

8th Annual Women's Leadership Conference

April 7-8, 2025; 8 am - 4 pm

at The Palace at Somerset Park
333 Davidson Ave., Somerset, NJ 08873

An event designed for women in or aspiring
to positions in educational leadership



Crista Samaras



Dr. Liza
Caraballo-Suarez



Patty McGee



Dr. Adrienne
Hill



Amy Kennedy



Schedule

Monday, April 7

Music provided by South Brunswick Crossroads South Middle School Jazz Band - Don Strusz, Director

8:00 am - 9:00 am	Registration
9:00 am - 9:15 am	Welcome
9:15 am - 10:15 am	Keynote – Crista Samaras
10:15 am - 10:30 am	Break
10:30 am - 11:30 am	Session 1
11:30 am - 11:45 am	Break
11:45 am - 12:45 pm	Session 2
12:45 pm - 2:00 pm	Lunch/Keynote – Dr. Liza Caraballo-Suarez
2:00 pm - 3:00 pm	Session 3
3:00 pm - 3:15 pm	Break
3:15 pm - 4:15 pm	Keynote – Patty McGee
4:15 pm - 5:15 pm	Networking/Reception (Sponsored by Edmentum)

Tuesday, April 8

Music provided by Matawan Regional High School Jazz Ensemble - Director Tyler Smayda and Matawan Regional High School Choir - Director Andre Baldasserini

8:00 am - 9:00 am	Registration
9:00 am - 9:15 am	Welcome - NJDOE Commissioner Kevin Dehmer
9:15 am - 10:15 am	Keynote - Dr. Adrienne Hill
10:15 am - 10:30 am	Break
10:30 am - 11:30 am	Session 4
11:30 am - 1:00 pm	Lunch/Keynote - Amy Kennedy
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm	Session 5
2:00 pm - 2:15 pm	Break
2:15 pm - 3:15 pm	Session 6

Keynote Presenters

Monday, April 7



Crista Samaras

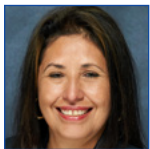
Founder and CEO, Brave Enterprises; Founder, BOOM Lab; Consultant/Advisor/Builder of Proprietary, Novel, Science-Based Programming that Activates Your Team

Brave Your Fear



Patty McGee

Educational Consultant, Author of *Feedback that Moves Writers Forward*, *7 Essentials of Writers Workshop*, and other instructional materials for literacy
Holding Difficult Conversations with Those We Lead and Those Who Lead Us



Dr. Liza Caraballo-Suarez

Principal of the Magnet School of Architecture, Engineering and Design, Brooklyn, NY; Immediate Past President of the National Association of Elementary School Principals

Opening Doors for the Next Generation for Women in Leadership

Tuesday, April 8



Dr. Adrienne Hill

Turnaround Principal at Trenton Board of Education

Underestimating the Class Clown: The Hidden Power of Arts Integration, SEL and Humor in Education



Amy Kennedy

American Educator, Mental Health Advocate, and Former Political Candidate from the State of New Jersey

Fireside Chat with Amy Kennedy

Agenda

Monday, April 7

Welcome

9:00 am - 9:15 am

Ballroom

Keynote: Brave Your Fear

9:15 am - 10:15 am

Ballroom

Fear is personal. It commandeers our spirit and handcuffs our will. In striving to be “fearless,” we reinforce the idea that life is best lived without fear. But is it? Fear is real. What we truly mean when we commend someone for their fearlessness is that we value their bravery. The point isn’t to fear less—it’s to brave more.

Drawing from data on thousands of women, including NJASA participants, Brave Enterprises presents a powerful case for fear as both an alarm and an engine for courageous action, and a case for bravery as a vital lever to confidence. This potent keynote will ignite your joy in concert with your fear, guiding you to unlock your bravery and build your BOOM.

Presenter: Crista Samaras

Session 1

10:30 am – 11:30 am

We Belong at the Table: Using Your Voice to Impact Policy and Legislation

Lecture Suite

In this session, join Dr. Rachel Goldberg and Betsy Ginsburg as they share their experiences in participating in the legislative process.

Ms. Ginsburg is an experienced school board member, journalist, and policy advocate who keeps a pulse on what is happening in Trenton. She regularly testifies on behalf of the GSCS and its 150+ member districts. Dr. Goldberg serves on the Executive Board of GSCS, the NJDOE Literacy Working Group, and has testified in the State House and New Jersey State Board of Education meetings. Together, they will reflect on their experiences as female voices using their voices to impact productive policy and hope to recruit more strong educator voices to come to the table!

Presenters: Dr. Rachel Goldberg, Superintendent of Springfield Public Schools; Elizabeth (Betsy) Ginsburg, Executive Director of Garden State Coalition of Schools

Get Out of the Box: Finding Innovation through Creative Thinking

Salon 1

This interactive session aims to empower female educators and school leaders with tools to foster creativity within their organizations. Attendees will learn about the role of creativity in educational leadership, explore practical strategies to support a creativity-centered culture, and leave with actionable steps for inspiring innovative thinking among their teams.

Presenters: Sandra Schwartz, Supervisor of Business, Math & Science, K-12, Montville Township Public Schools; Danielle Barkey, Mathematics Teacher, Montville Township Public Schools

Forging Antifragile Confidence: Using Challenges as a Catalyst for Growth

Salon 2

This workshop empowers participants to build “antifragile” confidence — a resilience that thrives and strengthens in the face of adversity. Through interactive exercises, participants will explore how challenges can be transformed from setbacks into opportunities for growth. They’ll learn strategies to harness stress, embrace uncertainty, and adapt proactively. By shifting their mindset, attendees will discover how resilience can not only withstand pressure but also grow stronger because of it, making them better equipped to face future challenges with confidence.

Presenters: Lori Emmerson, Principal, East Windsor Regional School District

STUDENTS EMPOWERED: Developing a Successful Tier 3 Program for High School Students

Salon 3

School administrators, teachers, and school counselors will find practical strategies for expanding Tier 3 supports within a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS). Learn how to address the needs of students with I&RS, Section 504 plans, and IEPs, that may have lost credit, chronic absenteeism, or experiencing a range of barriers to academic success. This session will cover data-driven decision-making, collaboration across teams, and effective, individualized interventions for students who need the most intensive support.

Key Takeaways:

- Tailor interventions for high-need students
- Use data to guide targeted support
- Collaborate to create cohesive, wrap-around services
- Strengthen Tier 3 programs for greater impact

Presenters: Elizabeth Jewett, Superintendent; Dan Scanlon, Empower Program Teacher; and Jason Sabino, Director of Counseling, Watchung Hills Regional School District; Jennifer Bender, NJTSS-ER State-Level Coach, Rutgers University

Understanding Your Identity: Empowerment to Impact

Salon 6

What has been a highlight of your career? How did you get there? By focusing on these two questions participants will engage in a series of exercises designed to reflect on and uncover the strengths of their own identity. and impact change with confidence. We will then connect these unique strengths to tangible leadership qualities. Discussion will be focused on how we as women can use our strengths as leaders to make decisions and engage in difficult conversations.

Presenters: Susan Totaro, Chief Equity Officer, West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District; Barbara Gould, Chief Academic Officer, West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District; Jessica Cincotta, High School Principal, West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District

Amplifying Voices for School Transformation

Salon 7

This session will explore how to tap into the power of staff and student voice to create more engaging, inclusive, and supportive learning environments on a classroom, school, or district level. Participants will learn how to implement strategies to improve student engagement, school culture, and staff retention. By the end of the session, participants will have a toolkit of practical strategies to engage students and staff in community building, leading to a more positive and productive school community.

Presenters: Carrie Dattilo, Superintendent, Union County ESC; Staci Beyer, Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services, Union County ESC; Alyson York, Lambert Mill Academy Teacher, Union County ESC

Beyond Panic to Progress: Reimagining Physical and Digital Learning Spaces for Today's Students

Ballroom

This session explores how leaders can intentionally integrate physical and digital environments post-pandemic. We'll examine the distinct pedagogical approaches required in each space and why understanding these differences is crucial for student success. Join us to envision thoughtful educational frameworks that move beyond crisis response toward purposeful innovation.

Presenter: Dr. Kimberley Harrington, Former NJ Commissioner of Education and Founder of Education Advisors

Session 2 **11:45 – 12:45**

Building Early Learning Latine Educators (BELLE)

Lecture Suite

Building Early Learning Latiné Educators (BELLE) aims to increase Latiné representation in positions of leadership by creating a pipeline of bilingual educators who are experienced and knowledgeable about effective DLL practices and have developed leadership skills. We will describe BELLE and its structure, which aims to address the current lack of strong policies in place to support DLLs at the state level, which we have found is mirrored in school districts, Head Start and childcare. We will highlight research on the obstacles that impede minority women from rising to positions of leadership including lacking mentors and how BELLE seeks to fill these gaps. We will share the experiences of the BELLEs who have participated in New Jersey in hopes that it will entice others to see the potential of focusing on increasing Latine leaders who will not only improve policies for DLLs but also pave the way for future leaders.

Presenters: Dr. Alexandra Figueras-Daniel, Assistant Research Professor, National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER); Ellise Genao, Training Specialist, National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER); Carmen Espinosa, Research Coordinator, National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER)

Invisible Labor Reflection and Wellness Routines for Women

Salon 1

Why make women's wellness a priority? Women impact the MOST people. We are significantly interconnected to others. We are depended upon. We create a sense of a village, team, and family for others. Join this session to reflect on the impact of your own invisible labor and to dig deep on your overall wellness. Together, we will practice and develop your own individualized wellness routines to prioritize your mental health.

Presenter: Toni DiFazio, District Supervisor, Edison Township Public Schools

Cups Overflowing: How An Incentive-Based Wellness Program Creates Stronger Teams

Salon 2

This session highlights the powerful impact that prioritizing staff wellness can have on an organization. Attendees will learn about two districts' wellness initiative, which strategically combine online opportunities with in-person events to engage the broadest possible range of staff members across four wellness dimensions—physical, emotional, social, and intellectual. Featuring women in various educational leadership positions, we will showcase how developing an effective, budget-friendly incentive program can lead to meaningful improvements in staff morale and community connections. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies and a blueprint for creating a wellness culture that inspires, engages, and “fills the cups” of staff members.

Presenters: Wendy Morales, Assistant Superintendent, Monmouth-Ocean

Educational Services Commission; Bettyann Montleone, Principal, Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission; Kathleen Miller, Principal, Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission

Expanding Horizons: Cultivating Connections Across Districts

Salon 3

Join us for an engaging session, “Expanding Horizons: Cultivating Connections Across Districts,” designed to foster collaboration and innovation among educational leaders. Attendees will explore best practices for building meaningful partnerships across districts, sharing insights on effective communication strategies, joint initiatives, and resource sharing. Participants can expect interactive discussions, networking opportunities, and actionable strategies to enhance student outcomes through collaboration. This session aims to empower educators to break down silos, leverage shared expertise, and create a supportive community that enriches learning experiences for all students. Come ready to connect, collaborate, and cultivate change!

Presenters: Meagan Drapkin, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Dunellen Public Schools; Katie Harms, ELA Supervisor, School District of the Chathams

Using a Survivor's Lens to Address Human Trafficking Education

Salon 4

Participants will receive an all-encompassing Human Trafficking 101 training that covers a range of topics pertaining to human trafficking such as understanding coercive control, red flags/identification, prevention, internet safety, and why human trafficking is prevalent in NJ. This will be followed by a presentation given by a human trafficking survivor who will share their lived experience, providing depth and clarity to the Human Trafficking 101 presentation. Participants will leave the program empowered with knowledge and skills to help fight trafficking in NJ.

Presenters: Patti Pfeifer, NJ Coalition Against Human Trafficking Outreach Committee Co-Chair; Gina Cavallo, NJ Coalition Against Human Trafficking Survivor

The Wisdom of Diversity

Salon 6

We all know that hiring diverse staff enriches our schools by fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. Varied perspectives challenge the status quo, leading to innovative solutions and improved decision-making. When women in school administration build such teams, we empower ourselves and our colleagues, leading to a more robust and resilient school district. Session participants will explore the myriad definitions of diversity and reflect upon the individual and collective wisdom that is found in us all - as leaders, as women, and as valued contributors to society.

Presenter: Charity Comella, Assistant Superintendent for Personnel and President, NJ STRIDE, West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District

Advancing Leadership Development to Empower Women in Education

Salon 7

This session will focus on fostering leadership skills among women in education, providing them with the tools, training, and skills needed to be successful in administrative roles. The focus throughout the session will be on breaking down barriers, promoting equity, and creating opportunities for women to lead with confidence. Emotional intelligence, collaboration, and empathy are important skills for effective leadership, not signs of weakness. True leadership isn't about command and control; it's about empowering and inspiring others. The skills covered in this session will offer essential support for addressing challenges and create positive solutions that will directly impact educational settings.

Presenters: Jessica Sargent, Health & Physical Education Supervisor Prek-12, Long Branch Public Schools; Nicole Esposito, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Long Branch Public Schools

Coordinated State and Local Leadership in Driving Early Childhood Literacy

Ballroom

Participants to hear from and engage with a panel of state and local leaders who are focused on boosting the literacy skills of students in grades K-3 across their respective states and schools. Panelists will share and discuss various lessons in leadership and promising pathways that are emerging across states that have implemented legislation and programs to increase focus, funding, and outcomes in this critical area of teaching and learning.

Facilitator: Megan Rodriguez, Senior Learning & Professional Development Specialist, Public Consulting Group

Panelists: Natalie Franzi Dougherty, Director of the Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery, New Jersey Department of Education; Jane-Ellen Lennon, Director of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction, South Hunterdon Regional School District

Keynote: *Opening Doors for the Next Generation for Women In Leadership*

12:45 pm - 2:00 pm

Ballroom

Join us in empowering the next generation of women leaders. We will share our experiences, knowledge, and networks. With your voice, we will inspire, mentor, and uplift aspiring leaders. During our session you will learn the keys to professional success, including self-care, self-determination, and the importance of building strong relationships. Together, we can create a lasting impact and foster a community of supportive women who are dedicated to each other's growth and advancement.

Presenter: Dr. Liza Caraballo-Suarez

Session 3

2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Let the Children Play! Aligning P-3 Curriculum & Instruction with Developmentally Appropriate Practice **Lecture Suite**

P-3 alignment aims to improve the quality and coherence of children's learning opportunities, improve child outcomes, and close achievement gaps. This session will help educational leaders to make a shift in thinking and practice towards integrating guided play, discovery, and joyful learning along with academic rigor in preschool through 3rd grade. The session will 1) explore reasons for the changes in early childhood practices and policies, 2) examine what developmentally appropriate practice looks like, 3) outline strategies to make shifts in policy and practices, 4) learn about districts who have begun making changes, and 5) offer resources to support improvements.

Presenter: Dr. Muriel Rand, Professor/ Instructional Coach, New Jersey City University and Rutgers Center for Literacy Development

Forums for Staff and Leader Collaboration: Strengthen a Community of Care and Support **Salon 1**

This session will provide district leadership recommendations for tried and effective, efficient and creative forums to support, inform and evidence care for staff. Three forums include: "The Front Porch," used primarily as a space for reflection, conversation, and community, "1:1s" intended to gather information about what is working well in an organization (and whether staff have the resources to do their jobs), and "Refine and Reflect" to improve cohesion in decision-making processes related to instructional programming across buildings.

Presenters: Dr. Danielle Hamblin, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, Flemington-Raritan School District; Dr. Gulay Maffia, Director of Special Education, Harbyston Township Schools; Rebecca Burns, Supervisor of Pupil Personnel Services, Flemington-Raritan School District

Making Space for Ethical Decision Making: Applying the Multiple Ethical Paradigm to Current Student Wellness Problems of Practice **Salon 2**

This session invites participants to reimagine staff and student support and wellness challenges in ever-changing educational contexts using the ethical paradigms. The discussion will entail consideration of the efforts we could undertake to push forward equity and belonging while navigating current support and wellness centered problems of practice. The intended audience includes principals, assistant principals, supervisors, directors, equity specialists, and those re-entering the educational environment.

Presenter: Dr. Jennifer Antoni, Director of Counseling and Assessment, Ewing

These Girls Are on Fire: Ignite Your Inner Spark and Light a Flame in Others

Salon 3

This workshop will inspire self-confidence and encourage women leaders to uplift others. Through personal stories and interactive activities, participants will identify their strengths, share affirmations, and explore ways to empower fellow women leaders. Attendees will share their unique talents and draw inspiration to support their female colleagues. Aligned with the mission of the NJPSA Women in Leadership Committee, this session fosters connection, confidence, belonging, and a commitment to empowering female leaders. Participants will leave with renewed energy to embrace their leadership roles and ignite potential in those around them.

Presenters: Theresa Brennen, Vice Principal, Lyndhurst Public Schools; Lisa Bauer Klein, Supervisor of Humanities, Lyndhurst Public Schools

Title IX: 2024 Changes and Effects of the New Administration

Salon 4

This session will provide an overview of Title IX, including a review of regulations that became effective as of August 1, 2024, mandatory Title IX training requirements for all staff members, and the potential impact of the new President's Administration on Title IX in 2025-2029. Participants will learn about topics including defining sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination, staff reporting requirements, protections against retaliation for reporting Title IX violations, and how Title IX is applied in various contexts, including academics, accommodations for medical conditions, athletics, extracurricular activities and District human resource practices. Finally, participants will learn about how to address issues that may simultaneously involve concerns under Title IX, Discrimination Laws, New Jersey's Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights, and/or overlapping (and possibly conflicting) obligations under additional state and federal laws.

Presenter: Sandra L. Jacques, Esq., LL.M., FEA Assistant Director of Legal Education

What Lies Beneath the Iceberg? Leading Schoolwide Equity with Teacher Champions

Salon 6

This workshop focuses on cultivating teacher leaders as equity champions while also addressing how to implement school-wide programs/initiatives that promote equity and foster a sense of belonging for all members of the school community. Participants will engage in hands-on activities and explore teacher-led projects/ tools that address the growing challenges of biases, microaggressions, and language in the classroom. By the end of the session, participants will leave a personalized toolkit to support diverse learners and address equity beyond the visible aspects of school culture through teacher champions.

Presenter: Hitisha Patel, Officer of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Edison Township Public Schools

Shared Leadership: How to Use Protocols to Empower Your Team

Salon 7

During this session, participants will be engaged in and learn protocols and organizational strategies to effectively and efficiently work with a variety of teams. In this post-Covid environment, relationships matter the most. Taking the time to develop protocols that guide visions while still fostering empathy can provide a shared leadership environment any admin team would want. Join this all female admin team as we share our experiences and leave with new tools to bring back to your team.

Presenters: Dr. Jennifer Diszler, Superintendent, Cranbury; Dr. Ashley Kipness, Supervisor of Special Services, Cranbury; Megan Mannarino, Supervisor of Curriculum, Cranbury

Simple, Powerful, and Free Designs for Professional Learning

This interactive one-hour workshop is designed for educational leaders seeking innovative ways to energize professional learning without stretching budgets. Participants will explore practical, low or no-cost strategies to engage educators in meaningful, high-impact professional development experiences aligned to the Standards for Professional Learning.

Presenter: Patty McGee, Keynote Speaker

Keynote: Holding Difficult Conversations With Those We Lead and Those Who Lead Us

3:15 pm - 4:15 pm

Ballroom

Leadership requires conversations that can feel challenging and uncomfortable. However, we know that strong, open communication with those we work with benefits the district culture and, therefore, student learning. Yet, addressing challenging topics remains one of the most difficult aspects of professional life. Leave this session with practical tools and renewed confidence to handle difficult conversations in a way that promotes growth, enhances teamwork, and strengthens school culture.

Presenter: Patty McGee

Networking/Reception (Sponsored by Edmentum)

4:15 pm - 5:15 pm

Tuesday, April 8

Welcome



9:00 am - 9:15 am

Ballroom

Presenter: Kevin Dehmer, NJDOE Commissioner

Keynote:

Underestimating the Class Clown: The Hidden Power of Arts Integration, SEL and Humor in Education

Ballroom

A former class clown turned doctor and school principal redefines how we see our most unconventional students. Drawing from personal experience, Dr. Hill will share how her journey from being the “class clown” to a transformative leader was shaped by humor, creativity, and connection. This session explores how Arts Integration, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and the healing power of humor can turn classrooms into spaces of growth, belonging, and engagement for all students, especially those who challenge traditional norms.

Dr. Hill will reveal how the traits that make class clowns stand out—quick wit, emotional intelligence, and an innate ability to connect with peers—are the same strengths that can be nurtured into leadership, resilience, and academic success. With practical strategies and heartfelt storytelling, she’ll guide educational leaders in seeing beyond the laughter to unlock the hidden potential in every student and all school stakeholders.

Presenter: Dr. Adrienne Hill

Session 4

10:30 am – 11:30 am

Empowering Women in Leadership: Growth, Connection, and Balance Lecture Suite

Are you ready to take your leadership journey to the next level? Join us for an interactive and inspiring session designed for women in leadership roles. This workshop will delve into growth leadership strategies to unlock potential, explore the benefits of women in leadership associations to amplify your impact, and provide actionable techniques for achieving life-work balance without compromise. Whether you're an experienced leader or aspiring to take on a leadership role, this workshop will equip you to lead with confidence and authenticity. Come ready to collaborate, share experiences, and leave empowered to thrive in all aspects of your life!

Presenters: Dr. Jeanene Dutt, Superintendent, North Warren Regional School District; Dr. Sarah Billotti, Superintendent, Pascack Valley Regional High School District

I Want a (Robot) Wife: How AI Supports Organized, Productive, Effectual Leaders

Salon 1

When Judy Brady asked readers of Ms. magazine, "My God, who wouldn't want a wife?" She addressed that second shift of household chores. Her satire still resonates fifty years later. AI is my new work wife. One part time-saver, two parts brain-stormer, and slightly scary yet undeniably addictive, AI assists me in my quest to be a more organized, productive, effective leader. Examples of how AI can assist include: de-snarking emails, glow and grows for observations, and turning confusing data into pithy narratives.

Presenter: Danyel Cicarelli, Supervisor of ELA/ML, Kearny School District

Principal Leadership Pipeline for Women of Color: What Does Meaningful Support Look Like

Salon 2

The growing diversity in the racial and ethnic composition of the student population is not reflected in the educator workforce: only 21% of public-school teachers and 22% of principals identify as persons of color. To address this disparity and support educators of color, particularly women, in transitioning to principal and central office roles, we must focus on comprehensive support mechanisms. A robust affinity network, designed to prepare and empower women of color to lead and innovate in education, is essential. This session will delve into five critical areas that transitioning leaders need to leverage to promote their success: self-care, budget/resource allocation, board relations, conflict management, and communication. A critical emphasis will be on coaching, mentoring and sponsoring.

- Engaging dialog regarding key organizational leverage that will promote successful transition to a new leadership role
- The difference between coaching, mentorship and sponsorship
- Expanding a collegial network of passionate educators interested in leading effective systems

Presenters: Dr. Danita Isibashi, Consultant, Executive Coach, Women of Color Education Collaborative; Dr. Denise Lowe, Executive Coach, Women of Color Education Collaborative

New Jersey Tiered Systems of Support Early Reading Project

Salon 3

In this session, the Netcong School District and the NJTSS-ER State Level Consultants will share the process for transforming a reactive instructional model into a preventative multi-tiered system of data-informed instruction that promotes positive student reading outcomes. This session will provide a comprehensive look at the challenges, strategies, and successes experienced by the district in adopting a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework to enhance early literacy.

Presenters: Kate Walsh, Superintendent, Netcong School District; Jennie Rider, Supervisor of Curriculum, Netcong School District; Cynthia Mackowicz, NJTSS-ER Project Manager, Rutgers University

Leading with Love: Cultivating a Positive School Environment In and Out of the Classroom

Salon 4

This professional development session empowers school administrators to lead with love, providing actionable strategies to enhance classroom culture, reduce disruptions, and foster a positive learning environment. Participants will grasp the principles of effective classroom management and its impact on student achievement. They will discover methods for fostering positive student-teacher relationships, encouraging accountability, and exploring restorative practices. By the end of the session, administrators will feel confident in supporting and coaching staff, leading to improved student behavior and engagement. Participants will leave with a toolkit of strategies to share with their teachers.

Presenters: Rachelle Crawley, Principal Linden Public Schools; Gwendolyn Long, Principal, Linden Public Schools

Mastering Your RBF: A Power Move for Women Leaders

Salon 6

Let's flip the script on what RBF means and make it work for us! In this session, we'll explore how crafting the right level of Resting Boss Face (RBF) can help you navigate the education administrator ladder with poise, confidence, and authority. Learn how to find your female tribe—those who will inspire, uplift, and refine your leadership presence—and develop an RBF that not only supports your success but opens doors for the next generation of women leaders. Together, we'll dig into the balance of authenticity and impact, because climbing the ladder isn't just about getting to the top; it's about paving the way for yourself and others. Get ready to build your legacy while breaking barriers!

Presenters: Brianna Rucci, District Supervisor Math/Science, Delsea Regional School District; Alicia Fragoso, Principal, Clayton Public School District

Leading with Emotional Intelligence: The Key to Stronger Teams

Salon 7

This session will explore the connections between emotional intelligence (EI) and effective leadership, highlighting EI's role in building trust and managing conflict. Discussion and recommendations will emphasize strategies for strengthening EI in leaders and empowering others to cultivate EI, fostering personal and professional growth. Key topics include enhancing leadership effectiveness through EI, creating collaborative environments, and supporting the development of emotional intelligence in teams to promote leadership success.

Presenters: Cara DiMeo, Assistant Superintendent, Toms River Regional Schools; Alyce Anderson, Director of Curriculum, Brick Township Schools

AI and the Future of Education: Opportunities and Challenges

Join us for a stimulating discussion with innovative women leaders who are exploring the many ways that AI provides opportunities and challenges for education leaders, school districts, teachers and staff, and our students. The panelists will discuss how they're using AI personally and professionally, their experiences and insights on the growing impact of AI in schools, and the impact they think AI will have on students who are growing up to live in an AI world. The session will include time for attendees to share their input and ask questions.

Panelists: Donna Reichman, former Assistant Superintendent, Wayne Township Schools, and Founder & CEO, Reichmanreco.com; Dr. Lisa Schleer, Founder & CEO, LMSeducationconsulting.com; Julie Spoerl, Director of Technology, Springfield Public Schools; Cara Flodmand, Assistant Director of Technology, Trainer & Consultant, NJASCD Emerging Leader '23, Hamilton Township Schools. **Moderated by** Lisa Schmucki, Founder & CEO, edWeb.net.

Keynote: Fireside Chat with Amy Kennedy

Ballroom

Join us as we chat with Amy Kennedy, a former educator, mother of five, and nationally recognized advocate for youth mental health, for an engaging and thought-provoking keynote. With deep expertise in social-emotional learning, trauma-informed care, and school-based treatment solutions, Amy offers a powerful perspective on fostering mental wellness in young people. Drawing from her work with the Kennedy Forum and her groundbreaking mental health-focused Congressional campaign, she will explore actionable strategies to create supportive environments for children and teens. As a respected thought leader and board member of several national organizations, Amy will share her insights on the role of schools, families, and communities in addressing mental health challenges. This intimate conversation promises to inspire, educate, and spark meaningful dialogue on building a brighter future for youth mental health.

Presenter: Amy Kennedy with Nelyda Perez, Superintendent, Matawan Aberdeen Regional School District

Session 5

1:00 – 2:00

Harnessing AI to Optimize Your Time and Energy

Lecture Suite

This workshop empowers educational leaders with AI tools to optimize teaching practices, streamline administrative tasks, and enhance personal well-being. Learn about prompt engineering, AI-assisted lesson planning, differentiated instruction, time management, stress reduction, and mindfulness techniques. By leveraging AI, we can boost productivity, improve work-life balance, and lead with greater effectiveness and time management.

Presenter: Noemi Rodriguez, District Supervisor of Instruction Pascack Valley Regional HS District

Setting Up Behavioral MTSS Systems for Success

Salon 1

Behavioral Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) provides a proactive, data-driven framework for addressing student behavior, promoting positive outcomes, and fostering a safe, supportive school environment. This session will guide participants through the essential components of establishing effective behavioral MTSS systems and aligning them with their district or school's overall MTSS framework.

Presenter: Catherine Havens, M.A., BCBA

Equity is a How, Not a What: Partnering with a Shared Vision for Multilingual Student Success

Salon 3

Fostering collaboration among district leadership requires sharing responsibility for the success of all learners. In this session, two district administrators will model how to implement collaborative practices to support multilingual students' success and enhance instructional rigor.

Presenters: Michelle Shappirio, K-5 Supervisor of ELA, Intervention, & Instructional Coaching, Township of Ocean School District; Cecilia Vila Chave, P-12 Supervisor of ESL, 6-12 Social Studies, Township of Ocean School District

Self-Care & Leadership

Salon 4

Achieving a healthy work-life balance is vital for strong leadership. This session focuses on the essential connection between leadership and self-care, providing strategies for managing stress, maintaining balance, and building resilience. By understanding how leadership and personal well-being are interlinked, individuals can improve their capacity to lead with empathy, make thoughtful decisions, and ensure long-term success. The session encourages a proactive approach to self-care, recognizing that a leader's effectiveness is closely tied to their mental and emotional well-being. Participants will learn self-care techniques and strategies to maintain one's physical, mental, and emotional well-being, enabling one to lead more effectively.

Presenter: Dr. Shakirah Miller, Assistant Superintendent, Newark Board of Education

Next-Gen Learning: How AI and CTE Open Doors for All Students

Salon 6

Discover how Spartan Schools are using AI and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to open doors for every student, preparing them for college and successful careers. This session will share real-life examples of how AI can personalize learning to meet individual needs and support diverse learners, while CTE programs offer hands-on experiences and skills that align with the job market. You'll walk away with actionable strategies for bringing these innovative approaches into your schools and creating opportunities where all students can excel and be ready for life beyond high school.

Presenters: Gina Hagerman, Assistant Principal and Supervisor of Spartan Schools, Township of Ocean; Erin Leahy, Supervisor of Technology and the Arts, Township of Ocean

Building Bridges: Designing Inclusive Programs for Students with Developmental and Cognitive Disabilities

Salon 7

This session will focus on the purposeful creation and implementation of programs designed to support middle and high school students with developmental and cognitive disabilities. Participants will learn how to develop meaningful programs that foster inclusion and build lasting friendships between students with disabilities, general education peers, and the broader community. Attendees will be guided through practical steps to design programs that engage all students, ensuring they are welcoming, collaborative, and promote social growth. Emphasis will be placed on creating environments where every student feels valued and supported.

Presenters: Melissa Levine, Director of Special Services, West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District; Anita Anantharaman, Special Services Supervisor, West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District

Data Insights for Student Success

Ballroom
In today's digital classrooms, educational leaders face a paradox: an abundance of usage data from countless educational apps and resources, yet a persistent challenge in understanding how they impact student learning. While we can track every click and login, transforming these digital footprints into meaningful insights about student success remains elusive.

In this session, we will explore how ClassLink Analytics helps to provide practical approaches to analyze your digital ecosystem and focus on what truly matters - understanding how students engage with learning resources to enhance educational outcomes and leveraging the cost-effective tools to do so. The session examines three critical areas:

- **Student Engagement:** Monitor and evaluate how students interact with digital resources to identify patterns of success and opportunities for intervention.
- **Instructional Effectiveness:** Analyze the digital tools and platforms that are being utilized to make differences in student learning outcomes.
- **ROI:** Leverage the cost module to determine return on investment and return on instruction.
- Join us to discover how to harness digital resource data to drive authentic student achievement.

Presenter: Jamie Saponaro, Director of Community and Professional Learning; Michelle Massey, Director of Instructional Technology, ClassLink; and Monica Crudele, Principal & Director of Curriculum, Morris Plains School District

Session 6

2:15 – 3:15

It's Your Journey, It's Your Leadership, Overcoming Leadership Challenges

Lecture Suite

Educational leaders face challenges in every facet of their career. Whether the leader is a building administrator, director, supervisor, assistant superintendent or superintendent, regardless of the leadership position, it takes time, effort, dedication and work to foster a positive and successful school. But this comes at the cost of making sacrifices, working long hours, dealing with stress and conquering challenges head-on! If the journey is leadership, then the leader must learn how to work within this realm to accomplish their goals.

Presenters: Dr. Robin Moore, Leadership Consultant/Adjunct Professor, NJPSA/FEA and Rowan University; Jennifer Rush-ton, District Director, Greater Egg Harbor Regional High School

GenAI in Teaching and Learning

Salon 1

Leaders from the West Morris Regional High School District will showcase their vision for preparing their school community for the exciting world of generative AI while ensuring responsible use by students. We'll discuss creating clear, ethical guardrails, including student honor code updates and citation expectations specific to AI-generated content. Drawing on professional development, our task force work, and classroom applications, we'll share specific use cases and lessons we've learned over the past year.

Melissa Heike, Assistant Superintendent: Curriculum and Instruction, West Morris Regional HS District

Presenters: Melissa Heike, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, West Morris Regional HS District; Meg Brandt, Library Media Specialist, West Morris Regional HS District

Visionary Leadership in Action: Transforming School Culture Through Innovation

Salon 2

Experience how strategic leadership transforms traditional education into dynamic, real-world learning environments. Through intentional vision-setting and supportive administrative practices, school leaders have cultivated a culture where innovation thrives—from student-engineered parade floats to special education café enterprises and kindergarten gardens. Learn how administrators strategically empower teachers, model innovative practices, and leverage professional development to build sustainable, school-wide project-based learning. Discover practical strategies for creating an ecosystem where visionary leadership catalyzes authentic learning experiences that innovate, inspire, and elevate student achievement.

Presenters: Maggie Callahan, Assistant Principal, Edison Township Board of Education; Nicole Carmena, Teacher, Edison Township Board of Education; Nicole Rurka, Special Education Teacher, Edison Township Board of Education

Homegrown Leadership

Salon 3

Join us for an in-depth session on cultivating “Homegrown Leadership” within your organization. Discover how to identify, nurture, and empower team members with varied backgrounds and leadership styles, creating a harmonious and dynamic unit. Our “Homegrown Team” approach leverages each member’s unique strengths through cross-training, collaboration, and adaptive learning, fostering resilience and continuous growth. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies for building a cohesive leadership pipeline that champions diversity in skill, thought, and perspective, ready to drive meaningful change in any educational setting.

Presenter: Connie Sanchez, Executive Director, Unity Charter School

A Secret Leadership Recipe with a Dash of Joy

Salon 4

Join us as we discover how to cultivate joyfulness as leaders. This important aspect of leadership strengthens our sense of belonging and instills a purpose in what defines us. As we explore the different ingredients of leadership, we will spend time teaching you how to mix in some JOY. By compassionately dealing with our own leadership struggles, we learn how to create our own internal climate which manifests itself in meaningful relationships, inspiring others, and connects us to the motivating and engaging work that we do daily.

Presenters: Briean Madden, Elementary School Principal Elk Township School District/Aura School; Lori Zafevski, Elementary School Principal, Mt. Laurel School District/Countryside Elementary School

Shifting the Paradigm on Inclusive Strategies

Salon 6

Meet students where they are, while making your job easier! In this session, you will learn various strategies that foster inclusion best practices and promote student self-regulation skills. Our district Special Education Coach will join the session, offering the tips and tricks that have transformed classrooms in ICR, Resource, and LLD settings. Some of the topics on the agenda will be flexible grouping, rotation models, skill-based small groups, and maximizing assessment data to drive student learning. Be prepared to leave motivated and inspired!

Presenters: Emily Keyes, Supervisor of Special Services K-5, Township of Ocean School District; Amy Steckhahn, Special Education Instructor, Township of Ocean School District

Sustaining Success: Mentoring Beyond the First Year

Salon 7

Explore how a multi-year mentoring program for teachers beyond their first year can enhance retention, reduce turnover, and positively impact district resources. This workshop will touch on the costs of teacher turnover and introduce participants to a cohort model, rooted in reflective practices, to support teachers beyond their first year.

Presenter: Blair Eiseman, Director of Programs and Professional Development, South Brunswick School District

Nurturing Staff Wellness

Ballroom

As educational leaders, it's crucial to prioritize the well-being and morale of our staff. This session will delve into a variety of wellness initiatives designed to promote self-care, foster community, and strengthen positive relationships. From simple gestures to comprehensive programs, we'll explore strategies that can have lasting impact and significantly boost staff satisfaction. Learn how to create a supportive work environment where educators feel celebrated and appreciated throughout the school year.

Presenters: Flora Encarnacao, Superintendent, Kearny School District; Alik Bieltz, Assistant Superintendent, Kearny School District

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