

Session Titles and Descriptions
AASPA 2025 VRROOM Summit | Virtual
Thursday, February 20 - Onboarding, Orientation & Mentoring
(All sessions will be presented in CST.)

Deep Dive into the Orientation Ocean

Experience Management, Talent Acquisition, Onboarding & Orientation

Presented by Jamie West, Instructional Recruitment Partner, Lake County Schools, Tavares, FL

Having trouble navigating the chaotic waters of the Orientation Ocean? Learn how to comfortably address all necessary topics, but also the content your new employees want to hear. All aboard!

Developing a Mentor Program for Emergency Certified Teachers

Experience Management, Talent Development, Training & Development

Presented by Douglas Taylor, Director of Human Resources, Macon County Public Schools, Tuskegee, AL

This 1-hour session aims to equip participants with a comprehensive understanding of the key steps involved in implementing a successful mentor program that will support teachers working under emergency certifications. Participants will learn about the importance of mentorship in supporting new teachers and gain insight into effective mentor selection and training strategies. The webinar will discuss how to establish clear program goals and objectives, develop a mentor-mentee matching process, and create a supportive and collaborative environment for participants. Additionally, participants will explore methods for ongoing program evaluation and refinement to support school system goals and objectives.

Driving Success Through Onboarding

Experience Management, Talent Acquisition, Onboarding & Orientation

Presented by Quiana Peterson, Instructional Recruitment Partner, Lake County Schools, Tavares, FL

What can the movie franchise “Fast & Furious” teach us about onboarding? You’re about to find out. This session will race through the four main steps of onboarding and drift into resources available to help new hires succeed. Then we’ll cruise through some ideas on how to make new employees feel valued and excited about joining the team. This session will cover approaches for instructional and internal staff.

Empowering Educators: Transformative Strategies for Effective Teacher Mentoring

Experience Management, Talent Development, Training & Development

Presented by Jodie Graham, Executive Director of Human Resources, Ankeny Community School District, Ankeny, IA

Supporting new teachers is critical to fostering professional growth, increasing retention, and ensuring job satisfaction. This session will equip participants with strategies that are innovative and research-based to foster professional growth and development for new teachers, ultimately increasing retention and job satisfaction. In this session Jodie Graham will:

- Share a range of transformative mentoring strategies, including peer coaching, reflective practices, and tailored feedback techniques that foster professional growth for new teachers.
- Share explicit examples of how building supportive, and trusting relationships with mentees, focused on social and emotional development, active listening, goal-setting, and constructive feedback has enhanced our new teacher acclimation and experience.
- Highlight the importance of a collaborative, community-driven approach to mentoring that encourages mutual learning and shared responsibility for growth.

Mental Mentor: Doing Leadership as a Developer of Talent

Experience Management, Talent Development, Training & Development

Presented by Kirk Koennecke, Superintendent, Indian Hill Exempted Village School District, Cincinnati, OH

Participants will learn about the distinct methods necessary to grow mentoring skills for others through interactive dialogue and activities in this virtual session.

Onboarding – There’s No Place Like Home!

Experience Management, Talent Acquisition, Onboarding & Orientation

Presented by Gretchen Lawn, Consultant, Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio, Independence, OH

We all know the difference between a house and a home. A successful and comprehensive onboarding program should help to make ‘Work’ not feel like a place or a building, but somewhere with feeling, emotion and value that contributes to a person’s life. Ready to learn more and put in the work? It isn’t going to be easy, as change never is. But by focusing on designing support systems for both Classified and Certified new staff members, we can begin to shift the way our employees view ‘work.’ And maybe, just maybe, we can make it feel more like Home!

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Orientation with Purpose: Embedding Mission, Vision & Culture

Experience Management, Talent Acquisition, Onboarding & Orientation

Presentation by Jennifer Hart, Chief Office of HR & Administration, Aiken County Public School District, Aiken, SC

A well-structured orientation program does more than introduce new employees to policies and procedures—it immerses them in the mission, vision, and culture of your organization. This session will explore strategies for designing an orientation experience that goes beyond logistics, ensuring new hires feel connected, engaged, and aligned with the organization's core values from day one.

Key Takeaways:

1. **Align Orientation with Mission & Vision** – Learn how to integrate your organization's core values into the onboarding process to inspire and motivate new employees.
2. **Create a Culture-First Experience** – Discover ways to immerse new hires in the workplace culture, fostering a sense of belonging and long-term commitment.
3. **Make Orientation Interactive & Impactful** – Explore techniques to engage employees with meaningful activities that reinforce mission-driven work.

Western Dubuque Onboarding and Retention Strategies

Experience Management, Talent Acquisition, Onboarding & Orientation

Presentation by Rick Colpitts, HR Specialist, Kelly Simon, Director of Elementary Education, Jake Feldmann, Director of Secondary Education, and Dr. Dan Butler, Superintendent, Western Dubuque Community Schools, Farley, IA

Better Every Day isn't just a vision statement that hangs on a wall, it is a culture that the Western Dubuque School District has been intentionally working to create for the past eight years. Our district has invested a significant amount of time, talent, treasure in our greatest resource, our people. This work has involved training all staff to be more positive and resilient even when things are very challenging. The work has evolved significantly since it began in 2017, and the impact it has had on our staff and students has been transformative.

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