

*What We Do Matters*  
GROWING OUR IMPACT



# POWERFUL LEARNING CONFERENCE

FEB. 2-3, 2026 ■ TAN-TAR-A CONFERENCE CENTER ■ OSAGE BEACH

# General Information

## REGISTRATION FEES

If your online registration is received **on or before Jan. 9**, you will receive the early registration rate of \$275. If your online registration is received **after Jan. 9**, your registration rate will be \$325. On-site registration will be \$400. Regular registration will close on Jan. 23. **Any registration received after Jan. 23 will be considered an on-site registration.** There is an additional \$95 fee (that includes lunch) to attend the post-conference session.

## PAYMENT OF REGISTRATION FEES

Payment of fees may be made by credit card, purchase order, or check. A purchase order must be emailed within five business days of receipt of the online registration confirmation to Custom Meeting Planners at [tammy@custommeetingplanners.com](mailto:tammy@custommeetingplanners.com). If you choose to pay by check, your check must be received within five business days of your confirmed registration. Make checks payable to Custom Meeting Planners. (Purchase orders and checks may not be used as a form of payment after Jan. 21.)

### Mailing address:

Custom Meeting Planners  
P.O. Box 30785  
Columbia, MO 65205

## REFUND POLICY

Registration fees, minus a \$50 processing fee, may be refunded **if a request is emailed to Custom Meeting Planners at [tammy@custommeetingplanners.com](mailto:tammy@custommeetingplanners.com) no later than Jan. 9.** If your payment has yet to be received at the time of your refund request, your invoice will be adjusted to reflect the administrative fee due. No refunds will be authorized after this date, but substitutions will be permitted. No cancellations will be accepted after this date, and any subsequent registrations are not eligible for refund. Full payment of fees will be expected from registrants who are unable

to attend the conference **but fail to notify Custom Meeting Planners in writing on or by Jan. 9.** Duplicate registrations that are canceled are also subject to the \$50 processing fee. Please email Custom Meeting Planners at [tammy@custommeetingplanners.com](mailto:tammy@custommeetingplanners.com) to check whether you have already registered for the conference.

## ONLINE REGISTRATION

To register, please go to [na.eventscloud.com/26plc](http://na.eventscloud.com/26plc). Please view and/or print the online registration brochure and select the sessions you would like to attend prior to beginning online registration. Confirmation for your registration and session selections will be emailed to you immediately after completion of the online registration. If you do not receive confirmation or have questions about registration, please contact Tammy Bagley at **573-881-4849** or [tammy@custommeetingplanners.com](mailto:tammy@custommeetingplanners.com).

## LODGING

Tan-Tar-A Conference Center  
494 Tan-Tar-A Drive  
Osage Beach, MO 65065  
573-348-3131

Participants are responsible for making their own room reservations. A block of rooms at the discounted rate of \$119.97 per night has been reserved for the conference. A tax exemption letter must be provided to the hotel in order to receive this rate. **Based upon availability, this rate is available until Jan. 5.**

To make your reservation, call **800-826-8272** and identify yourself as an attendee of the Powerful Learning Conference using code **POWE**. You may also make your reservation online by [clicking here](#). Enter your arrival and departure dates, and then click on *Check Availability*. Make your reservations early!



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*The Powerful Learning Conference provides information and resources from outside speakers whose views are their own and may not always reflect the views of DESE.*

# Registration Notes

Please review the following information before you begin the online registration. You will be asked to select a category type from the list below. If you have questions about which category type you are, please contact Christine Nobbe at [christine.nobbe@dese.mo.gov](mailto:christine.nobbe@dese.mo.gov) or Tammy Bagley at [tammy@custommeetingplanners.com](mailto:tammy@custommeetingplanners.com).

## CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

Please select this category type if you are an attendee whose district, charter, school, or organization is paying for your registration fees; or you are a co-presenter for a breakout session and your district, charter, school, or organization is paying for your registration fees.

## DESE/RPDC DIRECTOR ATTENDEE

Please select this category type if you are on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Powerful Learning Conference planning committee and you have approval to attend from an assistant commissioner, or if you are a DESE employee presenting a session on behalf of DESE. Please also select this category type if you are a Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC) director. Contact Christine Nobbe at [christine.nobbe@dese.mo.gov](mailto:christine.nobbe@dese.mo.gov) if you have any questions.

## PRESENTER

This category type is designated specifically for a complimentary registration for each non-DESE presented session. Select *Presenter* if your registration has been designated as complimentary.

## RPDC ATTENDEE

Please select this category type if you are an attendee who is a contracted consultant for an RPDC.



# Conference Agenda

## SUNDAY, FEB. 1

4:00 – 8:00 p.m.

**Registration and DESE Outreach Tables**

4:30 – 6:00 p.m.

**Meet and Greet for First-Time Attendees**

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

**Networking**

## MONDAY, FEB. 2

7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**Registration**

7:15 – 8:00 a.m.

**Breakfast Buffet**

7:45 – 10:00 a.m.

**Beverage Service**

8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**DESE Outreach Tables**

8:15 – 9:45 a.m.

**Welcome and General Session**

Keynote Speaker: Steve Bollar

*Standing Tall Through It All*

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

**Concurrent Session A**

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

**Concurrent Session B**

12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

**Lunch**

1:45 – 3:00 p.m.

**What We Do Matters Celebration: Missouri Teacher of the Year Address, Commissioner's Remarks, and Missouri Gold Star Schools Recognition**

Dr. Karla Eslinger, Commissioner of Education

Kimberly Sixta, 2026 Missouri Teacher of the Year

3:15 – 4:15 p.m.

**Concurrent Session C**

**Enjoy Dinner on Your Own**

6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

**Speed Round Trivia**

8:00 – 11:00 p.m.

**Evening Social With Karaoke**

## TUESDAY, FEB. 3

7:00 – 10:00 a.m.

**Registration**

7:15 – 8:00 a.m.

**Breakfast Buffet**

7:45 – 10:00 a.m.

**Beverage Service**

8:15 – 9:45 a.m.

**General Session**

Keynote Speaker: John Antonetti

*Engaging the Learner – Powerful Task Design*

10:00 – 11:00 a.m.

**Concurrent Session D**

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

**Concurrent Session E**

12:15 p.m.

**Conference Adjourns**

12:30 – 3:00 p.m.

**Post-Conference Session**

Keynote Speaker: John Antonetti

*Digging Deep Into Powerful Task Design*

# Featured Speakers

## JOHN ANTONETTI

**John Antonetti** has had the great fortune to visit more than 20,000 classrooms throughout North America in an effort to answer the question: “What truly engages learners?” From observing thousands of students in PK through graduate school, Antonetti has focused on the three facets of powerful learning tasks — intellectual, academic, and emotional engagement. He has been a teacher, an administrator, and a central office leader during his career. While hands-on work in schools is his passion, Antonetti is also a highly sought keynote speaker. His humor and parables are recognized by both educators and parents as relevant examples of the power of teachers. His latest book, co-authored with Terri Stice, is the best-seller *#PowerfulTaskDesign: Rigorous and Engaging Tasks to Level Up Instruction*.



## STEVE BOLLAR

**Steve Bollar**, a.k.a. **Stand Tall Steve**, is driven to help schools and organizations create better culture and climate through creative innovations and encouragement. His books *Stand Tall Leadership* and *Ideas Ideas Ideas* have been a focal point for hundreds of organizations on how to increase morale, change their culture, and improve climate for their students and staff. The recipient of numerous awards and honors, Bollar has worked in education for more than 25 years serving in various roles from art teacher to principal to superintendent of schools. His career has shown him firsthand how to face the challenges that all organizations encounter and how to overcome these challenges with creativity and communication. It is this insight and energy that he brings on stage during his engaging and enlightening workshops.

## KARLA ESLINGER

**Commissioner of Education Dr. Karla Eslinger** is a lifelong educator with more than 30 years of experience in a variety of educational settings. She started her career as an elementary school teacher before serving as a building principal and superintendent in Ava and West Plains. After retiring as superintendent, Dr. Eslinger came to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to serve as assistant commissioner in the Office of Educator Quality. She then went on to work for the AEM Corporation, serving as a senior analyst for education services and providing technical assistance to the U.S. Department of Education in Washington, D.C. Dr. Eslinger most recently represented District 33 in the Missouri Senate from 2021-24. Prior to that, she represented District 155 in the Missouri House of Representatives from 2019-20.



## KIMBERLY SIXTA

**Kimberly Sixta** is a dedicated high school social studies teacher at Ruskin High School in Kansas City, part of the Hickman Mills School District. She was selected by a committee of her peers and educational partners from throughout the state as the 2026 Missouri Teacher of the Year. She is the 57th Missouri Teacher of the Year since the program's inception in 1957. With a passion for student voice, lifelong learning, and access to opportunities, Sixta has inspired and motivated students for more than two decades. Known for her immersive simulations and civic-focused instruction, she empowers students to explore history, justice, and public policy through meaningful inquiry. Sixta continues to shape education through service, mentorship, and tireless advocacy for student success.

# Concurrent Sessions

## CONCURRENT SESSION A MONDAY, FEB. 2 10:00-11:00 A.M.

### ◆ A1: Stand Tall Leadership

Developing yourself as a leader is more than reading a few books and implementing a new strategy. You have to strengthen relationships, develop useful systems, inspire your organization to follow you, and communicate effectively at all times. In this session, participants will discover how to empower themselves to make crucial decisions and to strengthen their confidence in order to make these decisions easily. Learn how to turn your vision into reality and how to develop a culture and climate that support this vision so that others can move from simply being compliant to being fully committed.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Steve Bollar, Keynote Speaker

### ■ A2: Implementing Proficiency Scales With Students to Improve Achievement

You've implemented proficiency scales — now what? In this session, discover one educator's journey of implementing proficiency scales with students in order to improve achievement. The core strategies used include the creation of student-friendly scales, the integration of proficiency scales into daily lessons, the development and utilization of assessments aligned with proficiency scales, and the active involvement of students in monitoring their progress and in setting goals. The implementation of proficiency scales creates a transformative shift in student learning outcomes and engagement.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Melissa Fike (Milken Educator), Secondary Mathematics Coordinator, Columbia Public Schools

### A3: Reimagining Special Education in Missouri

In this session, learn how you can improve outcomes for students with disabilities in your district and throughout Missouri. Join leaders from DESE's Office of Special Education and Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled as they share new strategies to provide educational opportunities for learners with disabilities. Review the status of special education in Missouri today, and learn about many of the key initiatives underway at DESE to improve practices

throughout the state.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Mark Wheatley, Assistant Commissioner, and Gregory Caine Sr., Superintendent of Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled, DESE

### A4: Launching Student Innovators — Building a High School Entrepreneurship Incubator That Transforms Communities

Discover how the Thrive Entrepreneurship Incubator empowers high school students to turn ideas into real ventures while building an entrepreneurial mindset. In this session, learn how mentorship and community partnerships move ideas to action along with practical strategies to create programs that transform schools and communities. Participants will understand the core components of a high school entrepreneurship incubator including curriculum design, mentorship, and community collaboration.

**Grade Levels:** High School, Career/Tech

**Presenter:** Kara Siebe, Thrive Entrepreneurship Program Coordinator, Webster Groves School District

### A5: Aligning Your Actions With Your Priorities in the Principalship

This session will provide strategies for individuals serving in leadership roles to align the time they spend each day with their priorities. Current school principals will share how they use the process of prioritization to clarify the most-important actions they must take each day. Participants will reflect on how their own actions align with the priorities of their schools and will explore tools that can help manage and organize their time.


**Grade Levels:** All


**Presenters:** Christy Coursey, Executive Director of Elementary Learning; Erin Wayt, Principal, Lyon Elementary School; and Cameryn Lyons, Principal, McCulloch Elementary School, Republic R-III School District



### ● A6: AI for Teachers

AI is a hot topic in education today, but how can teachers effectively use AI in the classroom? This session will focus on how teachers can use AI tools to design lessons, generate leveled texts, provide effective feedback, and differentiate instruction to increase student engagement. Teachers will walk away with ideas they can use in their classrooms tomorrow. When students are engaged in lessons and feel like their

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# Concurrent Sessions (Continued)

learning has real-world applications, they interact with the content at a deeper level.

**Grade Levels:** Grades 6-8, High School

**Presenter:** Bethany Petty (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2022 Semifinalist), Social Studies Teacher, Central High School, Central R-III School District

## ✔ A7: Meet Every Student's Needs – The Modern Classroom Project

Are you seeking innovative teaching strategies? This session will introduce the Modern Classroom Project approach – student-paced, flipped, and mastery-based learning. Participants will gain practical steps to implement this model, design self-paced units, and learn how to leverage video lessons and establish mastery checks. Empower your students, create equitable and effective learning environments, and foster ownership of their learning journey. The Modern Classroom Project impacts student learning by fostering a more personalized, engaging, and effective educational experience.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Kara Schulte, Physics Teacher, Parkway North High School, Parkway School District

## ● A8: Leveraging Leadership – A Discussion With and for Teachers

Teachers are experts in learning; but how do we recognize, develop, and leverage our influence? In this session, representatives from the Missouri Teacher of the Year program will discuss several aspects of teacher leadership – instruction, school climate and culture, teacher retention, and advocacy for the profession. Through participant discussions and panelist insights, this session will invite reflection and learning about advocating for students and the teaching profession at the local, state, and national levels.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Jennifer Jones (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2025), ELA Teacher, Lee's Summit West High School, Lee's Summit R-VII School District; Darbie Valenti Huff (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2017), Professional Developer, Missouri State Teachers Association; Kimberly Sixta (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2026), Social Studies Teacher, Ruskin High School, Hickman Mills School District; Stephanie Gladbach (Missouri

Teacher of the Year 2026 Finalist), Business Teacher, Salisbury High School, Salisbury R-IV School District; Melissa Maness (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2026 Finalist), Culinary Arts Teacher, South Tech High School, Special School District of St. Louis County; and Jessica Backs (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2025 Finalist), Third Grade Teacher, Sunrise Elementary School, Richmond R-XVI School District

## A9: Growing Together – Transforming Learning Through Future-Ready Leadership

This session will explore how to effectively implement both personalized learning and competency-based learning districtwide. Participants will receive a framework for building a sustainable initiative through distributed leadership, which empowers teachers and school leaders to drive change. Participants will also examine key strategies for cultivating a positive school culture, targeted resources, and how to foster collaboration. Become equipped with the tools to build a vision that supports both student and educator growth.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Montize Aaron, Director of Elementary Education, Cara Hiripitiyage, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Odetta Smith, Director of Innovation and Life Readiness, and Tammy Hasheider, Director of Secondary Education, Pattonville R-III School District










## A10: When Fluency Flows, Comprehension Grows

How can educators effectively support students whose foundational reading assessments indicate fluency challenges? Fluency is the bridge between decoding and comprehension, helping readers move from sounding out words to truly understanding text. In this session, come explore fluency's key components – accuracy, automaticity, rate, and prosody – and discover how they work together. Educators will leave with practical insights on supporting students beyond speed, fostering expressive and effortless reading that builds comprehension.

**Grade Levels:** Grades PK-2, Grades 3-5

**Presenters:** Jenn Wright, Reading Specialist, and Angel Garrett, First Grade Teacher, Rising Hill Elementary School, North Kansas City School District

Join the Conversation! @MOEDUCATION  
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# Concurrent Sessions (Continued)

## A11: From Last to Leading — Using Collaborative Teams to Improve Student Outcomes

Starting as the lowest-performing school in the state two years ago, Alpha Hart Lewis Elementary School has reduced teacher turnover, improved student behavior, increased attendance, and dramatically improved student learning through the use of collaborative data team structures. Join this session to learn how you can replicate the same process and improve collective teacher efficacy in your school.

**Grade Levels:** Grades PK-2, Grades 3-5

**Presenters:** Amanda Minear, Principal, Marissa Klenda, Instructional Coach, Alpha Hart Lewis Elementary School, Columbia Public Schools; and Mark Clements, Associate Director, Heart of Missouri RPDC

## A12: Curiosity — A Wonderful Way to Learn

If there was ever a blueprint for brilliance, it would be curiosity. Our brains simply work better on curiosity. Once we are curious, our brains draw in any and all of the information around us. Curiosity triggers our reward system, increases dopamine, drives us to keep learning, and makes us happier. But, why does it seem to fade as our students get older? In this session, participants will acquire a multitude of techniques that can be used immediately in any classroom to increase the level of curiosity in their students. Let's bring curiosity back to our teaching!

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Denise Ford, Gifted Specialist, North Kirkwood Middle School, Kirkwood R-VII School District

## A13: Nurturing Norms — Crafting Classroom Community With Confidence

This session will empower educators to create structured (yet flexible) classroom environments by understanding and applying classroom norms. Participants will explore what norms are and are not, how they differ from rules and expectations, and why they matter. Grounded in research and utilizing interactive activities and collaborative planning, these practical strategies to implement norm-setting in your own classroom will enhance student engagement and foster a sense of belonging.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Haylee Anderson, Instructional Coach, eMINTS National Center; and Keith Slater, K-12 Counselor, Hurley R-I School District

## CONCURRENT SESSION B MONDAY, FEB. 2 11:15 A.M.-12:15 P.M.

### ◆ B1: Classroom Management That Works

A teacher's ability to manage student behavior effectively is arguably the most-important indicator of both short- and long-term success of a teacher. The challenge with teaching teachers to effectively manage student behavior is that teachers tend to not understand the impact or reaction caused by their own actions. They tend to struggle with creating a comprehensive repertoire of management strategies. In this session, participants will learn how to make meaningful connections with students that lead to respect from students to teachers. Come discover how to direct (and not ask) during daily lessons and activities within the classroom, which improves teacher confidence.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Steve Bollar, Keynote Speaker

### ● B2: Turning the Page — A New Chapter for Reading in Our Schools

In this session, discover practical ways to move beyond Accelerated Reader and other quiz-based programs in order to spark true joy in reading. Two librarians will share their schools' journeys and will offer ideas, strategies, and solutions to grow students' intrinsic motivation to read and their love for books. Participants will leave with fresh approaches to support independent reading without relying on quizzes, incentives, or costly programs. These strategies have led to an increase in students actually reading the books they check out.








**Grade Levels:** Grades 3-5

**Presenters:** Hope Hunter (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2025 Semifinalist), Librarian, Lucy Wortham James Elementary School, St. James R-I School District; and Dawn Moore, Librarian, Hawthorn Elementary School, Camdenton R-III School District

### ● B3: From Standards to Service — Authentic Learning in Action

Learn how two career and technical education teachers turned their class projects into community assets. From a rural spirit shop that became a student-run printing studio to an urban culinary program making



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# Concurrent Sessions (Continued)

and donating freezer meals, participants will discover how these educators built partnerships; aligned to standards; managed budgets, safety, and scheduling; and assessed authentic skills. Walk away with practical tools to help launch community-connected learning and strengthen local impact.

**Grade Levels:** Grades 6-8, High School, Career/Tech

**Presenters:** Melissa Maness (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2026 Finalist), Culinary Arts Teacher, South Tech High School, Special School District of St. Louis County; and Stephanie Gladbach (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2026 Finalist), Business Teacher, Salisbury High School, Salisbury R-IV School District

## ★ B4: Engage, Energize, and Elevate to Unlock Potential

Discover how every member of your school community can thrive when positivity and engaging activities are at the core of your culture. This session will explore practical strategies to energize lessons, build staff morale, and foster collaboration among all roles in your building. Participants will leave with simple yet powerful tools to unlock the hidden potential in themselves and others, creating a more vibrant and supportive school environment.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Tonya Edgar, Fourth Grade Teacher, Sedalia Middle School; and Allison Burton, First Grade Teacher, Skyline Elementary School, Sedalia School District

## B5: The Power of Collaboration for Students and Teachers

When educators believe in their collective ability to impact student learning, powerful things happen. This session will explain the concept of collective teacher efficacy and how purposeful collaboration among educators leads to stronger instruction, deeper learning, and a more cohesive school culture. Participants will also explore how these same principles apply to students through the use of vertical learning surfaces — a high-leverage strategy that promotes engagement, communication, and critical thinking.

**Grade Levels:** Grades PK-2, Grades 3-5

**Presenters:** Ann McLaughlin, Supplemental Math Teacher, and Mindy McBride, Reading Specialist, MRH Early Childhood Center, Maplewood-Richmond Heights School District

## B6: Enhancing Leadership Behaviors and Professional Development Via Arts-Based Professional Learning

In this session, participants will engage in arts-based activities that are designed to enhance

positive behaviors among leaders and that could be incorporated into professional development. Behaviors such as emotional awareness, dealing with uncertainty, and addressing challenges are often neglected in both leadership and school-based professional development. However, these behaviors can be addressed through the arts. This session will also highlight the many benefits of experiential adult learning in an educational setting.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Daniel Jones, Assistant Principal, Riverview Gardens High School, Riverview Gardens School District

## B7: AI in Action — Enhancing Instruction With MagicSchool and Brisk

Discover how MagicSchool and Brisk are transforming the classroom experience for educators and students. These platforms can enhance student learning by increasing engagement, providing instant feedback, and helping teachers differentiate lessons more efficiently. In this hands-on session, participants will explore how these AI-powered tools can save time, personalize instruction, and streamline lesson planning. Learn practical strategies for using AI to generate resources, differentiate content, and provide real-time feedback — empowering you to work smarter, not harder.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Tia Draffen, Business Teacher, and Liz Schwab, Business Teacher, Fulton High School, Fulton School District

## B8: Two Brains, One Mind — Unlocking the Secrets of Twice-Exceptional Learners

Imagine having two brains in one mind. One is bursting with brilliance while the other is tangled in challenges. This session will explore the dynamic world of twice-exceptional students — those who are both gifted and have learning disabilities. These students are often described as “hiding in plain sight.” Their advanced abilities can mask their struggles, and their struggles can obscure their gifts. The result is missed opportunities for growth. In this session, participants will discover powerful strategies to support these students and their unique strengths and struggles.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Carly Mansfield, Gifted Specialist, Keysor Elementary School; and Jennifer Moore, Gifted Specialist, Robinson Elementary School, Kirkwood R-VII School District

# Concurrent Sessions (Continued)

## **B9: MTSS MythBusters — What Leading MTSS Is and Is Not**

There are many misconceptions about what multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) are and how they can be implemented in school settings. This session will debunk a few of these myths and will help you to define your role as a principal or leader in implementing MTSS in your building. Participants will walk away with resources to use and concrete actions to take in order to effectively lead and monitor MTSS at all levels. MTSS significantly improves student outcomes when implemented with fidelity and intentionality.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Breeya Perry, MTSS Facilitator, and Taryn Gaskill, MTSS Facilitator, Special School District of St. Louis County

## **B10: The Work — A Journey, Not a Destination, Through All Types of Weather**

For the past three years, Windsor High School has been undertaking *the work* to develop highly functioning teams with strong communication, transparency, and accountability practices. This session will frame continued work from the onset, outlining progress along with continued efforts to improve both process and function. Most importantly, this session is a testimony to the philosophy behind highly functional teams that endure and grow during times of great adversity.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Alex DeMatteis, Assistant Principal, Windsor High School; and Julie Schubert, Director of Curriculum, Windsor School District

## **B11: From Chaos to Clarity — Using Kanban to Streamline Workflow in Education**

This session will introduce participants to the Kanban project-management system. Kanban is a flexible, visual technique that can be created with sticky notes for the purpose of organizing work and reducing overload. Participants will engage in hands-on activities that illustrate Kanban's core tenets — visualizing work, limiting tasks in progress, and improving flow. Participants will also explore actual classroom, instructional, and leadership applications and will walk away with practical strategies to implement immediately.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Lisa Siegfried, Principal, Leeton Middle/High School, Leeton R-X School District

## **B12: The One Where We Welcome New Staff — We'll Be There for You**

Could we BE any more excited to share our story? Come learn how one school uses *Friends*-inspired strategies to create a warm and connected culture for new staff. From building Central Perk gathering spaces to fostering Monica-level organization and Joey-style camaraderie, discover practical ideas, creative activities, and ready-to-use resources that can help any school turn onboarding into a meaningful (and fun) experience. When teachers feel valued and connected, they are more likely to stay, collaborate, and create engaging classrooms.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Olivia Howard (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2024 Semifinalist), Director of Choral Activities, Francis Howell Middle School, Francis Howell R-III School District

## **B13: Adjusting Our Lens — Bringing Behavior Into Focus**

Come dive into the science of behavior. Students come to our schools to receive an education, but it is often the soft skills not frequently found in our lesson plans that make the difference between success and failure on the job, in relationships, and intrapersonally. The way we view these student characteristics dictates how we address them in the learning theater. Maintaining a state of equilibrium fosters growth in our students while also addressing our own needs as educators. In this session, participants will learn why student behaviors emerge along with various ways to assess student behavior.

**Grade Levels:** Grades 6-8, High School

**Presenter:** DeAnna Addison, Special Education Teacher, Fox High School, Fox School District

## **CONCURRENT SESSION C** **MONDAY, FEB. 2** **3:15-4:15 P.M.**

### **★ C1: Missouri Gold Star Schools — What We Do and Why It Matters**

In this session, join Commissioner Karla Eslinger and representatives from exemplary high-performing schools that were honored as 2025 Missouri Gold Star Schools. The Missouri Gold Star Schools program

# Concurrent Sessions (Continued)

recognizes schools whose students achieve at very high levels and schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap. The program sets a standard of excellence for all schools in our state that are striving for the highest level of academic achievement. Come witness these schools' journeys to success and discover strategies that your own school can use to impact student achievement and growth.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Karla Eslinger, Commissioner of Education, DESE

## ● C2: Active Literacy – Engaging Reluctant Readers

"I don't like reading" is a phrase teachers hear all too often. But, what if reading did not mean sitting in silence? Active literacy strategies like reader's theater transform reading into a social and engaging activity that builds fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Once seen as only for the elementary grades, research now shows that reader's theater also empowers secondary students. This session will share practical strategies — including reader's theater, interactive fiction, and word games — that turn reluctant readers into confident participants.

**Grade Levels:** Grades 6-8, High School

**Presenter:** Zachary Hamby (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2020 Finalist), English Teacher, Ava High School, Ava R-I School District

## C3: Student-Centered Learning Through Competency-Based Learning for Leaders and Coaches

What if all of the students in your classroom could articulate exactly what they have mastered and what they need to work on next? By leveraging proficiency scales, educators can shift the focus from traditional grades to genuine mastery, making learning goals crystal clear for every student. This session will provide practical strategies and real-world examples that empower students, transforming them from passive recipients of information into active, engaged architects of their own educational journeys.

**Grade Levels:** Grades PK-2, Grades 3-5

**Presenters:** Christina Curtis, Instructional Specialist, and Leslie Jones, Assistant Principal, Bridgeway Elementary School, Pattonville R-III School District

## C4: The Power of Subtraction

Every year, school leaders are presented with a dozen new expectations — new programs, new mandates, new *musts*. But, year after year, what students need

the most has not changed. They need well-supported teachers delivering high-quality, focused instruction in a calm, consistent environment. Yet, as principals, we often find ourselves buried in busyness, pulled away from the very work that matters most — being in classrooms, supporting teaching, and leading learning. In this session, learn how to reclaim your role as an instructional leader and how to simplify and focus your school's improvement plan.

**Grade Levels:** Grades PK-2, Grades 3-5

**Presenters:** Nick Pettit, Director of Federal Programs and Elementary Education; Jocelyn Wilcox, Assistant Principal, Maplewood and Ravenwood Elementary Schools; and Lindsey Priest, Teaching and Learning Coach, Maplewood Elementary School, North Kansas City School District

## C5: More Than a Name Tag

At the beginning of every school year, teachers are tasked with learning the names of their new students. In recent years, it has become clear that learning students' names is not enough. Uncovering students' stories is just as important. In this session, participants will explore how teachers can engage with their students in meaningful ways and then use the knowledge gleaned from this engagement to shape instruction. Walk away from this session with immediately applicable strategies for moving from an awareness of students' stories to an application of this knowledge in curricular planning.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Shaylin Montgomery, Teacher, and Helena Nokes, Teacher, Clearwater High School, Clearwater R-I School District

## C6: Power Up Your Classroom — Automating Student Data With Google Apps Script and ChatGPT

In this session, discover how a teacher-created system using Google Apps Script and ChatGPT can transform everyday classroom tasks. This session will share how to build custom Google Sheets tools for automated rosters, grade checks, and real-time student tracking. No coding experience is needed. Teachers have reported on how easy it is to view the data, and these tools can be utilized in a variety of ways. Walk away with practical ideas and simple steps to save time, boost efficiency, and keep the focus on student learning.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Ally Klein, Assistant Principal, North County High School, North St. Francois County R-I School District

# Concurrent Sessions (Continued)

## **C7: Using Interactive Learning to Promote Critical Thinking and Student Voice**

Are you ready for your students to become future leaders? In this session, discover how to use powerful interactive learning activities to promote both critical thinking and student voice. See how to effectively teach students the ability to evaluate evidence, support opinions, problem-solve, and become analytical thinkers using highly engaging tasks that are applicable to all subject areas. Walk away prepared to maximize student learning using research- and project-based practices.

**Grade Levels:** Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8

**Presenters:** Kendra Vaughn, Reading Specialist, and Kyndra Ward, Third Grade Teacher, Brown Elementary School, Hazelwood School District

## **C8: Together We Thrive – Effective Co-Teaching Practices for Secondary Special Education**

Successful student outcomes are achievable with effective co-teaching. Join this session to learn about the six types of co-teaching. Discover how you can positively impact students receiving special education services through the co-teaching model. Participants will receive and discuss best practices and real-life examples of successful co-teaching. Participants will also identify common challenges and learn strategies to address them.

**Grade Levels:** Grades 6-8

**Presenters:** Melissa Manie, Instructional Mentor, and Angee Whitesides, Special Education Department Chair and Instructional Mentor, Lange Middle School, Columbia Public Schools

## **C9: Unlocking Potential – Standards-Based Instruction for Struggling Learners**

This session will explore standards-based instruction that is rooted in Missouri's state standards, ensuring that all students work toward grade-level expectations with equitable access to rigorous content. Participants will learn practical strategies for differentiation, scaffolding, and resource alignment in order to support objective and standards-aligned teaching and learning for all classrooms.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Chrystal Long, Special Education Math Teacher, and Kyle Stern, Teaching and Learning Coach, Center Middle School, Center School District

## **C10: Assessment + Data = Instructional Information**

Assessment and data can feel overwhelming, and it is difficult to know what to do with all of the information. This session will offer a practical perspective on using student work to discover student successes, identify trends and patterns, and make immediate shifts in instructional practice. Assessment and data do not have to be scary. Participants will receive samples of work from the elementary level, but the strategies and protocols are effective from PK through adult learning.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Amber White, Principal, Moline Elementary School; and Tiffany Hunter, Director of Assessment, Riverview Gardens School District

## **C11: Teaching Tomorrow – Building Educator Pathways Through RYA Programs**

This session will highlight how Registered Youth Apprenticeship (RYA) programs can prepare students to pursue careers in education. Participants will explore how schools can create pathways that develop future teachers and strengthen the local workforce. RYA programs directly influence student learning by connecting academic instruction with authentic workplace experience. Participants will also identify strategies schools can use to partner with districts, colleges, and community organizations to support future-educator development.

**Grade Levels:** Grades 6-8, High School, Career/Tech










**Presenters:** Sarah Chaney, Early Childhood Professions Instructor, Lex La-Ray Technical Center, Lexington R-V School District; and Linda Stinson, Career Pathways Manager, DESE

## **C12: A Culture of Positivity in Your School**

A positive school culture highlights the vital role educators play in shaping the energy and environment of their schools. Creating a positive culture is not simply about making children feel comfortable. It is directly tied to student achievement, engagement, and long-term success. In this session, learn strategies for creating this culture that include fostering positive interactions with colleagues and students. These strategies support a safe and thriving environment for everyone in the building.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Mindi Crook, Librarian, and Dana Cravens, Technology Teacher, Sunrise Elementary School, Richmond R-XVI School District

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 Missouri Purple Star  Gysbers Missouri Comprehensive School Counseling Program  
 Exemplary School Library Program  Missouri Gold Star School

# Concurrent Sessions (Continued)

## C13: Rtl in Action — How to Set Up Effective Tier 2 Interventions

This session will focus on using the Missouri Learning Standards to guide Tier 2 instruction. Participants will learn how to identify the most-essential standards, how to break them down into key skills, and how to design a common formative assessment. Using this process for Tier 2 instruction allows for student mastery of essential skills, and common formative assessments help teachers to identify gaps in instruction and to meet the needs of specific students. Participants will also learn how to track student progress with data sheets and how to group students based on mastery.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** McKenzie Brink, Instructional Coach, and Amanda Cruz, Instructional Coach, Monett Elementary School, Monett R-I School District

## CONCURRENT SESSION D TUESDAY, FEB. 3 10:00-11:00 A.M.

### ◆ D1: Leading the Work of Powerful Task Design

This session will build upon the design elements of Powerful Task Design but will look at the work through a leadership lens. How can we support teachers as they design powerful tasks? This session will share two powerful, field-tested protocols and routines that can be employed by coaches, data-based decision-making team leaders, and school and district administrators to level up instruction in their classrooms.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** John Antonetti, Keynote Speaker

### ● D2: Strategy Smackdown

This session will continue John Antonetti's keynote on Powerful Task Design. Participants will explore high-impact strategies and will model how the strategies boost cognitive engagement and thinking across grades and subjects. Walk away with quick-win strategies that you can plug into tomorrow's lessons. These strategies are practical, low-prep, and easy-to-adapt for every classroom and for all learners in various content areas.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Darbie Valenti Huff (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2017), Professional Developer, Missouri State Teachers Association

## D3: Supporting Success — Utilizing TeachNow for Alternatively Certified Educators

One goal of the Missouri Teacher Development System is to provide support at any level. Of the 4,556 first-year teachers in 2024, 57.7 percent did not complete a traditional educator-preparation program. TeachNow was started in 2023 when a school administrator and a teacher-development specialist discussed the need to support educators entering the classroom through nontraditional avenues. This session will demonstrate how TeachNow can help support your teachers from nontraditional paths along with their students. Discover how to increase teacher retention, improve learning outcomes, and strengthen teacher effectiveness.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Lori Pinkston, Missouri Teacher Development System Specialist, Northeast RPDC; Atina Roberts, ELA Teacher, Higbee High School, Higbee R-VIII School District; Tennille Banner, Superintendent, Green City R-I School District; and Sadie Lewis, Professional Development and Leadership Coordinator, St. Louis School District

### ● D4: Putting the Fun in Student Engagement

Students get tired, teachers get tired, curriculum materials are often tired — the traditional ways of capturing student engagement are tired! This session is all about waking up and reengaging. Participants will walk away with a smorgasbord of new ideas for capturing student attention and promoting student commitment. These new ideas will include everything from attention-grabbing bell ringers to behavioral-management strategies, innovative teaching methods, and activities appropriate for all ages and subjects.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Paul Wright (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2026 Semifinalist), ELA Teacher, and Sandra Looney, Science Teacher, Success Campus, St. Charles R-VI School District

### ● D5: Beyond the Block Button — Reimagining Academic Integrity in the Age of AI

Join this session to examine what academic integrity means in the age of generative AI. Come explore a new paradigm where AI is seen as a powerful learning partner that can be integrated ethically to foster deeper thinking and creativity. Participants will discover AI-resilient task design that focuses on process, critical thinking, and personalized inquiry. Walk away with a practical framework for creating authentic, engaging,

# Concurrent Sessions (Continued)

and AI-supported assignments that promote a culture of integrity and prepare students for a world in which AI is a constant.

**Grade Levels:** High School

**Presenters:** Eleanor Taylor (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2022 Finalist), Assistant Director of Technology Services, and Tammy Hasheider, Director of Secondary Education, Pattonville R-III School District

## ● D6: Bright Futures, Big Smiles — Supporting Gifted Learners in the Regular Classroom and Beyond

In this session, discover joyful and practical strategies for meeting the needs of advanced and gifted students in both suburban and rural K-12 settings. Gifted learners need differentiation. This session will blend research-based differentiation strategies, creative programming models, and real stories from classrooms in order to spark fresh ideas. Participants will walk away with ready-to-use tools, community-connection ideas, and a renewed sense of purpose in supporting gifted learners in the regular classroom and beyond.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Jessica LaFollette, Adjunct Instructor, University of Missouri; and Christa Price (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2026 Semifinalist), K-12 Gifted Specialist, Stockton R-I School District

## ● D7: Mind Over Matter

Are MAP or end-of-course exam scores dragging you down? Building systems of intervention will change the game. By using a day-to-day learning structure, including formal and informal assessments, teachers can address students' identified areas of need. The results are immediate changes to both instruction and learning. In this session, participants will discuss how to assess student learning, data-based decision-making, creating targeted intervention groups, and growing your impact. Walk away with strategies to use in your classroom right away.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Sara Buckley (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2026 Semifinalist), Title I ELA Interventionist, Trojan Intermediate School; and Regina Moyers (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2022 Regional), Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Potosi R-III School District

## D8: Becoming the Administrator Teachers Want to Work With (and How to Stay That Way)

What traits do teachers value the most in administrators, and how can aspiring administrators

find roles that align with these traits? A 2020 study ranked 51 administrator traits via teacher surveys in three rural Midwestern school districts. Also, 328 students recently shared which traits they believe impact classrooms the most. These top traits are a key to administrator success, and finding a district that fits your style helps retain teachers and reduce burnout. In this session, discover the values and leadership style you need to ensure that you are in the best possible role.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Tori Snitker, Principal, and Chelsea Johnson, Assistant Principal, Rolla Junior High School, Rolla School District

## D9: Mastery Made Visible — Student Badge Books

In this session, discover how one team created clear, student-friendly proficiency scales and turned them into a badge book that makes mastery visible. Follow the team's journey from tackling standards-based grading challenges to designing a system in which students monitor progress and earn badges as they grow — offering practical ideas to bring clarity, motivation, and ownership to learning. After attending, participants will understand how to prioritize standards, develop proficiency scales, and implement a badge book system for students.

**Grade Levels:** Grades PK-2, Grades 3-5

**Presenters:** Staci Johnson, Assistant Superintendent; Tricia Ridder, Principal, Owensville Elementary School; Lisa Uthlaut, Literacy Coach, and Courtney Hinson, Math Coach, Gasconade County R-II School District

## ● D10: Reading Success Starts Here — Engaging Every Learner

Implementing explicit phonics instruction in small groups provides targeted support that accelerates reading growth. Research shows that systematic phonics can double the rate of decoding-skill improvement for struggling readers. In this session, learn how to implement explicit phonics instruction in small groups while keeping other students engaged in meaningful literacy tasks. Gain research-based and ready-to-use ideas for grades K-5 including differentiated activities for fluency, comprehension, and word study.

**Grade Levels:** Grades PK-2, Grades 3-5

**Presenters:** Jessica Backs (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2025 Finalist), Third Grade Teacher, and Alaze Chowning, Second Grade Teacher, Sunrise Elementary School, Richmond R-XVI School District

# Concurrent Sessions (Continued)

## ★ D11: Strengthening Transitions and Support Systems for Military-Connected Students Through Collaborative School Initiatives

Informed by our Missouri Purple Star program work and federal grant support, the Plato R-V School District has created a student-centered model for military-connected learners. By addressing the unique challenges these students face — frequent relocations, emotional strain from deployments, and social disconnection — the district has created a more stable and all-embracing learning environment. Our district offers staff training, a military liaison, student-led transitions, and events like the Month of the Military Child. In this session, participants will learn how to build similar supports in their own school districts.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Brad Cooper, Superintendent, and Linda Meckem, Curriculum Director, Plato R-V School District

## D12: New Teacher Induction — Growing and Keeping Effective Educators

For 17 years, St. Louis Plan has advanced effective teaching and learning through peer assistance and review. With teachers entering from a variety of pathways, the St. Louis School District redesigned its new-teacher orientation and academy to provide professional development anchored in evaluation standards, aligned to district priorities, and strengthened by feedback loops. This builds teacher confidence, improves retention, and raises student outcomes. In this session, participants will examine how quality induction programs support new teachers and how feedback loops between teachers and coaches drive growth in instructional practice.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** M. Scott Kopf, St. Louis Plan Coordinator, Wanda Clay, St. Louis Plan Coordinator, and Brein Forcha, St. Louis Plan Induction Coach, St. Louis School District

## D13: From Strategy to Practice — Executive Functioning and Emotional Intelligence in Action

Teaching self-regulation, executive functioning, and

social problem-solving skills has a profound impact on student learning. These foundational skills not only support academic achievement but also enhance emotional resilience, interpersonal competence, and classroom engagement. Our school district is shifting from broad strategic planning and the development of self-regulation programming toward providing deeper support for learners and teachers within their classrooms. This session on executive functioning and emotional intelligence is rooted in our strategic action steps and will equip teachers with practical strategies to build student self-regulation, resilience, and problem-solving within everyday instruction.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Maggie Martinez, Behavior Intervention and Support Coordinator, Garet Nunan, Director of Special Services and Federal Programs; Lacie Reinsch, Behavior Intervention Specialist, Wyatt Humble, Behavior Intervention Specialist, Reeds Spring Elementary School; and Julie Michel, Behavior Intervention Specialist, Reeds Spring Middle School, Reeds Spring R-IV School District

## CONCURRENT SESSION E TUESDAY, FEB. 3 11:15 A.M.-12:15 P.M.








### ◆ E1: Finding Rigor in the Standards

How do we translate the language and expectations of learning standards into aligned tasks that require students to make sense of and *live* in the standards? With a focus that moves beyond simply unpacking the standards, this session will examine hidden clues that reveal the cognitive demand and depth of understanding and meaning-making that standards (and their concomitant verbs) require. Participants will receive a glossary and protocol for mining standards for rigor.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** John Antonetti, Keynote Speaker

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 Exemplary School Library Program  Missouri Gold Star School

# Concurrent Sessions (Continued)

## ● E2: Inspiring Creativity and Engagement in the Classroom — What If We Taught Our Classes Like a Jazz Band Rehearses?

Drawing from the principles of John Antonetti's Powerful Task Design, Daniel Pink's book *Drive*, and the art of jazz improvisation, this session will explore strategies to cultivate creativity and engagement in our schools and classrooms. Rather than *if/then* incentives, true engagement is the most-effective way to reach students. Creativity is the key to unlocking that engagement. Participants will gain new perspectives on how to apply the engagement found in music classrooms to other subjects being taught throughout their buildings.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Jeffrey Collier (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2024 Semifinalist), Band Instructor, Hardin Middle School, St. Charles R-VI School District

## E3: From Standards to Success — Vertical Alignment That Works for Teachers

Teachers often feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of standards and the pressure to cover everything. This session will offer practical strategies to unpack and prioritize the Missouri Learning Standards while exploring vertical alignment across grade levels. When teachers view standards in vertical progression, they better understand what students should know before entering their classrooms and what readiness skills they are responsible for developing. Participants will practice collaborative tools they can bring back to their data-based decision-making teams to strengthen student readiness, scaffolding, and acceleration.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Andrew Berry, Principal, Katelyn Sundin, First Grade Teacher, and Danielle Wenger, First Grade Teacher, Lone Jack Elementary School, Lone Jack School District

## ● E4: Whole Brain Teaching — Five Steps to Engaged Classrooms

This session will introduce Whole Brain Teaching (WBT) using a quick-start framework of five steps — understanding brain-based learning, implementing WBT smoothly, motivating with a classroom video game, teaching using the magic circle, and guiding social skills with classroom rules. The WBT approach has led to remarkable improvements in student learning across K-2 classrooms. Through demos and activities, participants will gain all the practical tools needed to create engaging and supportive classrooms.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Sarah Tillinghast (Missouri Teacher of the Year 2025 Semifinalist), Kindergarten Teacher, Eldon South Elementary School, Eldon R-I School District

## ★ E5: Dream Big, Act Together — A Playbook for Purpose-Driven PTA Collaborations

Establishing a strong, collaborative partnership between school administrators and parent organizations is a powerful strategy for driving student success and achieving goals. In this session, learn how one school has cultivated a highly effective administrator-parent partnership that strengthens the entire school community. Based on the principles of collective teacher efficacy and supported by real experiences, this session will provide strategies for building trust, aligning goals, and leveraging parent organizations as meaningful partners in education.

**Grade Levels:** Grades PK-2, Grades 3-5

**Presenters:** Thomas Devitt, Principal, Conway Elementary School, Ladue School District; and Liz Lohman, President, Conway School Association

## E6: The Benefits of Looping and Its Impact on Trauma-Informed Teaching

This session will detail the positive impact of teachers looping — moving through consecutive grade levels with the same group of students. This approach has a range of benefits including academic success, behavioral support, and a stronger relationship with all educational stakeholders. In this session, participants will learn what looping is, how one school's looping process works, what its benefits are, and how it supports trauma-informed teaching.

**Grade Levels:** Grades PK-2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8

**Presenters:** Carleigh Lindsay, Fifth Grade Looping Teacher, Samohya Stallons, Principal, and Francesca Meixner, Fifth Grade Looping Teacher, Larimore Elementary School, Hazelwood School District

## E7: Using MTSS to Create a Unified Framework for Academic and Behavioral Support

In this session, participants will learn the components of MTSS and ways in which they can create a unified framework within their own schools. Many buildings already use Response to Intervention (RtI) or components of it in isolation. MTSS provides a framework for identifying students in need of academic, behavioral, and/or social supports; matches students with appropriate interventions; and

# Concurrent Sessions (Continued)

monitors progress to ensure that the interventions are working. Participants will walk away with a plan for implementing MTSS as well as resources for interventions, progress-monitoring tools, and a digital dashboard for tracking student data.

**Grade Levels:** Grades PK-2, Grades 3-5

**Presenters:** Kate Giovanini, Assistant Principal, Kara German, First Grade Teacher, and Anna Supel, Special Education Learning Specialist, Paxton Keeley Elementary School, Columbia Public Schools

## **E8: Keeping Great Teachers — Practical Solutions for Retention and Renewal**

In today's climate, retaining passionate and effective teachers is critical. Research shows that students with consistent, experienced teachers make greater academic gains than students who undergo frequent teacher turnover. This interactive session will explore ways to support teachers emotionally and instructionally so that they feel valued and equipped for success. Participants will discover practical strategies and tools for building relationships, increasing engagement, and promoting collaboration. Walk away with ideas you can use immediately to strengthen teacher retention.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Heather Beach, DCI Consultant, Heart of Missouri RPDC; Amy Breeze, Curriculum Coordinator, Crystal City High School, Crystal City School District; and Tammy Ridgeway, DCI Consultant, EducationPlus/St. Louis RPDC

## **E9: Empowering Students, Improving Behavior — The Case for Personalized Learning**

Personalized learning has a significant positive impact on student learning by increasing engagement, motivation, and ownership. In this session, learn how personalized learning can be a proactive approach to improving student behavior. By offering choice and designing instruction around student interests, educators can foster stronger engagement, build student agency, and reduce disruptive behaviors. Come explore practical strategies for creating a learning environment that empowers students to take ownership while promoting positive behavioral outcomes.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Lacie Reinsch, Behavior Intervention Specialist, Reeds Spring Elementary School, Reeds Spring R-IV School District

## **E10: Setting Students Up for Self-Efficacy**

The role of educators goes beyond motivating students in the classroom — we must also prepare them for their lives beyond it. A key factor in student success is self-efficacy, which is the belief in one's own ability to learn and achieve. This session will demonstrate how to build self-efficacy by identifying student mindsets and providing tools to shift them from fixed to growth mindsets. Participants will leave with practical and engaging strategies to enhance lessons and to empower students for long-term success.

**Grade Levels:** Grades 6-8, High School

**Presenter:** Mackenzie Thompson, ELA Teacher, Thomas W. Kelly High School, Scott County R-IV School District

## **E11: Let Your School Go to the Dogs!**

Join this session for an insightful experience exploring the profound impact that facility dogs have on students. As educational environments grow increasingly more demanding, the need for innovative and holistic approaches to student well-being becomes paramount. Facility dogs have emerged as a powerful tool in addressing the emotional, social, and academic challenges faced by adolescents. In this session, participants will learn how effective a facility dog can be for a school's climate along with the logistics for acquiring and caring for a facility dog.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** Mark Wieggers, Principal, and Blondie, Golden Pyrenees Facility Dog, Center High School, Center School District

## **E12: Interpreting English Learner Data to Determine Language Difference or Disability**

When English learners (ELs) struggle academically, it is often difficult to decipher the root cause. This session will explore the stages of language acquisition, the impact of culture on how we teach and learn, DESE resources, and methods to form a collaborative multidisciplinary team to ensure that these learners' unique needs are being considered. Participants will walk away with a framework that can be used to make informed and knowledgeable decisions about ELs' data.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Rhonda Hittenberger Ortiz, EL Instructional Specialist, Agency for Teaching, Leading, and Learning/Springfield; and Zabdi Nunley, EL Instructor, Cassville R-IV School District

# Concurrent Sessions (Continued)

## E13: It Has to Rhyme...Not!

The presenters of this session don't like poetry either! However, poetry can be extremely impactful, and students at all levels of poetic appreciation often become immersed when creating authentic poetry. In this session, plunge into the intricacies of poetry, rock out to the lyrics of your favorite songs, and learn how to have your students decode their choices in an immersive and adaptable deluge of poetic elements. Enjoy creating and reciting authentic poems using original content and elements from the Poetry Out Loud program. These exciting techniques can be easily adapted into every classroom.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenters:** Nichole Stegeman, ELA Teacher, and Sharon Balzer, ELA Teacher, Woodland High School, Woodland R-IV School District



## POST-CONFERENCE SESSION TUESDAY, FEB. 3 12:30-3:00 P.M.

### ◆ POST: Digging Deep Into Powerful Task Design (Additional \$95 fee that includes lunch)

This session will take participants deeper into the tenets and constructs of Powerful Task Design for the perfect balance of engagement and rigor. Quick-win tasks from more than 23,000 classroom visits will be shared, inspected, and transferred across content areas and grade levels to meet learners where they are at. Participants will receive structures of thinking and routines for making sense and making meaning. This session is designed for classroom teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators. Bring your questions, curiosity, and concerns as we level up instruction.

**Grade Levels:** All

**Presenter:** John Antonetti, Keynote Speaker



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