ISACS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

INSPIRE DETROIT 2026

NOVEMBER 5-6, 2026

2 KEYNOTES **165** SESSIONS **1,600+** ATTENDEES

2 INSPIRE 2026
3 Schedule
4 Registration
5 Presenters
8 Sessions: Thursday
20 Sessions: Friday
33 Sessions At-A-Glance
37 Sponsors & Exhibitors

For the most up-to-date information visit:
isacs.org/annualconference

Register for INSPIRE 2026!

ISACS ANNUAL CONFERENCE
INSPIRE 2026 DETROIT
NOVEMBER 5-6, 2026

The Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) invites all independent school professionals to join us at INSPIRE 2026. With over 160 unique sessions and two acclaimed keynote speakers, you'll gain fresh perspectives, connect with independent school peers from across the region, and bring exciting new tools back to your school. This year's conference will be held at Huntington Place in Detroit, right along the award-winning Detroit Riverwalk—named Best Riverwalk in America three years in a row by *USA Today*!

As a former head of school and past attendee of many ISACS Annual Conferences, I can attest that this is some of the most valuable learning that exists for independent school professionals. The presenters and sessions have been curated by our expert staff to ensure the most timely and relevant professional learning will be awaiting you this November.

Our Thursday keynote, delivered by bestselling author and community-building practitioner Charles Vogl, will urge us to rethink how real connection happens. Vogl shows how the most powerful communities are built in intimate, authentic, campfire-sized moments. It's a timely reminder that meaningful school culture isn't built through spectacle, but through the small yet purposeful moments. We all know that a culture of connection is more important than ever.

On Friday, keynote speaker Shawn Achor, author and renowned researcher on happiness and human potential, will explore how the beliefs we hold shape what we believe is possible and how that belief, in turn, shapes our results. Achor will share the seven core beliefs most predictive of strong performance, resilience, and well-being, along with strategies to release the limiting beliefs holding us back. Same world, different beliefs, different outcomes—I can't think of a better message for educators shaping the next generation.

Outside of our keynote sessions, there is so much to explore for every member of our independent school community, from Pre-K to Upper School, faculty to staff, administrators and leaders to marketing and admissions professionals. I encourage you to dive into this guide to find what most excites and inspires you, your colleagues, and your school community.

Best regards,

Anne Stavney

Anne Stavney, PhD
Executive Director, ISACS

inspiring independent schools

REGISTRATION

LOCATION

Huntington Place
Convention Center
1 Washington Boulevard, Detroit, MI

DATES & TIMES

Wednesday, November 4

Come a day early & visit Detroit area school(s).

*Click here to view a **list of participating schools**.*

Please contact the schools directly to schedule your visit.

Thursday, November 5

7:30 a.m.	Check-in opens
9:00-10:15	**Sessions**
10:30-11:45	**Sessions**
11:45-1:15 p.m.	**Luncheon & Keynote**
1:30-2:45	**Sessions**
3:00-4:15	**Sessions**
4:30-5:30	Thursday Afternoon Reception *(invite only)*

Friday, November 6

7:30 a.m.	Check-in opens
9:00-10:15	**Sessions**
10:30-11:45	**Sessions**
11:45-1:30 p.m.	**Luncheon & Keynote**
1:45-3:00	**Sessions**
3:15-4:30	**Sessions**

Registration

Save by registering early! Registration fees are per person and include all sessions & lunch each day.

Register for INSPIRE 2026!

Each attendee must register separately.

Early Bird	Register by September 30	
School Type	Both Days	One Day
ISACS Member	**$350**	**$230**
Non-Member	**$450**	**$330**
Regular	Register October 1–14*	
ISACS Member	**$400**	**$280**
Non-Member	**$500**	**$380**

**After October 14 late fees will apply.*

Registration Details

- You may opt out of the luncheon/keynote during the registration process.
- Plated luncheon includes salad, main course, and dessert.
- There is no on-site registration.
- Cancellations must be received at programinfo@isacs.org by October 14, 2026 to be considered for a refund.

  ISACS will determine the refund amount, if any, at the conclusion of the conference. Cancellations received after October 14 will not receive a refund. Registration may be transferred to another member from the same school.

HOTEL & TRAVEL

ROOM BLOCK

Westin Book Cadillac Detroit

1114 Washington Blvd, Detroit, MI 48226

Book Your Room ($269/night)

Use the button above or call (888) 627-7150 to request a room using the ISACS rate.

Check-in: 4 p.m. **Checkout:** Noon

$269/night + tax is for double/single occupancy and is valid until October 14, 2026, midnight ET or until the room block reaches capacity. Cancellations require 48 hours' notice before arrival..

Travel between hotel & convention center
The Westin is a ten minute (0.4 mile) walk to the convention center. Complimentary shuttles will be available for attendees in the mornings & afternoons for transport between the hotel and Huntington Place.

Transportation & Parking

Air travel

The Detroit Metro Airport (DTW) is ~22 mins from downtown Detroit—including Huntington Place Convention Center & the Westin.

Transport between DTW & the Westin
The **Detroit Airport Express** offers transport directly between DTW and the Westin. Tickets are $6-8.

RideShare rates vary, averaging ~$60 one way.

Parking

The most convenient and economical onsite daily parking is at the Convention Center's Rooftop Parking which is $25/day (no in-and-out privileges).

View the **Huntington Place Parking page** for the most up-to-date information.

Overnight parking (Westin guests only)
Overnight valet parking at the Westin is $50/night.

Schools arriving by bus
Please notify ISACS at programinfo@isacs.org.

GENERAL INFO

Check-in

Floor 3, Room 310A, 7:30 a.m.–4 p.m. each day
Follow ISACS signage. *Plan to arrive no later than 8:30 a.m. to receive your name badge prior to the morning sessions.*

- Coffee will be available each morning.
- Approximately one week prior to INSPIRE 2026, details including meeting room locations, maps, and updatess will be posted online at **isacs.org/annualconference**.
- There will be no on-site conference packets. Refer to isacs.org for the most up-to-date information.

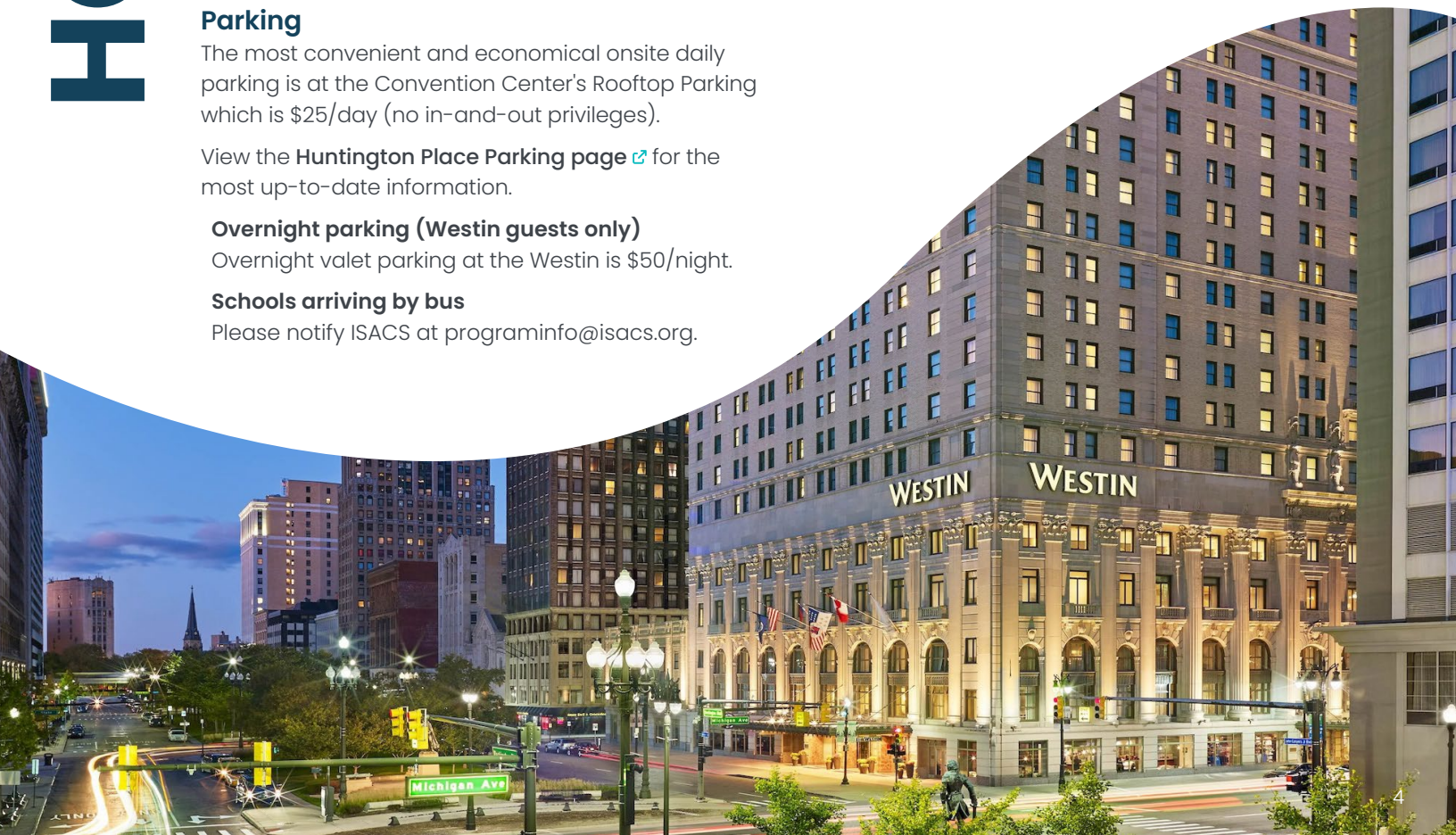
Complimentary Headshot

Stop by Booth 17 for your complimentary headshot brought to you by **Geskus Photography Inc.**

Bookshop

Schuler Books will be at Booths 12–13 to sell books including titles authored by presenters.

Book signings by authored presenters will be announced at the conference.



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Charles Vogl is an adviser, speaker, and the author of three books, including the international bestseller *The Art of Community*, now in its 2nd edition. He is a trusted thought leader for the Google School for Leaders, which develops more than 20,000 Google managers. He also is a founding member of the Google Vitality Lab which navigates big challenges in health and well-being. His work is used to advise and develop leadership and programs worldwide within organizations including Airbnb, Amazon, Dow Inc., and the U.S. Army. His work draws on 3,000 years of spiritual traditions to understand how individuals build loyalty, strengthen identity, and live out shared values in a fragmented society. He holds an M.Div. from Yale, where he studied spiritual traditions, ethics, and business as a Jesse Ball duPont Foundation scholar.

TL-01 **Creating Deep Connection: Community Building Fundamentals**

T-41 **Ignite Connection: Building Stronger Communities**

Shawn Achor became one of the world's leading researchers on the connection between a positive brain and success. He has traveled to more than 50 countries studying how beliefs predict performance, resilience, and well-being. Achor is a *New York Times* bestselling author of multiple books, including The Happiness Advantage, which has sold more than one million copies worldwide. His new book, *The Power of Beliefs* was released in May 2026. His research has been featured on the cover of Harvard Business Review, his TED Talk is among the most viewed of all time, and his PBS program has reached millions of viewers. Achor has worked with one-third of the Fortune 100, as well as the NFL, NASA, and the U.S. Marines at Camp Pendleton. He has been interviewed twice by Oprah Winfrey and is one of only two external speakers ever invited to address the President's staff at Camp David.

FL-01 **The Power of Beliefs: How Seven Core Beliefs Are the Greatest Predictors of Future Performance, Resilience & Well-Being**

FEATURED PRESENTERS

Tim Bono, PhD, is a faculty member in the department of psychological and brain sciences at Washington University in St. Louis where his teaching and research focus on positive psychology and college student development. His work has been featured in media outlets including *NBC News, CNN, Fast Company,* and the *Associated Press*. Thousands of students have taken his popular courses on the Psychology of Young Adulthood and the Science of Happiness. He summarizes the research along with how his students have put that information into practice in their own lives, in his book, *Happiness 101: Simple Secrets to Smart Living & Well-Being.*

T-42 ⇄ F-02 **The Science of a Good Day: Research-Backed Habits for Sustainable Well-Being**

T-61 ⇄ F-24 **The Anatomy of Trust: Strategies for High-Performing Teams**

Josh Chuck is a fourth-generation resident of San Francisco's Chinatown, where his family has deep roots, including doctors, merchants, teachers, and pastors. With more than 25 years of experience as a youth worker, filmmaker, and fundraiser, he is deeply committed to his community. He co-directed his first feature documentary, Chinatown Rising, alongside his father, Rev. Harry Chuck, and has presented the film to more than 400 audiences. He recently co-directed the film *Making Waves: The Rise of Asian America,* which premiered in 2025. He is currently in post-production stage of his latest documentary film, *Dragon Boat*, about a multi-ethnic teen dragon boat team in San Francisco.

F-08 ***Chinatown Rising*: Badass Asian Americans of the Civil Rights Era**

F-30 ***Making Waves*: Asian American Youth Take the Lead**

F-50 ***Dragon Boat*: Tradition, Teamwork & Belonging**

F-69 **Oral Histories: Best Practices from a Self-Taught Film Director**

The **Detroit Creativity Project** was founded in 2011 on the belief that every child should have the opportunity to succeed. We help youth in Detroit and the surrounding areas transform their lives by teaching them to improvise—a tool that fosters collaboration and respect for others, builds literacy and encourages experimentation in a safe, supportive setting.

T-04 **Serious Play: An Applied Improv Workshop**

T-24 **Improvisation & Cooperative Game Play**

Thomas R. Guskey, PhD, is professor emeritus at the University of Kentucky. A graduate of the University of Chicago, he began his career as a middle school teacher, served as an administrator in the Chicago Public Schools, and was the first director of the Center for the Improvement of Teaching and Learning, a national educational research center. Guskey was named a fellow in the American Educational Research Association and was awarded the Association's prestigious Relating Research to Practice Award. He is the author/editor of 30 books and more than 300 published articles and book chapters, and best known for his work on teacher change, professional learning, educational assessment, and grading and reporting student learning.

F-01 ⇄ F-45 **Grading & Reporting Student Learning: Effective Policies & Practices**

F-23 **Differentiating Instruction with Mastery Learning**

Jason Craige Harris is a strategist, essayist, and storyteller who helps leaders and some of the sharpest minds in the country solve hard problems. When organizations and communities are stuck, polarized, or quietly unraveling, Harris is often called to steady the room, fix what's broken, and help people talk to each other. Trained in ethics, psychology, and systems thinking, he blends science with real life—using humor, deep listening, and storytelling to help navigate conflict, repair relationships, and make decisions under pressure. He brings big ideas down to earth, helping people see that leadership isn't about being the loudest or the smartest—it's about being human, especially when it's hardest.

T-45 ⟲ F-03 **When the Classroom Gets Wobbly: Stabilizing Conflict with Dignity**

T-62 ⟲ F-25 **Steady Leadership: Navigating High-Stakes Conversations with Clarity & Care**

Evan Harris is an expert on emerging AI risks in schools, with a focus on deepfake abuse and digital safety. He has advised the Office of the First Lady, the Texas State Senate, and the general counsel of the National Association of Independent Schools, where he co-authored the legal guide on deepfake sexual abuse. A former teacher and administrator with a decade of experience in independent schools, Harris holds a master's in private school leadership from Teachers College and was a Technology Ethics Fellow at Stanford's Human-Centered AI Institute.

T-46 ⟲ F-12 **Deepfake Threat Landscape: What Schools Are Up Against**

T-64 ⟲ F-31 **Deepfake Response: Policy, Crisis Readiness & Prevention**

Chris Lukach, APR, is chief executive officer of AKCG–Public Relations Counselors, a national public relations consultancy with deep experience in reputation management, crisis communications, and issues management. Lukach has been instrumental in developing issues and crisis communications plans and consulting with the firm's independent school clients on sensitive and pivotal matters. He is a lecturer and author on a range of reputation-management topics and adjunct professor of crisis communications at Rowan University, where he co-designed the Crisis Communication Certificate of Undergraduate Study Program.

T-65 ⟲ F-52 **The Six Factors Shaping Your School's Reputation**

F-09 **How Faculty Can Build Trust in Daily School Interactions**

F-33 **Reputation 101: What Schools Need to Know About Building & Protecting Reputation**

Caroline Miller, EdD, is a neuroeducation specialist at St. Paul's School for Boys (MD), serving as their director of learning services for grades 5-12. She holds a Doctor of Education, with a specialization in mind, brain, and teaching; and a Master of Science degree in special education from Johns Hopkins University. Her work centers on applying neuroscience, self-regulated learning, and teacher efficacy research to practical, inclusive, and evidence-based professional learning models. She also is lead consultant and co-founder of Efficacy Lab Group Consulting, which offers individualized and data-driven support in creating and managing professional learning systems in independent schools.

T-63 **How the Brain Learns to Learn: Neuroscience, Self-Regulation & What It Means for Your Classroom (Grades 6–12)**

F-05 **How the Brain Learns to Learn: Neuroscience, Self-Regulation & What It Means for Your Classroom (PK–Grade 5)**

F-28 **Teacher Efficacy Is a Brain State: What Neuroscience Tells Us About Teacher Support**

F-47 **Metacognition Is Not a Buzzword: The Brain Science of Attention & Student Agency That Transfers**

Jessica Minahan, PhD, BCBA, is a licensed and board-certified behavior analyst, special educator, and best-selling author. With more than 20 years of experience partnering with school systems globally, she is a recognized expert at the intersection of behavior, mental health, and learning. Minahan specializes in supporting students with trauma histories, anxiety-related challenges, and oppositional behaviors. An acclaimed international speaker and consultant, she is noted for translating complex mental health and behavioral concepts into actionable strategies for educational organizations. She is the author of *The Behavior Code Companion* and co-author of *The Behavior Code*.

T-01 ⟲ T-43 **Behavior Blind Spots: Overlooked Strategies to Reduce Anxiety & Challenging Behavior**

T-21 **Kids Who Challenge Us: Increasing Work Engagement & Reducing Oppositional Behavior**

Louisa Penfold, PhD, is a lecturer and the chair of Arts and Learning at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. She has worked on the curation of children's play spaces at internationally renowned art museums including Tate Modern, the Serpentine, and MoMA, as well as acting as an arts and culture advisor to the United Nations. Penfold is the director of Project Zero's Art/Play, a collaborative study looking at the integration of modern and contemporary arts into public school curriculum in the U.S. Her recently published book for parents, *Every Child Is an Artist: Artist-Inspired Activities for Cultivating Children's Creativity* is out now with Workman Publishing.

Photo: Carl Tremblay

F-06 ⟲ F-27 **Material Play: Why Materials Matter in Creative Learning**

F-48 **Playful Art Exercises for the Early Years Classroom**

Kristin Smith is a partner in the Houston and Minneapolis offices and a co-chair of the education industry group at Fisher Phillips LLP where her practice focuses exclusively on independent and private schools. Smith assists schools in a variety of areas, including: student and employee discipline; faculty, staff, and student contract drafting; handbook and policy drafting, implementation, and enforcement; LGBTQ issues, including transgender students and employees; board governance and training; discrimination claims and EEOC charges; administration and faculty training and development; school entanglement in family court proceedings; and investigations, litigation, arbitration, and mediation.

- F-11 **The Independent School Legal Forecast: What Heads & Administrators Need to Know**
- F-32 **Know Before You Act: Legal Guidance for All Independent School Employees**
- F-53 **The Independent School Legal Check-up: Trends, Risks & Best Practices**

Bob Sornson, PhD, was a teacher and administrator for 30 years, and he is the founder of the Early Learning Foundation. He is a consultant and best-selling author of more than 30 books for educators, parents, and children, including *Over-Tested and Under-Prepared: Shifting from One-Size-Fits-All Instruction to Personalized Competency Based Learning*. His work focuses on early learning success, competency-based learning, and parent engagement, founded on the belief that every child deserves a rock-solid early learning experience to help them become learners for life. Sornson earned a bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Michigan and his PhD from Andrews University.

- F-07 **Essential PK–K Math Skills & Concepts**
- F-29 **Essential Grades 1–2 Math Skills & Concepts**
- F-49 **Essential Grades 2–3 Math Skills & Concepts**

E. Jason Tremblay, labor and employment group vice chair, as well as Chicago office managing partner at Saul Ewing LLP, advises clients across various industries, including K–12 independent and charter schools, on a wide variety of employment, regulatory and administrative matters. In the K–12 space, he regularly acts as outside general counsel to schools, handling issues such as advising on employment/human resources matters, conducting internal investigations, reviewing and drafting school policies and handbooks, responding to governmental audits and investigations, and handling litigation and other contested matters involving educational institutions.

- T-03 **Avoid the Perception of a Cover-Up: How to Foster a Culture of Reporting & Avoiding Liability**
- T-23 **Student Voices, Legal Choices: School Leadership's Guide to Free Speech Issues**

Heidi Tringali is a pediatric occupational therapist, speaker, and writer. She founded Tringali Occupational Therapy Services (T.O.T.S) in response to a need for occupational therapy services in independent schools. T.O.T.S. now provides support and consultative services to independent schools and pre-schools throughout the country. She is a member of the American Occupational Therapy Association, where she serves as a media expert. Tringali holds a certification with the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, BA degrees in special education and psychology from Hastings College, and an MS degree in occupational therapy from Tufts University. She is author of *The Readied Child: Parenting Tools for Learning and Life Readiness.*

- F-04 **The Readied Child**
- F-26 **Self, Student, Space: Creating Conditions for Learning**
- F-46 **Adding Performance-Based Activities to Your Curriculum**
- F-68 **Talking to Parents: When It's Not Academics**

Lisa Van Gemert shares best practices in education with audiences around the world using a combination of neuropsychology, pedagogy, experience, humor, technology, and sheer fun. She is an expert consult to television shows including Lifetime's *Child Genius*, and a writer of award-winning lesson plans, as well as numerous published articles on social psychology and pedagogy and four books, including the Legacy Award winning book, *Perfectionism: A Practical Guide to Managing Never Good Enough.* A former teacher, school administrator, and Youth & Education Ambassador for Mensa, she shares resources for educators and parents at giftedguru.com.

- T-02 **The Gift of Self: Developing & Enhancing Self-Concept in Gifted Learners**
- T-22 **Through the Roof: Raising Students' Thinking Skills Through Depth & Complexity**
- T-44 **Grouping the Gifted**

Trevor Waddington spent 17 years working in independent schools, beginning his career in the classroom before quickly stepping into leadership roles in admissions, marketing, communications, enrollment management, and financial aid. In 2018, Waddington "retired" from working in schools to help schools around the world attract and enroll best-fit students from mission-aligned families. An expert in digital psychology and behavioral economics, he brings a unique perspective on how families consider, evaluate, and ultimately choose an independent school education.

- F-10 **The Kids Are Driving the Bus: How Gen Alpha Is Disrupting Independent School Admissions**
- F-34 **The Trifecta: How to Create a Successful Cross-Platform Marketing Campaign**
- F-51 **How to Position Your School to Show Up in a Chatbot Search**

THURSDAY, NOV 5
QUICK GUIDE

Keynote

TL-01 Creating Deep Connection: Community Building Fundamentals *with Charles Vogl*

Featured Sessions

T-01 **Minahan** | Behavior Blind Spots: Overlooked Strategies to Reduce Anxiety ... ↻ T-43

T-02 **Van Gemert** | The Gift of Self: Developing & Enhancing Self-Concept in Gifted Learners

T-03 **Tremblay** | Avoid the Perception of a Cover-Up ...

T-04 **Detroit Creativity Project** | Serious Play: An Applied Improv Workshop

T-21 **Minahan** | Kids Who Challenge Us: Increasing Work Engagement & Reducing ...

T-22 **Van Gemert** | Through the Roof: Raising Students' Thinking Skills Through Depth & Complexity

T-23 **Tremblay** | Student Voices, Legal Choices: School Leadership's Guide to Free Speech Issues

T-24 **Detroit Creativity Project** | Improvisation & Cooperative Game Play

T-25 ISACS | Adjusting Parent Expectations in the Age of Amazon & 24/7 News

T-41 **Vogl** | Ignite Connection: Building Stronger Communities

T-42 **Bono** | The Science of a Good Day: Research-Backed Habits for ... ↻ F-02

T-44 **Van Gemert** | Grouping the Gifted

T-45 **J. Harris** | When the Classroom Gets Wobbly: Stabilizing Conflict ... ↻ F-03

T-46 **E. Harris** | Deepfake Threat Landscape: What Schools Are Up Against ↻ F-12

T-61 **Bono** | The Anatomy of Trust: Strategies for High-Performing Teams ↻ F-24

T-62 **J. Harris** | Steady Leadership: Navigating High-Stakes Conversations ... ↻ F-25

T-63 **Miller** | How the Brain Learns to Learn: Neuroscience, Self-Regulation ... (Grades 6–12)

T-64 **E. Harris** | Deepfake Response: Policy, Crisis Readiness & Prevention ↻ F-31

T-65 **Lukach** | The Six Factors Shaping Your School's Reputation ↻ F-52

Accreditation Sessions

T-20 Self-Study to Standing Ovation

T-40 Writing the Report: Insights from Breck's Self-Study

T-60 A Strategic Self-Study for All

T-80 ISACS | What Can DASL Do for You? Succeed at DASL Data Entry & Maximize Value for Your School

Roundtables

T-05 ISACS | Roundtable for ISACS Lead Learners

T-66 ISACS | Roundtable for Faculty, Staff & Administration from Under-represented Groups

THURSDAY, 9–10:15 a.m.

SESSION LISTINGS

T-01 Behavior Blind Spots: Overlooked Strategies to Reduce Anxiety & Challenging Behavior ↻

Jessica Minahan, *Behavior Analyst* — K–12

Interventions for challenging student behaviors often fail to achieve sustained success. Common practices often rely on rewards and consequences, instead of prioritizing preventative strategies. When strategies fail, it can mean the current approach is overlooking key factors in students with mental health needs. Three particular "blind spots" are the connection between thoughts and perceptions and behavior, student's self-awareness, and the need to directly teach skills to change behavior. Identify gaps in behavioral support and develop a roadmap for effective positive behavior interventions. Gain strategies to reduce negative and inaccurate thinking, prevent challenging dysregulated behaviors and enhance students' engagement, task initiation, persistence, emotional regulation, and self-monitoring.

↻ *Thursday, 1:30 p.m. (T-43)*

T-02 The Gift of Self: Developing & Enhancing Self-Concept in Gifted Learners

Lisa Van Gemert, *giftedguru.com* — K–12

Explore the six essential keys to building strong self-worth and resilience in gifted students. Learn to help gifted learners recognize their inherent worth, celebrate their accomplishments, cultivate meaningful connections, embrace the power of practice and effort, develop intuitive decision-making skills, and receive feedback that fuels growth rather than limits potential. Drawing on research from leading experts including Carol Dweck, Malcolm Gladwell, and Anders Ericsson, gain strategies to implement immediately. Leave with tools to foster the self-concept and confidence these exceptional learners need to thrive both academically and personally.

T-03 Avoid the Perception of a Cover-Up: How to Foster a Culture of Reporting & Avoiding Liability

E. Jason Tremblay, *Saul Ewing LLP* — All

Maintaining and encouraging a school culture where reporting of misconduct is promoted is a key component of avoiding and minimizing liability. In this seminar, hear why creating such a culture is important, how to create such a culture and real-life scenarios highlighting best and worst practices.

T-04 Serious Play: An Applied Improv Workshop

Detroit Creativity Project — All

Experience several key improv principles and focus on how to use improv to promote good communication and teamwork when working with students. Learn how these principles connect to learning competencies like self-management, listening, collaboration, and decision-making. This session will include interactive exercises you can use in your classroom to foster these skills with your students.

T-05 Roundtable for ISACS Lead Learners

ISACS Professional Services Committee

Join others serving as Lead Learners and actively contribute to the continuing development of a vibrant learning community. Make connections with other Lead Learners and share models for professional learning. Leave with new connections, ideas for adult learning at your school, and visions of how to strengthen the impact of this community of teacher leaders.

T-06 Mindfulness & Movement to Prevent Educator Burnout

Heather Kurut, Morgan Park Academy

All

Educators face rising emotional and cognitive demands that impact both adult well-being and student regulation. This session equips administrators, teachers, and staff with tools—breathwork, gentle movement, mindfulness, and aromatherapy—to prevent burnout and strengthen individual wellness and school climate. Practice strategies to implement in classrooms, meetings, and leadership spaces and leave with a sustainable regulation framework to support personal resilience and student success.

T-07 Moving Away from Screens with Activity Passports

Brynn Wade, The Kazoo School

All

Explore one school's Wild Explorers Passport Program, designed to intentionally move students away from screens and into meaningful, real-world experiences. Learn how a series of themed passports—focused on hiking, service, community, night exploration, and more—encourage curiosity, independence, and connection. Hear how structured, choice-based activities enrich students' lives while fostering social-emotional growth and lifelong engagement.

T-08 How Parent/School Connections Move Your School into the Future

Jenny Pitcher, Detroit Country Day School

All

Learn how parent education and connections focus on transforming schools from isolated institutions into collaborative communities where families are active partners in school success. Hear how equipping parents with research-based strategies and fostering deep school-family relationships can improve student outcomes, boost attendance, and create a more inclusive, supportive climate for all.

T-09 I'm No Influencer: You Gotta See This!

Diana Matthews, Detroit Country Day School

Early Childhood | Lower

Get hands-on with the latest STEAM gadgets and gizmos in this playful, high-energy session. Explore maker-tested tools that blend creativity, curiosity, and rigor to meet diverse learner needs. Touch, test, and tinker with classroom-ready tech while discovering innovative ways to spark engagement. Follow my STEAM wagon full of cool stuff—you've seen it and wondered—now come try it yourself.

T-10 Using Nonfiction to Grow Readers & Writers

Katie McEnaney & Ellen Bunn, EAGLE School of Madison

Lower | Middle

Research shows that kids love nonfiction, yet many educators struggle to integrate award-winning, engaging nonfiction literature into their classroom. At a time when books are under siege, nonfiction provides an important opportunity for students, librarians, and teachers to learn about the world together. Lessons and units for nonfiction reading and writing that celebrate diversity, promote critical thinking, foster interdisciplinary connections, and reinforce literacy skills will be shared.

T-11 Handwriting Is More Than Just Neatness

Gabi Guillory Welsh, Horizon Academy

Lower | Middle

In a culture hurtling towards increased screen time and digital technology, why are school districts and even states mandating cursive instruction? Hear about the necessity of handwriting instruction across grade levels, and the research that supports handwriting as a pillar of literacy and learning. Learn and practice the basics of direct and explicit handwriting instruction and walk away with helpful tips and tools.

T-12 I Observe: It's in My Head

Chea Parton & Erika Eicholz, Oak Farm Montessori School

Lower | Middle | Upper

Explore approaches to classroom observation and record-keeping: what they are, why they're important, and how to combine them for maximum instructional effectiveness. Hear about different tools, and identify meaningful connections between observation and record-keeping. This session will support growth in observation and record-keeping to enable participants to effectively guide the development of the whole child.

T-13 With Learning & Inclusion for All

Stacy Synold & Rebecca Tiffany, University Lake School

Lower | Middle | Upper

Our new center for neurodiversity has redefined engagement for every learner, academically gifted and neurodivergent. Explore a holistic approach to inclusion and the frameworks we use to support teachers in mastering differentiated instruction. Breakthroughs and setbacks from our journey will be shared as well as a toolkit to help design a custom blueprint for your own school to empower educators and meet diverse needs with actionable, inclusive strategies.

T-14 From Belonging to Mattering: Designing for Community & Student Voice

Louis Frank & Sloan Magliery, The Wellington School

Middle

Explore how middle schools can move beyond simply gathering student feedback toward intentionally designing systems where students help shape their own experience. Student voice is a design principle that should be embedded across culture, structures, and decision-making. When done well, this work shifts students from passive participants to active co-creators of their community, deepening connection, responsibility, and contribution.

T-15 Using AI to Deepen Students' Mathematical Thinking

Chris Bolognese & Emily Dennett, Columbus Academy

Middle | Upper

This session equips mathematics educators with three frameworks to leverage AI as collaborative thought-partners by modifying problem constraints, critiquing ambiguity/flaws in problem statements, and brainstorming authentic real-world contexts. Analyze concrete classroom artifacts and apply these strategies to your own teaching. A toolkit will be shared to amplify student reasoning, foster critical thinking, and shift the focus from getting answers to exploring mathematical connections.

T-16 Evidence-Based Science Literacy Strategies

Angelia Rougeau, John Burroughs School

Middle | Upper

This session will equip secondary science teachers with high-impact literacy routines that integrate seamlessly with inquiry-based learning. Practice strategies for reinforcing scientific vocabulary, structuring evidence-based discussions, and helping students connect concepts. These routines strengthen reading comprehension and scientific discourse without sacrificing hands-on investigation. Leave with classroom-ready techniques to boost engagement, support diverse learners, and strengthen students' ability to read, reason, and communicate scientifically.

T-17 Changing the World One School at a Time

Dean Ruff & Clare McGowan, Old Trail School

Middle | Upper

Hear how intermediate school entrepreneurs collaboratively designed products and developed business proposals. Learn how they marketed their goods to classmates, families, and the community to raise funds to build schools in developing countries. See how their efforts extended beyond the classroom and ultimately led to a journey to Nepal, where pen-pal letters were shared, time was spent living in the community, and help was provided to construct a school.

T-18 The Global Impact Diploma: A Parallel Pathway

Brett Potash, Maharishi School

Upper | School Leaders | Marketing & Communications

The Global Impact Diploma (GID) is a capstone experience founded on the premise that students need three things to thrive: agency, meaningful learning, and well-being. Through a series of courses and experiences (Leadership, Internships, Entrepreneurship, Impact Project, etc.) the GID enhances your curriculum, allowing students to become authors of their own learning. Discover one school's path to implementation.

T-19 Money! Money! Money!

Amy Borntrager & Rebecca Bailey, Columbus School for Girls

School Leaders | Development & Advancement

Explore the key drivers of successful development—from major gifts to high-impact appeals—and learn how to build a clear fundraising plan for any initiative. Discover strategies that move donors to act and leave with tools for immediate use. Expect interactive discussion, friendly competition, and actionable tips to help you turn great ideas into dollars for your community.

T-20 Self-Study to Standing Ovation: Accreditation Without the Overwhelm

Anna Delia, Hawken School

Everyone Preparing for the Self-Study

Gain insights and strategies from the recent accreditation cycle including behind-the-scenes organization, building a strong steering committee, empowering chapter leaders, setting deadlines, and distributing the workload. Leave with tools for drafting and refining the report, coordinating across stakeholders, maintaining steady momentum, and hosting the visiting team in ways that best showcase their school and set everyone up for success.

T-21 Kids Who Challenge Us: Increasing Work Engagement & Reducing Oppositional Behavior

Jessica Minahan, *Behavior Analyst*

All

Among the many reasons teachers leave the field within the first five years, disruptive students are at the top of the list. Without intervention, these children are at risk for poor performance, diminished learning, and social/behavior problems in school. Overwhelming, negative, and inaccurate thoughts can contribute to student disengagement. When this is the case, traditional suggestions such as incentives, offering breaks, graphic organizers, or even checklists will not help the student initiate an activity. Be able to implement preventive tools, strategies, and interventions for reducing oppositional behavior, increasing work engagement, initiation, persistence, and self-monitoring.

T-22 Through the Roof: Raising Students' Thinking Skills Through Depth & Complexity

Lisa Van Gemert, *giftedguru.com*

K–12

Looking for a one-stop shop for raising the thinking level of students in your classroom? Look no further than the Depth & Complexity framework, developed specifically to enable quality thinking for a wide range of student abilities. Learn the fundamentals of how the framework works in classrooms. If you like effective pedagogical tools, or if you're a teacher wanting to raise the thinking ceiling in your classroom, this is your session.

T-23 Student Voices, Legal Choices: School Leadership's Guide to Free Speech Issues

E. Jason Tremblay, *Saul Ewing LLP*

All

There is a growing list of polarizing national, local, and global issues that are making their way into the daily lives of educators, parents, and students in the K–12 space. While private schools generally have broad authority to regulate speech in the school environment, there also is a risk of shutting down all speech, both legally and in the court of public opinion. This session will help school personnel understand the underlying laws regulating speech in private schools and suggestions on how to handle free speech issues.

T-24 Improvisation & Cooperative Game Play

Detroit Creativity Project

All

Explore the mental health benefits of cooperative game play through improvisation. This practice can reduce anxiety in new situations, promote positive relationships among peers, and can provide space to give your brain a break. Join us as we create a space where people can learn new activities, feel safe to fail, and experience the joy of improvisation.

T-25 Adjusting Parent Expectations in the Age of Amazon & 24/7 News

Anne Stavney, ISACS & **Lou Salza**, *Hawken School Trustee*

All

A growing number of parents expect the personalization, speed, and ease of an Uber or Amazon transaction in their interactions with schools, along with communications disseminated at the velocity of digital news with real-time updates. Focusing on these heightened and unrealistic parent expectations, this session will suggest ways to build a culture of partnership in which parents and the school honor each other's expertise and establish informed and appropriate expectations of each other.

T-26 The Finnish Approach to Well-Being at School

Elizabeth Ko, The Summit Country Day School

All

Finland, a country known for its positive school outcomes, calls out well-being as a critical priority. But how do educators foster it in practice? What lessons from this Nordic approach can we translate to our U.S. settings? Hear what one school counselor learned after a Fulbright grant allowed her to spend four months visiting dozens of Finnish schools to investigate those questions.

T-27 Portrait of an Educator

Julie Winn, Mounds Park Academy

All

Be introduced to a new framework to define faculty characteristics that lead to a collaborative and supportive team. With greater clarity, leaders can define and refine their current culture and make more deliberate hiring decisions with an eye toward long-term culture-building. Benefit from the opportunity to reflect on your setting and leave with a practical exercise for your own faculty to use in culture building work.

T-28 Toward a More Equitable & Successful Hiring Process

John Novick, North Park Elementary School

All

The work of attracting, hiring, and retaining the best teachers and administrators has never been more challenging. Learn the key mind shifts and changes in practice required to create a more inclusive, equitable, and successful hiring process for your school—changes that can strengthen retention of new hires. We'll also explore how we might advocate for change in our own schools.

T-29 Walking with Purpose: Growth-Centered Learning Walks

Ryan Welch & Danielle Holden, The New School

PK–12

Learn about a practitioner-tested learning walk protocol grounded in the Danielson Framework and built around a core belief: observation should fuel teacher growth, not administrative compliance. Hear a division head and a classroom teacher share the protocol's three components, the thinking behind each, and the facilitation language needed to introduce it well. Leave with a ready-to-use protocol and a clear path to implementation.

T-30 Learning to Learn: Mixed-Age Project-Based Learning

Nathan Smith & Marjorie MacGregor, Pembroke Hill School

K–12

What does learning how to learn look like across age groups? How can the innate curiosity of our youngest learners serve as inspiration for the intellectual behaviors of our oldest students? How can teachers cultivate deeper learning dispositions in themselves through collaboration over shared or overlapping projects? Early Childhood and Upper School educators will share practices and takeaways involved in deep, ongoing project-based learning across age groups.

T-31 Building a Forest Program from the Ground Up

Lisa Borowy & Julie Harris, Hawken School

Early Childhood

Hear about the launch of an Early Childhood Forest Program, including the research that informed our thinking and steps taken to move from concept to pilot in a short timeframe. Program philosophy, logistics, staffing, and lessons learned during the first years of implementation will be discussed. Join other educators interested in developing or expanding nature-based learning programs at their schools.

T-32 Beyond Book Week: Celebrating Literacy All Year

Megan Shook, West End School

Lower

Transform literacy into a yearlong celebration that students can't resist. Explore creative, low-barrier strategies that spark excitement for reading and writing across the school year. Leave with ready-to-use ideas, themed activities, and classroom examples that build student enthusiasm and family access. Collaborate and share your own practices—because the best literacy inspiration happens when educators learn from one another.

T-33 Intentional Tech Integration: Saving the Screentime for Where it Matters Most

Marnie Diem, Hillel Day School

Lower Middle

The last decade saw the educational pendulum swing from fully analog to digitally saturated, bypassing that "just right" balance. Explore ways to move beyond digital substitution, instead focusing on strategically reserving screen time for transformative learning. Hear about technology integration through a mindful lens, shifting focus from digitizing tasks to redefining experiences while learning to pair analog foundations with digital workflows to amplify student inquiry.

T-34 Facilitating Conversations Across Differences

Jannie Kim, University High School of Indiana

Middle Upper

How do we keep conversations respectful and meaningful when perspectives clash? Explore the teacher's role in facilitating respectful discourse, preventing harm, and modeling evidence-based discussion. Learn to establish and uphold norms, respond in the moment, and turn disagreement into deeper learning with tools and language that can be used right away to help students build lifelong skills for productive conversation.

T-35 Pop Goes the Easel: Communication Intensifies Curriculum

Joy Van Scyoc, The Linsly School

Middle Upper

Communication is essential to creating a comfortable and effective learning environment. Even more powerful is cultivating a classroom climate where meaningful connections emerge through a genuine interest in students, connections that can then be leveraged to enrich and deepen the curriculum. Explore an educator's experience in uncovering powerful links through student discussions that connect the Holocaust, cultures, and the world beyond the classroom.

T-36 Lead by Heart: The Leadership Academy

Kate Fleming & Rob Conover, Maumee Valley Country Day School

Middle Upper

In the Lake Woebegon-esque culture of independent schools, the drive to be above average creates a high demand for student leadership positions. Our mission is training students to lead well, with purpose, a servant's heart, and the technical know-how to ensure successful follow through. Hear how our Leadership Academy provides a training model that empowers prospective high school leaders with both the how and the why of leadership on campus and in the community.

T-37 *Guernica* Reimagined Through an Inquiry Lens

Naira Jansen, Beacon Academy

Middle Upper

Bring language, culture, and art to life through Picasso's iconic painting *Guernica*. Discover how to build an inquiry-driven interdisciplinary unit at the intersection of language, culture and art using authentic texts for Spanish levels 3-IB/AP. Leave with a complete, ready-to-use unit that has students exploring the question of how art can serve as a powerful form of protest, and strategies to design your own rich, thought-provoking learning experiences.

T-38 Unmasking Excellence: Intersectional Moves Supporting AANHPI Students

Reanne Young, Emerson School & Maria Graciela Alcid, Buckingham Browne and Nichols

Middle Upper

Despite 70 percent of AANHPI students reporting high well-being, nearly half meet clinical criteria for depression—a "Help-Seeking Gap" masked by the Model Minority myth. This practitioner-led session addresses entrenched narrative patterns in school language and referral practices. Through case studies, identify high-impact shifts to interrupt deficit-based narratives. Gain tools to redesign support structures and promote mental health equity within their unique school communities.

T-39 Give Peace a Class: Theory & Action

Kayla Corcoran, Thaden School

Upper

Amid persistent global conflict, peace is not simply a "nice idea" but a substantive, academic subject. This session provides secondary educators the foundational tools to teach peace, violence, and conflict as nuanced concepts. Engage with frameworks and adaptable materials from the United States Institute of Peace, examine your own assumptions, and consider classroom lessons and community-based projects that cultivate student agency, critical reflection, and sophisticated understanding of the world around you.

T-40 Writing the Report: Insights from Breck's Self-Study

Sarah Flotten & Julie Kallio, Breck School

Everyone Preparing for the Self-Study

Preparing for your school's accreditation self-study report and visiting team? Join experienced committee chairs for key strategies, including establishing leadership structures of an editor and lead writer, coordinating timelines, aligning Google documents to facilitate writing committees, and developing a NotebookLM chatbot for the visiting team. Additionally, we will discuss how we leveraged the self-study process to reflect on culture and climate data and amplify our strategic plan.

11:45 a.m.–1:15 p.m.
LUNCHEON & **KEYNOTE**

TL-01 Creating Deep Connection: Community Building Fundamentals

Charles Vogl, *Author, Community-Building Practitioner*

Discover why the most powerful community connections don't happen in big noisy spaces; they happen around the campfire. Bestselling author Charles Vogl reveals how intimate experiences create vulnerable conversations that build lasting communities. Learn why arena-sized ambitions require campfire sized moments and how to plan spaces where meaningful relationships form. Gain practical strategies to offer the time, proximity, and permission people need to connect authentically. Stop investing only in spectacle. Start building intimate experiences where your community powerfully grows strong.

T-41 Ignite Connection: Building Stronger Communities

Charles Vogl, *Author, Community-Building Practitioner*

All

Join Charles Vogl for an interactive session where we will delve into community building fundamentals that tackle the pressing issue of loneliness in the U.S. Through discussions and insights from his books, Vogl will go deeper on distinctions we can use to shift a culture. Learn how to shift experiences to feel deeper and more meaningful using the distinction acknowledgment. Perfect for leaders passionate about enhancing relationships and combating loneliness in their profession, organization, city, or family.

T-42 The Science of a Good Day: Research-Backed Habits for Sustainable Well-Being

Tim Bono, *Washington University St. Louis*

All

A lot of the cultural messages we receive about happiness are contradicted by scientific data. Drawing on findings from a popular university course on the Science of Happiness, this session dispels common myths and highlights the habits that truly improve life satisfaction. Take an evidence-based look at how to incorporate small, practical shifts into your daily routine to achieve more genuine joy and balance in both your professional and personal life.

Friday, 9 a.m. (F-02)

T-43 Behavior Blind Spots: Overlooked Strategies to Reduce Anxiety & Challenging Behavior

Jessica Minahan, *Behavior Analyst*

K–12

Interventions for challenging student behaviors often fail to achieve sustained success. Common practices often rely on rewards and consequences, instead of prioritizing preventative strategies. When strategies fail, it can mean the current approach is overlooking key factors in students with mental health needs. Three particular "blind spots" are the connection between thoughts and perceptions and behavior, student's self-awareness, and the need to directly teach skills to change behavior. Identify gaps in behavioral support and develop a roadmap for effective positive behavior interventions. Gain strategies to reduce negative and inaccurate thinking, prevent challenging dysregulated behaviors and enhance students' engagement, task initiation, persistence, emotional regulation, and self-monitoring.

Thursday, 9-10:15 a.m. (T-01)

T-44 Grouping the Gifted

Lisa Van Gemert, *giftedguru.com*

K–12

Gifted students often have a preferred group size of one. Would you like to learn ways to move students in and out of groups flexibly and effectively? Would you like to know what the research says about productive grouping? Explore grouping students in a way that builds camaraderie and saves time. Learn best practices for planning and facilitating small group instruction for gifted students and how to avoid common pitfalls. Take away great ideas and an understanding of when to use what.

T-45 When the Classroom Gets Wobbly: Stabilizing Conflict with Dignity

Jason Craige Harris, *Pollyanna*

Middle Upper

Educators know when a classroom interaction starts to wobble: a tense exchange, a comment that lands poorly, a conflict threatening to derail learning. In these moments, the classroom can feel like a game of Jenga, where one wrong move destabilizes everything. Gain a practical framework for stabilizing classroom conflict while protecting everyone's dignity. Drawing on social psychology, restorative practice, and the lived realities of schools, this session blends research, storytelling, and reflective work with concrete skill-building. Learn conversational moves that lower defensiveness, restore safety, and reopen pathways for learning, with strategies for navigating difficult moments with steadiness and care.

Friday, 9-10:15 a.m. (F-03)

T-46 Deepfake Threat Landscape: What Schools Are Up Against

Evan Harris, *Pathos Consulting Group*

All

Anyone with a phone can now create a convincing deepfake image, video, or voice—and schools are a common target. Learn what schools are up against: AI-generated nude images of students, sextortion, voice clones used to impersonate leaders or defraud staff, fabricated clips meant to humiliate teachers or damage a school's reputation, fast-spreading misinformation, and AI companions marketed to kids. Hear how these attacks unfold, who they target, and why schools are vulnerable. Get a clear read on where the law stands and language to discuss deepfake risk with boards, colleagues, and parents.

Friday, 9-10:15 a.m. (F-12)

T-47 The Fourth Fire: Place-Based Partnerships with Indigenous Communities

Christopher Hemler, University Liggett School

All

University Liggett School has cultivated a partnership with the Wyandot of Anderdon Nation, moving beyond the textbook to center Indigenous voices in the classroom. Explore the mechanics of building a mutually beneficial partnership that empowers students to engage in rigorous, place-based research. Learn how to transition from "teaching about" Indigenous communities to "learning with" them through authentic assessments and shared history.

T-48 Beyond Monthly Celebrations: Deepening K-12 DEIJB Action

Jonelle Harris, New City School & Reanne Young, Emerson School

All

Schools often begin their DEIJB journey with cultural celebrations, but how do we move toward lasting change? Explore shifting from performative events to mission-aligned, sustainable action. Learn to articulate clear growth goals and use assessment tools to advance your school's progress. Through collaborative workshopping, gain strategies to build institutional capacity, ensuring DEIJB initiatives move beyond the calendar and into your school's ethos.

T-49 How Music Helped Us Teach Emotions

Julia Patterson & Brooke Herron, Virginia Chance School

Early Childhood

Learn how a start-of-the-year study on feelings in a PK classroom grew into a yearlong exploration of how music helps us express our emotions. Explore a child-led comprehensive journey that PK students and teachers took to learn how to express their feelings and cope with them. See how parent involvement can make the difference between a meaningful experience and a spectacular one.

T-50 Responding to Student Behavior Through Restorative Practices & Family Partnership

Courtney Britton, The Frances Xavier Warde School

Early Childhood | Lower | Middle

Educators and families face rising student dysregulation alongside increasing parental pressure to prevent failure. Drawing on current child and adolescent mental health data and Jessica Lahey's *The Gift of Failure*, discover how these trends affect family-school relationships. Explore Multi-Tiered System of Supports, restorative practices, and responses to intensive needs, with systems-based strategies to address behavior and to collaboratively strengthen partnerships.

T-51 Teaching Is a Team Sport

Kim Green & Karen Yusko, Laurel School

Lower

Meeting the diverse needs of learners can feel impossible for a single teacher. Three teachers share how a collaborative small-group structure helps individualize literacy and math instruction. See how we use assessment data to form flexible skill-based groups and run a shared rotation block that provides targeted instruction while other students work independently. Leave with tools and a fresh vision for collaborative teaching.

T-52 Scaffolding Research Skills Across Grade Levels

Anne Holmes & Lindsy Serrano, Francis Parker School of Louisville

Lower | Middle

How do we prepare students to be informed, critical thinkers, and engaged global citizens? Hear how two courses—Digital Literacy & Library and Racial Literacy & Digital Citizenship—create a cohesive, scaffolded approach to research and media literacy. Through student-centered projects, we show how to develop these skills across grade levels. Leave with adaptable frameworks, mini-lessons, and strategies to support independence and strengthen presentation skills.

T-53 Cancelled

T-54 Designing Powerful Interdisciplinary Learning

Cristina Torres & Rachel Raab, North Shore Country Day School

Lower | Middle

Explore the planning process behind a second-grade interdisciplinary unit that places social studies and English Language Arts at the center of meaningful, real-world inquiry. Hear how literacy, activism, history, science, technology, music, art, and library partnerships create deeper engagement and coherence across the school day. Gain strategies for cross-curricular design that strengthen literacy, elevate social studies instruction, build critical thinking, and empower learners as informed, creative citizens.

T-55 Making Learning Multi-Sensory Across Disciplines

Regina Jorgensen, Fortune Academy

Lower Middle Upper

Learn to implement a multi-sensory approach across grade levels and subject areas. Designed for teachers, learning specialists, and administrators, participants will see demonstrations of the Concrete–Representational–Abstract (CRA) model applied in core subjects. Strategies—including interactive notes, near-point references, and color-coded materials—will be shared to support diverse learners. Leave with ideas that increase engagement, retention, and student independence.

T-56 Fostering Critical Thinking with Intentional AI Integration

Claudia Mihm & Lisa Flohr, Greenhills School

Middle Upper

Learn to adapt your classroom practices to foster the critical thinking skills needed to engage responsibly with AI. Take a deep-dive into two lessons that demonstrate how to foster critical thinking alongside AI. Collaborate with others to identify authentic AI integration points within your classroom. Leave with a toolkit of resources ready for immediate classroom use, including how to establish guidelines that help all students grow with AI.

T-57 Building a Sustainable Global Exchange Experience

Rhoda Weston & Rick Schoeny, Cincinnati Country Day School

Middle Upper

Hear how a Midwest school launched its first East Asia exchange with Taiwan's Tzu Chi Senior High School. Discover how teachers, administrators, parents, and students worked together to plan and carry out a two-way program centered on cultural immersion, language learning, and shared exploration of environmental solutions. Leave with ideas for building and integrating similar global learning experiences into your own curriculum.

T-58 Welcome to the Rock: Collaborative Arts Leadership

Brian Bozanich, Maumee Valley Country Day School

Upper

You can harness the agility of independent schools to lead transformative, city-wide arts collaborations. Using a massive multi-school production of *Come From Away* as a case study, discover how independent school leadership navigates the logistical complexities of multi-campus casting, student technicians, and scheduling. Gain a framework for bridging the independent and public sectors through shared arts events, fostering deep community roots and mission-driven student experiences.

T-59 The Why & How of Senior Capstone Projects

Steven Sowell & Thomas Cherry, Louisville Collegiate School

Upper

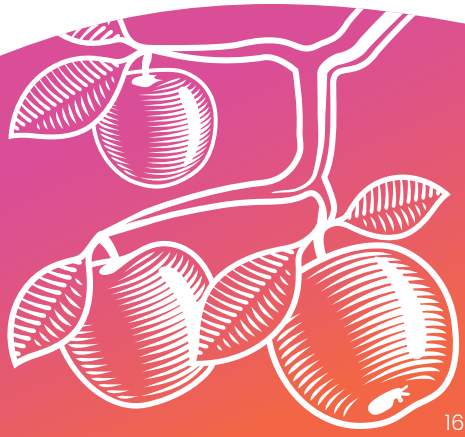
Hear about our unusual step of embedding a three-month-long, student-chosen and designed passion project in the second semester of Senior English for each senior. Discover how to cultivate not only high proficiency with literary skills and conventions, but also real-world and whole-child competencies that will more fully prepare young people for college, the workforce, and life.

T-60 A Strategic Self-Study for All

Mark Childs & Kassi Conditt, Madison Country Day School

Everyone Preparing for the Self-Study

Madison Country Day School was one of the first schools to complete a self-study using the new ISACS Membership and Accreditation Guide. The Steering Committee co-chairs will share how we used the revised academic sections (3A/3B) to develop academic strategic plans. Walk through our inclusive, efficient process—including lessons learned and what we'd do differently—with activities to inspire your own approach, no matter where you are in the journey.



T-61 The Anatomy of Trust: Strategies for High-Performing Teams

Tim Bono, *Washington University St. Louis*

All

Trust is the single most important variable for a successful organization, yet the challenges of recent years have made it harder than ever to maintain. Explore how emotional intelligence helps teams navigate hardship and rebuild professional relationships that have been strained by adversity. Leave with research-based strategies to foster a more resilient workplace culture where staff members can thrive and contribute to a shared mission.

Friday, 10:30 a.m. (F-24)

T-62 Steady Leadership: Navigating High-Stakes Conversations with Clarity & Care

Jason Craige Harris, *Pollyanna*

School Leaders

School leaders often step into high-stakes, emotionally charged conversations: concerned parents, difficult feedback with employees, trustee tensions, or institutional controversy. These moments call for strategic clarity and inner steadiness. This session weaves together science, storytelling, and reflective work with practical communication strategies. Practice tools that reduce defensiveness, surface underlying concerns, and guide difficult conversations toward constructive outcomes, so you can act with clarity and care when it matters most.

Friday, 10:30 a.m. (F-25)

T-63 How the Brain Learns to Learn: Neuroscience, Self-Regulation & What It Means for Your Classroom (Grades 6–12)

Caroline Miller, *Neuroeducation Specialist*

Middle Upper

Self-regulated learning is the engine behind study skills, motivation, and sustained effort, and its demands intensify sharply in the middle and upper school years. As students take on heavier independent workloads and longer timelines, the brain systems behind planning, focusing, and follow-through are still maturing, often unevenly within a single class. Using case studies, examine familiar breakdowns such as avoidance, disorganization, and poor time estimation, and what they reveal about students. Leave with strategies for building these skills and moving students toward real academic independence.

T-64 Deepfake Response: Policy, Crisis Readiness & Prevention

Evan Harris, *Pathos Consulting Group*

All

Knowing the deepfake threats is the easy part. Putting policy, crisis readiness, and education in place before an incident hits is the work most schools have not done yet. Walk through the creation of a deepfake policy that fits a school's culture and how to build an incident response sequence to follow under pressure: securing evidence, notifying the victim and family, getting images taken down, managing communications, and meeting obligations under the law. Learn about prevention by educating students, faculty, and parents so the whole community is harder to harm. Work through realistic crisis scenarios and leave with actionable advice you can put to immediate use.

Friday, 10:30 a.m. (F-31)

T-65 The Six Factors Shaping Your School's Reputation

Chris Lukach, *AKCG–PR Counselors*

School Leaders Admissions Marketing & Communications Business Officers

Today's communication landscape is shaped by more than just new communication methods. Changing trends in news consumption and audience behavior—from shrinking attention spans, to validation-seeking social media behavior, to uncharted levels of compassion fatigue—are forcing school leaders to rethink their communication practices, prioritizing disruptive forms of communication that penetrate noise and break down cynicism. Explore these trends and how they challenge reputational management principles and techniques for overcoming the communication barriers of the "attention-deficit age."

Friday, 1:45 p.m. (F-52)

T-66 Roundtable for Faculty, Staff & Administration from Under-Represented Groups

ISACS Equity & Justice Committee

Faculty, Staff & Administration from Under-Represented Groups

It is our hope that this session serves as a gathering space to uplift the voices and experiences of colleagues from under-represented groups. This session will provide space to process conference themes, share experiences, elevate challenges, and connect with colleagues from across the ISACS community in support of creating more equitable schools.

T-67 Hiding in Plain Sight: The Risks of AI Glasses

Christie Stover, Bergman Academy & Neil O'Hare, Neil O'Hare Security Consulting

School Leaders

AI-enabled glasses introduce emerging risks including covert recording, privacy breaches, cheating, and campus reconnaissance. This session helps independent school leaders understand the threat landscape and implement policies, signage, visitor protocols, and enforcement strategies immediately. Leave with a low-cost policy framework and communication plan to strengthen campus safety while gaining a manageable entry point into AI security issues without feeling overwhelmed.

T-68 Bridging Brain & Behavior: From Neuroscience to Student Success

Erika Rackers & Kaysi Rinks, KVC Academy

All

Educators are increasingly asked to respond to complex student behaviors while maintaining high academic expectations. Explore how insights from neuroscience can help educators better understand the connection between brain development, behavior, and learning. Gain practical, research-informed strategies to support students in ways that improve both behavior and academic outcomes.

T-69 Collaborative Case Management: Working with Agency Partners

Laurie Gross-Kammer & Abby Greenfield, Gross Schechter Day School

All

Learn how your school can utilize internal and external partnerships to support specific student needs. Leveraging our team's specialties and supplementing with outside agencies provides access to a day school education that previously wouldn't have been possible. Through these partnerships and strategies, families, teachers, and students collaborate to build integrated support systems for IEPs, accommodation plans, and individual student need.

T-70 Emergent Learning: Let Students Take the Lead

Mandi Wojciehowski & Sally Goodman, Marshall School

Early Childhood | Lower

An emergent learning framework provides learners with freedom and allows them to demonstrate key skills and competencies in deeply meaningful ways. Explore the philosophical background of emergent learning, examples of successful projects both outdoors and indoors, and solutions to potential barriers. We will simulate the planning and documentation process within the parameters of various school schedules and learning environments.

T-71 Unearthing a Sense of Place: Fossils, Collaboration & the Wonder of Discovery

Melissa Ganim & Lauren Hanahan, The College School

Early Childhood | Lower

Starting with a hands-on fossil discovery, explore an inquiry-based, emergent preschool project that unfolded over the course of the school year. Following the initial fossil experience, participants will be led through the yearlong study of fossils and place-based discovery within a Reggio Emilia-inspired PK classroom.

T-72 From Chaos to Control: Simple Systems for Behavior, Transitions & a Well-Run Classroom

Danielle Fuentes & Lori Buchanan, Wheeling Country Day School

Lower

This session equips elementary educators with strategies for managing behavior, teaching expectations, and structuring smooth transitions throughout the day. Learn to build consistent routines that support whole-group instruction, independent work, and centers. Explore small-group instruction and tiered reading groups, differentiating support, and maintaining engagement. Discover how small, intentional shifts can improve student behavior, accountability, and overall classroom flow.

T-73 Cultivating Global Citizens Through Project-Based Learning

Karin Scott & Lauren Yavor, Greenhills School

Lower | Middle

Discover how to combine meaningful project-based learning and advocacy to empower middle and upper elementary students to change the world. Learn to craft curriculum around real-world, high-interest issues like the modern refugee crisis, climate change, and more, while building fundamental reading, writing, research, and critical thinking skills. Leave inspired with teaching strategies, authentic assessment ideas, and advocacy projects you can adapt for your own classroom.

T-74 Leveraging Universal Design for Learning to Create Inclusive & Engaging Environments

Carrie Kamm, Chiaravalle Montessori School

Lower | Middle

Explore how Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies such as offering choice, fostering independence, and designing flexible materials that support diverse learning profiles can be integrated with Montessori principles. Examine how observation, student agency, and thoughtfully prepared environments align with UDL—and how these practices can be adapted for all classrooms to increase access, engagement, and meaningful participation across the curriculum.

T-75 Drawing Connections: Visual Arts & Interdisciplinary Study

Trevor Campbell, Canterbury School

Lower | Middle | Upper

Examine how the Visual Arts can connect learning across disciplines while remaining responsive to students. Leveraging the flexibility of independent schools and a choice-based visual arts curriculum, schools can design thematic and integrated learning experiences that extend beyond traditional subject boundaries. Explore how studio practice can foster real-world relevance, interdisciplinary thinking, and engagement without sacrificing the integrity of the visual arts.

T-76 Growth Over Grades: Escaping the Points Trap

Dan Polifka & Nathan Gleiner, The Seven Hills School

Middle | Upper

Grade obsession is real and it obstructs learning. Two teachers at a competitive school share the framework they built to put ownership back in students' hands, shifting focus from point accumulation to genuine growth through skills-based feedback and student self-evaluation. Leave with concrete, adaptable strategies for reducing grade anxiety and building a culture of real learning—whether you're ready to go all-in or just take a first step.

T-77 Big Outcomes, Small School College Counseling Success

Catherine Lewis & Stephanie Ihler, St. John's Northwestern Academies

Upper

Small independent schools can deliver personal, powerful college and career guidance without significant resources. Efficient, high-impact advising strategies that support multiple postsecondary pathways will be shared. Discover systems to streamline support while emphasizing personal and meaningful student connections. Leave with tools to build a more intentional, outcomes-driven college counseling model.

T-78 Wayfinding in Troubled Times

Carla Young, Cranbrook Schools & Karen Dye, Pine Cobble School

All

Courageous Conversations and Restorative Practices are socio-ecological models that help us confront our freedoms using dialogue to help heal social harm. Considering the sign of the times, need for repair, and environmental design, we can build our schools to reduce stress, improve relationships, and create a better world for all beings. Experience some of the skills necessary to cultivate healthy relationships within ourselves, between people, and within communities in a world determined to divide us.

T-79 Leading the School You Came From

Cassie Grant & Natalie Simms, Brownell Talbot College Preparatory School

All

What happens when you step into leadership at the very school where you once taught? Designed for new and aspiring independent school leaders navigating internal transitions, explore managing former peer relationships, confidentiality, boundary-setting, and shifting identity within established faculty culture. Leave with frameworks, conversation protocols, and reflection tools to lead with clarity, integrity, and confidence inside the communities that shaped them.

T-80 What Can DASL Do for You? Succeed at DASL Data Entry & Maximize Value for Your School

Kevin Kunst, ISACS

Those responsible for school data for Accreditation, Admissions, Advancement, or Financial Operations

ISACS schools are required to submit their school's data for accreditation in the NAIS DASL portal. Come for a guided demonstration on how to enter data into DASL and what you can do with that data once it's there. It is a data-driven world, and your school can use key data points to help you reach your goals.

4:30–5:30 p.m.
THURSDAY RECEPTION

RSVP Required

Heads of School, Lead Learners & Diversity Practitioners are invited to a reception in celebration of their leadership and contributions to ISACS schools. This invitation-only reception is hosted by ISACS board, committees, and staff.

Invitation forthcoming.

Sponsored by: FISD

FRIDAY, NOV 6
QUICK GUIDE

Keynote

FL-01 The Power of Beliefs: How Seven Core Beliefs Are the Greatest Predictors of Future Performance, Resilience & Well-Being *with Shawn Achor*

Featured Sessions

F-01 **Guskey** | Grading & Reporting Student Learning ... ↻ F-45
F-02 **Bono** | The Science of a Good Day: Research ... ↻ T-42
F-03 **J. Harris** | When the Classroom Gets Wobbly ... ↻ T-45
F-04 **Tringali** | The Readied Child
F-05 **Miller** | How the Brain Learns to Learn ... (PK–Grade 5)
F-06 **Penfold** | Material Play: Why Materials Matter ... ↻ F-27
F-07 **Sornson** | Essential PK–K Math Skills & Concepts
F-08 **Chuck** | *Chinatown Rising*: Badass Asian Americans ...
F-09 **Lukach** | How Faculty Can Build Trust in Daily School ...
F-10 **Waddington** | The Kids Are Driving the Bus: How Gen ...
F-11 **Smith** | The Independent School Legal Forecast ...
F-12 **E. Harris** | Deepfake Threat Landscape ... ↻ T-46
F-23 **Guskey** | Differentiating Instruction with Mastery Learning
F-24 **Bono** | The Anatomy of Trust: Strategies for ... ↻ T-61
F-25 **J. Harris** | Steady Leadership: Navigating ... ↻ T-62
F-26 **Tringali** | Self, Student, Space: Creating Conditions ...
F-28 **Miller** | Teacher Efficacy Is a Brain State: What ...
F-29 **Sornson** | Essential Grades 1–2 Math Skills & Concepts
F-30 **Chuck** | *Making Waves*: Asian American Youth ...
F-31 **E. Harris** | Deepfake Response: Policy, Crisis ... ↻ T-64
F-32 **Smith** | Know Before You Act: Legal Guidance ...
F-33 **Lukach** | Reputation 101: What Schools Need to Know ...
F-34 **Waddington** | The Trifecta: How to Create a ...
F-46 **Tringali** | Adding Performance-Based Activities ...
F-47 **Miller** | Metacognition Is Not a Buzzword: The Brain ...
F-48 **Penfold** | Playful Art Exercises for the Early Years Classroom
F-49 **Sornson** | Essential Grades 2–3 Math Skills & Concepts
F-50 **Chuck** | *Dragon Boat*: Tradition, Teamwork & Belonging
F-51 **Waddington** | How to Position Your School to Show ...
F-52 **Lukach** | The Six Factors Shaping Your School's ... ↻ T-65
F-53 **Smith** | The Independent School Legal Check-up ...
F-68 **Tringali** | Talking to Parents: When It's Not Academics
F-69 **Chuck** | Oral Histories: Best Practices from a Self-Taught ...

Accreditation Sessions

F-22 ISACS | Plan & Conduct the ISACS School Community Survey
F-44 ISACS | Analyze & Interpret the ISACS School Community Survey Results
F-67 ISACS | Get the Most Out of the ISACS Survey

Roundtable

F-54 ISACS | Roundtable for Division Heads

FRIDAY, 9–10:15 a.m.

SESSION LISTINGS

F-01 Grading & Reporting Student Learning: Effective Policies & Practices ↻

Thomas R. Guskey, *University of Kentucky* — K–12

Hear what we know about effective grading and reporting policies and practices. We will review the importance of fairness, honesty, and equity in grading and describe ways to ensure meaningful communication between teachers, students, and families. Procedures for implementing new reporting structures, including standards-based and competency-based grading models, will be highlighted along with policies and practices that should be avoided due to their negative consequences for students, teachers, and schools.

↻ *Friday, 1:45 p.m. (F-45)*

F-02 The Science of a Good Day: Research-Backed Habits for Sustainable Well-Being ↻

Tim Bono, *Washington University St. Louis* — All

A lot of the cultural messages we receive about happiness are contradicted by scientific data. Drawing on findings from a popular university course on the Science of Happiness, this session dispels common myths and highlights the habits that truly improve life satisfaction. Take an evidence-based look at how to incorporate small, practical shifts into your daily routine to achieve more genuine joy and balance in both your professional and personal life.

↻ *Thursday, 1:30 p.m. (T-42)*

F-03 When the Classroom Gets Wobbly: Stabilizing Conflict with Dignity ↻

Jason Craige Harris, *Pollyanna* — Middle, Upper

Educators know when a classroom interaction starts to wobble: a tense exchange, a comment that lands poorly, a conflict threatening to derail learning. In these moments, the classroom can feel like a game of Jenga, where one wrong move destabilizes everything. Gain a practical framework for stabilizing classroom conflict while protecting everyone's dignity. Drawing on social psychology, restorative practice, and the lived realities of schools, this session blends research, storytelling, and reflective work with concrete skill-building. Learn conversational moves that lower defensiveness, restore safety, and reopen pathways for learning, with strategies for navigating difficult moments with steadiness and care.

↻ *Thursday, 1:30 p.m. (T-45)*

F-04 The Readied Child

Heidi Tringali, *Tringali Occupational Therapy Services (T.O.T.S)* — Early Childhood, Lower

Using the model from her book, *The Readied Child*, Tringali unpacks the neurological and developmental factors that shape learning readiness in today's students. Learn why so many children arrive at school dysregulated or overwhelmed—and what you can do about it. Simple, easy-to-implement classroom strategies designed to change the trajectory of student performance will be provided.

F-05 How the Brain Learns to Learn: Neuroscience, Self-Regulation & What It Means for Your Classroom (PK–Grade 5)

Caroline Miller, *Neuroeducation Specialist*

Early Childhood | Lower

Self-regulation begins long before students can name it, and from PK–grades 4 or 5 it is still being built. At these ages, attention, executive skills, and self-regulation develop rapidly, and children rely on co-regulation with trusted adults before they can manage on their own. Using case studies, see how routines and scaffolded choices grow the early roots of focus, effort, and persistence. Learn to translate "learning to learn" into concrete language for young students and leave with strategies that support regulation while gradually handing more agency to the child.

F-06 Material Play: Why Materials Matter in Creative Learning

Louisa Penfold, *Harvard University, Author*

Early Childhood | Lower

Explore the potential of children's play with materials and examine how materials have been positioned across different learning theories including Froebel, Reggio Emilia, and New Materialism. Learn about 'pedagogical curation' that can be used to design learning environments that connect contemporary art practices and children's creative learning. This strategy includes practical steps for sourcing materials, researching artists, and scaffolding learning through the selection of materials, tools, vocabulary, and techniques. Leave with the knowledge and tools for designing classroom experiences that center creativity, play, and learning.

Friday, 10:30 a.m. (F-27)

F-07 Essential PK–K Math Skills & Concepts

Bob Sornson, *Early Learning Foundation*

Early Childhood

Some math skills are fundamental and deserve time and instruction to develop deep understanding, so students can become successful math learners for life. Understand why students need to engage with mathematical concepts, think quantitatively and analytically, and communicate using mathematics. Hear the essential sequence of early math skills and see hands-on modeling of activities which build essential math skills to proficiency. Gain strategies to help more students understand math instead of faking their way through math instruction by memorizing facts and formulas.

F-08 *Chinatown Rising*: Badass Asian Americans of the Civil Rights Era

Josh Chuck, *Filmmaker*

All

Join Josh Chuck, director and producer of the award-winning documentary film *Chinatown Rising*, as he shares powerful excerpts of the film and speaks on Asian American activism during the 1960s and 70s and how it relates to the present immigrant community challenges. Leave having witnessed vivid examples of solidarity between Asian Americans and African Americans, intergenerational community organizing, and social justice activism by a long-neglected and isolated immigrant community. There will be time for Q&A.

F-09 How Faculty Can Build Trust in Daily School Interactions

Chris Lukach, *AKCG–PR Counselors*

All

Trust is built—or eroded—in the everyday interactions that occur across a school community. From routine parent conversations to discussions about student concerns, these moments shape stakeholder confidence and influence a school's reputation over time. Explore strategies for communicating with parents and community members in ways that foster trust, strengthen relationships, and support a positive school culture. Approach challenging conversations with confidence, navigate tension, and create consistency in communication practices. Through real-world scenarios and guided exercises, gain tools to immediately apply.

F-10 The Kids Are Driving the Bus: How Gen Alpha Is Disrupting Independent School Admissions

Trevor Waddington, *Truth Tree*

School Leaders | Admissions | Marketing & Communications

Gen Alpha is no longer just along for the ride. Today's prospective students (yes, even as young as kindergarten) are actively shaping where their families apply and enroll. Examine why their influence has grown so quickly, where they form impressions of your school online, and how admissions teams can earn their attention through ethical, age-appropriate engagement. Leave with a framework for evaluating your school's current Gen Alpha presence and identifying where to invest.

F-11 The Independent School Legal Forecast: What Heads & Administrators Need to Know

Kristin Smith, *Fisher Phillips LLP*

School Leaders

School leaders face a growing list of legal, cultural, and operational challenges that demand sound judgment. Examine the latest legal developments shaping independent schools and the questions keeping leaders up at night, from governance and inclusion to student matters, employee issues, and emerging risks. Gain actionable guidance for navigating uncertainty while protecting your school's mission and values.

F-12 Deepfake Threat Landscape: What Schools Are Up Against

Evan Harris, *Pathos Consulting Group*

All

Anyone with a phone can now create a convincing deepfake image, video, or voice—and schools are a common target. Learn what schools are up against: AI-generated nude images of students, sextortion, voice clones used to impersonate leaders or defraud staff, fabricated clips meant to humiliate teachers or damage a school's reputation, fast-spreading misinformation, and AI companions marketed to kids. Hear how these attacks unfold, who they target, and why schools are vulnerable. Get a clear read on where the law stands and language to discuss deepfake risk with boards, colleagues, and parents..

Thursday, 1:30 p.m. (T-46)

F-13 Supporting Students Using a Strengths-Based Approach

Rachael Kimmel & Diana Pode DeGroot, Eton Academy

All

Working with students can bring unexpected behaviors, and it's easy to focus on challenges. This session flips that lens to focus on student strengths. Taking the view that all behavior is communication, learn how to use schoolwide systems to identify and leverage strengths while addressing areas of need—and see what a strengths-based approach looks like in the classroom.

F-14 Engaging Students Through Multisensory Instruction

Penelope Christianson-Hewer & Jamie Gannon, Eton Academy

All

Explore ways to include multisensory activities in your everyday lessons. Research supports that student engagement increases and learning solidifies when students engage with concepts and content in a multimodal way (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile). We will model, share examples, and provide resources to establish your own instructional and classroom resources to help make including multisensory activities easy.

F-15 Elevating Learning Through Project-Based Learning, Inquiry & Community

Nicholas Amos, Cranbrook Schools

All

Explore how place-based learning builds school-wide community connection, increases student engagement, and maintains rigor in the classroom. Using a case study of beekeeping, habitat restoration, and AI integration, learn how building living systems in the classroom can be an anchor for high-level scientific inquiry. Build the framework to design, implement, and scale your own place-based learning program.

F-16 The Musical Advantage: Wiring Brains for Success

Donna Doran, The Summit Country Day School

Early Childhood | Lower

Music doesn't just move us. It builds us. Bridge neuroscience with classroom instruction and discover how rhythmic movement, rhyme, and song enhance literacy, language and math skills, executive function, and emotional regulation. Leave with ready-to-use activities, actionable strategies, and a deeper understanding of why music is a fundamental necessity for the holistic success of the developing child.

F-17 Artists as Activists: Reimagining Monuments

Julie Toole, Baker Demonstration School & Kerah Sandler, Chicago Jewish Day School

Lower | Middle | Upper

Learn about a collaboration between an art teacher and 5th grade teacher centered around their study of the Civil War with a deep dive into the abolitionists, unsung heroes, and resistors that are often left out of history books. Using the work of contemporary artists including Sonya Clark, Kehinde Wiley, and Kara Walker as inspiration, students created a work of art to reimagine or redesign a monument to tell a more accurate story about the Civil War.

F-18 Create Interactive Visualizations Using Gemini Canvas

David Chambers, Breck School

Middle | Upper

Unlock the power of Google Gemini's Canvas to transform abstract concepts into interactive reality. Whether visualizing multivariable calculus, the life cycle of a star, or the Silk Road's global impact, learn to generate dynamic, custom-built content in minutes. Discover how these AI-driven tools can simplify complex topics and boost student engagement across any discipline.

F-19 Building an AI Playground: Human > AI > Human

Ben Friesen, Breck School

Middle | Upper

Step into the AI Playground, a 7th–8th grade elective designed to explore the growing role of artificial intelligence in our lives and society. Through hands-on experiences, engage with machine learning, generative AI, prompt engineering, and "vibe coding," along with other vetted activities you can adapt for your classroom. Along the way, examine the ethical, social, and environmental implications of AI.

F-20 Affordable International Immersion for Enhanced Learning

Catharine Calder, Meadow Montessori School

Middle | Upper

International travel can be transformative for students yet costs often put it out of reach. Partnering with the Habari Foundation provides an accessible alternative—offering an immersive experience that blends service, cultural exploration, and education. Students engage in meaningful work in schools and coffee fields, while participating in a ten-day safari, creating a well-rounded global learning experience. The steps for organizing the trip and curriculum support will be shared.

F-21 Rethinking Curriculum Alignment in Autonomous Schools

Erica Washburn, Latin School of Chicago

Curricular Leaders

Curriculum alignment in high-autonomy schools requires more than shared documents; it requires trust, language, and purpose. Learn how appreciative inquiry informs K–12 alignment work and examine how our strategic plan and faculty feedback shaped a clear vision guiding structural and professional learning shifts. Leave with adaptable protocols and tools to foster both curricular coherence and faculty agency.

F-22 Plan & Conduct the ISACS School Community Survey

Dawn Klus, ISACS; Chris Everett, The Kensington Group, Inc.; Bob Dicus, Marketing Research Technologies

Everyone Engaged in Accreditation

This session focuses on the survey's initial planning through receiving the final reports. Learn about the survey model and the ins and outs of planning for it: determining the survey schedule, creating custom questions, updating contact lists, formulating communication plans to encourage participation, and addressing the implications of sampling decisions. Come to appreciate the benefits of the survey for accreditation and strategic initiatives. Bring your questions.

F-23 Differentiating Instruction with Mastery Learning

Thomas R. Guskey, *University of Kentucky*

K–12

Learn how to personalize and differentiate instruction for diverse students through the use of mastery learning instructional strategies. The issues involved in implementing mastery learning will be presented, along with ways to adapt these procedures to personal teaching styles, specific classroom situations, and the needs of individual students. Gain a clear understanding of the theory and practice of mastery learning and explore ways to effectively implement these strategies to help more students learn excellently.

F-24 The Anatomy of Trust: Strategies for High-Performing Teams

Tim Bono, *Washington University St. Louis*

All

Trust is the single most important variable for a successful organization, yet the challenges of recent years have made it harder than ever to maintain. Explore how emotional intelligence helps teams navigate hardship and rebuild professional relationships that have been strained by adversity. Leave with research-based strategies to foster a more resilient workplace culture where staff members can thrive and contribute to a shared mission.

Thursday, 3 p.m. (T-61)

F-25 Steady Leadership: Navigating High-Stakes Conversations with Clarity & Care

Jason Craige Harris, *Pollyanna*

School Leaders

School leaders often step into high-stakes, emotionally charged conversations: concerned parents, difficult feedback with employees, trustee tensions, or institutional controversy. These moments call for strategic clarity and inner steadiness. This session weaves together science, storytelling, and reflective work with communication strategies. Practice tools that reduce defensiveness, surface underlying concerns, and guide difficult conversations toward constructive outcomes, so you can act with clarity and care when it matters most.

Thursday, 3 p.m. (T-62)

F-26 Self, Student, Space: Creating Conditions for Learning

Heidi Tringali, *Tringali Occupational Therapy Services (T.O.T.S)*

Early Childhood | Lower

Using the lens of Self, Student, Space, learn how to create an optimal learning environment for every student. As teachers, self, space, and student are the three elements we have the most control over and impact on—and small, intentional adjustments can have an outsized impact. Leave with individual goals and an easy-to-implement classroom plan to put into practice right away.

F-27 Material Play: Why Materials Matter in Creative Learning

Louisa Penfold, *Harvard University, Author*

Early Childhood | Lower

Explore the potential of children's play with materials and how materials have been positioned across learning theories, including Froebel, Reggio Emilia, and New Materialism. Learn about "pedagogical curation," a strategy for designing learning environments that connect contemporary art practices with children's creative learning, including steps for sourcing materials, researching artists, and scaffolding learning through material, tool, vocabulary, and technique selection. Leave with the knowledge and tools to design classroom experiences centered on creativity, play, and learning.

Friday, 9 a.m. (F-06)

F-28 Teacher Efficacy Is a Brain State: What Neuroscience Tells Us About Teacher Support

Caroline Miller, *Neuroeducation Specialist*

Mentors | Instructional Coaches | Academic & Divisional Leaders

Discover what research says about adult learning, motivation, teacher efficacy, and how these insights inform differentiated mentoring approaches for novice, mid-career, and veteran faculty. Explore strategies for tailoring feedback, supporting growth at different career stages, and fostering sustainable mentoring practices. Hear about mentorship structures, including 1:1 coaching and mentoring models, highlighting how these frameworks can support reflection, collaboration, and long-term growth.

F-29 Essential Grades 1–2 Math Skills & Concepts

Bob Sornson, *Early Learning Foundation*

Lower (Grades 1–2)

Some math skills are fundamental and deserve time and instruction to develop deep understanding, so students can become successful math learners for life. Understand why students need to engage with mathematical concepts, think quantitatively and analytically, and communicate using mathematics. Hear the essential sequence of early math skills and see hands-on modeling of activities which build essential math skills to proficiency. Gain strategies to help students in grades 1–2 to understand math instead of faking their way through math instruction by memorizing facts and formulas.

F-30 *Making Waves*: Asian American Youth Take the Lead

Josh Chuck, *Filmmaker*

All

Experience excerpts from the 2025 documentary *Making Waves: The Rise of Asian America*, with director commentary and Q&A. The film follows youth fighting for Asian American Studies inclusion: the movement's origins at UC Berkeley; Texas students persisting despite political setbacks; UCLA's effort to build the largest AAPI history resource yet; and Berkeley middle schoolers sparking a nationwide response after attacks on AAPI seniors. See how young people across the country are sharing stories of Asian American strength and impact.

F-31 Deepfake Response: Policy, Crisis Readiness & Prevention

Evan Harris, *Pathos Consulting Group*

All

Knowing the deepfake threats is the easy part. Putting policy, crisis readiness, and education in place before an incident hits is the work most schools have not done yet. Walk through the creation of a deepfake policy that fits a school's culture and how to build an incident response sequence to follow under pressure: securing evidence, notifying the victim and family, getting images taken down, managing communications, and meeting obligations under the law. Learn about prevention by educating students, faculty, and parents so the whole community is harder to harm. Work through realistic crisis scenarios and leave with actionable advice you can put to immediate use.

Thursday, 3 p.m. (T-64)

F-32 Know Before You Act: Legal Guidance for All Independent School Employees

Kristin Smith, *Fisher Phillips LLP*

All

The legal landscape for independent schools is evolving rapidly—and legal issues do not just belong in the head's office. Teachers, administrators, and business office employees regularly encounter situations with legal implications. Explore the latest developments affecting independent schools, including student supervision, boundaries and professionalism, documentation, accommodations, employment issues, technology, and other emerging challenges. Leave with strategies for reducing risk while supporting your school's community.

F-33 Reputation 101: What Schools Need to Know About Building & Protecting Reputation

Chris Lukach, *AKCG–PR Counselors*

All

A strong reputation can help schools stand out in a crowded marketplace and maintain the trust of their most important stakeholders. Cultivating a strong reputation requires intentional maintenance—it does not materialize without consistent and persistent work. Learn about independent school reputation: what elements shape it; how it affects current and prospective families, faculty and donors; and, why it is important to protect. Understand how public relations shape reputation while supporting enrollment, advancement, and other business-focused goals, how to safeguard reputation during crisis events, and how to emerge from challenges with action steps to repair reputational damage.

F-34 The Trifecta: How to Create a Successful Cross-Platform Marketing Campaign

Trevor Waddington, *Truth Tree*

School Leaders | Admissions | Marketing & Communications

Controlling your school's online narrative requires more than a single ad channel. With parents and students forming opinions based on reviews, social conversations, and a flood of competing messages from brands, schools need search, display, and social ads to work in coordination. Learn how to build that trifecta, why each piece matters, and leave with concrete, actionable tips specific to your school's enrollment marketing goals.

F-35 Cancelled

F-36 Cancelled

F-37 Forest School: Get Your Students Outside to Learn

Ronald Harig, The Pathfinder School, Inc.

Early Childhood | Lower

Hear from a pioneer in forest kindergarten who has worked to perfect it in today's model. Discover how students spend five hours every day including the coldest northern Michigan winter days in the outdoors, building up resilience and social-emotional competencies, in addition to achieving phenomenal success in early literacy and math skills.

F-38 Harmonizing Disciplines: Music & Science Through Inquiry

Van Kennedy, Academy of the Sacred Heart

Early Childhood | Lower

Explore how music and science can be a powerful entry point into inquiry-based, cross-disciplinary learning. By connecting musical concepts with foundational ideas in science, teachers spark curiosity and promote deeper understanding. Discover hands-on activities that encourage students to ask questions, investigate ideas, and make meaningful connections between music and science. Consider an approach that supports collaboration across content areas and nurtures creative, critical thinkers in the classroom.

F-39 Calming Practices in the Classroom

Stephanie Bennett, Meredith-Dunn School

Early Childhood | Lower | Middle

Gain, research-informed strategies to support student self-regulation, focus, and overall well-being through simple yoga and calming practices. Explore how movement and breathing techniques can be intentionally integrated into the school day to improve transitions, reduce dysregulation, and create a more supportive learning environment. Emphasis will be placed on developmentally appropriate implementation, reflective teaching practices, and strategies that can be used immediately in the classroom.

F-40 The Study of Funny: Connecting Through Comedy

Roz Larson, The Roeper School

Lower | Middle | Upper

Dive into the power, impact, and potential pitfalls when using comedy in the classroom. Hear an overview of the philosophy behind humor, the dangers of hiding behind "It was just a joke," and ways to connect with students using comedy as a foundational tool. If you like to connect, philosophize, and laugh—this session is for you.

F-41 Structured Support for Hebrew-Speaking English Learners

Toby Lausin, Mandel Jewish Day School

Lower | Middle

Jewish day schools serve as a landing place for Israeli families in the United States, yet many lack formal English Learner programs. Explore a framework designed for Hebrew-speaking students and consulted on by peer Jewish schools and the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland. Topics include data-driven placement, program structure, teacher collaboration, and Hebrew-informed literacy instruction. Leave with frameworks and tools to build coordinated, schoolwide support for Hebrew-speaking students.

F-42 Mission-Driven International Travel as a School Differentiator

Mitch White, Lake Ridge Academy

Upper

Learn about the transition from third-party teen tours to a distinctive, mission-driven travel program. Using recent travel to Cuba and upcoming trips to Greece and Martinique, hear how faculty-led, credit-bearing experiences build community, incorporate service, and foster meaningful, authentic connections with local students—creating a powerful differentiator for our school.

F-43 The Medical Sciences Semester: An Immersive Pre-med Pathway for HS Students

Adam Trifiro & D. Scott Looney, Hawken School

Upper | Marketing & Communications

This first-of-its-kind residential Medical Sciences Semester for high school students interested in medicine is grounded in the Association of American Medical Colleges' Pre-medical Competencies. Integrated with college-preparatory coursework, students live and learn alongside leading medical professionals in Cleveland's world-renowned healthcare environment. Discover a one-of-a-kind experiential learning model, partnership development, and immersive pathways design.

F-44 Analyze & Interpret the ISACS School Community Survey Results

Dawn Klus, ISACS; Chris Everett, The Kensington Group, Inc.; Bob Dicus, Marketing Research Technologies

Everyone Engaged in Accreditation

Learn to interpret the survey results to identify key self-study/strategic planning topics and priorities. Understand how the Board/Admin Overview presentation, charts, and tables provide the foundation for the self-study/planning process and learn how correlation and regression models can guide resource allocation. Make the connection from survey results to planning and decision-making.

11:45 a.m.–1:30 p.m. LUNCHEON & **KEYNOTE**

FL-01 The Power of Beliefs: How Seven Core Beliefs Are the Greatest Predictors of Future Performance, Resilience & Well-Being

Shawn Achor, *Author*

The greatest predictor of future performance is the beliefs you hold about the world. Achor illuminates how our beliefs change the math about what is possible and probable in our lives. And by changing the math, beliefs change our path. He has identified the seven most predictive beliefs that successful leaders and teams hold. Achor outlines six strategies for undoing our limiting beliefs and strengthening these seven core beliefs. By changing our lens and the lenses of those around us, we can significantly improve performance, strengthen resilience, and create a better life and society. Same world, different beliefs, different outcomes.

F-45 Grading & Reporting Student Learning: Effective Policies & Practices

Thomas R. Guskey, *University of Kentucky*

K–12

Hear what we know about effective grading and reporting policies and practices. We will review the importance of fairness, honesty, and equity in grading and describe ways to ensure meaningful communication between teachers, students, and families. Procedures for implementing new reporting structures, including standards-based and competency-based grading models, will be highlighted along with policies and practices that should be avoided due to their negative consequences for students, teachers, and schools.

Friday, 9 a.m. (F-01)

F-46 Adding Performance-Based Activities to Your Curriculum

Heidi Tringali, *Tringali Occupational Therapy Services (T.O.T.S)*

Early Childhood | Lower

Many social trends, including the "Back to Sleep" initiative, car seats, and the introduction of screens to toddlers, have contributed to our earliest learners' difficulties with regulation, social skills, group membership skills, and executive functioning. Teachers must now not only effectively modify the curriculum but also intervene by adding supplementary performance-based activities and assessments to bridge the gap. Tackle this daunting task together and explore instruction tools for developing these skills while teaching academics.

F-47 Metacognition Is Not a Buzzword: The Brain Science of Attention & Student Agency That Transfers

Caroline Miller, *Neuroeducation Specialist*

All

Metacognition has become shorthand for almost any kind of good thinking. Hear about practices for evaluating brain-based teaching claims before adopting them, and explore what the research on attention, executive skills, and metacognition supports in a classroom. Examine newer understandings of attention, and why study strategies help performance on some tasks but not on others. Connect cognitive science on self-monitoring, motivation, and self-regulation to concrete teachable strategies that build student agency, along with a practical way to vet the next brain-based strategy that lands in your inbox.

F-48 Playful Art Exercises for the Early Years Classroom

Louisa Penfold, *Harvard University, Author*

Early Childhood | Lower

Engage in three mini art exercises—textured clay sculptures, soundscapes, and object performance—from Penfold's newly published book *Every Child is an Artist: Artist-Inspired Activities for Cultivating Children's Creativity*. Explore the work of William Cobbing, Emeka Ogboh, and Leap then Look and consider how we can set up playful invitations for children in the classroom that connect to the concepts, tools, and experimentation contained in their creative practice. Walk away with examples of classroom activities ready to be implemented and adapted to the interests of children across different settings.

F-49 Essential Grades 2–3 Math Skills & Concepts

Bob Sornson, *Early Learning Foundation*

Lower (Grades 2–3)

Some math skills are fundamental and deserve time and instruction to develop deep understanding, so students can become successful math learners for life. Understand why students need to engage with mathematical concepts, think quantitatively and analytically, and communicate using mathematics. Hear the essential sequence of early math skills and see hands-on modeling of activities which build essential math skills to proficiency. Gain strategies to help students in Grades 2–3 to understand math instead of faking their way through math instruction by memorizing facts and formulas.

F-50 *Dragon Boat*: Tradition, Teamwork & Belonging

Josh Chuck, *Filmmaker*

All

Join the director for a sneak peek at his latest documentary film *Dragon Boat*, set for 2027 release. After spending a year and a half filming a teenage dragon boat team in San Francisco, the story has unfolded in real, gritty ways. Learn about the experience of working with this diverse group of youth from often overlooked neighborhoods. Witness Coach Henry Ha, a first-generation Vietnamese immigrant who found belonging and purpose in dragon boating, and hear how he believes the sport offers a long-term solution to healing fractured communities. For the kids, the boat becomes more than just a team—it's a lifeline. *Dragon Boat* shows how by crossing racial and socioeconomic divides, youth learn the radical power of moving forward together.

F-51 How to Position Your School to Show Up in a Chatbot Search

Trevor Waddington, *Truth Tree*

All

Independent school search strategy is rapidly changing. Families are skipping traditional online searching and going right to their favorite LLM for the "right" answer. Tips and complex projects to help your school be valued by chatbots, putting you on the all-important list will be shared. Learn tasks and project directives to signal your school's importance to chatbots.

F-52 The Six Factors Shaping Your School's Reputation

Chris Lukach, *AKCG–PR Counselors*

School Leaders | Admissions | Marketing & Communications | Business Officers

Today's communication landscape is shaped by more than just new communication methods. Changing trends in news consumption and audience behavior—from shrinking attention spans, to validation-seeking social-media behavior, to uncharted levels of compassion fatigue—are forcing school leaders to rethink their communication practices, prioritizing disruptive forms of communication that penetrate noise and break down cynicism. Explore these trends and how they challenge reputational management principles, offering techniques for overcoming the communication barriers of the "attention-deficit age."

F-53 The Independent School Legal Check-up: Trends, Risks & Best Practices

Kristin Smith, *Fisher Phillips LLP*

School Leaders

Just like an annual physical, every independent school needs a regular legal checkup. Are your handbooks current? Are your employment practices consistent? Are your policies keeping pace with emerging risks? Do you have the right team members and consultants in place? Discover a practical review of the key areas where school leaders should take a closer look. Gain a legal checklist of proactive steps schools can take now to reduce risk, strengthen operations, and avoid costly mistakes before they become crises.

F-54 ISACS Roundtable for Division Heads

ISACS Administrative Services Committee

Divisional Heads & Those in Similar Leadership Roles

All divisional leaders are invited to a spirited conversation about the challenges, opportunities, and innovations that come with this role. Meet others in the same position and share practices, resources, and stories to recharge yourself and your ISACS colleagues.

F-55 Designing Belonging: The Student Who Joins Nothing

Curtis Olufson, Groves Academy

All

Most students who disengage from school life aren't a problem to solve; they are data. This session challenges administrators, educators, program directors, and student life professionals to rethink how belonging is designed, not hoped for. Through three case studies at a school serving students with learning differences, examine why students join nothing, identify structural gaps in their programs, and leave with a belonging audit to apply immediately.

F-56 Embodied Learning: Dance Practices Support Students

Teresa Pachniak, The Roeper School

All

Explore how dance-based practices support academic rigor, social-emotional learning, and neuroplasticity across disciplines, especially for gifted learners. Engage in accessible movement experiences that build self-awareness, emotional regulation, and readiness to learn. Grounded in research and practices in dance education, discover adaptable strategies to support differentiation, foster community, and expand equitable, embodied approaches to teaching and learning.

F-57 Leading with Levity: Creating a Culture of Humor, Joy & Play

Michele Shane, The Children's House & Lisa Thauvette, Tilt Think

All

Maya Angelou's quote, "I don't trust anyone who doesn't laugh," highlights laughter's role in building trust. Humor—rooted in surprise and shared truth—connects people and strengthens community. In schools, levity fosters empathy and resilience. While some leaders fear humor may seem unprofessional, it often enhances credibility and effectiveness. Strategies for integrating humor into team culture will be shared including activities that can be used immediately within your communities.

F-58 Belonging Is Everyone's Work

Priyanka Rupani, Francis W. Parker School & Alex Halladay, Cranbrook Schools

All

You don't have to be in an equity and inclusion role to advance your school's belonging efforts. Hear from a director of enrollment management and an associate head of school on how they apply an equity and inclusion lens to their work. Learn strategies to deepen your skillset in justice and belonging, and leave with an action plan to make your school more inclusive and equitable.

F-59 School Safety: Learning from the Past to Protect the Future

Maria Fulton & Samantha Outcalt, Sycamore School

All

Our goal is to protect and guide every child, and school safety is fundamental to that mission. Best practices and training have continued to evolve, and we are tasked with customizing them into the unique landscape of independent schools. Explore the evolution of school safety, current strategies, and next steps. Examine your current practices, learn from one another, and leave with new best practices to apply.

F-60 Moving Toward Justice, Centering Wholeness & Healing

Motoko Maegawa, Catherine Cook School

All

Using a unique blend of experiential learning and structured dialogue practices, SEED creates conversational communities that move toward justice while centering the wholeness of the people who are seeking to transform and heal their organizations. This introduction to SEED will invite participants to consider how SEED might strengthen their communities of belonging.

F-61 Creating Meaningful Drama Curriculum & the Impact Beyond

Christopher Vance & Katie Gonring, University School of Milwaukee

Early Childhood | Lower | Middle

Explore how developing a spiraling theater curriculum supports creativity, strengthens communication skills, and fosters empathy by encouraging students to engage with diverse perspectives and express themselves through performance and collaboration. Developmentally appropriate approaches for creating theatre curriculum will be highlighted, demonstrating how early exposure to theater builds confidence, community, and essential skills needed throughout life.

F-62 Kindertown: Connecting Interests to Real Life

Taleesha Martin, The Orchard School

Early Childhood | Lower

Take a deep dive into Kindertown, an interactive social studies experience where students create a business and take on real-world experiences. Hear about the planning from the beginning to the final project and learn from our ups and downs to see how we involved families and our community in creating this amazing experience for all. Leave with practical ways to implement this in your school.

F-63 Learning Labs: Building Vibrant Schools Through Choice & Voice

Riva Cohen & Sylvie Anglin, The University of Chicago Laboratory Schools

Lower | Middle

The Lower School Learning Labs are weekly, 40-minute sessions for 3rd–5th grade students, led by teachers and administrators. Hear about an initiative that fosters cross-grade relationships, celebrates student interests, and builds belonging through diverse activities—from STEAM projects to passion projects and more. Learn how the period cultivates community, connection, and fun while discovering how we developed, launched, and refined this program and its impact on our community.

F-64 When Art Becomes Identity: Supporting Driven Students

Michael Kern, Interlochen Arts Academy

Middle | Upper

Independent school educators champion the "whole child," but competitive environments can narrow students' identities to a single domain—whether art, athletics, academics, or college admission. Hear the research on how identity narrowing drives perfectionism and disengagement in high-achieving adolescents. Counselors, administrators, and faculty will leave with actionable strategies for protecting identity breadth without undermining drive.

F-65 What Boys Really Need

Logan Moe, Saint Thomas Academy

Middle | Upper

Presented from a school counselor's perspective, hear how educators at Minnesota's only all-boys school, support student development and wellness. Faculty intentionally create an environment where boys build meaningful relationships and navigate complex interpersonal dynamics. Leave with a deeper understanding of how educators in the field connect and communicate with boys, empowering you to develop students into confident and responsible modern men.

F-66 Dig Into Your Texts with AI

Amber Matzke, Brownell Talbot College Preparatory School

Middle | Upper

Learn how to keep students in the driver's seat while using AI to deepen understanding of complex texts. Rather than replacing thinking, AI becomes a tool that helps students ask stronger questions, analyze evidence, and move from surface-level comprehension to critical interpretation. Leave with strategies for structuring AI-supported inquiry, teaching students to ask purposeful text-based questions, modeling ethical use, and building responsible AI habits across grade levels.

F-67 Get the Most Out of the ISACS Survey: Accreditation & Beyond

Dawn Klus, ISACS; Chris Everett, The Kensington Group, Inc.; Bob Dicus, Marketing Research Technologies

Everyone Engaged in Accreditation | Marketing & Communications

Digging deeper into the ISACS School Community Survey results help schools create plans for school improvement, enhance strategic planning, track trends over time, and develop marketing and communication plans to promote the school's mission and build stronger relationships within the school community.

F-68 Talking to Parents: When It's Not Academics

Heidi Tringali, *Tringali Occupational Therapy Services (T.O.T.S)*

School Leaders

In parent meetings, it is typically easier to discuss a child's academic issues than their behavioral/performance issues. When we talk about a child's behaviors/choices/social abilities/regulation/executive functioning skills, oftentimes the conversation can become unproductive, and even contentious. A clear methodology, along with tools to discuss student performance issues related to behavior, group membership skills, social skills, executive functioning, and learning readiness will be provided. Leave confident in your ability to discuss all aspects of a child's classroom skills and abilities.

F-69 Oral Histories: Best Practices from a Self-Taught Film Director

Josh Chuck, *Filmmaker*

Marketing & Communications | Faculty Conducting Meaningful Interviews

Drawing on hundreds of real-world on-camera interviews, Chuck introduces foundational skills and advanced techniques for capturing powerful first-person stories with care and integrity. Learn how to ask thoughtful questions and build trust with interviewees. The session includes live demonstrations, group participation, and time for Q&A. Whether your interest is film, journalism, or storytelling, this session will help you capture voices that matter.

F-70 Be the Representation: Power, Belonging & Latine Educators

FrankO Mansilla, North Park Elementary School & Ramon Cruz, Latin School of Chicago

All

As independent schools diversify, how do Latine educators experience predominantly white institutions as windows and mirrors? Where do tokenization, invisible labor, and leadership access appear? Join in reflection, dialogue, and shared responsibility. Explore how to affirm identity, redistribute labor, and expand leadership pathways, and consider what it means to be the representation students need through intentional practice, collaboration, and sustained commitment to equity in education.

F-71 Customer Care: Navigating the Uncomfortable Financial Conversation

Christina Armaly & Anna Golwitzer, Cranbrook Schools

All

Financial aid is more than number-crunching; it is a vital tool for equity, recruitment, and retention. This session coaches professionals on navigating uncomfortable family conversations through active listening, empathy, and strategic communication. Explore techniques for high-touch handholding, practice role-playing challenging scenarios, and review student-focused, equitable correspondence. Leave with a framework to build institutional trust while maintaining professional boundaries and emotional strength in complex interactions.

F-72 The Trauma-Informed Teacher: Providing Trauma-Informed Support for Students

Caitlin Quenneville, Detroit Country Day School

All

The percentage of children experiencing at least one traumatic event between birth and 16 years of age ranges from 14–43 percent; however, many educators feel inadequately prepared to understand and support these learners. Learn how trauma impacts the brain and learning, along with classroom strategies for supporting students who have experienced trauma.

F-73 Why Stay Inside? The Power of Outdoor Learning

Marlise Albert & Doey Boldt, Visitation Academy

Early Childhood | Lower | Middle

Are you still teaching inside all day long? Have you ever wondered why? Have you thought of the advantages of learning outdoors? Come with us on our adventure into outdoor learning. Learn how you can get started in your own school and hear how you can take your everyday curriculum to the next level.

F-74 Building Better Communities Through Project-Based Learning

Leslie Linde & Emily Hartgrove, Virginia Chance School

Lower | Middle

See how project-based learning can create meaningful, real-world experiences for students. Hear about a yearlong infrastructure unit where students explored local issues and redefined infrastructure as a social, community-centered system. Grounded in Reggio Emilia practices, discover hands-on strategies, student work examples, and tools to bring inquiry, student-centered learning, and community connection into your classroom and school.

F-75 Language Links: Connecting Literacy & World Language

Gina Merino & Laith Al-Msaibeeh, University School of Milwaukee

Lower | Middle

Explore literacy activities designed to support reading, writing, and sentence conventions in the Lower School World Language classroom. Discover creative strategies for fostering language proficiency through interactive exercises that promote comprehension, sentence formation, and writing skills. By integrating these activities, learners develop foundational literacy skills in a World Language, supporting their literacy development in English.

F-76 From 'I Wonder' to 'I Made This!'

Shelly Anderson & Lauren Pung, Thaden School

Middle

"Flight Time" reimagines Genius Hour as a loosely structured, curiosity-driven experience for Grade 6 students. Through question generation, research, hands-on creation, and presenting, students develop ownership, critical thinking, and communication skills strengthened through peer feedback. Try question generation, a "make-a-thing" activity, and explore tools and protocols to implement high-expectation, low-stakes learning that fosters student agency and engagement.

F-77 From Identity to Impact: The Blacknificent Blueprint

James Ewer, Mounds Park Academy

Lower Middle Upper

Your school has a Black History Month display. Maybe a heritage assembly. Possibly a DEI committee. And students of color still feel like guests in their own school. Blacknificent spent two years changing that inside a PK–12 independent school by centering student identity, voice, and belonging. Engage with artifacts, real design decisions, and a replicable framework to build theirs. This session is for every educator ready to stop decorating their culture and start building it.

F-78 Using Literature to Bring History to Life

Melanie Crow & Rosemary Lannen, The Kazoo School

Lower Middle

Teaching history in our current age of AI can be challenging. Immersion in literature provides students with more authentic historical experiences and fosters connections to historical eras and characters. Students in our classrooms learn history by examining literature and engaging with creative, hands-on assignments. Learn to design assignments using quality literature and immersion in historical eras through literary analysis, creative writing, and hands-on activities.

F-79 Vital Signs: Using Pulse Survey Data to Nurture Student Belonging & Faculty Engagement

Rachel Lintgen & Arete Calabrese, Hathaway Brown School

Middle Upper

What's it like to be a high school student? How do students find a balance between achievement and well-being? Hear how consistently collected data can complement anecdotal information to inform program design, improve student well-being, and nurture a culture of belonging in your school.

F-80 Building a World Schools Debate Program

Rudy Lurz, St. John's Northwestern Academies

Middle Upper

St. John's Northwestern formed a debate team and Wisconsin Interscholastic Speech and Dramatic Arts Association opened up the World Schools debate format. Learn how our success with debate helped expand both brands and grow the circuit in Wisconsin. Leave with tips to start your own debate program.

F-81 The SEL Cookbook: Ready-to-Use Practices

Chris Vasquez & Jane Knoche, Latin School of Chicago

Middle Upper

In the fast-paced world of independent schools, counselors often respond to evolving student needs without shared, practical models. Move beyond theory and into the "kitchen," with a collaborative exchange of proven SEL "recipes," from Tier 1 practices to targeted Tier 2 interventions. Engage in a facilitated "Recipe Swap" and leave with a digital SEL Cookbook: a curated collection of actionable, high-impact strategies ready for immediate implementation.

F-82 World Language Adventures for Generation Alpha

Cynthia Marker, Francis W. Parker School

Middle Upper

Questioning how to engage learners routinely confronted with reduced attention spans, overstimulated multimedia habits, and retention struggles? Explore strategies and discuss ways to lock teens into language lessons with a combination of self-guided work, creative activities, and a daily integration of current events resources. Rethinking pedagogy, revamping curriculum, and incorporating student perspectives can lead to fun discoveries in this tech-absorbed era of language acquisition.

F-83 Why AI? Ethics, Pros, Cons & Classroom Applications

Wendy Mayer & Dan Jacobs, The Roeper School

Middle Upper

Generative AI and large language models (LLMs) are often framed as tools to be avoided, associated with cheating and the erosion of critical thinking. Explore some ethical questions around GenAI and student-tested examples to show how teacher-designed, custom LLMs can lead to creativity and deeper critical thinking through individualized learning experiences. Guidance to teachers who want to design their own custom LLMs will be provided.

F-84 Retaining Students Through Division Jumps

Donny Bittala & Kristy Rodriguez, Lake Ridge Academy

Admissions | All

Learn how to lead with relationships to ensure students and families are retained between division level jumps. Focus on the events, meetings, strategies, and culture building activities that go into ensuring as many students as possible choose to move up within your school community.

F-85 From Hello to Happy: Onboarding Matters

Leilani Grey, Topeka Collegiate School

School Leaders | Admissions | All

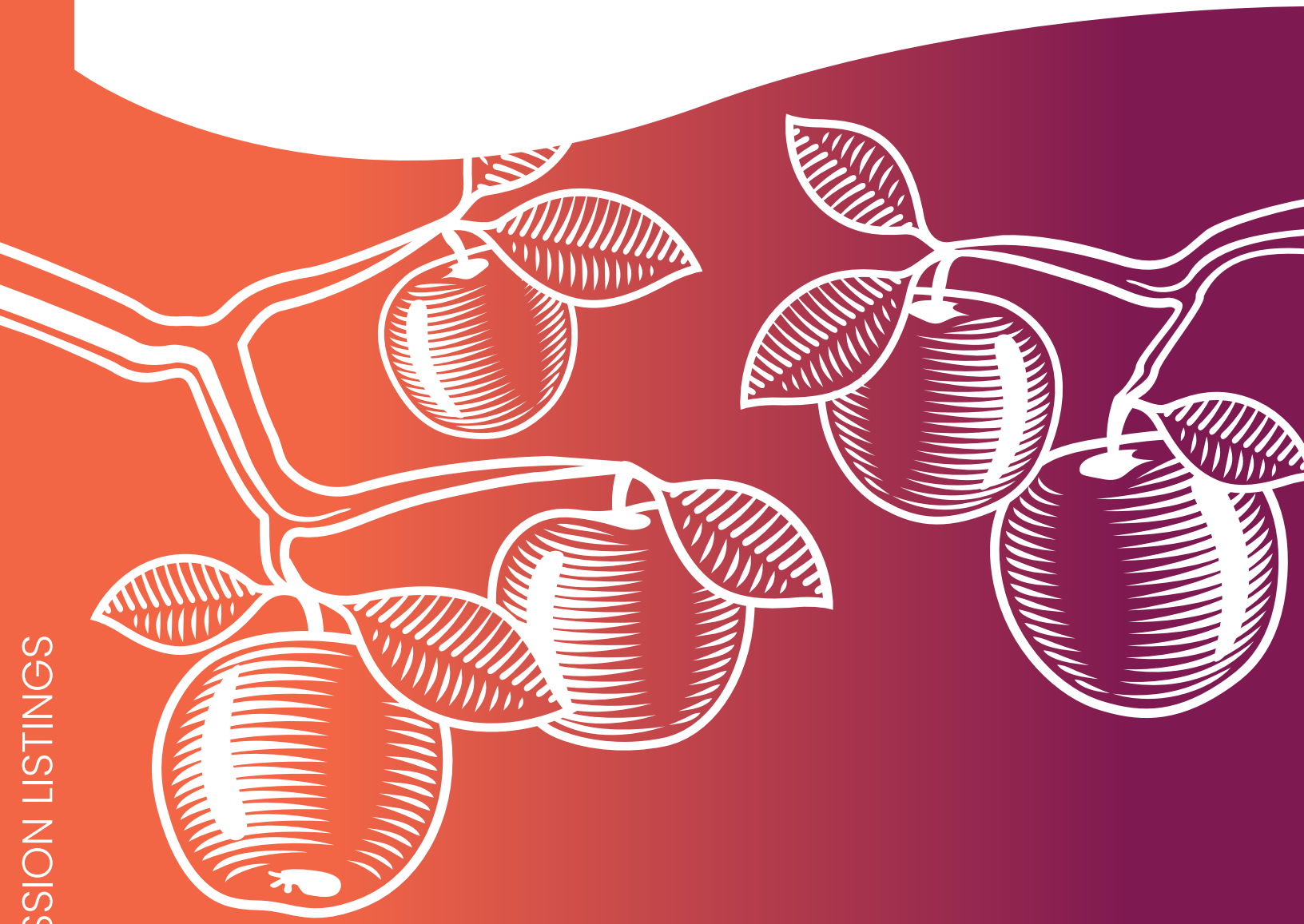
Happiness and play aren't extracurriculars, they're the architecture of a thriving school community. While academics are important, explore how Admissions serve as a school's first happiness touchpoint, and how intentional family onboarding rituals at the start and end of each day build belonging that sustains students long-term. Leave with a replicable daily framework rooted in social sustainability, joy, and play.

F-86 Data-Driven Decision Making: Keys to Success

Lauren Nobles & Kelly Dewald, Eton Academy

School Leaders | Admissions | Marketing & Communications

Drowning in data but not sure what actually matters? Cut through the noise and learn how school leaders can focus on the key metrics that drive admissions and enrollment success. Discover how to build simple dashboards, identify bottlenecks, and turn data into clear, actionable decisions that improve inquiries, conversions, and retention. Designed for administrators and admissions teams, gain tools to use immediately—no data overload required.



ISACS ANNUAL CONFERENCE
INSPIRE 2026 DETROIT

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5
MORNING

Sessions 9–10:15 a.m.	Presenters	Room
☐ T-01 Behavior Blind Spots: Overlooked Strategies to Reduce Anxiety & Challenging ...	J. Minahan	TBA
☐ T-02 The Gift of Self: Developing & Enhancing Self-Concept in Gifted Learners	L. Van Gemert	TBA
☐ T-03 Avoid the Perception of a Cover-Up: How to Foster a Culture of Reporting ...	E. Tremblay	TBA
☐ T-04 Serious Play: An Applied Improv Workshop	Detroit Creativity Project	TBA
☐ T-05 Roundtable for ISACS Lead Learners	Professional Services Committee	TBA
☐ T-06 Mindfulness & Movement to Prevent Educator Burnout	H. Kurut	TBA
☐ T-07 Moving Away from Screens with Activity Passports	B. Wade	TBA
☐ T-08 How Parent/School Connections Move Your School into the Future	J. Pitcher	TBA
☐ T-09 I'm No Influencer: You Gotta See This!	D. Matthews	TBA
☐ T-10 Using Nonfiction to Grow Readers & Writers	K. McEnaney, E. Bunn	TBA
☐ T-11 Handwriting Is More Than Just Neatness	G. Guillory Welsh	TBA
☐ T-12 I Observe: It's in My Head	C. Parton, E. Eicholz	TBA
☐ T-13 With Learning & Inclusion for All	S. Synold, R. Tiffany	TBA
☐ T-14 From Belonging to Mattering: Designing for Community & Student Voice	L. Frank, S. Magliery	TBA
☐ T-15 Using AI to Deepen Students' Mathematical Thinking	C. Bolognese, E. Dennett	TBA
☐ T-16 Evidence-Based Science Literacy Strategies	A. Rougeau	TBA
☐ T-17 Changing the World One School at a Time	D. Ruff, C. McGowan	TBA
☐ T-18 The Global Impact Diploma: A Parallel Pathway	B. Potash	TBA
☐ T-19 Money! Money! Money!	A. Borntrager, R. Bailey	TBA
☐ T-20 Self-Study to Standing Ovation: Accreditation Without the Overwhelm	A. Delia	TBA

Sessions 10:30–11:45 a.m.	Presenters	Room
☐ T-21 Kids Who Challenge Us: Increasing Work Engagement & Reducing Oppositional ...	J. Minahan	TBA
☐ T-22 Through the Roof: Raising Students' Thinking Skills Through Depth & Complexity	L. Van Gemert	TBA
☐ T-23 Student Voices, Legal Choices: School Leadership's Guide to Free Speech Issues	E. Tremblay	TBA
☐ T-24 Improvisation & Cooperative Game Play	Detroit Creativity Project	TBA
☐ T-25 Adjusting Parent Expectations in the Age of Amazon & 24/7 News	A. Stavney, L. Salza	TBA
☐ T-26 The Finnish Approach to Well-Being at School	E. Ko	TBA
☐ T-27 Portrait of an Educator	J. Winn	TBA
☐ T-28 Toward a More Equitable & Successful Hiring Process	J. Novick	TBA
☐ T-29 Walking with Purpose: Growth-Centered Learning Walks	R. Welch, D. Holden	TBA
☐ T-30 Learning to Learn: Mixed-Age Project-Based Learning	N. Smith, M. MacGregor	TBA
☐ T-31 Building a Forest Program from the Ground Up	L. Borowy, J. Harris	TBA
☐ T-32 Beyond Book Week: Celebrating Literacy All Year	M. Shook	TBA
☐ T-33 Intentional Tech Integration: Saving the Screentime for Where it Matters Most	M. Diem	TBA
☐ T-34 Facilitating Conversations Across Differences	J. Kim	TBA
☐ T-35 Pop Goes the Easel: Communication Intensifies Curriculum	J. Van Scyoc	TBA
☐ T-36 Lead by Heart: The Leadership Academy	K. Fleming, R. Conover	TBA
☐ T-37 *Guernica* Reimagined Through an Inquiry Lens	N. Jansen	TBA
☐ T-38 Unmasking Excellence: Intersectional Moves Supporting AANHPI Students	R. Young, M. Alcid	TBA
☐ T-39 Give Peace a Class: Theory & Action	K. Corcoran	TBA
☐ T-40 Writing the Report: Insights from Breck's Self-Study	S. Flotten, J. Kallio	TBA

Use this sheet to mark the sessions and luncheons you registered for, then print it and bring it with you to the conference. Room assignments and maps will be emailed to attendees about a week before the conference.

Continued on next page.

ISACS ANNUAL CONFERENCE
INSPIRE 2026 DETROIT

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5
AFTERNOON

Luncheon & Keynote 11:45 a.m.–1:15 p.m.	Presenter	Room
✓ TL-01 Creating Deep Connection: Community Building Fundamentals	C. Vogl	TBA

Sessions 1:30–2:45 p.m.	Presenters	Room
☐ T-41 Ignite Connection: Building Stronger Communities	C. Vogl	TBA
☐ T-42 The Science of a Good Day: Research-Backed Habits for Sustainable Well-Being	T. Bono	TBA
☐ T-43 Behavior Blind Spots: Overlooked Strategies to Reduce Anxiety & Challenging ...	J. Minahan	TBA
☐ T-44 Grouping the Gifted	L. Van Gemert	TBA
☐ T-45 When the Classroom Gets Wobbly: Stabilizing Conflict with Dignity	J. Harris	TBA
☐ T-46 Deepfake Threat Landscape: What Schools Are Up Against	E. Harris	TBA
☐ T-47 The Fourth Fire: Place-Based Partnerships with Indigenous Communities	C. Hemler	TBA
☐ T-48 Beyond Monthly Celebrations: Deepening K–12 DEIJB Action	J. Harris, R. Young	TBA
☐ T-49 How Music Helped Us Teach Emotions	J. Patterson, B. Herron	TBA
☐ T-50 Responding to Student Behavior Through Restorative Practices & Family ...	C. Britton	TBA
☐ T-51 Teaching Is a Team Sport	K. Green, K. Yusko	TBA
☐ T-52 Scaffolding Research Skills Across Grade Levels	A. Holmes, L. Serrano	TBA
☐ T-53 CANCELLED		
☐ T-54 Designing Powerful Interdisciplinary Learning	C. Torres, R. Raab	TBA
☐ T-55 Making Learning Multi-Sensory Across Disciplines	R. Jorgensen	TBA
☐ T-56 Fostering Critical Thinking with Intentional AI Integration	C. Mihm, L. Flohr	TBA
☐ T-57 Building a Sustainable Global Exchange Experience	R. Weston, R. Schoeny	TBA
☐ T-58 Welcome to the Rock: Collaborative Arts Leadership	B. Bozanich	TBA
☐ T-59 The Why & How of Senior Capstone Projects	S. Sowell, T. Cherry	TBA
☐ T-60 A Strategic Self-Study for All	M. Childs, K. Conditt	TBA

Sessions 3–4:15 p.m.	Presenters	Room
☐ T-61 The Anatomy of Trust: Strategies for High-Performing Teams	T. Bono	TBA
☐ T-62 Steady Leadership: Navigating High-Stakes Conversations with Clarity & Care	J. Harris	TBA
☐ T-63 How the Brain Learns to Learn: Neuroscience, Self-Regulation ... (Grades 6–12)	C. Miller	TBA
☐ T-64 Deepfake Response: Policy, Crisis Readiness & Prevention	E. Harris	TBA
☐ T-65 The Six Factors Shaping Your School's Reputation	C. Lukach	TBA
☐ T-66 Roundtable for Faculty, Staff & Administration from Under-Represented Groups	Equity & Justice Committee	TBA
☐ T-67 Hiding in Plain Sight: The Risks of AI Glasses	C. Stover, N. O'Hare	TBA
☐ T-68 Bridging Brain & Behavior: From Neuroscience to Student Success	E. Rackers, K. Rinks	TBA
☐ T-69 Collaborative Case Management: Working with Agency Partners	L. Gross-Kammer, A. Greenfield	TBA
☐ T-70 Emergent Learning: Let Students Take the Lead	M. Wojciehowski, S. Goodman	TBA
☐ T-71 Unearthing a Sense of Place: Fossils, Collaboration & the Wonder of Discovery	M. Ganim, L. Hanahan	TBA
☐ T-72 From Chaos to Control: Simple Systems for Behavior, Transitions & a Well-Run ...	D. Fuentes, L. Buchanan	TBA
☐ T-73 Cultivating Global Citizens Through Project-Based Learning	K. Scott, L. Yavor	TBA
☐ T-74 Leveraging Universal Design for Learning to Create Inclusive & Engaging ...	C. Kamm	TBA
☐ T-75 Drawing Connections: Visual Arts & Interdisciplinary Study	T. Campbell	TBA
☐ T-76 Growth Over Grades: Escaping the Points Trap	D. Polifka, N. Gleiner	TBA
☐ T-77 Big Outcomes, Small School College Counseling Success	C. Lewis, S. Ihler	TBA
☐ T-78 Wayfinding in Troubled Times	C. Young, K. Dye	TBA
☐ T-79 Leading the School You Came From	C. Grant, N. Simms	TBA
☐ T-80 What Can DASL Do for You? Succeed at DASL Data Entry & Maximize Value for...	K. Kunst	TBA

ISACS ANNUAL CONFERENCE
INSPIRE 2026 DETROIT

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6
MORNING

Sessions 9–10:15 a.m.	Presenters	Room
☐ F-01 Grading & Reporting Student Learning: Effective Policies & Practices	T. Guskey	TBA
☐ F-02 The Science of a Good Day: Research-Backed Habits for Sustainable …	T. Bono	TBA
☐ F-03 When the Classroom Gets Wobbly: Stabilizing Conflict with Dignity	J. Harris	TBA
☐ F-04 The Readied Child	H. Tringali	TBA
☐ F-05 How the Brain Learns to Learn: Neuroscience, Self-Regulation … (PK–Grade 5)	C. Miller	TBA
☐ F-06 Material Play: Why Materials Matter in Creative Learning	L. Penfold	TBA
☐ F-07 Essential PK–K Math Skills & Concepts	B. Sornson	TBA
☐ F-08 Chinatown Rising: Badass Asian Americans of the Civil Rights Era	J. Chuck	TBA
☐ F-09 How Faculty Can Build Trust in Daily School Interactions	C. Lukach	TBA
☐ F-10 The Kids Are Driving the Bus: How Gen Alpha Is Disrupting Independent…	T. Waddington	TBA
☐ F-11 The Independent School Legal Forecast: What Heads & Administrators …	K. Smith	TBA
☐ F-12 Deepfake Threat Landscape: What Schools Are Up Against	E. Harris	TBA
☐ F-13 Supporting Students Using a Strengths-Based Approach	R. Kimmel, D. Pode DeGroot	TBA
☐ F-14 Engaging Students Through Multisensory Instruction	P. Christianson-Hewer, J. Gannon	TBA
☐ F-15 Elevating Learning Through Project-Based Learning, Inquiry & Community	N. Amos	TBA
☐ F-16 The Musical Advantage: Wiring Brains for Success	D. Doran	TBA
☐ F-17 Artists as Activists: Reimagining Monuments	J. Toole, K. Sandler	TBA
☐ F-18 Create Interactive Visualizations Using Gemini Canvas	D. Chambers	TBA
☐ F-19 Building an AI Playground: Human > AI > Human	B. Friesen	TBA
☐ F-20 Affordable International Immersion for Enhanced Learning	C. Calder	TBA
☐ F-21 Rethinking Curriculum Alignment in Autonomous Schools	E. Washburn	TBA
☐ F-22 Plan & Conduct the School Community Survey	D. Klus, C. Everett, B. Dicus	TBA

Sessions 10:30–11:45 a.m.	Presenters	Room
☐ F-23 Differentiating Instruction with Mastery Learning	T. Guskey	TBA
☐ F-24 The Anatomy of Trust: Strategies for High-Performing Teams	T. Bono	TBA
☐ F-25 Steady Leadership: Navigating High-Stakes Conversations with Clarity & Care	J. Harris	TBA
☐ F-26 Self, Student, Space: Creating Conditions for Learning	H. Tringali	TBA
☐ F-27 Material Play: Why Materials Matter in Creative Learning	L. Penfold	TBA
☐ F-28 Teacher Efficacy Is a Brain State: What Neuroscience Tells Us About …	C. Miller	TBA
☐ F-29 Essential Grades 1–2 Math Skills & Concepts	B. Sornson	TBA
☐ F-30 Making Waves: Asian American Youth Take the Lead	J. Chuck	TBA
☐ F-31 Deepfake Response: Policy, Crisis Readiness & Prevention	E. Harris	TBA
☐ F-32 Know Before You Act: Legal Guidance for All Independent School Employees	K. Smith	TBA
☐ F-33 Reputation 101: What Schools Need to Know About Building & Protecting …	C. Lukach	TBA
☐ F-34 The Trifecta: How to Create a Successful Cross-Platform Marketing Campaign	T. Waddington	TBA
☐ F-35 CANCELLED		
☐ F-36 CANCELLED		
☐ F-37 Forest School: Get Your Students Outside to Learn	R. Harig	TBA
☐ F-38 Harmonizing Disciplines: Music & Science Through Inquiry	V. Kennedy	TBA
☐ F-39 Calming Practices in the Classroom	S. Bennett	TBA
☐ F-40 The Study of Funny: Connecting Through Comedy	R. Larson	TBA
☐ F-41 Structured Support for Hebrew-Speaking English Learners	T. Lausin	TBA
☐ F-42 Mission-Driven International Travel as a School Differentiator	M. White	TBA
☐ F-43 The Medical Sciences Semester: An Immersive Pre-med Pathway …	A. Trifiro, D. Looney	TBA
☐ F-44 Analyze & Interpret the School Community Survey Results	D. Klus, C. Everett, B. Dicus	TBA

Continued on next page.

ISACS ANNUAL CONFERENCE
INSPIRE 2026 DETROIT

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6
AFTERNOON

Luncheon & Keynote 11:45 a.m.–1:30 p.m.	Presenter	Room
✓ FL-01 The Power of Beliefs: How Seven Core Beliefs Are the Greatest Predictors of ...	S. Achor	TBA

Sessions 1:45–3 p.m.	Presenters	Room
☐ F-45 Grading & Reporting Student Learning: Effective Policies & Practices	T. Guskey	TBA
☐ F-46 Adding Performance-Based Activities to Your Curriculum	H. Tringali	TBA
☐ F-47 Metacognition Is Not a Buzzword: The Brain Science of Attention & Student ...	C. Miller	TBA
☐ F-48 Playful Art Exercises for the Early Years Classroom	L. Penfold	TBA
☐ F-49 Essential Grades 2–3 Math Skills & Concepts	B. Sornson	TBA
☐ F-50 Dragon Boat: Tradition, Teamwork & Belonging	J. Chuck	TBA
☐ F-51 How to Position Your School to Show Up in a Chatbot Search	T. Waddington	TBA
☐ F-52 The Six Factors Shaping Your School's Reputation	C. Lukach	TBA
☐ F-53 The Independent School Legal Check-up: Trends, Risks & Best Practices	K. Smith	TBA
☐ F-54 ISACS Roundtable for Division Heads	ISACS ASC	TBA
☐ F-55 Designing Belonging: The Student Who Joins Nothing	C. Olufson	TBA
☐ F-56 Embodied Learning: Dance Practices Support Students	T. Pachniak	TBA
☐ F-57 Leading with Levity: Creating a Culture of Humor, Joy & Play	M. Shane, L. Thauvette	TBA
☐ F-58 Belonging Is Everyone's Work	P. Rupani, A. Halladay	TBA
☐ F-59 School Safety: Learning from the Past to Protect the Future	M. Fulton, S. Outcalt	TBA
☐ F-60 Moving Toward Justice, Centering Wholeness & Healing	M. Maegawa	TBA
☐ F-61 Creating Meaningful Drama Curriculum & the Impact Beyond	C. Vance, K. Gonring	TBA
☐ F-62 Kindertown: Connecting Interests to Real Life	T. Martin	TBA
☐ F-63 Learning Labs: Building Vibrant Schools Through Choice & Voice	R. Cohen, S. Anglin	TBA
☐ F-64 When Art Becomes Identity: Supporting Driven Students	M. Kern	TBA
☐ F-65 What Boys Really Need	L. Moe	TBA
☐ F-66 Dig Into Your Texts with AI	A. Matzke	TBA
☐ F-67 Get the Most Out of the Survey: Accreditation & Beyond	D. Klus, C. Everett, B. Dicus	TBA

Sessions 3:15–4:30 p.m.	Presenters	Room
☐ F-68 Talking to Parents: When It's Not Academics	H. Tringali	TBA
☐ F-69 Oral Histories: Best Practices from a Self-Taught Film Director	J. Chuck	TBA
☐ F-70 Be the Representation: Power, Belonging & Latine Educators	F. Mansilla, R. Cruz	TBA
☐ F-71 Customer Care: Navigating the Uncomfortable Financial Conversation	C. Armaly, A. Golwitzer	TBA
☐ F-72 The Trauma-Informed Teacher: Providing Trauma-Informed Support for ...	C. Quenneville	TBA
☐ F-73 Why Stay Inside? The Power of Outdoor Learning	M. Albert, D. Boldt	TBA
☐ F-74 Building Better Communities Through Project-Based Learning	L. Linde, E. Hartgrove	TBA
☐ F-75 Language Links: Connecting Literacy & World Language	G. Merino, L. Al-Msaibeeh	TBA
☐ F-76 From "I Wonder" to "I Made This!"	S. Anderson, L. Pung	TBA
☐ F-77 From Identity to Impact: The Blacknificent Blueprint	J. Ewer	TBA
☐ F-78 Using Literature to Bring History to Life	M. Crow, R. Lannen	TBA
☐ F-79 Vital Signs: Using Pulse Survey Data to Nurture Student Belonging & Faculty...	R. Lintgen, A. Calabrese	TBA
☐ F-80 Building a World Schools Debate Program	R. Lurz	TBA
☐ F-81 The SEL Cookbook: Ready-to-Use Practices	C. Vasquez, J. Knoche	TBA
☐ F-82 World Language Adventures for Generation Alpha	C. Marker	TBA
☐ F-83 Why AI? Ethics, Pros, Cons & Classroom Applications	W. Mayer, D. Jacobs	TBA
☐ F-84 Retaining Students Through Division Jumps	D. Bittala, K. Rodriguez	TBA
☐ F-85 From Hello to Happy: Onboarding Matters	L. Grey	TBA
☐ F-86 Data-Driven Decision Making: Keys to Success	L. Nobles, K. Dewald	TBA

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