



THE COMPASS

DIRECTION FOR HR LEADERS IN EDUCATION

RETENTION IS THE NEW RECRUITMENT: BELONGING

*How a Focus on People, Culture and Leadership
Lead to Retention*



Popping the Self-Congratulatory Bubble
with Vulnerability & Courage

We Aren't There Yet
Aspiring to Be a Destination District

**Watching AASPA's Voice Grow in
Washington**

**How One School Division is Transforming
HR Recruitment in Virginia**

AUGUST - SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2026



AASPA Certifications

More than Professional Development - **A Professional Certification**



Professional Human Capital Leader in Education (pHCLE)



SCAN to learn more!



Trainings prepare participants to become a Certified Professional Human Capital Leader in Education (pHCLE). All learning aligns to the updated HCLE Professional Standards/Body of Knowledge.



50 hours of learning



Blended Learning



No Prerequisites

2026 - 2027 pHCLE Virtual Class Schedules/Times:

September 29 - November 17, 2026 (Tues. 12:30 pm - 2:00 pm ET)
Jan. 21-March 4, 2027 (Thurs. 1:00-2:30 pm ET)
July 13-Aug. 24, 2027 (Tues. 12:00 am-1:30 pm ET)
Sept. 23-Nov. 11, 2027 (Thurs. 1:00-2:30 pm ET)

*Class time: 90 Minutes

2026 - 2027 Testing Windows:

October 23 - November 13, 2026
January 15 - Feb 5, 2027
April 1 - 22, 2027
June 10 - 30, 2027
October 20 - November 10, 2027

Executive Human Capital Leader in Education (eHCLE)



SCAN to learn more!

Leadership growth thrives in community. Through the eHCLE program, you will connect with peers and coaches who inspire new thinking, challenge your ideas, and help you refine your human capital project through meaningful feedback. Every exchange builds your confidence, expands your perspective, and strengthens your ability to lead lasting change.



10 month Cohort



10 Virtual coverings and final presentation



Prerequisites

Prerequisites:

- A current, unexpired pHCLE certification
- Current AASPA membership
- At least 7 years of experience leading staff, programs, or departments
- A demonstrated record of success driving system-wide improvement or innovation

Application closes 1/8/2027

IN THIS ISSUE:

President's Corner	5
Retention Is the New Recruitment: Moving from Burnout to Belonging	6
Popping the Self-Congratulatory Bubble with Vulnerability & Courage	10
We Aren't There Yet Aspiring to Be a Destination District	12
You Told Us What You Need. Here's What Comes Next	15
Watching AASPA's Voice Grown in Washington	16
How One School Division is Transforming HR Recruitment in Virginia	20
AASPA's 88th Annual Conference Preview	24

Join the conversation!

#K12Talent



7285 W. 132nd Street, Suite 100
Overland Park, KS 66213
(913) 327-1222 / aaspa@aaspa.org

2025 - 2026 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

PRESIDENT
Dr. Vincent Citarelli
Glen Mills, PA

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Dr. Monica Schroeder
Highland Park, IL

RECORDING SECRETARY
Michele Stephens
Conyers, GA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Dr. Kelly Coash-Johnson
Overland Park, KS

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

REGION 1
Debbie Simons
Hillsboro, OR

REGION 2
Josh Chambers
Glen Ellyn, IL

REGION 3
Jacqueline Levine
Putnam Valley, NY

REGION 4
Jessica Bennington
Ogden City, UT

REGION 5
Dr. Amy Dillon
Kansas City, MO

REGION 6
Ramon Ray
Savannah, GA

COVER & LAYOUT
Karin Neckelmann



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

From the Desk of Dr. Vincent Citarelli, AASPA President

BUILD STRONGER EDUCATORS

From Certification to Classroom Success to AI-Ready Teaching

Prepare educators. Strengthen classroom performance. Develop future-ready skills.

Pearson helps districts, schools, and educator preparation programs build a stronger educator workforce with practical solutions that support educators at every stage of their professional journey.

RIGHT START®

Certification Preparation That Builds Confidence

Personalized preparation that helps candidates identify knowledge gaps, build skills, and approach certification exams with confidence.

- ✓ Diagnostic assessments
- ✓ Personalized learning paths
- ✓ Targeted study resources
- ✓ Practice tests with actionable feedback

FOUNDATIONS OF CLASSROOM SUPPORT

Classroom-Ready Skills for Day-One Success

Practical, scenario-based learning that helps educators and paraprofessionals strengthen classroom management, student engagement, instructional support, and effective teaching practices.

- ✓ Classroom management fundamentals
- ✓ Student engagement strategies
- ✓ Real-world classroom scenarios
- ✓ Instructional planning and delivery (add-on module)

FOUNDATIONS OF AI FOR EDUCATORS

Practical AI Training for Today's Schools

Help educators confidently and responsibly integrate AI into teaching, planning, assessment, and professional practice.

- ✓ Generative AI fundamentals
- ✓ Classroom-ready applications
- ✓ Ethics, privacy, and academic integrity
- ✓ Credly digital badge

Connected Solutions for Educator Growth

Build a stronger educator pipeline from recruitment through retention.

Whether you're helping candidates earn certification, supporting new educators in the classroom, or preparing staff for an AI-enabled future, Pearson provides the tools that help educators succeed.



VISIT PEARSON AT AASPA 2026

Austin, Texas | October 12-15

Stop by booth 420 to learn more.

Let's discuss how Pearson can help strengthen educator readiness, classroom effectiveness, and workforce development across your district.



esinfo@pearson.com | Pearson Evaluation Systems



Dear AASPA Members,

As I continue my opportunity to serve as AASPA President, I am continually reminded that one of our greatest strengths as an association is our willingness to learn from one another. Every conversation, every shared experience, and every new idea helps strengthen not only our state affiliates but also our collective ability to serve the students, employees, and communities that rely on us every day.

That spirit was on full display during our recent AASPA State Leaders Virtual Retreat. The AASPA staff once again did an outstanding job providing our state affiliate leaders with meaningful resources and practical information to help them be successful in their respective roles. From conference planning updates, membership information and mentor program discussions, the retreat reinforced the value of staying connected and working together. I am incredibly grateful for the preparation, professionalism, and commitment our staff brings to supporting our affiliates across the country.

Also announced at this year's retreat was the 2026-2027 AASPA Compass Distinguished Affiliate Award. This award honors AASPA affiliates who demonstrate distinguished leadership and alignment with the association's mission. Much like a compass guides the way, recipients of this award serve as navigators for the profession modeling excellence in governance, engagement, programming and advocacy.

Congratulations to the following states for being selected for this designation.



CONNECTICUT
FLORIDA
GEORGIA
ILLINOIS

INDIANA
IOWA
KANSAS
MASSACHUSETTS

MICHIGAN
MISSISSIPPI
MISSOURI
NEW JERSEY

NEW YORK
OHIO
UTAH
VIRGINIA

As school HR leaders, we know that our work is rarely done in isolation. The challenges we face are often complex, but they are also opportunities to build stronger relationships, develop future leaders, and support one another in meaningful ways. That is what makes AASPA such a valuable professional community. We are at our best when we learn together, share generously, and remain committed to serving something greater than ourselves.

As another school year begins, I am filled with optimism for what lies ahead. Each August brings a renewed sense of purpose—a fresh opportunity to welcome new educators, support our colleagues, strengthen our schools, and positively impact the lives of students. Thank you for the work you do every day and for the leadership you provide in your districts and states. I wish each of you a successful, rewarding, and inspiring start to the new school year, and I look forward to all that we will accomplish together as an AASPA family. Don't forget to mark your calendars and register for our annual conference in Austin, TX, from October 12-15, 2026!

Dr. Vincent Citarelli

*President, American Association of School Personnel Administrators
Assistant Superintendent, Garnet Valley School District, Glen Mills, PA*

RETENTION IS THE NEW RECRUITMENT:

MOVING FROM BURNOUT TO BELONGING

How a Focus on People, Culture, and Leadership Increased Teacher Retention from 81% to 89%

By Dr. Michel Pantin, Executive Director of Talent Services, Savannah-Chatham County Public School System, Savannah, GA

Across the nation, school districts continue to invest significant time, energy, and resources into recruitment. We attend job fairs, develop marketing campaigns, establish university partnerships, and create innovative talent pipelines designed to attract employees. While these efforts remain important, Savannah-Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS) learned a valuable lesson over the past three years: the most effective recruitment strategy may be retention.

Every employee who chooses to stay represents institutional knowledge preserved, student relationships maintained, leadership capacity retained, and one less vacancy requiring recruitment efforts. For this reason, retention cannot be viewed solely as an outcome of Human Resources practices. Rather, it is the result of intentional leadership, organizational culture, and an employee experience that encourages individuals to build long-term careers within a district.

When Dr. Denise Watts became Superintendent of SCCPSS in 2023, the district faced many of the same workforce challenges impacting school systems across the nation. Teacher retention stood at 81 percent, and like many districts, we were searching for ways to attract and retain high-quality educators. Instead of focusing solely on recruitment, district leadership made a deliberate decision to focus on the experience of the employees already serving our students. That decision would ultimately transform our approach to retention.

“Instead of focusing solely on recruitment, district leadership made a deliberate decision to focus on the experience of the employees already serving our students. That decision would ultimately transform our approach to retention.”

Culture Drives Retention

One of the defining leadership themes introduced by Superintendent Watts was simple but powerful: **Together We Can.**

While concise, those three words established an important expectation. Employee retention would not be owned solely by Human Resources. It would become the responsibility of every leader, every department, and every school. Building a culture where employees wanted to stay would require collective ownership and intentional action across the organization.

Culture shapes how employees experience their workplace every day. It influences whether they trust leadership, whether they feel valued, whether they believe their contributions matter, and whether they see a future for themselves within the organization. Over time, those experiences influence one of the most important decisions an employee can make: whether to stay.

As a result, retention became more than an HR initiative. It became a districtwide commitment.

Leadership Development Matters

Culture does not change simply because leaders say it should. Culture changes when leaders change their behaviors.

As SCCPSS focused on strengthening its culture, district leaders committed to developing a common leadership language and philosophy. Through leadership development opportunities, leaders explored concepts from *Trust & Inspire: How Truly Great Leaders Unleash Greatness in Others* (Covey, 2022), *Radical Candor: Be a KickAss Boss Without Losing Your Humanity* (Scott, 2017), *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything* (Covey, 2006) and *The 4 Disciplines of Execution: Achieving Your Wildly Important Goals* (McChesney, Covey & Huling, 2012).

While each text offered unique insights, together they reinforced several important principles: trust is foundational to organizational success, people perform best when they feel valued and empowered, candid conversations strengthen relationships when

delivered with care, and meaningful results require disciplined focus on the most important priorities.

These ideas influenced how leaders engaged with employees, approached feedback, built relationships, and supported their teams. Over time, leadership practices became increasingly aligned with the culture SCCPSS sought to create, one where employees felt respected, supported, trusted, and inspired to do their best work.

Listening Before Leading

One of the first steps in strengthening culture was listening.

SCCPSS expanded the use of employee culture and climate surveys to better understand the employee experience and identify opportunities for improvement. However, gathering feedback was only the beginning. The more important work involved responding to what employees shared. Survey feedback informed decisionmaking, shaped organizational priorities, and provided leaders with valuable insights regarding employee needs and concerns. Employees began to see evidence that their voices mattered and that leadership was willing to act on what was being learned. Trust is built when employees believe they are being heard. Engagement grows when employees see that their feedback influences



decisions. Over time, those experiences contribute to stronger organizational commitment and improved retention.

Investing in People

Employees deserve to be valued both verbally and financially. Recognizing this reality, SCCPSS completed and implemented a comprehensive compensation study designed to improve market competitiveness and address internal equity. While compensation alone does not create loyalty, it sends a powerful message about organizational priorities.

The district also committed to ensuring employees felt seen and appreciated. Over the past three years, SCCPSS intentionally recognized at least 15 percent of its workforce annually through district-level recognition initiatives while encouraging schools and departments to create cultures of appreciation within their own teams. By April 2026 alone, more than 1,100 employees had been recognized through district-sponsored programs.

Recognition strengthens connection, reinforces purpose, and reminds employees that their efforts matter. In a profession where challenges are often highly visible, recognition helps ensure that excellence is visible as well.

Wellness Matters

The conversation surrounding educator burnout is no longer theoretical. Across the country, educators continue to balance increasing professional demands while managing personal responsibilities, family commitments, and the complexities of life outside of work.

Organizations that ignore employee wellness do so at their own risk.

To support employee well-being, SCCPSS implemented two employee wellness days each year, one during each semester, providing dedicated opportunities for employees to recharge and focus on their personal well-being. The district also expanded flexible scheduling opportunities and remote work options for eligible positions, recognizing that accountability, trust, and flexibility can coexist.

These initiatives communicated a simple but powerful message: employees are valued not only for the work they perform but also as individuals.

From Burnout to Belonging

The work of retention cannot be separated from the realities of educator burnout.

In 2022, the Georgia Department of Education convened a statewide Teacher Burnout Task Force to better understand the challenges facing educators across Georgia. The task force identified several contributing factors, including unrealistic expectations, limited time, insufficient opportunities for employee voice, and concerns related to wellness and work-life balance.

SCCPSS was proud to participate in and support this important statewide work. As we reviewed the findings, one message stood out: burnout is not simply an individual challenge, it is an organizational challenge that requires organizational solutions.

That understanding reinforced many of the actions already underway within our district. Through culture and climate surveys, employee recognition initiatives, wellness days, flexible work arrangements, and investments in compensation, we sought to address many of the same concerns identified by educators throughout the state. Our goal was not simply to reduce burnout.

Our goal was to create a culture where employees felt valued, supported, heard, and connected to purpose. Because when people experience a genuine sense of belonging, they are more likely to remain committed to the organizations they serve.

Leadership Owns the Results

Perhaps the most important lesson from our retention journey is this: retention is not an HR issue, it is a leadership issue. Leaders shape culture through their decisions, priorities, actions, and daily interactions. They influence how employees experience the organization and whether those experiences encourage commitment or disengagement. Under Dr. Watts' leadership, SCCPSS embraced a strategic commitment to Own the Results. This principle reflects the belief that organizational outcomes are not accidental. They are the result of intentional decisions and collective effort.

The increase from 81 percent to 89 percent teacher retention did not occur because we discovered a single solution. It occurred because leadership consistently invested in the conditions that help people thrive. Culture, compensation, wellness, recognition, and employee voice were not treated as isolated initiatives. They became part of a broader strategy focused on supporting employees and strengthening the organization.

The Results

The impact of this work has been measurable. Teacher retention increased from 81 percent in 2023 to 84 percent in 2024, 87 percent in 2025, and 89 percent in 2026. During the same period, teacher vacancies declined dramatically, from approximately 180 vacancies to fewer than 30, even as new teaching positions were added throughout the district.

While the numbers are encouraging, they tell only part of the story. Behind every percentage point increase are educators who made the decision to continue serving students, building relationships, and investing their talents in our schools. The true story of retention is ultimately a story about people.

Lessons for Educational Leaders

While every district's circumstances are different, our experience suggests that successful retention efforts share several common characteristics. Employees want to be fairly compensated, recognized for their contributions, supported in their well-being, and given meaningful opportunities to share their perspectives. Most importantly, they want to work in a culture where they feel valued and connected to a larger purpose.

For districts seeking to improve retention, the lesson is clear: start by listening. The most successful retention strategies are not programs. They are commitments that become embedded within the culture of an organization. When leaders intentionally invest in their people, employees are more likely to invest their future in the organization.

Unlimited Possibilities

As SCCPSS launches its new strategic plan centered on Unlimited Possibilities, we recognize that those possibilities begin with people. Employees who feel valued, supported, and connected to purpose are more likely to remain committed to the students and communities they serve.

The lessons from our retention journey are both simple and profound. People stay where they feel respected. They stay where they believe their voices matter. They stay where leadership demonstrates care not only for what they do, but for who they are.

The future of education will not be determined solely by our ability to recruit talented individuals. It will also be determined by our ability to create environments where talented individuals choose to stay. Retention is no longer merely an HR metric, it is a leadership responsibility.

At SCCPSS, our improvement from 81 percent to 89 percent teacher retention was not the result of a single initiative. It was the result of a sustained commitment to people, culture, and belonging. The numbers tell an important story, but the greater story is one of employees who chose to continue serving students because they felt valued by the organization they serve.

Together, we can create workplaces where educators thrive.

Together, we can own the results.

Together, we can unlock unlimited possibilities.



Dr. Michel Pantin is the Executive Director of Talent Services for the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS), leading efforts in talent acquisition, staffing, onboarding, employee engagement and retention. With more than

20 years of experience as a teacher, instructional coach and HR leader, she is dedicated to creating employee experiences that strengthen schools and improve student outcomes.

Her leadership philosophy, *Be Inspired to L.E.A.D.* (Lift, Empower, Achieve, and Develop), reflects her passion for developing people and creating workplaces where employees thrive. Dr. Pantin earned her doctorate from Georgia Southern University, is a co-author of *Be Inspired* and believes that retention is the new recruitment.

POPPING THE SELF-CONGRATULATORY BUBBLE WITH VULNERABILITY & COURAGE

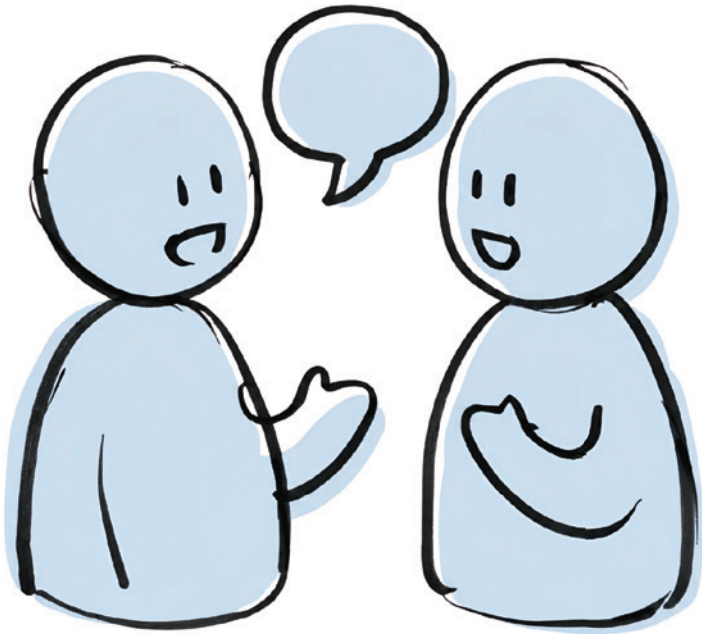
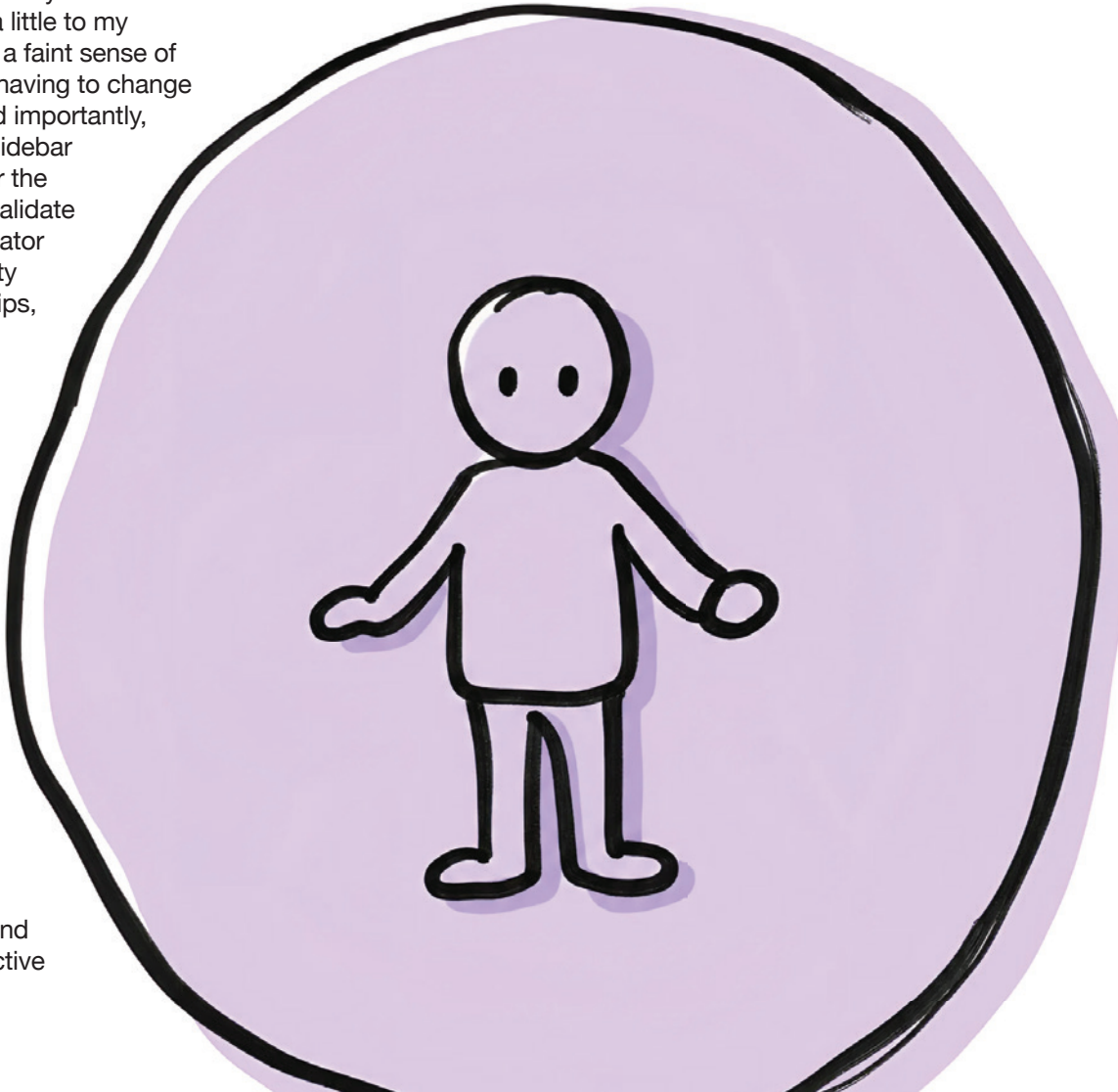
By Neill Alleva, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Katonah-Lewisboro School District, Salem, NY

One of my primary responsibilities over the past several months as a central administrator has been to co-create a new teacher evaluation plan in partnership with our Teachers Association president. After presenting the blueprint of ideas to our talented administrator unit, polite questions emerged adjacent to a few thoughtful ideas going forward. The work getting to this point was challenging and not without its obstacles, so some feeling of relief began to settle in shortly after the meeting. That is until I stopped by the office of a trusted administrator the next day for an impromptu meeting. During that meeting, the administrator conveyed the collective response of the group which, a little to my surprise, was replete with apprehension, a faint sense of dislike, and a general feeling of upset of having to change mid-year. All understandable feelings and importantly, not expressed during the presentation. Sidebar conversations apparently sprung up after the meeting. In the moment, I was quick to validate the courage and bravery of the administrator full-well knowing that psychological safety (Edmunson, 2018) is crucial to relationships, trust, and employees feeling safe and secure to express themselves and their viewpoints.

Walking back to my office after the meeting, the initial feeling of self-congratulation and relief subsided into a sense of disappointment and failure. The disappointment and failure didn't emerge due to anything about the plan itself. Rather, it quickly dawned on me that as a member of the central administration I created an unintentional and impermeable bubble protected by the (mis) perception that a trusting, courageous, and vulnerable culture had been created and enjoyed by all.

While the lone administrator was brave and courageous enough to discuss the collective

feelings of the group, the collective group was unable to express their dislike and frustrations in the open during the Q + A portion of my presentation. While many explanations for this are possible, the one most probable is a systematic failure to set the conditions (Harrison & Stevenson, 2024) for our trusted and talented colleagues to openly and courageously share their honest and authentic perspectives. A failure of a significance for a Human Resources Officer who prides himself on human-centered threads weaved into the cultural DNA.



The lack of conditions for courageous and daring leadership is stifling for both my own growth and learning as well as the entire organization. Leadership tendencies and practices tend to cascade to the rest of the organization (Safir, 2017) and this was not a mindset that one wishes to “cascade” to other parts of the system.

Fortunately, there are radical and breathtaking approaches holding the potential to create both thriving organizations and happier, healthier people. Recently, the work of Brené Brown’s Strong Ground (2025) has caught my attention. In her most recent book, Brown emphasizes the following four points that can help redesign systems anchored by courage and the “four skill sets that can be taught, observed, and measured” (p.92). The skill sets are listed below with the caveat that my story and Brown’s work inspire you to read and learn more about her powerful and cutting-edge leadership skills needed for an uncertain future already upon us:

- 1. Living into Values:** What are the one or two values that can be seen in our observable behaviors.
- 2. Rumbling with our Vulnerability:** We experience this during times of uncertainty.
- 3. BRAVING Trust** (I encourage you to look up the acronyms for BRAVING)
- 4. Learning to Rise:** Staying flexible in the face of setback.

In other words, the bubble of self-congratulations, relief, and artificial feedback must be popped, (destroyed if possible) and re-designed with courage and bravery at its heart, otherwise we risk setting the conditions that restrain an organizations greatest asset: it’s people. Without it, even the most well-intentioned initiatives risk being developed inside the very bubble they are meant to disrupt.



Dr. Neill Alleva is the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources in his fifth year with the Katonah-Lewisboro School District. He has worked in public education since 2001 and brings a systems-oriented, people-centered approach to leadership and talent development. Dr. Alleva studied organizational leadership at Northeastern University, where his work deepened his interest in how leadership practices, culture and human capital systems shape organizational effectiveness. He is particularly committed to fostering workplaces where educators and staff feel supported, valued and able to do their best work in service of students.

WE AREN'T THERE YET

ASPIRING TO BE A DESTINATION DISTRICT

By Marva Tutt, Ed.D., HR Coordinator, Elementary Schools, Richmond County School System, Augusta, GA



I still remember the moment my literacy coach leaned over and whispered what we were both already thinking. We had just finished interviewing a candidate, call her Teacher A, who had been teaching in a high-performing, higher-paying neighboring district. As she walked out of the room, my coach and I exchanged that look. She is not going to pick us. The salary gap was real. The district's reputation was real. So, we managed our expectations and moved on.

Then she called back. She picked us.

Teacher A turned out to be one of the finest hires I have ever made. When I finally asked her why she chose us, her answer stopped me cold. "It was your energy," she said. "Your vision. It wasn't the money. It wasn't the district. It was you."

That conversation has never left me. Because it revealed a critical gap between what districts offer and what candidates choose. Teacher A did not choose a salary schedule. She chose a feeling, the sense that something was being built and that she could be part of it. The question that has driven my work ever since is simple: What happens when that energy becomes a district-wide commitment rather than a single coordinator in a single interview room? That is what a destination district is. And most of us, if we are honest, are not there yet.

A destination district is one where people choose it, not the other way around. More applicants than vacancies. Candidates who heard something from a colleague or a former student that made them call first. Getting there requires intention at every stage of the talent pipeline.

It starts the moment someone applies. Reaching out promptly to acknowledge an application is not courtesy; it is a statement about who you are as an organization. From there, a strong district-level screening process that partners HR with school principals helps identify the right candidates before schools ever post a vacancy. When candidates move through a process that is organized, communicative, and intentional, they leave thinking one thing: I want to work here.

Once hired, the first 90 days are the single most powerful retention strategy a district has. That means access to every tool and program before students arrive, intentional introductions to the full support ecosystem, mentors, specialists, social workers, and instructional coaches, and consistent check-ins built around growth, not compliance. Mini celebrations, honest conversations about struggles and successes, and actionable classroom feedback foster a sense of belonging during onboarding. Beyond year one, teacher leader pipelines,

differentiated professional learning, and stay interviews, asking teachers what keeps them energized and what would make them fight to keep a colleague, transform good employees into invested stakeholders.

But none of it holds without strong building leadership. School leaders are the missing piece in most destination district conversations. Principals must be active, visible champions of why their school is the school to be in. When leaders manage buildings instead of leading people, when they miss the early warning signs, stay behind closed doors, and fail to model the culture they expect, the district's aspirations stop at the schoolhouse door. Destination principals are in classrooms daily, giving real feedback, listening, and making every teacher feel seen.

Your district has something worth choosing. But you must act like it first. Starting this week, have your recruitment team reach out to every applicant in your pipeline and let them know they have been seen. That one act is the first signal that something different is being built.

We are not there yet. But the journey begins the moment we decide that every person who walks through our doors deserves the same energy and vision that made Teacher A say yes.



Dr. Marva Tutt serves as an HR Coordinator for the Richmond County School System in Augusta, Georgia. With over 25 years of experience in education, she brings deep expertise in talent development,

strategic staffing and organizational leadership. Dr. Tutt is widely recognized for her ability to bring order to chaos—guiding schools and leaders through complex change with clarity, structure and purpose.

She holds a Doctorate in Education from Argosy University and is passionate about change management, workforce sustainability and building systems that support both educators and students. Dr. Tutt's leadership centers on creating aligned, people-focused solutions that strengthen school communities and advance educational excellence.

Career and Family. We've got you covered.

AASPA sponsored insurance plans and services have been carefully chosen from the industry's leading carriers to provide specialized insurance for educators.

Professional

- Educators Professional Liability
- Student Educator Professional Liability
- Private Practice Professional Liability

Life

- New York Life Annually Renewable Group Term Life Insurance[†]
- New York Life 10-Year Level Group Term Life Insurance[†]
- New York Life 20-Year Level Group Term Life Insurance[†]
- New York Life Group Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance[†]

Health

- Educators Dental Plan
- Educators Vision Plan
- New York Life Group Disability Income Protection[†]
- Long-Term Care Insurance
- Individual and Group Health Insurance
- Medicare Supplement Insurance
- Aflac Accident Insurance & Critical Illness Plans

Auto & Home

- Farmers GroupSelect Auto[®]
- Farmers Homeowners / Condo / Renters Insurance

Legal

- LegalShield[™] Legal Plans and LegalShield[™] Identity Theft Protection
- ID Responder+ and ID Defender+ Identity Theft Resolution Services

Pet

- MetLife Pet Insurance

[†] Underwritten by New York Life Insurance Company, New York, NY 10010 Policy Form GMR

For more information, visit www.ftj.com/aaspa or call (800) 821-7303



This advertisement is for informational purposes only and is not meant to define, alter, limit or expand any policy in any way. For a descriptive brochure that summarizes features, costs, eligibility, renewability, limitations and exclusions, call Forrest T. Jones & Company. Arkansas producer license #71740, California insurance license #0592939.



YOU TOLD US WHAT YOU NEED.

HERE'S WHAT COMES NEXT.

This spring, we asked AASPA members a simple question: what do you actually need from us? 444 of you answered, and the response was clear. You trust AASPA, with an average likelihood to recommend membership at 9.04 out of 10. But trust isn't the finish line. You also told us there's room to make that value show up more often in your day-to-day work, and we're listening.

What You're Facing

The picture you painted was honest and consistent. Teacher recruitment and retention remain the biggest daily pressure points, closely followed by employee investigations, leave management and substitute shortages. Add tight budgets to the mix, and it's clear PK-12 HR professionals are being asked to do more with less, often with little room to breathe.

What You Asked For

Here's what stood out most: You want tools you can open and use today. HR compliance checklists topped the list of requested resources, followed closely by investigation guides and AI tools for HR. That last one deserves attention. Artificial intelligence wasn't just a requested resource, it was the single most mentioned emerging issue in your open-ended responses. AI in HR has moved from "someday" to "now," and you're asking AASPA to help you navigate it with confidence, not guesswork.



What We're Doing About It

Your feedback is already shaping our next chapter. Here's where we're focused first:

- **A refreshed HR resource library.** We're auditing and reorganizing our templates, checklists, and guides around the real, everyday problems you're solving, not abstract categories.
- **An AI in HR starter kit and learning series.** Practical use cases, sample prompts and guidance on privacy and policy, built specifically for PK-12 HR.
- **More flexible, affordable professional development.** Shorter, on-demand modules alongside our live webinars, designed for HR teams who don't have a spare day to step away from the office.

None of this replaces what you already value about AASPA: your conference, your peer network, your webinars. It builds on it, making sure the support is there exactly when and where you need it, not just once a year.

Thank You

Every checklist, every guide, and every session we build going forward starts from what you told us. If you have thoughts, ideas or a resource you wish existed, we want to hear it.

Our members navigate the hardest conversations in K-12 schools every single day. Our job is to make sure you never have to do it without the right tool in hand. Thank you for showing up, speaking honestly, and helping shape where AASPA goes next.



WATCHING AASPA'S VOICE GROW IN WASHINGTON

By Dr. Benjamin M. Gies, Policy Advisor, Foresight Law + Policy, Washington, D.C.

Over the past several years, I have had the opportunity to work closely with the American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA) as it has steadily expanded its presence in Washington, D.C. and strengthened its reputation as a thoughtful voice on educator workforce policy. It is rewarding to watch an organization rooted in the day-to-day realities of school district human capital increasingly become part of national conversations about educator recruitment, retention, and leadership.

That progress has been intentional. Through its partnership with Foresight Law + Policy, AASPA has invested in building relationships with policymakers, engaging in substantive policy discussions, and ensuring that the experiences of school personnel administrators help inform federal education policy. Rather than simply responding to legislation, the association has worked to become a constructive partner that offers practical solutions grounded in the challenges school districts face every day.

One of the clearest examples of AASPA's growing presence came during this July's Washington, D.C. advocacy fly-in. AASPA Executive Director Dr. Kelly Coash-Johnson and I met with members of Congress, committee staff, and federal education leaders over several days to discuss educator recruitment, retention, teacher leadership, and the broader workforce challenges facing school districts nationwide.

What made this year's fly-in particularly meaningful wasn't simply the number of meetings; it was how dramatically the conversations evolved.

Last year, many of our meetings were introductions. We were introducing AASPA, explaining the organization's unique perspective, and beginning to establish relationships with congressional offices and key education staff. Those conversations laid an important foundation.

This year, we returned to many of those same offices and found ourselves having very different discussions. Rather than asking, "Who is AASPA?" congressional staff were asking, "What does AASPA think?" Staff sought the association's perspective on pending legislative proposals, asked for feedback on emerging workforce ideas, and welcomed AASPA's recommendations for addressing educator shortages and strengthening the teacher pipeline. Several offices continue to work alongside AASPA as legislation develops, recognizing the association as a practical resource grounded in the day-to-day realities of school personnel administration.

Dr. Kelly Coash-Johnson was instrumental in those conversations. She led policy discussions with members of Congress, senior committee staff, and federal education leaders, demonstrating AASPA's commitment to practical, bipartisan solutions. Whether meeting with Republican or Democratic offices, the focus remained remarkably consistent: How can Congress develop policies that meaningfully improve educator recruitment and retention?

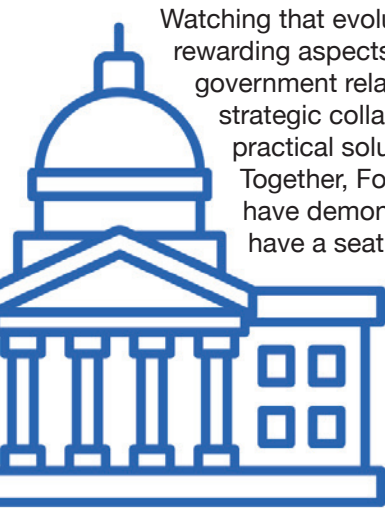
Perhaps most encouraging was the willingness from leaders and staff on both sides of the political aisle to engage in those discussions. Rather than approaching educator workforce issues through a partisan lens, many offices expressed a genuine interest in identifying common ground and exploring legislation that could earn bipartisan support. AASPA increasingly found itself not simply advocating for policy priorities, but participating in collaborative conversations about what workable legislation could look like. It was encouraging to see members, committee staff, and education policy advisors from both parties willing to roll up their sleeves, exchange ideas, and work together with AASPA to explore solutions that could make a real difference for school districts struggling to recruit and retain high-quality educators.

"Whether meeting with Republican or Democratic offices, the focus remained remarkably consistent: How can Congress develop policies that meaningfully improve educator recruitment and retention?"

The July fly-in served as a reminder of how far AASPA has come. The organization has made tremendous progress in building trusted relationships in D.C. and beyond. Those relationships are creating new opportunities for AASPA to contribute its expertise, help shape thoughtful educator workforce policy, and ensure that the voices of school personnel leaders continue to inform the national conversation.

What has impressed me most throughout this journey is that AASPA's growing influence has been earned. It has come through credibility, consistency, and a willingness to bring practical solutions to difficult policy conversations. Educator workforce challenges are not Republican problems or Democratic problems, they are challenges facing communities in every state. Throughout our work, AASPA has intentionally built relationships with policymakers on both sides of the aisle, establishing itself as a trusted resource focused on helping lawmakers find solutions rather than score political points.

Looking ahead, I believe AASPA is well positioned to continue expanding its role in educator workforce policy. As Congress and federal agencies search for strategies to address persistent educator shortages, organizations grounded in the day-to-day realities of school districts will become increasingly important. AASPA brings that perspective to every conversation, representing the professionals responsible for recruiting, supporting, and retaining the educators who serve America's students.



Watching that evolution has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my work. What began as a government relations partnership has grown into a strategic collaboration centered on advancing practical solutions for the educator workforce. Together, Foresight Law + Policy and AASPA have demonstrated that when practitioners have a seat at the policymaking table, better-informed policies, and stronger partnerships, can emerge.



Dr. Benjamin Gies has spent the last decade working in education advocacy and policy at the local, state and federal levels. His focus includes early childhood education, early

literacy, K-12 governance, post-secondary readiness and community engagement. He has collaborated with nonprofits, school district leaders, businesses and elected officials to improve education outcomes through advocacy, coalition building and policy reform.

Prior to joining Foresight, Ben served as policy director and director of government affairs for education and child welfare nonprofits in Kentucky. He worked with rural and urban communities to expand access to high-quality early education through increased investment and community partnerships.

AASPA Micro-Credentials

Get Certified Today!



AI Essentials for PK-12 Education

MICRO-CREDENTIAL

Harness the power of AI to revolutionize recruitment and retention, boost efficiency and enhance decision-making at work.

New dates! September / November



SCAN to learn more!



13 hours of learning
(Asynchronous + 4 Live Sessions)
12 months access to LMS



Digital badge and certificate
upon completion



\$300 AASPA Members
\$450 Non-Members



Earn credit hours toward
pHCLE recertification

Advanced AI for PK-12 Education

MICRO-CREDENTIAL

Designed for PK-12 leaders and professionals with foundational knowledge of AI tools and concepts who are ready to move beyond basic AI awareness into more advanced application.

New course! September / November



SCAN to learn more!



13 hours of blended learning
(Asynchronous + 4 Live Sessions)
12 months access to LMS



Digital badge and certificate
upon completion



\$300 AASPA Members
\$450 Non-Members



Earn credit hours toward
pHCLE recertification

HCMS Essentials for PK-12 Education

MICRO-CREDENTIAL

This course is an Introduction to Human Capital Management, designed to build foundational human capital leadership understanding for PK-12 leaders.

New course! September



SCAN to learn more!



13 hours of blended learning
(Asynchronous + 4 Live Sessions)
12 months access to LMS



Digital badge and certificate
upon completion



\$300 AASPA Members
\$450 Non-Members



Earn credit hours toward
pHCLE recertification

Get Involved

AASPA volunteers are a driving force in the development of new programs and services for members and for school personnel administrators.

WE WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR TALENTS!

From joining a Committee to presenting at an event or writing an article, there are so many ways to get involved!



**SCAN HERE &
Let us know how you
want to get involved!**



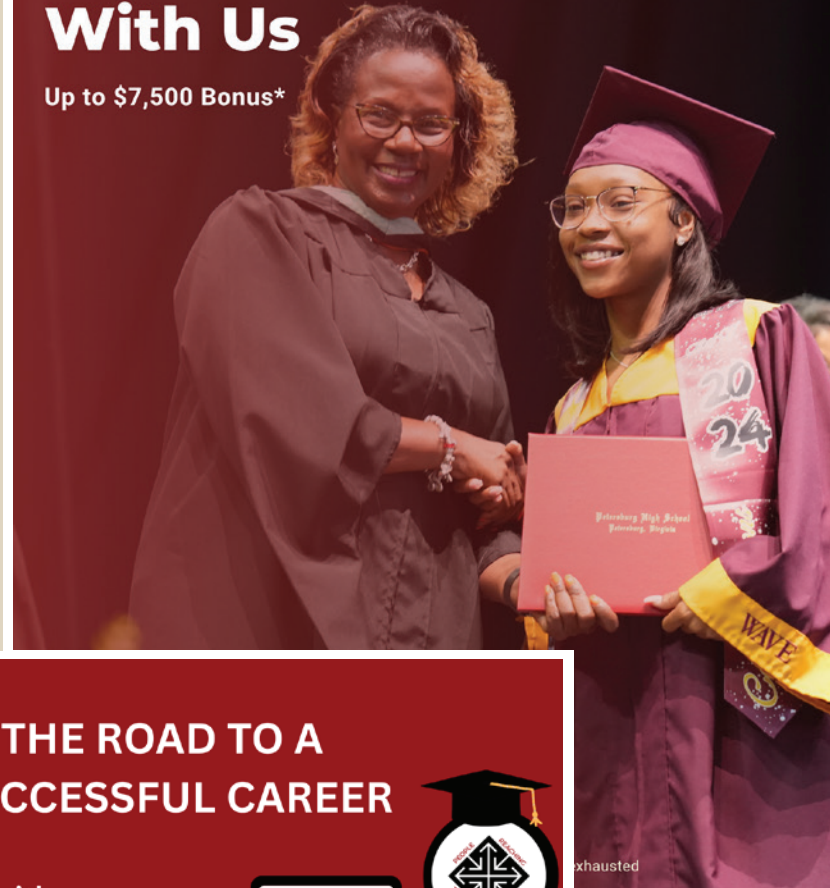
HOW ONE SCHOOL DIVISION IS TRANSFORMING HR RECRUITMENT IN VIRGINIA

By Chelsea Vongehr, Chief Communications Officer and Dr. Shamica Long-Lane, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, Petersburg City Public Schools, Petersburg, VA



Come Transform With Us

Up to \$7,500 Bonus*



Petersburg City Public Schools (Petersburg City PS) is a small, urban school division nestled just outside of Richmond, Virginia. With a population of 35,000 and a rich history that can be traced back to the nation's development, the City of Petersburg has home town charm and strong community pride. The solitary school division in the city, Petersburg City PS educates over 4,200 students from preschool to adults, and employs approximately 700 staff members. Over the last two years, Petersburg City PS has made a focused effort to stand out amid the highly competitive regional job market and to recruit top talent to the school division.

In 2025, the Petersburg City PS Human Resources (HR) and Communications Departments teamed up to redefine the school division's marketing efforts. In order to build brand awareness and recognition for Petersburg City PS, the school division needed a cohesive visual identity. The school division lacked a vector image logo, which made consistent marketing difficult. The two teams hired a graphic designer to redraw the official logo into high-resolution vector formats with color variations. They established comprehensive brand guidelines for staff and vendors, which outlined the approved logos, color palettes, and typography for the school division. With the refreshed brand identity in place, the HR and Communications teams created new and branded marketing materials, including customized folders, backdrops, and retractable banners, which have been used at career fairs across the nation.

The teams' first marketing plan centered on the theme of transformation. The school division was on a new trajectory, propelled by the new superintendent's vision to transform opportunities, learning, and success for every student so that they graduated with a life filled with choices. The HR and Communications teams wanted the school division's marketing and recruitment plans to reflect this shared vision for student success.

The themed marketing plan was launched at the Richmond International Airport (RIC) with a recurring ad that featured a winning speech and debate student from Petersburg High School. From there, transformation took root in all marketing materials to continue to build brand awareness, recognition, and clear identity for Petersburg City PS. Transformation would later become a permanent fixture in the school division's new vision as part of its five-year strategic plan.

To build upon this new visibility and to expand the school division's outreach to prospective employees, the teams kicked off "Why Wednesday." This targeted social media video campaign ran each week from September through December 2025. The videos spotlighted different Petersburg employees who shared why they chose to teach, build community, and make a difference in Petersburg. These authentic testimonials from employees amassed over 91,000 views across Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

As the peak season for hiring approached, the HR and Communications teams created and initiated recurring branded social media posts with specific calls to action to "Come Transform with Us" and "Teach, Transform, Together." Each post highlighted different position classifications and included branded themes and

scannable QR codes to track engagement metrics. The teams also developed a "Work Wednesday" paid ad campaign that geo-targeted specified regions in Virginia and neighboring states. The campaign generated over 330,000 views, reached over 177,000 individuals, and drove over 3,400 direct visits to the school division's hiring page. The HR and Communications teams have also

continued to differentiate the school division by leveraging social media. The teams have showcased employees' fun personalities and the workplace culture by hopping on viral trends, such as mash ups, Spotify Wrapped, and Elf on a Shelf. The teams wanted prospective employees to get a better feel for the community of Petersburg through visual storytelling.

In tandem with the online advertising and marketing efforts, the HR department branded their own in-person career pop up events as "Walk In Wednesdays." Each week a pop up event was held, prospective employees were invited to come to the school board office for in person interviews with HR department staff. By using alliteration and focused branding, the HR team has garnered positive attendance at the pop up events and continued to grow awareness surrounding the school division and the opportunities available to prospective employees.

Transformation has served as the anchor for the teams' marketing efforts over the last year and a half. Through the dedicated, cross-departmental teamwork of the HR and Communications staff, incredible new talent has been hired across the school division. In 2025-2026, the HR department hired over 200 new employees. This summer,

"Through the dedicated, cross-departmental teamwork of the HR and Communications staff, incredible new talent has been hired across the school division. In 2025-2026, the HR department hired over 200 new employees."

Come Transform With Us

Up to \$7,500 Bonus*

*Bonus funds available to eligible applicants until exhausted

THE ROAD TO A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

Transform with us as we help our students discover their full potential! →

SCAN ME

SUBSTITUTE

INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT

RESIDENT TEACHER

MENTOR

Mentor renewable licensed teacher supporting teachers in their first three years

For more info, visit <http://bit.ly/JoinPCPS>

Come Transform With Us

Up to \$7,500 Bonus*

About PCPS

	4,500+ STUDENTS
	\$70.5M BUDGET
	9 SCHOOLS
	672 EMPLOYEES

COME TRANSFORM WITH US!



PETERSBURG
City Public Schools



over 110 new teachers took part in the school division's second annual New Teacher Academy, which was recently featured by a local news outlet.

The school division's new five-year strategic plan will serve as the key focus for the teams' next marketing and recruitment plan. Aptly named Petersburg Forward 2031, one of the priorities of the plan is "talent acquisition, development, and retention." The team is now developing a new campaign that will center on the forward momentum of the school division and why prospective employees should choose Petersburg as their new home.

If you are interested in learning more about Petersburg City Public Schools job opportunities, please visit petersburg.k12.va.us. Choose Petersburg.



Chelsea Vongehr is the Chief Communications Officer for Petersburg City Public Schools in Virginia, with 15 years of experience in government affairs, public relations and communications. Previously, she served as Director of Communications for Lodi Unified School District and worked in legislative advocacy and grant

writing for public agencies in California and Washington, D.C. A nationally recognized school communications professional, Chelsea is an active member of NSPRA, PRSA and Chesapeake School Public Relations Association.



Dr. Shamica Long-Lane is an executive, educator and edupreneur with more than 20 years of experience in public education. Her career spans roles as a teacher, school administrator, Chief Human Resources Officer and central office leader overseeing instruction, technology and human resources across three states.

Today, she continues her work as an HR leader, bringing strategic insight and passion for developing people and organizations. Dr. Long-Lane is dedicated to helping others grow, lead with purpose and achieve meaningful results.

2027 SCHOOL HR WINTER BOOT CAMP

 Jan 25 - 26, 2027 / ANAHEIM, CA

AASPA's School HR Winter Boot Camp is the perfect time to pause and focus on your professional development, and there's no better way to truly reflect on your leadership than with our lineup of inspiring and knowledgeable HR speakers.

This two-day workshop offers a variety of essential topics for all HR administrators. Breakouts follow two strands of topics - one for the basic HR professionals and another for the more advanced administrators. Basic and advanced training includes recruitment, hiring, employee discipline, HR legislation, employee evaluation and much more! Take charge of your career, increase your knowledge and gain the respect of your peers and superiors with career-enhancing professional development.

Registration + More Info Coming Soon!



HUMAN CAPITAL *Leadership* SUMMIT

Dec 10 - 11, 2026
San Diego, CA



Designed for experienced school HR leaders ready to take their leadership to the next level, the Human Capital Leadership Summit offers advanced professional development focused on strengthening both HR expertise and leadership skills.

Gain practical strategies to:

- Strengthen recruitment and retention in today's PK-12 environment
- Build a more effective and organized HR department
- Connect human capital practices to student learning and performance
- Grow your leadership skills and professional impact



Scan here and register now!

2026

VIRTUAL LEGAL SUMMIT

NOVEMBER 4 - 5, 2026

AASPA's Virtual Legal Summit is an opportunity to engage with attorneys who specialize in the field of education and school law. Over the course of this two day virtual event, attendees will gather up-to-date information on the latest laws, policies and legal challenges facing school HR departments. This 2 day event will provide a platform to make valuable connections with driven and focused people from across the legal and HR profession.



Scan here and register now!





**AASPA'S 88TH
ANNUAL CONFERENCE**
OCTOBER 12-15, 2026 | AUSTIN, TX



LEADING FROM THE GROUND UP

ARE YOU READY TO PUT YOUR BOOTS ON & LEAD THE WAY?

AASPA's 88th Annual Conference is heading to Austin, TX — four days of can't-miss content, bold new perspectives and the connections that fuel your career. This is the premier gathering for PK-12 school HR leaders, packed with ready-to-use solutions and research-backed strategies, all served up in an environment built for real conversation (and real fun). Come ready to think big. You'll leave energized, inspired and equipped with fresh ideas, resources and contacts.

Learn directly from the experts shaping the field and walk away with new approaches to change things up in your own district. Connect with leaders who get. Swap strategies on equity, student outcomes, district performance and everything in between. Stay ahead of the curve with the latest research, trends and relationships that push your profession and your career, forward.

Let's be honest: your job is one of a kind. Where else do you get to spend four days surrounded by people who truly understand the work? This is that place. Come build the relationships that will be there for years to come, Austin-style.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- HR Directors
- Superintendents
- Assistant Superintendents
- Personnel Staff
- Principals
- School Administrators
- Business Officials
- And Others!

WHAT'S INCLUDED:

- Pre-Conference Workshops*
- Keynote Sessions
- Breakout Sessions
- Session Materials
- Networking Receptions
- Exhibit Hall Access
- Breakfast & Breaks
- Conference Website and Mobile App

**For All Access Registrations ONLY*



www.aaspaconference.com

CHECK OUT OUR EVENING EVENTS

AASPA's 88th Annual Conference brings PK-12 HR leaders together to connect, collaborate and share ideas. Grow your professional network through engaging events designed to build meaningful connections.

NEW FACES. FAMILIAR PLACES

Monday, October 12, 4:30 - 6:00pm / Austin Marriott Downtown Hotel

Kick off the conference at the New Faces, Familiar Places Reception! Connect with attendees and AASPA leaders while getting ready for what's ahead.

Sponsored by: **AASPA** **Red Rover**

WELCOME RECEPTION **Monday, October 12, 7:00 - 10:00pm / Bull & Bowl - Mayfair - SKYBOX**

Kick off AASPA's 88th Annual Conference at the Welcome Reception! Enjoy dinner, drinks, live music and interactive fun across three unique venues. Transportation provided.

Sponsored by: **AASPA** **frontline education** **NATIONAL PELRA**

EXHIBIT HALL RECEPTION **Tuesday, October 13, 4:30 - 6:00pm / Moontower Hall, 2nd Floor**

Join us at the Exhibit Hall Reception to connect with 80+ innovative companies! Enjoy drinks and appetizers while discovering new ideas, practical solutions and valuable resources to support your district's success.

Sponsored by: **Marathon Health**

AUSTIN AFTER HOURS **Tuesday, October 13, 7:00 - 10:00pm / Various Locations**

Experience Austin After Hours with exclusive sponsor-hosted gatherings at some of the city's liveliest venues. Connect, unwind and enjoy Austin! Transportation not provided.

Sponsored by: **Red Rover** **ESS** **PROXIMITY** **Moreland University** **Vector Solutions** **kickup** **Marathon Health**

2027 CONFERENCE KICKOFF PARTY **Wednesday, October 14, 4:30 - 6:00pm / Waterloo Ballroom 3-4, 5th Floor**

Be there for the big reveal! Discover where AASPA is headed next while enjoying drinks, appetizers and a few surprises. You might even start craving a little BBQ!

Sponsored by: **AASPA**

PARTY WITH A PURPOSE **Wednesday, October 14, 7:00 - 10:00pm / Fareground**

Get ready for Party with a Purpose! Celebrate AASPA's commitment to Educate, Advocate & Innovate with great food, music and networking at Fareground. Connect, celebrate and experience Austin—all in a walkable indoor-outdoor venue!

Sponsored by: **AASPA**

**REGISTER
NOW!**

\$1,025 for Members and \$1,325 for Non-Members*

**For the All Access Package Registration*

AGENDA

AT A GLANCE

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

02:30pm - 05:00pm Registration Open

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12

07:30am - 05:30pm Registration Open
08:00am - 05:30pm Information Desk Open
08:30am - 10:00am AM Pre-Conference Workshops
10:00am - 10:15am Networking Break
10:15am - 11:30am AM Pre-Conference Workshops
11:30am - 01:00pm Lunch on Own
01:00pm - 02:30pm PM Pre-Conference Workshops
02:30pm - 02:45pm Networking Break
02:45pm - 04:00pm PM Pre-Conference Workshops
04:30pm - 06:00pm New Faces, Familiar Places Reception
07:00pm - 10:00pm Welcome Reception

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13

07:00am - 04:30pm Registration Open
07:00am - 08:00am Grab N Go Breakfast Available
08:00am - 04:30pm Information Desk Open
08:00am - 09:00am Opening Ceremony & Keynote
09:00am - 10:15am Exhibit Hall Grand Opening
09:45am - 10:15am Networking Break
10:15am - 11:30am Ignite Sessions & Clinic Workshops
10:15am - 04:30pm Exhibit Hall Open (Closed During Lunch)
11:30pm - 01:30pm Lunch on Own / Boots, Bites & Business
01:30pm - 02:30pm Community Conversations
01:15pm - 04:15pm Ignite Sessions & Clinic Workshops
02:15pm - 03:00pm Networking Break
04:30pm - 06:00pm Exhibit Hall Reception
07:00pm - 10:00pm Austin After Hours

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

07:00am - 04:00pm Registration Open
07:00am - 08:00am Grab N Go Breakfast Available
07:00am - 08:00am State Leaders Breakfast
08:00am - 04:00pm Information Desk Open
08:00am - 09:00am Keynote Speaker
09:00am - 09:45am Networking Break
09:00am - 10:30am Exhibit Hall Open
10:15am - 11:30am Ignite Sessions & Clinic Workshops
11:30am - 12:00pm Exhibit Hall Closing / Grand Prize Drawing
12:00pm - 01:30pm Lunch on Own or Join ESS/Proximity Learning for Lunch
01:30pm - 02:30pm Ignite Sessions & Clinic Workshops
02:30pm - 03:00pm Networking Break
02:45pm - 04:15pm Ignite Sessions & Clinic Workshops
04:30pm - 06:00pm 2027 Conference Kickoff Party
07:00pm - 10:00pm Party with a Purpose

THURSDAY OCTOBER 15

07:30am - 11:30pm Information Desk Open
07:30am - 08:30am Breakfast Buffet Available
08:30am - 10:45am Executive Board Meeting
08:15am - 10:45am Ignite Sessions & Clinic Workshops
11:00am - 12:00pm Closing Ceremony & Keynote

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



TUESDAY- OCTOBER 13 / 8AM

Henna Pryor

THE CHANGING PSYCHOLOGY OF INFLUENCE: How School HR Leaders Can Overcome Resistance to Move Ideas, Initiatives and People Forward in the Modern Era

This interactive keynote explores how school HR leaders can overcome resistance and build influence in today's skeptical, information-saturated environment. Henna Pryor shares practical strategies for identifying hidden barriers to change, building trust and gaining buy-in—helping leaders move hiring, retention, policy changes, difficult conversations and other key initiatives forward.

Sponsored by: **TEACHERS-TOMORROW**
Learning Leaders | **simpleK12**



WEDNESDAY - OCTOBER 14 / 8AM

Jay Kiew

NAVIGATE: How to Flourish in the Complexities of an Uncertain World

This keynote explores how school district leaders can navigate uncertainty and turn change into an opportunity for growth. Innovation strategist and bestselling author Jay Kiew introduces Change Fluency™, sharing practical strategies to build adaptable mindsets, lead teams through disruption and create lasting change with greater confidence.

Sponsored by: **Red Rover**



THURSDAY - OCTOBER 15 / 11AM

Rachel Druckenmiller

UNMUTED: Unleash Clarity, Confidence & Contribution to Amplify Your Impact

This closing keynote empowers school HR leaders to move beyond self-doubt, perfectionism and hesitation to lead with greater confidence and courage. Rachel Druckenmiller introduces her VOICE Method, providing practical tools to build self-trust, recognize strengths and turn quiet capability into meaningful action and impact.

CHECK OUT OUR **PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS!**

OCTOBER 12, 2026

MORNING SESSIONS
8:30am - 11:30pm

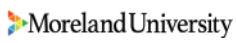
- 1. **H.R. in the C.A.R: Driving Culture, Appreciation and Recognition Through Storytelling**
Presented by Dr. Dale Fisher and Gabriel Cappozzo
- 2. **FMLA & ADA and What You Should and Shouldn't Say**
Presented by Barbara Erickson
- 3. **Riding the Wave of Generative AI in Education: The Good, the Risky, and the Non-Compliant**
Presented by Rebecca Bailey and Amber King
- 4. **From Guesswork to Game Plan: Building a Strategic HR Roadmap with Data That Drives Decisions**
Presented by Dr. Amy Dillon and Dr. Jamie Dial
- 5. **Leading with Clarity and Courage: Building Stronger Teams Through Evaluation, Development and Difficult Conversations**
Presented by Sarah Marriott
- 6. **From Day One: A Systems-Based Approach to Onboarding and Mentoring New Educators**
Presented by Joseph Tasman, Leslie Brophy and Kelly Barry

AFTERNOON SESSIONS
1:00pm - 4:00pm

- 7. **Civil Rights Speed Dating: A Fast-Paced Compliance Lab for K-12 School Personnel Administrators**
Presented by Jackie Gharapour Wernz and Holly McIntush
- 8. **Don't Get Burned: How to Conduct Legally Sound Employee Investigations**
Presented by Rebecca Bailey and Amber King
- 9. **Hot Topics in School Law: What Every School HR Leader Needs to Know Now**
Presented by Namita Brown and Sara Boucek
- 10. **From Backlog to Board-Ready: How AI Can Rescue Your HR Policies**
Presented by Jessica Bennington
- 11. **The Best Candidates are Already in Your Building: A Retention-First Approach to Leadership Development**
Presented by Dr. Kerri B. Stroka
- 12. **Educator Ethics Workshop and Discussion**
Presented by Jimmy Adams, Dr. Troy Hutchings and Anne Marie Fenton

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR **ELITE SPONSORS!**















AASPA's 88th Annual Conference is almost here, and Austin is ready for you! Whether this is your first conference or your fifth, here's how to make the most of your week and start with your #BootsOn: Leading from the Ground Up!

01. SESSIONS

Between breakouts, pre-conference workshops and keynotes, you're looking at 100+ sessions to choose from which can feel like a lot. Get ahead of it: browse the full lineup at www.aaspaconference.com before you arrive and start building your personal roadmap for the week. The conference mobile app makes this even easier, letting you search, save and organize sessions on the go. Every session ties back to the Human Capital Leaders in Education (HCLE) Standards and you can earn recertification credit through SHRM, HRCI or pHCLE along the way. Our speakers are practitioners and experts who know this field inside and out; they'll send you home with strategies you can actually use. Can't make it to everything? No stress, clinic and ignite session materials are posted right in the app.

02. EVOLVING TOGETHER

AASPA has grown a lot in recent years and that growth means this year's conference will look a little different than the last. That's a good thing. It's a sign of a community that's expanding and getting stronger for school HR leaders everywhere. Our staff has poured creativity into reimagining parts of the experience and we can't wait for you to see what's new.

03. EXHIBIT HALL

Step into the Exhibit Hall and you'll find the tools and technology built to take work off your plate so you can spend more time on the parts of the job you actually love. With 80+ exhibitors on the floor, give yourself real time to explore; you won't want to rush through it. And don't skip the Exhibit Hall Reception, there are prizes up for grabs and someone's going home happy.

04. NETWORKING

Ask any AASPA veteran what they remember most and odds are it's the people, not just the sessions. This year brings six evening events plus countless daytime moments to connect over coffee, in the hallway and in the Exhibit Hall. Set yourself a simple goal: leave Austin having made at least one real connection you'll still be talking to next year. (And bring business cards — you'll want them.)

05. GET TO KNOW THE APP

If there's one tip to take to heart, it's this: download the app and actually use it. It's your command center for the week and includes session details, speaker bios, handouts, maps, dining options and a "My Schedule" tool that keeps your days organized. You can also connect with fellow attendees, compare schedules and set up meetups right from your phone. Be sure to turn notifications on so nothing important slips past you.

06. DRESS FOR AUSTIN

Texas weather doesn't do things halfway, expect sunshine and warmth outside and chilly, over-air-conditioned ballrooms inside. Pack a light jacket or sweater you can layer on and off, plus sunscreen and a water bottle for good measure. And whatever you pack, make room for comfortable shoes. Between session hopping, the Exhibit Hall and an Austin After Hours evening, you'll be logging some serious steps.

Can't wait to see you in Austin!



SAVE
THE
DATE



**THE
HEART
OF**

HR

FEEL THE BEAT - LEAD THE PATH

AASPA'S 89TH
ANNUAL CONFERENCE

October 4 - 7, 2027
Kansas City, MO