

2026 ASBSD-SASD Convention Breakout Session Descriptions

Leadership

School Board Scenarios

Presenters: ASBSD Executive Director Heath Larson & Members of the ASBSD Board of Directors

Thursday, 10:30 to 11:20 a.m. in Rooms 13-14

Join this session as experienced school board members cover a variety of board leadership related scenarios and provide insight on how they would deal with these situations.

Developing Leadership Capacity from Within

Presenter: Douglas Superintendent Kevin Case

Thursday, 11:30 to 12:20 p.m. in Rooms 6-7

In this interactive session, we will explore how Douglas School District is strategically building leadership capacity across all levels of the organization. We will explore the specific activities, professional development opportunities, and strategic partnerships designed to ensure seamless continuity during both planned and unplanned transitions. Ultimately, our goal is to cultivate a robust pipeline of leaders who are deeply committed to district initiatives and the principles of continuous improvement.

Administrative Partnerships: Evaluation & Coaching

Presenters: Wall Superintendent & MS-HS Principal Dr. Sally Crowser and Assistant Principal & Tech Coordinator Rebecca Myers

Thursday, 3:00 to 3:50 p.m. in Rooms 6-7

Two administrators work together to create an environment of learning and growth for inexperienced and veteran staff. In this session, administrators share how one coaches and one evaluates. The two administrators work together closely and combine forces for strength in enhancing teachers and staff, working to improve learning while improving retention of teachers. The administrators share the strength in working together in a small school to provide a stronghold for their team.

Leadership

Delivering a Vision: How Yankton Brought Early Learning to Life

Presenters: Trailhead Learning Center Principal Melanie Ryken, Yankton Curriculum Director Nicole Valnes, Koch Hazard Architects AIA Principal Keith Thompson, World Architects & Engineers AIA Education Practice Leader Valerie Peterson and McGough Construction Project Manager Mark Sontag

Thursday, 3:00 to 3:50 p.m. in Room 1

This session highlights how Yankton School District delivered South Dakota's first standalone public early childhood center and key lessons after one year. Presenters will share insights on community engagement, intentional planning, and collaborative design and construction that led to a successful project. Attendees will learn how the facility supports young learners and gain practical strategies to improve project delivery and student outcomes, including how professional development prepared teachers to thrive in a team-based instructional environment.

Board-Employee Contract Negotiations 101

Presenters: Kaufman Law Office Attorney Gerry Kaufman and Churchill, Manolis, Freeman & Burns Law Office Attorney Rodney Freeman, Jr.

Thursday, 4:00 to 4:50 p.m. in Rooms 13-14

Every year school boards negotiate contract terms with the teacher organization, and some school boards also negotiate contract terms with a support staff organization and/or an administration organization. Therefore, it is important for all school board members (and school administrators) to have a basic understanding of the laws related to public employer-public employee collective bargaining and the negotiations process. This session is an overview of the Negotiations Webinars which ASBSD sponsors every spring.

Stronger Together: How School Districts Are Lowering Costs and Gaining Control Through Pooling

Presenters: Risk Program Administrators Program Administration Vice President Ryan Doyle and Gallagher Benefit Services Consultant Kim Lobato

Thursday, 4:00 to 4:50 p.m. in Rooms 6-7

This session explores how pooling arrangements through Associated School Boards Programs provide a sustainable, cost effective solution for property & casualty insurance and employee benefit plans. Attendees will learn how shared risk delivers lower and more stable costs, stronger buying power, and enhanced coverage and benefits tailored to public school districts. The discussion will highlight the value of shared expertise, transparent governance, and greater local control compared to traditional insurance models. Presenters will also examine key trends impacting P&C and employee benefits, including ongoing changes in health insurance. Participants will leave with practical insights on how pooling helps South Dakota public school districts protect resources and sustain essential programs for the long term.

Leadership

Critical Leadership Responsibilities in Special Education: What Every Decision Maker Must Know

Presenters: S.D. DOE Director of Special Education and Early Learning Linda Turner and Special Education Programs Specialist Rebecca Cain

Friday, 9:00 to 9:50 a.m. in Rooms 6-7

This session provides board members and administrators with a clear overview of their legal responsibilities under IDEA and state law. Participants will review discipline requirements, including suspension, expulsion, and impact of HB 1017; seclusion and restraint policy obligations; comprehensive plan expectations; and fiscal duties to ensure student needs are met. Leaders will leave with a stronger understanding of their roles in special education compliance and have time for questions and discussion.

Vision to Execution: Developing Strategic Plans That Work

Presenters: Harrisburg Superintendent Jennifer Lowery, Board Chair Terra Venard, Director of Academic Services Michael Amolins, Data & Analytics Andrew Koch and Director of Communication JoAnne VerMulm

Friday, 10:00 to 10:50 a.m. in Rooms 8-9-10

This session centers on how to build an executable strategic plan from the start. Participants will explore development processes that align purpose, priorities, timelines, and ownership, ensuring the plan is realistic, clearly communicated, and embedded into daily decision making to drive sustained improvement across the district.

Building a High-Functioning Board-Superintendent Partnership

Presenters: Harrisburg Superintendent Jennifer Lowery, Board Chair Terra Venard and Harrisburg School Board Members

Friday, 11:00 to 11:50 a.m. in Rooms 8-9-10

An effective district depends on a strong, trust-based partnership between the school board and superintendent. This session explores how clear roles, shared expectations, communication norms, and aligned governance practices support effective leadership. Participants will learn practical strategies to strengthen collaboration, navigate conflict, and maintain focus on strategic goals—creating a unified leadership team that drives student success and organizational stability.

Making it Through

Presenter: Langford Area Superintendent Shad Storley

Friday, 11:00 to 11:50 a.m. in Room 2

This presentation will share information on the planning in the Redfield School District to pass a \$16 million bond for a new PK through 12 building, as well as in Langford Area for the steps and planning gone through to pass their opt-out with 71 percent voter approval.

Learning

Future Ready Classrooms: Hands-On Strategies for K–12 Educators with Computational Thinking and Exploring Computer Science Curriculum

Presenters: CAMSE STEM Education Specialist Nicole Uhre-Balk, STEM Education Specialist Hannah Caffee, Estelline Technology Coordinator Tina Beldon and a panel of teachers

Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. in Rooms 6-7

As South Dakota implements new K–8 Computer Science standards, this session introduces practical ways to integrate computational thinking (CT) across K-8 classrooms—no computer science background required. Participants will explore strategies that build problem-solving skills in math and science and receive an overview of the free, hands-on Exploring Computer Science (ECS) high school, 9-12, curriculum. Attendees will also learn about supported professional development opportunities for teachers that include stipends and travel, helping schools implement these approaches effectively.

Supporting Tier I-III in Your District

Presenters: Harrisburg Special Education Director Stephanie Grey, Assistant Principal Levi Ludens and Principal Darren Ellwein

Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. in Rooms 8-9-10

This session will provide a framework for implementing and documenting Tiers I-III in the Harrisburg School District. Tier I will highlight how to serve most of your students through PBIS implementation. Tiers II and III will look at the structures for more intense behaviors within a school district. After implementing a Tier II Room pilot in 2025, positive and challenging results will be discussed. The session leaders will provide examples and the frameworks created.

Back to the Heart: Storywork as a Bridge Between SEL, Academics, and Human Connection

Presenters: Compass Partners in Learning Learning Specialists & Co-Authors of Storywork Dr. Scott Simpson and Sharla Steever

Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. in Room 3

Storywork integrates social-emotional learning with academics through personal storytelling. Developed by Dr. Scott Simpson and Sharla Steever, this approach helps educators foster empathy, resilience, and identity while meeting academic goals. Through modeling and real classroom examples, participants will learn how to transform everyday experiences into meaningful, standards-aligned learning. Attendees will leave with practical tools to design story-based SEL lessons that support diverse learners.

Learning

Social Studies Resources from SDPB and PBS

Presenter: SDPB Education Specialist Steven Rokusek

Thursday, 4:00 p.m. to 4:50 p.m. in Room 3

During this session, we will share social studies resources from SDPB and PBS. The session will include resources on South Dakota history and Native American studies. We will highlight lesson plans, videos, interviews, and other resources that encourage student engagement. SDPB would love the opportunity to share these resources with you to bring back to your teachers. (Grades: PreK-HS examples will be shown.)

Supporting Your Staff in Science of Reading Best Practice

Presenters: Compass Partners in Learning Learning and Literacy Specialists Chris Snyder and Dr. Kim Buechler

Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. in Room 3

This session provides practical tools for administrators to confidently guide their staff in the implementation of evidence-based Science of Reading (SOR) practices. Checklists and clear look-fors to be used in the classroom will provide clarity and confidence for educators on both sides of the observation and feedback process. Participants will leave with defined success indicators to monitor systematic academic gains and ensure consistent, high-quality implementation across classrooms and content.

Beyond the Classroom: School Libraries as Literacy Infrastructure

Presenter: S.D. State Library Training Coordinator Scottie Bruch

Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. in Room 2

The South Dakota Department of Education's literacy initiative calls for evidence-based instruction grounded in the Science of Reading across grades and content areas. This session explores how school libraries function as essential literacy infrastructure, supporting language development, background knowledge, reading volume, and critical thinking beyond the classroom. Participants will examine how leadership decisions related to staffing, access, and resources directly strengthen or limit a district's literacy efforts.

Legal

Counting to Ten: The Dos and Don'ts of Special Education Discipline

Presenter: Ratwik, Rosak & Maloney P.A. Shareholder Christian R. Shafer

Thursday, 10:30 to 11:20 a.m. in Rooms 8-9-10

In this presentation, an experienced school attorney will walk through every step of the discipline process, from counting suspension days to conducting a manifestation determination. The speaker will offer practical, real-world advice to help school leaders respond to student conduct, and parent responses to school discipline, while hopefully avoiding potential pitfalls.

The Open Meetings Laws – Current and New

Presenters: Kaufman Law Office Attorney Gerry Kaufman, Churchill, Manolis, Freeman & Burns Law Office Attorney Rodney Freeman, Jr. and ASBSD Director of Policy & Legal Services Naomi Cromwell

Thursday, 3:00 p.m. to 3:50 p.m. in Rooms 13-14

This session should be a “must attend” for all school board members, veteran members and newly elected members (and also school administrators) as the open meeting requirements are the law and not merely suggestions. A violation of the open meetings laws can be a criminal offense, result in a board action being voided by a court, and the school board being publicly reprimanded by the SD Open Meetings Commission.

Section 504: A Deep Dive

Presenter: Ratwik, Rosak & Maloney P.A. Shareholder Christian R. Shafer

Thursday, 4:00 p.m. to 4:50 p.m. in Rooms 8-9-10

Section 504 is often thought of as "just accommodations." The law, however, requires much more, and the failure to follow Section 504 could result in costly liability. In this presentation, an experienced school law attorney will take a closer look at the ins and outs of Section 504, from child find to the provision of a free appropriate public education, including special education and related services (yes, the Section 504 regulations actually say "special education").

Pain in the App, v. 4.0

Presenters: KSB School Law Attorneys Sara Rogers, Bobby Truhe and Tyler Coverdale

Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. in Rooms 11-12

Now in its fourth year, Pain in the App is officially preschool-aged, still growing, still learning, and occasionally causing a little chaos. What began as a focus on social media and student technology has expanded into a broader look at the legal and practical issues schools face today. Join the KSB attorneys as they cover the latest developments in social media, AI, cell phones, and emerging technology impacting administrators and board members. Each year brings new challenges, and this one is no exception.

Legal

Dirt, Dollars, and Deadlines: School Construction Explained

Presenters: KSB School Law Attorneys Sara Rogers, Bobby Truhe and Tyler Coverdale

Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 10:50 a.m. in Rooms 11-12

School construction projects are exciting, until you meet capital outlay requirements, bid laws, and acronyms like CM@R. This session will walk South Dakota administrators and board members through the legal and practical side of getting projects off the ground (and actually finished). We'll cover capital outlay, procurement options, opt-out issues, and other common pitfalls that can turn a project into a cautionary tale.

Navigating Due Process & State Complaints: What to Do When Your District Is Challenged

Presenters: Ratwik, Rosak & Maloney P.A. Shareholder Christian R. Shafer and Douglas Director of Special Services Monica Waltman

Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 10:50 a.m. in Room 3

When a district faces a due process complaint or state complaint, understanding the legal process and responding effectively is critical. In this joint session, an experienced attorney and a seasoned special education director provide a comprehensive look at navigating these challenges with confidence. Attendees gain insight into legal requirements, common pitfalls, and proactive strategies to prevent disputes before they escalate. Presenters share practical guidance on drafting strong responses, maintaining compliance, and fostering collaboration to resolve conflicts efficiently. This session equips school leaders with the knowledge and tools to protect their district's interests while ensuring appropriate services for students. Whether you're new to special education administration or a seasoned professional, this presentation offers valuable takeaways for handling legal challenges with clarity and confidence.

Handling Parent Disputes & Attorney Involvement: Strategies for New Special Education Administrators

Presenters: Ratwik, Rosak & Maloney P.A. Shareholder Christian R. Shafer and Douglas Director of Special Services Monica Waltman

Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. in Room 3

Effectively managing parent disputes and attorney involvement is a critical skill for new special education administrators. This interactive session, led by an experienced attorney and a seasoned special education director, provides actionable strategies to navigate challenging conversations, maintain positive relationships, and respond appropriately to legal challenges. Presenters will share real-world scenarios, offer communication techniques to de-escalate conflict, and outline key legal considerations when attorneys become involved. Attendees will engage in problem-solving activities designed to build confidence in handling contentious situations. The session concludes with a structured Q&A, allowing participants to apply learned strategies to their own experiences.

Technology

Data Collection Tools Your District Can Own and Customize

Presenters: Compass Learning Specialists Brady Licht and Dr. Ryan Young

Thursday, 10:30 to 11:20 a.m. in Room 3

Most walkthrough and observation tools cost thousands per year and lock your data behind a vendor's platform. We build free, customizable data collection tools that run entirely on Google Workspace, and we're giving them away. This session showcases three tools your district can deploy immediately: a Danielson-aligned classroom rounding tool, a behavior tracking and communication system, and a curriculum adoption rubric with a built-in dashboard. You'll see each tool in action, learn how the dashboards surface patterns that help leaders make informed decisions, and leave with everything you need to deploy and customize them for your district's evaluation framework and data collection needs.

Taming the Wild West of Student Use of AI

Presenter: Compass Learning Specialist Andrew Ley

Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. in Rooms 13-14

Should students use AI in our schools or is the risk to learning simply too high? District leaders everywhere are wrestling with this crucial question. This session explores what research says about student AI use and what responsible use can look like in South Dakota classrooms. Participants will examine grade-level appropriate strategies such as AI interviews, debates, and teacher-managed "walled garden" platforms that guide student AI use while preserving productive struggle and building durable skills.

AI Isn't Coming—It's Here: Are We Preparing Educators & Students or Playing Catch-Up?

Presenter: National Accounts Biotech/AI, Brandon Valley School Board Member & ASBSD Director Ellie Saxer

Thursday, 3:00 to 3:50 p.m. in Rooms 8-9-10

AI is already transforming how decisions are made; from classrooms to cutting-edge biotech shaping patient care. The question isn't if education should adapt, but how fast. Drawing on real-world experience at the intersection of AI and science, this session delivers practical, no-fluff strategies to help educators work smarter, not harder, and to prepare students for a future that's already in motion. Because standing still isn't a strategy.

Training

Smarter Social Media for Schools

Presenters: Sioux Falls Community Relations Director DeeAnn Konrad and Communications Strategist Carly Uthe

Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. in Rooms 11-12

Sharing student and staff stories is a powerful way for public schools to build trust among constituents. This session highlights best practices for engaging families, and the greater community, while ensuring information and content is accessible for all! We'll share ideas for simple, but effective, social media posts and explain the basics of how to make sure your content meets the new ADA compliance standards going into effect for public entities.

TeamMates: Transforming School Communities Through Mentoring

Presenters: TeamMates Regional Coordinator Carrie Clark and TeamMates Mentoring of SD State Director Jess Karim

Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. in Room 2

Strong relationships are the foundation of thriving schools — and the TeamMates Mentoring Program provides a powerful framework for building those connections. This interactive panel session will feature a diverse group of voices involved in TeamMates mentoring, including a school administrator, TeamMates employee, district/local board member and mentor. Participants will hear firsthand how TeamMates strengthens student well-being, fosters belonging, and enhances school culture. The panel will share real-world insights into program implementation, community collaboration, and the measurable impact of mentoring on student success. Attendees will also have the opportunity to ask questions, explore how the program can fit within their district or community, and learn practical steps for launching or expanding a mentoring initiative in their schools.

Strengthening Administrator–SRO Collaboration

Presenter: Sioux Falls Security Coordinator David Osterquist

Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. in Rooms 11-12

Having a School Resource Officer expands access to community resources, strengthens prevention efforts, and builds meaningful connections between schools and the communities they serve. So how do we close the gap between education and law enforcement? In this session, participants will learn practical strategies to strengthen collaboration, improve communication, and align efforts around one shared priority: doing what's best for students.

Training

Teens Who Mentor and Teach!

Presenter: South Dakota Youth Foundation Inc. Executive Director & Program Leader Carol Birgen

Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. in Room 2

Teens Who Mentor and Teach outlines the Teens as Teachers program of the South Dakota Youth Foundation Inc. High School Students who volunteer to participate are trained to teach elementary students in their local area using the curriculum provided: Healthy YOUTH or CHARACTER COUNTS! Those who complete the program earn a scholarship for use at any post-secondary training of their choice. Using the power of youth to mentor and teach, a positive impact is seen on the elementary student and Teen Teacher. This session will outline the Teens As Teachers program and how to participate.

Raising Awareness on Human Trafficking

Presenter: S.D. DCI Human Trafficking Coordinator & Analyst Mary Beth Holzwarth

Thursday, 3:00 p.m. to 3:50 p.m. in Rooms 11-12

Raising awareness on tactics predators use to target youth, how to spot and report trafficking and exploitation, community partnerships to protect South Dakota kids, increase awareness of challenges affecting kids today, learn practical ways to talk with kids about staying safe online and additional resources available.

Student School Boards - Elevating Student Voice Through Shared Leadership

Presenters: Rapid City Superintendent Dr. Jami Jo Thompson, Youth Engagement Coordinator Kristin Kiner and School Board and Student School Board Members

Thursday, 3:00 p.m. to 3:50 p.m. in Room 3

We believe schools are strongest when students' voices are not just heard but also valued as engaged leaders. By establishing and supporting a Student School Board, we have committed to shared leadership, authentic voice, and meaningful civic preparation. During this session we will share information about creating a Student School Board along with our challenges and successes from our first year. Join us to be inspired in moving student voice into a formal leadership structure.

Training

Maximizing Opportunities and Simplifying Management - Grants, Scholarships and School Foundations

Presenters: South Dakota Community Foundation Development Director Jeff Veltkamp and Community Development Coordinator Patrick Gallagher

Thursday, 3:00 p.m. to 3:50 p.m. in Room 2

Managing school foundations and scholarship funds can be overwhelming—but it doesn't have to be. The South Dakota Community Foundation supports schools, organizations, and donors with investment management and administrative services and can connect them with valuable grant opportunities. Learn how SDCF can help your school access funding while reducing the burden of managing scholarships, donor contributions, and IRS reporting. Hear from SDCF experts and fund holders about how this partnership can benefit your school.

Small Moves, Big Shifts: Empowerment & Flexibility in Action

Presenters: Watertown Middle School Principal Todd L. Brist and Harrisburg South Middle School Principal Darren Ellwein

Thursday, 4:00 p.m. to 4:50 p.m. in Rooms 11-12

What if increasing engagement and reducing burnout isn't about doing more but leading differently? This session challenges traditional structures and highlights how empowerment and flexibility can transform school culture. Through real examples and practical strategies, participants will gain both inspiration and immediate next steps to build systems where staff and students don't just comply—but thrive.

Networks of Support/Legacy Leaders

Presenters: White Lake Superintendent Will Gottlob, School Counselor Mica Foxley and Networks of Support Executive Director & Trainer Tim McGowan

Thursday, 4:00 p.m. to 4:50 p.m. in Room 2

Culture within schools and communities happen regardless. Deliberately creating a supportive environment positively influences student engagement, connectedness to each other, and a sense of belonging. With the mental health crisis we are in now, students need more opportunities to be in these types of environments as well as learn help-seeking behaviors. Through Networks of Support peer mentor groups, students have the opportunity to engage with one another in safe and playful ways that increase positive relationships among students in various grade levels, socioeconomic statuses, activities, and many other areas that separate students today. Peer mentors and students learn help-seeking behaviors, how to identify trusted adults, and ways to engage in healthy ways together. Through this program, schools can create a culture in which all students feel more valued, supported, and happy.

Training

Because Someone Believed in You: Growing the Next Generation of Educators

Presenter: Harrisburg Director of Teaching & Learning Travis Lape

Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. in Rooms 13-14

This session will challenge school leaders to think differently about how we build and sustain the future of the teaching profession—starting within our own systems. As principals and district leaders, we have the unique opportunity to intentionally identify, support, and develop students who have the potential to become future educators. Learn how schools across South Dakota are designing purposeful pathways that allow students to explore, engage, and step into authentic teaching experiences that spark both passion and purpose. This session will highlight scalable strategies, leadership moves, and system-level supports that make “grow your own” efforts successful. Walk away with practical ideas, leadership tools, and a renewed vision for how you can strengthen your teacher pipeline—starting right in your own schools and community.

Data that Drives Decisions (Not Just Reports)

Presenters: Harrisburg Superintendent Jennifer Lowery, Board Chair Terra Vennard and Director of Communications JoAnne VerMulm

Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. in Rooms 13-14

School boards receive extensive data but often struggle to translate reports into action. This session focuses on how boards can use data to drive governance-level decisions, set clear expectations, and monitor progress toward strategic goals. Participants will explore board-appropriate metrics, effective data questioning, and practices that connect evidence to policy, resource allocation, and connecting to superintendent evaluation, moving data from information to impact.

Promoting Youth Well-Being: Behavioral Health Resources Across South Dakota

Presenters: S.D. DSS-DBH Suicide Prevention & Crisis Services Program Manager Jordan Mouna, Juvenile Services Program Manager Kassy Dunn and Substance Use Prevention Manager Shaina Smykle

Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 10:50 a.m. in Rooms 13-14

Behavioral health remains a critical component of student success. This presentation will provide an overview of behavioral health challenges affecting youth, with a focus on risk and protective factors, early intervention, and prevention strategies. Participants will explore available behavioral health services and supports in South Dakota, including school-based programs, community mental health centers, and statewide initiatives aimed at promoting well-being among school age youth.

Training

Prevention is Possible

Presenter: S.D. DPS Office of Homeland Security School Safety Program Director Brett Garland

Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 10:50 a.m. in Rooms 6-7

Prevention is Possible: Learn to recognize behaviors on the pathway to violence and engage in interventions to prevent tragedies from occurring. A key component; challenging preconceived notions about reporting threatening or concerning behaviors and engaging students to report concerns. But, when prevention isn't possible, learn how understanding the background science of how people behave in high stress events, will save lives.

Resources to Support the Well-Being of School Aged Youth

Presenters: S.D. DOE School Counseling & Student Support Administrator Andrea Effling, USD School Crisis Prevention & Resource Hub Director Dr. Kari Oyen, S.D. DPS School Safety Specialist Angela Waldner, S.D. DOH School Health Coordinator & Public Health Nurse Lacey Wieczorek, S.D. Center for Disabilities BEAM-SD Program Coordinator Nikki Eining and S.D. DSS-DBH Suicide Prevention & Crisis Services Program Manager Jordan Mouna

Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. in Rooms 13-14

The growing need for school-based mental and behavioral health services requires schools to engage in systematic prevention and responses. This session provides an overview of a multi-tiered framework designed to help schools effectively implement programming. These resources can provide tools for staff and students to identify and refer youth in need; training opportunities for students, educators, and families; school safety tools; and treatment services.

Identifying Root Causes that Actually Drive School Improvement

Presenters: USD Associate Professors Erin Lehman and Vassa Grichko and Madison Central Superintendent Abi Vanregenmorter

Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. in Rooms 11-12

Many school improvement efforts stall because teams address symptoms rather than root causes. This session focuses on how leaders can move from compliance-driven needs assessments to meaningful root cause analysis that drives meaningful change. Participants will explore common pitfalls and learn a practical protocol for identifying root causes. Alignment across curriculum, instruction, and assessment is crucial. Attendees will leave with practical strategies they can use immediately to focus and strengthen their school improvement work.

Training

Safe2 Say SD: Strengthening School Safety Through Student Voice and Engagement

Presenter: S.D. DPS School Safety Coordinator Angela Waldner

Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. in Room 6-7

This session provides school administrators with an overview of Safe2Say SD and strategies to increase student engagement and reporting. Participants will learn how to effectively implement and promote the program within their schools, including a student-led “Lights, Camera, Call to Action” 30–60 second video initiative. This approach leverages peer influence to normalize reporting, strengthen school safety culture, and empower students to take an active role in prevention and early intervention.

Sponsored

Sleepless In South Dakota: Rest Easy With A Facilities Assessment

Presenters: CMBA Architects Education Specialist Jerry Rasmussen, Principal Architect Lee Beukelman and Director of Construction Services Dan Munch

Thursday, 10:30 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. in Room 1

School facilities play a critical role in learning, safety, and community trust. This session highlights common challenges facing schools—including aging infrastructure, limited budgets, safety requirements, space utilization, and sustainability—and demonstrates how a comprehensive facility assessment provides leaders with the data and clarity needed for effective planning. Learn how data-driven insights help prioritize needs, reduce expensive facilities surprises, and support conversations with your board and community, leading to informed decisions about your district’s future.

To the Moon: Master Planning for Future-Ready Schools

Presenter: Co-Op Architecture Representatives Tom Oster, Ed. S., Tom Hurlbert, AIA, Kyle Raph, AIA and Justin Kautz, ALEP

Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. in Room 1

School buildings age and change. Generations of families walk the same halls. Enrollment grows, shrinks, and grows again. Budgets ebb and flow. With so much uncertainty, how can school board members be confident they’re making the right decisions for the future of their district and community? By considering the whole picture — including physical, financial, and strategic goals and constraints — a facilities master plan can help a school district avoid the guesswork, identifying what they have today, what the community and building users think is needed for the future, and the most efficient and responsible way to get there. Led by experts in educational environments, this session will outline CO-OP Architecture’s master planning process and share lessons learned from delivering dozens of district master plans. Attendees can expect to gain insight into the purpose and value of long-range facility planning, including how it has helped various school districts – big and small – throughout the state.”

Sponsored

Growing Great Educators: Why South Dakota Schools Partner with the University of Sioux Falls

Presenter: USF Assistant Professor of Special Education Dr. Jamie Juhl

Thursday, 4:00 p.m. to 4:50 p.m. in Room 1

Description: Teachers and school leaders need high-quality professional learning that is flexible, practical, and immediately applicable in today's classrooms. Discover how the University of Sioux Falls partners with South Dakota school districts to support educators through graduate degrees, licensure pathways, continuing education credits, and customized professional development. Learn how districts can invest in their staff while building leadership capacity and improving student outcomes through this session.

Insulating Concrete Forms (ICF) Overview

Presenter: Fox Blocks & True Grid Western U.S. Commercial Advisor Randy Daniels

Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 9:50 a.m. in Room 1

Fox Blocks, America's Leading Manufacturer of Insulated Concrete Forms, Demonstrates ICF Product & Industry Overview with time for questions.

DISC and CliftonStrengths for Stronger Team Culture

Presenters: Erin Bauer, Desi Keller and Dr. Peg Diekhoff

Friday, 10:00 to 10:50 a.m. in Room 2

Schools are asking the same big questions: How do we build a stronger staff culture? Reduce turnover? Create shared understanding and trust across roles? This interactive session introduces two practical tools schools can use to support those goals: DISC (communication and behavioral tendencies) and CliftonStrengths (talent themes and contribution patterns). Participants will learn what each tool is best for, when to choose one over the other, both or a combination of the two, and how to use either tool to strengthen collaboration, especially in meetings, decision-making, and everyday team interactions. Examples will include use with leadership teams, building teams, and school boards.

Choosing the Right Construction Delivery Method

Presenter: Hausmann Construction Representatives Pierce Koch & Seth Lukonen

Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 10:50 a.m. in Room 1

Selecting the right construction delivery method is crucial for your school project's success. This session explores Hard Bid, Construction Manager as Advisor, Construction Manager at Risk, and Design-Build—how each impacts cost, schedule, and collaboration. Using real-world examples, we'll highlight lessons learned, common pitfalls, and key decision factors. Whether planning a renovation or new build, you'll gain the insights needed to choose the best method and confidently navigate the construction process.

Sponsored

Beyond the Math Wars: What Students Actually Need

Presenter: Lauren Moore

Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. in Room 1

What is THE right way to teach math? Is a problem-based curriculum the answer? How about drilling students on basic facts? Join this session to learn how Eureka Math2 sits in the "Dynamic Middle", balancing time spent on procedural fluency, conceptual understanding, and application to produce powerful math learning experiences.