in School Leadership Award, an INTEL Technology Excellence Award, and a Blue Ribbon Lighthouse School Award. He was named an *International Distinguished Principal* by the Chinese Ministry of Education in 2007. Ed has worked with the Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, Inc., since its inception.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *It's a Small World: Transforming a Big School into Smaller Houses.* Attendees will come away with practical strategies to transform their school into a more connected, personal, and engaging place. Delaware Hayes High School has spent nearly a decade implementing our House system. House has provided more opportunities for connections, interventions, clubs, leadership, mentoring and culture building. In today's educational climate, the need for more emotional support, safety and student connections is more important than ever. The House system has transformed our large high school into a smaller feeling, more personal and connected learning community. If you are looking for ways to enhance your school culture and provide more opportunities for student and teacher leadership, you are in for a magical ride! Come and soar with us! We will take attendees through a step- by-step implementation process from conducting a needs assessment to how to divide the school into Houses. We have a playbook that provides school leaders the tools necessary to easily replicate our best practice.

**PRESENTERS:** Ric Stranges, Superintendent, Buckeye Valley School District, Ohio, and Rex Reeder, Principal, Delaware Hayes High School, Ohio.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Conscious Discipline®: Creating Emotionally Intelligent Schools Where Social and Academic Skills Soar.* Conscious Discipline is a comprehensive, adult-first, trauma-responsive approach to self-regulation, wellness, and classroom management that is practiced by 20 million adults worldwide. This transformational program is designed to develop awareness, shift mindsets, and build fundamental skills in teachers, school staff, and parents so they can effectively instill these same skills in children. As adults learn to change their perceptions and responses, they can create an environment of safety and connection that fosters learning and problem-solving. Conscious Discipline's field-tested best practices have been cultivated over more than 25 years to provide lasting results for achievement, self-regulation, community-building, and teacher retention. This workshop will give participants an overview of Conscious Discipline and the phases of implementation that lead to fidelity and sustainability.

**PRESENTER:** Ashley Dwyer, Senior Manager, Partner Development, Conscious Discipline, Florida.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Exploring Western Culture & Social Dynamics.* Western Culture and Social Dynamics is an innovative high school interdisciplinary course that provides international students a classroom setting in which they engage in an interdisciplinary study of topics and skills essential for a rich understanding of western culture and social dynamics. Students review western culture and consider social settings, interactions, and perspectives in relation to a variety of academic disciplines, such as history, sociology, science, art, and business. Through analyzing western subcultures and social dynamics, students build cultural competency, leadership skills, communication skills, study skills, and critical thinking. The study of western culture and social dynamics is aided through reading, writing, oral presentation, small and large group, and research assignments. These assignments require analysis, synthesis, and critical evaluation. Further, students will have the unique experience of expanding on classroom activities through co-curricular opportunities around Southern California which broaden the classroom experience and allow for real-world applications. This course was designed to allow students the opportunity to have exposure to a wide range of experiences while learning about a variety of topics. The presenters will detail the various modules within the course along with the associated objectives. Details about the facilitation of the course design and implementation will be outlined for clarification along with examples of assignments and samples of student work.

**PRESENTERS:** Sarah Moyer, Director of Faculty and Joanna Abrantes, Director of English Language Education, Crean Lutheran High School, California.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Retaining Talent Through Strong Team Culture.* One of the best recruitment strategies is simply retaining talent—but there’s nothing “simple” about retaining talent. It takes intentional thought work and execution to build and maintain strong team culture. In this session, we will explore your current team dynamic, reflect on your own impact on culture in your building, engage in activities to push your team culture forward, and plan your next steps to maximize talent retention.

**PRESENTERS:** Zoë Beckham, Co-Founder and Leadership Coach and Dr. Andre Warren, Leadership Coach, Pivot: School Improvement Leaders, Tennessee. Zoë Beckham has worked in Tennessee K-12 schools for over 15 years. After teaching multiple grade levels in elementary and middle school, she led a successful turnaround effort at an elementary school in Nashville, TN. During the pandemic, Zoë worked at Amazon, supporting leaders in scaling systems and processes in response to pandemic demand, while developing and retaining key team players. From there, she joined the Tennessee Department of Education, designing and leading programming and development for K-12 principals across Tennessee, specifically focused on leaders of turnaround schools. Dr. Andre Warren is an education professional with 20 years of experience. He served 15 of those years in Middle TN, at various schools in classroom teacher and school leadership roles at the middle and high school levels. Many of those years were spent as a turnaround instructional leader for schools in priority status. Under his instructional leadership all schools achieved level 5 status, either in specific content areas and/or schoolwide. Andre transitioned to the Tennessee Department of Education, as the Director of Leadership Development, where his role included working with principals, assistant principals, and district level instructional supervisors by developing and facilitating professional development opportunities to support leaders with professional growth.

**LOCATION:** Coronado B

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Walk to Read - “Stop, Collaborate, and MOVE Students How Your School Can Walk-to-Read Using PLC Collaborative Team”.* As educators, we are deeply invested in enhancing student reading skills and continuously seek effective strategies to improve our student performance data. This presentation will highlight methods for addressing the needs of high-risk students through targeted 30-minute intervention sessions. Additionally, we will emphasize the importance of Professional Learning Community meetings, where we can collaboratively discuss insights and observations gathered during instruction. We have the data, now what? Have you ever asked yourself how to best leverage the data gathered to deliver the needed instruction and intervention to multiple levels of students? This session will investigate how to effectively use data to develop and implement bite-sized differentiated small groups. We will illustrate how grade-level classroom teachers can collaborate and partner to ensure the needs of all students are being met and all students are moving toward progress.

**PRESENTERS:** Sonya Prater, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Teacher; Karen Fischer, Principal; and Amy Johnston, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, Madison Cross Roads School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado C

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *The Magic of Honoring Student Voice for Enhancing Student Engagement and School Improvement.* Honoring students' voices is a key to supporting a school of excellence. Promoting student voice benefits the student, the school, and the community. This workshop will address promoting student voice in the classroom and within the school environment. Practical strategies will be presented to support student voice and how it enhances student motivation to learn. Also, a series of exercises and activities will be presented to strengthen student voice. Social-emotional learning goes together with student voice and supports students' becoming positive leaders, good decision-makers, and strengthens their communication skills. You will see the magic of the extraordinary power of influence student voice will have on your school.

**PRESENTER:** Dr. Dawn Cobb-Fossnes, Principal, Ocean Academy Charter School, New Jersey.

**LOCATION:** Coronado D

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *How Collaboration and STEM Work Together to Build a Community of Engaged Learners.* Daves Creek Elementary strives to provide students with an environment that increases student engagement with a focus on STEM, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking. Promoting student engagement while being immersed in a thinking culture is a priority at our school. See how Peter Liljedahl's research and his book *Building Thinking Classrooms* inspires teachers to foster a thinking culture and take Peter's ideas beyond the math classroom. During this session, we will explore how our school builds collaborative communities of learners across content areas while showcasing some of our exciting and engaging student learning. Participants in this session will get to share in activities and engage in critical thinking tasks that can be easily replicated at their school.

**PRESENTERS:** Eric Ashton, Principal; Ashley Johnson, Assistant Principal; Lauren Parsell, Assistant Administrator; Lindsey Shadburn, Educational Technology Coach; Eileen Barbieri, Instructional Coach; Ashley Parker, Teacher; and Jessica Melendez, Teacher, Daves Creek Elementary, Georgia.

**LOCATION:** Coronado E

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Coaching for High Impact Results.* In this session participants will learn about coaching techniques that impact standards based planning, data discussions, and strategies for teachers at any experience level grounded in a student centered approach. Coaching strategies will be shared on how to have a significant impact across grade levels with instructional coaches as well as strategies for all leaders. We will reference some of Steve Barkley's work and Elena Augular who share valuable tips and resources for student centered coaching and support.

**PRESENTERS:** Brenda Blue, Principal; Angela Smith, Reading Coach; and Britney D'Antonio, Numeracy Coach, Pritchardville Elementary School, South Carolina.

**LOCATION:** Coronado F



**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Blue Ribbon Blueprint: Navigating New Paths and Mastering the Art of Transition.* Navigating change is never easy, but growth is essential for continued success. Self-awareness is vital to recognizing when your work is complete and it's time to move on to new challenges. In this presentation, learn how a 25-year veteran leader transformed her school into a Blue-Ribbon institution, and realizing her work was complete, made the bold decision to take her Blue-Ribbon Blueprint to a new school district. Learn how to identify and leverage the unique talents of your team to create impactful instructional leadership teams (ILTs) and ensure coherent, innovative practices across all grade levels using frameworks like student friendly learning objectives (WALT statements), Success Criteria and TIB (the why). Discover how strategic partnerships with organizations such as The Algebra Project and Verizon Innovative Learning Schools, along with community initiatives like family math nights and project-based summer camps, enrich the educational environment. This session will showcase how aligning these efforts with a strategic plan fosters collective efficacy, empowers educators, and enhances students' outcomes.

**PRESENTERS:** Dr. Laura Scamardella, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction; Dr. Marnie Hazelton, Superintendent of Schools; Jeanette Widensky, Supervisor of Elementary Education; Michael Hellegers, Instructional Coach; and Theresa Manziano, Instructional Coach Englewood Public School District, New Jersey.

**LOCATION:** Coronado G

### **3:00 PM - 4:00 PM CONCURRENT SESSIONS C - TUESDAY**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Leveraging Curriculum-Driven Opportunities to Fortify Student's Knowledge of General and Content-Specific Academic Language.* Nearly two-thirds of the nation's children have difficulty demonstrating independent mastery of content and concepts, but there is a manageable solution: calibrated understanding of academic language. In this informative and dynamic session, Dr. Donyall Dickey, international authority on literacy, leadership, and school improvement, will introduce participants to the Universal Language of Literacy and a correlate, finite set of research-based methods for teaching and assessing general and content-specific academic language across grade bands and subject areas.

**PRESENTER:** Donyall D. Dickey, Ed.D. is an internationally recognized authority on curriculum, instruction, organizational development, and district improvement.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Monitoring Student Performance with Google Sheets: Beginner to Advanced Techniques for Educators.* This workshop provides a hands-on approach for educators interested in utilizing Google Sheets to monitor and track student performance to quickly identify students who may need additional support. Participants will learn basic to advanced techniques such as sorting and filtering student information, color-coding information based on specific criteria, automating grade calculations, summarizing student assessment data, and using the advanced QUERY function to create dynamic, visual graphs to monitor class performance trends. Throughout the workshop, educators will work directly in Google Sheets, applying these tools to typical classroom scenarios to see immediate benefits.

**PRESENTER:** Ben Fisher, Director of Innovative Learning, Crean Lutheran High School, California.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Middle School Students Can Do Math.* In middle school, math data tends to dip especially during 7th and 8th grade. Using strategies to create challenging activities aligned to state standards and remaining student-focused we can bridge the gap to help students perform better on end-of-the-year summative assessments. Allowing data and student feedback to guide your next move in the classroom is a game changer. Let's empower our teachers to master these powerful techniques and help our students reach their full potential.

**PRESENTER:** Tiffany Whitten, Math Teacher, Boaz Middle School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Dealing with Angry Ducks 2.0: Positive Leadership in the Most Challenging Circumstances.* Dealing with Angry Ducks 2.0: Positive Leadership in the Most Challenging Circumstances. This session goes beyond the basics of navigating difficult conversations to look at what positive leaders do differently during the most difficult circumstances. From consequential conversations with faculty and staff members to dealing with the most contentious parents, positive leaders take the high road by staying anchored in tried-and-true behaviors that make the difference. We will examine the characteristics of effective leadership in the face of conflict and how leaders can share these skills school-wide.

**PRESENTERS:** Dr. Gales Scroggs, Executive Director of Middle and Secondary Education, Fort Mill School District and Caryn Scroggs, 2024 South Carolina Middle Level Assistant Principal of the Year, Fort Mill School District and Assistant Principal, Gold Hill Middle School, South Carolina.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *The Value of Standards-Based Grading.* Why is standards-based grading becoming the new norm? Why is "traditional" grading taking a backseat? During this session we will discuss how a school/district can change over from traditional grading to standards-based grading quickly, efficiently, and with fidelity. Also, we will go into detail about the implementation of standards-based grading, the benefits of it versus traditional grading, the data that can be collected and used to fuel further instruction, as well as real-life examples used from our very own school district that show student buy-in, teacher buy-in, and community buy-in. We will take a deep dive into how Unity Charter School has switched over to standards-based grading for all subjects in grades K-8 over the past 18 months. This process, though tedious over the first year, has been paying off - come check out why!

**PRESENTER:** Kristopher Scotto, Supervisor of Assessments, Accountability, & Data Management, Unity Charter School, New Jersey.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Boost Happiness, Boost School Success.* During this session you'll learn the ins and outs of providing strength-based feedback to fuel your school improvement and a positive school culture. When you pair school improvement and school culture, and do it well, this is when teachers (and administrators) are happiest. They feel accomplished and successful in their work, while also feeling supported and understood. This can be accomplished in as little as 15 minutes a day with the right tools and this simple, yet powerful, feedback strategy.

**PRESENTER:** Amber Dembowski, Elementary Principal & School Leader Consultant, Betz Elementary School, Nebraska.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *School Emergency Communication: From Scared to Prepared!***

Even with so many moving parts, school emergency communication plans don't have to be complicated! Join this session to learn some key strategies for effective (and easy) communication during emergencies. In this session you'll learn how to...

- Enable staff to quickly contact 911 in the event of an emergency
- Help staff communicate issues or incidents not needing 911 assistance
- Silently communicate between staff during an incident
- Easily communicate with parents whose students were impacted
- Create a safe and efficient method of closure after an incident

Don't miss this chance to turn your school's emergency communication from a chaotic experience into a well-prepared operation. Attend this session and embark on a journey to safety, as we banish the fear and prepare for the unknown!

**PRESENTER:** JJ Roberts, Director of Partnerships, PikMyKid, Florida.

**LOCATION:** Coronado B

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Hitting the Reset Button: How One School Created Data Driven Students to Improve Resilience and Outcomes in Elementary School and Beyond. Is the C3 Academy Framework Right for You?***

Students aspire to succeed academically and personally. However, challenges such as COVID-19, economic instability, and other life stressors have left many students struggling. Beyond addressing academic standards and implementing intervention strategies, it is essential to explore additional approaches. This presentation will examine how holding students accountable for their behavior, academics, and organizational skills can transform a challenging school year into a successful one, as evidenced by improved outcomes from August to May in the areas of behavior management, academics, and organization.

**PRESENTERS:** Amy Johnston, 5th Grade Teacher; Barrett Holder, 5th Grade Teacher; and Karen Fischer, Principal, Madison Cross Roads Elementary School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado C

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Growing Writers: A Systematic Approach to Cultivating Writing Excellence Across All Grade Levels.***

In this workshop, participants will explore Crosswind Elementary School's comprehensive journey to improve student writing. From forming a dedicated writing committee to creating detailed guidance documents for each grade level, we will share the systematic approach that led to a remarkable improvement in our writing scores and recognition as a National Blue Ribbon School. Attendees will gain insights into practical strategies for fostering a love of writing, integrating writing into every subject, and establishing a culture of writing excellence across all grade levels.

**PRESENTERS:** Kristie Murin, Principal; Jamie White, Assistant Principal; Tara Peeper, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher; Susanna Bortz, 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher; Kerry Landon, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, and Marianne Dodd, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher, Crosswind Elementary School, Tennessee.

**LOCATION:** Coronado D

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *P.A.W.S. (Pets Aiding in the Wellbeing of Students) and the Impact on Students.*** Join us for an engaging presentation on our innovative P.A.W.S. program - Pets Aiding in the Wellbeing of Students. P.A.W.S. utilizes certified therapy animals, specifically dogs, to enhance the social and emotional wellbeing of our students through positive interactions, relationship building, and the modeling of coping skills. Our vision for the P.A.W.S. program involves three distinct components, each targeting different tiers of students. Primarily focused on Tier 2 students, with small Tier 1 and Tier 3 components integrated; P.A.W.S. serves as a social-emotional learning (SEL) program. It is designed to support students who may struggle with relationship building, peer interactions, social skills, self-regulation, self-confidence, and literacy. Through exposure, interaction, role-playing, and reinforcement, our certified therapy animals play a pivotal role in implementing and motivating our students. Join us to learn more about how P.A.W.S. is making a positive impact on the lives of our students and fostering a supportive learning environment.

**PRESENTERS:** Jaclyn Carugno, Principal, and Michelle Lambert and Allison Fenton, PAWS Coordinators, Egg Harbor Township High School, New Jersey.

**LOCATION:** Coronado E

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Vibing and Thriving: Connecting with Your School Community.***

Join us for an engaging, fun, and interactive session to explore practical strategies for strengthening connections between schools and their communities. This session will delve into the impact of defining a school's identity within its community and the importance of fostering a joyful, connected learning environment. Participants will learn how to create and implement effective community engagement initiatives that enhance overall student success and strengthen the bonds between school and community. Through real-world examples, attendees will gain valuable insights into:

- Identifying and articulating what your school wants to be known for in the community, creating a distinct and positive identity.
- Implementing programs and events that bring joy and excitement to learning for students, families, and community members.
- Developing communication strategies that foster trust, transparency, and collaboration among all stakeholders.
- Creating a school culture that values and celebrates community involvement and student achievements.

By the end of this session, participants will leave equipped with practical tools and actionable ideas to transform their schools into vibrant, connected learning communities where every student can thrive. Join us in this journey to define your school's identity, build lasting community connections, and create joyful learning experiences that empower every student to succeed.

**PRESENTERS:** Courtney McKinney, Principal; Katie Turner, Assistant Principal; and Jackie Crumpton, Assistant Principal, Big Creek Elementary School, Georgia.

**LOCATION:** Coronado F

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Pawsitive Impactors*. Parkside School was awarded as a CLAS Banner School this year for Alabama. Our award was based on our community partnerships, which have benefited our students and teachers. My presentation would show how community partnerships can level the playing field for a small K-8 school and how big things can be accomplished with help from the community. The faculty at Parkside Elementary realized that if students were not well-fed and felt unsafe, we could not expect them to do well academically. Many children are coming to school without their basic needs being met. With Parkside's poverty rate at 82%, the struggle to level the playing field for all students is real. Parkside students needed resources for food, clothes, and hygiene items. We realized the problem was too significant to solve within the walls of our school. PSE reached out to the community for assistance. A group called Pawsitive Impactors became a team of community members and school employees that empowered and benefited everyone. By bridging the community and the school, Pawsitive Impactors was able to meet the physical needs of Parkside students. This included a \$50 shoe voucher for over 150 students, provided all school supply needs, 50 weekly backpacks for over 1500 weekend meals, a fully stocked hygiene closet to be used as needed, provided Christmas assistance to 577 students and siblings, 70 back-to-school haircuts, and served over 600 meals during a community event. A volunteer fair was held at the end of the year to show students ways they could give back to their community in the future. There is such value in linking arms with others to accomplish something of this magnitude.

**PRESENTERS:** Caleb Elrod, Principal and Kim Crumbley, Counselor, Parkside School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado G

**DAY THREE - WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2024**

**7:15 AM - 4:00 PM REGISTRATION**

**LOCATION:** South Registration Counter

**7:15 AM - 8:00 AM BREAKFAST AND VISIT EXHIBITORS**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**8:00 AM - 9:15 AM GENERAL SESSION**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER:** Dr. Donyall Dickey

**TITLE:** *Forging a Promising Connection between Early and Continuing Literacy*. While investments in early literacy are vital to the preventing fissures among developing readers in primary grades, millions of our nation's intermediate and secondary pupils matriculate past their "learning-to-read" years lacking concrete foundational knowledge and mastery of essential skills necessary to successfully engage with increasingly complex texts, think critically, and ascend the pyramid of cognitive demand. This keynote, delivered by international authority on literacy, leadership, and school improvement, Donyall D. Dickey, Ed.D., will support teachers and leaders in their efforts to establish and strengthen a seamless academic through-line between their approaches to early [K-2] and continuing literacy [3-12]. Participants will leave with a renewed commitment to systems-thinking and practical next steps for addressing longstanding obstacles to significant improvements in student outcomes.



**9:30 AM - 10:30 AM CONCURRENT SESSIONS D - WEDNESDAY**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Next Steps for Implementing an Actionable, Measurable, and Replicable Approach to Upper Elementary and Secondary Literacy Development.* With 65% of the nation's 50 million school-aged children reading below the grade level expectation, upper elementary and secondary grades teachers have the unenviable task of being expert in teaching grade level content to students who have yet to demonstrate proficiency in reading. As we approach another year of serving students who have been promoted with gaps in knowledge and ability, Donyall D. Dickey, Ed.D., an international expert on literacy, curriculum development, and school improvement will support participants in their effort to conceptualize and/or refine school-level and districtwide approaches to linking viable curricular resources to short- and long-term planning, formative assessment practices, remediation and acceleration for the intermediate and secondary learner.

**PRESENTER:** Donyall D. Dickey, Ed.D. is an internationally recognized authority on curriculum, instruction, organizational development, and district improvement.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Flight of Passage: Utilizing Priority Standards and Proficiency Scales to Transform the New American High School.* Following our Blue Ribbon Assessment, we developed a framework to improve academic performance, reduce failures, increase student engagement, and build a system for school improvement. We are working with schools across the country, and we will provide attendees with the methods, skills, and takeaways to replicate our successes in their own schools and districts. Today, schools are faced with far too many standards for students to master. We have developed priority standards and proficiency scales across disciplines. Whether you are a teacher, a principal, or a central office administrator, join us and launch your school on a passage of transformation. This flight is for you! All aboard!

**PRESENTERS:** Ric Stranges, Superintendent, Buckeye Valley School District, Ohio, and Rex Reeder, Principal, Delaware Hayes High School, Ohio.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *A Conversation with Award Winning National High School Principals.* NASSP's National Principal of the Year program recognizes outstanding middle level and high school principals who have succeeded in providing high quality learning opportunities for students as well as demonstrating exemplary contributions to the profession. This is an opportunity to bring your current challenges, issues, and hot topics to an informal session with **three national awarding-winning high school principals.**

**PRESENTERS:** Andrew Farley, 2024 National Principal of the Year, Wisconsin; Dr. Akil Ross, 2018 National Principal of the Year, South Carolina; and Jayne Ellspermann, 2015 National Principal of the Year, Florida

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *In-Fusion Learning.* In-Fusion Learning is an innovative instructional approach that cultivates deep understanding of a topic, while exposing students to diverse perspectives and learning styles. Teachers of all grades and subject matter will be able to use this approach to give students access to advanced and differentiated resources to promote a holistic grasp of any topic. In-Fusion Learning fosters a learning environment that is both fun and enriching!

**PRESENTERS:** Colleen Herking, Gifted Coordinator and Emily James, Literacy Support Specialist, Mariemont City School District, Ohio.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Igniting the SPARK: Speaking to the Potential, Ability and Resilience Inside EVERY Kid.* There is a SPARK within every human being, regardless of their circumstances, that cannot be damaged. This SPARK is the birthplace of resilience, well-being, common sense, intelligence, solutions, creativity and innovation. This presentation will explore how innate resilience is uncovered through a simple understanding of the mind and how the stress resistance needed to overcome trauma is naturally formed. We are excited to announce that the methods in this presentation have gone through rigorous, research and evaluation using both randomized and control groups. In 6 separate studies employing over 1000 participants (K-12th grade), the methods have been deemed evidence-based with participants showing significant improvement in levels of resilience (up to 91%), emotional regulation including impulse control (up to 83%), communication, decision making, and problem-solving skills (up to 89%). They have been published in 3 peer-reviewed journals and have also been evaluated and approved by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic and Social-Emotional Learning).

**PRESENTERS:** Brooke Wheeldon-Reece, President and CEO, and Ashley Hunt, VP of Learning and Development, The SPARK Initiative, Florida.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Promoting A Positive School Climate: In and Out of the Classroom.* Join us for an engaging presentation that explores the essential elements of creating and sustaining a positive school climate both in and out of the classroom. We'll explore strategies that promote respect, inclusivity, and engagement among students, fostering an environment where everyone can thrive. Participants will leave with actionable strategies, resources, and inspiration to enhance their school climate, ultimately leading to a more supportive and engaging educational experience for all. Join us to explore how we can work together to build a vibrant school community where every individual feels valued and empowered.

**PRESENTERS:** McKenzie Benefield, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Teacher and Amanda Duckett, Guidance Counselor, Boaz Intermediate School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado B

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Engage, Empower, Excel: Transforming Student Engagement Through Simulated Workforce.* This professional development session will explore the Simulated Workforce Program at Hanceville Middle School, designed to boost student attendance, motivation, and academic achievement. By implementing real-world work protocols, such as clocking in and out for daily attendance, restroom breaks, class departures, and discipline infractions, the program creates a structured environment that mirrors a professional workplace. Students have an opportunity to visit the payroll department, where the points they've earned are converted to motivating rewards. Attendees will learn how this approach fosters responsibility, enhances student accountability, and motivates learners to take ownership of their educational journey.

**PRESENTERS:** Elizabeth Watwood, Principal, and Amy Whaley, Science Teacher, Hanceville Middle School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado C

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *A Recipe for School Success: Strategies That Will Make a Difference in Improving Your School's Culture.* Do you want your students to enjoy school while also being challenged and engaged in their work? Do you want them to achieve at higher levels than ever before? Learn the common sense, research based strategies that this three-time National Blue Ribbon School and Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence Lighthouse School used to improve student achievement while also creating a kid friendly, teacher friendly culture. Strong school culture is the key to making schools more constructive and instructive places. One major challenge for today's educators is building strong emotional and social connections with students. Strategies for planning, designing, and creating environments that foster maximum student learning and development will be discussed to show how to assist students in their paths to academic, social, and emotional success.

**PRESENTER:** Johnny Calder, Three - Time National Blue Ribbon School Principal, Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence Principal, and Senior Assessor, Blue Ribbon School of Excellence, South Carolina.

**LOCATION:** Coronado D

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *A CliffsNotes Guide to MTSS.* This session provides participants with practical ideas for planning, implementing, and monitoring MTSS. Participants will observe examples from an implementation model and receive templates for immediate use in any school setting. Examples will include sample teams, scheduling, interventions, and monitoring protocols. This session is packed with everything you will need to increase your knowledge and unlock your MTSS superpower! Through the effective implementation of MTSS, ELA and math data increased by 7% and science data increased by 12% on the Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program, the state's standardized assessment, within one year. This session will target the following: team members, scheduling, interventions, and monitoring protocols.

**PRESENTERS:** Dr. Nina Williams, Principal and Leah Davenport, ARI Reading Coach, Bear Exploration Center for Mathematics Science and Technology School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado E

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Ai Unleashed: Revolutionizing Curriculum & Insights for Next-Level Educational Impact. Come Learn from Education's Subject Matter Experts!* Transform your district's approach to Ai-powered tools by learning how to streamline curriculum alignment, enhance insights, and drive data-driven decisions. Join Dr. Jesus Jara, Michelle Kinley and Dr. Donna Elam as they showcase how advanced Ai can analyze and align district curricula with state standards, identifying gaps that save districts thousands—even millions—in alignment costs in MERE MINUTES! Coupled with real-time data visualizations, and targeted Professional Development, educators gain a complete, actionable view of district performance. Join us to explore Ai and these fantastic innovations. Leave ready to elevate outcomes, accountability, and strategic planning in your district!

**PRESENTERS:** Michelle Kinley, Vice President, School Improvement and Dr. Jesus Jara, Global K-12 Leader, Prometric, LLC; and Dr. Donna Elam, CEO, Elam Leadership Institute, Florida.

**LOCATION:** Coronado F

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Teaching Isn't Fun Anymore.* Have you ever said these words? Do you live from one break to the next, or even from the morning bell to your planning time? Do you feel like you're just surviving the day, or even worse, feel like you are not even making a difference? What if I told you that you could begin to enjoy your job more just by changing the climate and culture of your classroom? In this session, you will get tips and tricks on aspects ranging from behavior management, parent involvement, student engagement, building relationships and more. Learn how to transform your classroom environment from gloom and doom to captivating and joyful!

**PRESENTER:** Lauren Rainwater, Teacher, Parkside School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado G

#### **10:45 AM - 11:45 AM CONCURRENT SESSIONS E - WEDNESDAY**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Empowered to Grow! Creating Effective Learning Environments for all students.* Under the right conditions, all children can grow academically, socially, and emotionally. This session provides educators and school leaders with a framework for creating three (3) growth conditions to help students improve academically and increase self-confidence. The alignment of purpose, skills, and outcomes is at the core of any successful process. Attendees can identify, apply, measure, and refine growth strategies to help historically disadvantaged children reach their maximum potential.

**PRESENTER:** Dr. Akil Ross, Superintendent, District 5 of Lexington and Richland Counties, and 2018 NASSP National Principal of the Year, South Carolina. Dr. Ross is also a National Blue Ribbon School Principal and Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Principal in South Carolina.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Providing More Student Choice in Scheduling.* We have worked hard the past few years to expand our course offerings for our students in core subjects. We have options for students to work online, hybrid model (both in class and online), SDL courses (Self-Directed Learning), Independent Studies, and Core-Blocking (Math/Science courses and English/SS courses). Our district is a previous Blue Ribbon award winner with high academic success. However, our students have communicated their overwhelming stress and anxiety from expectations and workload. We have worked diligently to offer different styles of courses that allow our staff to keep high standards but more autonomy for our students. I would also like to discuss how the decision making process has included our students through advisory councils.

**PRESENTERS:** Scott Hinton, Principal; E.B. Smith, SDLL English Teacher; and Dianne McDonald and Zach Patterson, IAP Block Teachers, AP Pre-Calculus/Physics Teachers, Granville High School, Ohio.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Enhancing Student Self-Efficacy Through Equitable, Accessible and Rigorous Curricula.* Research on social cognitive theory and student wellbeing is clear that inspiring students to believe in themselves improves wellness and enhances achievement and outcomes. When educators provide equitable, accessible, and rigorous curricula all students achieve at a high level. In my district, I removed an antiquated and harmful lower level of instruction to improve student achievement as well as having removed artificial scheduling barriers to ensure equity and access to the most rigorous curricula. No students were denied any level of instruction to which they personally aspired. This resulted in significant increases in AP enrollment, decreased disciplinary referrals, improved student culture, and improved achievement among all students. Removing levels or tracks of instruction based upon educator perceptions of student ability improved student self-efficacy and student outcomes in achievement and increased access to higher education. In a dynamic and engaging presentation, I will walk the audience through the research on social cognitive theory, professional development to enhance educator focus on building student self-efficacy and wellness, systemic change in practice and school culture and the results of loving and believing in kids to achieve at the highest level. I am deeply passionate about this topic and its impact on the lives and wellbeing of children; it is the subject of my dissertation: A Consideration of Tracking Within a Bounded Educational System.

**PRESENTER:** Dr. Scott Ripley, Superintendent, High Point Regional School District, New Jersey.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Create a SAFER Learning Environment with Integrated Security and Communications Solutions.* Fostering a nurturing environment for students is essential to promoting learning in schools and on campuses. Maintaining safety and security while keeping buildings and grounds easily accessible to students, teachers, and staff is an ongoing challenge. Technology-based solutions help to mitigate risks and increase operational efficiency, while preserving a welcoming atmosphere that is so important to student and staff performance. The SAFER approach uses integrated solutions to increase overall security, enable faster responses to potential risks, and promote a sense of safety among the school or campus community. It covers the ability to: **S**ense - Detect something is happening; **A**lert - Notify the right people; **F**ortify - Activate fortification systems automatically; **E**ngage - Target communications to mitigate threats; and **R**espond - Empower responders with information and communications. Our Gun Detection System is part of the SAFER approach that is designed to detect guns through video analytics and detect gunshots through audio analytics. The detection of either can automatically initiate door locks and dispatch audio messages through system integration. This session will explain how combining video surveillance, intrusion detection, access control, and communications technology improve security and safety while minimizing the complexity of operations – enhancing student, teacher, and staff outcomes in educational facilities.

**PRESENTER:** Craig Oberschlake, Manager, SLED Vertical, Bosch Security Systems, LLC.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *I'm Not Trained to Help Students with Needs Like This.***

Participants will learn about steps to consider becoming a trauma responsive school through exploring challenging student behaviors, the root of these behaviors, methods for supporting these needs in school, and ways to support teachers on the journey to address these needs. Teachers will learn about trauma-informed practices that can support student behavioral needs in schools to include restorative circles, ABC data, check in check out, and review Ross Green's ALSUP protocol.

**PRESENTER:** Amy Mason, Senior BRSE Assessor, 2021 NAESP National Principal of the Year, and National Consultant, Aim2Educate, LLC, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Math Magic: Crafting an Afterschool Program to Raise***

***Achievement.*** In this presentation, we will explore the journey of Starr-Iva Middle School, which successfully developed and implemented an afterschool program designed to enhance student achievement in math and English Language Arts (ELA), with an emphasis placed on math instruction. This comprehensive program focused on improving standardized test scores and fostered a deeper understanding and love for these core subjects while providing students with a fun environment to encourage attendance. The program provided a unique opportunity for students to interact with teachers and administrators in a more relaxed and informal setting, fostering stronger relationships and a sense of community. Through collaborative activities and engaging learning experiences, students were able to see their educators as mentors and allies, enhancing their overall motivation and enjoyment of learning.

**PRESENTERS:** Adam Coates, Principal and Emily Wilson, Assistant Principal of Instruction, Starr-Iva Middle School, South Carolina.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *To VEX and Beyond.*** Beyond science and engineering principles, VEX Robotics solutions encourage creativity, teamwork, leadership, passion, and problem-solving among groups. This session will demonstrate how to start, build, and maintain a successful robotic program in an elementary school setting. Robotics education encourages students to think critically and solve problems through hands-on experiences. Students gain experience in scenario analysis and creative problem solving as they design, construct, and program robots. Kilby Laboratory's Linking Lions Robotics program has seen great success over the last five years. From qualifying for State to competing on a national level with teams from all over the world. Just last year, all six teams qualified for the Alabama State Championship and three of the teams went on to compete on the world stage. They competed with such excellence that they even earned three of the top awards at the 2024 VEX IQ World Championship.

**PRESENTERS:** Misty Buerhaus, Library Media Specialist and Robotics Coach; Aria White, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Student; Blakely Burdette, Graduate Assistant and Robotics Coach, and Eric Kirkman, Principal, Kilby Laboratory School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado B



**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Unlock the Magic of Accomplished Teaching at Your***

***School!*** This fast-paced and informative session is designed to provide school district leaders, building administrators, assistant principals, professional development coordinators, and teachers interested in National Board Certification with a comprehensive understanding of the certification process. The session will cover the requirements, benefits, and strategic tips for how administrators can effectively support their staff in pursuing this prestigious certification. Attendees will learn how National Board Certification not only enhances teacher retention and job satisfaction, but also leads to greater student achievement.

**PRESENTER:** Jacy Douglas, National Board Certified Teacher, Priceville Elementary School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado C

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Engage, Empower, Achieve - Strategies for Implementing Close Reading and Text Analysis.*** The Close Reading Protocol strategy asks students to read and reread a text carefully and purposefully. When students “close read,” they focus on what the author has to say, what the author’s purpose is, what the words mean, and what the structure of the text tells us. We will examine strategies for students to carefully investigate a text to make connections to essential questions about history, human behavior, and ourselves. Skillful close reading is an important foundation for helping students develop the ability to justify their claims in class discussions and writing assignments with specific evidence. Analysis will be done on close reading activity that use some or all the steps of (1) Read Aloud Text: The teacher or a confident student reader can read the text aloud. Students should follow along with the reading. Students will be asked to circle unfamiliar words as they listen. After the read-aloud, as students share these words with the class, the group may decide which words to define immediately to limit confusion and which definitions you want students to uncover through careful reading for their students. (2) The group will then proceed to analyze how students then may read silently and note specific word or phrases that jump out to them for any number of reasons to then develop into questions the teacher may ask students to think about from what they have read. (3) Teachers will be given information on how to arrange small groups, have students read the text in chunks and answer a set of text-dependent questions. Text-dependent questions are those that can be answered based only on careful analysis of the text itself. (4) Ideas on having students create a visual image of what the essence of the text is about, and (5) then create a gallery walk of those images, and lastly, (6) lead discussions of text and collaborate on the information gathered from the previous 5 activities.

**PRESENTER:** Randall Kincaid, Supervisor of Instruction for Grades Pre K-5, Sevier County Board of Education, Tennessee.

**LOCATION:** Coronado D

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Building Thinking Classrooms (BTC): Transforming Education in Oldham County Schools.*** Over the past two years, Oldham County Schools has undergone a comprehensive transformation in our approach to student engagement within the core classroom. With guidance from Dr. Peter Liljedahl, and his text *Building Thinking Classrooms*, we have embraced a new pedagogical approach to learning that is reshaping once passive learning environments into dynamic centers of critical thinking and collaborative learning. The Building Thinking Classrooms (BTC) approach is designed to create a learning environment that encourages mathematical thinking and active engagement among students. It centers on transitioning the classroom structure from one dominated by teacher instruction to a student-centered model.

**PRESENTERS:** Dylan Smith, Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning and Jenna Daulton, Middle School Level Director, Oldham County Schools, Kentucky.

**LOCATION:** Coronado E

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *PD on the Go!*** Are you looking for an innovative way to offer purposeful professional learning during the school day? Come learn about how Lake Murray Elementary School in Lexington, SC uses Learning Labs to model tools and tricks that can be implemented immediately back into the classroom. This quick and effective structure has proven to help our teachers grow their craft and enhance collaboration within our school. In this session, learn how to LEVEL UP your professional development!

**PRESENTERS:** Leisa Clamp, Principal and Shannon Sharp, Literacy Coach, Lake Murray Elementary School, South Carolina.

**LOCATION:** Coronado F

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *K-12 Instruction Using Science and STEM Career Pathways... a Real-World Example.*** Woz ED was created through the vision of Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple. It is an educational company focused on STEM and science. Woz ED offers STEM kits in the areas of Drones, AR/VR, Coding, Animation, Mobile App Development, Robotics, Cybersecurity, Data Science, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Engineering/3D Printing. They also offer science kits in grades K-8 aligned to state standards. The goal is to create an engineering mindset in students and expose them to STEM career pathways starting at the PreK level through graduation. It is no secret that every school is either creating, or wants to create, a STEM program for their students. The problem is that it is not an easy task and requires time that no one has. Woz ED provides that instant solution! With the help of Kristy Carlson, Elementary Principal at Randolph Central School District, and Eileen Klubek, Sales Consultant at Woz ED, we will explore ways in which to incorporate these tried and tested STEM and science programs into your K-12 program.

**PRESENTERS:** Kristy Carlson, Principal, Gail N. Chapman Elementary School, New York; Eileen Klubek, Sales Consultant, and Jim Klubek, Educational Consultant, Woz ED, New York.

**LOCATION:** Coronado G

#### **11:45 AM – 12:15 PM VISIT EXHIBITORS**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**12:15 PM - 1:30 PM BEACON LUNCHEON**

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER:** Jared Scott

**TITLE:** *The Culture Shift Tour: “A Student Made Solution Put into Action Starts a Movement”*



**Jared Scott's** motivational movement began at the young age of 15, marking the start of an impactful career dedicated to inspiring resilience and hope. Today, Jared is known as an award winning speaker that creates legacies and movements wherever he goes. He is also a proud husband and father, an author, and a counselor.

Jared's aspiration to become a public speaker started with a mental health crisis in his hometown. Using his musical talents, Jared reached out to his peers through a song, offering messages of strength and hope after the loss of two friends to suicide. This early experience set the foundation for his later work, leading to speaking engagements in over 1,000 schools across the country. Through a unique blend of inspiration and actionable guidance, Jared can reignite passion and meaning in the lives of students, staff, and communities at large.

This ultimately led to the creation of the Culture Shift Tour. This initiative is centered on empowering students to voice their challenges and pressures, with the goal of turning these discussions into actionable solutions. Jared is dedicated to converting student-led ideas into practical initiatives that initiate positive movements, laying the foundation for the development of positive school cultures from the ground up. His method is hands-on and focused on outcomes, showcasing his commitment to driving genuine and lasting change.

***Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, Beacon Schools***

***Austinville Elementary School***

***Crosswell Elementary School***

***F.W. Holbein Middle School***

***Harrison Elementary School***

***Riverside Township Elementary School***

***Riverside Township Middle School***

***Riverside Township High School***

***Speake School***

***Tom Joy Digital Literacy and Leadership Magnet School***

**1:45 PM - 2:45 PM CONCURRENT SESSIONS F - WEDNESDAY**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Next Steps for Implementing an Actionable, Measurable, and Replicable Approach to PreK-2 Literacy Development.* Early grades teachers have the dubious task of being expert in planning and facilitating two domains of teaching and learning experiences for children: (1) learning to read [foundational skills] and (2) reading to learn [knowledge-based competences]. The knowledge base necessary to present students with instruction representative of a strategic balance of the two domains is actionable, measurable, and replicable. Donyall D. Dickey, Ed.D., an international expert on literacy, curriculum development, and school improvement will support participants in their individual and collective effort to conceptualize the development of a concrete approach to linking viable curricular resources to short- and long-term planning, formative assessment practices, remediation [for striving students] and acceleration [for the highly able and gifted].

**PRESENTER:** Donyall D. Dickey, Ed.D. is a nationally recognized authority on curriculum, instruction, organizational development, and district improvement.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Strengthening Bonds: Enhancing Family and Community Engagement in Schools.* Join us for an enlightening presentation on fostering family engagement in education! Discover innovative approaches like Math and Literacy Family Engagement Nights, where learning becomes a family affair. Explore our curated Math and Literacy Kits designed to spark curiosity and reinforce learning at home. Uncover the excitement of STEM and STREAM Kits, bridging the gap between school and home through hands-on exploration. Together, let's empower our communities to nurture a love for learning beyond the classroom!

**PRESENTERS:** Dr. Amanda Pendergrass, Chair, Department of Teaching and Learning and Dr. Dessilyn Chappell, Assistant Professor of Elementary Education, University of West Alabama, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Harnessing the Power of AI: Giving Time Back to Your Team.* In this presentation, we will explore how artificial intelligence (AI) can be leveraged to streamline processes, automate tasks, and ultimately give valuable time back to your team. We will discuss real-world examples of AI implementation in educational settings, demonstrating how these technologies can enhance efficiency, reduce workload, and allow educators to focus on what matters most: student success. Attendees will leave with a clear understanding of the potential benefits of AI in education and practical strategies for integrating AI tools into their own schools and districts.

**PRESENTER:** James C. Alexander, 7th Grade Language Arts, Boaz Middle School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *ESSA Level 3 Certified Courses from EVERFI- Free and Standards Aligned.*** EVERFI provides **free digital courses** and accompanying offline lesson plans to K-12 educators and districts. With individual student real-time data reporting, and school/district level data reporting, EVERFI has achieved ESSA Level 3 "Promising Evidence" certification for middle and high school courses. This session will review those financial wellness and health/wellness courses that have received official certification. Schools and districts are increasingly encouraged to use programs and tools that have proven they positively impact student outcomes through rigorously designed research studies - this session will review the EVERFI courses that have proven this. Deep dive into the data found on the impact these courses have had on students' financial, emotional, and mental wellbeing.

**PRESENTER:** Cassandra Soulis, Senior Communications Lead, EVERFI, New York.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Aligned PLCs: Giving Teachers the Power to Affect Learning.***

One of the most impactful things a leader can do is give PLCs and teams the power to change things and the opportunities to work collectively to do so. However, it can be challenging to get everyone on the same page with so many roadblocks in the way. Come learn a practical protocol to help PLCs and teams determine and approach a collective focus, even when resistance gets in the way!

**PRESENTER:** Casey Watts, Team Alignment Coach and Consultant, Catching Up with Casey, Texas.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Culture is the Key to Climate Change – Transform your Site from Good to Great!*** Finding ways to build school culture can be overwhelming in today's educational climate. This presentation will share straightforward, uncomplicated strategies that work and can be implemented immediately. As leaders we understand teacher morale affects every part of our school. Teachers are overwhelmed with the demands from the district and state as well as the ever changing landscape with parent and student needs. Finding ways to support and build a positive culture and climate is essential. As site leaders we set the tone and are responsible for growing and supporting the needs of our teachers. Focusing on building positive attitudes and outlook can affect every aspect in the building! Happy teachers create happy classrooms and positive retention rates!

**PRESENTER:** Janet Dotson, Principal, Leisure Park Elementary School, Oklahoma.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Every Interaction Matters: The Lasting Impact of Meaningful Connections.*** In education, it's easy to focus on curriculum, test scores, and lesson plans—but what truly leaves a lasting impact are the everyday interactions between teachers and students. Whether it's a brief conversation in the hallway or a moment of connection in the classroom, these interactions shape students' confidence, self-worth, and sense of belonging. In this session, we'll explore how every encounter, no matter how small, can leave a lasting impression on a student's life. Through personal stories, reflections, and strategies, participants will gain insight into the power of authentic human connection and learn how to make each interaction meaningful and memorable. In a world increasingly dominated by technology, we'll discuss why face-to-face interaction is more crucial than ever, and how educators can create an environment where students feel truly seen, heard, and valued.

**PRESENTER:** Heath McFaul, Principal, John Hersey High School, 2024 National Blue Ribbon School, Illinois.

**LOCATION:** Coronado B

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Beyond Burnout: Building Compassion Resilience and Authentic Support for Educators.* Educators are often on the front lines of emotional support, balancing the demands of teaching with the need to respond compassionately to students, colleagues, and themselves. This presentation equips participants with ready-to-use strategies to build compassion resilience, enabling them to sustain empathy and well-being while avoiding burnout. Additionally, we will address the concept of toxic positivity—the tendency to dismiss or invalidate real struggles with overly optimistic or dismissive attitudes—and its harmful impact on educators' mental health. Participants will explore practical tools from the Compassion Resilience Toolkit, learn to recognize the signs of toxic positivity, and discover ways to foster an authentic culture of support that honors both the joys and challenges of the teaching profession. Through interactive discussions and reflection, attendees will leave with actionable steps to cultivate resilience and foster a healthier, more balanced work environment.

**PRESENTER:** Erick Blasing, Former National Blue Ribbon Principal of Gordon L. Willson Elementary and Education Consultant, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Wisconsin.

**LOCATION:** Coronado C

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Achieving Phonemic Awareness: Strategies for Diverse Learners and Aspiring Educators.* Reading pedagogy and phonemic awareness are critical components of early literacy development, forming the cornerstone of a child's journey to becoming a proficient reader. Join us as we present a comprehensive set of strategies aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of phonemic awareness instruction, particularly when faced with challenges related to dialectal variations and diverse linguistic backgrounds among students. Without a solid foundation in phonemic awareness, children may struggle with reading comprehension and face academic challenges later. The targeted area of this best practice is to improve early literacy education, ensuring that all students, regardless of their dialect or linguistic background, have access to high-quality phonemic awareness instruction.

**PRESENTER:** Tamala Martin, Instructor, Morehead State University, Kentucky.

**LOCATION:** Coronado D

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *The Impact of School Success Teams.* Through the development and implementation of School Success Teams, Oconee County Primary School has navigated the path to success across the areas of Instructional Success, Student Success, Staff Success, and Family and Community Involvement Success. The Success Teams target these areas:

- Instructional Success Team - focuses on pacing, standards, and curriculum implementation while uncovering resources and strategies to impact student learning and academic achievement.
- Student Success Team - collaborates to identify student needs (to help students be more successful) in the areas of social emotional development and behavior, aiming to celebrate the accomplishments of each individual student.
- Staff Success Team - centers on staff recognition and morale through the planning of events, boosters, celebrations, and initiatives to maintain or improve morale and to ensure staff members are recognized for their hard work and successes throughout the school year.
- Family and Community Involvement - plans and implements events, resources, and strategies to promote and maintain positive relationships with families and the community.

**PRESENTERS:** Shelby Hilley, Principal; Jennifer Beeson, First Grade Teacher; Ashley Gollither, First Grade Teacher; and Paige Bowen, PE Teacher, Oconee Primary School, Georgia.

**LOCATION:** Coronado E



**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *I Want Candy: How Syllabication Can Hit the Sweet Spot for Struggling Readers.* This session will explore evidence-based techniques for teaching syllabication to students who are struggling with reading. Attendees will learn how to use phonics instruction, multisensory approaches, and hands-on activities to help students segment words into syllables and increase their reading fluency. We will also discuss strategies for differentiating instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners and will provide participants with practical resources and materials to use in their own classrooms. By the end of the session, attendees will have a deeper understanding of the science of reading and will be equipped with the tools they need to help their students make meaningful gains in syllabication and reading proficiency.

**PRESENTER:** Amber Miller, Reading Specialist, Monrovia Elementary School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado F

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *"We all Belong" - One Schools Journey to Create an Environment of Acceptance and Belonging.* Research has shown that for students to be successful academically, they first must have a sense of belonging and acceptance. An Elementary School Principal and School Counselor from a Blue Ribbon Elementary School located in Somerset County, New Jersey share the steps that they have taken to build a culture of belonging, acceptance and inclusivity. Participants will learn about successful positive behavioral interventions and supports that have been implemented to ensure that all students' social, emotional and academic well-being are addressed. Participants will walk away with concrete and practical ideas to foster an inclusive and positive learning environment.

**PRESENTERS:** Jeff Heaney, Principal and Alexandra McWilliams, School Counselor, Woodland School, New Jersey.

**LOCATION:** Coronado G

### **3:00 PM - 4:00 PM CONCURRENT SESSIONS G - WEDNESDAY**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *How has the BRSE Process Brought Magic to Lighthouse Schools?* Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence can transform your school from being "Good to Great"! Lighthouse principals share how the BRSE process moved their school in areas of improving data, culture/climate, active teaching and learning, and parent & community support. The BRSE process covers nine categories that can change a school system just by going through the assessment process. If you want answers to becoming a Blue Ribbon Lighthouse School, then this session is for you! Attend this session and you will find out how the BRSE process works from school leaders that have achieved Lighthouse. After attending this session, you will be able to understand from start to finish how the Blue Ribbon Action Plan Blueprint can become your school improvement plan. Don't miss out on the ways to get your school a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Lighthouse School!

**PRESENTERS:** April Stansberry, Director of Sales, Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, Florida; Dr. Perry Dillard, Curriculum Director, Dale County Schools, Alabama; Vicky LaPorte, Principal, Atlantic Technical High School, Florida; and Dr. Alicia Early, Principal, Gulf Shores Elementary School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Unleashing the Joy of Successful Reading Comprehension.***

Through the Knowledge Acquisition and Transformation (KAT) Framework, the Literacy.IO team has developed, tested, and refined a powerful approach to teaching children how to create powerful memory of text and audio. The focus of the framework is vocabulary, generating main ideas, extending the main idea to a summary, and extrapolating inferences. Accumulating research evidence showcases the power of our strategies and has resulted in 100% pass rates for all children - monolingual, bilingual, special education, and regular education. We will share the research and practical experiences of practitioners to help solve the comprehension problems permanently. The joy of reading is essential for all our children.

**PRESENTERS:** Dr. Kay Wijekumar, Professor; Mr. Javier Garza, Principal; Ms. Pilar Sierra, Teacher who achieved 100% pass rates; and Dr. Kacee Lambright, Associate Research Scientist, Texas A&M University, Texas.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Blue Ribbon Success from K to 12 Grades.*** Three former National Blue Ribbon Principals from the same school district will provide a K-12 narrative of what it takes to be a Blue Ribbon campus at any grade level. We look at campus systems, culture, and instructional design that made our schools at all levels Blue Ribbon schools. We will share our journey along with the essential components needed for success at any grade level. Specific areas of discussion will be PLC, STEM practices, Technology Integration and student culture.

Attendees will leave with a toolbox of strategies and ideas to help their campuses continue Blue Ribbon-level success

**PRESENTERS:** Paul Covey, Director of Federal and State Program (former Principal of Valle Verde ECHS); Dr. Judy Calderon, Director of High School Academics (former Principal of Vista Hills Elementary); and Irene Ahumada, Associate Superintendent of Elementary Schools (former Principal of Ramona Elementary), Ysleta Independent School District, Texas.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Character Education/SEL Resources for K-12, EVERFI and the NFL.*** At the request of attendees, EVERFI is hosting a session on their partnership with the NFL, who sponsor "*Character Playbook: Healthy Relationships*" and "*Understanding Mental Wellness.*" 1 in 5 students have experienced bullying in school. And nearly half of teens have been bullied online. These digital lessons focus on supporting students as they navigate relationships with peers, parents, educators, social media, and their mental health. This session will deep dive into the partnership, including the digital courses, offline lesson plans, community/school events, impact, and more. Thanks to the NFL, this resource is completely free for all K-12.

**PRESENTER:** Cassandra Soulis, Senior Communications Lead, EVERFI, New York.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Brain Dump for EXCELLENCE.*** In this fast paced, dynamic session, the presenter will "brain dump" practical technological/instructional strategies and resources that support continuous improvement and support schools and teachers to strive for EXCELLENCE for ALL students. The presentation will focus on various technology resources including ABii, Dreambox, Flocabulary and others along with other instructional strategies that have proven to be effective for instructional and social emotional purposes.

**PRESENTER:** Dr. Nakia Barnes, Principal, Sunset Park Center for Accelerated Studies, South Carolina.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Engaging Minds, Empowering Learners through Arts Integration and AVID.***

Join us for an enlightening session where we explore the powerful synergy of Arts Integration and AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination). Discover how these approaches combine to create dynamic learning environments that foster creativity, critical thinking, and academic success. We'll delve into practical strategies, success stories, and collaborative activities that enhance student engagement and achievement across disciplines. Whether you're new to Arts Integration, AVID, or both, this session offers insights and tools to inspire and empower both educators and learners alike.

**PRESENTERS:** Tavia Beasley, Curriculum Instruction Specialist; Mrs. Ashley Reed, AVID Coordinator, Computer Science Specialist; and Dr. Trellaney Lane, Principal and MNPS 2023-24 Principal of the Year, Isaiah T. Creswell Middle Magnet School of the Visual and Performing Arts, Tennessee.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *The Science of Reading: Myths and Truths About Evidence-***

***Based Literacy Instruction.*** The “science of reading” has become a popular phrase in the field of education in recent years, but what exactly does it mean? As with many things that become popular, there are some misconceptions about what the science of reading is and is not. In this interactive session, participants will learn about common myths regarding effective literacy instruction and evidence-based alternatives. From phonemic awareness and letter recognition to comprehension and writing, educators will leave this session with ideas and strategies informed by strong research evidence base that they can take back to their schools and put into practice.

**PRESENTERS:** Emily Binks-Cantrell, Clinical Professor and Dr. Ramona Pittman, Associate Professor, Texas A&M University, Texas.

**LOCATION:** Coronado B

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Leadership Team Development.*** Join us for an inspiring leadership training session that draws on the powerful message of Dewitt Jones' *Everyday Creativity*. Learn how to approach challenges with a fresh perspective, harness creativity in daily tasks, and find extraordinary solutions in ordinary moments. This session will empower you to shift your mindset, unlock new possibilities, and cultivate a culture of innovation and positivity in your team, all while seeing the beauty in the unexpected. Perfect for leaders looking to enhance their problem-solving skills and inspire creative thinking in the workplace!

**PRESENTER:** Dr. Yossi Kastan brings over 20 years of experience in entrepreneurship, education, and leadership. He has served as Head of School at Brauser Maimonides Academy and Berman Hebrew Academy, and as the Director of the Institute for Transformational Leadership at Georgetown University. Dr. Kastan holds advanced degrees in education, including a Doctorate in Educational Leadership, and has completed leadership training at prestigious institutions like Harvard and NYU. Dr. Kastan is a published researcher, an experienced presenter, a certified facilitator and an international leadership coach. He is the Founder and CEO of TAP Leadership Group.

**LOCATION:** Coronado C

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Teach a Teacher to Fish.* We've all heard the proverb, "Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day. Teach them to fish and you feed them for a lifetime." We believe the same proverb applies to educators. The rate at which teachers are leaving has been declared a crisis. School counselors are also walking away at an astonishing rate. Student behavior and lack of support are often part of the reason educators are leaving. With more emphasis being placed on trauma-sensitive environments, who better to help train the people who are with students for 8 hours a day than the social emotional gatekeepers, school counselors with the support of the administrator! In this session you will be given practical strategies you can implement immediately to support, train, and collaborate with the teachers in your building. In other words, teach them to fish so that they feel empowered, and the students receive the immediate support they need.

**PRESENTERS:** Caleb Elrod, Principal, Parkside School; Laura Rankhorn, School Counselor; and Kim Crumbley, School Counselor, Parkside School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado D

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *The AI Advantage: Teach More, Stress Less.* Are you ready to revolutionize your teaching and streamline your workload? In this engaging and practical workshop, you'll discover how to harness the power of AI tools to:

- **Streamline Your Workload:** Learn how AI tools can automate tedious administrative tasks, assist with grading, and simplify classroom management, giving you more time to focus on what you love—teaching.
- **Personalize Student Learning:** Explore how AI tools can create and adapt materials to support individual student needs, fostering customized learning experiences that boost engagement and achievement.
- **Support Educational Standards:** Understand how AI tools can support educational standards, ensuring that your teaching methods meet educational benchmarks and enhance student learning outcomes.

Leave with actionable strategies to implement AI tools in your classroom. Don't miss this opportunity to stay ahead of the curve and transform your educational experience into one that is efficient, personalized, and impactful.

**PRESENTER:** Dr. Jamie Burton, Kids First Education Coach, Alabama and former Principal, New Hope Elementary School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado E

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Small Group, Big Impact: Reading Instruction that Delivers.*

Small group instruction can be a vital part of classroom instruction in so many ways. Explicit, intensive small group can impact achievement when it is targeted and meeting the needs of all students. Small group not only meets academic needs but can boost confidence, motivate students, and provides a way for teachers to personalize instruction. Our tips for success include: providing opportunities daily for students to read and write; having an informal/formal assessment daily to measure the impact of the instruction to adjust instruction when needed; and making sure that moving students to other groups based on progress is a fluid process.

**PRESENTERS:** Amy Rooker, Local Reading Specialist; Allie Clement, Interventionist; Jan Hughey, Kindergarten Teacher; Julie Stephens, First Grade Teacher; and Brandi Abernathy, Second Grade Teacher, Helena Elementary School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado G

## DAY FOUR - THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2024

### 7:30 AM COFFEE SERVICE

**LOCATION:** Monterrey Lobby

### 8:00 AM - 10:30 AM REGISTRATION

**LOCATION:** South Registration Counter

### 8:00 AM - 9:00AM CONCURRENT SESSIONS H - THURSDAY

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *How Your School Can Become a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence.* How does your school measure up to the highest performing schools in the nation? Where do you start and what can you expect? If you would like to become a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence this is the session for you. Find out what is a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence and learn about the process to become one. We will share all the details from the application process to being named a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. Interested in the Blue Ribbon School of Excellence process, but you are concerned because your school is not high performing. Come to this session and you will put your concerns aside. Find out how the process works for all schools.

**PRESENTER:** Jayne Ellspermann, 2015 NASSP National Principal of the Year; Educational Consultant; Leadership Coach/Trainer; and Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, BRSE, Vice Board Chair and Senior Assessor, Florida.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *MTSS - Best Practices and Interventions.* This presentation is over what Chesterfield Elementary does for their MTSS (Multi-tiered systems of support) process. We call our practice Student Talks. Our presentation will show how we bring up students for academic, social emotional, and behavioral struggles and how we use data and interventions to best support ALL students. We have shored up our practices since covid and have increased our district and state scores higher than they were before the pandemic. What we are doing is working! All teachers have access to our MTSS system (Student Talks Folder). In this folder, we have each grade level, teacher, and individual students. Teachers can see prior interventions and supports we have given students throughout the years as well as add onto the student's file. This allows us to hit on all aspects of the student: academic, speech/language, social/emotional, behavior, etc. We provide appropriate interventions, track data, and next steps after the intervention is over. With this data we have been able to increase our overall Math and ELA scores at the district and state levels by 5-9%. We have received all our points on Missouri's APR (Annual Performance Review) for academic achievement of ALL students and for our subgroups of students (IEP, FRL, minority, etc.).

**PRESENTERS:** Mr. Cody Dusenberry, Principal, and Dr. Theresa Rose, Assistant Principal, Chesterfield Elementary School, Missouri.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *The Journey from Good to Great is Just Around the River Bend.***

How do you take a good school and push it to greatness? Learn the nuts and bolts of fueling your momentum to fine tune your school and tap into its highest potential. This session will discuss how to take what is considered a good school and make it better by supporting both teachers' & students' social emotional health and unmet student learning needs. It's the story of walking into what looks from the outside like a "good" school - is considered an A school by state standards (but barely an A at 90%) which is arguably a harder place to start from than a failing (turnaround) school because the possibility of falling is huge - especially with too many "new items like new curriculum and new school system. Your goal as an administrator is to keep the good stuff while deleting the waste to push the entire organization higher. This is accomplished by addressing the personal social emotional needs through Leader in Me (LIM) and the academics through Precision Teaching for learning. LIM gives a voice and personal control over their successes, builds self-efficacy, positive attitude, decreases discipline, improves attendance, and improves overall performance for both students and teachers. Precision teaching using data, solid curriculum, and creative scheduling to revise the RTI process, introduce Walk to Intervention, dedicated Reading block, integrate Math foundation standards into hands on STEAM and Green lessons. All these pieces work together to give teachers and students the tools they need to push students from high to higher.

**PRESENTER:** Dr. Alicia Early, Principal, Gulf Shores Elementary School and BRSE Assessor, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *SHARE: Share Positive Affirmation in a Negative Culture.***

Sharing in a Safe Place with leaders who will support you. This is not a one size fits all program. This is a workshop design to add tools to your educational toolbox. We will aid in the development of your individual plan for school success in health education. We will lead a workshop on how to create this environment for successful SHARE - Sexual Health, Abstinence, and Reproductive Education. Successful kids come from successful teachers. This presentation is created from over a decade of reproductive health education in the public and private environment. This plan seeks to give students courage, grit and aid in developing resilience in decision making. We aid instructors with the tools to make their SHARE program successful.

**PRESENTERS:** Theresa Barbale, Youth Advocate, Educator, and Non-Profit Leader, and Kayla VanDuser, Science Educator, Florida.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Branding - Telling Your District/School Story.*** In an increasingly competitive educational landscape, the importance of a strong, resonant brand for schools cannot be overstated. "Empowering Leadership: Transformative Branding Strategies for Schools" is a dynamic presentation designed specifically for school leaders who aim to elevate their institution's profile and connect more deeply with their community. This session will provide actionable insights into developing and implementing effective branding strategies that reflect your school's unique identity, values, and vision for the future.

**PRESENTER:** Connie Sanchez, Principal, Unity Charter School, New Jersey.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Student Led STEAM Day: Enrichment for ALL Students.* Having a school with over 70% of our student population identifying as being gifted, providing enrichment opportunities for our learners is key. Here is the problem: why do the “gifted” students get to do “fun” enrichment projects while others do not? At our school, ALL students receive enrichment because enrichment and project based learning benefits ALL learners! Come learn how we have taken the teachers out of the equation while our students plan and lead an entire STEAM Day at our school, grades K-6! We will give you everything (including resources) to make this happen at your school this year!

**PRESENTERS:** Michelle Kowalski, Gifted Intervention Specialist and Barbara Culbertson, Elementary Math Teacher, School, Ohio.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Community as Classroom: Harnessing the Power of Place-based Education to Increase Student Success.* Reflect on your teaching experiences and consider if you have ever had a student ask you "why do we have to learn this?" or "when am I ever going to need this?" Oftentimes the student's educational experiences lack a sense of relevance and purpose that keeps learning disconnected from its usefulness, importance, and application. University Charter School has embraced a place-based educational model that situates all topics, standards, and experiences directly in students' sense of place: their local community. Come learn more about the power of place-based education that can lead to increased student outcomes and increased student retention by bringing the community into the school, and by taking learning out into the local community. Leaders and teachers from University Charter School will discuss this learning model and specific activities, lessons, projects, and ideas spanning Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 that will inspire you to view your own community as a classroom.

**PRESENTERS:** Dr. Matt Johnson, Chief Academic Officer; Meghan Dunn, PK-3 Administrator; Libba Reed, Director of Instructional Support; Morgan Allen, Secondary ELA Teacher; and Stephanie Gaither, Elementary ELA & Social Studies Teacher, University Charter School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado D

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *You've Got a Friend in Us: Building Parent Engagement Strategies That Work.* This presentation explores the importance of strong parent engagement in a Title 1 school to support fostering student success. We will highlight the diverse needs of our families and outline strategies we are implementing to increase engagement and create a welcoming school environment for all. Our school is committed to cultivating strong partnerships with families to support every student's journey. The events offered not only at the school but within the community provide stakeholders with multiple opportunities to engage with the school and educators. We have seen positive outcomes from our increased efforts, including rising parent attendance at events and improved communication.

**PRESENTERS:** Allyson Pennington, Principal; Ashley Wheeler, Media Specialist; and Dawn Beadles, Family Engagement Specialist, East Jackson Elementary School, Georgia.

**LOCATION:** Coronado E



**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Be Flexible: Maximizing Student Success with Flextime.***

Struggling to find enough time to support all your students? Join us to explore how flextime—a short, daily period dedicated to remediation, peer tutoring, testing, and fun activities—has transformed student engagement and achievement in our school. Over the last 10 years, we’ve refined our approach to include structured activities, skill-building sessions, and creative ways to manage student progress. Learn practical strategies to implement flextime effectively, foster student relationships, and improve overall performance, all while balancing the demands of a busy school day.

**PRESENTERS:** Jeremy Lowry, Principal, Principal; Regina Ann Bennett, Assistant Principal; and Bryan Gustafson, Assistant Principal, Madison County High School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado F

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Unlocking the Magic inside Each Child with Tiered Intervention.***

Are you tired of seeing student data at the beginning of the year and feeling defeated due to the gaps in student learning? Do you ever feel alone on your journey of ensuring every child reaches his/her potential? Teachers work so hard, but we sometimes need to take a step back and find ways to work smarter and realize we don’t have to do this job alone. This session will demonstrate strategies for using student data to meet student needs in practical ways. It will address how teachers can work as a team during PLC and the intervention block. By building on each teacher’s strengths and choosing to take ownership of every child’s learning in a “shared student” approach everyone succeeds and that’s where the magic really happens.

**PRESENTERS:** Kristen Noah, Sabrina Rice, and Shannon Pitts, First Grade Teachers, New Market School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado G

**9:15 AM - 10:15 AM CONCURRENT SESSIONS I - THURSDAY**

**SESSION DESCRIPTION: *Intentional Leadership - How to Make Success Unavoidable for Your Students.*** Creating a school that focuses on student success sounds simple. However, the reality in 2024-2025, it is a real challenge. Starting with intentional leadership, you can design a pathway for student and staff success. Teaching and learning come together with systems that empower students, redesign grading, and leverage the power of the brain. Leave this session with tools that will take your leadership to the next level and support success for your students.

**PRESENTERS:** Jayne Ellspermann, 2015 NASSP National Principal of the Year; Educational Consultant; Leadership Coach/Trainer; and Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, BRSE, Vice Board Chair and Senior Assessor, Florida and Owen Clanton, Director of Middle Schools, Calcasieu Parish School District, Louisiana

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Leading the Magic: Empowering Principals and Teachers as Instructional Leaders in Schools.* In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, the role of building leaders has never been more crucial. Join us for an insightful presentation that delves into how principals and school leaders can become the driving force behind instructional excellence in their schools. Effective instructional leadership is the cornerstone of student success and school improvement. As the primary architects of their schools' educational vision, building leaders are uniquely positioned to inspire, guide, and elevate teaching and learning practices. This presentation will explore how principals can harness their leadership skills to foster a culture of continuous improvement, promote effective teaching strategies, and ultimately enhance student outcomes. This session is designed for current and aspiring school leaders who are committed to making a meaningful impact on their schools. Whether you are looking to refine your leadership skills or seeking new strategies to enhance instructional practices, this presentation will provide practical tools, real-world examples, and actionable insights to elevate your role as an instructional leader.

**PRESENTERS:** Jennifer Laughridge, Principal; Erin Carroll, Special Education Teacher and Department Chair; Keri Harreck, PE Teacher, Former Classroom Teacher and Department Chair; and Wendi Pitts, EIP Teacher, Former Classroom Teacher, and Department Chair, Oconee County Elementary School, Georgia.

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Empowering Education: Leveraging Technology for Stronger School, Family, and Community Partnerships.* Join us for an engaging presentation on the integration of technology in education and the importance of school, family, and community partnerships. We will explore the benefits of creating a digital newsletter that connects teachers and parents, fostering effective communication and collaboration. Don't miss out on learning how to leverage technology to strengthen relationships and enhance the educational experience for everyone involved!

**PRESENTERS:** Ashley Francis, Learning Liaison, and Katie Segreti, Counselor, Colleyville Elementary School, Texas

**LOCATION:** Monterrey 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *How Baseball Cards Introduced Me to the 6 Cs of Deeper Learning (DL) in 1982.* Can you recognize the 6 Cs when they are happening in front of you? Do you want to foster a school environment that embodies the 6 Cs? The presenter experienced deeper learning as a student for the first time in 1982. The presenter was 11 years old, and DL helped him navigate middle school during a time when he was struggling in and out of school. The experience had nothing to do with academics, but everything to do with him becoming a better, more confident learner, thanks to a science teacher who had a passion for collecting baseball cards and who started a club. Our school has been on a journey toward deeper learning and has been unified by the 6 Cs. Students and staff know what they are, why they are important, and how to spot them. We believe this initiative has led to our academic and social-emotional success and it has also prepared our students for secondary school. Anyone who visits our school is struck by how well the students and staff demonstrate citizenship, critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and character. It is not a coincidence that since we have adopted the 6 Cs our scores and survey results have shot up. Our progress reports and our district's mission statements have also changed to capture the basic tenets of deeper learning.

**PRESENTERS:** Gino Sangiuliano, Principal, Hampden Meadows School, and Dawn August, Principal, Primrose Hill Elementary, Rhode Island.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 1

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Local Roots, Global Impact: The Power of Global Learning.* Join Freebird McKinney and Sara Wheeler for an inspiring session on the transformative power of global learning. With a wealth of experience in global education, this team will demonstrate how global teaching can serve as a gateway to the world, preparing students to thrive in an interconnected and competitive global workforce. This session will also highlight innovative strategies from Participate Learning's partner Global Leaders schools, showcasing how they use global learning to operationalize the workforce development initiatives, foster a globally focused school culture, and engage students in impactful global action projects. Freebird and Sara will explore how schools build deeper connections with their communities through strategic partnerships and global initiatives. By sharing the Global Leaders school pillars and teaching practices, they will go beyond traditional education narratives, emphasizing the need for approaches that equip students with the skills and perspectives to tackle both local and global challenges. As a "Global Village Teacher," Freebirds's journey, and the role of Participate Learning in partnering with schools and districts like Lexington-Richland 5 (SC) will illustrate how global education can shape society positively, preparing students not only for career readiness but also for active, socially responsible citizenship. "We must teach our children to thrive in a big world, even if they live in a small town."

**PRESENTERS:** Sara Wheeler, Director of Magnet Schools, District Five of Lexington and Richland Counties, South Carolina and Freebird McKinney, Director of Partnership Development and 2018 North Carolina Teacher of the Year, North Carolina.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 2

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Transformational Leadership by School Leadership Teams.* How do you make your school leadership team transformational and get results in 180 days? Join members of the Southeast Bulloch Middle Leadership Team as they share the teacher lead decision making process that helped create a school climate and culture that students and teachers are excited to call their own. During this session, you will hear the story of how high expectations in ALL areas of the school along with students and staff consistently challenging one another to grow and stretch has helped create an environment where taking risks and making mistakes are encouraged and celebrated. Come hear about how the power of Professional Learning Communities lead to flex grouping of students and how effective enrichment and remediation time helps insure success for students at SEBMS....a place of possibility!

**PRESENTERS:** Dr. Todd Veland, Principal; Stephanie Burke, Science Teacher; Kathryn Hodges, Media Specialist; Brandon Poole, Science Teacher; Patia Rountree, Math Teacher; Anna Swint, ELA Teacher; and Melissa Whiteman, Social Studies Teacher, Southeast Bulloch Middle School, Georgia.

**LOCATION:** Yucatan 3

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Personalization through Playlists: The Key to Learner-Centered Classroom Design.* A challenge many teachers face is creating a learning environment that authentically differentiates instruction for all students on a routine basis. Some teachers also struggle with creating a classroom experience that allows them to work with individual students and small groups of students for a majority of the instructional block while also ensuring that students who are working independently are engaged and challenged. At University Charter School, teachers from Kindergarten through Grade 12 have leveraged the power of personalized learning through learning playlists to solve these challenges and to create a thriving learner-centered classroom. In this session, participants will learn more about University Charter School's approach to personalized learning that includes the use of proficiency scales, competency-based assessment practices, goal setting and reflection, and ample amounts of student voice and choice as a design recipe for custom learning playlists. You will be amazed at the model playlists ranging from kindergarten math classes to high school Physical Science. This session will conclude with a "make and take" opportunity for you to take these ideas, templates, and models with you so that your teachers and students can consider how to make your classrooms more learner-centered to meet everyone's needs!

**PRESENTERS:** Dr. Matt Johnson, Chief Academic Officer; Libba Reed, Director of Instructional Support; Shelby Dial, Reading Specialist; Terri Pope, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Math Teacher; Morgan Allen, Secondary ELA Teacher; and Stephanie Gaither, Elementary ELA & Social Studies Teacher, University Charter School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado D

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Visible Vocabulary.* This presentation demonstrates the use of semantic mapping, and the importance of using images and context clues when learning new vocabulary. Using a digital form of the Frayer Model, students utilize beginning of class/bell ringer time to learn additional Tier 2 vocabulary. Visible Vocabulary is a digital-based, reasoning, and visual vocabulary program using the Semantic Reasoning method. Semantic reasoning pairs language-based instruction, visual examples, and critical thinking to teach vocabulary words.

**PRESENTERS:** Marlene Freeman, Teacher and Harolyn Roberts, Instructional Partner, Boaz Intermediate School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado E

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Building a Reward School of Excellence.* This session will give an overview of Tom Joy's journey from a priority school to Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence. This session will describe an overview of the curriculum, challenges, and climate and culture. We will highlight how intentionality has transformed our institution into a high performing school of academic excellence. The presentation will include academic data, demographics, videos, pictures, and other evidence of Tom Joy's transformation. We will utilize digital tools and resources that our audience can replicate and implement at their institutions.

**PRESENTERS:** Nicole Glaze, Curriculum Specialist and Assistant Principal and Mollie Crockett, Assistant Principal, Tom Joy Digital Literacy and Leadership Magnet School, Tennessee.

**LOCATION:** Coronado F

**SESSION DESCRIPTION:** *Lessons Learned Cultivating Student Leaders at a K-2 School.* It is tricky to identify and implement leadership roles for students at K-2 elementary schools. When the oldest students are 8, it can be a little unsettling to have them assume responsibilities typically performed by staff members. We have learned at Helena Elementary that when we raise the bar for our kiddos, they typically rise to the occasion. However, this has not been without some growing pains. Allow us to share with you some of our greatest successes along with some of the things we will never, ever - like EVER - do again. We are still a work in progress, but we are happy to share what we have learned along the journey.

**PRESENTERS:** Kathleen Keelin, School Counselor and Allison Festavan, Special Education Teacher, Helena Elementary School, Alabama.

**LOCATION:** Coronado G

## **10:30 AM – 12:30 PM LIGHTHOUSE CELEBRATION BRUNCH**

**MASTER OF CEREMONY** - Dennis Bega, Senior Assessor, Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence, Georgia.

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER** - Andrew Farley, Principal, Brookfield East High School, and 2024 NASSP National Principal of the Year, Wisconsin.

**TITLE:** *Dreaming Big: Building and Leading Transformational Schools.*

**LOCATION:** Coronado Ballroom H-J



“**Andy Farley** works tirelessly to engage students in their learning and, more broadly, in their school community,” said Elmbrook Schools Superintendent Mark Hansen. “Mr. Farley is a proud East graduate himself, and his story is a testament to both our Elmbrook Schools and public education. He communicates high expectations of students and staff in a personal and supportive way that consistently yields tremendous results.”

“Principal Farley’s vision for a school culture deeply rooted in the whole-student experience is both inspiring and revolutionary,” said NASSP CEO Ronn Nozoe. “It’s not just the academic excellence that sets Andy apart; his dedication to destigmatizing mental health support through initiatives like the Hope Squad has literally saved lives. His work is a testament to the profound impact a principal can have when they lead with heart and purpose.”

During Farley’s decade as principal, Brookfield East has been named Wisconsin’s top public high school for four consecutive years (niche.com), and the school was recently recognized as a 2023 National Blue Ribbon School for Exemplary Work in Closing Achievement Gaps—one of only three high schools in the country to be recognized in that category. Farley has led a school culture committed to the school’s mission of academic and human excellence. Brookfield East’s Hope Squad, the first in Wisconsin, has developed student leaders to serve as ambassadors for wellness throughout the school, community, and region. Farley has ensured all students have access to rigorous, capstone educational experiences with a remarkable 99% of the Class of 2023 taking at least one college-credit bearing course prior to graduation. Through a commitment to literacy instruction, students have excelled on standardized assessments. In 2023, the senior class earned an ACT composite score of 23.5, including a 24.1 in reading. Additionally, 572 Brookfield East students (42%) took 1,235 Advanced Placement exams, earning a 3 or better on 80% of the exams taken.

### **SAVE THE DATES – CORONADO SPRINGS RESORT**

Conference 2025 - December 1 - December 4, 2025

Conference 2026 - November 30 - December 3, 2026

Conference 2027 - November 29 - December 2, 2027

## 2024 Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence Lighthouse Award

*Annie Lucy Williams Elementary School, Two-Time*  
*Atlantic Technical High School*  
*Bear Exploration Center School*  
*Boaz Intermediate School*  
*Boaz Middle School*  
*Cold Springs High School, Two-Time*  
*Colleyville Elementary School*  
*Corley Elementary School*  
*Danville Neel Elementary School, Two-Time*  
*Downtown Doral Charter Elementary School*  
*Downtown Doral Charter Upper School*  
*East Jackson Comprehensive High School*  
*East Lawrence Elementary School*  
*East Lawrence High School*  
*Elberta Middle School*  
*Fairview High School, Two-Time*  
*Hampden Meadows School*  
*Hanceville Elementary School*  
*Hartselle Intermediate School, Two-Time*  
*Harvest Elementary School, Two-Time*  
*Hatton Elementary School*  
*Helena Elementary School*  
*Hoboken High School*  
*Hoboken Middle School*  
*Holly Pond High School*  
*Hyde Park School*  
*John J. Pershing Elementary School*  
*Johnson County Middle School*  
*Jose Marti STEM Academy*  
*Joseph F. Brandt Elementary School*  
*Lacey's Spring School*  
*Lawrence County High School*  
*Leisure Park Elementary School*  
*Lenape Valley Regional High School*  
*Little Fort Elementary School*  
*Lynn Elementary School, Two-Time*  
*Lynn High School, Two-Time*  
*Mansion Avenue School*  
*Maysville Elementary School*  
*Meek Elementary School, Two-Time*  
*Nation Ford High School*  
*Oconee County Elementary School*  
*Oconee County Primary School*  
*Owens Cross Roads Elementary School, Four-Time*  
*Priceville Elementary School, Two-Time*  
*Rea Farms STEAM Academy*  
*River Trail Elementary School*  
*Riverton Elementary School, Three-Time*  
*Ruskin Elementary School*  
*South Dale Middle School*  
*Southeast Bulloch Middle School*  
*Sparkman Middle School, Three-Time*  
*Sparkman High School, Two-Time*  
*Stiles Point Elementary School*  
*Summit Hill Elementary School*  
*Sunset Park Center for Accelerated Studies*  
*Technology Park, Two-Time*  
*Thomas G. Connors Elementary School*  
*Union Hill School, Two-Time*  
*Unity Charter School*  
*University Charter School*  
*Vinemont Elementary School, Two-Time*  
*Vinemont High School, Two-Time*  
*Wallace Elementary School*  
*Walnut Grove Elementary School, Three-Time*  
*West End Elementary School*  
*Whitworth-Buchanan Middle School*  
*Winston Career Academy, Two-Time*

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**BlueRIBBON**  
Schools of Excellence

**Why your school needs to Go Blue!**



## WHY NOW IS THE TIME



The Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Process will help you move your school from good to great! With the BRSE school improvement process, you will receive the reports and data you need to take the needs of improvements and move them to areas of strength for your school.

## WHAT YOU'LL RECEIVE



**Stakeholder Feedback**



**Two-Day Onsite Visit with Detailed Reporting**



**Action Plan for Growth**



### SUCCESS STORY

*"Our experience with the BRSE assessment process was incredible. We experienced growth the minute we began digging into the nine areas of highly effective schools and evaluating ourselves against those standards."*

*Marlo Lee, Principal  
Ketchum Elementary, OK*



### PROGRAM CATEGORIES

- Student Focus & Support
- School Organization & Culture
- Challenging Standard & Curriculum
- Active Teaching & Learning
- Technology Integration
- Professional Community
- Leadership & Education Vitality
- School, Family, Community Partnerships
- Indicators of Success

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Districts: \$6500  
One School: \$7900  
Title One Funds may be used.



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