Leading AT THE SPEED OF CHANGE

ISBA INDIANA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION | IAPSS Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents

77th ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE

October 5-6, 2026 | Indiana Convention Center

2026 ISBA/IAPSS FALL CONFERENCE

DAY 1 – MONDAY OCTOBER 5, 2026

8:00 A.M. – EXHIBIT HALL OPEN FOR VISITATION UNTIL 3:30 P.M.

Plan your day's activities to include a visit to the exhibit hall, meeting friendly personnel from each company who are well versed in the specifics of up-to-date school products and services.

8:00 A.M. – PHOTO BOOTH OPENS (Next to Exhibit Hall)

Take a photo with your entire board!

8:00 A.M. – 8:45 A.M. – IAPSS LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS HEARING (Rm. 237)

Presiding: Dr. Dan Hile, IAPSS President, Noblesville Schools

8:45 A.M. – 10:45 A.M. – MONDAY GENERAL SESSION (Sagamore Ballroom 4)

Presiding: Steve Corona, ISBA President, Fort Wayne Community Schools
Award Ceremony for the Lorin A. Burt Award, Regional Outstanding Board Service Awards, and State Outstanding Board Service Award
IDOE update from Dr. Katie Jenner, Indiana Secretary of Education

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Gian Paul Gonzalez "ALL IN"

11:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M. – CLINIC SESSIONS

How Collaborative Alliances Are Revolutionizing Indiana's New Diploma Pathways (Rm. 130-131)

With the 2029 diploma redesign requiring significant Work-Based Learning (WBL) hours (75 to 650+), school corporations are searching for consistent, scalable ways to manage programs without "reinventing the wheel." This session showcases the WBL Alliance, a statewide initiative led by the Education Service Centers of Indiana (ESCI), and the WBL Alliance Resource Hub, a centralized repository of training plans, coordinator guides, and legal frameworks.

Attendees will leave with:

- A Toolkit: Access to the WBL Coordinator's Guide and standardized training plan templates.
- Efficiency Hacks: Demonstrations of AI time saver tips for tracking student competencies and logging hours.
- Barrier Solutions: Proven strategies for navigating transportation, liability, and youth employment laws (under-16) discussed during Alliance meetings.
- Implementation Map: A timeline for aligning existing WBL hours (SAE, clinicals, internships) with the new Enrollment and Employment Honors Seals.

Presenters:
Cindy McKinney, Assistant Director, Region 8 ESC of Northeast Indiana
Stacey Monnet, College and Career Readiness Support Specialist, Central Indiana ESC
Paula Fiscus, Secondary Instructional Specialist, East Central ESC

You Don't Need More Space: Transforming Schools Without Major New Construction (Rm. 132-133)

School districts today are being asked to do more—expand programs, adapt to evolving educational needs, and modernize aging facilities—all while working within limited and tight budgets. The instinct is often to build new. But in many cases, the opportunity is already there.

In this session, architecture, engineering and district leadership perspectives will come together to explore how schools can get more out of the buildings they already have. By rethinking how space is used, making targeted renovations, and investing in smarter, more efficient building systems, including improved HVAC and energy-efficient solutions, districts can create environments that better support teaching and learning while maximizing long-term value.

Panelists will introduce the SPACE framework—Study, Prioritize, Align, Collaborate and Expand—and show how the framework was applied at North Posey High School to support evolving educational programs, strengthen community partnerships, improve operational efficiency, and create more adaptable learning environments. Attendees will leave with actionable ideas and a replicable framework for evaluating space needs, prioritizing investments, and aligning facility improvements with district goals.

Presenters:
Jennifer Kissel, Principal + Architect, Hafer
Henry Steckler, Mechanical Engineer, Hafer
Todd Slagle, Superintendent, M.S.D. of North Posey County

5-Step Strategic Plan Process for District Alignment (Rm. 134-135)

This session will highlight the process Knox Community School Corporation used to develop and implement a strategic plan that shifted the district's focus toward student achievement, beginning with the school board. Presenters will walk participants through the district's five-step framework: developing collective efficacy and shared responsibility, strategic planning and leadership, establishing three SMART goals, creating administrator-led collaborative teams, and implementing data-driven interventions.

Attendees will learn how KCSC developed school board norms, mission and vision statements, selected district SMART goals, monitored implementation across schools, and used data to inform decision-making. The session will demonstrate how aligning the school board, district leadership, administrators, teachers, and students around a shared vision created a culture of continuous improvement and increased student achievement.

Presenters:
Greg Mikulich, Superintendent, Knox Community School Corporation
Kirk Bennett, Board Member, Knox Community School Corporation
Jason Downs, Board Member, Knox Community School Corporation

Owning Our Narrative: Sharing the Good News of Public Education at MCSC (Rm. 136-137)

Public education is too often defined by negative headlines and misinformation. If school leaders do not proactively tell their story, others will. This session highlights how Mississinewa Community School Corporation (MCSC) built a strategic, low-cost communication system to consistently share the positive impact of its schools and strengthen community trust.

Presenters will showcase how MCSC leverages press releases, short-form video, and transparent financial messaging—through initiatives like "Where Your Dollar$ Go"—to improve engagement, align leadership messaging, and support key district priorities. The session emphasizes practical execution, not theory. Attendees will leave with a clear, replicable framework to highlight student success, elevate staff, and communicate the value of public education in their own communities—starting immediately.

Presenters:
Jeremy Fewell, Superintendent, Mississinewa Community School Corporation
Denny Smith, Board President, Mississinewa Community School Corporation
Brooke Richardson, Director of Marketing, Mississinewa Community School Corporation

The Ten Professional Habits of Superintendents Who Know Their School Culture (Rm. 138-139)

School culture is often discussed, but how well do superintendents truly know the culture within their schools? Drawing from dissertation research focused on the connection between superintendent professional habits and school culture awareness, this session explores the professional habits that help district leaders remain meaningfully connected to the experiences of staff.

Attendees will leave with actionable ideas for strengthening their own leadership practices, increasing authentic connection with schools, and creating systems that support strong positive culture across their district.

Presenter:
Dr. Katy Eastes, Superintendent, Batesville Community School Corporation

Why School Boards Matter (Rm. 140-141)

Not long ago, school boards were viewed as unexciting entities conducting mundane district business. Across red, purple, and blue states, school boards have now become highly visible battlegrounds, adjudicating some of the most contentious issues of our time. Why are there so many boardroom battles? Should education governance decisions be made at the federal, state, or local level? Do school

boards even matter? Drawing on history, research, and his personal journey from Wall Street to a public-school board seat, Scott Levy (author of Why School Boards Matter: Reclaiming the Heart of American Education and Democracy) makes the case that school boards hold transformational power. Board governance can be challenging amidst polarization and the rise in social media, but airing differences in a public forum is quintessentially American. Board meetings require us to make tough decisions transparently and encourage us to engage in civil discourse and listen to our neighbors who don't always think like we do. As policymakers debate the federal government's role in K-12 education and states pursue sharply divergent policies, Scott offers a roadmap for how local school boards can strengthen our public education system, our communities, and our overall democracy.

Presenter:
Scott Levy, Author "Why School Boards Matter"

12:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M. – EXHIBIT-SPONSORED LUNCHEON AND FREE TIME TO VISIT EXHIBIT HALL (Exhibit Hall)

12:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M. – ISBA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY – FOR DELEGATES ONLY – LUNCH WILL BE SERVED TO DELEGATES (Rm. 231-234)

Registration and lunch begin at noon. Delegate Assembly meeting begins promptly at 12:30 p.m.

2:00 P.M. – 3:00 P.M. – CLINIC SESSIONS

Indiana Department of Education Update: Advancing Education Priorities Across Indiana (Rm. 130-131)

Join the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) for a timely update on the state's education priorities, initiatives, and emerging policy developments impacting Indiana schools. This session will provide school board members and superintendents with the latest information on key legislative and regulatory updates, academic initiatives, accountability, school improvement efforts, educator workforce developments, and other issues shaping K-12 education.

Presenter:
Paul Ketcham, Assistant Secretary of Education, Indiana Department of Education

Right-Sizing Without Disruption: How One Corporation Saved $14M While Protecting Classrooms (Rm. 132-133)

School corporations are facing a new fiscal reality: declining enrollment, local birth rate stagnation, constrained state funding, and property tax reforms that limit local revenue. More often than not, these headwinds lead to reactive cuts, fractured trust, and significant classroom disruption. This session offers a different approach. The Monroe County Community School Corporation (MCCSC) implemented a disciplined two-year financial strategy designed to align costs, especially staffing across all employee groups, to student enrollment and declining revenue. The result: over $13.2 million in savings across two school years while limiting teacher layoffs to just one teacher and a handful of non-certified staff.

Workshop participants will learn how MCCSC prioritized people and classrooms through a structured Strategic Staffing Model, where 79% of staffing cost savings were achieved through natural attrition and position transfers, not layoffs. In addition, 57% of total savings came from non-classroom areas, demonstrating a disciplined commitment to protecting the student experience.

This session will highlight how proactive, transparent communication and strong board-superintendent alignment were essential to implementing consequential decisions while maintaining organizational trust.

Attendees will receive:

- Keys to strengthen board governance and superintendent alignment
- A staffing strategy sequence and checklist that prioritizes people and minimizes layoffs
- A cost reduction framework that protects classrooms and
- An actionable communications roadmap that builds trust amidst fiscal uncertainties.

Presenters:
Dr. Markay Winston, Superintendent, Monroe County Community School Corporation
Erin Cooperman, Board President, Monroe County Community School Corporation
Matt Irwin, Chief Financial Officer, Monroe County Community School Corporation
Sarah DeWeese, Director of Strategic Communications, Monroe County Community School Corporation

From Vision to Impact: A Leadership Playbook for Building Community-Driven Career Pathways (Rm. 134-135)

School districts across Indiana are navigating significant changes in how students demonstrate readiness for life after graduation, with new Graduation Pathways emphasizing work-based learning, industry credentials, and career-aligned experiences. As expectations shift, school leaders are being challenged to rethink how they deliver Career and Technical Education in ways that are relevant, accessible, and aligned with workforce needs.

In Hancock County, a "perfect storm" of factors—growing student demand for career pathways, regional workforce shortages, limited local access to training, and strong alignment across school, community, and industry leadership—led to the development of the Amplify Hancock initiative. Representing a multi-district collaboration across four school corporations, this effort provides a scalable, community-driven model for delivering high-impact Career and Technical Education.

This session brings together perspectives from a superintendent, school board member, county commissioner, and program leadership to share practical insights into how this initiative was developed and implemented. Panelists will discuss how they built and sustained business and industry partnerships and aligned board and community leadership to create programming that supports immersive, hands-on learning tied directly to workforce needs.

Attendees will hear candid lessons learned—including challenges, missteps, and what they would do differently—and will leave with practical strategies that can be applied in districts of any size, with or without major capital investment. The session will include moderated discussion and audience interaction to help participants explore how these ideas can be adapted within their own communities.

Presenters:
Mark Beebe, Principal, RATO Design
Stan Wilkison, Director, Mt. Vernon Community Schools
Harold Olin, Superintendent, Greenfield-Central Community School Corporation
Laura Haeberle, Board Member, New Palestine Community Schools
Bill Spalding, County Commissioner, Hancock County

Seeing is Believing: Using Visual Storytelling to Build Support for School Facilities (Rm. 136-137)

When school corporations face facility needs, the difference between community hesitation and community support often comes down to communication. For DeKalb County Central United Schools, a successful facility planning process required a visual, proactive communication strategy that helped stakeholders understand the "why" behind the project before misinformation, uncertainty, or financial concerns could define the conversation.

DeKalb County Central United Schools and Garmann Miller will share how district leadership, board members, architects, and communication professionals worked together to tell a cohesive project story and build understanding in the community. The session will explore how drone footage, photography, 3D renderings, Revit modeling, Enscape animations, video, community meetings, and stakeholder conversations were combined into one clear message. Together, these tools helped the district inform public perception, promote the good news happening in public education, and advance a major facility project without a referendum.

Presenters will discuss how consistent messaging and high-quality visuals helped residents see existing facility needs and understand proposed solutions. The session will connect these efforts to student opportunity, fiscal stewardship, and long-term community benefit.

Attendees will leave with practical communication strategies they can apply in their own schools to support facility planning, help address financial uncertainty, respond to social media misinformation, and strengthen community advocacy.

Presenters:
Derek Luth, Director of Fort Wayne Operations, Garmann Miller
Steve Teders, Superintendent, DeKalb County Central United Schools
Valerie Armstrong, Board President, DeKalb County Central United Schools
Eric Baltzell, CEO, Garmann Miller

Finding Common Ground: Building Consensus in School Board Leadership (Rm. 138-139)

School boards are often called to make difficult decisions in complex environments. In this interactive session, participants will explore practical strategies that help school boards and superintendents communicate effectively, navigate differing viewpoints, and work toward shared direction and effective governance.

Attendees will examine what it means to build consensus as a leadership team and how consensus is not about everyone getting exactly what they want but rather reaching a decision that everyone can support and move forward with. The session will also explore how boards can remain unified even when

complete consensus is not achieved and provide practical tools that participants can use to strengthen collaboration and improve board effectiveness.

Presenter:
Derek Morgan, ISBA Assistant Director of Board Services

Why School Boards Matter – Repeated Session (Rm. 140-141)

Not long ago, school boards were viewed as unexciting entities conducting mundane district business. Across red, purple, and blue states, school boards have now become highly visible battlegrounds, adjudicating some of the most contentious issues of our time. Why are there so many boardroom battles? Should education governance decisions be made at the federal, state, or local level? Do school boards even matter? Drawing on history, research, and his personal journey from Wall Street to a public-school board seat, Scott Levy (author of Why School Boards Matter: Reclaiming the Heart of American Education and Democracy) makes the case that school boards hold transformational power. Board governance can be challenging amidst polarization and the rise in social media, but airing differences in a public forum is quintessentially American. Board meetings require us to make tough decisions transparently and encourage us to engage in civil discourse and listen to our neighbors who don't always think like we do. As policymakers debate the federal government's role in K-12 education and states pursue sharply divergent policies, Scott offers a roadmap for how local school boards can strengthen our public education system, our communities, and our overall democracy.

Presenter:
Scott Levy, Author "Why School Boards Matter"

3:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M. – FREE TIME TO VISIT EXHIBITS

3:30 P.M. – 4:30 P.M. – CLINIC SESSIONS

Every Student, Every Day, Whatever it Takes: Building and Sustaining a Student-Centered MTSS Framework (Rm. 130-131)

Join the Merrillville Community School Corporation on a journey through development of a custom-built Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework. Presenters will explain the key components of collaborative data-driven decision-making, student voice, and integrated supports for academic, behavioral, and social-emotional success.

Attendees will learn how to:

- Identify and integrate the essential components of a personalized MTSS framework that balances academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports.
- Utilize a multi-year rollout strategy, tracing the transition from elementary implementation to the unique complexities of secondary school scheduling, including the use of Student Resource Time (SRT).
- Implement creative professional development tools, such as the "MITSS Minutes" podcast, to build authentic commitment from stakeholders.
- Apply practical resources to effectively build, customize, and strengthen your own district's systems for student success.

Presenters:
Dr. Dexter Suggs, Superintendent, Merrillville Community School Corporation
Erica Copeland, MTSS, Co-Chair, Merrillville Community School Corporation
Patrice Weil, MTSS Co-Chair, Merrillville Community School Corporation

Telling Your Financial Story Through Good Fiscal Stewardship (Rm. 132-133)

Terry Spradlin and Michele Moore will present on the elements of good fiscal stewardship, model governance, proactive planning, transparency, and accountability. ISBA Executive Director Terry Spradlin will expand on his recent series of articles in ISBA's Journal magazine about "knowing your numbers and telling your financial story to demonstrate transparency and build trust with your stakeholders." Dr. Michele Moore will provide practical tips on what planning and transparency look like at the board level using school financial documents. This session is important for board members as they build their financial acumen and work towards model governance.

Learning Objectives:

- Determine what model board governance looks like
- Develop the steps for proactive planning
- Analyze the steps for transparency
- Use case studies to show how all three are used in district financials
- See an overview with data of the microcredentialing program

Presenters:
Dr. Michele Moore, Clinical Asst. Professor, Indiana University
Terry Spradlin, ISBA Executive Director

The Family Engagement Advantage: A Smart Strategy Hiding in Plain Sight (Rm. 134-135)

Strong family engagement is linked to improved attendance, stronger academic outcomes, and increased enrollment, regardless of poverty and other community factors. When schools intentionally leverage the strengths and assets families bring, they expand their capacity to support student success. With a high return on investment and sustainable impact, family engagement is a strategy school leaders cannot afford to overlook.

In this session, participants will learn the fundamental elements of an evidence-based approach to family engagement and will be invited to join a network of schools in Indiana recognized as Family Engagement Certified.

Presenters:
Dr. Natalie Hicks, CEO, IN*SOURCE
Dr. Tara Bishop, Superintendent, Perry Central Community Schools

How District & Foundation Partnerships Can Fund Excellence in Public Education (Rm. 136-137)

As public school districts across the state face shrinking state and federal funding, education foundations play an increasingly critical role in supporting schools. At Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation, intentional alignment between the district's Communications Department and the Penn-Harris-Madison Education Foundation (PHMEF) has transformed traditional fundraising into a strategic,

districtwide effort with measurable results. Rather than operating in separate lanes, P-H-M and PHMEF share a unified mission and messaging strategy. The impact has been significant, driven by increased awareness, record-breaking event attendance, and stronger donor engagement. Teachers benefit from innovative resources, students experience enriched learning opportunities, and community partners see a tangible return on their investment in public education.

Attendees will learn how to identify and apply practical communication strategies that leverage district channels to amplify foundation initiatives, and how strategic storytelling can connect fundraising efforts to student outcomes, build trust, and cultivate long-term community advocates. Attendees will leave with actionable tools and replicable practices to move from siloed communication to strategic alignment, demonstrating how communication can serve as a powerful catalyst for funding excellence in public education.

Presenters:
Lucha Ramey, Director of Communications, Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation
Jennifer Turnblom, Executive Director, P-H-M Education Foundation

Two Questions, Four Pillars: AI Governance for Indiana K-12 (Rm. 138-139)

A working session for superintendents, board members, and HR on building a defensible, board-adopted AI governance posture. Gary Community School Corporation will walk through a four-pillar framework—Operations, Recruitment, Content, and Delivery—that helps districts identify where AI is already creating risk and where it can create real advantage. The session is structured as a conversation between a sitting Indiana superintendent and an ISBA Region 1 Director, drawing on a real district engagement now underway.

Every superintendent in Indiana is being asked two questions about AI right now. From the board: "How do we know our district isn't exposed?" From the community: "What are we doing with this that other districts aren't?" Most districts cannot answer either question with documented confidence, even though AI tools are already in use across HR, curriculum, communications, and classroom instruction, often without policy coverage, vendor due diligence, or board awareness. This session gives attendees a practical framework for answering both questions and a clear sense of what a defensible AI posture looks like in a K-12 context.

Presenters:
Glenn Johnson, Board Vice President, Gary Community School Corporation, ISBA Region 1 Director
Dr. Yvonne Stokes, Superintendent, Gary Community School Corporation
Jovanka “Jo” Cvitkovich, Director of Human Resources, Gary Community School Corporation

Beyond the Schoolhouse: Why School Board Members Must Advocate at the Federal Level (Rm. 140-141)

Local school board members play a crucial role in shaping education, but federal policies significantly impact funding, regulations, and student outcomes. This session will explore why school board members must engage in advocacy at the federal level to ensure their voices are heard in decisions that affect public education.

Attendees will learn:

- The key federal education policies and funding streams that impact Indiana school districts.

- How federal decisions on issues like IDEA, Title I, and E-Rate affect districts.
- Effective advocacy strategies for engaging with Congress, the U.S. Department of Education, and national education coalitions.

Whether you're new to advocacy or a seasoned pro, this session will provide practical steps for making an impact beyond your district.

Presenters:
Julie Feasel, Director of Communications & Government Relations, Consortium of State School Boards Associations (COSSBA)
Lisa Tanselle, ISBA General Counsel

4:30 P.M. – GENERAL RECEPTION (Outside of Sessions)

One hour of networking and collaboration—open to all conference attendees! Enjoy a complimentary drink while connecting with peers. Be sure to stick around for the door prize drawing for exciting giveaways.

DAY 2 – TUESDAY OCTOBER 6, 2026

7:00 A.M. – 8:15 A.M. – SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENTS' BREAKFAST PANEL (Rm. 235-236)

A panel of board members who have served or are currently serving as president will field questions from the audience. Reservation required. Open to current school board presidents only.

Presiding: Rebecca Gardenour, ISBA Past President, New Albany-Floyd County Consolidated School Corporation

8:00 A.M. – 12:15 P.M. – ASSOCIATION AISLE (Between Session Rooms)

Representatives from not-for-profit educational organizations will display material and answer questions. Show your support by picking up literature and visiting the various representatives.

8:30 A.M. – 9:45 A.M. – TUESDAY GENERAL SESSION (Sagamore Ballroom 4)

Presiding: Dr. Dan Hile, IAPSS President, Noblesville Schools
Presentation of the IAPSS Superintendent of the Year

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Jim Mahoney "The Four Bases of Leadership"

10:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M. – CLNIC SESSIONS

Introduction to the Federal School Safety Task Force's New Report with a Focus on Understanding Child Exploitation & Empowering Students to Protect Themselves (Rm. 130-131)

According to statistics from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), in 2024, reports of online enticement (adults communicating with children for sexual purposes) rose by 192% to more than 546,000 tips, and child sex trafficking reports increased 55% to 26,823. In 2025 these numbers increased another 80%, leading to a January 27, 2026, warning memo from the Department of Homeland Security entitled "Online Recruitment of Child Sex Trafficking Becoming Endemic." With 96 percent of US teens using the internet daily, traffickers exploit social media, video games, encrypted

messaging apps, dating apps, and, increasingly, artificial intelligence to identify and manipulate victims. The NCMEC CyberTipline reported an over 60-fold increase in the use of generative AI in child sexual exploitation cases in 2025 compared to the year before.

Emerging threats to students also include financial sextortion, sadistic exploitation, and AI-generated intimate images. Child victims feel desperate, leading tragically to suicide and self-harm. With many students embarrassed or ashamed to tell their parents that they have been victimized, school resource officers are often at the front lines of these issues and when properly trained can empower students to avoid these threats or assist them in obtaining resources to prevent a tragic outcome.

This program is designed to provide an introduction to the Task Force's report released in August and to educate the participants on the emerging threats relating to child exploitation and arm them with the tools and resources necessary to identify potential student victims and help them navigate their way through these difficult situations.

Presenters:

Hon. Tom Wheeler, United States Attorney, United States Department of Justice
Steven Grocki, Chief, Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, United States Department of Justice
Lindsay Burton, Director, Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety
Julie Q. Smith, Director, Indiana Office of School Safety

Blueprints for CTE Success: Phasing, Funding, and Partnerships that Work (Rm. 132-133)

Across Indiana, districts are reimagining how to provide students with real-world learning experiences that align with local workforce needs. The New Albany Floyd County Schools' approach to modernizing the Prosser Career Education Center provides a practical, phased roadmap for districts seeking to expand their Career and Technical Education (CTE) offerings while balancing funding, timing, and facility constraints.

In this session, attendees will learn how the district developed a five-phase master plan to meet growing local demand in high-skill, high-wage programs—starting with the most immediate infrastructure needs while maintaining flexibility for future expansion. The project team will share key lessons learned from planning through construction, including how to prioritize program areas, minimize operational disruption, and align physical improvements with long-term educational goals.

Attendees will also hear about the district's strategies for building community and industry partnerships to strengthen program relevance and funding potential. From leveraging state and federal CTE dollars to forming local collaborations with employers and training providers, this session will offer a holistic look at how strategic planning, design, and partnership development can come together, piece by piece—to transform any facility into a dynamic, future-ready CTE-learning environment.

Presenters:

Kyle Miller, Principal, Schmidt Associates
Kyle Lanoue, Director of CTE Programs, New Albany Floyd County Schools

Earning the Ask: How Data-Driven Engagement Changed a District's Future (Rm. 134-135)

In 2022, the La Porte Community School Corporation launched a strategic planning process, and community survey data revealed a widespread erosion in public trust in the school system. Post-COVID

disengagement, limited financial transparency, and years of reactive communication had created perception gaps across parents, staff, business leaders, and community members alike.

Rather than respond with a marketing campaign, a multi-year strategic engagement plan grounded in the data was designed. The goal was not to sell the community on the district but to earn its trust through transparency, access, and honest conversation, especially about money.

This session tells the story of that strategy and introduces the framework behind it, including the Slicer Ambassador program that brought business leaders and community influencers inside district operations, School Funding 101 presentations that built financial literacy among staff and the public, the adoption of ParentSquare to close a communication equity gap for Spanish-speaking families, a transparent school closure process that strengthened rather than damaged trust and led to the creation of a CTE Center and an early childhood center, a joint State of the Schools event with the city's economic development organization, and an internal communications strategy that ensured staff heard critical information before the community did.

Attendees will leave with a replicable engagement framework, honest lessons on what worked and what they would do differently, and practical strategies that any Indiana district can adapt, regardless of size or budget. The session includes an interactive component in which participants identify their district's engagement gaps and begin mapping out the next steps they can act on immediately.

Presenters:
Dr. Sandra Wood, Superintendent, La Porte Community School Corporation
Erin Meyer, Director of Communications, La Porte Community School Corporation
Ryan Seaburg, Board President, La Porte Community School Corporation

Changing the Narrative: Strategic Public Relations to Elevate the Good News in Public Education (Rm. 136-137)

This interactive session challenges school leaders to examine how their district is perceived online and within the community. Attendees will begin by searching their own school corporation on Google and reflecting on the message prospective families and community members receive. The session explores how one Indiana school district shifted from reactive communication to a proactive public relations strategy through intentional storytelling, transparency, and consistent communication without major financial investment. Attendees will leave with practical strategies to increase positive visibility, strengthen community trust, highlight student and staff success, and create a culture where sharing the great work happening in schools becomes everyone's responsibility.

Presenters:
Dr. Jim Hanna, Superintendent, Rossville Consolidated School District
Joe Hufford, Board President, Rossville Consolidated School District
Dustin Shadbolt, Director of Technology, Rossville Consolidated School District

Welcome to the Table: Strategies for Intentional New Board Member Orientation (Rm. 138-139)

Brand new board members across the state will take their seats at the board table for the first time in January. Too often, new people have very little idea of the role of a school board, the expectations for the work, or critical knowledge of the corporation's operations. They will be thrown into a firestorm of information at a rapid-fire pace. The time between election day and their first meeting is ideal for intentionally setting them up for success and strengthening your leadership team.

This session will provide useful strategies and ideas for developing a well-defined orientation process that you can incorporate and codify in policy and practice.

Presenter:
Steve Horton, ISBA Director of Board Services

11:15 A.M. – 12:15 P.M. – CLINIC SESSIONS

Blueprint for HS Redesign: Framework of Strategies to Meet New Diploma and Accountability (Rm. 130-131)

As Indiana school corporations face the challenge of meeting new graduation pathways requiring hours of immersion, local leaders are finding that traditional "one-off" partnerships are no longer sustainable. Fragmented systems leave businesses "engagement-taxed" and schools struggling with scheduling and liability roadblocks.

This session introduces the Partners for Professions talent development framework, an initiative of the Central Indiana Education Service Center (CIESC). CIESC is currently partnering with Hendricks College Network to support five districts in Hendricks County, as well as partnering with EmployIndy in supporting all Marion County school districts. We will demonstrate how this model provides a Signature Experience Continuum from elementary exposure to high school immersion, ensuring all students are ready for the new Employment and Honors Employment Seals.

Learn how to track market value assets and manage student progress for state accountability and new diploma requirements, while reducing friction for industry partners.

Presenters:
Dr. Kimberly Fifer, Strategic Specialist, Central Indiana Education Service Center
Dr. Tracey Shafer, Superintendent, Danville Community School Corporation
Chris Ponsler, Asst Executive Director/Intermediary, HCN/MADE of Plainfield
Stacey Monnett, Strategic Specialist, Central Indiana Education Service Center

An Interactive Working Session on the State of K-12 Capital Projects: From Challenge to Strategy (Rm. 132-133)

In this interactive working session, K-12 leaders and school board members will navigate real capital project challenges. You'll engage directly with industry leaders in architecture, financial advisory, bond counsel, construction management, and bond brokerage to explore how successful school projects actually come together, even under challenging circumstances.

Through small-group breakouts, you'll tackle real-world topics like funding uncertainty, enrollment shifts, community engagement, and deferred maintenance. Each group will share insights back to the room, creating a dynamic, peer-driven discussion shaped by the audience, not a presentation.

Come ready to participate, exchange ideas, and leave with practical strategies and perspectives you can apply to your district's next capital project.

Presenters:
Victor Landfair, Executive Vice President, The Skillman Corporation
Kristin McClellan, Partner, Ice Miller Legal Counsel
Lindsay Simonetto, Director, Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors
Dr. Scott Robison, Former Superintendent/Client Liaison, Fanning Howey
Chad Blacklock, Director, Stifel Public Finance

A Strategic Approach to Staffing: Registered Apprenticeships for Teachers, Counselors, and School Leaders (Rm. 134-135)

This session examines how districts can use pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs as a comprehensive workforce strategy to address multiple high-need areas.

Presenters will share how a coordinated portfolio of role-specific degree apprenticeships can be used to intentionally develop local talent. These programs enable individuals to complete their degrees and transition into professional roles while remaining in their communities and employed—expanding access to the profession in ways that were not previously feasible. Attendees will gain insight into how this approach can improve retention, reduce recruitment and onboarding costs, and create more stable, predictable staffing pipelines. We'll also address governance considerations, partnership structures, and key implementation lessons to support informed decision-making at the district level.

Presenters:
Dr. Leah Nellis, Assistant Vice President, Indiana University
Dr. Tambra Jackson, Dean, School of Education, Indiana University Indianapolis
Steven Hensley, Director of Human Resources, Richmond Community School Corporation
Michele Starkey, Superintendent, Logansport Community School Corporation

30 Days & Counting: How to Maximize the Final Stretch of a Referendum Campaign (Rm. 136-137)

Hear from leaders of the Avon Schools Referendum PAC as they reflect on how they maximized the critical final days of their successful November 2025 referendum campaign. Presenters will share their top 10 lessons learned, offering practical insights for communities preparing for 2026 referendums—or those just beginning to explore a future campaign.

A key focus will be on effective use of social media in the closing weeks, including message amplification, volunteer engagement, and rapid response strategies. The session will also address how to manage and respond to negative social media late in the campaign, when timing, tone, and clarity matter most.

Participants will leave with actionable strategies they can apply immediately to strengthen campaign momentum and finish strong.

Presenters:
Dr. Scott Wyndham, Superintendent, Avon Community School Corporation
Kevin Carr, Communications Coordinator, Avon Community School Corporation
Chelsea Neiswinger, Social Media Chair, YES4AvonSchools PAC

Focused Leadership: Creating and Cultivating an Aligned School Board/Superintendent Team (Rm. 138-139)

School boards and superintendents each play a critical role in the effective leadership of Indiana's school districts. When roles, responsibilities, and commitments are unclear or misaligned, district progress and student outcomes can be negatively impacted. High-performing districts, however, are grounded in strong, collaborative governance teams built on trust, clarity, and shared purpose.

In this session, Dr. Daniel Hile will lead a conversation on critical governance understandings and practices that must be clearly defined and internalized to build a productive and aligned school board/superintendent team. Emphasis will be placed on establishing role clarity to strengthen decision-making, improve communication, and increase organizational coherence. Dr. Stephanie Lockwood will share experiences from her first year as superintendent of Marion Community Schools, highlighting how intentional board training, in partnership with Dr. Hile, helped reset the leadership dynamics and establish a unified direction for the district. This process emphasized building team alignment, a shared focus, and mutual respect among board members and between the board and superintendent. As a result, the board and superintendent developed a shared understanding of their distinct yet interconnected roles, leading to the creation of clearly defined board commitments that now serve as the foundation for effective governance practices.

Presenters:
Dr. Daniel Hile, Superintendent, Noblesville Schools
Dr. Stephanie Lockwood, Superintendent, Marion Community Schools

End of conference – Thank you for your attendance!