

**New Jersey Association of School Administrators
and
New Jersey Association of Pupil Services Administrators
Welcome you
to the
44th Annual Spring Leadership Conference Program
Leading, Thriving and Elevating Education in Changing Times
Caesars
Atlantic City, New Jersey
May 13-15, 2026**

Welcome to the 44th Annual NJASA/NJAPSA Spring Leadership Conference!
A comprehensive program of informative and state-of-the-art activities is planned for your professional development.

Please take a moment to read this program so that you will not miss an opportunity to attend the exceptional selection of sessions and events planned at this year's Conference.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

9:00 am – 6:00 pm

Location: 2nd Floor – Centurion Tower
Palladium Ballroom Registration Desk

10:00 am – 11:15 am

Location: Spartacus

New Jersey School Funding at a Crossroads: Rising Costs, Structural Pressures, and the Path Forward

As New Jersey enters a critical budget cycle, districts—especially those serving high-need populations—face growing fiscal pressure. Rising costs in employee health insurance, special education, and transportation are outpacing the 2% levy cap. While the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) was designed to allocate resources based on need, volatility tied to equalized valuation and shifting Local Fair Share has created instability. At the same time, charter expansion continues to impact district finances through mid-year enrollment changes and fixed cost burdens. Compounding these challenges is the increasing demand for student mental health services without sustainable funding. This session will examine these interconnected pressures and explore practical strategies to align funding with real costs, improve stability and transparency, and support districts in meeting their obligations.

Presenter:

Tony Trongone
Executive Director
Great Schools of New Jersey

10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Apollo/Zeus

New Jersey Alliance of Black Superintendents
(Closed Meeting/Invitation by NJABS Only)

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Romulus

Union County Roundtable
(Closed Meeting/Only open to Union County Superintendents)

11:30 am – 1:00 pm
Location: Tiberius

New Jersey Association of Pupil Services Administrators
(RSVP in advance required for attendance)
Co-Sponsored by Scarinci Hollenbeck, LLC

GENERAL SESSION
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Location: Palladium Ballroom C

Special Education Administrator of the Year Award Presentation
Sponsored by
Co-Sponsored by NJASA and NJAPSA

Keynote Speaker: Jared Campbell

Jared Campbell is an award-winning singer-songwriter from upstate New York who has spent more than 20 years traveling the country performing for thousands of people and hundreds of schools. He has shared the stage with well-known bands and musicians, had his music featured on television, and has been recognized by Billboard Magazine as one of the top independent musicians in the Northeast.

His music is uplifting, thought-provoking, and emotionally resonant. Jared blends humor, storytelling from life on the road, and personal experiences to create meaningful connections with every audience. Audiences often walk away with life-changing insights — discovering their passions, learning to appreciate others, choosing kindness over bullying, and making positive decisions that shape a brighter future.

Jared has spoken and performed for Fortune 500 companies and leadership conferences across the United States and currently presents at more than 250 schools each year. He has released multiple albums available on all major streaming platforms and now dedicates much of his creative work to writing custom songs for schools.

The Keynote Speaker Program is sponsored exclusively by Frontline

Exhibitor Registration and Set-up
2:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Location: 2nd Floor – Centurion Tower
Palladium Ballroom Registration Desk

NJASA "Open" Executive Committee Meeting
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm
Location: Apollo/Zeus

Breakout Sessions
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm

Session 1
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm
Location: Romulus

Every Student, Every Path: Innovative Scheduling and Comprehensive Support to Help All Students Thrive

In a time of rapid change, high schools must design systems that help every student succeed. This session shares how River Dell High School has reimagined scheduling, learning pathways, and support structures to meet diverse academic, social, and emotional needs. Participants will explore flexible scheduling models, real-world scheduling options, and the integration of school-based social and emotional supports within the school day. Attendees will gain practical strategies, examples, and implementation ideas to lead meaningful, student-centered change in their own schools.

Standards 1, 4, 5, 8, 10

Presenters:

Dr. James J. Albro
Superintendent
River Dell Regional School District

Erin Kirkby
Director of Student Personnel Services
River Dell Regional School District

Brian Pepe
Principal
River Dell High School/
River Dell Regional School District

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
brian.pepe@riverdell.org

Session 2

3:15 pm – 4:15 pm

Location: Spartacus

Active Learning- Transforming the Learning Environment

Learning labs make instruction both fun and impactful at the Morris-Union Jointure Commission, a school for students with autism spectrum disorder. Participants will view videos and pictures to experience a variety of learning labs such as, Esports, Sensory Room and the Interactive Movement lab along “Main Street” at the Developmental Learning Center-Warren. Be prepared to learn creative ways to motivate student learning and to transform the school day with innovation, technology and physical activity!

Standards 1, 4, 8

Presenters:

Dr. Janet L. Fike
Superintendent
Morris-Union Jointure Commission
NJASA Past President

Denise Smallacomb
Assistant Superintendent
Morris-Union Jointure Commission

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
dsmallacomb@mujc.org

Session 3
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm
Location: Tiberius

From Presence to Partnership: Leading Communities Through Change With Trust and Intention

In times of change, strong relationships between school leaders and their communities are essential. While every district context is unique, the work of building trust is universal. This session explores how school leaders can move from presence to partnership by leading through change with trust and intention. Drawing on leadership experiences from two New Jersey districts, participants will examine practical approaches to communication, visibility, and engagement that strengthen community relationships. Attendees can expect concrete examples, reflective discussion, and actionable strategies they can adapt to support thriving school communities and elevate public trust in education.

Standards 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10

Presenters:
Courtney McNeely
Superintendent
Moorestown Township Public Schools

Christopher Meyrick
Superintendent
Woodstown-Piles Grove Regional School District

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
cmcneely@mtps.com

Session 4
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm
Location: Neptune

Leveraging Needs Assessment for Strategic Special Education Leadership

Discover how comprehensive data analysis can transform special education programming and drive systemic improvement. This session will guide participants through developing and presenting a multi-year needs assessment that examines classification trends, least restrictive environment (LRE) performance, declassification rates, and referral patterns. Attendees will learn how to translate data into actionable strategic priorities, communicate findings effectively to stakeholders, and align special education goals with district vision. Participants will leave with practical tools for conducting their own needs assessment, creating data-driven presentations for boards and leadership teams, and using evidence to guide program development, resource allocation, and inclusive practices that elevate outcomes for all students.

Standards 1, 3, 4, 5, 10

Presenters:
Michelle Fenwick, SLP.D
Assistant Superintendent
Ridgewood Public Schools

Alicia Pavone
Director of Special Programs
Ridgewood Public Schools

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/michellefenwick> or mfenwick@rpsnj.us

Session 5
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm
Location: Mars

Transforming the IEP Experience: Parent Perceptions of Communication, Decision Making, and Empowerment

This session examines how targeted, district-provided parent workshops can transform the IEP experience by strengthening parents' communication, decision-making, and self-efficacy as collaborative partners. Grounded in a phenomenological study of parents of students with disabilities, the presentation highlights key themes from parent interviews following participation in an IEP-focused workshop. Attendees can expect practical insights into common barriers parents face during IEP meetings, evidence of how structured training can shift parent engagement, and actionable strategies school leaders can use to move beyond procedural compliance toward authentic, family-centered IEP collaboration.

Standards 3, 8, 10

Presenter:
Rebecca Burns
Director of Pupil Services
Readington Township Public Schools

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
rburns@readington.k12.nj.us

Session 6
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm
Location: Palladium C

Beyond Elementary: Building a Middle School ABA Program That Works

When our PreK-5 students started aging out of their elementary program, we knew we had to grow with them. This session shares Westwood Regional School District's story of expanding our in-house ABA program to the middle school level. We'll give you an honest look at our journey, from setting up the physical classroom and picking materials to mastering the middle school schedule. Attendees will walk away with a practical framework for keeping students in-district, including tips for creating inclusive opportunities and getting staff ready for the transition. Join us to learn how to build a program that supports student independence while keeping your community together.

Standards 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10

Presenters:
Jessica Gluck
Assistant Director of Special Services
Westwood Regional School District

Ray Renshaw
Director of Special Services
Westwood Regional School District

Session 7
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm
Location: Octavius

Designing ERI Programs That Work: Data-Driven Decision Making, Mental Health Collaboration, and Inclusive Pathways

School districts face challenges programming for students with severe emotional and behavior challenges. Many districts create specialized programs (Emotional Regulation Impairment (ERI)) with varying levels of success. The Department of Education (DOE) provided a guidance document titled "Emotional and Behavioral Program Quality Indicators." This presentation will evaluate best practices in the creation of ERI programs for primary and secondary students aligned with DOE guidance focusing on data-based decision making, collaboration with mental health providers, and shifting away from a self-contained model to "revolving door" approach where opportunities for students to access mainstream classrooms are considered from the outset of placement.

Standards 3, 5, 6

Presenters:
Catherine Havens, M.Ed., BCBA
Supervisor of Special Education PreK-4
North Brunswick Township Public Schools

Alexis Rich, Ed.D.
Supervisor of Special Education, Grades 5-8
North Brunswick Township Public Schools

Tiffany Campbell, MA, LMFT
Program Coordinator
Rutgers Health - University Behavioral Healthcare

Anthony DiCesare, BCBA, Esquire
Executive Director of School Consultation
Brett DiNovi and Associates LLC

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
tony@brettdassociates.com

Session 8
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm
Location: Jupiter

Leading with Resilience: Effective Strategies to Improve You and Your District

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, administrators face unprecedented challenges that demand unwavering strength. This dynamic presentation equips public school leaders with practical tools to navigate adversity and prevent burnout. We will explore evidence-based strategies to cultivate personal resilience, fostering a mindset that sustains your well-being while revitalizing your entire district. Discover how to model adaptive leadership, build supportive cultures, and turn obstacles into opportunities for growth. Join us to learn how transforming pressure into progress allows you to lead your community with renewed purpose, stability, and effectiveness.

Standards 2, 6, 7, 8, 10

Presenters:
Richard Bergacs
Superintendent
North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District

Katharine Bergacs
Licensed Clinical Social Worker
My Place for Peace

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
rbergacs@nhvweb.net

Session 9
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm
Location: Venus

Right Support, Right Time: Mindful Use and Fading of Paraprofessional Support

Paraprofessionals are essential members of special education teams; however, without clear systems for adding, monitoring, and fading support, students may become overly reliant on adult assistance, limiting independence and access to the Least Restrictive Environment. This session presents a systematic, data driven framework for the mindful addition and strategic fading of paraprofessional support.

Participants will learn how a multidisciplinary team used structured tools to guide collaborative problem solving, clarify roles, and align support with student skill development. Information regarding targeted professional development in prompting hierarchies, prompt fading, and data collection strengthened implementation and teacher paraprofessional collaboration will also be touched upon.

Attendees will leave with practical processes and tools to promote intentional, responsive, and independence focused paraprofessional support across educational settings.

Standards 5, 6

Presenter:
Molly Lange
Director of Special Services
Warren Township Schools

Welcome Reception
5:00 pm – 6:30 pm
Location: Palladium Ballroom A/B (Exhibit Hall)
Join us in the Exhibit Hall as we welcome new members and renew old friendships!

THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2026

CONFERENCE/EXHIBITOR REGISTRATION & INFORMATION
7:00 am – 5:00 pm
Location: 2nd Floor – Centurion Tower
Palladium Ballroom Registration Desk

Continental Breakfast
7:15 am – 8:10 am
Location: Palladium Ballroom A/B (Exhibit Hall)

The exhibit hall will be open from 7:00 am – 5:00 pm. Don't miss this opportunity to network with NJASA's preferred providers of equipment, supplies and services.

GENERAL SESSION

8:15 am – 10:45 am

Location: Palladium Ballroom C

Special Award Presentations will be made honoring:

- NJASA President
- Distinguished Service
- Central Office Administrator of the Year
- Regional Superintendents of the Year
- Superintendent of the Year

Keynote Speaker: Jeff Harmon

Jeff Harmon is an executive leadership coach, speaker, and founder of the nonprofit *My Impossible*, an initiative dedicated to helping people pursue goals that once seemed out of reach. After being diagnosed with a progressive neurological disease and becoming a wheelchair user, Jeff set out to climb Mount Kilimanjaro—an expedition that required an entire team working together to achieve what many believed was impossible. Jeff now shares the leadership lessons from that journey with organizations and teams facing complex challenges. Through his coaching and speaking, he helps leaders build resilience, lead through uncertainty, and create cultures where people believe they can do hard things together.

10:45 am – 11:00 am

Location: Palladium Ballroom A/B (Exhibit Hall)

Refreshment Break

Enjoy a cup of coffee and mingle among the Exhibitors before rushing off to the next session.

Breakout Sessions

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Session 1

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Tiberius

Things Are PERCing Up

Employee and Managements rights in labor relations are complicated. Labor organizations often seek relief through the PERC unfair practice process without utilizing the grievance process or in addition to a grievance. Learn about navigating through these issues and other PERC related issues that school leaders are facing.

Standard 6

Presenters:

Dr. Rick Falkenstein

NJASA President/

Superintendent

Kingwood Township School District

Jeffrey Caccese

Attorney

Comegno Law Group

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
rfalkenstein@kingwoodschool.org

Session 2

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Spartacus

Lead Boldly, Care Deeply: The Power of Empathetic Educational Leadership

Effective and impactful school and district leadership requires more than creative ideas, buzzwords, and far-reaching vision. At our core as administrators, we are in the "people business". This demands authentic and meaningful human connection. This workshop explores how school leaders can harness the transformative power of using empathy to build trust, enhance collaboration, and ultimately to create resilience in school districts.

Participants will learn how empathetic leadership:

- Strengthens relationships between peer administrators, teachers, students, and their families.
- Enhances decision-making by fostering inclusive perspectives and accounting for conflicting and diverse needs.
- Builds and sustains positive school culture and workplace culture promoting well-being and academic success.
- Improves staff morale through compassionate communication and support.

Attendees will discover how leading with empathy is not simply "just being nice", but a calculated approach that promotes confidence and long-term success.

Standards 3, 5, 7, 10

Presenters:

Dr. James J. Albro

Superintendent

River Dell Regional School District

Anthony Albro

Superintendent

Wood-Ridge Public Schools

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
james.albro@riverdell.org

Session 3

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Neptune

One Edison, Many Pathways: Personalized Learning Across K–12 Programs

Edison Township Public Schools is strengthening personalized instruction across K–12 learning environments, including general education, self-contained classrooms, medical settings, home instruction pending placement, and alternative programs. This session highlights how Imagine Learning helps identify student skill levels, deliver individualized learning pathways, maintain continuity of instruction for students temporarily out of placement, expand access to credit-bearing coursework, and support multi-level instruction within a single classroom. Attendees will see practical examples of how Edison teams use platform data and tools to drive student engagement, monitor progress, deliver responsive instruction,

and improve instructional consistency across settings—while also supporting district cost savings.

Standards 3, 4, 5, 6, 9

Presenters:

Dr. Edward Aldarelli
Superintendent
Edison Township Public Schools

Kate Gousman
Supervisor for Pupil-Special Services
Edison Township Public Schools

Dr. Thomas Toohey
Assistant Superintendent of Pupil/Special Services
Edison Township Public Schools

Dan Savarese
Senior Account Executive
Imagine Learning

Session 4
11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Location: Otavius

Strengthening Curriculum Design for New Jersey Classrooms

Curriculum mapping should anchor a district’s instructional program, yet it often becomes a one-time exercise disconnected from classroom practice. This session explores how district leaders can strengthen curriculum design as a living system that supports teachers and improves student outcomes. Informed by work with schools worldwide, we’ll examine common challenges including standards alignment, curriculum continuity amid turnover, and gaps between planned and taught curriculum. Participants will explore how purpose-built technology — including embedded AI tools — can streamline curriculum work by generating unit outlines, supporting differentiation, and strengthening assessment design.

Standards 4, 6

Presenters:

Ali Dondero
Senior Manager, Learning and Engagement
Toddle

Chris Merryman
Senior Manager, Business Development
Toddle

Session 5
11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Location: Romulus

From Conflict to Clarity: A Simple Reset for Difficult Conversations in School Leadership

School leaders are increasingly called to manage difficult conversations with staff, families, boards, and community members. In moments of conflict, leaders often feel pressure to respond quickly, even when

emotions are high and trust is strained. This session introduces a practical, mediation-informed “conflict reset” that administrators can use to de-escalate tension, restore clarity, and move conversations forward productively. Participants will leave with usable language, a simple conversational structure, and real-world scripts for common leadership scenarios that can be applied immediately in schools.

Standards 2, 6, 7, 8, 9

Presenter:

Dr. Bruce Arcurio
Chief School Administrator
Lebanon Borough School District

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
barcurio@lebanonschool.org

Session 6

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Mars

Flipping the RTI Triangle: How Strong Tier 1 Instruction Drove Exceptional Reading Outcomes

What happens when Tier 1 instruction is intentionally designed, consistently implemented, and fully supported? In Andover, it resulted in a flipped RTI triangle and exceptional elementary reading outcomes. This session explores how a strong Tier 1 literacy foundation, paired with a robust RTI framework, reduced reliance on intensive interventions while improving student performance across multiple grade levels. Participants will examine the leadership decisions, instructional practices, and system structures that made this shift possible—and leave with practical, replicable strategies to strengthen core instruction and maximize the impact of RTI districtwide.

Standards 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10

Presenters:

Nicole Dilkes
Principal
Andover Regional School District

John Fritzky
Superintendent
Andover Regional School District

Jenn Reynolds
Curriculum Supervisor
Andover Regional School District

Session 7

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Venus

From Overwhelmed to Empowered: AI for Small-District Leaders

Tailored for small-district leaders, this session transforms AI from a source of overwhelm into a powerful thought partner. Attendees will engage in live modeling and an interactive lab using tools like NotebookLM and Perplexity to streamline policy interpretation and leadership communications. You can expect to learn how to summarize state guidance, draft parent letters, and reduce legal fees while

maintaining ethical guardrails regarding privacy and bias. Participants will leave with a practical personal AI use framework and starter prompts to improve district operations immediately.

Standards 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9,10

Presenters:

Shaun Banin

Superintendent

Tabernacle Township School District

Joshua Zagorski

Superintendent/Principal

Riverton School District

Session 8

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Jupiter

Threading the AI Needle: Responsible AI Use by Students + Mitigating AI Plagiarism

Student-facing AI can support inquiry and learning, but also risks AI plagiarism in writing assignments. We must find a way to enable students to use AI responsibly AND preserve authentic learning. Come hear how North Brunswick Township Schools is doing this in partnership with Scrible, the world's first "show your work" writing process platform. It mitigates AI plagiarism by making the writing process visible to teachers and shifting assessment to writing as a process. Scrible now also offers Rese, a brand new genAI chatbot enabling students to use AI responsibly in the research and writing process. Come see it!

Standards 2, 4

Presenters:

Jennifer Aschettino

Supervisor of Technology & Future Ready Programs

North Brunswick Township Public Schools

Dr. Kayne Ellis

Director of Communications & Policy

North Brunswick Township Public Schools

Dr. Brian Zychowski

Interim Superintendent

North Brunswick Township Public Schools

Victor Karkar

CEO

Scrible

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:

jaschettino@nbtschools.org

Session 9

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Apollo/Zeus

Beyond the Glow: Building Essential Life Skills Through Quality Extended Learning Time Programming

In an age where the average U.S. student between 8 and 18 spends 7.5 hours a day on screens, the need for meaningful, in-person engagement is more critical than ever. This presentation, "Beyond the Glow," explores how high-quality afterschool programs offer a powerful antidote to the potential negative effects of excessive screen time and individual isolation. We'll delve into the ways that structured, hands-on activities, collaborative projects, and peer-to-peer interactions can help students develop essential life skills, including empathy, executive functioning, active listening, and conflict resolution.

Standards 4, 5

Presenters:

Patti Blood

Retired Superintendent

Little Egg Harbor School District

Julie Lyon

Vice President of School Partnerships

Right At School

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:

<https://www.rightatschool.com/partner-with-us/see-the-difference/>

Practical Advice – Small Group Roundtable Discussions

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location for all Roundtables: Palladium Ballroom A/B

Roundtable 1

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Location: Exhibit Hall

From Crisis to Care: A Practical School Safety + Mental Health Response Playbook

Schools are being asked to respond to escalating student mental health needs while also strengthening safety protocols, often with limited clinical staff and fragmented systems. This session provides a practical, district-ready framework that integrates threat assessment, risk triage, care coordination, and family engagement into one repeatable workflow. Attendees will leave with (1) a sample safety-to-support decision tree, (2) a tiered referral and follow-up cadence, (3) strategies to reduce "handoff gaps" between schools and providers, and (4) implementation tips for launching in 30–60 days using existing teams and resources.

Standards 5, 8, 9, 10

Presenters:

Dr. Michelle CarneyRay-Yoder

Superintendent

Central Regional School District

Dr. Melissa Nelson

Strategic Advisor

InSite Health

James Rossi Jr.

Vice President of Partnerships

Insite Health

Roundtable 2
11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Location: Exhibit Hall

Leading Through Change: How Districts Are Leveraging New Jersey Virtual School to Expand Access and Stability

As districts navigate staffing shortages, scheduling constraints, and increasing student needs, leaders are rethinking how learning opportunities are delivered. This session highlights how New Jersey Virtual School (NJVS) has partnered with school districts across the state to provide flexible, standards-aligned solutions that support continuity, equity, and student success.

Participants will explore real-world district use cases, including addressing staff shortages, credit recovery, alternative pathways to graduation, Option II, acceleration, and other non-traditional learning needs. The session will focus on implementation models and operational considerations to help school leaders determine how virtual learning can responsibly supplement—not replace—traditional schooling in changing times.

Standards 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10

Presenter:
Derek Tranchina
Director of Special Projects
Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
www.njvs.org

Roundtable 3
11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Location: Exhibit Hall

Servant Leadership: Leading Beyond the Title

This interactive and engaging session invites school leaders to reflect on how influence, empathy, and accountability shape effective leadership. Through storytelling, real-world examples, and reflective exercises, participants explore how to lead with purpose rather than position, building trust, strengthening relationships, and fostering positive school cultures.

Attendees will examine practical strategies for balancing high expectations with compassion, communicating the “why” behind decisions, and cultivating environments where staff and students feel valued, supported, and empowered to grow. This session challenges leaders to move beyond compliance-driven leadership and embrace a servant leadership mindset that promotes collaboration, resilience, and sustainable success in changing times.

Standards 1, 2, 3, 6

Presenter:
Kendra K. Houser
Middle School Principal
Cresthaven Academy Charter School

12:00 pm – 1:30 pm

Location: Palladium Ballroom A/B (Exhibit Hall)

Exhibit Hall/Lunch/Networking/Prizes

Have lunch and visit with our Allied Members who graciously support the Associations throughout the year. The knowledge, products and services they bring are available throughout the conference to assist school leaders in making informed decisions for their school districts.

Breakout Sessions
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm

Session 1
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm
Location: Spartacus

From Truancy Letters to Daily Presence: How One NJ District Rebuilt Attendance

Chronic absenteeism has doubled since the pandemic, and many New Jersey districts continue to lose ground despite sustained effort. Traditional responses—truancy letters, incentives, and isolated programs—often fail to change daily behavior at scale.

In this session, leaders from PreK–12 Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District share how they addressed absenteeism across all grade levels, using differentiated strategies for early learners, middle grades, and high school students. Joined by EAB, they will outline how the district strengthened Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports, tailored family engagement by age group, and made intentional tradeoffs to improve attendance systemwide. Attendees will leave with a practical framework and lessons learned to support compliance and improve daily attendance.

Standards 1, 5, 8

Presenters:
Mike Liebmann
Assistant Superintendent of Schools PreK-12
Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District

Nelyda Perez
NJASA Immediate Past President
Superintendent
Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District

Zayd Abukar
Associate Director, Research Advisory Services
EAB

Session 2
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm
Location: Apollo/Zeus

Learning Without Labels; Comegno on Special Education, Section 504, and MTSS in 2026

What changed in Special Education, this year? What is the new “2 day rule,” and how does it reinforce the need to connect CSTs with faculty? How does MTSS and real-time intervention make the job of teaching “easier,” and why is MTSS the answer to avoiding over-classification? How do the federal disability laws and ever-increasing threat and risk assessment connect? What message helps our staff understand the

riddle of Section 504?

This dynamic session, delivered by school law litigator, adjunct law professor, and best practice consultant, John Comegno, Esq., will engage, entertain, and empower attendees with turnkey, practical strategies to take home.

Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Presenter:

John Comegno

Attorney/Consultant

Comegno Education Institute, Inc. And Comegno Law Group, PC

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:

Comegnoeducation.com

Session 3

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm

Location: Jupiter

Your Secret Superpower: Leading With Your Strengths

What if the key to transforming your district culture wasn't about fixing weaknesses, but about unleashing the genius present in every one of your educators? When people understand their strengths, they stop trying to be someone they're not and start leveraging what they naturally do best, leading to increased engagement, greater performance, and a renewed passion. This session is presented by a NJ educator and a strengths certified coach with a combined eight decades of experience, who have used a powerful tool backed by over fifty years of research to help school and district leaders discover and develop their talents.

Standards 1, 6, 7

Presenters:

Dr. G. Kennedy Greene

Past President

NJASA

Retired Superintendent

Newton Public Schools

Diane Haviland

Consultant

Diane Haviland Consulting LLC

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:

kennedygreene.edu@gmail.com

Session 4

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm

Location: Romulus

Crafting a Superintendent Communications Plan That Awakens Success for All

This session explores how superintendents can build a strategic communications plan that strengthens trust, advances student success, and meaningfully engages their communities. Attendees will gain practical insights into aligning communication with leadership priorities, addressing common challenges

such as misinformation, language barriers, and information overload, and leveraging storytelling and branding to reinforce district values. Through real-world strategies—including listening tours, community forums, and consistent multi-platform messaging—participants will leave with actionable ideas to improve transparency, increase stakeholder engagement, and create a cohesive, effective communication approach that supports both day-to-day operations and moments of crisis.

Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Presenters:

Brian Brotschul
Superintendent
Somerset Hills School District

Max Eisl
Finalsite

Matt Miller
Director of Education Leadership
Finalsite

Session 5

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm

Location: Palladium C

Canines in Your School Community

Schools have traditionally been regarded as multifaceted purpose institutions serving as centers for learning, fostering formative social experiences, and providing safe havens where students are surrounded by the support of teachers, administrators, counselors, and their peers. When students encounter traumatic events in their lives, it is often these individuals to whom they turn first for support. There is a burgeoning interest in a field that is attracting heightened attention: the integration of Animal Assisted (canines) interventions as a complementary component to existing school counseling and support services. This entails augmenting existing resources through an innovative Animal Assisted School Counseling (AASC) model. This program will address pivotal events that influence school communities and society. It will investigate the valuable function of an Animal Assisted School Counseling model in enriching education, offering solace, fostering support, aiding recovery, and fostering resilience in individuals and communities. Additionally, it will explore alternative methods such as Animal Assisted Education in which canines can be employed within educational settings to help students cope with anxiety, improve behavior, and integrate with the curriculum (Vokatis & Ormiston, 2023).

Crisis Response Canines is a New Jersey rooted national nonprofit organization that has provided much-needed stress relief to school staff and students experiencing stress and anxiety due to learning disabilities, stressful environments and loss of life. Andrea Hering is the co-founder and CEO of CRC. John Hunt is a retired Major in the NJ State Police. He was the Homeland Security-Special Operations Commanding Officer. He is the Co-Founder & COO of CRC. David Cittadino is a 30 year educator in the state of New Jersey. He has 20 years of school administration experience, 13 years as a superintendent. He is currently the Wayne School District Superintendent and a CRC canine handler using canines in schools for the past 10 years.

*The program will incorporate certified working canines present at the session.

Standards 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10

Presenters:

David Cittadino
Superintendent

Wayne School District

Andrea Hering
Co-founder & CEO
Crisis Response Canines

John Hunt
Co-Founder & Chief Operating Officer
Crisis Response Canines

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
<https://crisiscanines.org/>

Session 6
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm
Location: Octavius

Building a Culture of Literacy Begins with Access!

Effective classroom libraries are a key foundation for building classroom communities steeped in literacy and learning. Students in classrooms with libraries read 50-60% more than students who do not have the same access to books. This additional time spent reading each day is consistently linked to higher academic achievement.

Standard 4

Presenters:
Jazleen Othman
Director of Literacy
Newark Public Schools

Yolanda Severe
Deputy Superintendent
Newark Public Schools

Ardelio Valdes
Senior Account Executive Senior Account Executive
Scholastic

Session 7
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm
Location: Tiberius

Turning Insight Into Action: Effective Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management In Schools

During this collaborative session, presenters from the NJDOE and the Clifton School District will guide participants through a compelling case study illustrating actions, interventions, and investigations aligned with the behavioral threat assessment and management model. Attendees will examine successful interventions and learn how multidisciplinary teams differentiate between transient threats and substantive intent. Moving beyond theory, the session will demonstrate how data-sharing and wraparound supports, rather than exclusionary discipline, can de-escalate threats for students at risk of violence. Participants will gain practical strategies to strengthen assessment protocols, enhance communication, and promote a proactive school safety culture.

Standards 1, 5, 9

Presenters:

Dr. Danny A. Robertozzi
Superintendent
Clifton Public Schools

Meaghan Zinola
Director of District Safety and Security
Clifton Public Schools

Jim McDavitt
Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning
NJ Department of Education

Session 8
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm
Location: Venus

Closing Learning Gaps Through Personalized Learning and Strategic District Programs

As student needs continue to evolve, educational leaders must implement flexible, student-centered approaches that ensure all learners can thrive. This session explores how personalized learning, supported by targeted AI powered Intervention programs, online tutoring and effective use of existing staff, can close learning gaps and elevate instruction. Participants will learn how to identify individual learning needs, leverage technology for differentiation, and scale personalized learning across classrooms and districts. Attendees will see different scaled intervention models that foster student agency, build confidence, and lead sustainable instructional change in changing times.

Standards 4, 10

Presenters:

Fiona Borland
Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Staff Development
Montgomery Township School District

Diane Torman
Title I Supervisor
Jersey City Public Schools

Sheila Miller
NJ Partnership Manager
Edmentum

Session 9
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm
Location: Mars

What High-Performing Leadership Teams Actually Do Differently

Teacher turnover. Board tensions. Leaders working in silos. When your leadership team isn't aligned, everything gets harder—and your wellbeing takes the hit. Superintendents Mark Guterl (Upper Freehold) and Robyn Klim (Lawrence Township) will share how they moved their district leadership teams—from cabinet members to principals—from fragmented to focused, creating clarity that drives execution and

strengthens resilience. You'll come away with practical, evidence-based strategies to strengthen trust, improve follow-through, and protect your capacity to lead well.

Standards 1, 6, 7

Presenters:

Mark Guterl

Superintendent

Upper Freehold Regional School District

Robyn Klim

Superintendent

Lawrence Township Public Schools

Martín Blank

Founder and CEO

School Wellbeing Solutions

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:

martin@schoolwellbeingsolutions.com

Session 10

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm

Location: Neptune

Discover Innovative Strategies for Staffing Success

Join us for an engaging panel session that explores how school districts are tackling today's staffing challenges head-on. Learn how education leaders are successfully retaining existing staff, recruiting new talent from within their communities, and developing sustainable workforce pipelines that grow talent from within. This session will highlight practical approaches, share success stories, and offer actionable insights to strengthen your district's human capital strategies.

Standards 6, 7, 8

Presenters:

Dr. Dennis Copeland

Director of Human Resources

Hamilton Township School District

Dr. Kayla Lott

Director of Human Resources

Linden Public Schools

Dr. Lauren Patterson

District Partnerships

BloomBoard

Practical Advice – Small Group Roundtable Discussion

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm

Location: Palladium Ballroom A/B

Roundtable 1

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm

Location: Exhibit Hall

Building Coherence Across a Connected Learning Ecosystem

Join us for a high-level conversation focused on building coherence across today's increasingly complex learning environments. This session explores how Renaissance's connected ecosystem brings assessment, instruction, practice, curriculum, and partnerships into tighter alignment to support districtwide goals. Participants will explore how Renaissance Intelligence transforms integrated data into clear, actionable insights that empower leaders to make confident instructional decisions, ensure consistency across schools, and drive measurable impact at scale.

Presenter:

Aggie Monezis
National Academic Advisor
Renaissance

2:30 pm – 2:45 pm

Refreshment Break

Location: Palladium Ballroom A/B (Exhibit Hall)

Breakout Sessions

2:45 pm – 3:45 pm

Session 1

2:45 pm – 3:45 pm

Location: Jupiter

PD for Everyone! Providing Differentiated Professional Development for Staff

Using county partnerships, vendors, and teacher survey feedback, the Berlin Borough School District provided teachers who were in district and out of district with high quality professional development including AI workshops provided by Eastern Regional HS, and multiple options for instructional strategies, differentiated instruction, and staff self care activities. The shared in-service was a huge success and definitely a model that can be replicated in other counties.

Standards 4, 6, 7,10

Presenters:

Julie Crossan
Director of Curriculum
Berlin Borough School District

Jack Marcellus
Superintendent
Berlin Borough School District

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
marcellusj@bcsberlin.org

Session 2

2:45 pm – 3:45 pm

Location: Spartacus

Thriving Schools Don't Happen by Chance: Leveraging Instructional Leadership to Elevate Teaching and

Learning in Times of Change

Today's superintendents are leading through a complex period in public education, shaped by staffing shortages, accountability pressures, financial challenges, and shifting policy expectations. The challenge is not simply managing change, but leading systems that remain focused, coherent, and thriving. Districts that sustain high-quality teaching and learning share a common trait: intentional instructional leadership grounded in a system-wide alignment.

This interactive, research-based session explores how superintendents can leverage instructional leadership as both a stabilizing force and a driver of growth. Participants will examine how alignment from board vision to classroom practice strengthens coherence and elevates teaching and learning in changing times.

Standards 4, 6, 10

Presenters:

Brooke Geller
Supervisor of Innovation, Assessment, and Special Projects
River Edge Public Schools

Christine Moran
Director of Curriculum & Instruction
River Edge Public Schools

Lisa Torres
Supervisor of English & Social Studies
River Dell Regional Schools

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
lisa.torres@riverdell.org

Session 3

2:45 pm – 3:45 pm
Location: Octavius

A Leader's Playbook: The Leadership Behaviors That Change Everything

In this session, Lisa Garofalo, Principal of Bernardsville Middle School, and Angelo DelliSanti, Leadership Solutions Strategist with Capturing Kids' Hearts, will explore how to develop leaders at every level of your organization by building a relationship-driven culture, modeling proven leadership behaviors, and creating self-managing teams. You'll leave with practical steps to improve both the culture and climate of your school and district.

Standards 1, 10

Presenters:

Lisa Garofalo
Principal
Bernardsville Middle School

Angelo DelliSanti
Leadership Solutions Strategist
Capturing Kids' Hearts

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
angelo.dellisanti@capturingkidshearts.org

Session 4
2:45 pm – 3:45 pm
Location: Romulus

Regional Collaboration as a Proven Alternative: 64 Years of Shared Services That Work

Discover how eight school districts have collaborated for 64 years through the Northern Valley Curriculum Center, providing curriculum coordination and professional learning while preserving local control. Originally created to ensure students arrived at the regional high school prepared, NVCC evolved into comprehensive support individual districts couldn't achieve alone. This session demonstrates practical regional collaboration as an alternative to mandatory consolidation. Through video, data, and tangible resources, learn about coordinated curriculum development, teacher committees, and a three-year induction program. The NJSBA-endorsed model offers replicable strategies for districts seeking effective shared services.

Standards 4, 6, 7, 9

Presenters:
Vincent McHale
Superintendent
Closter Public Schools

Kathleen O'Flynn
Director of Curriculum and Instruction
Northern Valley Schools Consortium

Session 5
2:45 pm – 3:45 pm
Location: Venus

Proving What Works: Evidence-Based High-Dosage Tutoring Aligned to NJDOE Expectations

As a provider of high-dosage tutoring across the USA, we understand the growing pressure districts face to demonstrate clear, measurable results. This session will share how our HDT model is built on evidence-based instructional practices and intentionally aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. We'll discuss how districts can implement tutoring with fidelity, monitor student progress in real time, and generate actionable data that meets NJDOE requirements. Participants will gain insight into how thoughtful program design, instructional alignment, and transparent reporting can turn tutoring from an intervention into a proven, results-driven strategy.

Presenters:
Mary Lombardo
K12 Academic Tutoring Director
The Princeton Review & Tutor.com

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
K12team@tutor.com

Session 6
2:45 pm – 3:45 pm
Location: Tiberius

Strategic Planning in Action: Turning Community Perspectives Into Measurable Impact

This session explores how district leaders can strengthen strategic planning by authentically capturing and prioritizing stakeholder voices. Participants will learn how to gather inclusive input from staff, students, families, and community members and transform that feedback into a clear, actionable strategic plan. The session will demonstrate how collective insights can be organized directly into a planning framework that includes aligned goals, measurable objectives, and concrete action steps. Attendees will leave with practical strategies for building transparency, shared ownership, and a living strategic plan that evolves with community needs.

Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Presenters:

Michelle Aquino
Superintendent
North Plainfield School District

Filipe Luis
Assistant Superintendent
North Plainfield School District

Session 7

2:45 pm – 3:45 pm

Location: Neptune

The Responsible AI Playbook for School Districts

This session equips superintendents and district leaders with a practical, governance-first approach to responsible artificial intelligence in K–12 education. Attendees will learn how to move from informal or ad-hoc AI use to a clear, board-aligned policy framework that protects student privacy, promotes equity, and maintains public trust. Grounded in real-world leadership responsibilities, the session covers superintendent accountability, human oversight, acceptable and restricted uses of AI, and strategies for communicating transparently with boards, staff, and families. Participants will leave with concrete tools and next steps to lead AI adoption responsibly and confidently.

Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Presenters:

Kathi Kersznowski
Lead Technology Integration Specialist and Department Head
Washington Township Public Schools

Max Eisl
Finalsite

Matt Miller
Director of Education Leadership
Finalsite

Session 8

2:45 pm – 3:45 pm

Location: Palladium C

Superintendents Leading School Climate Improvement Using the NJ SCI Survey and Platform

This session introduces New Jersey school and district leaders to the New Jersey School Climate Improvement (NJ SCI) Platform, a free, statewide resource developed by Rutgers University in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Education. The platform helps leaders collect data using the NJ SCI Survey to identify priorities, set goals, and implement and monitor strategic, research-based improvement plans.

Grounded in findings from the 2025 American Superintendent Study on the increasing complexity of the superintendent role, the session highlights how superintendents and supervisors can lead the school climate improvement process as an essential component of systems leadership. Participants will explore how NJ SCI tools support inclusive, supportive learning environments while aligning with district goals and priorities. The session's panelists will share practical insights and lessons learned from their experiences leading use of the NJ SCI Survey and Platform in their districts.

Standards 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10

Presenters:

Dr. Richard Bergacs
Superintendent
North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District

Dr. Francisco Rodriguez
Superintendent
Long Branch Public Schools

Dr. Alicia Raia-Hawrylak
Project Manager, School Climate Transformation Project
Rutgers University

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
www.njschoolclimate.org

Session 9

2:45 pm – 3:45 pm

Location: Mars

Do You Have A Sec?- Leading a People-First School

Great school cultures are built through intentional communication and trust. This interactive session equips school leaders with practical, immediately usable strategies for strengthening relationships with staff, students, and families. Participants will learn the core elements of reflective listening, explore interaction styles and how they shape communication, and practice delivering effective feedback using the "Three T's": Timing, Tact, and Tincture. Through reflection, partner activities, and case studies based on real school scenarios, leaders will leave with concrete tools to reduce conflict, increase clarity, and foster a professional culture where people feel valued, heard, and supported.

Standards 1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Presenter:

Nicholas Grimshaw
School Principal
River Edge Public Schools

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:

grimshawn@riveredgeschools.org

Session 10

2:45 pm – 3:45 pm

Location: Apollo/Zeus

BTAM - From Law to Opportunity, Seeing Threat Assessment and MANAGEMENT as an Opportunity to Improve School Climate Safety

I presented this topic at the Summer Safety Conference and had a good turnout. This is a law that places a lot of responsibility on district leaders and this session Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) has been the law for three years, yet some school leaders have not seen the broader value. Schools may be missing opportunities to use the law and research based strategies to ensure student safety and help prevent targeted acts of violence, not just school shootings! Using real world scenarios, participants will be able to consider their responses to cases and determine if their BTAM practice is focused on helping students or just being compliant or non-existent.

Standards 3, 5, 6, 9, 10

Presenter:

Dr. Mary Ann Bell

Superintendent

Burlington Township School District

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:

mbell@burltwpsch.org

3:45 pm – 5:00 pm

Location: Palladium A/B (Exhibit Hall)

Exhibit Hall Networking and Prizes!

The Exhibit Hall remains open until the start of the Presidents Reception. Stop by after a long day and visit with the NJASA Allied Members. (Cash bar)

5:00 pm – 6:30 pm

Location: Seven Stars Lounge (formerly Nero's Restaurant)

2nd Floor – From the Palladium Ballroom, proceed across the casino floor, turn left at the Theatre/Box Office, take the elevator or the staircase to the 3rd floor.

NJASA PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION

Don't miss the opportunity to meet new members and renew old friendships while enjoying adult refreshments and light fare.

Co-Sponsored by L.E.A.D.

FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2026

CONFERENCE/EXHIBITOR REGISTRATION & INFORMATION

7:30 am – 11:30 am

Location: 2nd Floor – Centurion Tower / Palladium Ballroom Registration Desk

7:30 am – 8:20 am

Location: Palladium Ballroom A/B (Exhibit Hall)
Continental Breakfast

The Exhibit Hall will be open from 7:30 am – 10:30 am. Don't miss this opportunity to network with NJASA's preferred providers of equipment, supplies and services.

GENERAL SESSION

8:30 am – 10:15 am

Location: Palladium Ballroom C

Special Recognition will be made honoring NJASA Retirees

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Lily Laux

Dr. Laux has nearly two decades of experience as an educator, in nonprofit work, and leading statewide education departments, including serving as the Deputy Commissioner for the Texas Education Agency.

10:15 am – 10:30 am

Location: Palladium Ballroom A/B (Exhibit Hall)

Refreshment Break

Enjoy a cup of coffee and mingle among the Exhibitors before rushing off to the next session.

Breakout Sessions

10:35 am – 11:35 am

Session 1

10:35 am – 11:35 am

Location: Mars

From Last to Leading: How One District Used 4DX to Drive State-Leading Academic Growth

This session tells the story of how a small district with almost half of its student population economically disadvantaged moved from the lowest-performing district in its county to one of the highest ELA growth statewide, defying expectations and proving that “impossible” outcomes are achievable with disciplined execution. Attendees will learn how a focused, multi-year strategic plan anchored in the 4 Disciplines of Execution (4DX) translated vision into action. Presenters will unpack how Wildly Important Goals, lead measures, visible scoreboards, and a cadence of accountability drove dramatic literacy gains and are now producing similar growth in mathematics. The execution framework shared is scalable and adaptable to districts of all sizes.

Standards 1, 4, 6, 10

Presenters:

Dr. Samantha Bahna
Supervisor of Curriculum & Instruction
Washington Borough School District

Frank Esposito
Superintendent
Washington Borough School District

Earl Jenkins
Principal

Washington Borough School District

Dr. Tatum Johnson
Principal
Washington Borough School District

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
espositof@washboro.org

Session 2
10:35 am – 11:35 am
Location: Tiberius

Developing a Table Top Scenario for a Level I Reunification

This presentation will show how school personnel and first responders can collaborate to develop a tabletop scenario for a school evacuation and reunification for a non-tragic event. The focus will be on planning for a non-loss-of-life situation, with first responders working alongside schools to understand challenges, assess current resources, and identify additional needs. The session emphasizes the importance of coordinated efforts to ensure a smooth Level 1 reunification between students and parents.

Standard 6

Presenters:
Jeff Gale
Director
Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning
New Jersey Department of Education

Dr. Thomas Gambino
Education Specialist
Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning
New Jersey Department of Education

Session 3
10:35 am – 11:35 am
Location: Venus

Strength & Joy: Communicating Your Leadership Identity

Our words and how we share them speak to our presence and how the myriad groups we serve will perceive our leadership. They also influence our self-perception and help us present as leaders in a manner that encourages others to believe, support and ultimately follow. This session will emphasize how we can convey our strength and joy for our work.

Standards 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8

Presenter:
Michael Portas
Superintendent
Pequannock Township School District

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
michael.portas@pequannock.org

Session 4

10:35 am – 11:35 am

Location: Octavius

Leading for Longevity: Elevating District Finances and Faculty Wellness for a Thriving School Community

In an era of funding cuts and a narrowing educator pipeline, leadership success requires balancing academic excellence with innovative fiscal stewardship. Attendees will learn how to explore their risk tolerance and evaluate wellness initiatives to plot a course to elevate your district's financial future. This interactive workshop will discuss strategies designed to offset the rising costs of insurance while creating a new paradigm for longevity.

Standards 1,4, 6 9, 10

Presenters:

Shaun Banin

Superintendent

Tabernacle Township School District

Robyn Kilm

Superintendent

Lawrence Township Public Schools

Jared Scherz

Founder and CEO

Teacher/Coach

Session 5

10:35 am – 11:35 am

Location: Romulus

Onboarding Is Leadership: How the First 90 Days Shape Retention, Culture, and Performance

Onboarding is often treated as a compliance function, yet the first 90 days of employment represent one of the most critical leadership opportunities a district has. This session reframes onboarding as a shared leadership responsibility that shapes employee retention, performance, and professional conduct. Participants will explore how intentional onboarding practices—including electronic onboarding systems, structured first-day orientations, early Board policy review, and mid-year orientation—establish clear expectations, reduce employee relations issues, and strengthen district culture. Designed for superintendents and central office leaders, this session offers practical strategies for elevating onboarding from paperwork to leadership.

Standards 2, 3, 6

Presenter:

Kayla Lott

Director of Human Resources

Linden Public Schools

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:

Session 6

10:35 am – 11:35 am

Location: Spartacus

Inclusion With Intention: Elevating Academic Rigor for Students With Disabilities in Changing Times

In changing educational times, leaders face increasing pressure to ensure inclusive practices do not unintentionally lower academic expectations for students with disabilities. This session explores how district leaders can intentionally elevate academic rigor while honoring the principles of the Least Restrictive Environment. Participants will examine common misconceptions about ability, leadership decisions that influence instructional quality, and research-based practices that promote access and challenge. Attendees will leave with practical insights to support inclusive systems that position students with disabilities as capable, engaged learners deserving of rigorous, equitable educational opportunities.

Standards 1, 3, 4, 6, 10

Presenter:

Elizabeth McQuaid
Director of Special Services
West Essex Regional School District

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
emcquaid@westex.org

Session 7

10:35 am – 11:35 am

Location: Jupiter

How to Ensure IEP Compliance: Accommodations and Modifications

This session will provide staff and administrators with a clear, practical understanding of accommodations and modifications, grounded in real classroom examples. Our presentation will provide a foundation, so that attendees will learn how to distinguish between accommodations and modifications, implement them with fidelity, and track their use to ensure compliance with IEPs and 504 plans. The session will also outline a district-wide rollout strategy, emphasizing collaboration with supervisors of curriculum to reinforce expectations, ensure consistent implementation, and support teachers in meeting students' individualized needs across settings.

Standards 3, 4, 9, 10

Presenters:

Jonathan Hesney
Director of Special Services
Pascack Valley Regional High School District

Stacey Cherry
Special Education Attorney
Fogarty, Hara, LaPira, & Cherry, LLC

The Website/Email address where my Presentation/Materials can be viewed after my session:
jhesney@pascack.org

Adjourned