

**Session Titles and Descriptions**  
**AASPA 2026 School HR Virtual Boot Camp**  
**Wednesday, August 5 - Thursday, August 6**  
**(All sessions will be presented in CST.)**

**From Documentation to Decisions: A Step-by-Step Guide to Employee Discipline**

**Risk Management**

*Presented by Melissa Sobota, Partner and Reva Ghadge, Associate, Franczek P.C., Chicago, IL*

This interactive session will walk participants through the full employee discipline process, from identifying concerns and documenting issues to making defensible disciplinary decisions. We'll explore real-world scenarios, common mistakes and how to ensure fairness, consistency and compliance. Whether you're new to administration or a seasoned professional, you'll gain actionable tools you can immediately apply in your district.

**Hall Pass to Leave: FMLA for School Personnel Administrators**

**Risk Management**

*Presented by Kim Davis, Attorney, Udall Shumway, Mesa, AZ*

For school personnel administrators, FMLA compliance is both a legal responsibility and a practical challenge that directly affects staffing, employee relations and continuity of instruction. This presentation will provide an overview of the core FMLA requirements, employee eligibility, qualifying reasons for leave and the special rules that apply in school settings—particularly for instructional employees. The goal is to help administrators approach leave decisions consistently, lawfully and with an understanding of how to balance district operations with employee rights.

**How to hire alternatively-route teachers in a way that recognizes their value, prepares leaders to support them and sets them up for retention from day one**

**Talent Development**

*Presented by Dr. Cheryl Countee, Assistant Director Human Resources, Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District, Fairfield, CA*

As districts expand their educator pipelines, alternative-route teachers are becoming an important part of the talent conversation. Hiring these educators well requires more than filling a vacancy; it requires recognizing the career experience, content expertise, cultural knowledge and community connections they may bring to schools. This session will help HR leaders and district administrators examine how to approach the hiring process for alternative-route teachers through an asset-based lens. Participants will explore strategies for reducing deficit-based assumptions, identifying candidate strengths, preparing site leaders and building early support structures that begin at the point of hire. **Recruitment without support is not a retention strategy.** Hiring alternative-route teachers means designing a process that honors what candidates bring, connects them with strong preparation experiences and support partners and sets them up for growth, belonging and long-term success.

**HR 101 for Educational Leaders What Every School Leader Needs to Know About People, Compliance and Culture**

**Talent Acquisition**

*Presented by Rebecca Greenough, Human Resources Director, Maple Run Unified School District, St Albans City, VT*

By the end of this session, participants will:

- Understand their role in HR
- Recognize common legal and compliance risks
- Learn best practices for hiring and employee relations
- Know when to involve HR
- Strengthen leadership practices that improve culture and retention

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**Investigations and Documentation of Employee Misconduct**

**Risk Management**

*Presented by Rick Verstegen, Attorney, Boardman & Clark LLP, Madison, WI*

Allegations of employee misconduct trigger investigation processes. These allegations may come from other employees, students and the public and they may raise complaints about matters that occur on or off school grounds. Human resources administrators often play an important role in guiding the investigation process and addressing political, procedural and legal issues. This role can be challenging, especially considering the various policies that may be triggered depending on the type of misconduct involved. Consideration must also be given as to what documentation is created and who has access to this documentation. This presentation will provide details of the investigation process, scenario discussions and related considerations such as law enforcement involvement, child abuse reporting, records creation and other issues.

**Performance Management & Evaluations for Classified Employees**

**Talent Development**

*Presented by Kayla Andrews, Director of Human Resources, Morgan County Charter School System, Madison, GA*

Building Accountability Through Effective Coaching, Documentation & Performance Conversations

**Recent Developments Concerning the Fair Labor Standards Act**

**Risk Management**

*Presented by Rick Verstegen, Attorney, Boardman & Clark LLP, Madison, WI*

On March 12, 2025, Keith Sonderling was confirmed at the U.S. Deputy Secretary of Labor and, on April 20, 2026, he was designated as the Acting Secretary of Labor. During his tenure, there have been numerous developments related to wage and hour issues and school district administrators need to be aware of these changes. The developments include formal removal of the proposed 2024 overtime rules and newly proposed rules related to independent contractors or joint employment. In addition, there have been numerous opinion letters issued by the Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division that provide significant guidance on interpreting the Fair Labor Standards Act. Beyond these developments, school administrators need to identify frequent wage and hour concerns for schools. This presentation will provide an overview of the law and an update on many of the changes to ensure that your school stays legally compliant with the FLSA and wage and hour laws.

**Red Flags, Gut Checks and 'Call the Lawyer' Moments: Federal Law for School HR**

**Risk Management**

*Presented by Jeremy Neff, Attorney, Ennis Britton Co., L.P.A, Cincinnati, OH*

Navigating federal employment laws in the school setting can feel overwhelming—especially when multiple laws may apply to a single situation. This session provides a practical, issue-spotting framework to help PK–12 school HR professionals identify when key federal laws may be implicated in everyday decision-making.

Rather than diving deeply into the technical requirements of each statute, this session focuses on recognizing common scenarios where federal law is likely to come into play, including hiring, employee discipline, leave requests, accommodations and workplace complaints. Participants will gain a clearer understanding of how laws such as the FMLA, ADA, Title VII, FLSA and others intersect with routine HR responsibilities.

Designed for both newer and more experienced HR leaders, this session will help attendees build confidence in identifying potential legal issues early, asking the right follow-up questions and knowing when to seek additional guidance. The goal is to provide attendees with a practical lens they can use immediately in their roles to reduce risk and support compliant decision-making.

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**Say the Hard Thing: A Working Framework for Difficult Conversations in K-12 Education**

**Risk Management**

*Presented by Dr. Kerri Stroka, Deputy Superintendent, Orange-Ulster BOCES, Goshen, NY*

Every leader has a conversation they are avoiding. The staff member whose performance has slipped. The behavior everyone sees and no one names. The pattern that has gone unaddressed so long it now reads as permission. The conversations we avoid are almost always the ones that, once held, change the trajectory of the work and the cost of avoiding them only compounds. This session gives HR leaders and administrators a clear, repeatable structure for the conversations that matter most. Participants will learn how to open with purpose, name the specific behavior, name its impact, make a direct ask, listen and confirm next steps in writing. They will see what each step sounds like done well and where it most often goes wrong, from leading with feeling instead of fact to burying the task in language so soft the message never lands. This is not a scripted communication model. It is a working structure built from real personnel decisions. The session reframes documentation as leadership work rather than paperwork and grounds the entire approach in the assumption of positive intent. Most people come to work meaning to do well. Holding a hard conversation with that belief intact is what turns confrontation into problem solving. Participants will leave with a framework they can use in any state, with any employee, the next time the conversation cannot wait.

**By the end of this session, participants will be able to:**

- Recognize the true cost of an avoided conversation and identify the one they have been postponing.
- Structure a difficult conversation using a clear, repeatable framework: open with the why, name the behavior, name the impact, make the ask, listen and confirm in writing.
- Identify the most common ways these conversations break down, from leading with feeling instead of fact to softening the ask until the message disappears.
- Approach documentation as leadership work, capturing the specific behavior, connecting it to expectation and recording the conversation and the task.
- Hold the hard conversation while holding the relationship, grounding the work in the assumption that most people come to work meaning to do well.

**Stop the Sieve: How Better Onboarding Halts First-Year Teacher Burnout**

**Talent Acquisition**

*Presented by David Robertson, Retired Assistant Superintendent, Vacaville, CA*

Are your new teachers starting the school year already exhausted before the first bell even rings? In education, first impressions aren't just polite, they are our single best defense against the escalating teacher retention crisis. Join me for this session where we will ditch the traditional, overwhelming "paperwork dump" and build an intentional, phased onboarding strategy that actually inspires. Don't just hand over a classroom key and hope for the best; learn some ideas to build a world-class system of support that protects your staff, boosts morale and secures your school's future. Hopefully you'll walk away not just with fresh ideas, but inspired to make a change for your system

**The AI-Supported HR Office: Building Smarter Staffing, Certification, and Compliance Systems in PK-12 Schools**

**Process Management**

*Presented by Dr. Marva Tutt, HR Coordinator, Richmond County School System, Augusta, GA*

This session will explore how PK-12 HR professionals can use AI as a practical support tool to strengthen staffing workflows, improve communication, organize documentation and increase consistency across HR processes. Participants will learn how AI can assist with drafting principal communications, creating checklists, developing process tools, supporting certification and staffing reviews and identifying gaps in current HR systems. The session will also address responsible AI use, including confidentiality, human oversight and the importance of keeping final HR decisions aligned with district policy, legal guidance and professional judgment.

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**The Engagement Advantage**

**HR Strategy**

*Presented by Michele Thomas, HR Supervisor, Cobb County School District, Marietta, GA*

In today's challenging educational landscape, employee engagement has become a critical factor in attracting, supporting and retaining high-quality talent. As school districts navigate staffing shortages, increased workplace demands and evolving employee expectations, Human Resources leaders play a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture and fostering a positive employee experience. This webinar explores the connection between employee engagement, retention and organizational success in K–12 education. Participants will examine the key drivers of engagement, including leadership, communication, recognition, professional growth and employee well-being. Through practical strategies and evidence-based practices, attendees will learn how to create workplace cultures where educators and staff feel valued, connected and committed to the district's mission.

**The Policies That Matter: Building a Better Employee Handbook**

**Risk Management**

*Presented by Kim Davis, Attorney, Udall Shumway, Mesa, AZ*

This session will provide a practical roadmap for building and updating employee handbooks so they are clear, consistent and aligned with both policy and current legal requirements. The session will examine the core handbook provisions districts should address and highlight the importance of aligning handbook language with governing board policy, statutes and state board rules, while avoiding common drafting mistakes that create confusion or can increase risk. Attendees will leave with a practical checklist of essential handbook components, drafting considerations for district-specific customization and strategies for using the handbook as both a communication tool and a risk-management resource.