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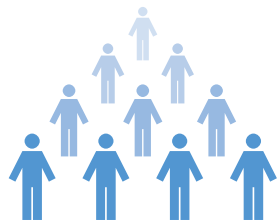
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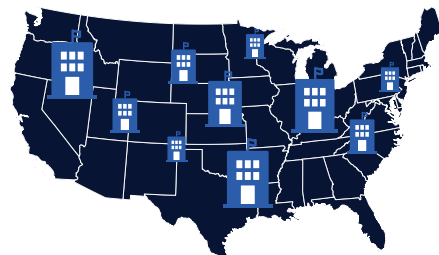
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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

From the Desk of Kevin Walton Sr., AASPA President



As school districts across the United States prepare for a new school year, I would like to extend my sincere wishes for a successful school cycle. The start of the school year brings a sense of excitement, promise and endless opportunities for both students and staff—and this is equally true for us in Human Resources.

As the principal architects of the employee experience, we hold the power to shape and sustain a positive workplace culture rooted in fairness, equity and effective communication. Our role is to lead with purpose, ensuring that every employee feels valued, respected and part of a shared experience. Let us embrace this responsibility with passion and determination, knowing that our efforts have the potential to transform the experiences of staff, students, families and all stakeholders.

As Human Resources leaders, we often encounter challenges that can feel daunting and overwhelming. But the good news is, we do not have to face these challenges alone. Therefore, I encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to “Create Connections” and enhance your professional journey by attending the AASPA Annual Conference, October 15-18, 2024, in

“Our role is to lead with purpose, ensuring that every employee feels valued, respected and part of a shared experience.”

beautiful Seattle, Washington. The Annual Conference offers an exceptional opportunity to sharpen your professional skills, connect with dedicated PK-12 HR professionals and gain valuable insights that will help expand your sphere of impact and influence within your district.

As we prepare for the new school year, I extend my sincerest best wishes to each of you. The work we do is profoundly important and has the potential to effect positive experiences for our employees, students and families. Let us approach this year with unwavering enthusiasm, determination and a shared commitment to excellence in our districts. Here is to a successful and impactful school year!

Yours In Service,

Kevin E. Walton, Sr.
AASPA President

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN K12 EDUCATION

by Dr. Mary K. Boudreaux, Associate Professor at Southern Connecticut State University, New Haven, CT

In the dynamic landscape of education, teachers' performance is pivotal to the success of students and the school district. Effective performance management is essential for creating an environment where school leaders, teachers, and students can thrive. School leaders, supported by Human Resources (HR) and unions, play a crucial role in identifying and addressing engagement issues stemming from knowledge, skills or motivation gaps. However, educational leadership programs often lack preparation for those aiming to lead HR departments, particularly in understanding the processes needed to support school leaders.



Mary K. Boudreaux, Ed.D., is an Associate Professor at Southern Connecticut State University and the coordinator for the Doctor of Education program in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies.

Dr. Boudreaux's research interests include improving the climate and culture of school systems and addressing diversity and equity issues in K12 school districts and post-secondary institutions.

Her passion for education led her to serve as a teacher, education specialist, and school district administrator across several urban, suburban, and rural school districts in Florida and Texas.

She made valuable contributions as a community college faculty member in Houston, Texas, teaching college preparatory English and ESOL courses to developmental students and later as faculty in the College of Education at the University of Memphis.



Drawing from Clark and Estes' *Turning Research Into Results: A Guide to Selecting the Right Performance Solutions*, this article explores how school leaders can improve teacher performance through targeted interventions, supported by HR and union involvement, to facilitate and sustain these efforts. AASPA's Human Capital Leaders in Education framework underscores essential elements of performance management, such as the need for targeted support systems, effective training of evaluators, promoting clear workplace policies and addressing disciplinary issues.

Performance management in education systematically ensures teachers meet their professional goals and contribute effectively to the school's mission. This involves setting clear expectations, providing continuous feedback and supporting professional development. Effective performance management helps enhance teaching quality, identify and address areas for improvement, and promote a culture of accountability and continuous improvement.

THE SCHOOL LEADERS ROLE

School leaders, including principals and administrators, are at the forefront of performance management, playing a crucial and multifaceted role. They must set clear, measurable objectives for teacher performance, defining effective teaching within the school's vision and educational standards. Regular, constructive feedback is essential, with performance reviews that highlight strengths and identify areas for improvement, ensuring feedback is

specific, actionable and supportive. Additionally, school leaders should support professional development by facilitating opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills and knowledge through workshops, mentoring programs and access to educational resources.

IDENTIFYING ENGAGEMENT ISSUES

According to Clark and Estes, understanding whether engagement issues are due to knowledge, skills or motivation is essential for selecting the right performance solutions. School leaders can assess knowledge by reviewing lesson plans and instructional materials, observing classroom teaching and conducting surveys or assessments to gauge understanding of the subject matter. Solutions might include targeted professional development, access to updated teaching resources or collaborative planning sessions with knowledgeable peers. To evaluate skills, leaders should observe classroom interactions, review student performance data and seek feedback from students and parents. Interventions could involve hands-on training, peer coaching or workshops on specific teaching techniques or classroom management strategies. Assessing motivation involves conducting one-on-one meetings to understand personal and professional goals, administering surveys to gauge job satisfaction and observing signs of burnout or disengagement. Addressing motivational issues may include recognizing and rewarding achievements, providing career advancement opportunities, fostering a positive school culture and ensuring a supportive work environment.

IMPLEMENTING TARGETED SOLUTIONS

Once school leaders have identified the root causes of engagement issues, they can implement targeted solutions. For knowledge-based interventions, they can offer professional development workshops, provide access to up-to-date teaching materials and resources and encourage collaboration and knowledge-sharing among teachers. Skill-based interventions might include conducting skills training sessions, implementing peer coaching and mentoring programs and facilitating classroom observations and feedback sessions. To address motivation, leaders can create recognition programs to celebrate teacher achievements, offer career advancement and professional growth opportunities and foster a supportive and collaborative school culture.

DETERMINING ISSUES OF KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND MOTIVATION

Effective performance management requires school leaders to accurately identify the root causes of engagement issues among teachers, whether they stem from deficiencies in knowledge, skills or motivation. To assess knowledge, school leaders can observe teachers during lessons to gauge their content knowledge and effectiveness, review lesson plans for accuracy and alignment with standards, use surveys to identify areas of self-perceived knowledge gaps and engage in professional conversations to probe their understanding. For evaluating skills, leaders should conduct performance reviews focused on instructional strategies, classroom management and student engagement; analyze student performance data to spot patterns indicating skill deficiencies; collect feedback from students, parents and colleagues; and review professional development records to check if relevant skills have been built and applied. To identify motivation issues, leaders can hold regular informal meetings to discuss career goals and job satisfaction, administer surveys to gauge overall morale, observe behaviors and attitudes for signs of disengagement and analyze the effectiveness of the school's recognition and rewards system to ensure teachers feel valued and have opportunities for career growth.

STEPS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS IF INTERVENTIONS DO NOT WORK

Despite best efforts and well-structured interventions, there may be instances where a teacher's performance does not improve. In such cases, school leaders must take additional steps to address the ongoing issues effectively and fairly. Here's a guide on what school leaders should do if interventions do not work:

1. Re-Evaluate the Situation:

- Conduct a Follow-Up Assessment: Review the teacher's progress against the performance improvement plan (PIP). Assess which goals were not met and why.
- Seek Additional Input: Gather further feedback from colleagues, students and parents to view the teacher's ongoing performance issues comprehensively.

2. Identify Barriers:

- Analyze Interventions: Evaluate whether the interventions were appropriately designed and implemented. Identify any barriers that might have hindered their effectiveness.
- Consult with HR: Collaborate with HR to ensure all procedures were followed correctly and to seek their insights on potential underlying issues.

3. Additional Interventions and Support:

- Adjust the Improvement Plan: Based on the follow-up assessment, consider revising the PIP's goals and strategies. Set new realistic targets and timelines.
- Provide Additional Resources: Ensure the teacher can access any additional resources or support they may need, such as further training, mentorship, or peer support programs.
- Increased Monitoring and Support: Schedule frequent check-ins to closely monitor the teacher's progress and provide immediate feedback and support. Pair the teacher with a highly effective colleague for peer mentoring to encourage peer support and collaboration.

4. Formalizing the Process:

- Document Everything: Document all interventions, meetings, feedback, and the teacher's response and progress. This documentation is critical for transparency and compliance with school policies and employment laws.
- Communication with Teacher: Ensure that all communications with the teacher are clear and documented, outlining expectations, progress and next steps.

5. Escalating the Process:

- Formal Performance Review: Conduct a formal performance review involving HR, school administration and, if applicable, union representatives. This review should summarize all efforts made and the teacher's progress.
- Communicate the potential consequences if performance does not improve, including reassignment or termination.

- Final Warning: Issue a written warning if the teacher's performance remains unsatisfactory. This warning should outline the specific areas of concern, previous interventions and the possible outcomes if improvement is not observed. Provide a final deadline for improvement and outline the specific criteria that must be met within this period.

6. Making Tough Decisions:

- Consider Reassignment: If such a position is available, explore the possibility of reassigning the teacher to a different role within the school that better suits their skills and abilities.
- Termination: If all else fails, work closely with HR to initiate the termination process, ensuring that all actions comply with employment laws, union agreements, and school policies. Communicate the decision to the teacher, providing the rationale and ensuring they understand the process and their rights.

7. Aftermath and Reflection:

- Reflect and Improve: After the process is concluded, review the entire case with HR and school leadership to identify any areas for improvement in the performance management process.
- Support Remaining Staff: Support the remaining staff in maintaining morale and trust in the performance management system. Ensure transparency and fairness in communicating the reasons for the actions taken.
- Learn and Adapt: Use the insights gained to review and, if necessary, update the school's performance management policies and procedures to prevent similar issues in the future. Continue to invest in professional development and support systems to help all teachers succeed and avoid performance issues.



“Continue to invest in professional development and support systems for all teachers to prevent performance issues and foster a positive working environment.”

ENGAGING HUMAN RESOURCES IN ADDRESSING TEACHER PERFORMANCE GAPS

Once school leaders have identified performance gaps related to knowledge, skills or motivation, involving Human Resources (HR) is crucial in developing and implementing effective interventions. HR professionals can provide training, development and employee relations expertise to support school leaders in addressing these gaps. Here’s a step-by-step guide on how to effectively engage HR in this process:

- 1. Initial Assessment and Documentation:**
 - Gather Evidence: Document observations, feedback and performance assessments highlighting the identified gaps. This includes classroom observations, lesson plan reviews, student performance data and feedback from students and parents.
 - Create a Summary Report: Prepare a comprehensive report summarizing the findings, highlighting areas where knowledge, skills or motivation gaps exist.
 - Review Policies and Procedures: Familiarize yourself with the school’s HR policies and procedures related to performance management, professional development and employee relations. Ensure that any proposed actions comply with employment laws, union agreements and school policies.
- 2. Engaging HR in the Performance Improvement Process:**
 - Schedule a Meeting: Arrange a formal meeting with the HR department to discuss the identified performance gaps and seek their support. Prepare for the discussion by bringing the summary report and relevant documentation.

- Collaborative Planning: Work with HR to jointly assess the identified performance gaps. This may involve additional observations or interviews with the teacher. Collaborate to create a detailed performance improvement plan (PIP) with specific, measurable goals, timelines and support mechanisms. Address knowledge gaps with professional development opportunities, skills gaps with targeted training and mentoring and motivation issues with strategies like recognition programs and career advancement opportunities.
- 3. Implementing and Monitoring the Plan:**
 - Communication and Implementation: Meet with the teacher to discuss the PIP, ensuring they understand the expectations, support available and consequences of not meeting the improvement goals. Provide the necessary resources and support.
 - Monitor Progress: Schedule regular check-ins with the teacher to monitor progress, provide feedback and make any necessary adjustments to the plan. Keep detailed records of the teacher’s progress, feedback and any improvement plan changes.
- 4. Evaluating Outcomes and Next Steps:**
 - Evaluate Effectiveness: After the designated period, review the teacher’s performance to determine whether the PIP goals have been met. Gather feedback from students, parents and colleagues to assess the impact of the interventions.
 - Decide on Next Steps: If the teacher has made satisfactory progress, acknowledge their efforts and consider additional opportunities for professional growth. If performance has not improved, work with HR to explore further actions, which may include additional support, reassignment or termination.

HANDLING REASSIGNMENT OR TERMINATION WITH UNION INVOLVEMENT

When a union representative is involved in a teacher’s reassignment or termination process, it is essential to navigate the situation with care, ensuring compliance with union agreements and maintaining clear communication. School leaders should first review the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) to understand terms and identify provisions related to due process, disciplinary actions and the teacher’s and the union’s rights. Consulting with HR and legal advisors is crucial to ensure all actions comply with employment laws and the CBA and to understand the documentation required to support the process.

Engaging the union representative early is important. Inform the union about the performance issues and steps taken to build trust and cooperation. Schedule meetings with the union representative, the teacher and HR to discuss the situation and explore possible solutions collaboratively. Seek input from the union on potential interventions and work together to develop a performance improvement plan (PIP) that is fair, realistic and compliant with union agreements.

Maintaining detailed documentation is essential. Keep meticulous records of all meetings, communications, interventions and the teacher’s progress, and share this documentation with the union representative as appropriate. Document any agreements reached, including timelines, goals and support mechanisms. Provide regular updates to the union representative and the teacher about the progress and any changes to the PIP, ensuring all communications are clear, transparent and respectful.

If reassignment or termination becomes necessary, explore possible reassignment options that align with the teacher’s skills and abilities, aiming for a mutual agreement. If termination is required, follow all steps outlined in the CBA and employment laws. Involve the union representative to ensure fairness and transparency and provide all necessary documentation and evidence to support the decision. Conduct a final meeting with the teacher, HR and the union representative to communicate the decision clearly, outlining the reasons and next steps.

After the process, support the remaining staff to maintain morale and ensure a smooth transition. Communicate transparently about the process to build trust. Review the process with HR, legal advisors and the union to identify any areas for improvement in handling similar situations in the future. Use the insights gained to review and update school policies and procedures related to performance management, ensuring they are robust and fair. Continue to invest in professional development and support systems for all teachers to prevent performance issues and foster a positive working environment.

CONCLUSION

Students’ and the school district’s success heavily depends on teachers’ performance, necessitating effective performance management. With support from HR and unions, school leaders play an integral role in addressing engagement issues stemming from gaps in knowledge, skills or motivation. Targeted interventions, informed by frameworks like Clark and Estes’ *Turning Research Into Results: A Guide to Selecting the Right Performance Solutions*, can significantly enhance teaching quality.

AASPA standards emphasize maintaining or improving job performance through ongoing supervisor and employee interactions. Key elements include assisting stakeholders with evaluation systems, training evaluators to differentiate performance and promoting clear workplace policies. Addressing disciplinary issues fairly and ethically is also critical.

School districts can create a supportive, growth-oriented atmosphere by focusing on these components and fostering collaboration and professional development. Comprehensive training and practical skills can better equip leaders to handle their roles’ challenges, ultimately enhancing school districts’ performance and success.



THE NEW RECRUITMENT IN EDUCATION:

by Dr. Tamy Smalskas, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources in Carrollton - Farmers Branch ISD, Carrollton, TX

EVOLUTIONARY TRENDS IN TEACHER HIRING

Recruiting educators has always been a pivotal aspect of the education sector, as the quality of teachers directly impacts the quality of education. Over the years, the recruitment landscape in education has undergone significant evolution, driven by technological advancements, changing demographics and evolving teaching methodologies. In this article, I delve into the transformative journey of teacher recruitment, exploring the emerging trends, challenges and implications for the future of education.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Traditionally, teacher recruitment relied heavily on localized methods such as newspaper advertisements, word-of-mouth referrals and recruitment fairs. Educational institutions would engage in extensive outreach efforts within their immediate communities to attract potential candidates. However, this approach often resulted in limited applicant pools and lacked the efficiency needed to meet the growing demand for educators.

THE EMERGENCE OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS

The advent of digital technology revolutionized the recruitment landscape, providing educators and institutions with unprecedented opportunities to connect and collaborate. Online job boards, specialized recruitment websites and social media platforms emerged as powerful tools for advertising teaching positions and engaging with prospective candidates on a global scale. This shift not only expanded the reach of recruitment efforts but also facilitated the exploration of diverse talent pools and enhanced the efficiency of the hiring process. Let's face it, face to face job fairs are the thing of the past.

TECHNOLOGY-DRIVEN RECRUITMENT

Technology has revolutionized the way educational institutions attract, assess and hire teaching talent. Online job portals, social media platforms and dedicated recruitment websites have become integral tools for advertising teaching positions and reaching a wider pool of candidates. Moreover, advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) have enabled the development of sophisticated algorithms that streamline the screening process by matching candidates' skills and qualifications with job requirements.

Virtual interviews and remote hiring practices have become commonplace, eliminating geographical barriers and facilitating the recruitment of teachers from diverse backgrounds. Video conferencing platforms allow recruiters to conduct interviews efficiently while providing candidates with greater flexibility and convenience. Additionally, online teaching demonstrations and digital portfolios enable educators to showcase their teaching styles and accomplishments effectively.

REMOTE AND FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

The proliferation of remote work technologies and flexible work arrangements has further transformed the dynamics of teacher recruitment. With the rise of online learning platforms and virtual classrooms, educators now have the flexibility to teach from anywhere in the world, transcending geographical barriers and expanding the talent pool for educational institutions. Remote teaching opportunities offer greater flexibility and work-life balance for educators while providing institutions with access to a diverse pool of qualified candidates. However, this shift also presents challenges in terms of maintaining effective communication, collaboration and support for remote educators, requiring institutions to adapt their recruitment and onboarding processes accordingly.



Dr. Tamy Smalskas is a distinguished leader in the field of education, renowned for her transformative leadership and expertise in human resource management, student services and safety and security. With close to 30 years of experience in public education, Dr. Smalskas has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to improving culture,

student achievement, recruitment, retention and professional development strategies.

Dr. Smalskas holds a Doctor of Education (Ph.D.) in Educational Administration with a focus on Human Resource Management from the University of North Denton. She is also professionally certified in Human Capital Leadership in Education (pHCLE) from the American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA). Her human resource leadership is characterized by her ability to foster teamwork, build leadership capacity and ensure alignment with district goals. She has conducted comprehensive salary and wage analyses, developed job descriptions and supervised recruitment processes for various district positions.

Dr. Smalskas currently serves as the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources in Carrollton - Farmers Branch ISD, in Carrollton, TX.

VALUES-BASED RECRUITMENT

Beyond traditional metrics such as academic qualifications and experience, there is a growing emphasis on aligning the values and beliefs of teachers with those of the educational institution. Schools and districts are recognizing the importance of hiring teachers who share their mission, vision, and educational philosophy, as it contributes to a more cohesive and collaborative school culture.

Values-based recruitment involves assessing candidates' alignment with the institution's core values, teaching philosophy and commitment to student success. This may include incorporating values-based interview questions, conducting situational assessments and seeking evidence of candidates' contributions to their communities or professional development.



“By investing in the recruitment and development of high-quality educators, institutions can cultivate thriving learning communities and empower students to reach their full potential.”

BUILDING TEACHER PIPELINES

Recognizing the challenges of teacher shortages in certain subject areas and geographical regions, many educational institutions are investing in initiatives to build sustainable teacher pipelines. These efforts involve partnering with colleges and universities to recruit prospective teachers, providing financial incentives such as scholarships or loan forgiveness programs and offering mentorship and professional development opportunities to support early-career educators.

Alternative certification programs and pathways to licensure are also being explored to attract individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences to the teaching profession. By nurturing and retaining talented educators, schools and districts can mitigate the impact of teacher turnover and ensure a stable workforce that meets the evolving needs of students.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

In an era of data analytics, recruitment processes are increasingly informed by quantitative insights and predictive modeling. Educational institutions are leveraging data to identify trends in teacher turnover, anticipate future hiring needs and assess the effectiveness of recruitment strategies.

By analyzing metrics such as applicant demographics, hiring outcomes and retention rates, recruiters can identify areas for improvement and tailor recruitment efforts to target specific demographics or address recruitment challenges. Data-driven decision-making enables schools and districts to allocate resources more efficiently, optimize recruitment strategies and ultimately enhance the quality of their teaching workforce.

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the transformative potential of these emerging trends, teacher recruitment still faces numerous challenges, including teacher shortages, retention issues and systemic inequalities. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that combines proactive recruitment strategies, targeted professional development initiatives and supportive work environments. Educational institutions must prioritize investment in teacher recruitment and retention efforts, focusing on fostering a positive organizational culture, providing ongoing mentorship and support and offering competitive compensation and benefits packages. By investing in the recruitment and development of high-quality educators, institutions can cultivate thriving learning communities and empower students to reach their full potential.

CONCLUSION

The recruitment landscape in education is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by technological advancements, evolving demographics and changing educational priorities. By embracing innovative strategies, educational institutions can effectively attract, select and retain high-quality teachers who are equipped to meet the diverse needs of students in the 21st century. As the demands on the teaching profession continue to evolve, so too must our approaches to teacher recruitment, ensuring that schools and districts remain well-positioned to support student success and educational excellence.



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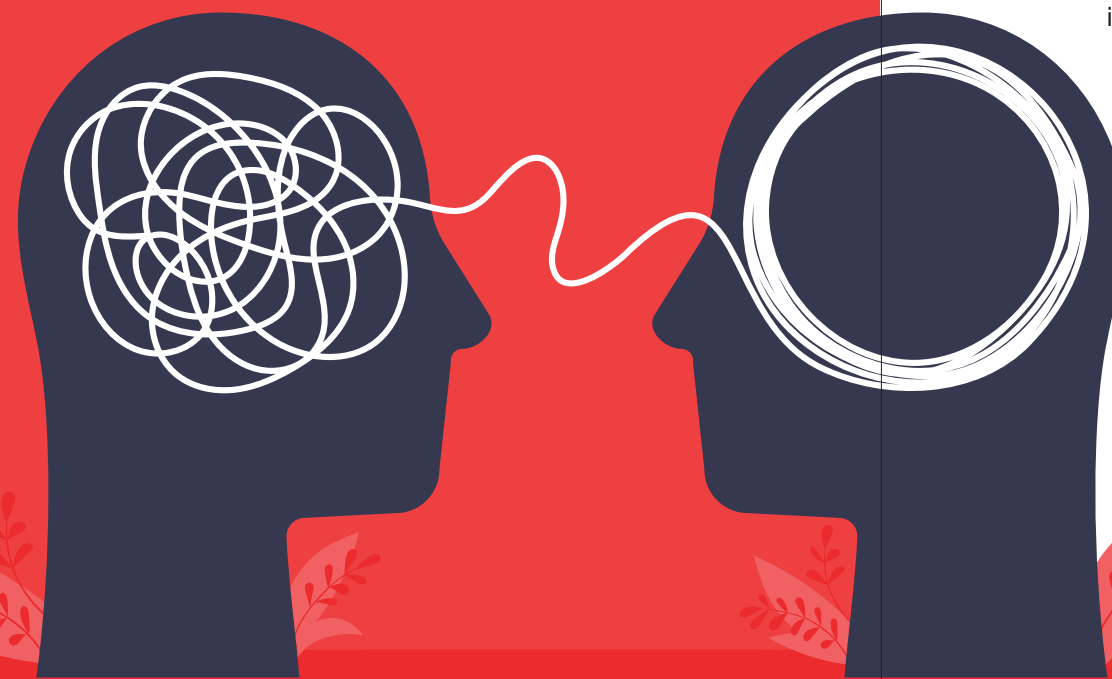
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HARD CONVERSATIONS: MESSY TO MEANINGFUL STARTING WITH ME

by Dr. Patty Corrum, Executive Director, MOASPA, Educational Consultant, St. Louis, MO

Communication can be difficult even when it doesn't have to be. And when we find ourselves in situations where messages are going to be hard to hear, relationships are troubled or perspectives are unlike, it's even more difficult. After years of top leadership in human resources, watching great school administrators communicate effectively and weak ones lose respect, status and influence, I realized there are huge benefits to being able to navigate messy conversations.



I began to take notes and create lists outlining what I found to be effective. I wrote down what I observed and tested each consideration carefully by watching others, and repeating certain actions myself. The results were clear. Difficult conversations didn't have to be that hard. And while nothing is 100%, I found there were strategies that increased the chance for a positive conversation and a better relationship to follow. Then, when I added to those strategies, a strong sense of self-awareness through constant reflection, self-assessments and self-study, and having critical friends to provide feedback, my ability to not only communicate effectively improved, but I was also able to sit still longer, endure difficult situations with more ease and I felt calmer and more confident all situations. I slept better at night, and during the day, whatever life dealt, I was happier and better able to handle myself with more successful outcomes.

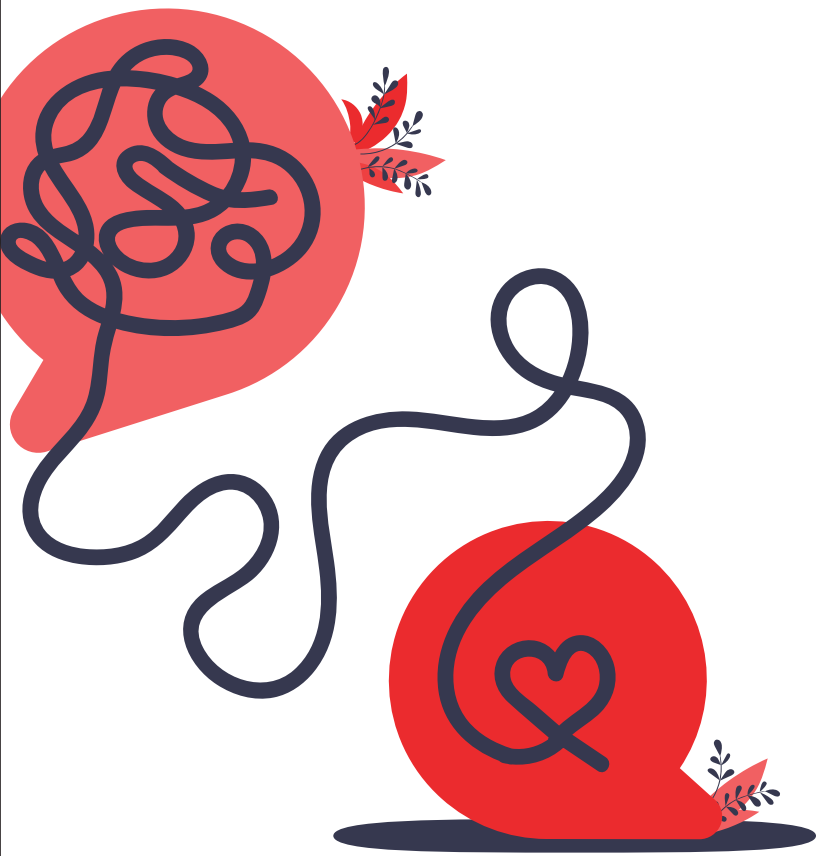
MESSY TO MEANINGFUL

Whether it is work related or personally speaking, the first and most significant lesson I have learned over my six decades of life, is to be quiet and listen without judgement and without constantly contemplating how the issue relates to me. I suppose we were all taught, at some point, the value of active listening, but I didn't really understand its many components until I started focusing on effective communication. While in my educational leadership position, I wanted to understand the other person in a difficult conversation, I also wanted to talk, a lot. It was hard to resist the urge to get my perspective out there, my opinion stated, my point of view in the other person's head. What I didn't realize, is that while I was concentrating so much on me, my thoughts and my defense, I had no idea what was important to the other person. I didn't know what they felt was the most important part of their message. I didn't recognize their feelings or reasons about sharing the message. Sometimes I hadn't even taken the time to truly find out what it was they wanted. I just kept focusing on how I would respond. I talked and tried to persuade them to understand my perspective. What I learned through watching my own role models, was to start with listening, listening to understand, listening to remember, listening for intent and emotion. Strive to



know the gist of the entire message fully and understand it and where it came from. Before you ever share your thoughts or perspectives, it's a good thing to simply listen to the other person. Let them fill up the airspace. Let them talk. Embrace the silence that surrounds you both when they are gathering the courage to tell you something hard. Be still. Be silent. When you do talk, ask good questions, and then close your mouth and listen carefully, and fully embrace their answer. When I let go of the notion that I had to weigh in every time something was said, I enjoyed the freedom of simply being able to hear the message from their point of view. I relished in the experience of someone else doing the talking and sharing themselves with me. And even in anticipation of a difficult conversation, I looked forward to learning more about what that person would offer in the midst of the dilemma. I had something to look forward to instead of something to dread. When attempting to solve a problem, to negotiate a positive outcome for all or to move forward as a team, we must first grasp where the other side is coming from. It is amazing the benefits that come from simply listening with all your senses! Once I fully appreciated that time and embraced the honor of someone sharing their thoughts and ideas with me, I felt more welcomed by them to thoughtfully share my perspective and input when it was time.

A second approach that I have learned about effective communication, (and see great benefits when I employ it well), is to be sure my messages have a balance of clarity and compassion. I believe that while every person has probably not earned my respect, every person is a human being who can be treated with dignity. In my position as deputy superintendent in a large school district, there were times when I was in conversation investigating staff, discussing an employee's poor performance or terminating someone for misconduct. These were not easy conversations. The most difficult were when the employee was someone I knew and had worked closely with at one



STARTING WITH ME

There are many communication strategies that when implemented and practiced regularly, will help conversations be more positive and productive. While I continued to learn them, and enjoyed the success of the conversations and relationships, at some point, I realized there was one more thing on which I needed to focus. Strategies alone only went so far. There was something else that these great leaders did. There was more to it than just “how to.” And as I observed and asked questions and listened, I learned what that was. It was a simple concept yet could be complex in the making. And it took intention and time. What they did was increase their sense of most people’s favorite topic, themselves. Developing and maintaining a strong sense of me. I learned that great leaders who communicated well and made it through the most difficult situations and conversations with confidence and calm, had a very strong sense of self-awareness. They understood who they were and why they were. They practiced self-awareness exercises. They reflected carefully, daily and with intention. They were keenly aware of their strengths and how to leverage those in life. They were able to articulate their understanding of themselves as well as how others viewed them. They knew their own wellness including physical, emotional, social and spiritual and worked regularly to maintain self-care. These successful leaders also had a true understanding of what was within their control and what wasn’t. They didn’t spend time on things they couldn’t change, and their concern and think time was focused on what they could. They also embraced the many abilities they held, constantly thinking about tough situations and how they

time or another. Conversations like this cause you not to sleep or eat and can even trigger panic attacks. I had to figure out ways to share my tough messages in the most productive way possible. Starting with listening helped me breathe, get centered and know their side, their tone, their attitude and message so that I could effectively navigate the rest of the meeting. After that, I would deliver my message in light of all they said. Simply put, I tried to deliver a message that was both caring and clear. I hoped in listening, I demonstrated compassion to the other person and respect for the conversation.

“I learned that great leaders who communicated well and made it through the most difficult situations and conversations with confidence and calm, had a very strong sense of self-awareness.”

I knew that I also had to have clarity and honesty in the message. Talking points had to be straight forward, precise and with language that was easily understood. People value being talked to like adults, and trickery, dishonesty, blaming others or being sarcastic doesn’t help the conversation, nor does it build trust, especially when emotions are high. As the message is being delivered, make good eye contact, continue to listen carefully, ask good questions, pause and be patient. When you are incredibly clear with the message, it is not necessary to repeat yourself. Trust that they heard you the first time. And then give time for them to comprehend. Come prepared, plan to be kind and practice your message before you get there. Then give invitation and allow space for the person to ask questions and process the message.

could contribute to the solution, rather than pointing the finger to others. Believing they had all control over themselves and not worrying about others, or things they couldn’t control, gave them strength and confidence to continue to seek solutions and make things better within their context, within their lives. I learned that these leaders spent time developing mission

and vision statements for themselves and their work, which helped them stay dedicated and focused. They spent time dealing with their past, their mentors, friends, teachers and family members who grew them, and they continuously thought about the positive characteristics of those people they wished to emulate. These great leaders never stopped in their endless journey of knowing and caring for themselves.

IMPACT

The effects of using productive strategies in difficult conversations are numerous. Being able to embrace the sound of another person’s voice, finding real interest in their message and as they are talking, searching for value and emotion goes a long way. As a family member, a

leader and a listener, it is liberating and brings a sense of connection and joy. At the same time, practicing the knack of delivering tough messages with care and clarity has kept me from worrying in anticipation of a difficult meeting. And these effects have benefited me greatly in work and in life. And while they give me confidence and strength, there is something else I learned I must do to stay grounded and feel success. By finding my own purpose and meaning, understanding the strengths I have to leverage, knowing

how people view me, realizing how I have come to be in the way that I am, knowing the status of my own wellness and self-care and truly embracing those many hundreds of things in life that I control and releasing the things I cannot, I have found my peace. So, as you think about moving from messy to meaningful when it comes to hard conversations, remember to listen, take time to be clear and compassionate and also take time for yourself.



Dr. Patty Corum is an educational consultant and trainer who works with school administrators in various areas of leadership, development and effective communication. Since 2014, Patty has worked with over 40 school districts and universities in Missouri and South Carolina. Dr. Corum’s sessions include learning and practicing difficult yet meaningful conversations, conducting skillful observations and providing effective feedback and self-awareness.

Along with consulting work, Dr. Corum has served as the Executive Director of the Missouri Association of School Personnel Administrators (MOASPA) for ten years, and works with Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in various projects related to leadership development.

Prior to 2014, Patty served twenty-eight years in public education as a teacher, principal, assistant superintendent for human resources and deputy superintendent. She has lived and worked in Missouri her entire life and continues to strive to provide educational leaders and aspiring leaders with the skills and the confidence to effectively serve others while taking care of themselves.

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COMPONENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS AND PERSONNEL BUY-IN

by Dr. Julie R. Williams, Deputy Superintendent, Fayetteville Public Schools, Fayetteville, AR

Fayetteville, located in northwest Arkansas, has a rich history dating back to its founding in 1828. Renamed from Washington to Fayetteville in 1829, the city has recently garnered recognition for its commitment to sustainability and environmental conservation. Fayetteville has implemented numerous initiatives promoting sustainability, including recycling programs, energy efficiency measures and alternative transportation options like bike lanes and public transit.



As a school leader, how do we get our staff to embrace environmental conservation? Getting school staff to buy into sustainability involves a combination of education, motivation and practical strategies. Sustainability occurs through a partnership between school district leaders, the community, the city and local architects and construction companies. Foremost, the school administration and board of education must be willing to integrate sustainability into the district's mission, vision and policies. Further, establishing a sustainability committee that includes administrators, community members and staff to oversee and promote green initiatives ensures additional buy-in of preservation efforts. Fayetteville has implemented waste reduction and recycling programs,

involving students, staff and community partners. AP Environmental students spearhead projects which produce visible changes in decreasing food waste. Several elementary and middle schools are involved as well. Uneaten fries, fruit peels and other food scraps from Fayetteville school lunches are getting composted instead of landfilled. Initiatives like composting, recycling and waste diversion help minimize landfill waste and promote environmental stewardship.

The Fayetteville Public School District, serving over 10,000 students, has been a leader in promoting Net Zero sustainability practices in its architectural planning and construction as well. The newest school buildings are designed to meet rigorous sustainability standards, producing as much energy as they consume annually. The district's leadership emphasizes energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, passive design strategies, water efficiency, healthy indoor environments, sustainable materials and educational opportunities both inside and outside the classroom. By enlisting outdoor education specialists and sustainable architectural experts, the district adheres to green building standards and pursues LEED certification. These standards ensure new constructions and renovations meet strict criteria for energy efficiency, indoor air quality and water conservation.

The district has embraced solar energy, retrofit lighting and HVAC systems, and adopted energy-efficient appliances. The integration of two solar farms has significantly reduced fossil fuel reliance and carbon emissions. There is increased focus on outdoor learning spaces and green infrastructure on school grounds. These areas enhance biodiversity and serve as educational resources, featuring native plant gardens, rain gardens and outdoor classrooms for students to engage with ecological concepts firsthand. One of the primary advantages of outdoor learning spaces is their contribution to enhanced educational outcomes. Ernst and Monroe (2021) found that environment-based education significantly improves students' critical thinking skills and their disposition towards critical thinking. By integrating natural settings into the learning process, students can experience a more dynamic and engaging education, fostering deeper understanding and retention of subject matter.

Outdoor learning spaces also promote social development and cohesion among students. Becker et al. (2017) conducted a systematic review revealing that regular classes in outdoor settings enhance students' social skills, cooperation and teamwork. These environments provide unique opportunities for students to interact and



“Research demonstrated that schools with dedicated outdoor learning spaces observed sustained improvements in student engagement, motivation and behavior.”

collaborate in ways that traditional classroom settings may not support, thereby improving their social competencies and relationships. Rickinson et al. (2021) emphasized the holistic development supported by outdoor learning spaces in their systematic review of schools’ use of these environments. Their findings suggest that outdoor learning spaces facilitate not only cognitive and academic growth but also emotional, social and physical development. This holistic approach to education prepares students for a well-rounded and balanced life.

The long-term benefits of outdoor learning spaces are further supported by Waite et al. (2020), who reported on the Natural Connections Demonstration Project. Their research demonstrated that schools with dedicated outdoor learning spaces observed sustained improvements in student engagement, motivation and behavior. These spaces serve as versatile resources that can be integrated into various aspects of the curriculum, offering lasting educational advantages.

The district has also shifted focus to the use of mass timber as a sustainable construction material due to its environmental benefits. Utilizing engineered wood products like cross-laminated timber (CLT), mass timber offers a renewable alternative to traditional construction materials such as steel and concrete, which have higher carbon footprints. Mass timber’s primary advantage lies in its ability to sequester carbon. Trees absorb carbon dioxide

during growth, storing carbon within the wood even after it is harvested and used in construction. This characteristic helps mitigate climate change by reducing the overall amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (Gustavsson et al., 2010). Additionally, mass timber production generates fewer greenhouse gas emissions compared to the manufacturing processes of steel and concrete (Mahapatra & Gustavsson, 2008).

The energy required to produce mass timber is significantly lower than that for steel and concrete. Mass timber buildings also benefit from improved insulation properties, enhancing energy efficiency and reducing heating and cooling demands (Smith et al., 2015). Moreover, advancements in precision manufacturing reduce material waste, making mass timber a more resource-efficient choice. Mass timber demonstrates robust structural performance, capable of bearing heavy loads and providing substantial fire resistance. CLT panels char on the outside when exposed to fire, protecting the inner layers and maintaining structural integrity longer than unprotected steel (Green & Karsh, 2012). This characteristic, along with rigorous testing and code compliance, ensures that mass timber buildings meet safety standards.

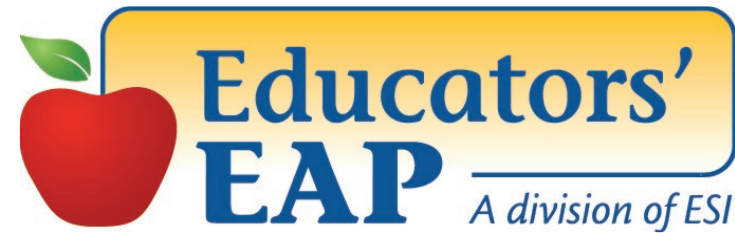
The adoption of mass timber in construction, combined with the integration of outdoor learning spaces and solar energy, married with reduction in food waste and recycling presents a compelling case for stakeholders to embrace changes in operations. As research continues to validate the positive impacts, it becomes increasingly clear that integrating sustainability practices into education is essential for fostering well-rounded and resilient learners.



Dr. Williams has served as a classroom teacher, school administrator and university professor over the last 34 years. After retiring in Missouri, she traveled to Fayetteville, Arkansas, which she describes as “the promised land”. In her

role as Deputy Superintendent there, she governs operations and maintenance as well as oversees fiscal and human resource responsibilities.

Williams’ interest in sustainability kicked into high gear with her move to Northwest Arkansas which has a remarkable support base for zero waste energy efficiency. The district’s partnership with local construction and architectural experts has allowed the vision of minimizing the district’s footprint to become a reality.



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BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR LEADERS

by Christine Owens, Chief Development Officer for South Carolina Learns, Greenville, SC

“Sam has been out for three weeks with some kind of illness. Do you need any other information from me?”

“We’re ready to terminate Robin. We keep having issues with them...no, we don’t have anything written down about the issues.”

Do these sound familiar? We as HR professionals can surely recount several instances where a leader approached us with a problem we wished we knew about sooner. Our mind formulates responses: “How could you let someone be out for three weeks without telling me?” “Why didn’t you document anything?” The real question HR professionals should ask: “Was this leader trained how to manage people?”

THE REALITY OF MANAGEMENT

Research from CEB Global from 2023 shows that, on average, 60% of new leaders fail early in their tenure. A new leader who is having trouble transitioning in their new role has an effect on both their team and the organization. Gartner found that the direct reports of poorly performing leaders perform 15% worse and poor leaders are 20% more likely to leave or be disengaged.

Why do new leaders fail? One possible explanation is the lack of preparation for the people management side of what they do. In the bestseller *Dare to Lead*, Brene Brown recounts a session she had with a group of rocket scientists. They were very smart individuals who knew their jobs very well. During a break, one of the leaders approached her and mused that landing a person on the moon was easier than managing people. Perhaps a little hyperbolic, but there is a grain of reality in this that a lot of our school leaders, especially new leaders, face. We as HR professionals can play an important role as a partner in the training and development of leaders.

BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

The HR field covers a vast amount of areas, and we should consider training leaders on the HR topics they will encounter as a people manager. While they may not need to know all about talent acquisition strategies or compensation benchmarking, they do need to have a basic understanding of FMLA and accommodations through a manager’s lens as well as understanding of documentation and progressive discipline, for example. Last school year, we held a series of sessions with our school leaders on topics ranging from FMLA to interviewing best practices. We even tackled best practices around using AI in day-to-day management tasks. The key is to distill these topics

into the relevant knowledge for non-HR leaders. For example, we did not deep dive into FMLA; we discussed the overall process of how an FMLA request turns into approved leave and how managers can recognize a potential FMLA situation so they can alert our department in a timely manner.

Training on proper documentation of performance concerns can be a challenge for new leaders who now supervise people with whom they were formerly peers; even those who have been leaders for years struggle with documentation. Leader training in this realm includes explaining the importance of documentation and when to contact HR for advice on next steps. We have also created a template for leaders to use for proper documentation so we can minimize delays and roadblocks when addressing a performance issue. When a performance issue comes to HR, some of our first questions may be, “What kind of training did this employee receive on this topic? Were the expectations clearly communicated?” Similarly, we need to train leaders on what our expectations are for documentation and other fundamental matters in people management.

FRAMING LEADERSHIP

We have the foundation set for our leaders, so how do we take the next steps to build leadership skills?

As with any training program we should begin with a needs assessment—where are our leaders proficient? Where can they improve or what do they want to strengthen? What skills are essential in our school’s culture? One failure of leadership training programs is to assume what is needed and to create a program solely based on what we think

they should learn. While that can be an important element of training, we should also ask our school leaders what they want to learn. You may be surprised to find there may be a hunger for what you would consider basic leadership skills.

Remember that you do not have to shoulder the creation of leadership training from scratch! We have had success with leadership book studies and are exploring short-form leadership studies for this year. In addition, we should be observant during our interactions with leadership. When we experience those frustrating “they should know that!” interactions, we need to take a step back. Should that person have known that? Did we explain this procedure to them and document that procedure for easy access later? Is this something we should consider adding to our leadership framework for all leaders? After a year of leadership training sessions in our organization, we have noticed leaders having more confidence in difficult conversations with staff.

FINISHING TOUCHES

You have the essential elements of training leaders, so how do you turn those elements into a training program?

First, identify how you will define your leader cohorts. You should have a plan for new leader training separate from the task-related training they are receiving from their own supervisor. Why should HR take ownership of this people management training? We should be able to trust current leaders to train new leaders on how to manage their staff, but we should also seek consistency in that training. After all, we can probably all name a leader we have worked with who fell into bad people management habits. Creating a new leader cohort training ensures those new leaders are hearing directly from us about best practices.

Speaking of current leaders, they benefit from continuing people leadership training as well! Whether they are getting training on evergreen topics or receiving training on a new law that may impact their staff, we should not neglect the ongoing need to refresh our school leaders as part of their continuing education so we can make the HR job just a little bit easier.



Christine Owens is the Chief Development Officer for South Carolina Learns, a nonprofit that oversees operations for Cyber Academy of South Carolina and Heron Virtual Academy. Her work focuses on staff and leadership development as well as communications for both schools.

Prior to moving into the education sector, she was a human resources and operations professional in the private sector. She holds a master's in business administration as well as the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) certification and is a SHRM Certified Professional (SHRM-CP).



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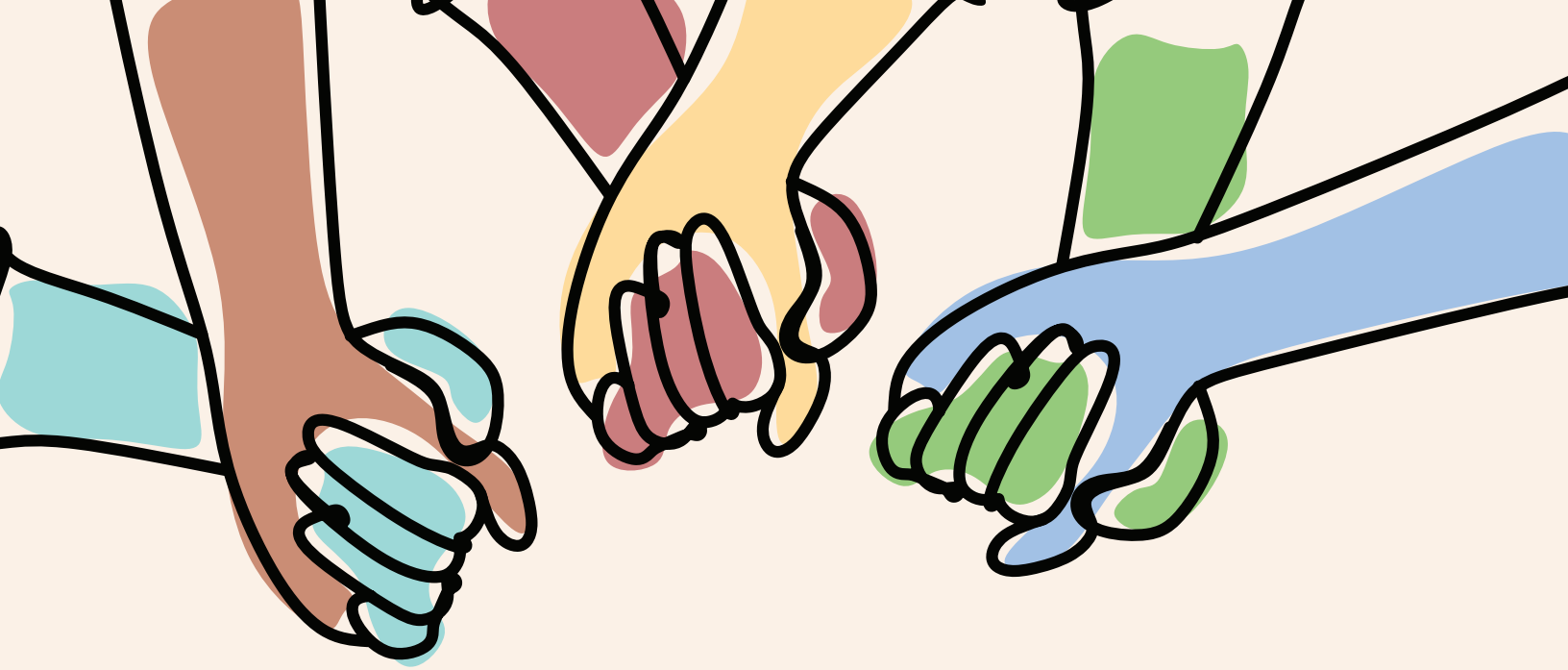


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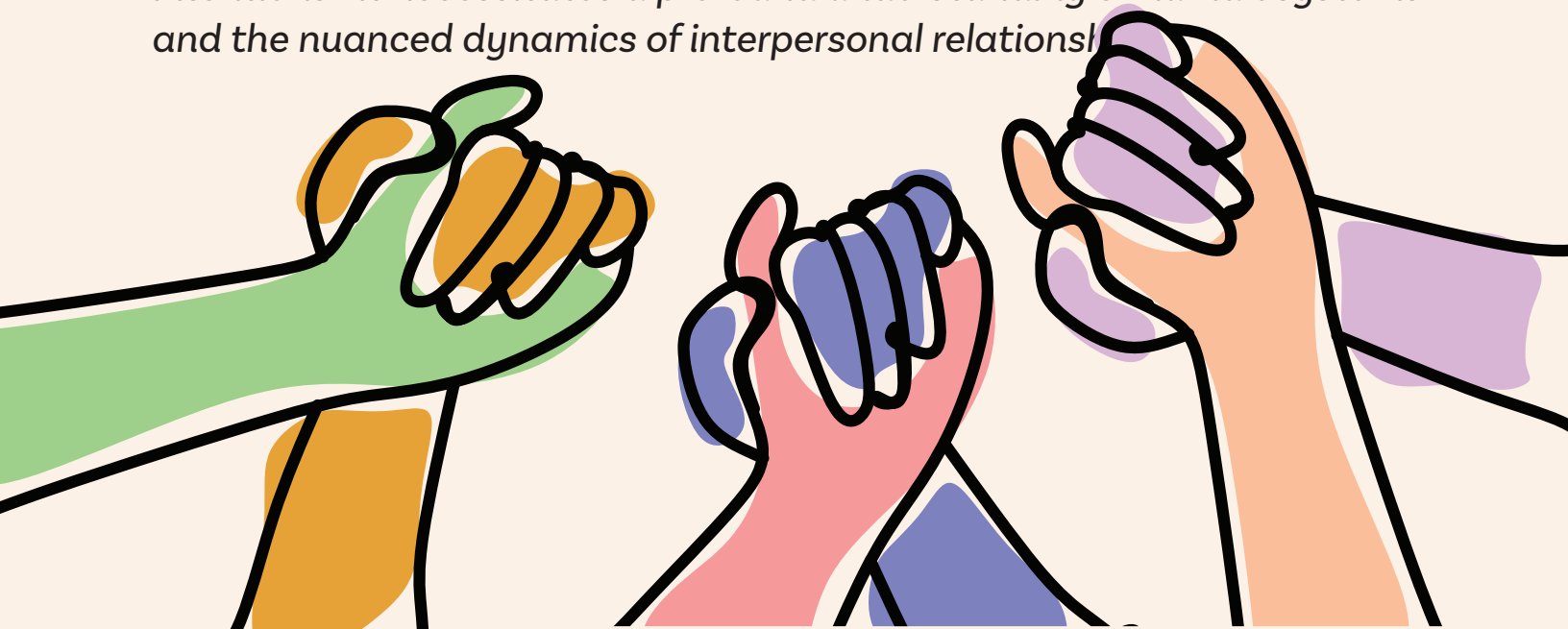
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NAVIGATING THE COMPLEXITY OF EQUITY WORK IN HUMAN SYSTEMS

by Dr. Zinnia Un, Director of Equity & Inclusion, Tigard-Tualatin School District, Tigard, OR

In my 22-year journey through various educational roles, culminating as the Director of Equity and Inclusion in a mid-sized school district, I have been responsible for developing policies, guidelines and systems to ensure equitable outcomes. This complex task extends beyond mere good intentions—it necessitates a profound understanding of human systems and the nuanced dynamics of interpersonal relationships.



As a budding phenomenologist, I've delved into how advancing equity involves grappling with the complexities of individual identities and systemic practices. This article explores conceptual frameworks and reflections on practicing transformational change, sharing insights from a recent study I conducted on equitable educational decision-making by ten white educational leaders.

Organizations are fundamentally human systems characterized by interactions and relationships that influence their functionality and culture. Transformational change refers to shifts beyond superficial adjustments, targeting the core dynamics of how individuals relate to and support one another. Change often meets resistance, misunderstanding or apathy—not from malice but from comfort with familiar processes and fear of the unknown. Acknowledging this complexity is the first step in navigating it effectively. By recognizing that organizations consist of individuals with unique trajectories and mindsets, leaders can approach change management with empathy and strategic insight.

The study revealed common experiential themes essential for transformational change, including facilitating participatory decision-making processes, leading teams, departments or initiatives and facilitating accountability processes for practice. A mindset of "Progress over Perfection" in actions for equity was also identified. Educational leaders recognized these areas as crucial in facilitating change, from implementing new anti-bias policies to enhancing professional development and team dynamics.

In my role, I've focused on bringing diverse communities together with clear objectives, emphasizing the equity of

voice and participation. These processes are meticulously designed to be mission-oriented and accessible, ensuring that every participant can contribute meaningfully. For instance, we've implemented specific training modules on conflict management and consensus building, significantly improving our decision-making processes.

Effective leadership in equity involves fostering a collaborative, people-oriented and inclusive decision-making environment. The study revealed that establishing clear, mission-aligned objectives was crucial. Leaders shared how this alignment helped implement significant policy changes and leadership strategies that promoted equitable outcomes.

Accountability is critical in ensuring that equity practices are proposed, actively implemented and refined. We have established protocols that make every process inclusive and continuously reviewed for effectiveness. This approach has led to noticeable organizational behavior changes, aligning daily operations more closely with our equity goals. The "Progress over Perfection" philosophy has reshaped our approach to equity actions. We've fostered an organizational culture that embraces sustainable equity by focusing on continuous improvement. We implement protocols encouraging collaborative work and equitable outcomes, which evolve based on regular feedback and iterative learning processes.

When leading organizational change, it is vital to guide clearly with a well-developed mission and vision. This involves setting conditions for meaningful work to facilitate change. People need time to understand and process how they fit into the collective change, seeing how this work will benefit them personally and professionally. They also require support to acquire the necessary skills and to build a global understanding of how their efforts co-construct congruent plans across our system.

Participants described a humanizing process at the individual level, often recognizing their privileges and biases for the first time. This acknowledgment led to learning and growing, moving beyond shame, blame or immobilization to a newfound sense of responsibility, efficacy and skills necessary for transformational change.

Over the last two decades of supporting transformational change, I noticed that individuals typically assume one of four roles in organizational change: Heroes, Healers, Helpers and Hecklers. Each role influences

What Does Equitable Decision-Making Look Like?

Developed by @Dr.Z_Un (June, 2023)

- 01 Facilitating Participatory Decision-making Processes**
 - Bring diverse communities together with clear objectives for work aligned with mission and vision of practice
 - Ensure the process is mission-oriented and protocols for equity of voice and participation are present.
 - Process is accessible and inclusive
 - Skills for conflict management and consensus building
- 02 Leading Teams, Departments, or Initiatives**
 - Bring diverse communities together to make collaborative decisions
 - Ensure the process is people-oriented and protocols for equity of voice are present.
 - Process is accessible and inclusive
 - Skills for conflict management and consensus building
- 03 Facilitating Meetings and Trainings**
 - Ensure the process is mission-oriented and protocols for equity of voice and participation are present
 - Process is accessible and inclusive
 - Skills for conflict management and consensus building
 - Facilitation skills for leading critical reflection of practice, behavior change, and continuous improvement
- 04 Facilitating Accountability Processes for Practice**
 - Ensure the process is mission-oriented and protocols for equity of voice and participation are present.
 - Process is accessible and inclusive
 - Skills for conflict management and consensus building
 - Facilitation skills for leading critical reflection of practice, and behavior change

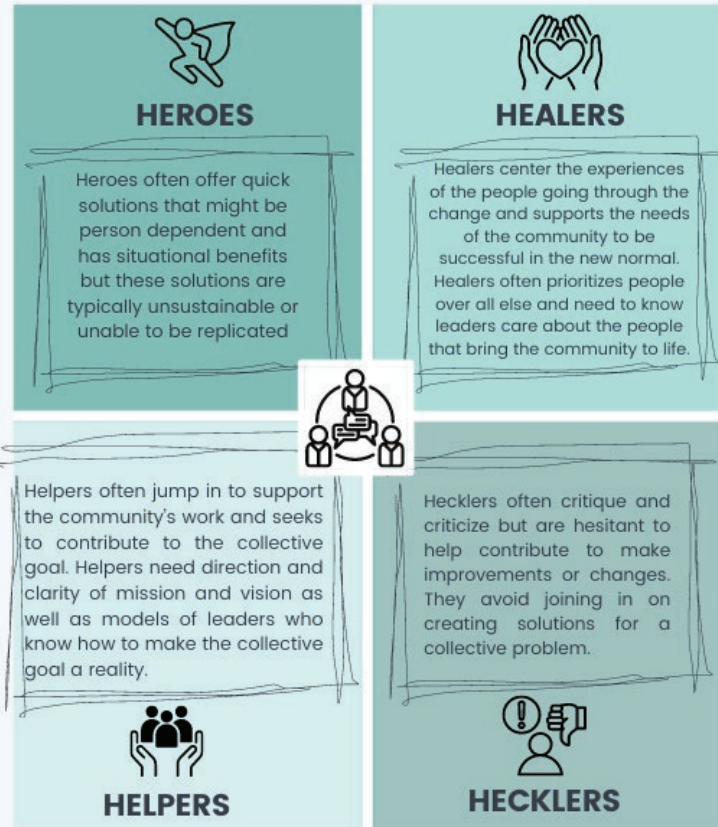


Leading for Change

LEADING AND HOSTING WORK FOR CHANGE

THE ROLES WE PLAY WHEN GOING THROUGH CHANGE PROCESSES

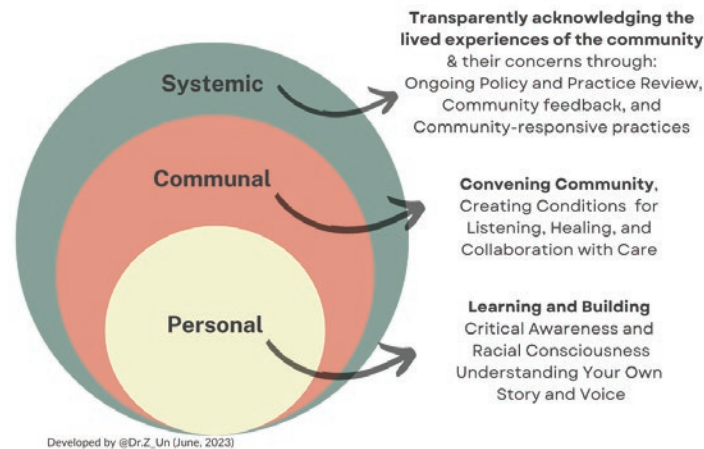
WHO ARE YOU DURING TIMES OF CHANGE?



Dr. Zinnia Un, Ed.D., is dedicated to advancing educational equity in Oregon. As the Director of Equity and Inclusion at a mid-sized school district, she collaboratively develops significant equity initiatives and supports culturally responsive practices.

Dr. Un earned her Doctorate in Education from Portland State University, focusing her research on equitable decision-making among educational leaders. She also serves on the Equity Board of the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators. She also teaches at Portland State University, where she helps nurture future leaders in integrating equity into educational systems as an adjunct instructor.

Levels of Humanizing Decision-Making Process



the transformation process differently, from providing quick fixes to prioritizing emotional well-being, actively engaging in support work, or critically assessing existing processes. This discourse scaffold can be used to critically reflect on how we all contribute to the success of change management. At the communal level, leaders used protocols to foster spaces where staff and participants felt safe to take risks, communicate honestly and develop critical consciousness. This approach made decision-making culturally and community-responsive, sustainable and intertwined with a commitment to supporting those historically marginalized by the educational system.

At the systemic level, participants highlighted the creation of policies and strategic plans developed through deep community engagement centered on the lived experiences of racially, culturally, linguistically and neurodiverse students and families. This focus on setting conditions to center relationships and partnerships supported leaders in creating a just and responsive educational system.

Phenomenology bridges the gap between abstract concepts of equity and tangible organizational realities. Studying experiences from a first-person point of view simplifies complex ideas to make them accessible and actionable. My study involving white equity practitioners revealed critical components of equitable decision-making, including collaborative decision-making, mission-oriented processes, accessible and inclusive procedures, conflict management, consensus building and critical reflection and behavior change facilitation. These practices foster an environment that aligns with organizational values of diversity and inclusion.

Equity work is dynamic and requires ongoing effort and adaptation. Understanding the complexities of human systems through phenomenological tools can help organizations foster environments where true equity is achievable. As we move forward, we must commit to active contributions to change, ensuring our actions align with our diversity, inclusion and equity values.

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| • Meals | |
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EVENING EVENTS



REGIONAL MEET & GREET

Tuesday, October 15 | 4:15pm - 5:15pm | Westin Seattle

Join us for our Regional Meet & Greet, where you can connect with your region representatives, network with fellow professionals and meet colleagues from your region. Don't miss your chance to win fantastic prizes while mingling and making valuable connections!

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FIRST-TIME ATTENDEE RECEPTION

Tuesday, October 15 | 5:30pm - 6:30pm | Westin Seattle

Is this your first AASPA conference? Join us for the First-Time Attendee Reception where you will have the opportunity to meet new people as well as members of the AASPA Executive Board and Staff. Head to aaspaconference.com to sign up for our First-Time Attendee Webinar where our Meetings Coordinator, Emily Kennedy, will share helpful tips and tricks to make your first AASPA conference a success!

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WELCOME RECEPTION

Tuesday, October 15 | 7:00pm - 10:00pm | Space Needle

Join us at the iconic Seattle Space Needle for a memorable Welcome Reception to kick off our 86th Annual Conference, featuring stunning views, light dinner, drinks, music and an evening of fun! This evening promises to be a perfect blend of networking and relaxation as we gather to celebrate the start of a great Conference. Transportation will be provided.

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EXHIBIT HALL RECEPTION

Wednesday, October 16 | 4:30pm - 6:00pm | Westin Seattle

Don't miss the Exhibit Hall Reception, where you can connect with over 70 companies showcasing innovative products and services tailored for school HR professionals. Enjoy drinks and light appetizers as you explore the latest industry trends. Don't miss this opportunity to discover new solutions to enhance your district's success!

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COMEDY & CONNECTIONS

Wednesday, October 16 | 7:00pm - 10:00pm

Get ready for an exciting evening, where a light dinner pairs perfectly with a comedy show, guaranteed to make you laugh. This reception promises to tickle your funny bone and your taste buds, wrapping up the day with food, fun and laughter. Transportation will be provided.

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2025 CONFERENCE KICKOFF PARTY

Thursday, October 17 | 4:30pm - 6:00pm | Westin Seattle

You don't want to miss our 2025 Conference Kickoff party as we unveil the location of AASPA's 87th Annual Conference. Join us for drinks, light appetizers and a few surprises as we celebrate and gear up for next year's spectacular event. Don't miss out on the fun!

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DEI/EMPOWERED RECEPTION

Thursday, October 17 | 7:00pm - 10:00pm

Step into a celebration, where diverse educators take center stage for an unforgettable evening. Enjoy a symphony of sounds with lively music, dancing, a light dinner and refreshing drinks as we honor the diverse contributions in education. All are invited to attend! Transportation will be provided.

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AGENDA AT A GLANCE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 15

9:00am - 12:00pm AM Pre-Conference Workshops
 1:00pm - 4:00pm PM Pre-Conference Workshops
 4:15pm - 5:15pm Regional Meet & Greet
 5:30pm - 6:30pm First Time Attendee Reception
 7:00pm - 10:00pm Welcome Reception at the Seattle Space Needle

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16

7:00am - 8:00am Breakfast Available
 8:00am - 9:30am General Session: Opening Ceremony & Keynote Manley Feinberg II
 9:30am - 4:30pm Exhibit Hall Open (Closed During Lunch)
 10:30am - 12:00pm Clinic & Ignite Sessions
 12:00pm - 1:45pm Lunch on Own (Giftcard provided by AASPA)
 1:45pm - 2:45pm Clinic & Ignite Sessions
 3:30pm - 4:30pm Community Conversations
 3:30pm - 4:30pm Solution Showcase
 4:30pm - 6:00pm Exhibit Hall Reception
 7:00pm - 10:00pm Wednesday Night Reception

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17

7:00am - 8:00am Breakfast Available
 8:00am - 9:30am General Session: Keynote - Theresa Fesinstine
 9:30am - 12:00pm Exhibit Hall Open
 10:15am - 11:15am Clinic & Ignite Sessions
 11:15am - 12:00pm Exhibit Hall Closing & Grand Prize Drawing
 12:00pm - 1:30pm Lunch on Own or Join ESS/Proximity Learning
 1:30pm - 4:15pm Clinic & Ignite Sessions
 4:30pm - 6:00pm 2025 Conference Kickoff Party
 7:00pm - 10:00pm DEI/EmpowerED Reception

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18

7:00am - 8:00am Breakfast Buffet Available
 8:00am - 10:45am Clinic & Ignite Sessions
 11:00am - 12:15pm General Session: Closing Ceremony & Keynote Tony Chatman

Register today at
www.aaspaconference.com

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16

Manley Feinberg II



In this session Manley Feinberg II inspires participants to step up in a new way to overcome resistance and reach higher than ever by cultivating Exponential Commitment in themselves and those around them. Participants will learn essential Vertical Lessons for deepening their commitment, building momentum and achieving breakthroughs in even the most challenging circumstances.

Sponsored by: **TEACHERS OF TOMORROW**



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17

Theresa Fesinstine



In this interactive session, Theresa Fesinstine will guide senior HR leaders through the essentials of AI adoption, focusing on practical applications, strategic integration and the pivotal role of HR in leading this transformation. Attendees will gain valuable insights into leveraging AI to enhance employee engagement, streamline operations and foster a people-first culture.

Sponsored by:



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18

Tony Chatman



In "Deliberately Leading Through the Disruption of Change," Tony will share captivating stories from the field and the very latest in organizational and psychological research to show your leaders how to turn the resistance of people stuck in their comfort zone into enthusiastic buy-in and how to transform change and disruption into greater innovation, higher efficiency, a better customer experience, new market offerings and increased talent retention and attraction.

PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Tuesday, October 15

Go in-depth, learn more and expand your skills in our targeted Pre-Conference Workshops.

MORNING SESSIONS
9:00am - 12:00pm

- 1. Systems Change through Storytelling**
Presented by Sara Baker, Sarah Semroc, Cathy Kim & Michaela Raikes
- 2. Investigations and Documentation of Employee Misconduct**
Presented by Richard Verstegen
- 3. From Shortages to Solutions: Building the Educator Workforce**
Presented by Emily Douglas-McNab & Dr. Kate Heynoski
- 4. Exploring Leadership Dynamics: Strategies for a Thriving Work Environment**
Presented by Flor Perry
- 5. People Matter: A Playbook for Implementing DEI Practices that Grow Pipelines and Foster Belonging**
Presented by Nathifa Carmichael
- 6. FMLA, ADA and Workers' Compensation: Untangling the Spider Web, Legal Update and Best Practices in Leave Administration**
Presented by Scott Macdonald

*Pre-Conference sessions are included with the ALL Access Package Registration. However, they can be purchased A La Carte as well. For a complete description of the Pre-Conference Workshops go to <https://www.aaspaconference.com/pre-conference-sessions>

AFTERNOON SESSIONS
1:00pm - 4:00pm

- 7. Navigating Employee Discipline: Legal Considerations in a Complex Landscape**
Presented by Sam Chalfant, Sarah Mack & Curtis Leonard
- 8. Righting the Ship without Rocking the Boat: Writing Effective Communications that Document, Correct and Support**
Presented by Philip Georgia & Gabe Cappozzo
- 9. Get Your Training On! Required Training Under the New Title IX Rules**
Presented by Jackie Gharapour Wernz
- 10. Thriving Amidst Challenges: Talent Management During a Workforce Shortage**
Presented by Dr. Sara Skretta & Kristen Finley
- 11. An Urgent Need to Improve Diverse Educator Retention: Addressing Historical Failures and Building Inclusive Solutions**
Presented by Tanya Dallas Lewis
- 12. I've Got 99 Problems, But Substitutes Ain't One!**
Presented by Jamie West, Andy Moore & Tina Limner



6 Tips

to Get the Most Out of Conference

By Emily Kennedy, Meetings Coordinator, AASPA; Overland Park, KS

With AASPA's 86th Annual Conference just around the corner, it's time to get excited and prepare for an amazing experience! Whether you're a conference pro or this is your first time, these tips will help you make the most of your time in Seattle and #CreateConnections.



With over 100 breakouts, pre-conference and keynote sessions, choosing the right sessions can be overwhelming.



Sessions

Before you join us, take some time to review all available sessions at www.aaspaconference.com/ program and select those that best meet your needs. Our mobile app is also a great tool to help you explore sessions and plan your schedule for the week. All sessions align with the Human Capital Leaders in Education (HCLE) Standards and are eligible for recertification credits from SHRM, HRCI and pHCLE. Our expert speakers are sure to leave you with actionable ideas and strategies for your district. If you miss a session, don't worry—materials from our clinic & ignite sessions will be available in the app.



Networking

One of the best parts of the AASPA conference is the chance to meet and mingle with fellow attendees. With five evening events and lots of daytime networking opportunities, you'll have plenty of chances to make connections that will benefit you long after the Conference ends. Many past attendees say that the friendships and professional contacts they make are the highlights of their experience. Aim to leave Seattle with at least one new connection and don't forget to pack those business cards! Evening event tickets are included with all of our package registrations.



Be Adaptable

This year's Annual Conference was originally planned for 2020 when our association was a bit smaller. Since then, we have experienced tremendous growth, which has brought us to an exciting crossroad. Our growth means that things might look a bit different this year. But rest assured, different is good! It means we're evolving, expanding and becoming an even stronger community of school HR leaders. The AASPA staff has embraced this challenge with creativity and innovation and we're excited to share the new features we've incorporated to make the space work beautifully for our Conference.

One of my biggest conference tips would be to make sure you utilize the conference mobile app. It's your go-to for everything from session descriptions to speaker info and handouts. The app also has maps, menus and a handy "My Schedule" feature to help you plan your days. You can even connect with other attendees, share schedules and request appointments. Make sure your notifications are turned on so you stay up-to-date with all the latest news and updates.



Technology



Weather

Seattle's weather can be a bit unpredictable, with cool temps and the occasional drizzle. Be sure to pack an umbrella and a sweater or light jacket to stay cozy in cool meeting spaces. And comfortable shoes are a must—you'll be doing quite a bit of walking between sessions and exploring the Exhibit Halls.



Exhibit Hall

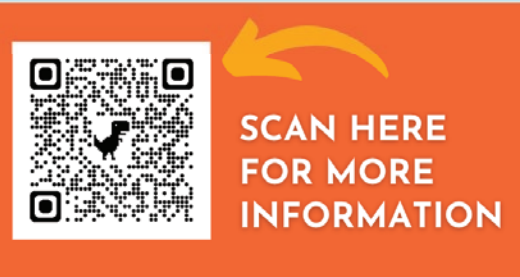
The AASPA Exhibit Halls are packed with innovative tools and technology designed to streamline your district's operations and give you more time to focus on what you love about your job. Our exhibitors are some of the best in the biz and are excited to show you what they've got. With over 70 companies to visit across two rooms, you'll want to make sure you have enough time to check them all out. And don't miss the Exhibit Hall Reception—you might just walk away with an awesome prize!

We're thrilled about the unique experience this Conference will offer and can't wait to see you in a few months. While our sessions and speakers are exceptional, the connections you make and the impact you create are equally important. Embrace the powerful community this conference fosters and be sure to say hello to the AASPA staff. Get ready to #CreateConnections!

ELITE SPONSORS



Upcoming Events



GET INVOLVED

AASPA wants 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 with your national association.



THINGS TO DO!

- Present a webinar
- Write an article, blog or book review
- Co-host our podcast
- Speak at a small meeting or annual conference

Professional Human Capital Leader in Education (pHCLE) Learning Opportunities

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. The professional-level standards outline the competencies that leaders in PK-12 and related organizations need to strategically manage human capital processes at the department, team or individual level.

For more information contact kelly@aspa.org



2024 pHCLE Virtual Class Schedules/Times:

- September 24 - November 12 (Tues 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm ET)
- January 23 - March 6, 2025 (Thurs. 12:30 pm - 2:00 pm ET)
- July 10 - August 21, 2025 (Thurs. 11:00 am - 12:30 pm ET)
- September 23 - November 11, 2025 (Tues. 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm ET)
- Class time: 90 Minutes

Upcoming pHCLE Testing Windows:

* November 15 - December 5, 2024 (Registration Deadline: November 8)

2025 Testing Windows:

- * January 10-31, 2025
- * March 10-31, 2025
- * June 10-30, 2025
- * October 20 - November 21, 2025



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