



Palisades High School

EXCELLENCE
WITHOUT EXCEPTION
REIMAGINING EDUCATION

CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS
DISTRICT LEADERSHIP RETREAT

EXCELLENCE WITHOUT EXCEPTION

REIMAGINING EDUCATION



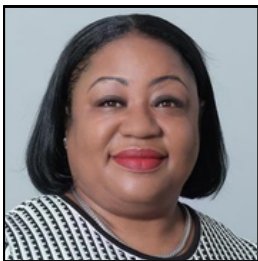
WELCOME

On behalf of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, I want to thank each of you for being part of this important opportunity to learn, collaborate, and lead together. Our district is in the middle of a significant period of growth and transition. As new leaders step into new roles and departments continue evolving, we recognize the importance of creating systems that are aligned, sustainable, and centered around student success.

This conference was designed with that work in mind. Throughout the day, you will hear from national education leaders, engage with colleagues from across our district, and explore practical strategies around transformational leadership and comprehensive school support for success.

The challenges facing public education today are complex, but they also create opportunities for us to rethink how we lead, communicate, support staff, and prepare students for the future they will enter. Whether your role is in curriculum, student support, operations, leadership, or school improvement, your work plays an essential part in shaping that future.

I encourage you to use this retreat as a chance to ask questions, share ideas, build connections, and think differently about what is possible for our schools and our students. Thank you again for your leadership, your commitment to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, and your willingness to continue learning alongside one another.



Sincerely,

Dr. Melissa Balknight
Deputy Superintendent
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

Breakout Session Rotation Guide

Concurrent breakout sessions are organized into two Strands: **Leadership Development** and **School Support and Success**. Each Strand will offer five concurrent sessions, each repeated three times. You will select the three sessions within your respective Strand that you believe will be most helpful and informative for your roles and responsibilities.

Master Schedule

MONDAY, AUGUST 3

Time	Activity	Details/ Facilitator
7:30 AM	Registration & Networking Breakfast	Arrival, coffee, exhibitor tables/resource displays
8:30 AM	Welcome & Opening Remarks	Charlotte Mecklenburg Leadership
9:00 AM	Opening Keynote: Dr. Bill Daggett	Preparing Students for Their Future Not Our Past
10:00 AM	Break	Refreshments Networking Exhibits
10:15 AM	Partner Booth Highlights	CMS Leadership Team
10:30 AM	Networking Brunch/Logistics/ Room Transitions/Partner Booths	
11:45 PM	Breakout Session Round 1 (5 Concurrent)	Leadership Development Strand – Participants Select One Session
11:45 PM	Breakout Session Round 1 (5 Concurrent)	School Support & Success Strand – Participants Select One Session
12:45 PM	Transition Break	Snacks Exhibit tables
12:55 PM	Breakout Session Round 2 (Same 5 Repeated)	Leadership Development Strand – Participants Select a New Session
12:55 PM	Breakout Session Round 2 (Same 5 Repeated)	School Support & Success Strand – Participants Select a New Session
1:55 PM	Transition Break	Refreshments
2:05 PM	Breakout Session Round 3 (Same 5 Repeated)	Leadership Development Strand – Participants Select a New Session
2:05 PM	Breakout Session Round 3 (Same 5 Repeated)	School Support & Success Strand – Participants Select a New Session
3:05 PM	Transition Break	Transition
3:15 PM	Fireside Chat: Reimagining Education	
4:00 PM	Closing Remarks	Charlotte Mecklenburg Leadership

School Map – 1st Floor

Registration in Auditorium Vestibule Area: Purple Area

Opening, Keynote, Panel Session, and Closing Session in Auditorium: Room 402, Purple Area

Breakfas/Lunch in Dining Area: Room 700 Yellow Area

Leadership Development Sessions (B-HALL): Rooms: 132,130,124,122,120

School Support & Success Sessions(C-Hall): Rooms: 152,154,156,151,160



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT STRAND

Session A – Room 120 | Building the Conditions for School Transformation: Dr Sarah Chatel

Audience: Central Office Leaders, Managers, Specialists and Coordinators **Duration:** 60 minutes

School transformation is not driven by new initiatives alone, it is driven by the daily practices that influence implementation across schools. District curriculum specialists play a critical role in shaping those practices by creating clarity, supporting instructional improvement, and building the conditions that allow schools to successfully implement change.

Drawing from the transformation work of a large urban school district, this session begins with a case study of the systems and strategic shifts that contributed to sustained school improvement. Participants will then explore four high-leverage transformation practices that can strengthen their own work with schools: intentionally noticing what matters, creating clarity around expectations, balancing support with accountability to change practice, and leveraging recognition and public practice to accelerate improvement across schools.

Participants will leave with practical strategies for moving beyond providing resources to becoming catalysts for sustainable instructional change.

Participants Will:

- Examine the district systems and structures that supported large-scale school transformation.
- Explore four high-leverage practices that influence implementation and instructional improvement across schools.
- Reflect on how their current support practices either reinforce or accelerate change.
- Identify actionable strategies to strengthen the impact of their work with schools and instructional leaders.

Session B – Room 122 | Leading with Purpose: Prioritizing What Matters Most: Dr. Latoya Mack

Audience: Central Office Leaders, Managers, Specialists and Coordinators **Duration:** 60 minutes

Continuous improvement is most successful when districts and schools work in partnership to support teaching, learning, and student success. This session explores how instructional specialists can build collaborative relationships that move beyond compliance and create a shared commitment to improving outcomes for all students. Participants will examine the essential roles of both the district and schools in fostering a culture of continuous improvement through effective communication, strategic use of data, capacity building, and shared accountability. The session will provide practical strategies for strengthening district-school partnerships, supporting instructional improvement, and creating systems that promote sustainable growth across all schools.

Session Objectives

- Describe the foundational conditions (shared vision and trust) that must be in place before collaboration can succeed.
- Identify the core elements of effective collaboration, including communication, data use, and capacity building.
- Name at least three concrete strategies the district office can use to support schools and strengthen the partnership.
- Apply the PDSA cycle (Plan-Do-Study-Act) as a repeatable framework for sustaining continuous improvement at the school level.
- Distinguish district office and school leadership roles within a shared accountability model.
- Commit to one specific action they will take within 30 days to strengthen district-school partnership at their own site.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT STRAND

Session C – Room 124 | Leveraging Executive Presence: Building Trust Through Expertise, Influence, and Instructional Leadership: Dr. Usamah Rodgers

Audience: Central Office Leaders, Managers, Specialists and Coordinators **Duration:** 60 minutes

Instructional support leaders may not supervise every educator they influence, but they are expected to inspire confidence, build credibility, and lead change across schools through expertise and relationships. Executive presence is the bridge between what you know and whether others trust and act on that knowledge.

Participants will explore how executive presence strengthens instructional leadership by building trust, demonstrating competence, communicating with clarity, and fostering authentic partnerships that drive school improvement.

Participants will leave with practical strategies to increase their influence, deepen relationships with school leaders, and strengthen their ability to lead without relying solely on positional authority.

Session Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants will:

- Recognize how executive presence influences instructional leadership, coaching effectiveness, and organizational credibility.
- Assess personal executive presence and identify behaviors that strengthen trust, expertise, and professional influence.
- Develop communication strategies that establish credibility while coaching principals, teachers, and district leaders through change.
- Practice leadership behaviors that communicate confidence, humility, and partnership when providing instructional support.
- Create a personal Influence Action Plan with 2–3 behaviors that will strengthen relationships, trust, and instructional impact.

Session D – Room 130 | Leading K-12 and Beyond: Dr. Brian Clarida

Audience: Central Office Leaders, Managers, Specialists and Coordinators **Duration:** 60 minutes

Effective feedback and strong relationships are the twin pillars of high-performing school teams. Trust must be intentionally built before feedback can be truly received, just as relationships require consistent deposits before a withdrawal can be made. This session explores the deep connection between trust, psychological safety, and feedback, providing instructional leaders with practical frameworks for building, maintaining, and restoring relationships across all six critical teacher connections: teacher to self, teacher to student, teacher to family, teacher to teacher, teacher to administrator, and teacher to staff.

Instructional specialists will learn to deliver corrective feedback with empathy using the structured "TALK" protocol, balancing high expectations with genuine care while practicing humble curiosity, listening to understand, pausing to process, and responding intentionally. Participants will also explore instructional coaching conversations that include setting bite-sized goals, providing immediate feedback, modeling desired practices, and engaging in deliberate practice.

Session Objectives:

- Building trust relationships and psychological safety within school teams by using intentional connection strategies, active listening, and structured team-building activities that create spaces where staff feel seen, heard and valued.
- Deliver corrective feedback with empathy using the structured talk protocol, balancing high expectations with genuine care while practicing humble curiosity, listening to understand, pausing to process, and responding intentionally.
- Design instructional coaching conversations that include bite-sized goals, providing immediate feedback, modeling desired practices, and engaging in deliberate practice with the coach.
- Establish collaborative team norms that foster psychological safety, encourage risk-taking and vulnerability, and create conditions where innovation and creative thinking can flourish.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT STRAND

Session E – Room 132 | Leading the Room: Facilitating Meetings That Move the Mission Forward : Dr. David Moore

Audience: Central Office Leaders, Managers, Specialists and Coordinators **Duration:** 60 minutes

Are your departmental collaboration and alignment efforts moving the needle in schools, or are they getting lost in the day-to-day operational "whirlwind"? "Leading the Room: Facilitating Meetings That Drive the Mission Forward" is a tailored session designed for specialists to transform cross-functional meetings into high-impact engines for system-wide alignment. This session explores how specialists can cut through the noise to establish faster learning, clearer instructional clarity, and collaborative feedback loops that directly link district strategies to classroom execution.

Participants will dive into the specific architecture of high-impact meetings, examining how to design intentional structures that foster cross-departmental collaboration, maximize focus, and eliminate operational silos. Utilizing self-evaluation tools, attendees will learn how to facilitate spaces that lean into productive challenge, invite the right stakeholders into the room, and use data dashboards to drive real-time problem-solving. Specialists will leave equipped with actionable protocols and predictable communication rhythms to confidently lead rooms, bridge systemic gaps, and coordinate strategic goals into synchronized, measurable action across all schools.

Session Objectives:

- **Design Cross-Functional Instructional Infrastructure:** Re-engineer cross-departmental and tactical support meetings into agile systems that bridge systemic gaps between district strategic plans and classroom-level execution.
- **Establish Aligned Instructional Feedback Loops:** Implement predictable rhythms of communication and standardized data protocols to ensure collaborative initiatives reinforce a single, cohesive message across all organizational tiers.
- **Facilitate High-Trust, Productive Challenge:** Cultivate a collaborative environment that leverages the right expertise at the table, breaks down traditional silos, and empowers team members to constructively question assumptions and address root instructional barriers.
- **Drive Action-Oriented Accountability:** Embed disciplined follow-through, measurable microlearning outcomes, and clear ownership of strategic action steps directly into tactical routines to avoid implementation drift.

SCHOOL SUPPORT & SUCCESS STRAND

Session A – Room 151 | The "Front Office" Flip: Transforming School Climate into an Attendance Magnet: Dr. AJ Nottingham

Audience: Central Office Leaders, Managers, Specialists and Coordinators **Duration:** 60 minutes

The most effective attendance strategy isn't a letter home—it's a school environment students refuse to miss. This session focuses on the principal's role as the Culture Architect, transforming the school from a place of "compliance" into a "hub of belonging".

Building on the "PowerUp" gamification model, leaders will explore how to audit their school's "Front Door" experience. From the first greeting at the bus loop to "Bell-to-Bell" cell phone-free engagement, participants will discuss eliminating the "Vicious Cycle" of traditional discipline and replacing it with restorative practices that keep students in class and learning.

Session Objectives:

- **Audit the School Experience:** Evaluate your school's "Front Door" experience—from the bus loop to the classroom—using the "PowerUp" gamification model.
- **Shift to Restorative Culture:** Eliminate the "Vicious Cycle" of traditional discipline and implement restorative practices that preserve instructional time.
- **Drive Attendance Through Belonging:** Act as a Culture Architect to pivot your school climate from forced compliance to an engaging hub of student belonging.

Session B – Room 152 | Neuroscience of Learning, Trauma Integration, and Signature Practices for Student Success: Dr. Linda Jordan

Audience: Central Office Leaders, Managers, Specialists and Coordinators **Duration:** 60 minutes

How does the brain learn best, and how can educators design spaces that support all students—especially those affected by adversity and chronic stress? This engaging, practical session explores the latest research in the neuroscience of learning and trauma-informed education to reveal how emotions, relationships, attention, memory, and stress shape student achievement. Participants will examine how trauma affects brain development and executive functioning while discovering actionable, high-impact strategies that can be implemented immediately.

Moving far beyond basic awareness, this session focuses on intentional classroom application. Attendees will walk away with an arsenal of practical tools designed to increase engagement, strengthen relationships, enhance memory retention, and build student agency so that every learner can thrive.

Session Objectives:

- **Decode the Brain:** Understand how the brain processes learning, memory, and emotion, and recognize how stress and trauma alter student behavior and achievement.
- **Apply Trauma-Responsive Strategies:** Utilize neuroscience-based practices to boost student attention and motivation while promoting psychological safety and belonging.
- **Implement Signature Instructional Practices:** Deploy high-impact instructional practices that intentionally support academic rigor, relevance, resilience, and relationship-building.

SCHOOL SUPPORT & SUCCESS STRAND

Session C – Room 154 | Becoming Trauma-Skilled™: What to Do When Trauma Shows Up: Nancy Nielsen**Audience:** Central Office Leaders, Managers, Specialists and Coordinators **Duration:** 60 minutes

Every day, educators encounter students, families, and colleagues who carry the invisible weight of trauma and chronic stress. When these experiences surface in our schools, they rarely come with a neat label; instead, they manifest as challenging behaviors, disengagement, chronic absenteeism, conflict, or professional burnout. While we cannot eliminate the adverse experiences that shape people's lives, we hold the power to transform how we respond when they show up in our buildings.

This dynamic session bridges the gap between being trauma-informed and becoming truly trauma-skilled. Participants will explore the neuroscience behind how trauma affects thinking and behavior, examine the stressors affecting both students and adults, and learn practical strategies that support immediate self-care and self-regulation.

Session Objectives:

- **Bridge Theory to Skill:** Transition from basic trauma awareness to actionable skill by understanding the neuroscience of how chronic stress impacts thinking, learning, and behavior.
- **Foster Resilience and Regulation:** Discover and utilize targeted practices that support self-care, self-regulation, and emotional resilience for both students and educators.
- **Commit to Immediate Action:** Identify and execute one meaningful, high-impact action to strengthen school relationships, manage moments of intense stress, and improve overall school culture.

Session D – Room 156 | Reengage, Reconnect, Restore: Preparing to Support Students Who Need Us Most: Ariael Brooks-Porter**Audience:** Central Office Leaders, Managers, Specialists and Coordinators **Duration:** 60 minutes

As a new school year begins, our most vulnerable students need far more than standard routines and reminders; they need intentional connection, predictable support, and adults who are fully equipped to respond with strategic care. This session provides student support staff and instructional partners with practical, high-impact moves to immediately reengage students affected by trauma, disabilities, attendance concerns, behavioral challenges, academic gaps, or deep disconnection from school.

Participants will cut through the noise to build meaningful trust, design welcoming reentry moments, and strengthen communication among families and school teams. You will walk away with a clear blueprint for identifying early warning signs and using simple data points to intervene before any student falls through the cracks.

Objectives

- **Deploy Immediate Reengagement Moves:** Master practical strategies to reconnect students navigating trauma, academic gaps, behavioral challenges, or chronic absenteeism.
- **Build Trust and Welcoming Spaces:** Design predictable support systems and welcoming reentry moments that strengthen relationships with vulnerable students and their families.
- **Utilize Early Intervention Data:** Identify early warning signs and leverage simple data points to proactively respond before students fall through the cracks.

SCHOOL SUPPORT & SUCCESS STRAND

Session E – Room 160 | Making the Invisible Visible: Moving Beyond Parent Involvement to Parent Engagement: Dr. Felicia N. Turner

Audience: Central Office Leaders, Managers, Specialists and Coordinators **Duration:** 60 minutes

School systems often gauge family engagement using easily observed metrics such as event attendance, volunteer participation, and completed forms. Yet many families who care deeply about their children's success remain largely invisible in traditional engagement efforts because of restrictive work schedules, language differences, transportation challenges, or prior negative school experiences. When communication is confusing or everyday interactions leave families feeling dismissed, schools unintentionally create distance that discourages families from partnering with them.

This interactive session invites leaders and support staff to unpack these hidden barriers and shift from superficial parent involvement to true, meaningful parent engagement. Participants will learn to build authentic partnerships in which every family feels seen, heard, valued, and respected.

Session Objectives:

- **Identify Hidden Barriers:** Recognize and address the invisible obstacles—such as work schedules, language differences, and transportation challenges—that limit family visibility in school efforts.
- **Dismantle Communication Gaps:** Analyze and eliminate alienating institutional practices, including educational jargon, unreturned phone calls, and confusing messaging.
- **Cultivate Active Partnerships:** Transition from passive parent involvement to collaborative family engagement by creating environments where families feel valued and respected.

PRESENTER PROFILES



Dr. Bill Daggett

Dr. Daggett's ability to move education systems towards more rigorous and relevant skills and knowledge for ALL students has led to collaborations with state-level and local district initiatives in all 50 states, as well as in Europe and Asia.

While an avid supporter of public schools, he also challenges educators to focus more on the children's future than on maintaining the classrooms of our youth. His insights and leadership have led nearly every major education association in the U.S., hundreds of school districts and colleges, numerous political and business leaders, publishers, and others to seek his insight and guidance.

Dr. Daggett began his career as a teacher, became a local administrator, and then the Director of the New York State Education Department. Today, he provides leadership and guidance to the National Dropout Prevention Center and the Career and Technical Education Technical Assistance Center, both part of the Successful Practices Network.

He created the Rigor/Relevance Framework and the Rigor-Relevance-Resilience Learning Model, which has become a pillar of many of the nation's school reform efforts. Dr. Daggett has authored 26 books on student learning and instruction, as well as textbooks, research reports, and journal articles.

Dr. Daggett has been recognized as a distinguished alumnus by both Temple University and the State University at Albany.

Dr. Daggett has a special commitment to individuals with disabilities. He and his wife, Bonnie, volunteer their time and lend their support to Wildwood Programs in upstate New York. Wildwood serves the needs of people of all ages who, like their daughter Audrey, have neurological impairments/learning disabilities or autism, by enabling them to become the best that they can be.



Dr. Robert Peters

Dr. Robert Peters is the Senior Vice President at Successful Practices Network and the National Dropout Prevention Center. He works with hundreds of Superintendents to strategically plan comprehensive solutions that empower academic success. Robert strongly believes in a future-focused education for ALL students. He has effectively worked with Superintendents across the United States in rural, suburban, and some of the largest urban districts, including Miami-Dade County, Los Angeles Unified, and Atlanta Public Schools. He has co-authored multiple Future Focused articles with Dr. Bill Daggett and Ray McNulty and collaborated on the development of the Future Focused Success Framework. Robert brings a history of innovation and transformation in all aspects of leadership. Before joining the Successful Practices Network and the National Dropout Prevention Center, he was an Assistant Superintendent and principal at all school levels. He holds an Ed.D. from the University of Texas at Austin. Robert is dedicated to working with Superintendents, campus-based administrators, and teachers to create Future Focused solutions that empower academic success.

PRESENTER PROFILES



Dr. Usamah Rodgers

Dr. Usamah Rodgers is a visionary education leader, author, and speaker who recently retired after 32 years of dedicated service as an educator and school system leader. Most recently, she served as Superintendent of Schools for DeSoto Independent School District, a position she assumed in May 2022. Prior to becoming superintendent, she served as a deputy chief in one of the largest school districts in Texas. Dr. Rodgers is widely recognized as a thought leader, collaborator, innovator, designer, and disruptor in public education. She is particularly known for designing, launching, and leading one of the largest implementations of the Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) program in the United States. Through this work, thousands of students have been provided the opportunity to graduate from high school with an associate degree and industry-recognized certifications, expanding access to college and career pathways.

Throughout her distinguished career, Dr. Rodgers has been recognized nationally for her impact and leadership. She was named Best K-12 Education Leader in both 2020 and 2022 by The Edvocate, a national organization devoted to advancing education equity, reform, and innovation. Her career journey includes being named Teacher of the Year (1998) and Principal of the Year (2009). Her leadership and service have earned numerous honors including recognition from the NAACP, the National Council of Negro Women, and the University of Texas at Austin. She was named a Holdsworth Center Champion of Hope (2024), received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Missouri State University, and was honored by the Texas Black Legislative Caucus as an Outstanding Texan for District 111 (2023).



Dr. David Moore

Dr. David K. Moore's tenure as Superintendent of Schools in Indian River County (SDIRC) has been marked by unprecedented academic improvements over the last three years. Under Dr. Moore's leadership, the District improved its state ranking by an impressive 29 positions during the 2023-2024 academic year, moving from 38th in 2018-2019 to 9th for the District Grade. This progress represents the highest rate of improvement of any district in the State of Florida since 2018-2019. Additionally, in 2023-2024, state assessment results showed SDIRC students outperformed state averages in all tested areas. The percentage of schools earning a school grade of "A" or "B" soared from 47% in 2018-2019 to an extraordinary 95% in 2023-2024. Furthermore, the District's most recent high school graduation rate (2022-2023) reached 96%, ranking 3rd in the State of Florida. These achievements are not only unparalleled in the District's history but also set a new standard for educational excellence in Florida..

Dr. Moore has also been the driving force behind transformative improvements in the District's financial stewardship. Upon his arrival, the District faced financial instability and declining student enrollment. Under Dr. Moore's guidance, the District implemented comprehensive organizational and budgetary accountability systems that prioritized data-driven resource allocation and responsible spending. These efforts resulted in a significant shift in financial ratings from negative to stable, as well as the creation of a healthy district fund balance. Since the 2019-2020 school year, district restructuring and reorganization efforts have generated cost savings of approximately \$4.5 million. Moreover, Dr. Moore successfully negotiated a multi-year teacher contract, securing salary raises and operating millage to provide the fiscal resources necessary for expanding district supports. His leadership also led to the establishment of the Indian River Education Fund, the District's first Direct Support Organization, which engages the private sector in intellectual and financial investment in the District.

PRESENTER PROFILES



Dr. Brian Clarida

Dr. Brian Clarida brings a rare blend of boots-on-the-ground school leadership and research-driven expertise to every room he enters. Before stepping into higher education, he served as a Principal in both rural and large urban school districts, leading campuses through the same day-to-day realities — the tough calls, the turnover, the pressure to perform — that today's school and district leaders face every day. Dr. Clarida has served as a leadership coach for the Department of Public Instruction assigned to work in the lowest performing schools.

Now a Clinical Professor at UNC Greensboro, Dr. Clarida trains the next generation of principals and assistant principals, most notably through the Assistant Principal Leadership Academy, a program he leads in partnership with Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools and Wallace Foundation to prepare aspiring administrators for the demands of the principalship. His research digs into one of the most urgent challenges in K-12 leadership today: how school leaders can sharpen their problem-solving skills fast enough to keep pace with rapid school turnaround and rising principal turnover.

Dr. Clarida doesn't just study leadership — he's lived it, taught it, and helped shape it in districts across numerous different states. Participants can expect a session grounded in real school experience, practical strategy, and a genuine passion for developing leaders who are ready for what's next.



Dr. LaToya Doby Mack

Dr. LaToya Doby Mack is an accomplished educational leader with more than 25 years of experience in K-12 education, specializing in strategic planning, educational research, data analytics, accountability, assessment, school improvement, and leadership development.

She currently serves as the Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Data and Research for a Georgia school system, where she leads the district's strategic vision for data governance, research, assessment, and continuous improvement. In this role, Dr. Mack provides executive leadership for the district's data systems, educational research, program evaluation, accountability, and assessment initiatives, ensuring that data-driven practices inform decision-making at every level of the organization. Her work focuses on translating complex data into actionable insights that enhance student achievement, strengthen organizational performance, and support continuous improvement across schools and departments.

A passionate advocate for data-informed leadership, Dr. Mack is committed to helping school systems build leadership capacity, improve teaching and learning, and create equitable opportunities for all students. Throughout her career, she has championed the strategic use of data to foster innovation, improve operational effectiveness, and promote a culture of continuous learning and accountability.

Dr. Mack holds a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Administration and has dedicated her career to empowering educational leaders, advancing systemwide improvement, and ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed.

PRESENTER PROFILES



Dr. Linda Jordan

Often described as "a teacher's teacher," Linda Jordan brings great enthusiasm, competence, and common sense to her work. A master presenter, Linda engages adult learners with her sincere and credible style. She has worked to help schools across the world implement the work of the Successful Practices Network. Linda is a part of the founding team, which established the Midwest Brain and Learning Institute at Hope College and creator and instructor for an on-line certification in Advanced Learning. She is also an adjunct instructor for Lynn University's doctoral program. Linda has been a keynote presenter at conferences around the globe with topics based in neuroscience, effective instruction, Trauma Skilled Schools, CTE and leadership.

Linda's background of training and experience prepare her to provide valuable information and advice on a variety of aspects of school improvement, neuroscience and trauma. She holds Ed.D., MA and BA degrees in education. Linda's doctorate focused on neuroscience and how ALL students learn. Linda has served as a teacher of preschool through college and has administrative experience. She has extended her participation beyond the classroom level as a member of school and district groups that include leadership council, school improvement team, child study team, and the district vision planning team, she also serves as a school board member. Dr. Jordan served as curriculum coordinator for the proposed National Plus School project in Jakarta, Indonesia. Dr. Jordan received the National Points of Light Foundation Award for Service Learning. Linda is a contributor to Service Learning Flagship newsletter, AASA article, Brain-Compatible Instruction for Young Learners in a Remote World, and contributing author to Finding Our Way: Reforming Teacher Education in the Liberal Arts Setting and author of Exceeding Expectations II: A Users Guide to Implementing Brain Research in the Classroom.



Dr. Anthony Nottingham

Dr. Anthony Nottingham Anthony (A.J.) Nottingham, is a native of Atlantic City, NJ. He received a Bachelor of Science and Masters in Teaching from Virginia Commonwealth University. He also completed a Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Virginia at the young age of 30.

Dr. Nottingham's life has been a testimony to the mantra that "No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship" by Comer. He has worn many hats in his over twenty years as an educator from lifelong learner, mathematics teacher, STEAM director, leadership coach, entrepreneur/business owner, father, adjunct professor, mentor, principal, advocate, consultant, and motivational speaker. Dr. Nottingham works with systems to build resilience and address the trauma needs of students. Most recently, Dr. Nottingham has served as a Transformation Schools Coach in both Gary, IN and Philadelphia, PA. In this capacity, he has been a vital voice and thought partner collaborating with both districts through the comprehensive needs and strategic planning effort with school leaders. As Transformation Coach, Dr. Nottingham has facilitated the Trauma Skilled School model that fosters a culture of resilience and monitored rigorous curriculum design. He has also facilitated targeted professional development, school level data teams, and coaching (one on one job embedded instructional and leadership) for over fifty comprehensive and specialty elementary, middle, and high schools across the country.

PRESENTER PROFILES



Dr. Sarah Chatel

Dr. Sarah Chatel is an accomplished educational leader with over 20 years of experience in curriculum design, leadership development, and organizational improvement. Sarah serves as the Executive Director of Professional Development for Miami Dade Schools. As a leader in professional development for Miami-Dade County Public Schools, she has led districtwide initiatives that build leadership capacity, strengthen culture, and drive continuous improvement. Dr. Chatel also works as a strategy coach for Green Schools National Network, supporting school leaders to embed sustainability, well-being, and innovation into school culture, learning, and daily practice. Dr. Chatel holds an Ed.D. and M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Florida and a B.A. in Communications from Florida Atlantic University.



Dr. Felicia Turner

Dr. Felicia Turner has presented at numerous local, regional, and international conferences. Audiences enjoy her humor and wit as she pushes boundaries and inspires teaching and learning to elevate to new heights. Prior to her time at the Successful Practices Network, she began her journey in education teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Ms. Turner's accomplishments include co-authoring a writing curriculum, called "Paper, Pencils, Let's Write!" Her proficiency in grant writing has yielded millions of dollars in grants for public and charter sectors; ultimately increasing learning opportunities for students through an array of technology initiatives, literacy, student attendance and dropout prevention, trauma, parent and family involvement, and extensive community collaborations. Additionally, Dr. Turner is skilled at creating and organizing district level teaching and learning institutes, devising professional learning for new teachers through academies, and strategic planning for districts and education foundations. Ms. Turner continues to build and support leaders by implementing instructional practices to promote literacy and college readiness. She has written and published several papers on the topic of crisis leadership and crisis management in K-12 educational settings, developed and written content for SPN and NDPC's Resilient District Series, Future Focused Success Series, Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention, Trauma Skilled School Models (TSSM) and Attendance and Drop Out Prevention.

PRESENTER PROFILES



Nancy Nielsen

Nancy Nielsen holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminology from Florida State University and a Master of Education degree in Counselor Education from Florida A&M University. Mrs. Nielsen has worked with at risk youth for almost 40 years in the fields of education, juvenile justice, and mental health. She began her career as a teacher in a residential juvenile justice program and later, as a halfway house assistant superintendent, led a team in the design, implementation, and accreditation of a residential community-based treatment program for juvenile offenders. As an educator, Mrs. Nielsen has taught at the elementary, middle, and high school levels and served as a behavior therapist and school counselor. She worked as a peer monitor for the Florida Department of Education Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Coordinator of Branford Opportunity School, and as Director of Education for the Florida Sheriffs Boys Ranch. Mrs. Nielsen is currently the Certification Programs Consultant for the National Dropout Prevention Center and a NDPC Trauma-Skilled Schools Faculty member. Her varied experiences have provided her with a unique perspective of student needs and a passion for helping students overcome obstacles to rewrite a narrative of failure into a story of success.



Ariael Brooks-Porter

Ariael Brooks-Porter is a dynamic education leader, consultant, speaker, and emerging scholar committed to advancing equity, access, and inclusion across K-12 schools. With deep expertise in special education, student support systems, and school improvement, she helps educators move beyond compliance and into meaningful practices that improve outcomes for students who need us most.

As a Director of Student Services in Washington, DC, Ariael leads work across special education compliance, student support programming, multilingual learner services, related service coordination, and instructional support systems. She is known for building practical, sustainable structures that help school teams better identify student needs, strengthen service delivery, and create environments where students with disabilities and other vulnerable learners can thrive. Beyond her school-based leadership, Ariael serves as a consultant with the Successful Practices Network, supporting schools across the country through professional learning, coaching, and strategic planning. Her work centers on helping teams use data, collaboration, and inclusive practices to create stronger systems of support for all learners.

Ariael holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Delaware State University and a Master's degree in Teaching from Relay Graduate School of Education. She is also completing her PhD journey, expanding her work as a practitioner-scholar focused on reimagining systems of support for students with disabilities and historically underserved learners.

As a sought-after facilitator and speaker, Ariael is known for her engaging, practical, and inspiring approach. She equips educators with tools they can use immediately while challenging them to reimagine what is possible for students. At the heart of her work is a clear mission: to create schools where every student is seen, supported, and positioned to succeed.

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