Session Titles and Descriptions
AASPA 2026 Virtual Legal Summit | Virtual
(All sessions will be presented in Central Time.)

AI in School HR: Legal Risks, Emerging Obligations, and Practical Guidance for Personnel Leaders
Presented by Chas Griffin, Associate, F3 Law, Chicago, IL
Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming school operations, from recruiting and hiring to employee evaluations, communications, and workplace investigations. While these tools offer exciting opportunities, they also raise significant legal, privacy, and compliance concerns. In this practical session, attorney Chas Griffin will explore the evolving legal landscape surrounding AI in K-12 education, with a particular focus on issues affecting human resources and personnel administration. Participants will gain actionable guidance on data privacy, bias and discrimination risks, employee use of AI tools, policy development, and governance strategies designed to help districts innovate responsibly while minimizing legal exposure.

Beyond the Checkbox: Making Employee Evaluations Matter
Presented by Namita Brown, Attorney & Amy Baer, District Relations & Development Advisor, F3 Law, Oakland, CA
Why is it that the employee everyone agrees is struggling somehow has 15 years of satisfactory evaluations? Effective employee evaluations are about more than completing forms, meeting deadlines, and satisfying legal requirements. They require supervisors to have honest, sometimes uncomfortable conversations about performance. Yet too often, school administrators avoid difficult feedback, provide inflated evaluations, or fail to document concerns until a personnel issue becomes a crisis.

Join an experienced education attorney and a former district HR executive for an engaging look at the legal and practical sides of employee evaluations. Through real-world scenarios, humor, and interactive case studies, participants will explore how to deliver meaningful feedback, navigate difficult conversations, document performance concerns, and support employee improvement while protecting the district's legal interests.

This session will also examine the role of HR in supporting and holding supervisors accountable for effective performance management. Participants will leave with practical tools and strategies they can put to work immediately.

Participants will be able to:
- Recognize evaluation requirements related to documentation, consistency, employee rights, and disciplinary decisions.
- Apply strategies for delivering specific feedback, managing defensive responses, and communicating clear performance expectations.
- Identify and address inflated ratings, vague feedback, inconsistent documentation, and delayed intervention.
- Distinguish coaching, formal evaluation, and corrective action, and recognize when to involve HR or legal counsel.
- Strengthen supervisory practices that support employee growth, accountability, and legally defensible personnel decisions.

Federal Employment Law in a Changing Landscape: What School HR Leaders Need to Know Now
Presented by Mary Breffle, Associate, F3 Law, Oakland, CA
Federal employment law continues to evolve, creating new challenges for school district HR leaders responsible for making legally defensible personnel decisions. Recent Supreme Court rulings, shifting federal enforcement priorities, and developments involving workplace discrimination, retaliation, and employee accommodations have important implications for public school employers.

This session will provide a practical overview of the federal employment laws most relevant to school district personnel administration, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), and the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA). Particular attention will be given to current legal developments, including discrimination claims involving majority-group employees, DEI-related employment practices, religious accommodations, employee transfers, and evolving federal civil rights enforcement.

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The presentation will examine how these federal requirements apply to common school district personnel decisions, how federal laws intersect with state employment protections, and how to distinguish binding legal requirements from agency guidance and changing enforcement priorities.

Participants will leave with a clearer understanding of federal employment law, emerging areas of legal exposure, and practical steps districts can take to strengthen compliance and reduce risk.

Participants will be able to:

- Identify the principal federal employment laws governing discrimination, retaliation, disability, religious and pregnancy-related accommodations, and age discrimination in public school employment.
- Explain how recent Supreme Court decisions and changes in federal enforcement priorities affect school district HR practices.
- Distinguish between binding federal legal requirements, agency guidance, executive branch policy, and state employment protections.
- Understand how federal employment laws apply to common school district personnel decisions involving accommodations, transfers, and discrimination concerns.
- Identify personnel policies and practices that may warrant review in light of recent legal developments.

FMLA – Changing Federal Landscape & Enforcement: What Do You Need to Know Now?
Presented by Brenda Pryor, Attorney, Udall Shumway, Mesa, AZ
The presentation will cover recent FMLA case law developments and changes in federal enforcement, highlighting key considerations for school HR professionals and administrators.

From Documentation to Decisions: A Step-by-Step Guide to Employee Discipline
Presented by Melissa Sobota, Partner & 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.

If It's Not Documented, Did It Happen?
The School HR Guide to Documentation, Recordkeeping, and Defensible Decisions
Presented by Sara Boucek, Partner, F3 Law, Chicago, IL
Every HR administrator has experienced it. A principal insists they have addressed an employee's performance concerns for months, but there is no documentation. An investigation uncovers conflicting accounts, but nobody took contemporaneous notes. A personnel decision is challenged, and the district discovers that the emails, records, and conversations needed to explain its decision are scattered across multiple systems—or missing altogether. Effective documentation is more than a compliance requirement. It is an essential leadership practice that supports fair treatment, consistent decision-making, employee accountability, and legal defensibility. Yet many school administrators receive little practical training on what to document, how to document it, and where those records should be maintained.

This practical, engaging session examines the documentation mistakes that create unnecessary legal exposure and offers strategies for getting it right. Through realistic school district scenarios, examples of effective and ineffective documentation, and discussion of the legal requirements governing personnel records, participants will learn how to create records that accurately reflect events, support sound decision-making, and withstand scrutiny.

The session will also explore the challenges of modern recordkeeping, including text messages, informal electronic communications, and the growing use of artificial intelligence to draft employee documentation.

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Participants will leave with practical strategies to strengthen documentation practices across their districts without creating unnecessary paperwork or overwhelming supervisors.

Participants will be able to:

- Identify the essential elements of clear, objective, timely, and legally defensible personnel documentation.
- Recognize common documentation mistakes that undermine credibility, weaken personnel decisions, and increase legal exposure.
- Distinguish among personnel files, supervisory notes, investigation records, medical records, and other confidential employment records.
- Understand key federal recordkeeping, confidentiality, retention, and preservation requirements, as well as the importance of applicable state laws.
- Evaluate the risks associated with electronic communications and AI-assisted documentation.
- Develop practical strategies for improving documentation practices and accountability among school administrators.

Hiring the Best and the Brightest

Presented by Jim Martin, Attorney, James K Martin Law Firm, PLLC, Eden Prairie, MN

This presentation will focus on recruitment and selection in a school environment. Learn the key rule that "past performance is the best predictor of future performance" and how to implement that rule throughout the hiring process. This session will cover how to find employees with the motivation, ability to build and maintain relationships and job specific skills who will be valuable assets to your organization. Discussion will include suggestions for recruitment, application screening, effective interviewing, the importance of reference checking and onboarding/orientation.

Respecting Employees' First Amendment Rights

Presented by David B. Rubin, Attorney, The Busch Law Group, LLC, Metuchen, NJ

In recent years, the federal courts have issued numerous important decisions clarifying the constitutional free speech and religious accommodation rights of public employees. Many of those decisions involve school staff and reflect the unique aspects of the public school setting. This session will review where the law currently stands, and offer helpful tips for honoring employees' rights while minimizing your school district's legal exposure.

The Family and Medical Leave Act: Legal Update and Best Practices in Leave Administration

Presented by Scott D. Macdonald, Managing Director, Macdonald & Associates, Middleton, VA

You'll leave with practical guardrails for documentation, record keeping, and keeping a human in charge of every personnel decision.

This session provides attendees with a summary of important case law relevant to the FMLA, as well as useful, practical tips and tools for managing the entire FMLA leave process, including:

- FMLA eligibility
- Employee notice requirements
- Training administrators and supervisors about their respective roles
- Definitions of a "Serious Health Condition"
- The medical certification process
- Calculating and Tracking FMLA leave
- Return-to-work issues

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The Robot Wrote You Up: Legal Pitfalls (and Smart Uses) of AI in School HR
Presented by Karen Haase, Attorney and, Attorney, KSB School Law, Lincoln, NE
Nobody went into school HR hoping to referee a robot. But employers across the country, including some school districts, are already using AI to screen applicants, write job postings, take notes in investigation interviews, and draft evaluations. Courts, unions and plaintiffs' lawyers have noticed. In this fast-paced session, you will learn:

- Why the nationwide age-discrimination lawsuit against hiring-software giant Workday matters even if your district has never used Workday.
- What happens when a principal's AI-drafted evaluation becomes Exhibit A in a teacher's termination case.
- How a union shut down AI-generated discipline in front of a state labor board, and what that means at your bargaining table.
- Why reporters are now filing public records requests for employees' chatbot conversations.
- How to investigate a deepfake complaint before it blows up.
- How AI can make HR's job easier without making your lawyer's job harder.

You'll leave with practical guardrails for documentation, record keeping, and keeping a human in charge of every personnel decision.

Title IX: When "It Was Just a Joke" Becomes an Investigation
Presented by Sarah E. Barrie, Attorney and Kathleen Brantingham, Attorney, Udall Shumway, Mesa, AZ
Join two Education Law attorneys for a practical update on Title IX and recent developments from the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). This presentation will explore evolving guidance, emerging compliance issues, and practical considerations for school administrators navigating Title IX in today's educational environment.

Under Investigation: Following the Facts to a Defensible Conclusion
Presented by Holly McIntush, Partner and Paige Duggins-Clay, Chief Legal Analyst, Thompson & Horton LLP, Austin, TX
Every investigation tells a story—but the evidence has to support the ending. This practical session explores how K–12 HR administrators can conduct thorough, fair, and focused investigations; gather and evaluate evidence; address conflicting accounts; avoid common investigative pitfalls; and reach clear, well-supported conclusions that can withstand scrutiny.

Wage and Hour Issues Under State and Federal Laws
Presented by William Pokorny, Partner, Franczek P.C., Chicago, IL
Public school districts face unique wage and hour challenges arising from varied employee classifications, schedules, assignments, and compensation practices. This session will highlight common pitfalls for school districts, including employee classification, compensable time and off-the-clock work, overtime and regular-rate calculations, compensatory time, timekeeping, and employees who perform multiple roles for the same district. Through practical examples, participants will learn how to identify recurring compliance risks and strengthen payroll and HR practices before small issues become costly problems.

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