

**Session Descriptions**  
**2026 School HR Winter Boot Camp**  
January 22-23, 2026 – Clearwater Beach Sheraton Resort on Sand Key  
Clearwater, FL

**Beyond the Vacancy: Smart Recruitment & Retention Strategies for Today's PK-12 Workforce**

**Talent Acquisition & Strategy**

*Presented by Wantanisha Morant, Executive Director of Human Resources, Marion County Public Schools, Ocala, FL*

In a competitive education landscape where every vacancy impacts students, HR professionals can't afford to "post and pray." This session dives into practical, high-impact strategies to recruit and retain top talent in PK-12 education. Participants will explore how to define and communicate their district's brand, expand recruitment pipelines, and strengthen early retention through culture and connection. Whether you're new to HR or building your first strategic plan, you'll leave with actionable tools to help your district move from reactionary hiring to proactive, people-centered workforce planning.

**Bringing the Human Back to Human Resources (with a Little Help from Artificial Intelligence)**

**Process Management & Total Rewards**

*Presented by Michele Natali, Assistant Superintendent, Personnel & Administration, Long Beach Public Schools, Lido Beach, NY*

AI can make HR more human — not less — when we use it to automate tasks that drain time and energy, freeing us to focus on relationships, empathy, and people-centered leadership.

**Employee Handbook**

**Process Management & Total Rewards**

*Presented by Scott Macdonald, Managing Director of Macdonald & Associates, Middleton, VA*

This workshop will provide attendees with the tools they need to develop a high value Employee Handbook that aligns with the school system's desired culture and human resources strategy. Learn about best practices in the handbook development process, what to include, what not to include, legal considerations, critical success factors and common mistakes. Useful tips, a handbook development checklist, and sample policies will be provided.

**Hiring the Right Teacher: Making High-Impact, Legally Sound Hiring Decisions**

**Experience Management, Talent Development, Orientation & Onboarding**

*Presented by Justin L. Schooley, Ed.D., pHCLE, Deputy Superintendent of Operations, Berkeley County Schools, Martinsburg, WV*

This session equips school HR leaders and administrators with practical strategies for recruiting, screening, and selecting high-quality teachers in an increasingly competitive labor market. Participants will examine effective hiring processes, resume and interview red flags, and the legal parameters that must guide every employment decision. Emphasis is placed on behavioral interviewing, reference vetting, and aligning hiring practices with district needs, diversity goals, and long-term retention. Attendees will leave with clear tools and decision-making frameworks to improve hiring outcomes and reduce risk while ensuring the right people are in the right roles.

**HR 101 Reimagined: Building an Effective and Strategic School HR Department**

**Strategy, Talent Development, Training & Development**

*Presented by Justin L. Schooley, Ed.D., pHCLE, Deputy Superintendent of Operations, Berkeley County Schools, Martinsburg, WV*

This session provides a practical foundation for new and emerging school HR leaders while offering timely refreshers for experienced practitioners. Participants will explore the core responsibilities of a modern school human resources department, moving beyond compliance to strategic workforce management that supports student success. Topics include recruitment, employee relations, ethics, compliance, and building organizational culture through effective communication and decision-making. Attendees will leave with concrete tools, real-world insights, and a clearer understanding of HR's role as both a service provider and strategic partner in school systems.

**Leadership Development for Classified and Certificated Staff**

**Talent Development & Training and Development**

*Presented by Sarah Marriott, Assistant Superintendent of HR, Liberty Public School District 53, Liberty, MO*

This session explores strategic approaches to identifying, preparing, and supporting emerging leaders within your district—both certificated and classified staff. Effective succession planning and leadership development aren't afterthoughts; they're critical human resources functions that strengthen organizational stability and culture. Districts with intentional leadership development programs experience higher retention, stronger succession planning, and more confident, capable leaders at all levels. This session will equip you with practical frameworks and actionable strategies you can implement immediately.

\*Topics are subject to change.

**Session Descriptions**  
**2026 School HR Winter Boot Camp**  
January 22-23, 2026 – Clearwater Beach Sheraton Resort on Sand Key  
Clearwater, FL

**Leadership, Law, and HR: Preparing Leaders for Real World Decisions**

**Talent Development & Training and Development**

*Presented by Schwanda Jackson, Director of Recruitment and Organizational Engagement, Roanoke City Public Schools & Morgan Strother, Assistant Director of Recruitment, Roanoke City Public Schools, Roanoke, VA*

This session equips school leaders with the essential knowledge and tools to navigate the intersection of leadership, human resources, and school law. Participants will gain practical insights into HR processes, legal responsibilities, and best practices for making informed decisions that protect students, staff, and the district. Through real-world scenarios and interactive discussion, leaders will leave with the confidence to address complex situations, foster a legally compliant and supportive school environment, and make decisions that reflect both sound leadership and HR guidance.

**Onboarding for Retention: Building a Strong Start to Strengthen the Teaching Workforce**

**Talent Development & Strategy**

*Dr. Sylvia Anthony-McGeachy, Director of Beginning Teachers, Nash County Public Schools & Stacey Wall, Master Classroom Leader, Nash County Public Schools, Nashville, NC*

In today's education landscape, teacher shortages continue to challenge schools and districts nationwide. This session explores how intentional onboarding practices can serve as a powerful retention strategy for new educators. Participants will examine district- and school-level systems of support that help teachers feel connected, confident, and capable during their first years. Discussion points will include the role of mentorship, professional learning communities, and leadership engagement in fostering belonging and efficacy. Attendees will leave with practical strategies to strengthen onboarding frameworks that not only welcome teachers but also inspire them to stay and thrive.

**Navigating Difficult Conversations**

**Talent Development & Performance Management**

*Presented by Sarah Marriott, Assistant Superintendent of HR, Liberty Public School District 53, Liberty, MO*

Difficult conversations are an inevitable part of HR school leadership, but they don't have to derail relationships or damage trust. This interactive session equips school human resources directors with practical strategies to approach sensitive discussions with clarity, confidence, and composure. Whether addressing performance concerns, delivering challenging feedback, managing employee relations issues, or facilitating conflict resolution, HR leaders need more than good intentions. They need a framework. This session will share an easy-to-use framework for structuring these conversations.

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

**Process Management & Total Rewards**

*Presented by Scott Macdonald, Managing Director of Macdonald & Associates, Middleton, VA*

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
- Employer 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
- The interaction of FMLA with the ADA and Workers' Compensation
- Return- to-work issues Forms, policies, and other documents will be provided to attendees upon request.

## Session Descriptions

### 2026 School HR Winter Boot Camp

January 22-23, 2026 – Clearwater Beach Sheraton Resort on Sand Key

Clearwater, FL

#### **The Modern Investigator: Blending Due Process, Practical Wisdom, and AI Tools in School HR Investigations**

##### **Talent Development & Experience Management**

*Presented by Hillary Brewer, Director of Personnel Development, Franklin-Essex-Hamilton BOCES & Rachel Rissetto, Labor Relations Specialist, Franklin-Essex-Hamilton BOCES, Malone, NY*

Investigations are at the heart of effective HR leadership in schools. This session blends legal precision with modern efficiency, exploring best practices when conducting thorough, unbiased investigations while introducing practical AI tools to streamline the process. We'll walk through every investigative step—from complaint intake and interviews to report writing and follow-up—while highlighting how tools like Otter.ai and ChatGPT can enhance accuracy, consistency, and time management.

#### **The Three Types of Plays Needed in Employee Evaluation Playbooks**

##### **Talent Development & Experience Management**

*Presented by Daniel Windish, Senior Director, Evaluation Systems, Orange County Public Schools, Orlando, FL*

Employee evaluation isn't just a compliance drill—it's the championship strategy for building capacity and culture. In this session, we'll break down the three essential plays every winning evaluation playbook needs: • Plays that Rate – Lock in clarity and consistency with calibrated calls and transparent criteria, so everyone knows the score. Plays that Coach – Turn evaluations into powerful coaching moments that drive growth and professional learning—because great teams thrive on feedback. Plays that Appreciate and Encourage – Celebrate the big wins and everyday hustle to boost morale, engagement, and retention. Participants will leave with a game plan full of practical examples and actionable strategies to balance accountability, development, and appreciation—helping organizations create playbooks that win for both employees and evaluators.