

12TH ANNUAL

TEACHER LEADERSHIP SUMMIT



BLACK EDUCATION EXCELLENCE:
Love. Inspire. Teach.

Wednesday, June 17th -
Thursday, June 18th, 2026



WELCOME TO THE 12TH ANNUAL Teacher Leadership Summit!



Welcome to the Pilgrim Rest Education Enrichment Center and thank you for joining us for the 12th Annual Teacher Leadership Summit. This year's theme, "Black Education Excellence: Reflect. Regroup. Reimagine.", invites us to honor our journey, reconnect with our shared purpose, and envision new possibilities for the students and communities we serve.

Over the next two days, we encourage you to engage in meaningful learning, powerful conversations, and authentic connections. As we reflect on our progress, regroup around our collective strengths, and reimagine the future of education, may you leave inspired, empowered, and equipped to continue advancing educational excellence.

As we gather during the week of Juneteenth, we are reminded of the resilience, determination, and enduring pursuit of freedom that continue to shape our communities and our work as educators. May this observance inspire us to remain steadfast in creating opportunities where every student can learn, lead, and thrive.

Thank you to our sponsors, exhibitors, presenters, volunteers, and planning team for making this Summit possible. Most importantly, thank you to each and every one of you for being here. Your leadership matters, and together we will continue advancing excellence in every classroom for every student.

With gratitude,

Zelatrice T. Fowler

Zel Fowler
President & Director
Arizona Alliance of Black School Educators



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WEDNESDAY KEYNOTE

Dr. Will Moreland

**2026 Teacher Leadership Summit Keynote
Founder, Moreland Training and Associates**

Dr. Will Moreland is a world-renowned leadership expert, civility ambassador, and motivational speaker, inspiring individuals and organizations globally to achieve excellence. With over 50 authored books, including 35 bestsellers, and recognition as one of the Top 10 Motivational Speakers in the World, Dr. Moreland has dedicated his life to fostering positive change and growth.

A two-time combat military veteran and Business Hall of Fame inductee, he is the founder of Moreland Training and Associates, where he delivers executive coaching, leadership development, and innovative training programs. Dr. Will's influence extends to over 125 nations, and he is a sought-after speaker on Capitol Hill and at the White House. Residing in Phoenix, Arizona, he is a devoted husband, father, and proud grandfather who loves old-school hip-hop, sneakers, jazz music, and tropical vacations.



THURSDAY KEYNOTE

Dr. Joy Lawson Davis

2026 Teacher Leadership Summit Keynote
Founder, Gifted Unlimited, LLC

Dr. Joy Lawson Davis is an award-winning international scholar, equity activist, author, consultant, and keynote speaker with a distinguished record of scholarship in the field of gifted education. Her specific expertise is in increasing access and equity in gifted education programming for culturally diverse students, including those who are twice exceptional. Davis has provided training and inspiring keynote messages with school districts, private schools, state agencies and international organizations, empowering them with best practices and resources to increase advocacy and enhance services for gifted learners who are often overlooked, marginalized and otherwise limited due to cultural bias, teacher training, and minimal family/school collaboration. Davis is the author of multiple publications, including six books, - “Bright Talented & Black: A guide for Families of Black Gifted learners”; “Empowering Underrepresented Gifted students: Perspectives from the Field” and “Culturally Responsive Teaching in Gifted Education”. Recently, she was featured in The Roeper Review as part of their ‘Eminent Scholar’ series. A recipient of multiple awards, Davis was recently named the winner of the 2025 Distinguished Service Award from NAGC and the 2025 2e Center Hall of Fame Award from Bridges Graduate School for Cognitive Diversity.



SCHEDULE

Wednesday, June 17th

7:00 AM Exhibit Booths Open
Continental Breakfast

8:10 AM Black National Anthem - Noah Benjamin
Invocation - Siyana Da'Briel
Welcome Dr. Stephen Neal

8:35 - 9:20 AM Keynote - Dr. Will Moreland:
Reimagining Education in a Distracted World

9:40 - 10:30 AM Concurrent Breakout Sessions 1

Room 316 *Self-Leadership: How Teachers Reclaim Their Power and Purpose*
Presenter: Jermaine Shakespeare

Room 335 *Disrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Public Health Approach to Equity and Prevention*
Presenter: Dr. Pamela Sacks-Lawlar

Room 336 *EconReads: Bringing Economics to Life Through Children's Literature*
Presenter: Ms. Donna Dempsey

Room 337 *When Students See Themselves: Identity-Affirming Practices for Success*
Presenter: Christopher Blane

10:40 - 11:30 AM Concurrent Breakout Sessions 2

Room 316 *Is Your Coaching Program Delivering Results?*
Presenter: Dr. Ildi Laczko-Kerr

Room 335 *From Misread to Empowered: Seeing the Student Behind the Behavior*
Presenter: Dr. LeTron Alexander

Room 336 *Unlocking the Joy of Writing: Proven Strategies to Inspire Reluctant Writers*
Presenter: Adam Laningham

Room 337 *What Students Carry: Partnering with Families to Support the Whole Child*
Presenter: Dr. Bisi Alli

11:30 AM - 12:10 PM Lunch, Networking & Exhibitor Showcase
Featuring Musical Performance

12:15 - 12:30 PM AzABSE Leadership Awards presented in partnership with 4AZ:

Higher Education Leader of the Year:
Dr. Jessica Manzone, Northern Arizona University

District Leader of the Year:
Dr. Danelia Portillo, Roosevelt School District

School Leader of the Year:
Angela West, Mesa Public Schools

Teacher Leader of the Year:
Cedric Collins, Casa Grande Union High School District

12:30 - 1:15 PM **General Session Panel**
Student Voices, Shared Leadership: A Multi-Generational Conversation on Reimagining Education

1:30-2:20 PM Concurrent Breakout Sessions 3

Featured Interactive Exhibition

Dreamscape Immersive Experience

Room 316 *The Most Dangerous Word in Education Isn't Failure. It's Potential.*
Presenter: Dr. Ovet Chapman Jr.

Room 335 *Perception and Perspective: Does Your Reality Need A Reality Check?*
Presenter: Prof. Rico McCoy Burton

Room 336 *I Am Because We Are: Centering Black Student Voice Through StoryShare*
Presenter: Cecilia Abarca & Amaya Ravenell

Room 337 *Regulated Adults, Regulated Classrooms: The Missing Link in Student Behavior*
Presenter: Kyla Seabrooks

2:30 - 3:20 PM Concurrent Breakout Sessions 4

Room 316 *Keeping Our Voice: Culturally Responsive Teaching in the AI Era*
Presenter: Dr. Ann Williamson

Room 335 *Building Stronger Futures: The Power of Community and Family Partnerships*
Presenter: Cedric Collins & Berdetta Hodge

Room 336 *To Be Seen is To Be Valued*
Presenter: Anahi Montelongo Nevarez

Room 337 *From Vision to Systems Change: Transformational Leadership for Equity, Excellence, and Collective Impact*
Presenter: Martin Perez, Jr.

3:20 - 3:30 PM Summit Closing Remarks

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SCHEDULE

Thursday, June 18th

7:00 AM Exhibit Booths Open
Continental Breakfast

7:55 AM Welcome

8:10 - 8:30 AM *Arizona Data Overview presented by the Center for the the Future of Arizona*
Ian Dowdy

8:35 - 9:20 AM Keynote Speaker - Dr. Joy Lawson Davis

9:40 - 10:30 AM **Concurrent Breakout Sessions 1**

Room 316 Arizona Association for Gifted and Talented Round Tables
Table 1: *Getting Your Community Involved in Everything Gifted!*

Facilitators: Heather Pace Executive Director and Jessica Zimmerman

Table 2: *Building Strong Parent Groups for Gifted Programs*

Stephanie Newitt and Beth Baker

Table 3: *Gifted Education – Equity, Advocacy, and Access*

Facilitator: Catherine Oliver, ADE Gifted Education Program Specialist

Room 336 *Early Identification, Intervention, and Equity: Addressing the Urgent Need for Holistic Support for Young Black Boys*

Presenter: Dr. Comel Belin

Room 337 *Building Resilience in Schools: Practical Mental Health Strategies for Teachers and Students*

Presenter: Cedric Collins

Room 335 *Knowledge is Power: Teaching for Instructional Equity*

Presenter: Dr. Joyce Jamerson

10:40 - 11:30 AM **Concurrent Breakout Sessions 2**

Room 335 *From Classroom Practice to Instructional Leadership: How Aspiring Leaders Influence Teaching and Learning*

Presenter: Dr. Pamela Chandler

Room 336 *Together We Rise—The Power of Afrocentric Playlists in Classrooms*

Presenter: Alisa Johnson, M.Ed

Room 337 *The Seven Silent Barriers: What Disrupts Connection and Communication and How to Remove It*

Presenter: Prof. Rico McCoy Burton

Room 334 *Rooted in Brilliance: Cultivating Culturally Responsive Classrooms from Early Learning to Leadership*

Presenter: Janet Wright-Moore

11:30 AM - 12:10 PM Lunch, Networking & Exhibitor Showcase
Featuring Musical Performance

12:15 - 12:50 PM **General Session**
Every Student, Every Responsibility: Rethinking Special Education and Belonging in Our Schools
Dr. Eva Marie Shivers in conversation with
Dr. Ovet Chapman Jr.

12:50 - 1:20 PM Meet the Speaker Book Signing & Exhibitor Booths

1:30-2:20 PM **Concurrent Breakout Sessions 3**

Room 316 *It's Not Trendy—It's Foundational: Building Coherent Leadership Systems That Turn Vision into Results*

Presenter: Racquel Stephenson

Room 335 *Literacy as Liberation: Culturally Responsive Literacy for Adolescent Success*

Presenter: Dr. Lynn Daniel

Room 336 *Invest in Their Future: Building Critical Thinking, Collaboration, and Financial Literacy Through the Stock Market Game*

Presenter: Donna Dempsey

Room 337 *Beyond the Classroom: Building Community-Centered Schools That Empower Black Students*

Presenter: Jermaine Shakespeare

2:30 - 3:20 PM **Concurrent Breakout Sessions 4**

Room 316 *Early Learning: Reframing School Readiness: A Summative Collaborative In Partnership with First Things First and Booker T. Washington Child Development & Family Services*

Facilitator: Dr. Evandra Catherine

Room 335 *Arizona's Public Education System—Opportunities and challenges observed in recent data.*

Presenter: Ian Dowdy

Room 336 *Leading from the Middle: How Educators Create Impact Without Formal Authority*

Presenter: Dr. Francesca Nesfield

Room 337 *What Students Carry: Partnering with Families to Support the Whole Child*

Presenter: Kylah Seabrooks

3:20 - 3:30 PM Summit Closing Remarks

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FEATURED GUESTS



2026 Teacher Leadership Summit Emcee

Dr. Racquel "Rockee" Armstrong

Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership, Arizona State University

Dr. Racquel "Rockee" Armstrong is an Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at Arizona State University and a candidate for State Representative for Legislative District 13, serving Chandler, Sun Lakes, and Gilbert. A former teacher and school administrator, she brings both practitioner expertise and scholarly insight to her work supporting the development and sustainability of educational leaders locally and globally. Her work focuses on identity, self-care, leadership, and equitable school–community partnerships. Dr. Armstrong also serves as a Commissioner on the Arizona Juvenile Justice Commission, chairs the Racial Equity Disparities Workgroup, is the State Social Action Coordinator for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, and leads a global consulting practice.



2026 Teacher Leadership Summit Emcee

Dr. Velma Trayham

President & CEO, Black Chamber of Arizona

Dr. Velma Trayham is an award-winning entrepreneur, best-selling author, and global business strategist who serves as President and CEO of the Black Chamber of Arizona. Recognized as one of the nation's Most Influential Women in Business by AZ Big Media, she is also a Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award honoree for her service and impact. Dr. Trayham is the author of the upcoming book UNFIREABLE, which equips professionals and leaders to overcome "gatekeepers," build resilience, and become indispensable in a changing economy. Through her portfolio of companies, she advances inclusive economic development by bridging business growth, housing access, and community empowerment. A nationally sought-after, faith-driven leader, she is widely recognized for helping communities, building and scaling businesses, and supporting institutions in unlocking sustainable success. Learn more at unfireableofficial.com.



Welcome Remarks

Dr. Stephen Neal Jr.

Educational Leader, School Psychologist, and Community Advocate

Dr. Stephen Neal Jr. is an educational leader, school psychologist, and community advocate with more than 30 years of experience serving students, families, and educators. He has held leadership roles in special education, curriculum, and professional development, advancing equitable opportunities and student success. Beyond education, he serves on the Phoenix Boys Choir Board and has mentored student-athletes as a six-time Arizona 6A state championship assistant basketball coach. Dr. Neal is currently a write-in candidate for Arizona State Superintendent of Public Instruction.



Music Performer

Collette 'Coco' Watson

Collette 'Coco' Watson is a singer, writer and filmmaker hailing from sunny South Carolina, now based in Arizona. She's opened for Boyz II Men and Lauryn Hill, and duetted with Eric Roberson. Her music and advocacy has been featured by EBONY, BET, OWN Network, TIME Magazine and more. Follow her creative journey at [instagram.com/CocoWatsonLife](https://www.instagram.com/CocoWatsonLife) and [collettemusic.com](https://www.collettemusic.com).

BREAKOUT SESSIONS 9:40 AM - 10:30 AM

Self-Leadership: How Teachers Reclaim Their Power and Purpose

Jermaine Shakespeare

In today's demanding educational landscape, teachers often feel overwhelmed, undervalued, and disconnected from their purpose. This session empowers educators to reignite their sense of purpose by embracing self-leadership—the ability to take ownership of mindset, growth, and impact regardless of title or position. Participants will reflect on their personal “why,” identify barriers to their effectiveness, and explore strategies to lead from where they are. Through practical insights and real-world examples, attendees will learn how to shift from compliance to empowerment, cultivate a growth mindset, and take intentional action to influence student outcomes and school culture. This session is designed for educators ready to move beyond burnout and reclaim their voice, impact, and leadership within their classrooms and beyond.

Disrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Public Health Approach to Equity and Prevention

Dr. Pamala Sacks-Lawlar

The School-to-Prison Pipeline represents a critical and often overlooked public health epidemic impacting vulnerable youth, particularly Black students, across the United States. This workshop reframes punitive educational practices as systemic contributors to long-term health, social, and economic disparities. Participants will explore how zero-tolerance policies, implicit bias, and a lack of cultural competency contribute to the criminalization of normal adolescent behavior and disproportionately push Black youth out of educational environments and into the juvenile justice system.

When Students See Themselves: Identity-Affirming Practices for Success

Christopher Blane

This session highlights instructional practices from a classroom where learning begins with students' lived experiences. The presenter will highlight how they intentionally use students' personal stories as a catalyst to spark curiosity, affirm identities, and invite authentic connections to academic content. Participants will discuss how the purposeful activation of prior knowledge bridges learners' realities with new concepts, making instruction relevant, meaningful, and accessible. Participants will see how identity-affirming strategies such as storytelling, culturally grounded examples, and reflective dialogue, build belonging and representation while deepening understanding. These culturally responsive practices honor students' cultures, validate their voices, and position their experiences as assets rather than add-ons. Attendees will leave with concrete strategies for creating inclusive learning spaces where all students feel seen, valued, and empowered to succeed.

EconReads: Bringing Economics to Life Through Children's Literature

Donna Dempsey

Join the Arizona Council on Economic Education for an interactive session highlighting EconReads, a student program that brings economics to life through the power of children's literature. In this initiative, trained volunteers partner with K–5 classrooms to read engaging, books while introducing key concepts in economics and personal finance. Each story is paired with hands-on, standards-aligned activities that make learning both meaningful and memorable. In this session, educators will experience ready-to-use lessons that connect Arizona's state standards with literacy, sparking curiosity and building cross-curricular connections. Participants will leave with practical strategies, classroom-tested resources, and fresh ideas to immediately implement in their classrooms. Discover how EconReads not only fosters a love of reading but also helps build a strong foundation for financial literacy in young learners.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17TH PRESENTERS



Jermaine Shakespeare

With 18 years in education, Jermaine Shakespeare leads transformative work in school culture, achievement, and equity. As a principal, he raised a school's grade from C to B and ranked it in the top 15% for growth. He has presented at NEA, ABSE, and AEA conferences, advances educator development, serves as an AEA virtual coach for statewide network for Black male educators, and founded his own outreach, Black Male Educators Leading Alabama.



Dr. Pamala Sacks-Lawlar

Dr. Pamala Sacks-Lawlar is a wife and mother of 7 grown children and 16 grandkids. She is the Founder and CEO/President of the National Black Behavior Health Advisory Council (NBBHAC). Dr. Sacks-Lawlar is an Adjunct Professor of Public Health at Grand Canyon University and a Dissertation Content Expert. She is a Consultant for the School to Prison Pipeline and a Certified Diversity Consultant. She is a proud member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc, and National Coalition of 100 Black Women (NCBW)



Christopher Blane

Christopher Blane is a 5th-grade English Language Arts and Social Studies teacher in the Roosevelt School District. He holds a Master's in Elementary Education from NAU. He completed his teacher preparation with the Arizona Teacher Residency, a nationally recognized program grounded in culturally responsive and relational pedagogies. His classroom is a space where identities are celebrated, cultures uplifted, and access to content is anchored in their home and family connections.



Donna Dempsey

Donna Dempsey is a Program Manager at the Arizona Council on Economic Education with 18+ years in education as a teacher, coach, and consultant. With ACEE, she helps to lead statewide programs that provide practical resources for teaching economics and personal finance, helping educators prepare students for real-world financial decisions and future success.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS 10:40 AM - 11:30 AM

Is Your Coaching Program Delivering Results?

Dr. Ildi Laczko-Kerr

Instructional coaching is widely recognized as a powerful lever for improving teaching and learning; but too often, districts struggle to understand whether their coaching programs are truly making an impact. This interactive session bridges that gap by introducing a practical, comprehensive framework for evaluating coaching effectiveness. Through hands-on activities and real-world examples, attendees will explore tools for capturing qualitative and quantitative outcomes, and apply an evaluation process designed to strengthen the alignment between coaching practices and student achievement. Whether you're refining an established coaching program or building an evaluation system from the ground up, this session will equip you with actionable strategies to ensure your coaching investments lead to real, measurable results that elevate instructional practice across classrooms.

From Misread to Empowered: Seeing the Student Behind the Behavior

Dr. LeTron Alexander

Some of the most challenging moments in school can become the most powerful opportunities to support student growth. From Misread to Empowered: Seeing the Student Behind the Behavior is an engaging, practical session that helps educators and leaders respond to student behavior in ways that strengthen dignity, belonging, accountability, and success. Grounded in psychology, educational leadership, and school-based practice, this session offers culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and relationship-centered strategies that educators can use right away. Participants will leave with practical tools, stronger language, and a renewed vision for helping students feel seen, supported, and empowered.

Unlocking the Joy of Writing: Proven Strategies to Inspire Reluctant Writers

Adam Laningham

Writing is a foundational skill, yet for many students it is also an intimidating and emotionally complex task. Gifted learners may grapple with perfectionism, others with low confidence or overwhelm, and many feel disconnected from assigned topics. Factors such as fear of failure, sensitivities, cultural influences, and limited motivation can all contribute to leaving students frustrated and teachers unsure how to reengage them. This session examines the mindsets and barriers that shape students' writing experiences and offers practical, research-aligned strategies to address them. Participants will learn how to reduce stress, cultivate curiosity, and spark intrinsic motivation through classroom-ready practices that emphasize process over perfection. Techniques include scaffolds that make writing more approachable, choice-driven prompts that foster creativity, and tools that build resilience when challenges arise. Educators will leave with strategies to use in class right away.

From Storytime to Systems Change: Integrating Nutrition Literacy Across Classrooms, Homes, and Communities

Dr. Bisi Alli & Alisa Johnson, M.Ed.

Across the U.S., pediatric obesity and poor food access disproportionately affect vulnerable communities, including our local schools. This workshop presents a classroom-ready, research-informed model for K–5, adaptable to K–12, using buddy and train-the-trainer approaches outside clinical settings. Through children's book read-alouds grounded in developmental behavioral science, Social Cognitive Theory, and Narrative Transportation, educators explore everyday, affordable, culturally relevant food choices. Evidence-informed practices—modeling, repetition, environmental cues—are adapted for classrooms, homes, and communities. Caregiver-child modeling and flexible family strategies reinforce dual-setting integration. Participants examine culturally responsive engagement, non-food rewards, and practical classroom examples. These evidence-based, equity-focused tools help educators promote culturally responsive strategies, family engagement, and nutrition literacy.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17TH PRESENTERS



Dr. Ildi Laczko-Kerr

Dr. Ildi Laczko-Kerr has decades of experience as leader in government, schools, non-profit organizations and professional learning. She's a three-time, educational entrepreneur who's successfully supported the professional learning of thousands of educators. She's a published researcher, national presenter and an award-winning leader. Ildi founded Ribbit Learning to help schools improve student and teacher outcomes by providing educators personalized, virtual coaching.



Dr. LeTron Alexander

Dr. Tron Alexander, PsyD is a psychologist, educator, and behavioral health leader with experience in school psychology, district-level special education leadership, and student support systems. He specializes in culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and relationship-centered practices that help schools better support students and strengthen outcomes.



Adam Laningham

Adam C. Laningham is an award-winning educator, author, and advocate with over 25 years of experience in education. Named Arizona Gifted Teacher of the Year, he has taught across multiple grade levels, led programs serving thousands of students, and founded The Gifted Collective, Bright Child Books, and Growing Intellect & Fostering Talent.



Dr. Bisi Alli

Dr. Bisi Alli, a board-certified internist and lifestyle medicine physician and Associate Professor at Creighton University School of Medicine--Phoenix, empowers schools, families, and communities through nutrition literacy and healthy habit development. A highly rated national presenter, she is also the author of Tayo and the Super Produce Pals at the Grocery Store!, which reached #1 on Amazon in children's nutrition and engages both kids and caregivers.



Alisa Johnson, M.Ed.

Alisa Johnson, M.Ed. is a professional development consultant focusing on culturally responsive practices and resources. Alisa is also a gifted specialist in the Paradise Valley Unified School District in Phoenix, Arizona. Alisa presents professional development sessions: AAGT: (Arizona Gifted and Talented), AzABSE: (Arizona Alliance of Black School Educators) and national conferences (NAGC: National Association of Gifted and Talented) and NABSE (National Alliance for Black School Educators).

BREAKOUT SESSIONS 1:30 PM - 2:20 PM

Perception and Perspective: Does Your Reality Need A Reality Check?

Rico McCoy Burton

A workshop that examines how perception shapes our thinking, choices, and relationships, this session invites educators to explore the inner workings of how we interpret the world—and how those interpretations influence our leadership, our classrooms, and our communities. Participants will unpack the factors that shape perception, analyze how perspective impacts interactions and decision-making, and identify moments when assumptions or misinterpretations lead us astray. Through guided reflection and practical strategies, attendees will learn how to pause, reframe, and realign their thinking to support clarity, empathy, and more effective communication. This session equips educators with tools to strengthen self-awareness, reduce misperceptions, and cultivate healthier, more intentional connections with others.

I Am Because We Are: Centering Black Student Voice Through StoryShare

Cecilia Abarca & Amaya Ravenell

This interactive session invites participants into a culturally responsive literacy model implemented at Utterback Middle School through StoryShare, in partnership with Tucson Unified School District and the University of Arizona College of Education. Grounded in the African philosophy of Ubuntu, “I am because we are,” this work engaged middle-grade Black students in reading, writing, and performance-based storytelling that centered identity, voice, and collective meaning-making. Participants will engage in select StoryShare experiences, including collaborative storytelling and embodied response, to explore how students built connection, belonging, and shared narrative. Literacy Connects' presenters will share insights from implementation with collaborators Dr. Desiree Cueto of the University of Arizona and Dr. Tonya Strozier of Tucson Unified School District. This session invites reflection on centering Black student voice and reimagining literacy as a shared, relational practice.

The Most Dangerous Word in Education Isn't Failure. It's Potential.

Dr. Ovetta Chapman Jr.

In schools, Black students are often described with a familiar phrase: “You have so much potential.” While intended as encouragement, this language can move responsibility from systems onto the student. Rather than examining the instructional conditions around a student, conversations move toward what students could become instead of what they need in this moment. In this interactive session, Dr. Chapman explores how the language of potential and prospects shapes how Black students experience school and how they are discussed in decision-making spaces. By examining real school situations, participants will consider how language colors expectations and responses through guided reflection and facilitated discussion. Educators will leave with actionable tools to reframe conversations, encourage in-the-moment support, and connect what is said about Black students to what they receive today.

Regulated Adults, Regulated Classrooms: The Missing Link in Student Behavior

Kylah Seabrooks

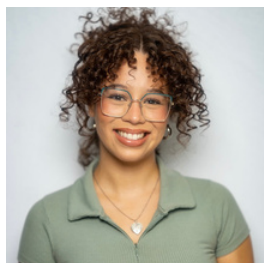
Student behavior is often addressed without examining the role of adult regulation. This session explores how educator responses shape classroom climate, student well-being, and overall school culture. Grounded in trauma-informed and restorative practices, participants will learn strategies to maintain composure, de-escalate challenges, and foster safe, supportive environments that promote resilience for both students and educators.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17TH PRESENTERS



Rico McCoy Burton

Rico “LadyB” Burton is an educator and Edu-tainer who blends communication scholarship, psychology, counseling expertise, and performance. With more than 300 stage and media credits, she brings a seasoned presence to her work as a professor, trainer, author, and coach—delivering evidence-based, engaging experiences that enlighten, educate, and entertain.



Cecilia Abarca

Cecilia Abarca is a Tucson native and Arts Integration Education Programs Manager at Literacy Connects, where she leads teaching artists and oversees StoryShare, a literacy and arts program centering student voice, identity, and self-expression. With a background in theatre education, she creates culturally responsive, collaborative spaces where young people explore their experiences and bring their stories to life.



Amaya Ravenell

Amaya Ravenell is an Education Programs Assistant at Literacy Connects and a teaching artist with over five years of experience in arts education. She is a member of the Literacy Connects’ professional theatre ensemble and supports programs that bring creative, literacy-based learning to diverse communities. She is committed to fostering creativity, confidence, and connection through the arts, centering student voice and culturally responsive practice.



Dr. Ovet Chapman Jr.

Dr. Ovet Chapman Jr. is a school psychologist, consultant, and author focused on creating more inclusive educational systems. With nearly two decades serving children and families in public schools, he leads Wellspring Education Solutions, providing professional development on reimagining special education and strengthening belonging. He is also an adjunct instructor in school psychology and author of *Special Education Superheroes*. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Arizona.



Kylah Seabrooks

Kylah Seabrooks is an experienced K–8 school leader, educational consultant, and national presenter with a focus on middle grades, student behavior, and culturally responsive school systems. Currently serving as an Assistant Principal in Phoenix, she brings a unique blend of instructional leadership and lived experience to her work. She continues to advocate for equitable outcomes by empowering educators to lead with intention, empathy, and clarity.

STUDENT PANEL DISCUSSION

Student Voices, Shared Leadership: A Multi-Generational Conversation on Reimagining Education

Panel Co-Moderators: Siyana Da'Briel & Noah Benjamin

What happens when students are not just participants in education, but partners in leading it? This dynamic plenary session brings together students and educational leaders to discuss the role of student voice, digital media, identity, and civic engagement in today's schools. Panelists will share perspectives on belonging, representation, leadership, and the skills needed to thrive in an increasingly connected world. Attendees will leave with practical ideas for creating learning environments where student voices help drive meaningful change.



Siyana Da'Briel

Siyana Da'Briel is an Honors student at Grand Canyon University, majoring in Legal Studies with minors in African American Studies and Professional Writing. A President's List scholar, she is graduating a year early in Spring 2027 and is currently applying to law school. A California State Seal of Civic Engagement recipient, Siyana enjoys working with local officials and candidates, while mobilizing Gen Z. She is passionate about civic education, advocacy, and public service. She serves as President of the Government & History Club, is a published journalist, and serves as President of her university's Black Student Union. As a contestant for Miss Juneteenth of Arizona, Siyana continues to use her platform to promote leadership, community engagement, and youth empowerment. She aspires to become a constitutional law and civil rights attorney before pursuing public office.



Noah Benjamin

Hello, my name is Noah, and I recently graduated from Tolleson Union High School. This fall, I'll be attending NAU as an Astronomy major, excited for both the cooler weather originally being from Michigan. As a member of the Phoenix Boys Choir, I've had the chance to travel, perform, and connect with people from different backgrounds. I enjoy spending time with friends and family, and playing football. I'm passionate about learning, meeting new people, and making the most of every opportunity that comes my way. As I start my transition into college, I do see myself working more on my music career to better myself.

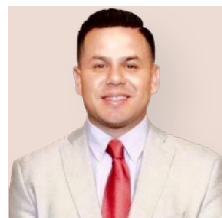
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17TH PANELISTS



Cedric Collins
Business Administration/Life Skills 101 Teacher
Vista Grande High School, Casa Grande USD
Governing Board Member
Kyrene School Elementary School Board



Dr. Lynn Daniel
English Language Educator/Gifted and Talented program Sponsor
West Point High School, Tolleson Union High School District



Martin Perez
Principal
Tolleson Union High School



Dr. LeTron Alexander
School Psychologist
Rover Elementary, Tempe USD
Cappella University
Xander Solutions



Kylah Seabrooks
Assistant Principal
Bernard Black Entrepreneurial Academy
Roosevelt School District 66



Prof. Rico McCoy Burton
South Mountain Community College
Maricopa Community College District

BREAKOUT SESSIONS 2:30 PM - 3:20 PM

Keeping Our Voice: Culturally Responsive Teaching in the AI Era

Dr. Ann Williamson

In a rapidly evolving educational landscape, educators are navigating the growing presence of artificial intelligence alongside increasing demands on their time, energy, and professional identity. This interactive session explores how culturally responsive teaching can remain grounded, affirming, and impactful in the age of AI. Using a Wellness 5.0™ lens, participants will reflect on current challenges, regroup around practical strategies for using AI as a support tool, and reimagine their role as educators who lead with voice, culture, and purpose. Participants will engage in discussion and application to explore how AI can assist with planning, differentiation, and communication without replacing the cultural knowledge, relationships, and lived experiences that define effective teaching. This session positions AI as a tool for access and efficiency while centering equity, identity, and educator voice.

To Be Seen is To Be Valued

Anahi Montelongo Nevarez

I am a first-generation queer Latina who serves our South Phoenix community with pride. I want to share my educational story. It all began in West Phoenix in the Isaac School District, in the heart of Maryvale. I am a product of educators who cared beyond the four walls of the schooling system. As a young girl, I romanticized “la vida loca” because I didn't yet see myself as a scholar; however, I was fortunate enough to be seen and supported by a Black educator. While I am not a Black woman, I deeply understand the power of being truly seen by a Black educator, and I now stand in a position to offer that same support to our Black and Brown children. For the past six years, I have dedicated myself to the classroom. During this time, my perception of what school is, what my role entails, and what it means to be a learner has been transformed. I challenge myself and others to evolve every year, fostering positive growth that reflects our community.

Building Stronger Futures: The Power of Community and Family Partnerships

Cedric Collins & Berdetta Hodge

Community and family partnerships play a vital role in fostering positive outcomes for individuals, particularly in education, health, and social development. By creating collaborative relationships between families, local organizations, and institutions, these partnerships promote shared responsibility, mutual trust, and inclusive decision-making. This paper explores the importance of engaging families as active participants and leveraging community resources to support holistic growth. It highlights effective strategies such as open communication, culturally responsive practices, and sustained engagement efforts. Ultimately, strong community and family partnerships contribute to more resilient systems, improved well-being, and long-term success for individuals and communities alike.

From Vision to Systems Change: Transformational Leadership for Equity, Excellence, and Collective Impact

Martin Perez, Jr

Transformational leadership requires more than vision—it requires coherent systems, collective efficacy, and a commitment to equity. This interactive session explores how school and district leaders can move beyond isolated initiatives to create sustainable systems that improve student outcomes and strengthen organizational culture. Participants will examine practical strategies for aligning vision, people, and practices through instructional leadership, distributed leadership structures, data-informed decision-making, and culturally responsive systems. Through reflective dialogue and collaborative learning, attendees will explore approaches to building leadership capacity, increasing organizational coherence, and fostering environments where both educators and students thrive. Participants will leave with actionable tools and systems-thinking strategies that can be applied immediately to advance equity, excellence, and collective impact within schools and districts.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17TH PRESENTERS



Dr. Ann Williamson

Dr. Ann Williamson is a veteran educator, transformational coach, and AI Empowerment Strategist with over 50 years in education. As Founder of AEW Educational Enterprises, she helps educators and leaders reduce burnout, reclaim their voice, and integrate AI with culturally responsive practices. She is the creator of the JOY Framework™ and Wellness 5.0™, advancing equity, sustainability, and innovation in education.



Anahi Montelongo Nevarez

A proud queer, first-generation Latina educator serving South Phoenix, she is a product of the Isaac School District in West Phoenix. Her educational journey was transformed by a Black educator who recognized her potential before she could see it in herself. Now in her sixth year in the classroom, she is dedicated to providing that same affirmation, visibility, and opportunity for Black and Brown scholars. She views her role as a guide, advocate, and community member who grows alongside her students and works to meet their evolving needs.



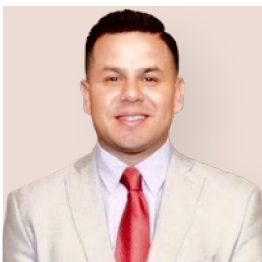
Cedric Collins

Cedric Collins is a dedicated educator and community leader recognized for his outstanding service and commitment to student success. A three-time recipient of the VFW Teacher of the Year award, he has consistently demonstrated excellence in the classroom and a passion for civic education. Collins has also been honored as SOS School Board Member of the Year, reflecting his strong leadership, advocacy for students and families, and dedication to strengthening schools through community.



Berdetta Hodge

Berdetta Hodge has been a resident of the city of Tempe for over 40 years. She was raised in Tempe and graduated from Tempe public schools. From a young age, Berdetta sought to become a transformative leader in our city. She wanted to make a difference in the lives of others. She has been a lifelong contributor to community well-being through public service and a passion for community-building.



Martin Perez, Jr.

Martin Perez, Jr., serves as the principal of Tolleson Union High School in Arizona. His leadership focuses on building systems of instructional excellence, strengthening school culture, advancing equity-centered practices, and developing collective leadership capacity. As a Columbia University doctoral researcher studying leadership experiences in urban educational systems, Martin is committed to transformational leadership practices that improve outcomes for students and communities.

AzABSE Leadership of the Year Awards

Presented in Partnership with 4AZ



Higher Education Leader of the Year

Dr. Jessica Manzone

Dr. Jessica Manzone is an Associate Professor of Teaching in the College of Education at Northern Arizona University and serves as lead faculty for the Arizona Teacher Residency. Through her leadership, she prepares and mentors future educators while strengthening the teacher pipeline across Arizona. As Co-Principal Investigator and Co-Project Director of a five-year U.S. Department of Education Innovation Research grant, Dr. Manzone is advancing research on relationship-based teacher residencies that support teacher effectiveness and retention. Recognized for her commitment to educator development, mentorship, and innovative teacher preparation, she empowers emerging educators to become confident, collaborative, and equity-minded leaders in their schools and communities.



School Leader of the Year

Angela West

Angela West is a visionary educational leader with 30 years of experience advancing student achievement, promoting equity, and transforming school communities. As Principal of East Valley Academy, she successfully led the school's improvement from a C-rated to an A-rated campus in just two years while increasing its College and Career Ready Index to a perfect score. Known for her data-driven leadership and commitment to continuous improvement, Mrs. West has implemented innovative practices that strengthen teaching, improve student outcomes, and foster a culture of accountability and collaboration. Her leadership is grounded in empathy, high expectations, and a belief in the potential of every student. Through mentorship, culturally responsive practices, and a relentless focus on excellence, Mrs. West continues to inspire educators and create opportunities for students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.



Teacher Leader of the Year

Cedric Collins

Cedric Collins is a dedicated educator, mentor, and advocate whose commitment to student success extends far beyond the classroom. During his 12 years as a high school educator, he has built a reputation for fostering meaningful relationships, creating inclusive learning environments, and empowering students to reach their full potential. In addition to his work in the classroom, he serves on the Kyrene School District Governing Board, where he advocates for strong public schools, family engagement, and equitable opportunities for all learners. A three-time VFW Teacher of the Year recipient and recipient of the Save Our Schools School Board Member of the Year Award, Mr. Collins is recognized for his leadership, educational excellence, and service to Arizona's students and communities. Guided by service, integrity, and innovation, he continues to inspire students and strengthen communities across Arizona.

FEATURED CONVERSATION

Every Student, Every Responsibility: Rethinking Special Education and Belonging in Our Schools

Dr. Eva Marie Shivers in conversation with Dr. Ovett Chapman Jr.

Join Dr. Eva Marie Shivers in conversation with Dr. Ovett Chapman Jr., author of *Special Education Superheroes: Rethinking Conventional Practices to Best Serve All Students*, for an engaging discussion on what it truly means to create schools where every student is seen, valued, and supported.

Drawing from his experience as a school psychologist and advocate for inclusive educational systems, Dr. Chapman will challenge traditional approaches to special education and explore how educators can move beyond compliance to cultivate belonging, opportunity, and success for all learners. Together, Dr. Shivers and Dr. Chapman will examine the connections between equity, disability, culture, and student identity while highlighting practical ways educators can embrace shared responsibility for every child in their care.

This thought-provoking conversation will inspire participants to reconsider long-held assumptions and reimagine schools where all students can thrive.



Dr. Ovett Chapman Jr.

Dr. Ovett Chapman Jr. is a school psychologist, consultant, and author dedicated to creating more inclusive and equitable educational systems. With nearly two decades of experience serving children and families in public schools, he provides professional development and consulting through Wellspring Education Solutions. Dr. Chapman teaches graduate students in school psychology and is the author of *Special Education Superheroes: Rethinking Conventional Practices to Best Serve All Students* (Routledge, 2025). He holds a Ph.D. in School Psychology from the University of Arizona and was recognized as a Champion of Equity by the American Consortium for Equity in Education.



Dr. Eva Marie Shivers

Eva Marie Shivers, J.D., Ph.D., is the founding executive director of Indigo Cultural Center, a national nonprofit research and consulting organization based in Phoenix. Her work focuses on culturally responsive and strength-based approaches that support children, families, and communities impacted by poverty, systemic racism, and historical marginalization. A former faculty member at the University of Pittsburgh, Dr. Shivers holds degrees from Arizona State University, Howard University School of Law, and UCLA. A nationally recognized researcher and speaker, she has spent more than two decades advancing racial equity through research, evaluation, policy, and professional learning.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS 9:40 AM - 10:30 AM

Building Resilience in Schools: Practical Mental Health Strategies for Teachers and Students

Cedric Collins

Today's schools face increasing challenges related to stress, anxiety, burnout, and emotional well-being among both educators and students. This presentation explores practical, research-based mental health strategies that can be implemented in classrooms, schools, and daily routines to create healthier learning environments. Participants will learn techniques for recognizing signs of emotional distress, reducing stress through mindfulness and self-regulation practices, and building resilience through positive relationships and supportive school culture. The session also highlights strategies educators can use to maintain their own mental wellness while supporting student success. Through interactive discussion and real-world examples, attendees will gain tools to foster emotional safety, improve communication, and encourage academic engagement. Designed for teachers, administrators, counselors, and school leaders, this presentation emphasizes proactive approaches that strengthen both individual well-being and overall school climate, helping schools create environments where students and educators can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Knowledge is Power: Teaching for Instructional Equity

Dr. Joyce Jamerson

Liberated living starts with dreaming big and building the motivation, skills, and knowledge to make those dreams real. But let's keep it real, gaps in literacy instruction can block scholars from reaching their greatest potential in school and in life. This session focuses on 'mind the gap' priorities: cultural depth, knowledge building, and differentiation. Throughout, you'll receive strategy invitations (Power Moves) to build knowledge capital and 'Resource Audit' Look-fors to drive reflection, exploration, and next-step conversations. Expected Outcomes: Leave with renewed purpose and practical tools to: 1) Ensure scholars learn to read and love to read; 2) Prioritize knowledge acquisition for scholars; and 3) Equip educators, caregivers, and families to develop skilled readers who live liberated lives!

Early Identification, Intervention, and Equity: Addressing the Urgent Need for Holistic Support for Young Black Boys

Dr. Comel Belin

This presentation examines the urgent need for early identification and intervention for young Black boys within the educational system. It explores how behavioral concerns are often misinterpreted, leading to exclusionary discipline and delayed access to support services. The role of school psychologists is highlighted as critical in guiding appropriate referrals, supporting teachers, and implementing evidence-based interventions. The session addresses the broader sociopolitical context, including the school-to-prison pipeline, and its disproportionate impact on Black males and other students of color. Participants will gain practical strategies to support behavioral and academic success through early screening, and culturally responsive practices.

THURSDAY, JUNE 18TH PRESENTERS



Cedric Collins

Cedric Collins is a dedicated high school educator known for his commitment to student success, leadership, and community service. A three-time VFW Teacher of the Year recipient, he has consistently demonstrated excellence in education and mentorship. Collins was also honored as Save Our Schools School Board Member of the Year for his advocacy and leadership in public education. Passionate about empowering students and strengthening schools, he continues to make a lasting impact on education and his community through service, integrity, and innovation.



Dr. Joyce Jamerson

Dr. Joyce Jamerson transforms lives through literacy. As National Director of Academic Planning & Solution Development, she creates strategic literacy plans that turn educational leaders' visions into reality. Drawing on 30 years as a teacher, literacy coach, administrator, and university instructor, she partners with districts to advance equity and student outcomes. Guided by "It takes a village," she leads literacy initiatives, speaks nationwide, and empowers scholars, educators, and families!



Dr. Comel Belin

Dr. Belin is a school psychologist with 20 years of experience in evaluations, counseling, and behavioral interventions in Arizona schools. She holds a doctorate from the University of Arizona and is certified in Child and Family Forensics, specializing in trauma and learning needs. Her work emphasizes culturally responsive, ethical practice, early identification, and collaboration. She integrates arts and mindfulness to support student outcomes and equity.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS 10:40 AM - 11:30 AM

Arizona Association for Gifted and Talented Round Tables

Participants will have the opportunity to engage in facilitated discussions on key topics impacting gifted education, equity, advocacy, and access.

Table 1: Getting Your Community Involved in Everything Gifted!

Heather Pace Executive Director of AAGT and Jessica Zimmerman Board President of AAGT

Imagine having one place where families, educators, and advocates can connect, share resources, celebrate successes, and stay informed about all things gifted. In this interactive roundtable, discover how to use AAGT's community platform to build engagement, share meaningful content, promote opportunities, and create a gifted-focused network your community will actually use. Leave with practical tools, ideas, and templates you can implement immediately.

Table 2: Building Strong Parent Groups for Gifted Programs

Stephanie Newitt AAGT Past President and Gifted Teacher and Beth Baker Deer Valley Parent Program Coordinator

Strong gifted programs don't happen in isolation—they thrive when families are informed, connected, and empowered. Join experienced parent leaders from AAGT's Parent Affiliates Task Force for a practical roundtable on building successful parent groups that foster advocacy, support, and community. Learn tried-and-true strategies for recruiting members, sustaining engagement, partnering with schools, and creating meaningful opportunities for families to connect. Leave with actionable ideas, resources, and next steps to start or strengthen a parent group in your school or district.

Table 3: Gifted Education – Equity, Advocacy, and Access

ADE Gifted Education Program Specialist, Catherine Oliver and AAGT Advocacy Task Force

Join educators, administrators, counselors, and advocates in a collaborative roundtable discussion focused on equitable access to gifted education through data-informed decision making. Participants will explore how ADE's Gifted Data Dashboard can help schools and districts analyze identification patterns, monitor representation across student groups, and identify opportunities to strengthen equitable identification practices. Through guided discussion and practical examples, attendees will examine systems of accountability, explore challenges, and leave with actionable strategies to support ongoing monitoring, advocacy, and access for advanced learners from diverse backgrounds.

THURSDAY, JUNE 18TH FACILITATORS



Heather Pace

Heather Pace serves as Executive Director of the Arizona Association for the Gifted & Talented (AAGT), where she works to connect educators, families, and advocates in support of Arizona's gifted learners. With more than 15 years of nonprofit and association leadership experience, Heather is passionate about building strong communities, creating meaningful learning opportunities, and helping organizations turn great ideas into action. A native Arizonan, she enjoys collaborating with educators across the state to ensure gifted students are seen, heard, challenged, and supported.



Jessica Zimmerman

Jessica Zimmerman is President of the Arizona Association for Gifted and Talented (AAGT), founder of Wonderfully Wired GT PD, and author of the children's book *Growing Up Gifted*. As the Gifted Experience and Design Specialist at The Immersive 9 in the Tempe Elementary School District, she creates innovative learning experiences for gifted students and was honored with the 2021 Milken Educator Award for her impact as a gifted resource teacher, instructional coach, and district gifted coordinator. Drawing on both professional expertise and personal experience as a former 2E student and parent of her own twice-exceptional child, she is dedicated to helping gifted learners thrive by supporting the families and educators who help them find their talents, passions



Stephanie Newitt

Stephanie Newitt is a gifted education advocate and the parent of four gifted young adults. She co-founded the Gilbert Gifted Education Parent Council in 2015. She joined the AAGT Board of Directors in 2018 to support parents of gifted children. Now on the AAGT Leadership Council, she co-chairs the AAGT Affiliate Task Force developing resources for and fostering connections with parent groups across the state. Her newest adventure includes being a gifted education teacher for 4th-6th grade students in Gilbert. When not teaching she enjoys kayaking, yoga, reading, and off-roading with her husband.



Beth Baker

Elizabeth is a longtime community advocate, speaker, and mentor dedicated to helping families, students, and parents thrive. She co-founded the Deer Valley Gifted Community, an online organization that supports families of neurodiverse students and partners with the school district to provide advocacy, resources, and connection. She leads the OC English Friendship Club, creating a welcoming space for moms to practice English and build cross-cultural friendships. Passionate about investing in young people, she launched Impact Breakfasts to recognize high school students making a difference. She has also coached volleyball, led parenting classes, volunteered in local schools, and raised three wonderful young adults.



Catherine Oliver

Catherine Oliver is the state Gifted Education Coordinator and program specialist for Title IV-A Student Support and Academic Enrichment at the Arizona Department of Education, overseeing programs designed to support and nurture gifted students across the state. She is dedicated to creating amazing opportunities for advanced learners. Catherine's commitment to fostering academic excellence and personal growth ensures that gifted students receive the resources and encouragement needed to thrive.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS 10:40 AM - 11:30 AM

From Classroom Practice to Instructional Leadership: How Aspiring Leaders Influence Teaching and Learning

Dr. Pamela Chandler

Aspiring leaders often believe leadership begins once they leave the classroom. In reality, strong leadership begins with strong instruction. This session explores how educators develop leadership influence through daily instructional practice. Participants will examine practical strategies that strengthen student engagement, increase clarity of learning, and build a culture of collaboration within classrooms and teams. The session highlights how practices such as checking for understanding, modeling thinking, purposeful questioning, and small group instruction build instructional credibility and position educators to influence others. Participants will also explore ways to support colleagues, contribute to instructional conversations, and lead improvement efforts without a formal leadership title. This session is designed for teachers, instructional coaches, and emerging leaders who want to expand their impact while continuing to refine their craft.

Together We Rise—The Power of Afrocentric Playlists in Classrooms

Alisa Johnson, M.Ed.

This presentation explores the pedagogical value of integrating Afrocentric playlists within the classroom to cultivate an inclusive and engaging learning environment. When we incorporate music that reflects diverse experiences, we foster culturally responsive practices where students feel seen, heard, and empowered by creative, thought-provoking musical lyrics. The session highlights three curated musical selections. Each selection identifies specific strategies for leveraging music as a catalyst for: Curriculum Integration: Connecting lyrical themes to core academic standards. Community Building: Using rhythm and shared listening experiences to strengthen classroom culture. Critical Conversations: Prompting meaningful dialogue on identity, equity, and social justice. For 21st-century African American students, incorporating music into the classroom affirms, cultivates, empowers and celebrates cultural identity by creating spaces where students feel safe and seen.

The Seven Silent Barriers: What Disrupts Connection and Communication and How to Remove It

Prof. Rico Burton

A session that uncovers the seven ineffective ways we listen and how they quietly undermine understanding, connection, and collaboration. Participants will learn to identify each barrier in themselves and others, recognize the habits and triggers that activate them, and practice practical strategies to shift from ineffective listening to intentional, engaged communication. This workshop equips educators with tools to strengthen awareness, reduce misinterpretation, and build more meaningful, responsive interactions in every setting.

Rooted in Brilliance: Cultivating Culturally Responsive Classrooms from Early Learning to Leadership

Janet Wright-Moore

What if educational excellence began by recognizing the brilliance already within every child? This interactive workshop engages educators, leaders, and community partners in exploring how culturally responsive practices—grounded in identity, equity, and high expectations—transform student outcomes, starting in the earliest years. Centered on Black Education Excellence: Reflect. Regroup. Reimagine., participants will examine how early learning environments build the foundation for literacy, confidence, and lifelong success, particularly for historically underserved learners. Through dialogue, storytelling, and practical application, participants will gain strategies to affirm identity, expand access to high-quality learning, and disrupt inequitable systems. Emphasis is placed on early childhood practices that strengthen language, culturally connected curriculum, and social-emotional development.

THURSDAY, JUNE 18TH PRESENTERS



Dr. Pamela Chandler

Dr. Pamela Chandler is a K–12 principal and Contributing Faculty member at Walden University who has taught and led in both U.S. and international schools. She focuses on strengthening instruction, increasing student engagement, and supporting teacher growth. Dr. Chandler is the author of *Engaging Learners at All Levels* and leads professional learning that helps educators connect strong classroom practice with instructional leadership.



Alisa Johnson, M.Ed.

Alisa Johnson, M.Ed. is a professional development consultant focusing on culturally responsive practices and resources. Alisa is also a gifted specialist in the Paradise Valley Unified School District in Phoenix, Arizona. Alisa presents professional development sessions: AAGT: (Arizona Gifted and Talented), AzABSE: (Arizona Alliance of Black School Educators) and national conferences (NAGC: National Association of Gifted and Talented) and NABSE (National Alliance for Black School Educators).



Prof. Rico Burton

Rico “LadyB” Burton is an educator and Edu-tainer who blends communication scholarship, counseling expertise, and performance. With more than 300 stage and media credits, she brings a seasoned presence to her work as a professor, trainer, author, and coach—delivering evidence-based, engaging experiences that enlighten, educate, and entertain.



Janet Wright-Moore

Janet Wright-Moore is a visionary early childhood leader and Phoenix South Regional Specialist with First Things First Arizona. With decades of experience as a teacher, coach, and systems leader, she uplifts children and families through bold, culturally grounded leadership. Guided by “Different Does Not Mean Deficient,” Janet embraces this work as a true calling—committed to dismantling barriers, expanding opportunity, and transforming communities by investing in our youngest learners.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS 1:30PM - 2:20 PM

It's Not Trendy-It's Foundational: Leading Beyond Initiative Overload to Black Student Excellence

Racquel Stephenson

More initiatives aren't the problem, misalignment is. In many schools, especially those serving Black students, competing priorities create overload that fragments practice, exhausts educators, and limits real impact. This interactive workshop challenges leaders to confront the hidden cost of "doing too much" and instead focus on doing what matters most. Drawing on district-level leadership experience, this session introduces a practical, equity-centered approach to creating coherence across systems. Participants will examine where overload exists in their own contexts, identify what to stop, and realign efforts to center culturally responsive practice and Black student excellence. Through reflection, dialogue, and action planning, attendees will leave with clear strategies to move from scattered initiatives to focused, high-impact leadership.

Investing in Their Future

Donna Dempsey

What do critical thinking and teamwork have to do with the stock market? Everything. In this interactive session, educators will explore how the Stock Market Game builds collaboration, decision-making, and analytical skills. Participants will learn the basics of the program and access ready-to-use resources that connect real-world financial concepts to classroom learning. Discover how students apply math to investment strategies, analyze current events for market impact, and explore concepts like risk, reward, and diversification through simulation. Walk away with practical tools and strategies to create an engaging, student-centered environment that promotes financial literacy and essential life skills—no prior investing experience required.

Literacy as Liberation: Culturally Responsive Literacy for Adolescent Success

Dr. Lynn Daniel

This session demonstrates how evidence-informed adolescent literacy practices help teachers challenge deficit-based assumptions, remove barriers to grade-level understanding, and elevate student voice. Participants will learn how to teach adolescents explicit vocabulary and morphology to help them understand difficult academic language; how to model and scaffold disciplinary reading routines like annotation, text coding, and think-alouds to make tough texts easier to understand; and how to use structured discussion protocols that put students in charge of making meaning. The session also highlights strategies like "writing-to-learn routines" that affirm students' linguistic and cultural assets while expanding opportunities for authentic expression. These literacy actions equip educators to create responsive, high-expectation classrooms where all adolescents can succeed.

Beyond the Classroom: Building Community-Centered Schools That Empower Black Students

Jermaine Shakespeare

Black student success extends beyond the classroom and is rooted in strong, intentional partnerships with families and communities. This session invites educators to reflect on current practices, regroup around shared responsibility, and reimagine schools as hubs of empowerment for Black students. Drawing from experience in mentoring, community outreach, and partnership-building, participants will explore practical strategies to strengthen family engagement, leverage community assets, and elevate student voice. Attendees will leave with actionable tools to create school environments where Black students are supported academically, socially, and emotionally—and empowered to thrive.

THURSDAY, JUNE 18TH PRESENTERS



Racquel Stephenson

Racquel Stephenson is an educational leader and co-founder of the ORI Group, focused on advancing equity-centered systems change and improving outcomes for Black students. With experience leading district-wide initiatives, she brings both classroom insight and systems-level expertise to her work. She supports schools in moving beyond initiative overload to build coherent, culturally responsive practices that center student identity, voice, and excellence.



Donna Dempsey

Donna Dempsey is a Program Manager at the Arizona Council on Economic Education with 18+ years in education as a teacher, coach, and consultant. With ACEE, she helps to lead statewide programs that provide practical resources for teaching economics and personal finance, helping educators prepare students for real-world financial decisions and future success.



Dr. Lynn Daniel

Dr. Lynn Daniel is an adolescent literacy educator with extensive experience supporting diverse learners in schools in Missouri and Arizona. Her work centers on evidence-based literacy practices, with a particular focus on vocabulary development, morphology, and disciplinary literacy strategies that strengthen students' listening, speaking, reading, writing, and critical comprehension skills. She holds a doctorate in Reading, Language, Literacy, and Leadership from Concordia University Chicago.



Jermaine Shakespeare

With 18 years in education, Jermaine Shakespeare leads transformative work in school culture, achievement, and equity. As a principal, he raised a school's grade from C to B and ranked it in the top 15% for growth. He has presented at NEA, ABSE, and AEA conferences, advances educator development, serves as an AEA virtual coach for statewide network for Black male educators, and founded his own outreach, Black Male Educators Leading Alabama.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS 2:30 PM - 3:20 PM

Leading from the Middle: How Educators Create Impact Without Formal Authority

Dr. Francesca Nesfield

Many educators are expected to lead, influence, and advocate for change without holding formal leadership titles. From coordinators and instructional support staff to teacher leaders and student success professionals, these “middle leaders” play a critical role in shaping student experiences, strengthening programs, and supporting institutional goals. This session explores practical strategies for leading from the middle through relationship-building, strategic communication, advocacy, and data-informed decision-making. Drawing from real-world experiences in student success leadership and program development, participants will examine how influence, credibility, and collaboration can create meaningful impact within educational systems. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies to strengthen their leadership identity, increase program visibility, and lead with confidence regardless of position or title.

What Students Carry: Partnering with Families to Support the Whole Child

Kylah Seabrooks

Students enter classrooms carrying experiences that shape their behavior, engagement, and sense of belonging. This session explores how educators can partner with families especially those navigating generational, cultural, and systemic challenges to better support the whole child. Participants will gain strategies to build trust, strengthen communication, and create inclusive environments that honor student identity while addressing the realities many families face.

Early Learning: Reframing School Readiness: A Summative Collaborative In Partnership with First Things First and Booker T. Washington Child Development & Family Services

Dr. Evandra Catherine

Facilitated by Dr. Evandra Catherine, Arizona State University professor and early childhood researcher, this Summit Collaborative brings together PreK–3rd grade educators, school leaders, and community partners to reimagine what it means for schools to be ready for every child. Through collaborative table discussions, participants will explore relationship-centered practices, responsive learning environments, engaging instruction, and strong family and community partnerships that support young learners during their foundational years. Together, attendees will examine challenges, share promising practices, and identify strategies that foster curiosity, strengthen school readiness, and support student success across the early learning continuum.

Arizona’s Public Education System—Opportunities and challenges observed in recent data.

Ian Dowdy

A close look at recent education outcomes in Arizona reveals a system that has weathered some significant challenges—and faces emerging realities of declining birth rates, ongoing teacher shortages, and a rapidly evolving open enrollment landscape. Recent data indicate that long-standing inequities in outcomes still persist, but that achievement gaps remain stable. Projected demand for qualified workers will be much stronger than the state’s education system can provide, requiring a renewed commitment on how to improve outcomes for all students.

THURSDAY, JUNE 18TH PRESENTERS



Dr. Francesca Nesfield

Dr. Francesca L. Nesfield is an educator, student success professional, and founder of Purposed Legacy Learning and Consulting, a consulting practice dedicated to supporting educational programs through leadership development, strategic planning, and data-informed decision-making. With experience leading academic support initiatives and developing student-centered learning environments, Dr. Nesfield is passionate about helping educators strengthen their influence, advocate for meaningful change,



Kylah Seabrooks

Kylah Seabrooks is an experienced K–8 school leader, educational consultant, and national presenter with a focus on middle grades, student behavior, and culturally responsive school systems. Currently serving as an Assistant Principal in Phoenix, she brings a unique blend of instructional leadership and lived experience to her work. She continues to advocate for equitable outcomes by empowering educators to lead with intention, empathy, and clarity.



Dr. Evandra Catherine

Dr. Evandra Catherine, is a research professor and lead consultant at EC Consulting Group, where she provides consulting in systems building, professional development, and Infant Mental Health. Her work focuses on improving outcomes for Black children and families through research, training, community engagement, and cross-sector collaboration. Dr. Catherine partners with organizations and leaders to strengthen equitable systems of care and support the well-being of young children, caregivers, and communities.



Ian Dowdy

Ian Dowdy is an award-winning urban planner with 20 years of experience across the public, private, and non-profit sectors. As a strategic data professional, he specializes in translating complex data into actionable insights that inform public policy and decision-making. Since 2018, he has served as the Director of Strategic Data Initiatives at the Center for the Future of Arizona, where he has created data tools and metrics to help communities understand and address key challenges in areas such as jobs, education, natural resources, and health.

Visit our Exhibitors



Creating a Bright Future
for Arizona's Gifted Children

Arizona Association for Gifted and Talented

The Arizona Association for Gifted and Talented (AAGT) supports and advocates for gifted learners across Arizona. We provide professional development, family resources, and a statewide network to help advanced students be seen, supported, and challenged to thrive.

arizonagifted.org



ARIZONA COUNCIL
ON
ECONOMIC EDUCATION

Arizona Council on Economic Education

ACEE is a statewide organization in Arizona that prepares teachers in teaching and students in learning personal finance, economics and entrepreneurship; and distributes proven economic education resources to schools free of charge.

azecon.org



Arizona STEM Acceleration Project

The Arizona STEM Acceleration Project (ASAP) is an initiative that provides direct support, resources, and funding to Arizona's K-12 educators as they deliver high-quality, hands-on STEM education to our state's future leaders.

stemteachers.asu.edu



The Gifted Collective/Bright Child Books

We are Arizona's gifted learning center supporting children, families, and educators. We are home to Arizona's first gifted microschool as well as to Bright Child Books books. Providing resources specifically curated for gifted and curious learners.

thegiftedcollective.com

Charmsquad

Women's Clothing Designed

c.mills.inc@gmail.com

Dreamscape Immersive Experience

Featured Interactive Exhibition

1:30–2:20 PM

Step into the future of learning through an immersive virtual reality experience powered by Dreamscape. This interactive exhibition combines storytelling, technology, and experiential learning to create engaging, hands-on adventures that inspire curiosity, creativity, and collaboration. Participants will explore how immersive technologies can transform teaching and learning while gaining firsthand experience with innovative educational tools that are shaping the future of education. Whether you are an educator, leader, or advocate, this unique experience offers a glimpse into the possibilities of next-generation learning environments.



Indigo Cultural Center

Since 2007, Indigo has lived up to its mission and vision through its three divisions by centering social justice, culture, and community: The Institute for Child Development Research and Social Change

• Racial Equity Consultation and Training • Indigo Community Healing Arts.

indigoculturalcenter.org



Joy for Books

Joy for Books is a nonprofit that expands access to high-quality, culturally diverse books through intentional curation. Educators choose the titles that best meet their students' needs from our curated collection. Applications for 2026–2027 are open now.

joyforbooks.org



Laptops 4 Learning

Laptops 4 Learning, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, buys and prepares high-quality refurbished laptops and provides them at low or no cost to students who lack reliable home computers. We identify Title-I, K–12 school attendees & college student who need financial assistance to obtain a laptop of their own.

laptops4learning.com



Velma Trayham Global

An award-winning entrepreneur, presidential honoree, and CEO, Dr. Trayham has built and sold multiple companies, designed national accelerators, and helped over 8,000 small businesses start, scale, and secure contracts across the U.S.

velmatrayham.com