

the

# COMPASS

Direction for HR Leaders in Education



**p. 4**

Evaluation's New Normal:  
Let's Hope It Is!

**p. 8**

A Call to Duty! Bus Drivers  
as Substitutes

**p. 18**

Welcoming Back Your Employees  
This Fall: What to Do and  
What to Avoid

# In This Issue:

**p. 3**

President's Corner

*Dr. Cathy Donovan, AASPA President*

**p. 4**

Evaluation's New Normal: Let's Hope It Is!

*Dr. Chad Dumas*

Talent Management  
& Development

**p. 6**

Grow Our Own

*Robert Phillips*

Strategic  
Staffing

**p. 8**

A Call to Duty! Bus Drivers as Substitutes

*Shawn C. Williams, Michele Taylor-Brown & Lori Lewers*

Strategic  
Staffing

**p. 10**

Book Review: Leading Schools in Disruptive Times

**p. 11**

Retention is the New Recruitment

*Dr. Steven Grubb & Evan Mirolla*

Strategic  
Staffing

**p. 14**

Creating a Culture of Pride: Communicating the Value of Every Individual Through Your Mission and Vision

*Jackie Levine*

Culture &  
Total Rewards

**p. 16**

Upcoming Events

**p. 17**

Book Review: The Power of Moments

**p. 18**

Welcoming Back Your Employees This Fall: What to Do and What to Avoid

*Seth Richtsmeier*

Culture &  
Total Rewards

**p. 21**

Conference Preview



## 2020 - 2021 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

### PRESIDENT

Dr. Cathy Donovan  
Olathe, KS

### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Dr. Beth Dalton  
Buffalo Grove, IL

### PRESIDENT-ELECT

Brian White  
Topeka, KS

### RECORDING SECRETARY

Dr. Kim Chambers  
Lincolnshire, IL

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kelly Coash-Johnson  
Overland Park, KS

## REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

### REGION 1

Jennifer DuVall  
Corvallis, OR

### REGION 2

Dr. Dale Fisher  
Deerfield, IL

### REGION 3

Kevin Walton  
North Haven, CT

### REGION 4

David Robertson  
McClellan Park, CA

### REGION 5

Dr. Robert Stewart  
Denton, TX

### REGION 6

Ruth Green  
Clinton, SC

## President's Corner

From the Desk of Dr. Cathy Donovan, AASPA President

We survived! As we reflect on one of the most challenging and unique years in education, School Human Resources Professionals should be proud. Even though we faced many challenges and unique situations, we were able to adapt, problem solve and find creative solutions together. Throughout these challenging times, our AASPA Organization continued to provide the quality support, services and resources to which we were accustomed. The unique experiences we had this past year greatly increased my appreciation for our AASPA Organization, AASPA Staff and Human Resources colleagues.



I am pleased to inform you that AASPA's financial situation has remained prosperous throughout this challenging year. Our Executive Director and Staff have been strategic and creative to maintain and increase our revenue and decrease expenditures. Professional Development opportunities were provided through successful virtual platforms. We experienced our first Virtual Annual Conference in the history of our organization. In addition, our AASPA Staff adapted and were able to continue the important work of our Strategic Plan so the organization can continue progressing. We are excited to share with you that we will be able to offer \$1,000,000 Liability Insurance to our members as an additional membership benefit, effective October 1<sup>st</sup>. Another major accomplishment this year is the revision of our certification program and standards. We are proud of the success of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Conference as well as the continued success of our webinars, Human Capital Leadership Summit, and Boot Camps.

I am extremely excited that we will be able to hold our 2021 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual AASPA Conference onsite in Washington DC! The networking opportunities and face-to-face interactions with other Human Resources Professionals are invaluable experiences. Like you, I missed these opportunities last year. This year's conference theme is "The Road to Recovery". The focus will center around rebuilding the educator pipeline as well as stabilizing and diversifying the educator workforce. Our AASPA Staff have worked hard to secure motivational keynote speakers, provide a variety of relevant professional development sessions and enjoyable networking opportunities for us. If you are unable to attend the conference in-person this year, please take advantage of the virtual opportunity. I am looking forward to seeing you in Washington DC on October 12-15, 2021 as we begin our recovery journey!

Respectfully,

*Dr. Cathy Donovan*

Dr. Cathy Donovan  
AASPA President

# Evaluation's New Normal: Let's Hope It Is!

by Dr. Chad Dumas, Ed.D., Solution Tree Associate;  
Solution Tree; Bloomington, IN



As the pandemic shows some signs of winding down, we hear talk of returning to a “new normal” in schools, businesses and life in general. In terms of teacher and principal evaluation in schools, I certainly hope this can be the case of establishing a new normal that *actually* works.

Evaluation is supposed to improve performance. Here's the problem: Despite our best efforts, it simply doesn't work this way. The results have been a waste of time, money (to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars in formal studies and no doubt climbing into the billions in similar efforts) and even lawsuits. If we want better performance (and who doesn't?!), more, different and better systems of evaluation simply won't cut it.

## Clarity Precedes Competence

I'm fond of Schmoker's comment that “clarity precedes competence.” This notion comes in handy quite regularly and this might be one of those times...

Because we tend to use terms in education without having clarity around what they mean or the implications of such terms, this keeps us from being able to become competent. It seems to me that, as we establish a new normal, the work around teacher and leader evaluation systems is one of those places where clarity is helpful. Merriam-Webster defines evaluation as “the act or result of evaluating.” This definition leads us to define, then, the term evaluating. Evaluating has two potential definitions: 1) “to determine or fix the value of”, or 2) “to determine the significance, worth or condition of. . .”. In other words, to evaluate something means to determine a value; to make a judgment.

Bill Gates states that “we all need people to give us feedback.” Feedback, however, is very different from evaluation.

Evaluation involves judgment.

Feedback involves information.

While teachers and leaders need effective *feedback* mechanisms, *evaluation* systems are not the same as systems of feedback and professional learning. Sure, evaluation is important to remove ineffective teachers from the profession. On the other hand, systems of feedback and high quality professional learning are what are needed to

improve our effectiveness and results for students. Mixing the two systems creates a lack of clarity and as noted previously, clarity is what is needed in order to have competence.

One of the “founding fathers” of the professional learning community movement, Rick DuFour, espoused that we should do as little as possible regarding evaluation:

“The way we're going to improve schools is not by supervising and evaluating individual teachers into better performance; it's by creating a culture in which teams of teachers are helping one another get better. I advise principals, ‘Don't put your school improvement eggs in the evaluation basket. Put them in the collaborative team and PLC basket.’”

While evaluation systems *can* be an impetus to improved performance, improved performance does not come simply from a value judgment bestowed by a supervisor (i.e. evaluation). Improved performance comes through feedback.

## So What is Feedback?

Joellen Killion, in her groundbreaking work, *The Feedback Process: Transforming Feedback for Professional Learning*, defines feedback as “a dynamic, dialogic process that uses evidence to engage a learner, internally or with a learning partner, in constructing knowledge about practice and self.”

Notice the four elements of feedback: 1) A dynamic and dialogic process, 2) Using evidence, 3) Engaging a learner (internally or with a partner), 4) In constructing knowledge about practice and self.

What I love about her definition is how simple yet comprehensive it is. Feedback comes from external observation or internal reflection. It happens through formal data or informal anecdotes. It occurs by oneself or with one or more colleagues (or supervisor(s)). It takes place with the use of video or self-assessments, formal observation tools or simple reflective questions.

Feedback is highly personal and extremely personalized. It implies ongoing and organic shifts. It involves trust and a collaborative environment. And it always ends with the learner constructing *their own* knowledge about their craft and identity.

Feedback is what improves practice. And improved practice leads to improved results for students.

## A New Normal

We have known for some time that the classroom teacher is the most important factor influencing the social, emotional and cognitive development of students. We also know that there is no one best way to teach kids and have more recently learned that collective efficacy yields the highest impact on improving student achievement.

In other words, teachers matter. We need to continually increase our “toolbox” to reach every child. And doing it together is what works.

While evaluation is one component of an overall system of feedback and professional learning, we do a disservice to ourselves and our profession by linking these ideas into one overarching term. Let us create a new normal where we're doing what is actually effective.

Feedback: Yes!

Evaluation: Only what is required by law.

Chad Dumas is a Solution Tree Associate and international educational consultant, presenter and award-winning researcher whose primary focus is collaborating to develop capacity for continuous improvement. With over two decades of successful leadership experience, Chad has led significant improvements for both students and staff. He shares his research and knowledge in his new books, *Let's Put the C in PLC* and *An Action Guide to Put the C in PLC*, and consulting that includes research, stories, hands-on tools, useful knowledge and practical skills.





by Robert Phillips, Director of Recruiting and Professional Learning;  
Loudoun County Public Schools; Loudoun County, VA

Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) are located in Loudoun County, VA, approximately forty miles northwest of Washington, D.C. As they are surrounded by two much larger school districts, Fairfax County Public Schools and Prince William County Schools, LCPS has intense competition for recruiting its teaching staff. As a result, LCPS' Department of Human Resources and Talent Development (HRTD) had to get creative to meet its strategic action of "recruiting, hiring and retaining a diverse, high-performing team of professionals."

In addition to the competition, LCPS has seen a major increase in both its student population and ethnic diversity. During the last 25 years, LCPS grew by 61,246 students and 41 schools, with the percentage of white students decreased by half. Now, in 2021, 62 of Loudoun's schools are composed of more than 50% students of color, while another seven schools are within 1% of joining that group. Again, HRTD had to think outside of the box to staff its classrooms in a manner that mirrors the demographic composition of the student body.

Challenged by the dynamic forces of competition and shifting demographics, HRTD developed a "Grow Our Own," program that aligned itself to the increased diversity of the students participating in electives offered at each high school in Loudoun. The Teacher Cadet program is a Virginia Department of Education Teachers for Tomorrow dual enrollment (DE) sequence offered through Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses. This two-year set consists of two 36-week DE courses (Teacher Cadet I DE and Teacher Cadet II DE) offered to high school juniors and seniors who are interested in pursuing a career in education. The Teacher Cadet program is designed to attract teacher candidates from high school students to the field of education through exposure to a world-class curriculum and hands-on experience that focuses on teaching.

LCPS began to strategize for its "Grow Our Own" program in 2017. During that year, HRTD began to track the number and diversity of the senior students in the Teacher Cadet classes in LCPS high schools. The chart below shows data from the past four years:

School Year	# of Students	Percent Diverse
2017-18	154	26.0%
2018-19	185	30.3%
2019-20	227	33.9%
2020-21	184	34.8%

Identifying the increase in diversity, HRTD had to develop ways to recruit the Teacher Cadets to return to LCPS upon graduation from college.

To further assist, HRTD created recruiting positions to help support the licensed hiring needs for the district in 2017. At that point, one of the recruiters was assigned to work with and support both the Teacher Cadet students and teachers. This included gathering contact information from the teacher cadets, speaking to the Teacher Cadet classes, collaborating with the teachers monthly and developing the annual *Educators' Rising Conference* for the students. At the conference, former Teacher Cadets now working as teachers and the current Teacher Cadet teachers facilitated workshops for the students to attend throughout the day, simulating an educational conference. Students chose sessions based on personal preference and interest.

While this support was a good beginning, HRTD took the next step in 2019 in securing the Teacher Cadet students as potential teachers for LCPS. In collaboration with the Career and Technical Education Department and LCPS School Board Attorney, HRTD created a Letter of Intent (LOI) to utilize with the students. The LOI provides the students an opportunity to declare their intentions as a high school senior to return to work for LCPS as a teacher. When signed, the LOI places the former cadet at the head of the line for jobs in LCPS upon completion of a Bachelor's or Master's Degree program in a certificated teaching field.

To be eligible, the LOI calls for the prospective teacher needs to meet the following pre-hire requirements:

- Graduate from a regionally accredited Educator Preparation Program;
- Have excellent ratings for your final student teaching evaluation(s);
- Be eligible to receive a Virginia teaching license for the subject area you are being hired to teach; and,
- Meet LCPS' criminal background check (state or federal), health certificate requirements and all other standard hiring requirements that are in place at the time of employment.

In addition, employment is contingent upon the LCPS School Board appropriating a budget containing an available teaching position in the appropriate certification/subject area.

In its first year of implementation, 100 Teacher Cadets signed the LOI while this past school year, 80 more committed to returning to LCPS. HRTD seized the opportunity to promote positive news by visiting each signee's house with some LCPS swag. In the future when COVID restrictions are lifted, each high school will have a ceremony to celebrate the signing, similar to ones high schools hold for its athletes. HRTD wants to put future teachers on that same pedestal.

Building on the momentum of the LOI, this year HRTD collaborated with the Mentoring and Coaching Office to create the Cadet Advisor Program (CAP). CAP pairs a LOI signee with a current LCPS teacher who is closely removed from the college experience (years two through four). The advisors are vetted through a rigorous application and training process, including a recommendation from the principal or lead mentor. The advisors will stay in communication with the signees as they navigate through the college experience. Not only is the program developing strong relationships with the cadets and the leadership capacity of early career LCPS teachers, it is also cultivating future mentors for beginning teachers. As the advisors enter the fifth year of experience in the district, they become eligible to mentor new teachers, taking their knowledge and applying it to the Mentoring and Coaching program.

Overall, the progression from tracking to creating job opportunities to supporting the students in the Teacher Cadet program has propelled the "Grow Our Own" initiative for LCPS. As the students return home to work in the communities in which they attended school, HRTD will continue to examine its impacts on diversity and teacher retention, as well as the increase in course enrollment and development of teacher-leaders.



Robert (Bob) Phillips is the Director of Recruiting and Professional Learning for Loudoun County Public Schools and is completing his 25th year in education. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics from Penn State University, a Master's degree in Special Education from George Washington University and an Education Specialist's degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Virginia Polytechnic University.



# A Call to Duty!

## Bus Drivers as Substitutes

by Shawn C. Williams, Sr. Chief Human Resources Officer,  
Michele Taylor-Brown, Director of Teacher Quality & Lori Lewers, HR Supervisor - Substitutes;  
Richland School District #2; Columbia, SC

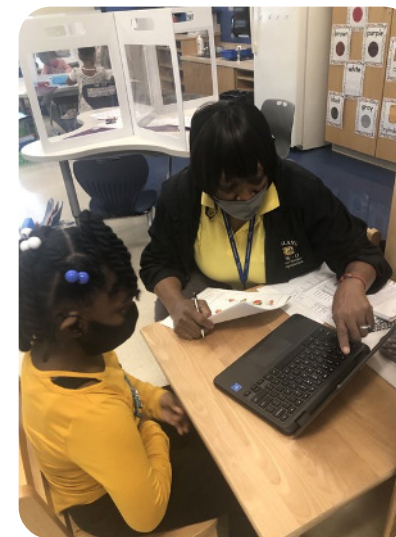
Bus drivers are often un-sung heroes. Charged with transporting our most precious cargo to and from school daily, the relationship between driver and student can be an important one. Drivers are often the first and last people students see each day. In 2019-2020, Richland Two buses operated 89 regular route buses and 39 special needs buses on over 700 bus routes to provide students transportation each school day.

Substitutes also perform a vital role maintaining instruction in the absence of a classroom teacher. Filling substitute vacancies can be challenging even during the best years but in the midst of a global pandemic, nearly all districts across America struggled with this task. However, Richland Two saw an opportunity to utilize one of its greatest assets...bus drivers! When bus drivers become substitute teachers, it's a win-win for our students and schools.

At the start of the 2020-2021 school year, the staff roster included over 500 active substitute teachers; however, with concerns of COVID-19 lingering, many substitute teachers were unable to return to the workforce. With a limited number of available substitutes and increased employee absences, we still needed a way to adequately staff our classrooms in the absence of the regular classroom teachers. We knew student instruction was paramount and that adequate staffing was critical to the success of our students. With this in mind, Human Resources developed a plan to address our urgent staffing needs.

Without hesitation, we collaborated with our transportation department to develop a plan of action. As word of this unique opportunity spread, interest among available bus drivers quickly gained momentum. Interest meetings were facilitated with interested bus drivers. Bus drivers were excited by the opportunity to spend more time with students and the prospect of earning additional income. The plan was simple. Drivers reported to their assigned elementary schools after covering their morning bus routes. Forty-four bus drivers accepted the call of duty and began covering classrooms, distributing lunches, supervising students during recess, providing one-on-one instruction for struggling students, giving our teachers an opportunity for planning, etc.

Our amazing bus drivers were often spotlighted on social media that captured them teaching various lessons and assisting wherever needed. Center for Knowledge Director Jessica Agee stated, "without a doubt having our bus drivers around to assist with any necessary duties alleviated the compounding pressures schools are often faced with that were often exacerbated during the pandemic. More importantly it allowed us to establish and build lasting and meaningful relations with a team we don't often get to work directly with." This unique opportunity allowed the bus drivers to see what happens daily inside of the school after dropping the students off. Bus driver Audrey Washington added, "I was able to see a different side of the students. It was heartwarming to work with them and see how intelligent they are. This opportunity personally taught me the most and I really looked forward to coming each day."



In Richland Two, we live by the mantra "Premier Starts Here!" Our bus drivers readily demonstrated this goal. The lasting impact of our students being able to see their bus drivers as teachers will enhance student/driver relationships. We used a unique approach to address a critical need in our schools and hope that this opportunity inspired our bus drivers to one day become teachers.



Shawn C. Williams, PHR



Michele Taylor-Brown



Lori Lewers

The Richland School District Two team are leaders in the field of education. We are proud to share that our programs have been the model for countless schools and districts across the country. With our focus on our Core Values: Learning, Character, Community and Joy, Richland Two teachers, administrators and support staff create the sparks for students' learning and achievement. At more than 28,000 students, we are the largest and fastest growing school district in the Midlands of South Carolina.

# Book Review: Leading Schools in Disruptive Times; How to Survive Hyper-Change

by Mark White and Dwight L. Carter  
Reviewed by Dr. Shelly Norris

“

**This book offers practical examples and strategies for how school leaders can address the ever increasing demands placed on them during an era of information overload, exponentially increased rates of knowledge and information and hyper-change.**

COVID-19 has forced school systems to exercise organizational agility and implement new practices and changes at an accelerated speed and volume that has not been previously experienced in our nation's history, but as school leaders are well aware of, even prior to the pandemic school systems were having to navigate increasing disruptions due to external pressures and societal changes. *Leading Schools in Disruptive Times; How to Survive Hyper-Change, 2nd Ed.*, by Mark White and Dwight L. Carter, offers a historical perspective of societal and school change and the innovative disruptions school systems have been facing in recent years and offers a framework for how leaders can successfully adapt and succeed as our society transitions from the information age into the age of hyper-change.

This book offers practical examples and strategies for how school leaders can address the ever increasing demands placed on them during an era of information overload, exponentially increased rates of knowledge and information and hyper-change. Specifically, the authors introduce an approach leaders can utilize to redefine and reimagine education during these turbulent times known as the CAT (Coping, Adjusting, Transforming) Strategy. In this second edition of *Leading Schools in Disruptive Times; How to Survive Hyper-Change*, White and Carter include new information about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and take the position that the pandemic is just the beginning of many new disruptions that will have significant implications for schools and school leaders in the 2020's. Despite this assertion, the book is not meant to offer a doom and gloom view of the future for education. As the authors state in the book's preface:

*While the world has endured a bleak period that has changed schools, this book is not meant to be a pessimistic prediction of the demise of schools; on the contrary, it is meant to serve as a tool for revitalization, for repurposing, and for avoiding the pitfalls that could sidetrack school leaders' progress into an amazing future.*

As schools are getting set to begin the 2021 school year amid continued uncertainty about the pandemic-induced and other disruptions that lie ahead, I highly recommend this book for human capital leaders and leadership teams as a guide for navigating the shifting practices and thinking that will be necessary for schools to thrive during the era of hyper-change and into the future.

To order your copy of  
**Leading Schools in Disruptive Times,**  
visit [aaspa.org/products/featured-books](https://aaspa.org/products/featured-books)



# Retention is the New Recruitment

by Dr. Steven Grubb, Ed.D, Chief Talent Officer and Evan Mirolla, M.Ed., Project Manager and Analyst;  
Highline School District; Burien, WA

Across the nation, school district human resource departments continue to engage in the recruitment of high-quality diverse staff at all levels to support and impact meaningful outcomes for students and communities. Highline School District is no different. As a mid-sized school district in the Pacific Northwest, we have come to see that the continuous recruitment of high-quality diverse staff at all levels remains a constant priority *and* it cannot exist absent the prioritization of sound race-explicit retention strategies to support high-quality diverse staff - especially our staff who identify as BIPOC.



As a district with a commitment to our students graduating both bilingual and biliterate as an essential piece of our district's strategic plan and vision, our expansion of Dual Language programs in elementary, middle and high schools with targeted recruitment efforts have largely yielded an increase in the racial diversification of our teaching staff since 2015 - specifically with our Latino/a educators. Significant rates of turnover and gaps between the racial demographics of our students and the racial demographics of our staff - specifically among our high-quality staff who identify as BIPOC - still remain. This reality has led our Human Resources (HR) department to take on increasingly race-explicit strategies to support not just the recruitment of high-quality racially diverse staff, but retention of our high-quality racially diverse staff, as well.

In 2019, Education Trust and Teach Plus released a report titled, *If you listen, we will stay: Why teachers of color leave and how to disrupt teacher turnover*. In this report, challenges and solutions associated with the retention of teachers of color - specifically Black and Latino/a educators - are shared from data gathered and analyzed across nationally representative focus groups. In this report, the following challenges are shared by educators who identify as Black and/or Latino/a:

- Strong **feelings of isolation and unwelcomeness** in the workplace
- Consistently **feeling undervalued and expected to take on disproportionate shares** of the teaching and social-emotional workload
- A greater sense of a **loss of agency and autonomy** in their efforts to support the students they serve and know
- A **variety of unfavorable working conditions** including, but not limited to, a lack of support for professional growth and development to increase effective practice and access pathways of increased opportunity and instructional leadership
- An **overall psychological and financial cost** of being an educator of color in a system not designed to support and meet their unique skills, ambitions and experiences

The report continues to suggest solutions to the challenges shared above:

- Explicit efforts and processes to create **culturally affirming workplaces** that allow teachers of color to bring their full authentic self – strengths, perspectives and experiences – to school buildings and classrooms
- Increased opportunities for **mentoring alongside both formal and informal leadership pathways** that directly contribute to retention and professional growth for staff who identify as BIPOC
- Increased **compensation and supports** that make teaching a more sustainable career for teachers of color and recognize that with which teachers of color may come to the profession
- Enhanced **district-level system supports and priorities that attend to hiring, onboarding, placement considerations** that reduce teacher isolation and tokenism for teachers of color, as well as **opportunities to build authentic community** with other teachers of color across schools and departments to help impact the overall retention of teachers of color



In our district, we have begun to operationalize these recommendations with a recognition of the need to begin more race-explicit strategies to support our teachers of color. To begin, we knew there needed to be a clear statement to connect our district's equity policy more explicitly to system supports and expectations to better support our workforce. As a district, we adopted a workplace environment and culture policy that shared a commitment and support for employees to address unwelcome and non-affirming working conditions.

In addition to adopting and adapting policies that are culturally affirming, there have been increased system efforts to educate and support employees about the policy and the types of remedies that it suggests. This has included regular districtwide training for central office and school leaders, as well as trainings for all employees through written communications, virtual trainings and school-level meetings and supports. As a human resources department, we know the next steps for us are providing more explicit guidance and supports for staff to have critical conversations with one another and to bring the policy supports and trainings to new staff directly early in their district onboarding.

As a district, we have implemented affinity groups – with additional compensation for those who participate, lead and plan – as another strategy in alignment to insights drawn from the report. Though implementation during the pandemic has proven difficult, this strategy will receive renewed vigor as we return to in-person instruction and full school opening in the Fall.

As we continue to review longitudinal exit surveys and interviews with a race-explicit lens, we will continue to use findings to better enact system supports and procedures – alongside central office and school leaders - to support the recruitment, hiring, onboarding and retention of our staff of color in alignment to our district equity and workplace environment and culture policies. Additionally, we are developing plans to conduct stay interviews with staff to gain authentic insights, experiences and narratives so that we are not just gaining these invaluable perspectives as our staff who identify as BIPOC leave our system.

Long-term initiatives are currently in early design and development, as well, in response to what we have heard from educators in our system. One example of such long-term efforts includes development of leadership pathways that bring meaningful and culturally affirming mentorship alongside on-the-job leadership development challenges toward administrative credentialing for our staff. Another example is thinking about our adult data-points and platforms more strategically to center employee experience and trust to empower our workforce to better build community and lead their own learning. Such initiatives are being designed with a clear desire to better understand and support the retention of our high-quality diverse staff.

Constant improvement of our recruitment efforts, strategies and experiences is paramount. As our HR department continues to support our system to fulfill its promise for students, the community and our staff, it is vital we continue to expand efforts that center the narrative and experiences of our staff – particularly our staff who identify as BIPOC - so that we can support the retention of our staff in meaningful, responsive and authentic ways.



Steven serves as Chief Talent Officer in the Highline School District, adjacent to Seattle. With support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Steven leads an effort to restructure a human resources department with greater focus on recruiting and retaining teachers and administrators of color.



Evan is a Project Manager and Analyst with the Human Resources Department at Highline School District. Evan manages the analysis of data and projects that influence and inform ongoing strategic work within human resources.

# Creating a Culture of Pride: Communicating the Value of Every Individual Through Your Mission and Vision

by Jackie Levine, Director of Curriculum and Instruction;  
Putnam Valley Central School District; Putnam Valley, NY

## “What do you do?”

It is a common question almost everyone asks, and simple enough for someone to offer a quick response. *Writer. Dentist. Teacher.* Many titles we know, and they immediately conjure images, ideas and supporting descriptors that we might access in our memories. Usually that is enough to confirm we know with a fair amount of certainty what someone does, even if what we think they do pales in comparison to what they really do.

Occasionally, we are provided a longer title and our brains assess the response utilizing context clues, so we think we understand the role in general. We may need to ask a follow-up, often confirmatory question, to clarify our thinking. Sometimes, we hear something unfamiliar and then we are prompted to say, “Tell me more about that.”

Educators often lament a concern that those outside the field “think they know what we do because they all went to school.” While this may be true, this could apply to many professions, as we all have a bias based on our personal experiences on what different professionals do. It leads me to wonder, how do we do a better job of telling people what it is we do?

When people ask what do you do, what do you say? Do you provide a label – *principal, coach, superintendent* – and assume they understand the depth of your work? Do you have a general or very specific definition of what, how and why you do what you do? How do you communicate the value of your role in the broader

organization? There is often so much more to the story than a single word or title.

Here is a better question: What do your people say when they are asked, “what do you do?”

### Conveying value to all

When we think about the people in our school communities, from teachers to custodians to secretaries to board members, do they know the value they bring to the organization? I don’t mean through leaders telling them, thanking them or throwing the occasional luncheon to celebrate them.

If you asked every single employee of the district what they do, how they impact children and how they carry forward the mission and vision of the school district, could they tell you?

Leaders are frequently readied for these kinds of conversations. Most can articulate at least half of the school’s mission from memory and share how they stay true to those words in their big and small decisions. However, every single member of the district has the potential to do this, and they should. When someone asks an employee of your district what they do, wouldn’t it be incredible for them to identify beyond their title? Imagine the impact a school district could have if everyone within it could tell neighbors, friends and family exactly what the organization does in their own words? Each employee of the district is possibly the first and last interaction with the organization members of the general public will have. We are all ambassadors to our school districts.

### Creating Ambassadors

We want our colleagues, who are often also community members themselves, to be ambassadors of the district. A front line of individuals who know what their district stands for, why they choose to be part of it and the tremendous value they bring to the organization can be transformational for a community. This starts with assisting them in developing a way to articulate who they are beyond their title. A more important reason to help all employees articulate beyond their title is the level of commitment you can expect from someone who knows their value to the organization and has found purpose in being part of the greater mission of the district. How someone answers the question of what they do also demonstrates their own leadership in this area.

### Start with the mission and vision

Boards of education and leaders spend a great deal of time developing, revising and communicating missions and visions. They might invest in consultants, retreats and focus groups to make sure they get it right, to ensure that the mission really reflects what their community is all about when it comes to education. Once the perfect statement is crafted, it is plastered on websites, in mailers, atop codes of conduct and on buildings.

We make a big deal about the mission and vision, and yet we do not always systematically connect people to it and help them see how they make the vision possible. For some of the folks who work in areas of schools that do not interact with students, they might not even know how they impact the lives of children every day.

The first step in any onboarding program is to convey the mission and vision by really breaking it down. What do the words mean to them? What are some tasks they do that contribute to developing the whole child or making sure children are prepared to be civic-minded leaders? The answer to creating ambassadors who know their value and how they contribute to better futures for children is having everyone then craft a personalized elevator statement that relates to the mission and vision to answer the age old question of “What do you do?”

### Re-imagining an old tool

Elevator statements are commonly utilized in other fields and often shared with the goal to sell someone or something. Sometimes referred to as elevator pitches, these are a go-to for those who have a small amount of time to make a big impression. When used in the context of communicating roles in a school district, what you are selling is a commitment to shared beliefs and the value of one’s role in a larger community.

What if districts repurposed this old practice and helped faculty and staff workshop elevator statements dedicated to conveying what they do in relation to the mission and vision and how they ultimately impact the lives of children? Helping all community members, from the board president to a new TA, find a relationship between their essential tasks and the mission and vision can mean the difference between compliance and commitment.

### A Culture of Pride

In fairness, maybe folks don’t want to talk about their work in depth at the neighborhood block party, so they may not embrace a role of ambassador right away. However, I would argue a district can build a culture in which everyone sees themselves as an ambassador, takes great pride in their organization and is *inspired* to share exactly who they are and what they do in that grand organization.

It all starts with each and every member of your school community being able to connect the value of their work to the mission and vision of your district and, most importantly, to an impact on children.

Jackie Levine is currently the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Putnam Valley Central School District. She is currently a student with Manhattanville College pursuing a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. Jackie has also led as the Coordinator of Regional Literacy and Teacher Center Services, and she taught grades K-5 prior to her role as an administrator.





# Upcoming AASPA Events

## SAVE THE DATES!

register for upcoming events at [www.aaspa.org/events/](http://www.aaspa.org/events/)

### AASPA's 83rd Annual Conference

OCTOBER 12-15, 2021  
WASHINGTON, DC

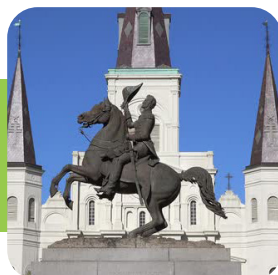


### Human Capital Leadership Summit

DECEMBER 2-3, 2021  
PHOENIX, AZ

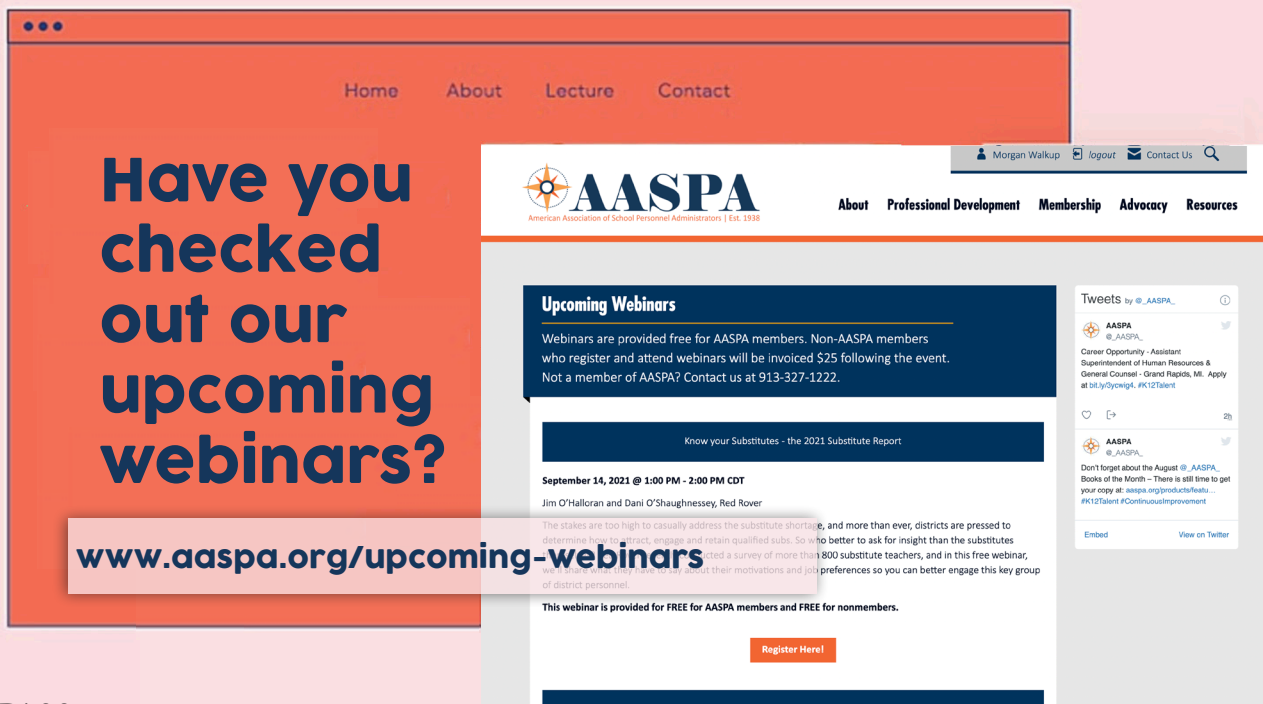
### Personnel Administrator Boot Camp

JANUARY 27-28, 2022  
NEW ORLEANS, LA



### Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Summit

APRIL 27-28, 2022  
CHICAGO, IL



Have you checked out our upcoming webinars?

[www.aaspa.org/upcoming-webinars](http://www.aaspa.org/upcoming-webinars)

## Book Review: The Power of Moments

by Chip Heath & Dan Heath

Reviewed by Danette Meyer, pHCLE, Assistant Superintendent - Human Resources; Schaumburg SD54; Schaumburg, IL

“

The book offers a convincing argument on why it's important not only to focus on fixing problems but also to focus on creating excellent and optimal experiences.

This past year the pandemic pushed all of us responsible for education talent management and culture to focus on the essentials: ensuring our people were safe and our students continued to learn. At this point, we're grateful we made it through the year, while also starting to look ahead at a new school year when we hope to return to in person learning and refocusing on best practices and innovation. As I close out this school year and look ahead wondering where to restart strong culture work and innovation, I am reminded of the excellent book, *The Power of Moments* by Chip and Dan Heath. The book offers a convincing argument on why it's important not only to focus on fixing problems but also to focus on creating excellent and optimal experiences. As you plan for the coming year and the opportunity for greater engagement and a stronger culture at your school district, you may want to include *The Power of Moments* to seek inspiration.

As a leader in a school district, I have been inspired by this book to strengthen our staff induction experience. It helps our new people feel really welcomed into their new work community. Creating these moments was a team effort and have become uniting rituals that make our new hires feel more like becoming members of a special

community rather than just starting a new job. *The Power of Moments* provides inspiration and a reminder that even in the midst of challenging times, small changes can make a big difference. As we all know, engaged and enthusiastic educators are more able to do great things with our students.

Unfortunately, last year we had to let go of some of these new traditions due to the pandemic and the move to a virtual environment. Without the in-person social connections, our district's defining moments were a little less present and impactful than in previous years. As I look ahead to next year I believe there are many opportunities to create new meaningful moments and build an ever stronger culture to meet our new challenges.

As you plan for your new normal, consider reading *The Power of Moments* to spark post pandemic inspiration for culture defining moments for your team.



To order your copy of *The Power of Moments*, visit [aaspa.org/products/featured-books](http://aaspa.org/products/featured-books)

# Welcoming Back Your Employees This Fall: What to Do and What to Avoid

by Seth Richtsmeier;  
Freelance Writer; Framingham, MA

The 2020-2021 school year was, for most, unlike anything educators and the like have experienced. In the aftermath of an unprecedented school year, teachers and students are still processing and recovering from heightened levels of uncertainty and trauma, as well as resting after hard-won triumphs.

Though the “new normal” has become a tired phrase, it’s imperative that human resources staff and support personnel continue evaluating their policies and practices for the upcoming year.

Although COVID barriers and restrictions are largely lifting, the pandemic has not fully ended. COVID variants are popping up around the country, vaccinations are still not readily available for all children and the economy hasn’t recovered.

Are you prepared for a compassionate, safe and authentic return to school?

## Preparing A New Environment

Throughout the pandemic, schools served as a flashpoint for testing social norms, boundaries and policy solutions regarding public health and safety. As you prepare to welcome back staff for the upcoming school year, one key step is to evaluate what’s changed, what’s remained the same and what’s still in flux.

Lynn Holdheide, a veteran technical assistance and education consultant, notes, “District or school leaders could ask, ‘What are you experiencing right now? What’s your biggest challenge?’ And the experts – such as technology specialists, university faculty or information technology teams – could point them to a particular resource and walk teachers through how it could be used to address emerging challenges.”

Employees, parents, students, personnel and district administrators have experienced the tumultuousness of the past year in unique and often conflicting ways. There are no monolithic opinions, but motivators and interests may not always overlap. Given that HR staff are tasked with fostering a seamless, productive environment, it’s crucial to build internal awareness on the forces that may influence your environment.

Map out relationships in the school or district ecosystem. Who are the most involved stakeholders? Who’s the least involved? How do these groups influence policies and practices? Gaining a better understanding of your landscape in a post-pandemic environment may involve surveying your constituencies and taking time to conduct one-on-one conversations.

Giving people space to voice how the pandemic has affected their ecosystem will only enable better practices for yourself and your staff. A few questions to start might be:

- In your experience, what was the status quo during COVID?
- What motivated you to continue in this position despite the obstacles?
- What were the hardest challenges to overcome?
- What became easier or changed for the better?

## Easing Stress with Compassion

As you know, back-to-school season is full of energy that’s framed with optimism and a welcoming spirit.

Given how traumatic and distressing the past year has been, it’s natural that many educators and staff will be apprehensive, dreadful, stressed or uneasy about returning to school. Some may be excited and tired of the pandemic gloom. Acknowledge the conflicting emotions that this year’s back-to-school season will present for educators. Give space – even if it’s outside the view of students – for your staff to process their feelings in a non-judgmental space.

Part of doing this is to create an environment that makes self-care and well-being a priority. Those who are well-cared for will, in turn, be more compassionate toward their students. Ask your staff what they need and follow through on it. You’ll be setting the norm and best practice for the rest of the school year.

Rather than placing the burden of finding time for self-care, incorporate it into daily practice in your schools. This may look like giving employees their time back to practice self-care, encouraging breaks and celebrating those who value their well-being rather than giving them more work and responsibilities.

Meaningful feedback processes, where employees can offer feedback that’s received and acted upon, can also ease stress. This way, staff feel like they’re working in a cooperative and collaborative environment (which they should, rather than a workplace that’s working against them).

## Avoiding the Pitfalls

Even though each school and district are charting unique paths forward, there are pitfalls that every HR staff should make sure to avoid.

For example, it should not be assumed that teachers and employees won’t need reminders, guidance or communication regarding health and safety. Policies, procedures and all resources should be available to all, as information regarding mask ordinances, vaccination sites and other preventative measures continues to change.

Stay on top of local ordinances, district policies, CDC guidance and other sources. Some students and teachers will be required to wear masks while others won’t, depending on both their vaccination status, age group, health conditions, among other factors. This system will likely be confusing and frustrating for staff.

Another pitfall to avoid is ambiguity in policies, procedures and practices. We're more than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic and teachers, students, staff and parents will expect you to be prepared to answer questions and concerns around public health, safety and protecting health data and privacy. As UNESCO notes, communication should happen "early, clearly and regularly with parents and school communities" to prepare educators as best as possible.

Communication is not only about conveying the rules. This approach is another trap to avoid. Convey the *rationale* for policies, including the district's sources of information and decision-making frameworks. To welcome and prepare others effectively, HR staff should be preparing themselves as well. Teachers are often the first point of contact for colleagues, parents and communities.

Lastly, don't make assumptions about what your community needs. Assess your own capacity for engaged listening, receiving feedback and validating the feelings of others while balancing the challenging mission of upholding the best possible professional environment.

And, of course, model what you hope to see in others. Celebrate accomplishments, encourage others (as well as yourself) and set bold-yet-pragmatic goals with an optimistic vision for the future.

Seth Richtsmeier is an SEO professional and freelance writer with a passion for all things education and digital marketing. He carries an analytical mindset and data-centric background that truly drive ROI and engagement for the HR industry.



## Substitute teacher training makes an impact

Give Your  
**Substitute Teachers**  
the **Necessary Skills**  
they Need for Success in your  
District Classrooms!



Call Kelley to discuss what  
STEDI training option is best for  
your district: 435-200-9547



## AASPA's 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference

# THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

October 12 - 15, 2021  
Washington, DC

AASPA's 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference is the most comprehensive professional learning and networking event for school personnel administrators. With over 600 school personnel administrators attending, you'll be able to form a professional network that you can call on when you need to leverage ideas and actions from those who have first-hand experience.

Hear from speakers who are experts in their field and take-home new ideas and approaches to invigorate your own district. Connect with like-minded leaders and share strategies on improving equity, student outcomes, district performance and so much more. Stay current with the research, trends and connections that help advance not only the profession, but also your individual career.

### Outcomes of Attending

- Hear about the latest research & best practices in the field of PK-12 human capital leadership
- Expand your knowledge & find solutions to your school HR problems
- Discover new business partners & innovative products & services
- Engage in high-level discussions & network with your peers from across the country
- Position yourself as an expert in the field of HR

### Who should attend?

- **HR Directors**
- **Superintendents**
- **Assistant Superintendents**
- **Personnel Staff**
- **Principals**
- **School Administrators**
- **Business Officials**



Crystal Gateway Marriott  
1700 Richmond Highway

Book Your Room Now at:  
[www.aaspaconference.com/accommodations](http://www.aaspaconference.com/accommodations)

## What's Included in Your Registration?

### In Person

- Pre-Conference Workshops
- Networking Receptions
- Exhibit Hall Access
- Meals
- Keynote Sessions
- Session Recordings & Materials
- Clinics & Ignite Sessions

### Virtual

- Pre-Conference Workshops
- Keynote Sessions
- Session Recordings & Materials
- Select Clinics & Ignite Sessions

**Register Now!**

# AASPA's 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference Keynote Spotlight

## Kaplan Mobray

**The Power of Your Voice: Authenticity, Self-Awareness, Influence Igniting the Power of your Voice to Elevate your Career**



This presentation is designed to inspire and teach individuals the importance of bringing your authentic self to work. Through a high-energy, interactive and thought-provoking session award-winning author, motivational speaker, career consultant Kaplan Mobray will highlight the positive impact of authenticity, confidence, and self-awareness and share insights on how to embrace these attributes to elevate your career and leadership influence. When you embrace your uniqueness, you hold yourself accountable for being your best you. You create the power to be celebrated not tolerated. And when this happens you gain the respect of others as you develop the confidence to elevate your work performance. Participants will walk away inspired to make the connection between their strengths, skills and authentic self as they celebrate the power that comes from their difference. Described as a life-changing event, this interactive, insightful, and engaging presentation and workshop teaches attendees and leaders how to harness the power of inclusion to increase emotional intelligence, cognitive and compassionate empathy, and engagement and propel your teams to new levels of success.

**Wednesday, October 13**

SPONSORED BY PowerSchool

## Garrison Wynn

**Making Employee Engagement Actually Happen**

We hear the term "employee engagement" a lot these days; we also hear how recognition, goal alignment and a clear path to success can create it. But how can an individual positively influence the opinions his or her employees and coworkers have about their job? This highly entertaining session, backed by Evolve Performance Group research across 46 countries (and combined with over 70 years of Gallup survey data) shows that the thing people value most is feeling valuable! It gives the specific communication tools that anyone can use to dramatically reduce resistance to change, difficult behavior and employee turnover. The impact of this program reaches far beyond the session itself, creating an emotional shift that fuels immediate implementation.

**Thursday, October 14**

SPONSORED BY TEACHERS of TOMORROW  
TEACHER CERTIFICATION™



## Mark Robinson

**The Little Things Matter**



Learn how a magician starts with an impossible goal and works backwards to find solutions.

Professional magician, comedian, author, and motivational speaker Mark Robinson reveals this, along with audience interactive examples of how easily we are distracted from what we should be focused on. Learn how important the "little things" are to someone's impression of your competency, and how to create "wow" moments for people.

**Friday, October 15**

SPONSORED BY ELEVATE  
K-12

“Annual Conference has great content and educational sessions. It is always good to leave a conference with real strategies and information that can be implemented in our own organizations!”

# AASPA's 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference Conference Schedule

All times listed are Eastern Time

## Tuesday, Oct. 12

- 9:00am – 12:00pm AM Pre-Conference Workshops
- 1:00pm – 4:00pm PM Pre-Conference Workshops
- 4:00pm – 5:00pm Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee Meeting
- 5:00pm – 6:00pm First-Time Attendee Reception
- 6:30pm – 9:30pm Welcome Reception

Sponsored by Teachers of Tomorrow

## Wednesday, October 13

- 8:00am – 9:30am Breakfast, Opening Ceremony & Keynote
- 9:30am – 5:00pm Exhibit Hall Opening (closed during lunch)
- 10:00am – 11:30am Ignite Sessions & Clinic Workshops
- 11:30am – 1:00pm Lunch, Awards, Recognition of Sponsors & 2022 Orlando Presentation

Sponsored by PowerSchool

Sponsored by Kelly Education

- 1:00pm – 1:45pm Committee Meetings
- 1:45pm – 4:15pm Ignite Sessions & Clinic Workshops
- 4:15pm – 5:00pm Regional Meetings
- 5:00pm – 6:00pm Reception in Exhibit Hall

Sponsored by Frontline

- 7:00pm – 10:00pm Party with our (Business) Partners

## Thursday, October 14

- 8:00am – 10:00am President's Breakfast, Business Meeting, Leon Bradley Scholarship Presentation & Keynote Speaker

Breakfast Sponsored by EDUStaff

Keynote Sponsored by Teachers of Tomorrow

- 9:30am – 11:30am Exhibit Hall & Consultants' Corner
- 10:45am – 11:45am Ignite Sessions & Clinic Workshops
- 11:45pm – 12:15pm Exhibit Hall Closing, Prize Drawing
- 12:15pm – 1:15pm Lunch on Own or Join ESS/Proximity Learning

Sponsored by ESS/Proximity Learning

- 1:15pm – 4:00pm Clinic Workshops
- 4:00pm – 4:45pm Membership Committee Meetings
- 5:00pm – 7:00pm State Receptions

Sponsored by Red Rover

- 7:00pm – 9:00pm Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Reception

## Friday, October 15

- 8:00am – 10:30am Clinic Workshops
- 10:45am – 12:00pm Closing Ceremony & Keynote

Sponsored by Elevate K-12

**Register Today at:**  
[www.aaspaconference.com/register](http://www.aaspaconference.com/register)



**Coming to Conference?**  
Let us know on Twitter!  
**#AASPA21**

## Get pHCLE, HRCI & SHRM Credit

This program has been approved for recertification credit through the Human Capital Leaders in Education (pHCLE), the Human Resources Certification Institute (HRCI) and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

The use of this seal is not an endorsement by HCLE, HRCI or SHRM of the quality of the program. It means that this program has met HCLE, HRCI and SHRM criteria to be pre-approved for recertification. Certificates will be mailed following the conference.



# Pre-Conference Workshops

Immerse Yourself and Learn More - Tuesday, October 12<sup>th</sup>

Go in-depth and expand your skills in our targeted pre-conference workshops!

## Morning Sessions

9:00 am – 12:00 pm

**1. Creating a Connection Through Employee Experience: Recruiting & Hiring**

Emily Douglas-McNab, Co-Founder and Chief, Dr. Kate Heynoski, Co-Founder and Principal & Taylor Tamang, Strategic HR Partner;

Experience Management Institute; Delaware, OH

**2. Diversity in All of Us**

Dr. Ron Lewis & Dr. Rodney Lewis, Founders;

The Lewis Influence; Saint Charles, MO

**3. But Johnny, You Have to Go to School. Cause You're the Principal!**

Leslie R. Stellman, Attorney;

Leslie R. Stellman ADR Services, LLC; Lutherville, MD

**4. Hot Topics in School HR**

Edmund O'Meally, Attorney;

Pessin Katz Law, P.A.; Towson, MD

**5. FMLA, ADA and Workers' Compensation: Untangling the Spider Web, Legal Update and Best Practices in Leave Administration**

Scott Macdonald, Esq., SPHR, SHRM-SCP, Attorney;

Macdonald & Associates; Middletown, CT

## Afternoon Sessions

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

**6. Creating a Connection Through Employee Experience: Engagement & Retention**

Brian White, Executive Director of Human Resources;

Auburn-Washburn USD 437; Topeka, KS

**7. A Human Resource Response to Suicide**

Dr. Marlene DeVilbiss Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources;

Raytown C-2 School District; Raytown, MO

**8. Collective Bargaining**

Edmund O'Meally, Attorney;

Pessin Katz Law, P.A.; Towson, MD

**9. Investigations, Discipline & Harassment Law**

Robert T. Schindler, Attorney;

Miller Johnson; Detroit, MI

**10. The Solution is Right in Front of You: How school districts throughout the country are inspiring HS students to become teachers.**

Dr. Joshua P. Starr, CEO;

PDK International; Arlington, VA

For a complete description of the Pre-Conference Workshops, go to [www.aaspaconference.com/precon](http://www.aaspaconference.com/precon)

## Elite Sponsors



# 4 Ways to Network



## Welcome Reception

Tuesday, October 12 | 6:30 – 9:30 pm

The Welcome Reception is a great opportunity to network with other conference attendees. Join us for a night of fun, food, music and surprises!

Sponsored by TEACHERS of TOMORROW  
TEACHER CERTIFICATION

## Exhibit Hall Reception

Wednesday, October 13 | 5:00 – 6:00 pm

You won't want to miss the Exhibit Hall Reception! Grab a drink and some appetizers, chat with our amazing business partners and try your luck at winning some terrific prizes.

Sponsored by frontline education

## Party with our (Business) Partners

Wednesday, October 13 | 7:00 – 10:00 pm

Join our Business Partners for a night on the town! Multiple locations will be offered to help you relax and meet up with your friends and colleagues. Maps will be provided.

## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Reception

Thursday, October 14 | 7:00 – 9:00 pm

Get ready to dance at our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Reception! We will provide the music and networking. This is a can't miss event!

**All times listed are Eastern Time**

# LET'S GET SOCIAL

LIKE  
COMMENT  
SHARE

/AMERICAN  
ASSOCIATIONOF SCHOOL  
PERSONNELADMINISTRATORS/

FOLLOW  
TWEET  
RETWEET

@\_AASPA\_

SEE THE  
BIG  
PICTURE

@AASPAK12

NETWORK  
CONNECT  
GROW

/COMPANY/AMERICAN-  
ASSOCIATION-OF-SCHOOL-  
PERSONNEL-ADMINISTRATORS/

