



2026 Fine Arts Directors Conference

February 9-10
The Kinkaid School

Day 1

February 9 | 7:30 a.m.

Board the bus at The Hilton Post Oak and travel to The Kinkaid School

February 9 | 8:00 – 8:45 a.m.

Conference Check-In at The Kinkaid School and informal networking with coffee and morning snacks

February 9 | 8:45 – 10:45 a.m.

Navigating Conflict in the Arts: Mindful Communication Practices for Difficult Conversations

As arts educators and leaders, we navigate many layers of collaboration — balancing creative visions, shared spaces, complex schedules, and community expectations. Whether we're working with colleagues, administrators, parents, or students, the work of leading in the arts often calls for both diplomacy and care.

This experiential workshop offers mindful communication practices for staying grounded, compassionate, and clear during challenging interactions. Together, we'll explore how our nervous systems respond under stress, and how awareness of those patterns can help us de-escalate tension, stay connected, and communicate with greater intention. Participants will also learn practical language tools for validation, boundary-setting, and repair — skills that support both artistic collaboration and the everyday conversations that shape healthy, creative teams.

Alan Brown, Founder and Principal, Learning to Thrive, LLC

February 9 | 10:45 – 11:15 a.m.

Break



February 9 | 11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

From the Dance Studio to the Playing Field: Juggling Student Schedules

This panel, featuring Fine Arts Directors and Athletic Directors from ISAS schools, explores effective strategies for balancing student involvement in both arts and athletics. Panelists will discuss scheduling challenges, collaborative planning practices, and ways to support students who are deeply committed to multiple areas of school life. Participants will leave with practical approaches for fostering a culture that values the full range of student interests and talents.

Scott Lambert and David Holm, The Kinkaid School

Melinda Williams and Jesse Martin, River Oaks Baptist School

Jennifer Bauer-Conley and Angela Gubitz, The Emery/Weiner School

February 9 | 12:15 – 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

February 9 | 1:00 – 1:45 p.m.

Tour of Fine Arts and Upper School

February 9 | 1:45 – 3:00 p.m.

Session: small group discussions

Content TBD

February 9 | 3:00 – 3:15 p.m.

Break

February 9 | 3:15 – 4:00 p.m.

Hear from Your Peers

Please submit your questions in advance [through this link](#). All questions will be asked of and answered by the group on the day of the conference.

February 9 | 4:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Board bus and return to The Hilton Post Oak



February 9 | 4:30 p.m.

Dinner and evening on your own. There are numerous restaurants within walking distance of the hotel including Rumi's Kitchen, Balboa Surf Club, North Italia, Maggiano's and more.

Day 2

February 10 | 7:30 – 8:00 a.m.

Board bus and travel to The Kinkaid School

February 10 | 8:00 – 8:30 a.m.

Coffee and light snacks at the school

February 10 | 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

A Canvas of Connection: The Evolving Art of Building an Inclusive Visual and Performing Arts Community

This session highlights Kinkaid Visual and Performing Arts' intentional, ongoing journey to embed Belonging and DEI practices throughout the department, creating a community where every student feels seen, valued, and supported. Grounded in identity-conscious training, a unified VPA vision aligned with Kinkaid's mission, and practical tools that shape daily inclusive and equitable practices, our work has continued to evolve over the past three years. We will share key accomplishments, and current priorities organized around five categories of holistic, systemic DEI work, as well as the communication structures that keep our faculty aligned—most notably our annual showcases, which synthesize survey data and provide an overview of our progress each year. These quantitative and qualitative insights ensure that our approach remains responsive and intentional, shaping a VPA program rooted in authenticity, inclusion, and meaningful creative collaboration.

Faculty of The Kinkaid School:

Scott Lambert, Director Visual and Performing Arts

Mujidat Shotonwa, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Anjaly Thakkar, Visual and Performing Arts DEI Lead and Dance Teacher and Choreographer with Dr. Aisha Taylor, PhD., Founder and CEO, Taylor-Made Strategies



February 10 | 9:30 – 9:45 a.m.

Break

February 10 | 9:45 – 11:45 a.m.

Building Identity, Belonging, and Agency Through Artistic Social Emotional Learning

Artistic SEL intentionally embeds life skill development into artistic processes and practices in service of student empowerment to enrich both musical fluency and human development. There is not one prescriptive way or technique to embed SEL into arts education. This session will help guide fine arts supervisors to support educators to better understand their practice and how their classrooms can be a space for rich social and emotional growth through the arts. Strategies to support teachers' social emotional well-being and develop strategies to embed these strategies into their practice will be explored. Participants will engage in learning experiences that facilitate a better understanding of their learning culture, develop routines and mindsets to organically build SEL competencies for their students and themselves, and build strategies that support student/teacher empowerment through the SEL Pillars of Identity, Belonging, and Agency.

The good news is we need to experience these practices ourselves and learning to teach them will also help us learn to support our teachers.

Scott N. Edgar, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Music, Lake Forest College

February 10 | 11:45 a.m.

Adjourned

February 10 | 11:45 a.m.

Bus departs The Kinkaid School for Houston Hobby Airport

(the drive takes 30-35 minutes, depending on traffic)

Speakers

Alan Brown



Alan Brown (he/him) is a resilience educator and coach who works with schools across the country to create cultures of belonging and balance. Alan spent 15 years of experience as a classroom teacher in the humanities and as a high school administrator, including as one of the founding deans of the High School Division at Grace Church School. As a faculty member at Mindful Schools, Alan was architect of multiple training programs and supported thousands of educators to practice and teach mindfulness, and to create programs that support self- and community care.

Alan specializes in working with overwhelm and other extreme nervous system states. He has served as an LGBTQ+ youth crisis counselor with the Trevor Project, and he supports the Tourette Syndrome community as a facilitator of the Tourette Association of America's New York Chapter family and adult support groups. Alan is also the co-developer of MBIT (a Mindfulness-Based Intervention for Tics & Tourette Syndrome), and is currently collaborating with Johns Hopkins Medicine & Bowdoin College on a 5-year NIH-funded clinical trial to improve non-pharmacological treatment options for people with tics.

Alan holds academic degrees in the humanities from Johns Hopkins University and the University of Chicago and was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship of the US State Department in Italy. Alan has completed certifications or advanced trainings in Somatic Experiencing™ Trauma Therapy, mindfulness in education, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), positive psychology & positive education, and vinyasa yoga.

Scott N. Edgar



Dr. Scott N. Edgar (he/him) has dedicated his career to highlighting the potential music education and educators have to build life skills students will utilize long after they leave the classroom. As a notable authority on music education and Social Emotional Learning, Dr. Edgar has emerged as the leading researcher, best-selling author, and internationally sought-after clinician on the subject. He is the author of *Music Education and Social Emotional Learning: The Heart of Teaching Music*, *The ABCs of My Feelings and Music* (co-authored with his wife Stephanie), and editor of *Portraits of Music Education and Social Emotional Learning* (published through GIA Publications). Dr. Edgar prioritizes facilitating spaces where people can explore their identity, build a sense of belonging, and experience agency. He is grateful for the many experiences he has had at Bowling



Green State University (B.M.E.), University of Dayton, (M.S.), and the University of Michigan (Ph.D.) to learn from his mentors. He is Associate Professor of Music, Chair of the Department of Music, and Director of Bands at Lake Forest College, Social Emotional Learning Editor for GIA Publications, and serves as Director of Practice and Research for The Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning. Dr. Edgar is also a Music for All Educational Consultant, a Conn-Selmer Educational Clinician, and VH1 Save the Music Foundation Educational Consultant. Striving for work/life balance, he enjoys grilling, exercising, and spending time with his wife Steph and their son Nathan, and their rescue golden retriever, Aria, and rescue cats, Violet and Clover.