








Conference Track Legend

-  Instruction & Classroom Practice
 -  Leadership & School Operations
 -  Innovation, AI & Future Learning
 -  Student Support & Special Populations
 -  School Choice, Policy & Funding
 -  Marketing, Growth & Enrollment
 -  Student Life, Culture & Development
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MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2026

Concurrent Session 1 | 11:00–11:45 AM

Free Resources & Grant Opportunities for Choice Schools: What's Available and How to Access It | *Amy Swann*

Private and charter schools are often expected to deliver high-quality programming with limited resources, yet many available funding opportunities remain underutilized. This session demystifies grants, partnerships, and free support spanning federal, state, and nonprofit sources—and show how to align them with school priorities.

Participants will gain practical strategies to secure funding, avoid compliance pitfalls, and build sustainable support for student success.

Student Ethics in Florida | *Andrew Locantora*

Focusing on how Florida Sports Virtual Academy has impacted student athletes across the entire state by utilizing amazing state programs.

The Center for Inquiry Don't Believe Everything You Believe | *Bertha Vazquez*

Students are immersed in a constant stream of persuasive and often misleading information, making it critical they develop skills to evaluate evidence, identify bias, and recognize flawed arguments across all subjects. This session showcases how educators can move beyond basic fact-checking to build transferable critical thinking skills using free, standards-aligned resources from Generation Skeptics. Participants will learn practical strategies to help students analyze information, communicate evidence-based conclusions, and navigate complex media with confidence. Attendees will also explore opportunities to extend learning through student clubs, expert-led sessions, and educator leadership pathways.

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Accreditation | *Gina Duarte-Romero*

This session is designed for school leaders considering accreditation who may perceive the process as complex or out of reach. Participants will gain a clear understanding of the accreditation pathway and how it strengthens credibility, enhances quality, drives operational improvement, and increases student opportunities such as credit transferability. Attendees will leave with practical insights, increased confidence in pursuing accreditation, and dedicated time for questions and discussion.

Hands-On Learning with LEGO | *Holly Gerlach*

Please join us as we unpack how LEGO® Education solutions support hands-on learning experiences, boosting confidence and transforming the way students learn through purposeful integration of LEGO bricks and hardware. This session will cover how LEGO Education's learning solutions can be used to address various aspects of Florida's academic standards in various disciplines. Participants will walk away with new ideas and ready-to-implement strategies.

■ Future of Florida Education | *Doug Tuthill*

Public education is in the midst of a historic transition. Not since the mid-1800s has public education experienced this much change. We will discuss what is driving this change and how it will impact teaching, learning, and schools moving forward.

■ AI in Education | *Dr. Willie Snead III*

Explores the benefits of integrating AI into education while maintaining academic integrity and high standards. Participants will learn how to use AI as a tool to enhance instruction, support critical thinking, and improve efficiency without replacing authentic student work. Attendees will gain practical strategies to implement AI responsibly, ensuring it strengthens learning rather than compromising it.

■ AI & Data for School Success | *Tayla Rooney*

As Florida's expanded education funding creates new opportunities, school leaders are seeking innovative technologies that improve outcomes while simplifying implementation. In this session, Tayla Rooney highlights how schools are using Let's Go Learn (LGL) and AI-enabled tools to drive personalized learning, leverage diagnostic data, and strengthen instructional and special education practices. Participants will gain practical examples of how data-driven, AI-supported solutions enhance decision-making, streamline processes, and better support every learner.

■ Marketing & Enrollment Strategies that Honor Your School's Mission and Vision | *Holly Riches*

Are you interested in taking full advantage of everything Step Up for Students offers the families in your community? Marketing your school and customizing your Enrollment Strategy during the Inquiry and Admission process can help! Find out how to grow your Enrollment, increase your use of funding, and tailor your Admission approach in a way that honors who you are and what you stand for.

■ Empowering Educators: Transforming Classrooms & Elevating Outcomes for New Teachers/Special Education Teachers | *Dr. Stephanie Sullivan*

This workshop highlights a comprehensive, ecosystem-focused approach to supporting students with exceptionalities by strengthening both family and educator capacity. Participants will explore practical strategies to provide compassionate, resource-driven support for families while equipping educators with targeted tools and training that improve student outcomes and enhance staff retention. Attendees will leave with actionable insights and collaborative approaches that can be immediately implemented to better serve diverse learners.

■ The Customized Learning Blueprint: An Educational Consultant's Guide to Transforming Private School & Homeschool Experiences | *LaQuinda Johnson*

Drawing from over 15 years of experience as an educator and consultant across public, private,

and homeschool program development—as well as scholarship compliance—this workshop equips participants with an Educational Consultant’s strategic blueprint for creating high-quality, personalized learning experiences. Participants will gain actionable tools used in real consulting engagements, including clarifying vision and mission, developing learner profiles, designing flexible scheduling models, implementing data-driven planning, customizing curriculum pathways, and strengthening school–homeschool partnerships. Attendees will leave with a consultant-developed framework they can immediately apply within their private school, or homeschool community.

■ Crisis to Clarity: Resource Management & Problem-Solving for Modern Schools | *Krista Mallo*

In the high-stakes environment of modern private education, crisis management" is often misunderstood as simply handling emergencies. However, the true crisis for many schools is the silent, slow-motion failure of operational inefficiency. In "Crisis to Clarity," Dr. Krista Mallo of School Choice CPA & Associates presents a leadership masterclass on transforming chaotic administrative burdens into streamlined, data-driven systems.

■ Building Microschools That Last: Vision, Infrastructure, and Human-Centered Design | *Jessica Parnell*

Florida’s education choice movement is expanding rapidly, but long-term sustainability requires intentional design beyond initial growth. In this session, Jessica Parnell guides leaders through how to align vision, infrastructure, and student-centered practices to build resilient microschools and alternative learning models. Participants will gain practical frameworks to strengthen operations, support diverse learners, and create learning communities built to last.

■ STEM & Aviation Pathways | *Ricardo Foster*

The aviation and aerospace industries face a critical workforce shortage, with hundreds of thousands of pilots and technicians needed in the coming decades, while women and underrepresented groups remain significantly excluded from these high-wage careers. This session introduces a proven, scholarship-compatible CTE pathway that equips students with aviation exposure, STEM skills, FAA certifications, and clear career pipelines. Participants will learn how to implement scalable programs, leverage funding, and build industry partnerships that connect students to high-demand careers.

■ Designing for Gen Alpha: Instruction & Environments That Ignite Curiosity | *Patti Clark*

This session explores the newest research on Gen Alpha—how they process information, what motivates them, and how technology has rewired their learning habits. Find out what makes Gen Alpha tick, how they learn best, and what they need from modern schools. We’ll unpack instructional shifts that increase engagement and fuel deeper learning, and examine how schools can evolve: from static, teacher centered models to flexible environments that promote collaboration, autonomy, and innovation. Gain practical ideas for instructional shifts and space redesigns that empower Gen Alpha to become future ready thinkers, builders, and problem solvers.

■ Behavior Never Lies | *JaDean Stricker*

Student behavior is a form of communication that reveals underlying needs, emotions, and experiences. When educators shift from reacting to behavior to understanding its root cause, they can respond with strategies that build trust, improve self-regulation, and support positive outcomes. This session equips educators with practical tools to interpret behavior accurately and create environments where all students can thrive.

■ **Microschool by Design: Building the School You Wish Existed | *Shiren Rattigan***

Microschools are expanding rapidly across Florida's scholarship landscape yet building one that is both inspiring and sustainable requires far more than vision alone. In this session, participants will explore what it truly takes to design a microschool with intention — one that balances mission, financial viability, operational clarity, and community trust. Drawing from real-world experience launching and sustaining a scholarship-funded microschool, this presentation offers an honest look at the design decisions that determine whether a school thrives or struggles. Attendees will leave with a practical framework for turning passion into infrastructure, avoiding common pitfalls, and creating a microschool that is not only meaningful for families, but built to last.

■ **Forging Financially Confident Kids | *Richard Greco***

Financial literacy is a critical life skill, yet many families lack the tools and confidence to teach it effectively. This session provides simple, age-appropriate strategies for parents and educators to introduce money concepts in engaging and practical ways. Participants will learn how to build healthy financial habits in children while increasing their own confidence in navigating money conversations.

■ **Connecting the Dots: Matrix Reviews, IEPs, and State Scholarship Funding | *Malka Kownat***

Families of children with moderate to severe disabilities often face a complex and inconsistent process when seeking a Matrix Review to access an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and qualify for additional Unique Abilities state scholarship funding. This session provides a practical overview of the Matrix review process, including eligibility requirements, timelines, documentation, and the roles of districts, schools, and families. Presenters will examine common barriers encountered in the field, such as procedural delays, misinterpretation of eligibility, and inequitable access across educational settings. Presented by a champion of special education alongside an experienced advocate specializing in Matrix reviews, this session equips attendees with knowledge, strategies, and advocacy tools to better navigate this process to help students with disabilities get the support they are entitled to succeed and thrive in their educational environments.

■ **Supporting Learning Differences: One Christian School's Approach | *Sarah Hudon***

This session highlights a school's unique approach to assisting students with learning and cognitive differences. Participants will gain practical ideas and strategies to better support both students and educators in diverse learning environments.

🕒 **Concurrent Session 2 | 1:00–1:45 PM**

■ **Understanding IEP's and knowing who you can accept in your school | *Amanda McCook***

Looking at the key points of IEP's and understanding what the categories mean. I also want to discuss understanding that I accept the UA scholarship. I will also go over ways of accommodating students in the classroom.

■ “Beyond the School Building: Real Homeschool & Microschool Paths for Florida Families” | *Candace Lehenbauer*

This session offers a practical, story-driven look at how families find and choose non-traditional education options, including homeschooling and microschools. Participants will gain insight into common misconceptions, what parents wish they knew earlier, and how community supports like podcasts and learning spaces extend beyond academics. Attendees will also explore what’s working well in Florida and the challenges families still face, with actionable takeaways for both educators and families.

■ The Leadership Classroom: Building Character and Competence Together | *Bethsaida Martinez*

In this interactive session, participants will explore how to transform everyday instruction into opportunities for leadership development and ethical growth. Drawing on real classroom examples, they will demonstrate how to integrate traits such as Professionalism, Collaboration, Adaptability, and Quality Orientation into academic objectives and assessments. Attendees will learn practical strategies to design lessons that build both character and competence, aligning with Florida’s vision for innovation and student-centered education.

■ Courageous Conversations: Conflict Resolution Tools for School Leaders | *Amy Swann*

School leaders are often expected to navigate conflict and communication challenges without formal training, which can impact trust and school culture. This interactive session provides practical frameworks and tools to help leaders address difficult conversations with clarity, confidence, and emotional awareness. Participants will leave equipped to manage conflict effectively, strengthen relationships, and foster accountability across their school communities.

■ Understanding the Relationship between Culture, Poverty, and the Science of Reading | *Courtney Johnson*

Education is the primary pathway for breaking the cycle of poverty. By explicitly teaching reading, fostering supportive relationships, building mental models for problem-solving, and maintaining high expectations paired with structured support, schools can help individuals transition successfully into independent adults. This presentation invites participants to examine how school culture, the science of reading, and building relationships lead to student success.

■ AI as a Creative Collaborator: Empowering Teachers for Real-World Learning | *Rebekah Kogelschatz*

As artificial intelligence reshapes education, this session invites educators to reimagine teaching as the design of meaningful, real-world learning experiences. Drawing on innovative practices from Heartland Christian Academy, participants will see how AI can enhance creativity, differentiate instruction, and streamline planning while preserving the human connection at the heart of learning. Attendees will leave with practical strategies to use AI as a collaborative tool that empowers both teachers and students.

■ Grants; Now What? Write, Manage, Procure, and Track Grants Funds for Sustainability and Student Achievement | *Cari Warnock*

After writing 100 million dollars in grants and managing/directing 40 million in grants, Cari will share practical insights about how to manage, procure, track, and create traction and momentum rather than simply compliance with grant project design KPI's. Sustainability is typically the last thing you think about during a five-year grant, but Cari will share how this word transcends every aspect of the life of the grant. In addition, Cari will showcase tools that will help save money, track expenses, and assist in the management of a grant's fiscal health. Lastly, let's talk about the "ROI". Did the teachers, students, leaders, and stakeholders see the benefit of the investment made into their school via a grant?

■ Let a Thousand Flowers Bloom: Ed Choice & Entrepreneurs in the Free State of Florida | *Ron Matus*

Florida is leading a historic shift from school choice to full education choice, creating one of the most dynamic and diverse education systems in the country. This session explores key trends, data, and innovative models shaping this movement, including the rise of new schools and education providers. Participants will gain insight into emerging opportunities and challenges while recognizing their role in shaping the future of education.

■ Curriculum Mapping for the "New Horizon" Learner | *Krista Mallo*

The "New Horizon" learner is no longer bound by the four walls of a single classroom or the spine of a single textbook. Today's educational landscape offers a rich tapestry of options—from online academies and specialized tutors to local co-ops and hands-on modules. However, without a strategic map, this abundance can lead to fragmentation, where learning becomes a series of disconnected experiences rather than a cumulative journey.

■ Expanding Educational Choice Through Flexible Learning: CSUSA's C-Flex Homeschool Model | *Dr. Eddie Ruiz*

Charter Schools USA (CSUSA) is expanding educational choice through C-Flex Homeschool, an innovative model that blends the flexibility of homeschooling with access to charter school classes and extracurriculars. This session explores how the program has scaled from a pilot to all 66 CSUSA schools in Florida, supporting personalized learning and stronger community connections. Participants will gain practical strategies for integrating homeschool students, expanding access to courses and activities, and maintaining academic rigor. Attendees will leave with insights on how flexible learning models can empower families and serve as a blueprint for the future of education.

■ Homeschool Compliance & Growth | *Grace Coca*

This session provides educational centers with clear, actionable guidance on navigating Florida's Home Education regulations and successfully partnering with Step Up for Students. Participants will learn how to integrate homeschool families, meet compliance requirements, and position their centers as trusted, homeschool-friendly providers. Attendees will gain strategies to expand enrollment, diversify services, and increase revenue while supporting educational choice. The session equips leaders with the tools and confidence to grow their impact in Florida's evolving education landscape.

■ Learning Through Play: Boosting Engagement and Achievement with Game-Based Learning | *Theodora Cherus*

This session explores how game-based learning (GBL) can transform classroom engagement, deepen understanding, and improve student achievement across grade levels and content areas. Participants will experience research-supported strategies, practical game structures, and ready-to-use classroom tools that increase motivation and support diverse learners. Attendees will leave with replicable lesson ideas, digital and non-digital game templates, and assessment approaches that make learning challenging, meaningful, and fun.

■ Presence Is the Pedagogy: Nervous System Safety as the Foundation for Learning | *Molly Funk*

As Florida's education landscape evolves, this session explores how nervous system safety serves as a foundational requirement for student engagement, behavior, and academic success. Grounded in neuroscience and trauma-informed practices, participants will learn how regulation, relationships, and classroom structures directly impact learning and executive function. Attendees will gain practical, immediately applicable strategies to support focus, co-regulation, and inclusive environments, especially for neurodiverse learners. The session also emphasizes educator sustainability, equipping leaders with tools to build resilient, high-performing learning communities.

■ Learning by Doing: Helping Students Succeed in College and Careers | *Patrick McDermott*

This session explores how experiential, "learning by doing" approaches—such as community service, field trips, and real-world projects—help students build the skills needed for life beyond high school. Drawing on research and classroom examples, participants will see how these experiences strengthen critical thinking, leadership, and career readiness. Attendees will gain practical strategies to integrate hands-on learning, build community partnerships, and create meaningful opportunities that prepare students for the workforce.

■ Leadership with Heart -Creating a Culture Where Every Student Belongs | *Zack Jones*

This session explores the power of relational leadership in education, emphasizing the importance of knowing students by name and story to build a strong, family-like school culture. Participants will learn how to balance high expectations with meaningful support while leveraging empathy as a key leadership strength. Attendees will leave with strategies to strengthen relationships and improve student outcomes.

■ Understanding the Importance of Why Cognia's New Accreditation Model Can Guide Institutions' Continuous Improvement Process | *Sarah DeCotis*

At Cognia, we believe that every institution, regardless of current performance, has the potential to grow and improve. This session will explore how Cognia's accreditation is more than a status; it's a dynamic, continuous improvement journey. Participants will gain a clear understanding of how the process, spanning the Self-Assessment, Accreditation Engagement Review, and Progress Report, supports meaningful, sustained improvement. Through interactive activities and guided discussions, participants will explore how accreditation aligns seamlessly with broader school

improvement efforts. A Padlet resource page will also be shared, offering tools, templates, and key takeaways from the session.

- **The Hook: How Parents and Educators Use ABA-Informed Strategies to Engage Learners in Homeschool and Alternative Education | *Orvie Mizzell***
This session explores how ABA-informed strategies can be used to increase student engagement, motivation, and access to learning across homeschool, microschoo, and alternative settings. Participants will learn how to apply the concept of the “instructional hook” to capture attention, reduce barriers, and support students with diverse learning needs using practical, everyday strategies. Through real-world examples, attendees will gain tools to improve task initiation, transitions, and independence while aligning behavioral supports with instructional goals. Educators and parents will leave with actionable approaches to enhance learning outcomes across home, school, and community environments.

- **Pathways to Possibility: Planning for Successful Postsecondary Education for Students with Intellectual Disabilities | *W. Drew Andrews***
This session equips families with strategies to prepare students with intellectual disabilities for college beginning in middle school. Participants will learn how to foster self-advocacy, build academic and social skills, and set high expectations that support long-term success. The session also highlights effective collaboration with educators to develop personalized transition plans. Attendees will leave with practical tools to help students successfully transition to and thrive in postsecondary environments.

- **It Takes a Village | *Kendal Schmidt***
Explore how to implement project-based learning through a STEAM-focused approach that integrates science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics across the school. This session highlights practical strategies for designing engaging, real-world projects that foster collaboration, critical thinking, and student ownership. Attendees will gain actionable ideas to create a cohesive, schoolwide model that drives deeper learning and meaningful outcomes.

 **Concurrent Session 3 | 2:45–3:30 PM**

- **Emotions & Learning: A Powerful Link | *Dr. Gabriela Mancini***
This presentation explores the powerful connection between emotional states and learning outcomes. It equips educators and parents with practical, research aligned strategies to support children’s emotional regulation, engagement, and academic growth. The goal is to help parents and educators create emotionally safe, motivating learning environments where children can thrive. Participants will learn how to integrate emotional literacy into educational practices and strengthen academic and personal outcomes through a deeper understanding of how emotion shapes learning.

- **Keeping the Right People: How Core Values and Accountability Drive Staff Retention | *Amy Swann***
Challenging the belief that schools must choose between accountability and staff retention by demonstrating how value-driven leadership can achieve both. Participants will explore the root causes of staff disengagement and learn how clear expectations, trust, and consistent feedback

improve morale and retention. Practical strategies such as stay interviews and accountability conversations equip leaders with tools to strengthen culture and reduce turnover. Attendees will leave with actionable approaches to build supportive, high-performing teams where educators choose to stay.

■ Artificial Intelligence: Digital Transformation for School Leaders | *Celethia Passmore-Mack*

Highlights how artificial intelligence can support digital transformation for school leaders by enhancing daily operations, communication, and decision-making. Participants will explore practical applications such as drafting communications, creating templates, optimizing scheduling, and improving school documents. AI-driven insights and automation help reduce repetitive tasks, increase efficiency, and strengthen strategic and instructional decisions. Attendees will leave with actionable ways to leverage AI to save time and focus more on leadership and student outcomes.

■ Teacher Development Systems Based on Laura Desimone's Research | *Kimberly Miccichi*

A Self Study: How can I as a small business owner implement and study best practices in teacher education/professional learning based on Laura Desimone's research centered on 1.

■ Cognitive Intervention Strategies for Struggling Students | *Angela Fox*

This session explores effective cognitive training strategies designed to support struggling students in building essential learning skills. Participants will gain practical tools to strengthen memory, attention, processing, and problem-solving abilities that directly impact academic success. Attendees will leave with actionable approaches to help students improve confidence, independence, and overall performance.

■ AI Capstone Programs | *Ricardo Foster*

Empowers students to create their own opportunities through an AI-powered, no-code capstone program that guides them from ideas to a functioning business in one term. Participants will learn how to implement the curriculum, integrate AI tools, and align projects with real-world outcomes and scholarship goals. Attendees will gain practical strategies to help students build portfolio-ready work and prepare for college or immediate business launch.

■ Yass Prize Innovation | *Amparo Suarez*

This impactful panel features Florida Yass Prize Awardees who share firsthand experiences on innovation, scaling, and navigating the evolving education landscape. Participants will gain insight into the Yass Prize application process and how the STOP principles drive sustainable, transformational, and outstanding school models. The session highlights how involvement in the Yass Prize extends beyond funding, fueling innovation, empowering leaders, and amplifying the role of families in education reform. Attendees will leave inspired and equipped to elevate their own programs and lead meaningful change in their communities.

■ The CSG Social Skills Squad: Teamwork Tools from a Minecraft-Themed Program | *Iris Pendleton*

Introduces the Camp Summer Garden Social Skills Squad, an inclusive, Minecraft-themed model designed to support social-emotional development for students with diverse needs in out-of-school settings. Participants will learn practical, immediately applicable strategies—such as visual schedules, sensory support, and play-based activities—to improve engagement, self-regulation, and peer interaction. Drawing from real program examples, attendees will gain tools and templates to create inclusive, high-impact environments that foster confidence, connection, and independence.

■ **Passion-Powered Pedagogy: Turning Your Expertise into Learner-Led Innovation | *Monica Encarnacion***

Highlights how an educator's passion can drive innovation, student agency, and new opportunities in the classroom and beyond. Drawing from real-world experience building successful homeschool STEAM programs, participants will explore how play-based, maker-centered approaches can transform learning and even lead to entrepreneurial ventures. Attendees will gain practical insights to apply these strategies in their own settings to foster creativity, engagement, and learner-led experiences.

■ **School Safety - Recent Risk Trends and Mitigation Steps to Overcome Them | *Jose Suarez***
Active Shooters in School continues to be part of our new school reality. However, the method of possible attack has changed over the year and so has our response to it. Remaining informed of these trends can help us understand the risk potential and develop common sense mitigation steps for our schools.

■ **Using the Learning Environment to Create ProSocial Learning Experiences | *Jim McKenzie***
Environments are never neutral. They either help or hinder learning. In this workshop, we'll explore why ProSocial Learning is key to the future success of students and how to use the learning environment to create these ProSocial experiences. We'll also examine as a case study a school's transformation of its learning environments and how it's improving student engagement while helping to future-proof its students.

■ **The AI-Literate Generation: What Schools Must Rethink Now | *Shiren Rattigan***
AI is already shaping how students learn, create, research, and prepare for their futures — whether schools are ready or not. Instead of focusing on fear or banning tools, this session explores how we can design learning communities that teach students how to think with AI responsibly and creatively. We'll talk about what AI literacy really means for middle and high school students, how it connects to career readiness and entrepreneurship, and what shifts schools may need to make in curriculum, assessment, and classroom culture. Participants will leave with practical ideas and a fresh perspective on how to prepare students for a world where AI isn't optional — it's normal.

■ **Small Belief Shifts, Big Impact | *Tracey-Ann Trail***
Explores how educators' underlying beliefs about learners and inclusion shape everyday instructional decisions and student experiences. Participants will examine how these beliefs influence what teachers notice, how they interpret behaviors, and the actions they take in the classroom. Through reflection and real-world scenarios, attendees will gain practical tools to

make small belief shifts that expand access, engagement, and outcomes for all learners without increasing workload.

■ The Performance Principle. The roadmap to better and more consistent performance. | *Michael Altshuler*

This keynote is super motivational, interactive, and entertaining with actionable takeaways that will immediately improve the performance of the attendees (both personally and professionally). Michael will get the audience primed and pumped to embody a growth mindset, an empowering belief system and the determination and resilience to consistently perform BETTER.

CAUTION: May cause audience members to feel a sense of supreme confidence and invincibility. Yea, that's right.

■ Cultivating Intrinsic Motivation in Students | Nina Mityuk

Explores the limitations of traditional motivation systems and why rewards often lead to short-term compliance rather than lasting engagement. Participants will examine how to foster intrinsic motivation by creating learning environments that promote ownership and curiosity. Attendees will also learn strategies for assessing growth without diminishing student interest, with a focus on developing resilient, self-driven learners.

■ The Architecture of Choice: Designing Individualized Learning Plans for PEP & FES-UA | *Krista Mallo*

With the expansion of the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (FES-UA) and the Personalized Education Program (PEP), Florida has entered a new era of unbundled" education. While this freedom allows for unprecedented customization, it often leaves parents and providers overwhelmed by the challenge of piecing together a cohesive educational journey. In "The Architecture of Choice," Dr. Krista Mallo of NovaPath Academics provides a structural framework for moving beyond "off-the-shelf" boxed curriculums to design robust, individualized learning pathways.

■ Secrets to the Scholarship Search | *Jean Burk*

Wait before you fill out any scholarship applications and waste precious time. You can learn about the contests that are legitimate and easiest to win and why sometimes you should NEVER apply for one. Discover the one place that contains nearly 85% of all the award money and how you can get your hands on it! There are 24 billion dollars' worth of private scholarships each year. Discover key words to search for little-known scholarships and find out the key that the library holds

to unknown money. No matter how old your child is, you can't miss out on the money that is available NOW!

■ Empowerment, Engagement, and Agency: Strategies for Student-Driven Learning | *Sarah DeCotis*

Engaging students in the learning process not only boosts attention and critical thinking but also creates more meaningful learning experiences. At the same time, student agency - often reduced to voice and choice - goes much further: it empowers learning to take ownership, recognize their needs, and advocate for their success in and out of the classroom. This interactive session

provides an opportunity for participants to reflect on current instructional practices, explore the intersection of engagement and agency, examine the conditions necessary to foster self-directed learners, and gain new strategies that promote active, student-driven learning.

■ Setting up the Next Generation of Leaders to Present with Excellence | *Mitch Lomazov*

All students will need to be prepared to step in front of a room and confidently communicate. Research shows that at least a quarter of Gen Z college graduates feel their education did not properly prepare them to network, negotiate, and speak publicly. This session is focused on helping teachers or directly instruct students to have greater awareness on their personal development and mindset to confidently speak in front of a room of people, the techniques to utilize with body language and voice, and structure to create compelling conversations.

■ From Agreement to Alignment: Creating Enrollment Contracts That Support Families and Schools | *Laurie Baluyot*

Good contracts preserve and define relationships, and how we approach the contract with our families will set the tone for the rest of the school year. Attendees will learn how to create and implement a more effective family enrollment contract.

🕒 **Concurrent Session 4 | 3:45–4:30 PM**

■ Triumph is a Skill That Can Be Learned: Building Student Resilience Across Choice-Based Learning Environments | *Beatriz Martinez*

Students across Florida are facing increased stress and emotional challenges that impact learning, behavior, and overall success. This session introduces the Triumph Steps® framework, a neuroscience-informed approach that builds emotional regulation, resilience, and personal responsibility in diverse learning environments. Participants will gain practical, low-cost strategies to support student wellbeing, engagement, and focus, including for those with anxiety or ESE needs. Attendees will also learn how to strengthen classroom climate and model emotional regulation to create environments where all students can thrive.

■ Meaningful Grammar: The Language of Writing | *Dawn Burnette*

Effective grammar instruction goes beyond isolated rules, helping students understand how language works within authentic reading and writing. This session introduces a research-based, hands-on approach using mentor sentences to build critical thinking, deepen understanding, and improve writing. Participants will learn practical strategies—such as annotation—to help students make intentional writing choices and strengthen originality in an age of AI. Attendees will leave with ready-to-use tools to teach grammar in a meaningful, integrated way that supports all learners.

■ AI: Level Up: GEN AI Policy and More | *Cari Warnock*

Leaders can feel isolated to solve issues and concerns across their school(s) community, and with technology playing a vital role in educational decisions. A problem of practice (PoP) role-alike collaborative can be a very powerful way to solve tech issues together. Join this session with like-minded leaders in a unified approach that allows thought leaders to draft, craft, and share ideas, challenges and solutions alongside other charter school greats. At the end of the session, participants will have a clearer understanding of the following:

Gen AI: policy, technology, and decision making, how to join a PoP collaborative to support your learning and growth as a professional, and action steps to consider back at your school

■ Private School Leadership, Mindset, and Emotional Sustainability | *Felicia Rattray*

Private schools often struggle not from operations alone, but from the unrecognized emotional and psychological demands placed on leaders. This session explores how leadership mindset and the emotional cycle of change impact decision-making, burnout, and long-term sustainability. Participants will gain practical tools to navigate challenges with clarity, set healthy boundaries, and lead with greater consistency and resilience. Attendees will leave equipped to move from reactive leadership to intentional, sustainable practices that strengthen both themselves and their schools.

■ Connect to Your Calling: Preparing High School Students with Career Readiness & Workforce Skills for Real Life | *Amy Swann*

High school students are often expected to make major life decisions without structured preparation in essential workforce skills. This session highlights the importance of intentionally teaching career readiness, including financial literacy, communication, and decision-making. Participants will explore Connect to Your Calling (C2YC), an interactive, flexible program that equips students with real-world skills through engaging, practical learning experiences. Attendees will leave with strategies to implement career readiness instruction that supports student success beyond graduation without adding burden to schools.

■ 8 Strategies for Engaging Boys in the Classroom | *Jeremy Spicer*

Engaging boys in learning can be challenging when traditional strategies fall short. This session provides eight research-informed, practical approaches to improve motivation, focus, and behavior through techniques such as hands-on learning, healthy competition, and effective communication. Participants will gain actionable tools to build stronger connections, foster confidence, and create environments where boys are engaged and empowered to succeed.

■ The Neuroscience of Belonging: Why Microschools Work | *Jessica Parnell*

Microschools across Florida are achieving strong outcomes by aligning with how the brain naturally learns, connects, and thrives. This session explores the neuroscience of belonging and how small, student-centered environments support engagement, emotional regulation, and success—especially for neurodiverse learners. Participants will gain practical insights on designing culture, relationships, and learning structures that enhance both student outcomes and staff sustainability.

■ Tutoring & Intervention | *Kristen Dench*

This workshop explores how Huntington Learning Center combines personalized tutoring, test preparation, and innovative technology to improve student outcomes. Participants will gain

insight into research-based instruction, individualized learning plans, and digital tools that support academic growth. Attendees will leave with a clear understanding of how these strategies drive students to success.

■ Federal Tax Credit Program | *Step Up Step Further Team*

Gain a comprehensive understanding of the Florida Tax Credit (FTC) Scholarship program and the role of Step Up For Students as a Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO). This session will provide key program updates, actionable fundraising strategies, and partnership opportunities that can directly benefit your school. Attendees will leave with practical insights to maximize program impact, strengthen school resources, and better support the families they serve.

■ Behavior Narration, a simple and powerful tool for positive classroom management | *David Eilers*

Behavior narration is a powerful classroom management tool based on the work of Lee Cantor. Behavior narration helps student be successful in class, set a positive and compliant classroom environment, reduces disruption in classroom, ensures compliance with key IEP and 504 plan goals, and reduces disciplinary referrals. Teachers and administrators will leave with a simple, easily implemented classroom procedure that is applicable K-12 in any setting.

■ Diversity, Discovery, and the Past: Crafting Authentic Florida Narratives | *Sallie Rodriguez*

This session explores how Florida's rich cultural diversity, layered history, and unique environmental landscape can be thoughtfully woven into compelling children's literature. Drawing from my experience writing well-researched works focused on Florida history and environmental science, I'll share how authentic research and cross-curricular connections can transform real places, historical events, and diverse voices into meaningful stories that educate and inspire young readers.

■ The Neurofeedback Approach to Childhood Disorders | *Jennifer Bourst*

This presentation introduces neurofeedback, a non-invasive brain-training approach that uses real-time feedback to help individuals regulate their brain activity. The purpose is to explain how neurofeedback works, the science behind it, and what conditions or goals it may support (such as focus, memory, mood, stress regulation, sleep, and overall brain performance). The audience will benefit by gaining a clear, easy-to-understand overview of neurofeedback, how it works, and insight into whether this approach may be a helpful option for themselves, their families, students or clients.

■ Becoming the Future You Educators Edition | *Jessica Villegas*

This workshop provides educators, leaders, and home-education organizations with a practical framework to help students build a strong personal brand grounded in self-awareness, values, and future readiness. Participants will learn how identity, mindset, and executive function shape student confidence, engagement, and long-term success, along with strategies to strengthen communication and self-advocacy skills. The session also highlights emerging workforce trends to better prepare students for an evolving, skills-based economy. Attendees will leave with a simple, repeatable system to foster student ownership, motivation, and real-world readiness.

■ Teacher Burnout Recovery | *Michelle Pacheco*

Workshop goal: Overcoming “Teacheritis”: Reigniting Passion, Purpose, and Productivity in Education

After years in the classroom, it’s easy for even the most dedicated educators to experience “teacheritis” — that feeling of burnout, exhaustion, and loss of motivation. This workshop is designed to reignite the spark that first drew you to teaching. Through humor, reflection, and practical strategies, we’ll explore how to overcome fatigue, rediscover creativity, and set meaningful goals that bring joy and purpose back into your classroom and professional life. Participants will walk away feeling refreshed, inspired, and equipped with tools to thrive—not just survive—the demands of education today.

■ The Rise of a La Carte Learning: From School Choice to Education Choice via Florida’s ESAs | *Ron Matus & David Heroux*

A la carte learning in Florida has rapidly expanded, with more than 140,000 students now using ESAs to customize their education—representing over \$1 billion in funding. This session explores how the shift from school choice to education choice is driving the growth of innovative providers, including offerings from former educators and school districts. Participants will gain insight into emerging models, key trends, and real-world examples shaping this movement. The session also addresses ongoing challenges, including navigation for families and ensuring accountability across a growing provider landscape.

■ Beyond Direct Instruction: Integrating Movement to Increase Student Engagement | *Dr. Debra Rains*

Beyond Direct Instruction is a movement-based teaching methodology that enhances communication, socialization, and academic learning through active engagement. It integrates skills such as choice-making, self-regulation, collaboration, and persistence into everyday instruction while promoting student leadership and participation. Participants will learn how to apply this flexible approach across various lessons to improve engagement and student outcomes.

■ Balance & Power in Religious Education | *Sean Herhold*

There is a misconception that Religious Schools have an additional burden and struggle since they must provide both education and religious instruction. Since more than half of private schools in Florida are religious schools, this presentation is intended for those schools as well as any other private school who is interested in the religious school education dynamic. Religious instruction in our schools is not a liability to our education program, but possibly its greatest asset.

■ From EnVision to Empowerment: Building One-on-One Success Through Specialist Instruction | *Janee Blackwell*

Introduces the Parent → Partnership → Mastery Framework, a practical model for delivering individualized instruction within Florida’s education choice landscape. Participants will explore how strong parent partnerships and targeted, one-on-one support can better meet the needs of diverse learners, including those served through scholarship and home education programs. Through real-world examples and planning strategies, attendees will gain actionable tools to drive measurable student mastery. The session emphasizes how collaboration between educators and families leads to stronger outcomes for every learner.

■ **Modern Day Dyslexia: Supporting the 1 in 5 | *Katie McLain***
Attendees will learn about the newest research and national trends that are literally redefining what it means to be dyslexic. Join me for resources that will build your staff's capacity to support learners with dyslexia today and in the future.

■ **Raised on Tech, Unprepared for AI: What Needs to Change | *Jo Dawn Brown***
Today's students are growing up surrounded by technology, comfortable with apps, fluent in devices, and confident navigating digital tools. But familiarity is not the same as understanding. A widening gap is emerging between using technology and truly understanding how it works, why it works, and when it can fail. This session explores the new digital divide: not access, but depth of knowledge. In an era shaped by artificial intelligence, students who simply consume technology risk falling behind those who can question it, analyze it, and build with it. More importantly, this session focuses on what needs to change. Attendees will explore practical ways to close this gap by shifting from tool-based learning to thinking-based learning, embedding critical thinking, problem-solving, and logic into everyday instruction.

 **TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2026**

 **Concurrent Session 5 | 9:45–10:30 AM**

■ **Reignite Your Spark: From Burnout to Empowerment | *Alexandra Batista Rodriguez***
Designed for educators seeking renewed purpose, this session explores pathways to become a provider with Step Up For Students. Participants will learn how to offer services such as tutoring, therapy, microschool instruction, or curriculum development to support diverse learners. Through real-world examples and clear guidance, attendees will gain practical steps to transition into new roles and build meaningful programs. The session empowers educators to reignite their passion while creating greater impact for students and families.

■ **Reading for Meaning: Critical Reading Strategies for Every Learner | *Dawn Burnette***
This workshop is designed to equip educators with practical, easy-to-implement strategies to strengthen reading comprehension for all learners, from struggling to advanced readers. Participants will explore techniques that build critical thinking skills such as analyzing, inferring, and using textual evidence while increasing engagement with both fiction and informational texts. Attendees will leave with a variety of adaptable tools to improve student understanding, retention, and confidence in reading across content areas.

■ **STEM Careers: Getting Girls in the Game | *Cari Warnock***
Explores how esports programs like Girls Who Game are creating powerful pathways to STEM careers for middle and high school girls. Participants will learn how esports foster engagement, teamwork, problem-solving, and interest in technology within inclusive learning environments. Attendees will gain practical strategies and real-world examples to leverage esports as a tool for empowering the next generation of female STEM leaders.

■ **Decoding to Devotion: How Chapter Books Create Lifelong Readers | *Irene Hernández***

This session explores how the transition from decoding to deep comprehension transforms students into engaged, lifelong readers. Participants will learn practical strategies to use chapter books to build fluency, stamina, and a genuine love of reading. Attendees will leave with actionable approaches to foster meaningful reading experiences that strengthen both skill and passion.

■ Stories, Songs, and Feelings | *Amy Swann*

Young children experience big emotions before they have the language to express them, often leading to behavior challenges rather than learning opportunities. This interactive session demonstrates how educators can use children’s literature, music, and hands-on tools—featuring works by Coy Bowles and SEL resources from Lakeshore Learning—to build emotional vocabulary, self-regulation, and empathy. Participants will leave with practical strategies that support positive student behavior and strengthen social-emotional development.

■ From Lecture to Lab: Using AI to Transform Passive Classrooms into Active Learning Spaces | *Daniella Rodriguez*

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly accessible to students, educators face a growing challenge in maintaining rigor, engagement, and academic integrity. This session explores how to move beyond lecture-based instruction by using AI to create active, student-centered learning experiences. Participants will learn how to redesign lessons into “learning labs” that promote inquiry, critical thinking, and meaningful engagement. Attendees will leave with practical, adaptable strategies to integrate AI in ways that enhance—not replace—effective teaching.

■ Simple steps 4 learning language and academic skills for young children with special needs | *Brenda Breton*

During this session we will provide you with practical, easy-to-implement strategies to support early language development and foundational academic skills in young children with special needs. Participants will learn how to use structured, developmentally appropriate approaches to improve communication, engagement, and learning readiness. Attendees will leave with actionable tools to foster growth, independence, and confidence in early learners.

■ From Chaos to Clarity: A Smarter Way to Reconcile Student Accounts | *Carla Justamante & Laurie Baluyot*

Best practices for reconciling student funding in conjunction with bank statements and your student information system (SIS) i.e., accounting or student tracking programs. Attendees will learn to use the billing export report alone to accomplish all reconciliation tasks without any remittances.

■ Music and Phonological Awareness: A Shared Pathway for Foundational Literacy | *Minda Gordon*

Explores the strong connection between music and language processing and how shared elements like rhythm, pitch, and patterning support phonological awareness. This session highlights research showing that music-based activities can strengthen early reading skills by enhancing sound recognition and manipulation. Participants will engage in practical, music-based strategies to support phonological development and literacy.

■ Unlocking Learning Potential in Mixed-Age, Choice-Driven Schools and Learning Communities | *Jessica Parnell*

Microschools have a unique ability to serve diverse learners, but success requires intentional design for personalization. This session reframes learning differences as strengths and introduces practical strategies for building flexible, sustainable learning environments that support mixed-age groups and learner autonomy. Participants will explore how thoughtful curriculum design and shared language improve engagement, reduce behavior challenges, and strengthen outcomes. Attendees will leave with actionable frameworks to implement effective personalization without increasing staff workload.

■ Back to the Basics: Where Little Hands Build Big Skills | *Helene Lieberman*

Foundational fine motor, visual-motor, and play skills are essential for academic success, independence, and daily life tasks, yet many children are missing opportunities to develop them due to increased screen time. This session highlights the impact of these gaps and the importance of reintroducing hands-on, play-based learning to support development and engagement. Participants will learn how to use simple, low-cost materials to build motor, cognitive, and social skills. Attendees will leave with practical strategies to create meaningful activities that support student readiness and overall success.

■ Teach Smart, Teach Small: Big Results in Flexible Learning Models | *Chelsey Potter*

Small schools and homeschool environments offer flexibility, but strong instructional practices are essential to ensure meaningful student growth. This session provides research-based, adaptable strategies to deliver high-impact instruction in personalized, multi-age, and small-group settings. Participants will learn how to design clear learning goals, increase engagement, and implement rigorous, differentiated instruction without added complexity. Attendees will leave with practical tools and a clear plan to drive strong academic outcomes in independent learning environments.

■ A "How-To" Guide to Offering Services in the SUFS Provider Marketplace | *David Heroux*

This session provides a clear, step-by-step guide to successfully participating in the Step Up For Students service provider marketplace. Participants will learn how to navigate account types, submit required documentation, create and manage catalog items, and complete the invoicing process with confidence. Attendees will leave with practical knowledge to streamline setup, ensure compliance, and effectively deliver services to families.

■ Build an amazing Transcript | *Jean Burk*

(Don't fear the high school years but learn little-known information that can give your student an edge.)

This session reveals key strategies for building a strong, credible high school transcript that stands out in the college admissions process. Participants will gain insider insights into what top universities value, how to maximize summer opportunities, and the differences between AP, Dual Enrollment, and CLEP courses. Attendees will also learn how to use a 3-tier credit approach to create a compelling student portfolio that captures the attention of admissions counselors.

■ FULL STEAM AHEAD: Hands-On STEAM That Transforms All Learning Spaces | *Scott Burns*

Hands-on STEAM experiences have the power to transform any learning environment into spaces of confidence, curiosity, and belonging. In this interactive session with Scott Burns at Home Science Tools, will guide participants through immersive, hands-on science experiences. Drawing from real-world implementation of Home Science Tools resources, presenters will share practical strategies, program-ready insights, and authentic examples—from dissections to ready-to-use investigations—that make high-impact STEAM accessible for every learner, no matter what the setting.

■ Building Sustainable Child-Led and Nature-Inspired Programs: A Practical Framework for Founders | *Justine Wilson*

Starting a microschool or nature-based program requires more than passion, demands strong systems, clear communication, and sustainable leadership practices. This session provides a practical roadmap for building stable, mission-aligned programs, including strategies for designing routines, setting expectations, and supporting child-led learning. Participants will gain tools for effective leadership, communication, and team alignment that reduce burnout and strengthen culture. Attendees will leave with actionable steps to create programs that are both impactful and built to last.

■ College Credit Pathways | *Patrick Carmack*

This presentation introduces an innovative online option for high schools, co-ops, and homeschool programs, the Great Books Program Online. Participants will explore how this rigorous, four-year model allows students to earn up to 48 college credits or an AA degree by 12th grade, with exceptional students on a pathway to a BA. The session will also highlight the history and impact of the Great Books movement while showcasing program features through select video excerpts. Attendees will gain insight into how this approach builds critical thinking, academic depth, and college readiness.

■ Whole Child Development | *James Zwiers*

This presentation will show how Clearwater Academy International goes beyond the classroom to truly give students the life skills to succeed in the real world. We will go in depth on how Clearwater Academy uses the Student Success Circle to evaluate students and motivate growth in areas outside the academic realm. Attendees will come away with tools to improve the life skills and growth of the students they work with.

■ Navigating Accreditation: Your Voyage Through an Accreditation Visit | *Tobi Manke*

What is accreditation? Preparing for an accreditation visit (ILCS, Cognia, MSA, or similar) is a monumental task—like setting out on a vital voyage to a new, uncharted frontier. This engaging workshop is designed to equip school leaders with the navigational tools needed to chart a smooth, confident course toward accreditation success. By the end of this session, your school will possess the necessary knowledge to confidently navigate the accreditation journey and successfully reach its new educational horizon.

🕒 Concurrent Session 6 | 11:15 AM–12:00 PM

■ Demystifying Dyslexia | *Carol Hale*

This session explores the complexities of dyslexia, a common yet often overlooked learning difference affecting one in five students, and why it can be difficult to identify across grade levels. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the unique strengths and challenges of dyslexic learners while learning to recognize early signs that are often missed. The session highlights proven, research-based intervention strategies, including structured literacy and multi-sensory approaches, along with practical classroom accommodation that support all learners. Attendees will leave with actionable tools, clear next steps, and take-home resources to more effectively identify and support students with dyslexia.

■ Reimagining Education for Students with Language Differences | *Cheyne Joslin*

This presentation highlights the benefits of the No Limits Method for educational professionals working with students with special needs. The Method functions as a digital training program, complete with micro-credentials and lesson videos. The session will focus on how the Method supports students with language difficulties in effectively engaging with parents, teachers, and curriculum.

■ AI Without the Panic: Practical, Ethical, and Powerful Uses of Artificial Intelligence in High School Classrooms | *Bethsaida Martinez*

Artificial Intelligence is already shaping how students read, write, research, and think, whether schools are ready or not. This interactive workshop equips high school educators and instructional leaders with clear, responsible, and classroom-ready strategies for integrating AI in ways that enhance learning, preserve academic integrity, and develop critical thinking skills. Rather than focusing on fear or prohibition, this session reframes AI as a thinking partner, one that supports differentiation, feedback, inquiry, and student agency when used intentionally.

■ The Microschool Movement: 2026 Trends Shaping the Next Era of Education | *Ashley Soifer*

Unveiling key findings from the 2026 Microschool Sector Analysis, offering a comprehensive look at national trends shaping the future of education. Participants will explore insights on growth, funding models, staffing, learner outcomes, and sustainability, supported by real-world case studies from across the country. The presentation highlights emerging opportunities, challenges, and innovations within the microschool movement. Attendees will leave with data-informed strategies to guide decision-making, planning, and investment in this rapidly evolving landscape.

■ The Power of Failure: Preparing Students for Life by Embracing the Learning Process | *Kelsey Dickinson*

Equip parents and educators with a practical framework for raising resilient, confident children in today's culture. Participants will explore the FAST Framework—Fail Forward, Allow Struggles, Support (Don't Save), and Teach Through Experience—to help children build independence, problem-solving skills, and accountability. Through real-world examples and interactive activities, attendees will learn how to use safe, age-appropriate challenges to prepare students for life beyond academics. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies and renewed confidence in fostering resilience and responsibility in children.

■ Coaching Educators and Parents on Positive Behavior Strategies | *Lorena Martinez*

The first three years of life are a critical period for brain development, where early experiences shape a child's cognitive, social, and emotional growth. This presentation explores evidence-based strategies for creating nurturing environments that support healthy development and positive behavior. Participants will learn practical approaches such as positive reinforcement, redirection, and teaching emotional regulation. Attendees will leave with actionable tools to help young children build a strong foundation for lifelong success.

■ The Future of Facilitation: AI Avatars Inside VR Classrooms | *Tina Shang*

Immersive VR can be unforgettable—but schools are increasingly asking the practical question: does it improve learning, and can it scale? This session is a high-energy showcase of OptimaED's VR + AI avatar learning experiences, presented as a lecture-style talk with embedded video demonstrations. Attendees will see what "instruction inside the headset" looks like when AI avatars guide learners through immersive environments with real-time prompts, feedback, and embedded checks for understanding. We will also highlight multilingual capabilities, including on-demand language switching (e.g., "I didn't catch that—can you say it in English?"), which supports accessibility and strong language-learning use cases. Alongside the demos, we will share measured academic outcomes from a VR-first implementation context and briefly connect the results to core pedagogy (guided attention, cognitive load management, and formative assessment signals). The full slide deck with embedded videos will be submitted after acceptance.

■ Building STEAM Throughout the Day | *Ronald Mohl*

Explores how the STEAM approach can be intentionally used to integrate science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics to cultivate curiosity and lifelong learning. Participants will experience hands-on, engaging strategies that strengthen critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills in students. The presentation highlights how to seamlessly embed STEAM into existing lessons and routines without added complexity. Attendees will leave with practical, ready-to-use ideas that immediately enhance student engagement and deeper learning.

■ Leading in the ERA of Universal School Choice | *John-Anthony Boggess*

The presentation "Leading in the Era of Universal School Choice" explains how the expansion of universal school choice has transformed private and charter schools. Scholarship growth has gone from 12,000 students in 2005 to over 500,000 today, this shift helps fund the supplemental support to a core strategic driver of enrollment and operations. This presentation emphasizes that mission-alignment and strategic leadership is essential to sustain growth and maximize the impact in this new educational landscape.

■ Designing Microschools Where Neurodiverse Learners Thrive | *Jessica Parnell*

Microschools are uniquely positioned to support neurodiverse learners, but long-term success requires intentional design and strong family partnerships. This workshop explores how to create learning environments that support academic, social, and emotional growth without overwhelming educators or lowering expectations. Participants will learn how to implement schoolwide design strategies, build independence, and use staffing and technology effectively to meet diverse needs. The session also highlights how clear communication and aligned expectations strengthen trust and retention with families. Attendees will leave with practical frameworks to create sustainable, high-impact environments where neurodiverse learners can thrive.

■ The Visibility Gap: What Schools Must Fix Now Before AI Reshapes How Families Choose Schools | *Jen Paul*

Families are increasingly choosing schools based on what they see online, making clear, strategic digital communication essential for visibility and enrollment. This presentation explores how AI is transforming school discovery and what today's families expect within seconds of engaging with a school's online presence. Participants will learn practical, low-cost strategies to improve messaging, strengthen digital visibility, and connect with the right families. Attendees will also gain a simple, sustainable framework for maintaining an effective online presence with limited time and resources.

■ A Debt-Free Degree Reality | *Jean Burk*

(College is a lousy investment if you must borrow from your future.)

There's nothing scarier than many of today's graduates who are like the walking debt, hoping the apocalypse comes so they can get out of paying their student loans. Crippling debt is harming our young people: they can't buy a house, start a business and are even delaying starting a family after

receiving their degree. You can save your students, and your pocketbook by being deliberate with the money talk, defining the real cost of college and discovering that the dream college is the one they don't have to pay for.

■ AI Workforce Pathways | *Ricardo Foster*

AI is transforming education globally, yet underserved communities' risk being left behind. With a projected 1.4 million STEM worker deficit by 2030 and 40-50% of underrepresented students leaving STEM majors due to lack of mentorship, schools need practical frameworks to prepare students for AI-integrated careers. This session introduces the AI-Ready Pathways Framework, a comprehensive approach to integrating AI tools responsibly into education while building student skills for the modern workforce. Participants will explore our six-app AI-powered platform ecosystem, learn implementation strategies for scholarship-supported programs, and discover how to maintain human oversight while leveraging AI for personalized learning.

■ Navigating Key Challenges for Administrators | *Pamela Tapley*

Join fellow Heads of School and Administrators for a collaborative roundtable designed to address the complex, real-world challenges of school leadership. This interactive, discussion-based session creates a trusted space to share experiences, exchange ideas, and problem-solve with peers who understand the demands of leading in today's evolving education landscape. Participants will engage in meaningful dialogue around key topics such as defining "highly qualified teachers" within the context of their school's mission and student population, while gaining practical insights and perspectives they can apply immediately.

■ Autism Basics | *Mercy Nyman*

This session will introduce teachers to what is the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), including what autism is and how it may present in early childhood or school aged children. Objectives will include, setting clear expectations, using social stories to support understanding and behaviors, and implementing best practices that promote positive engagement. Teachers and administrators will gain practical, easy-to-use tips to create structured, supportive classrooms that meet the

needs of all learners. This session will also explore gentle and compassionate ways to have conversations with administrators and parents.

- **Building for Longevity: A Leader's Guide to School Start-up & Accreditation | *Krista Mallo***
Navigating Florida's private school landscape requires both vision and strategic planning for long-term sustainability. This session equips new and emerging providers with practical tools to manage compliance, pursue accreditation, and build strong, mission-aligned schools. Participants will gain actionable insights on balancing regulatory requirements with educational goals. Attendees will leave with a clear roadmap to launch, grow, and sustain successful institutions.

 - **Parent-Driven School Models | *Walkiria Cash Ward***
This session highlights the critical role of parent involvement in enhancing classroom learning and student success. Participants will explore practical strategies for building strong family-school partnerships that support academic achievement and student engagement. Attendees will leave with actionable approaches to foster meaningful collaboration with families that positively impacts learning outcomes.

 - **Koalafied Classrooms: A Neuro-Clinical Model for Neurodiverse Student Development | *Pedro Curbelo***
Introduces an innovative neuro-clinical education model designed to improve outcomes for neurodiverse students by integrating academics with therapeutic support. Drawing from the Koalafied® methodology, this approach combines ABA, speech, occupational, and physical therapies with individualized curriculum to support each student's unique developmental needs. Participants will explore key elements such as sensory-conscious design, low student-to-teacher ratios, and data-driven learning plans that connect academic and clinical goals. Real-world examples demonstrate how embedded therapy accelerates communication, regulation, and engagement. Attendees will leave with practical strategies to implement this integrated approach and better support neurodiverse learners across various educational settings.

 - **From Classroom to Career: How Career Campus Creates Meaningful Transition Pathways for Students with IDD | *Sharon Engelbrecht***
This interactive workshop highlights the Career Campus model developed by The Arc Jacksonville, a hands-on, career-centered approach to transition services for students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). Participants will learn how Career Campus blends career exploration, real-world skill development, soft skills training, and community partnerships to create meaningful pathways from school to employment and independence. Attendees will leave with practical, replicable strategies they can use in their own schools and programs to strengthen transition outcomes for students with IDD.
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