



# NAPSEC Annual Leadership Conference

January 19-22, 2025

The Hotel Monteleone  
New Orleans, LA





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## CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

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# WELCOME

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We are thrilled to have you join us at The Hotel Monteleone in New Orleans for what promises to be a dynamic and transformative experience.

These next few days are designed to inspire, energize, and empower you as leaders in the field of special education. Our goal is to create a space where you can not only learn but also connect with others who share your passion for improving outcomes for students with special needs. We will engage in innovative sessions, collaborative workshops, and thought-provoking discussions that will spark new ideas, challenge us, and push the boundaries of what is possible in our work.



Together, we will explore new strategies in leadership, legal, fiscal, and best practice issues and solutions for our network of schools. We will build on best practices and foster a sense of renewed purpose in our mission. For our new conference attendees, we know that leadership can often feel like a solitary journey, but here at NAPSEC, we believe in the power of community. You'll have the opportunity to network with fellow leaders, share insights, and form lasting connections that will support you long after the conference ends.

Get ready for an exciting and invigorating experience that will leave you inspired and motivated to continue making a difference in the lives of the students and families we serve.

A special note of thanks to the conference planning committee, Danielle Damm, NAPSEC Executive Director, and Brandi Akins, for their significant role in planning this conference.

Thank you all for being part of this incredible community. Let's make this conference one to remember!

**Kathy Flannery**  
*Conference Committee Chair*



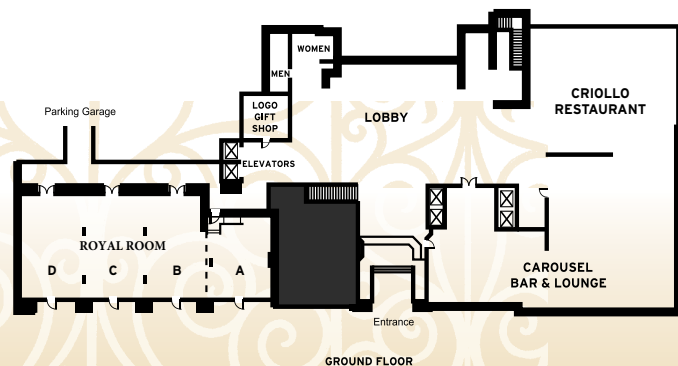
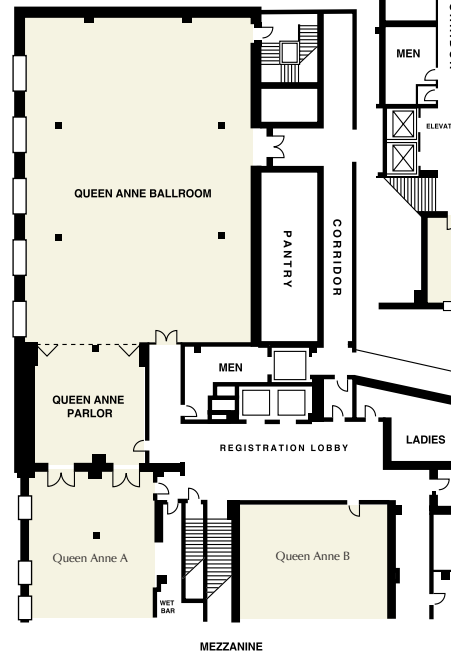
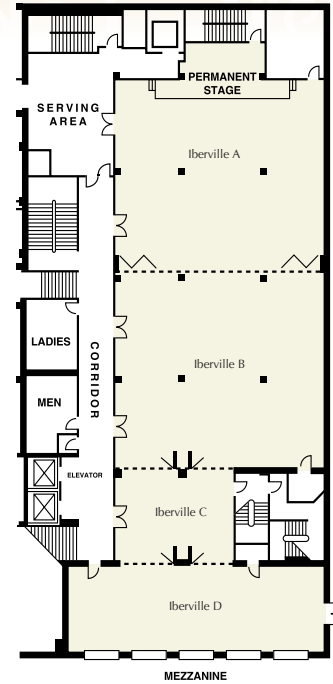
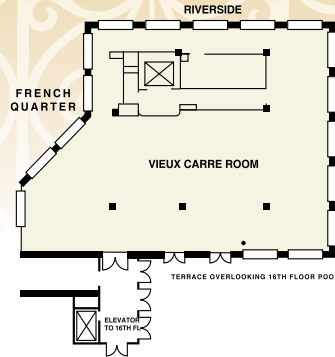


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# CONFERENCE AGENDA

## SUNDAY, JANUARY 19<sup>TH</sup>

**10:30 AM - 11:30 AM**

**Orleans A**

**CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**11:30 AM - 12:30 PM**

**Orleans D**

**NAPSEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS & NCASES COMMISSION LUNCHEON**  
*By Invitation Only - Sponsored by Boston Higashi School*

**12:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

**Main Lobby**

**REGISTRATION**

**12:30 PM - 2:30 PM**

**Orleans A**

**NAPSEC BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

**1:00 PM - 5:00 PM**

**Queen Anne Parlor/Queen Anne A**

**EXHIBITOR SETUP**

**2:30 PM - 4:30 PM**

**Orleans A**

**NCASES COMMISSION MEETING**

**6:00 PM - 7:00 PM**

**Iberville**

**NEWCOMER RECEPTION**

This reception provides an opportunity for first time attendees to meet NAPSEC Board Members and other new attendees in a smaller setting immediately before the Welcome Reception.

**7:00 PM - 8:30 PM**

**Iberville**

**WELCOME RECEPTION - *Sponsored by Partlow Insurance***

This event is the perfect time to catch up with colleagues and friends and to meet new ones as we kick off the conference.



# CONFERENCE AGENDA

## MONDAY, JANUARY 20<sup>TH</sup>

**7:30 AM - 8:30 AM - BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE:**

**French Market**

**ASAH Members Breakfast Roundtable**

An informal opportunity for New Jersey State Association members to join a facilitated discussion with other ASAH members.

**7:30 AM - 8:30 AM - BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE:**

**Queen Anne B**

**Funding Concerns & Strategies**

An informal opportunity to join a facilitated discussion with other conference attendees.

**7:30 AM - 8:30 AM - BREAKFAST BUFFET**

**Queen Anne Parlor/Queen Anne A**

*Sponsored by Kennedy Krieger School Programs*

**7:30 AM - 3:00 PM - REGISTRATION**

**Queen Anne Mezzanine**

**7:30 AM - 2:30 PM - EXHIBITS**

**Queen Anne Ballroom/Queen A**

**8:30 AM - 10:00 AM - KEYNOTE:**

**Queen Anne Ballroom**

**The Engagement Gap: Driving Employee Engagement Across the Generations**

*Karen McCollough*

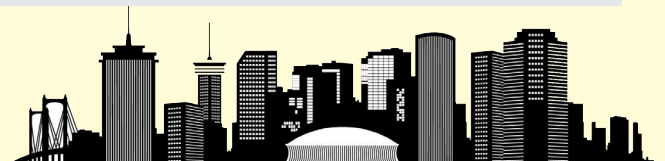
**Sponsored by Nisivoccia**

Today Gallop Research shares that employee engagement is at an all-time low. Employee engagement affects employee retention, productivity, and loyalty and is key to customer satisfaction and your bottom line. Your organization can't afford to lose your top talent. Not only does engagement have the potential to significantly affect employee turnover, absenteeism, productivity, and growth, but engagement is also a key link to customer satisfaction and your employer brand. Guiding leaders in their efforts to shape elevated employee engagement has never mattered more.

It's time to raise employee engagement by building a culture where people feel connected, protected, and respected by people from all generations.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

- Identifying the four key engagement factors that drive productivity and generational performance
- Gaining insights into the diverse generational work perspectives and generational motivators
- Understanding how trust plays into engagement
- Adapting to a rapidly changing workforce
- Discovering tools to build a culture of trust and belonging
- Exploring steps for every generation to get along better with the others and boost employee engagement





# CONFERENCE AGENDA

## MONDAY, JANUARY 20<sup>TH</sup>

**10:00 AM - 10:30 AM - COFFEE BREAK**

**Queen Anne Parlor/Queen Anne A**

***Sponsored by The Benedictine School***

Enjoy a cup of coffee and visit with our exhibitors.

**10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:**

**Queen Anne B**

**Speak Up: Supporting Self-Advocacy in Special Education**

***Lindsay Wagner & Michael John Carley***

Having agency over one's life, including making decisions for one's self, developing personal goals and values, and having opportunities to make informed choices, is a primary factor that is crucial for a high quality of life. Using current evidence, Autistic perspectives, and practical strategies for integrating student voice into transition planning, supporting adults can ease the path from student to adult. Including self-advocacy initiatives such as disability peer mentoring, quality of life factors, community-building, and multidisciplinary collaboration are key to transition planning. Now is the time to listen to disability self-advocates and improve our practices using their knowledge and experience as a baseline for growth.

**10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:**

**Royal B**

**Hot-Button Legal Issues Affecting Private Special Education Schools**

***David B. Rubin, Esq.***

***Sponsored by ASAH***

Private schools for the disabled are governed by a complex web of federal and state laws and regulations. In this litigious environment, it is essential for school leaders to recognize potential legal issues before they blossom into full-blown crises. This session will review developments in the law over the past year of interest to the private school community and offer tips on how to minimize risk and avoid liability.

*This session will be repeated on Tuesday at 10:30AM.*

**10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:**

**Royal C**

**Crisis Communications – It's All about the Plan**

***Abbie S. Fink - Sponsored by Spectrum360***

Although we hope to never need it, a well-thought-out crisis communications plan ensures your organization's leadership and executive team members take appropriate actions in a timely manner when and if a crisis situation arises. The plan, if used correctly, will minimize the impact of a crisis upon the organization and normal business operations. Abbie S. Fink, president of HMA Public Relations in Phoenix, will lead us through some interactive exercises and share her insights into how to handle crises in our organizations.



# CONFERENCE AGENDA

## MONDAY, JANUARY 20<sup>TH</sup>

**10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:**

**Royal D**

### **Preparing for OSHA Inspections within the Context of Workplace Violence**

*Blu Santee*

In the current OSHA environment, which increasingly prioritizes workplace violence prevention, being prepared for inspections—whether anticipated or unexpected—is essential. By adopting a proactive approach, you can enhance compliance and foster a safer workplace for all employees. As awareness of workplace violence continues to grow, there is increasing pressure on the government to establish formal regulations to protect workers across all industries. OSHA aims to create safer work environments by addressing specific risks associated with workplace violence, particularly in sectors like healthcare and social services, where encounters between patients and employees are more frequent. This presentation aims to help members understand what OSHA looks for during inspections and how to effectively navigate the process. By highlighting key focus areas and providing practical compliance strategies, you will gain the knowledge necessary to create a safer workplace and minimize the risk of OSHA citations. Additionally, we will discuss best practices for handling OSHA inspections, including tips on preparation, interacting with OSHA representatives, and understanding your rights during the process.

**12:15 PM - 1:30 PM**

**Queen Anne Ballroom**

### **STATE OF THE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING & FEDERAL UPDATE**

*Sponsored by Sheppard Pratt Schools*

Lunch provided

**1:45 PM - 2:45 PM**

**Royal C**

### **NCASES 101: Introduction to Accreditation**

Participants will be provided with an overview of the accreditation process (i.e. origins, philosophy, mission, organizational structure) and a summary of the NCASES process from the time a program applies for accreditation through the completion of the site review and the final report.

**1:45 PM - 2:45 PM**

**Royal B**

### **NCASES Volunteer Site Reviewer Training**

Help support our mission to promote excellence in special education. This session will train participants to be a NCASES Site Reviewer. Once your application is approved, participant names will be placed on the NCASES Site Reviewer list and you will be notified of opportunities to participate in upcoming site visits for applicant programs across the United States.

**1:30 PM - 2:30 PM - BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

**French Market & Parlor**

**3:00 PM - 5:00 PM - EXHIBITOR HAPPY HOUR**

**Vieux Carre**

Join our conference exhibitors for a cocktail, a bite to eat, and another invaluable NAPSEC networking opportunity!





# CONFERENCE AGENDA

## MONDAY, JANUARY 20<sup>TH</sup>

### 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM - CASINO NIGHT FUNDRAISER

Riverview

Join us for blackjack, roulette, craps, poker, slot machines, a raffle drawing, and lots of fun for a great cause! Join us for an incredible evening of fun and games - no experience necessary! Chips do not represent real money - no actual gambling occurs. All proceeds benefit the NAPSEC Foundation. **Ticket purchase required for entry.** Tickets are available to purchase at the registration desk.



### Player Ticket Package - \$100

- Casino Entry
- (2) raffle tickets
- (20) spins on the slot machine
- Gaming chip (\$1,000 in voucher chips for casino game play)
- (1) Drink Ticket

### Spectator Ticket Package - \$50

- Casino Entry
- (1) raffle ticket
- (20) spins on the slot machine
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# CONFERENCE AGENDA

## TUESDAY, JANUARY 21<sup>ST</sup>

**7:30 AM - 8:30 AM - BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE:**

**French Market**

**Issues in Adult Services**

An informal opportunity to join a facilitated discussion with other conference attendees.

**7:30 AM - 8:30 AM - BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE:**

**Queen Anne B**

**Safety in the Workplace**

An informal opportunity to join a facilitated discussion with other conference attendees.

**7:30 AM - 8:30 AM - BREAKFAST BUFFET**

**Queen Anne Parlor/Queen Anne A**

*Sponsored by Sheppard Pratt Schools*

**7:30 AM - 2:00 PM - REGISTRATION**

**Queen Anne Mezzanine**

**8:30 AM - 10:00 AM - KEYNOTE**

**Queen Anne Ballroom**

**I'm Not Limping. That's Swagger!**

*Kelsey Tainsh*

**Sponsored by Kennedy Krieger School Programs**

Two-time pediatric brain tumor and stroke survivor Kelsey Tainsh shares her remarkable journey, including the story of her relationship with her school administrators, teachers, faculty and staff along the way. Her message is a powerful reminder of the impact educators have on the lives of their students every day. Armed with her quirky sense of humor, engaging stories and relevant message, Kelsey will help you gain the perspective needed to overcome any challenge in your life and in your work. Audiences walk away with a resilient new mindset and a fresh appreciation for the gift of work, accomplishment and relationships we all share.

**10:00 AM - 10:30 AM - COFFEE BREAK**

**Queen Anne Parlor/Queen Anne A**

*Sponsored by CTC Academy*

**10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:**

**Queen Anne B**

**Raising the Bar on Safety**

*Harry Schaeffer & Cheray Christiansen*

**Sponsored by LifeScope Specialty School**

The challenges of managing day to day operations often results in safety issues being lost in the shuffle or taken for granted. Creating a culture that keeps safety as a top priority requires a commitment that must originate with and be maintained by leadership. This presentation will include several suggestions for (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) that now impact organizations that serve individuals with significant behavioral challenges. These federal safety related standards will be discussed as well as the procedural changes most organizations will need to make to meet those standards. The experience of a NAPSEC member organization having to respond to OSHA will be shared.

# CONFERENCE AGENDA

## TUESDAY, JANUARY 21<sup>ST</sup>

**10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:**

**Royal A**

### **Teacher Retention through Support and Induction**

*Cheryl A. White, MSM*

**Sponsored by Clark Lau, LLC**

This workshop addresses the critical issue of teacher attrition in special education, particularly among those teaching students with autism. It explores the internal and external causes of attrition, emphasizing the need for robust support systems for alternatively certified teachers (ACTs). Using Organizational Support Theory (OST), the workshop highlights how perceived organizational support can improve teacher retention and student outcomes. Practical strategies for administrators to enhance support and reduce turnover will be shared, aiming to create a more stable and effective educational environment.

**10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:**

**Royal B**

### **Transforming Human Services with Real-Time Analytics: Empowering Practitioners and Improving Outcomes**

*Peter York - Sponsored by VistaLife Innovations*

Discover how cutting-edge data analytics and machine learning are revolutionizing service delivery. This session explores innovative "precision analytics" projects where administrative data was leveraged to provide real-time, actionable insights for practitioners. Learn how organizations developed learning systems that offer tailored recommendations for each client, improving outcomes and decision-making. We'll discuss challenges faced, solutions implemented, and the potential for scaling these approaches across various human service sectors. Join us to explore how data science can empower practitioners and drive evidence-based practice in youth and family services, including those supporting individuals with disabilities.

**10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:**

**Queen Anne A**

### **Hot-Button Legal Issues Affecting Private Special Education Schools**

*David B. Rubin, Esq.*

**Sponsored by ASAH**

Private schools for the disabled are governed by a complex web of federal and state laws and regulations. In this litigious environment, it is essential for school leaders to recognize potential legal issues before they blossom into full-blown crises. This session will review developments in the law over the past year of interest to the private school community and offer tips on how to minimize risk and avoid liability.

**12:15 PM - 1:45 PM - AWARDS LUNCHEON**

**Queen Anne Ballroom**

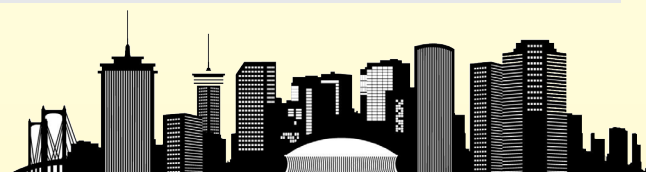
**Sponsored by Sheppard Pratt Schools**

During this special event we will recognize the 2025 NAPSEC and NCASES National Awardees and programs which were NCASES accredited this year. You don't want to miss this!

**2:00 PM - 3:00 PM - PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Queen Anne B**

Open to all conference attendees





# CONFERENCE AGENDA

## TUESDAY, JANUARY 21<sup>ST</sup>

3:00 PM - 4:15 PM - NCASES STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING

Orleans A

3:45 PM - 5:00 PM - NCASES PROCESS COMMITTEE MEETING

Orleans A

5:30 PM - 7:30 PM - NCASES GATHERING

Royal Salon

***Sponsored by The Benedictine School***

Stop by at the end of the day to relax and learn more about NCASES. We encourage current site reviewers to attend so we can thank you for donating your time and expertise on behalf of NCASES.

## Mark your calendars!

# NAPSEC Legislative Day

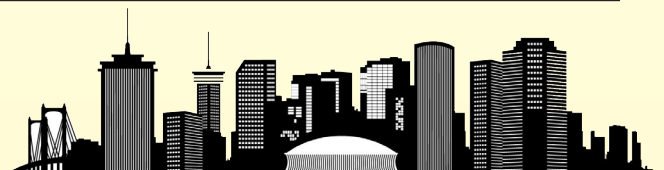
***May 11-13, 2025***

***Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill***

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at NAPSEC's 2025 Legislative Day in  
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NAPSEC provides everything you need – training, printed materials, networking opportunities and confirmed meetings with your elected representatives and congressional staff on Capitol Hill. Visit the NAPSEC website for more information – book your room today!



# CONFERENCE AGENDA

## WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22<sup>ND</sup>

**7:30 AM - 8:30 AM - BREAKFAST ROUNDTABLE:**

**Queen Anne B**

**Challenges in Human Resources**

An informal opportunity to join a facilitated discussion with other conference attendees.

**7:30 AM - 8:30 AM - BREAKFAST BUFFET**

**Queen Anne Parlor/Queen Anne A**

*Sponsored by Arrow Child & Family Ministries*

**7:30 AM - 12:00 PM - REGISTRATION**

**Queen Anne Mezzanine**

**8:30 AM - 10:00 AM - KEYNOTE:**

**Queen Anne Ballroom**

**Personal Climate and Culture ... It's Up to You**

*Gerry Brooks*

*Sponsored by League School for Autism*

Gerry uses his videos to develop a strategy for making the workplace a pleasant place where faculty, administrators, and support staff all maintain mutual respect, regardless of personal differences, resulting in more efficient and fulfilled workers. Gerry will share policies and practices he has incorporated that promote a healthy, respectful working relationship even when opinions differ. He will also share ideas that maximize opportunities to get to know staff members and create camaraderie, taking advantage of 15 seconds here and there throughout the day. Gerry will inspire attendees with personal stories to remind you of the reason educators endure the trials of working in this industry today. You will leave refreshed and encouraged.

**10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:**

**Queen Anne B**

**Utilizing the Continuous Improvement Process to Develop School Dashboards that Monitor Student Achievement**

*Ra Shone Franklin & Gabby Caroselli*

Every school wrestles with the question of effectiveness. Being able to answer this question in a quantifiable manner is no longer an option. State agencies, stakeholders, and communities are seeking to understand the impact of our work. Who better to define your effectiveness than you? Come with us on our journey to answer this question and receive strategies on how to start your journey. We'll start by sharing our organization's work to align our outcomes with our student achievement goals, then create space for attendees to begin their own process of selecting and tracking their own goals.

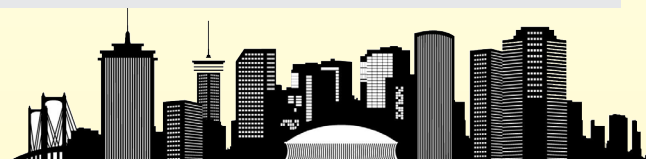
**10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:**

**Royal A**

**Committing to a Paradigm Shift: Compassionate Applied Behavior Analysis in Nonpublic Schools**

*Dr. Megan Anders, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA & Amanda Link, M.A., BCBA, LBA, LGPC*

Sheppard Pratt Schools serve some of the most vulnerable students in Maryland and surrounding states. Students frequently arrive at our doors having experienced trauma in many settings, including school. The field of applied behavior analysis is evolving; an increasing number of providers are committed to compassionate, trauma-assumed applications of our science. In service of elevating the quality of our behavior programming, Sheppard Pratt Schools participated in a consultation with FTF Consulting, Dr. Greg Hanley's company, to bring "Today's ABA" to our schools. In our presentation, we will share that process, along with our remarkable outcomes and next steps.



# CONFERENCE AGENDA

## WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 22<sup>ND</sup>

**10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:**

**Royal B**

### **Strategies for Succession Planning and Transitions**

*Dr. Shawn Kurrelmeier-Lee - Sponsored by Klingberg Family Centers*

Often organizations plan for transitions for the leader, but how do others prepare for change and transitions? This session will explore strategies for succession planning and transitions for all levels of leadership.

**10:30 AM - 12:00 PM - CONCURRENT SESSION:**

**Queen Anne A**

### **H1B Visas & International Recruitment**

*Magaly Rojas Cheng, Vincent W. Lau & Michael Kelly*

*Sponsored by Clark Lau LLC*

Join us for an insightful panel discussion that dives deep into the world of non-immigrant visa options and their vital role in international recruitment. Our expert panel will cover essential visa categories, including H-1B, TN, J-1, and H-2B, unpacking the legal processes and compliance requirements that organizations must navigate. The panel will feature the Boston Higashi School, who will share their firsthand experiences in leveraging international recruitment to enhance their direct care staff. Discover the tangible benefits of this approach, including the diverse perspectives and skills that international recruits bring to the table.

**12:15 PM - 12:30 PM - FAREWELL & RAFFLE DRAWING**

**Queen Anne Ballroom**

**1:00 PM - 2:00 PM - CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Queen Anne B**





# EXHIBITORS

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Partlow Insurance has provided tailored insurance services to NAPSEC members for over 40 years. Our knowledge of the insurance industry and experience with schools and agencies serving students requiring special education services uniquely qualify us to assess a school's need and evaluate the cost effectiveness of their insurance coverage.

**Contact:** *Brian Partlow • Suze Risteski • Jeff LePage • Arrianna Nichols*

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**Contact:** *Brian Tarpey • Susan Neusch • Ayse Saziman • Delaney Tarpey*

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Johnson, Kendall & Johnson is an independent Employee Benefits and Risk Management consulting firm that has over three decades of experience in supporting special education centers. Our goal is to ensure the valued members of your Special Education Center are satisfied, healthy and prepared to focus on what matters most, education.

**Contact:** *Joe Capri • Chad White • Dan Sullivan*

# CONFERENCE EXHIBITORS

## ACE ABA Software System

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The ACE® ABA Software System is the leading data collection and skill acquisition tool designed for public schools and organizations across the United States. Our comprehensive software streamlines every aspect of service delivery, offering user-friendly assessments seamlessly linked to a customizable lesson plan database. With advanced data entry and graphing capabilities, your team can efficiently monitor and report on student progress. Our mission is to equip your team with cutting-edge, research-based teaching methods and software tools that enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Developed by the esteemed New England Center for Children®—a non-profit school with over 150 BCBA's and more than 400 students—the ACE lesson plans and assessments are grounded in extensive research and real-world experience. Serving programs in over 33 states, we pride ourselves on delivering unmatched service in the autism community. Join us in making a difference. We look forward to collaborating with you.

**Contact:** *Frank Ciccone*

## 501(c) Services

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**Contact:** *Heidi Posada*

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Managed | Marketing Business Solutions is Making Business Simple through office technology and marketing services. MBS focuses on all communications in the modern office including: Documents, Voice, Data, Hardware and Managed IT. Through careful analysis of individual business infrastructures we provide comprehensive bundled services to streamline output management. Marketing Business Solutions (a division of MBS) is a modern, rapidly growing full-service marketing agency that helps businesses grow their brand by utilizing website design, social media, and much more.

**Contact:** *Steve Carroll • Vin Sinopoli • Jimmy Coler*

# ★ Educator of the Year

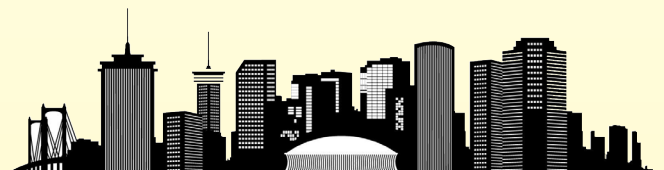
## ***Doug Howansky, Spectrum360***



Doug has been a dedicated Spectrum360 employee for over 25 years, progressing from Teacher's Aide to Teacher through dedication and a focus on resilience-building. He plays a pivotal role in the Young Adult Program (YAP), which helps 18- to 21-year-olds transition into adulthood. Doug has led initiatives such as implementing programs that teach workplace and social behavior, emphasizing consequences and adaptation. He rebranded YAP with innovative features like a simulated Walgreens, providing hands-on training in stocking, inventory, and customer service. Additionally, he creatively utilizes available resources in workshops to push students beyond expectations.

Doug excels in fostering inclusivity and pushing boundaries for student achievement. He introduced daily sign language lessons to integrate a deaf student with autism, enhancing communication and reducing dependence on interpreters. He also runs workshops where students use power tools to create marketable items, demonstrating trust in their abilities and enabling skill-building.

By designing programs that challenge traditional methods, he consistently proves that students with special needs can exceed expectations. Doug's work benefits the school and the broader special needs community in meaningful ways. He enhances school events with visionary set designs for productions, enriching student experiences. His career education programs prepare students for life after school by fostering independence and real-world readiness. Beyond the classroom, Doug supports former students through home instruction and community-based initiatives, ensuring their long-term growth and success. His dedication and innovative methods leave a lasting impact within Spectrum360 and the larger special education community.





# ★ Related Service Provider of the Year

## *Stephanie Dixon, Gramon Family of Schools*



Stephanie Dixon has worked as a Physical Therapist at the Gramon Family of Schools for over 20 years. Her impact in the field of special education goes well beyond the therapy services she provides to students. Stephanie has a positive, energetic, and fun personality, that it is contagious amongst her colleagues. Over the years, so many families have requested her to work with their child to develop their gross motor skills. Even though she has helped numerous students overcome motor deficits, it is the way she goes above and beyond that makes her truly special. Stephanie was instrumental in the founding of a new school program; NBFit. NBFit is a physical fitness gym located inside the Gramon Family of Schools that is designed to motivate students with special needs to work out and “be fit.” Stephanie was instrumental in the design and equipment chosen. She worked collaboratively with our physical education instructor to maximize the usage of the space for a variety of student ages. Stephanie and her colleagues are hoping that creating a rich, stimulating environment will help provide natural motivation for students to exercise.

Stephanie and her team aim to not only provide these incredible services to address IEP goals but to also combat obesity in our student population. Stephanie’s accomplishments are many inside the school setting. However, her greatest accomplishment might be one that occurred outside the walls of the school building. Stephanie has a love for sailing and frequently sails to various locations in her own time. Combining that passion with an organization called “Possible Dreams” she was able to organize and facilitate a sailing excursion for multiple groups of students with disabilities on the Hudson River. The sounds, the sites, and the experience was truly one of the most enriching of our students’ school lives. Many of the parents were overwhelmed with emotion as they experienced this dream opportunity with their son or daughter. Stephanie instinctually believed that students with ASD would respond positively to the lapping of the water against the boat, the motion and sensory experiences it would provide. Her instincts were correct, and the sails were even more successful than she dreamed. The success of this program has spawned multiple other sailing trips and help create “GFS Adventures,” which are experiences for students with ASD in the community that go above and beyond exposure to community-based instruction. These adventures include snow-tubing, alpaca farm trips, rock climbing and soon - surfing. For the many years Stephanie has provided incredible therapy services, leadership, and commitment to the organization, there is no one more deserving of this recognition.



# ★ Direct Care Worker of the Year

## *John Farris, Chapel Hill Academy*



John has been a pillar of the Chapel Hill Academy community for over twenty years, and his incredible dedication to students and staff makes him the perfect choice for this award. John's ability to connect with students—especially those facing challenges—set him apart from the start. Whether through humor, athletics, or just a quiet chat, he's always found ways to break down barriers and build trust.

Starting as a one-on-one aide, John quickly grew into a leadership role. When the school needed someone to handle counseling support, crisis management, and behavior interventions, John was the obvious pick. He's the go-to person for tough situations, knowing every student's name, needs, and unique personality. Tossing a ball, sharing a snack, or offering a kind word—John's approach is about meeting kids where they are. Beyond his work with students, John's influence shapes the entire school. He's a certified Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) instructor, modeling proactive strategies that prevent crises before they happen.

His insights help staff adopt trauma-informed practices, creating a school culture that's both compassionate and supportive. This year, with new students and staff transitions, John stepped in where he was needed most—guiding classrooms through challenging adjustments and helping new assistants find their footing. His efforts immediately brought calm and positivity, transforming difficult situations into success stories.

John's dedication goes beyond people—he takes pride in the school itself. Whether tidying up hallways or jumping in to solve problems, he's always ready to lend a hand. His commitment to Chapel Hill Academy is felt everywhere, making him more than a staff member—he's the heart of the school.

John's compassion, leadership, and tireless effort make him truly deserving of this recognition. He's not just a role model—he's the kind of person who makes Chapel Hill Academy a better place every day.

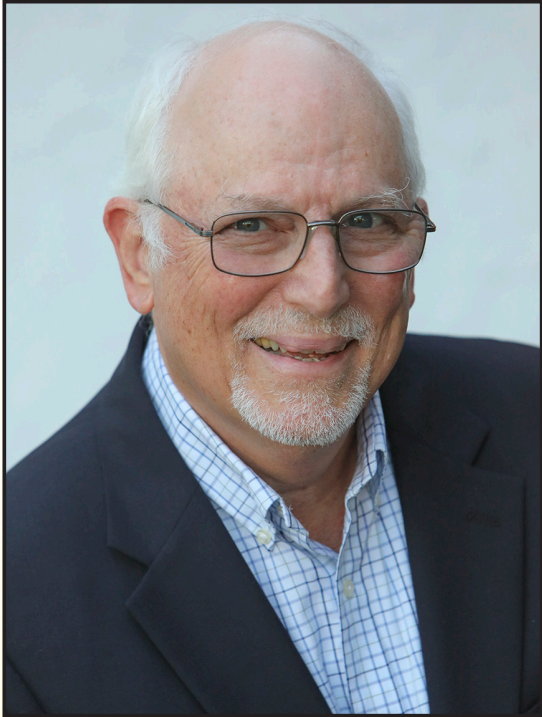


## Chapel Hill Academy



# ★ NCASES Site Reviewer of the Year

## ***Dr. Thomas Colasuonno***



Dr. Thomas Colasuonno has the characteristics of an outstanding NCASES site reviewer. He is thorough, understanding, committed, and empathetic to both school and site review team needs. Tom's impressive and dedicated career in education spans more than 50 years. He has served in leadership roles in both the public and private sector and continues to lead a life of service even since his retirement in 2015. During a process that is often stressful for applicant agencies, Tom consistently develops positive relationships with staff and students over a short period of time. His personable and approachable demeanor helps to put staff, students and families at ease. Tom works in a collaborative manner prior to, during, and after site review visits and oftentimes volunteers to mentor new site reviewers. Tom is committed to the evaluation process and to supporting excellence in special education, to education more broadly, and is driven by the success of others in this community. Throughout his impressive career in education he has supported various accreditation agencies and contributed to over 20 reviews. It's easy to see why he is so valued as a professional and a friend.

"Tom worked tirelessly with our team as an advocate to ensure our site is doing what is best for kids. We all appreciate and value Tom as an educator and friend." – Mark Capritto, *Casa Pacifica*

"Tom was a NCASES reviewer on my first site review. I learned so much just watching him interact with staff and team members in site interviews and walk-throughs. He had such a graceful way of putting anxious site members at ease with laughter and honesty, allowing them to shine as they answered questions and shared insights. He was very encouraging to me as a new reviewer and asked great questions that would assist me in my reviews thereafter. This is a well-deserved recognition." - Trae Hiatt, *Wings Special Needs Community*

"Being on a site review team with Tom is both a pleasure and an educational experience! He possesses an innate ability to connect with everyone with whom he interacts. Tom's blend of professional flair and friendly demeanor makes him a great communicator and helps to establish a comfort level with participants, whether they are agency related individuals or site review team members. To everyone's benefit, Tom generously and warmly shares his vast wealth of knowledge." - Sharon Grogan, *Retired*

"Tom is a great resource for new reviewers. He is a phenomenal communicator that can make complex topics seem simple. He also is great listener and values the opinions of others." - Ra Shone Franklin, *Nexus Family Healing*





# NCASES

National Commission *for the Accreditation of Special Education Services*

## NCASES Commissioners

### Chair

**Helen Bosch**

*Vista Life Innovations*

### Past Chair

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*Eden Autism Services*

### Vice Chair

**Julie Hickey**

*The Benedictine School*

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*Trousdale School*

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*Kennedy Krieger  
School Programs*

### Standards Committee Chair

**Sue Barnes-McLendon**

*Arrow Child & Family Ministries*

**Danielle Damm**

*Executive Director/CEO*

## ACCREDITED PROGRAMS

*ACCEL, Phoenix, AZ*

*ACCEL International Saudi Inc for Education Dhahran, Saudi Arabia*

*Arrow Child & Family Ministries, Baltimore & Bel Air, MD*

*Bancroft, Mt. Laurel, NJ*

*Boston Higashi School, Randolph, MA*

*Brookfield Schools, Cherry Hill, NJ*

*Casa Pacifica, Camarillo, CA*

*Cottonwood Day School, Bozeman, MT*

*Cyzner Institute, Charlotte, NC*

*Eden Autism Services, Princeton, NJ*

*Kennedy Krieger School Programs, Baltimore & Rockville, MD*

*Lifescape Specialty Schools, Sioux Falls, SD*

*Olive Crest Academy, Orange, CA*

*ScenicView Academy, Provo, UT*

*St. Coletta of Greater Washington, Washington, DC*

*Summitview Child & Family Services, Inc., Placerville, CA*

*The Benedictine School, Ridgely, MD*

*The Children's Guild, Baltimore & Chillum, MD*

*The Education Center at the Watson Institute and LEAP Preschool, Sewickley, PA*

*The New York Institute for Special Education, Bronx, NY*

*The Phoenix Center, Nutley, NJ*

*Trousdale School, Cleveland, TN*

*Vista Life Innovations, Madison, CT*

*Wings Special Needs Community, Edmond, OK*

*A special thank you to our volunteer site reviewers!*

*You are appreciated for your time, efforts, and expertise.*



# NAPSEC Foundation

**The National Association of Private Special Education Centers** is proud of the exceptional dedication displayed by our annual award recipients. The national awards for **Educator of the Year**, **Related Service Provider of the Year**, and **Direct Care Worker of the Year** are bestowed upon special education and adult service professionals through nominations by their respective NAPSEC member schools.

Through the generous support of our partners and friends, the NAPSEC Foundation is able to fund the NAPSEC Annual Awards, which provides each awardee an opportunity to attend our national conference free of charge (travel/registration), where they are recognized and celebrated during an awards luncheon. All proceeds from the conference casino night and raffle support the NAPSEC Foundation.

## NAPSEC CONFERENCE RAFFLE

Drawing 1 - \$1,000.00

Drawing 2 - \$500.00

Drawing 3 - 3 Day/2 Night Stay at the Hotel Monteleone

## YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE PRESENT TO WIN!

Drawing will be held during Casino Night on **Monday, January 20th** at the NAPSEC Annual Leadership Conference.

## Have you purchased your raffle tickets?



**All proceeds  
benefit the NAPSEC  
Foundation**



*"This award is not about the recognition of an individual, rather, the role we all play in fostering a supportive school community."*

**Melissa Feeley**

*2024 Educator of the Year / Spectrum360*



Located on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, Benedictine carries on the legacy of supporting children and adults living with intellectual and developmental disabilities so they can achieve their greatest potential.

The Benedictine School is a nonpublic educational program for students living with intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, and autism. The school provides rolling admissions throughout the year for students from kindergarten through 12th grade. Our dedicated teachers and staff provide customized programming designed to meet individual needs on a fully accessible campus.

Benedictine's Adult Services program offers Meaningful Day and job training services for transitional youth and adults, ages 22 to 70+, who live in the community, and in 18 Benedictine adult group homes in Caroline, Talbot, and Anne Arundel Counties.

**Benedictine  
is proud to be  
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# Elevating Workforce Well-Being

Comprehensive  
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Program



Eden is a recognized leader in providing a lifetime of support to individuals with autism, their families, and the community. With expertise in working with the most challenging and complex behaviors, communication deficits, and cognitive impairments, we offer numerous resources grounded in the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis including:

- The Eden School (ages 3–21) & Extended School Year
- Adult Day & Employment Services
- Adult Residential Services
- Wrap-Around Services (Respite, Extended Day Program, Transition to Employment)
- Parent Training & Support Services
- Consulting and Assessment
- Eden Curriculum Series
- Professional Development and Training

Princeton, NJ ● 609-987-0099 ● [edenautism.org](http://edenautism.org)



## OUR MISSION

To improve the lives  
of people with autism...



one individual, one family, one community  
at a time.

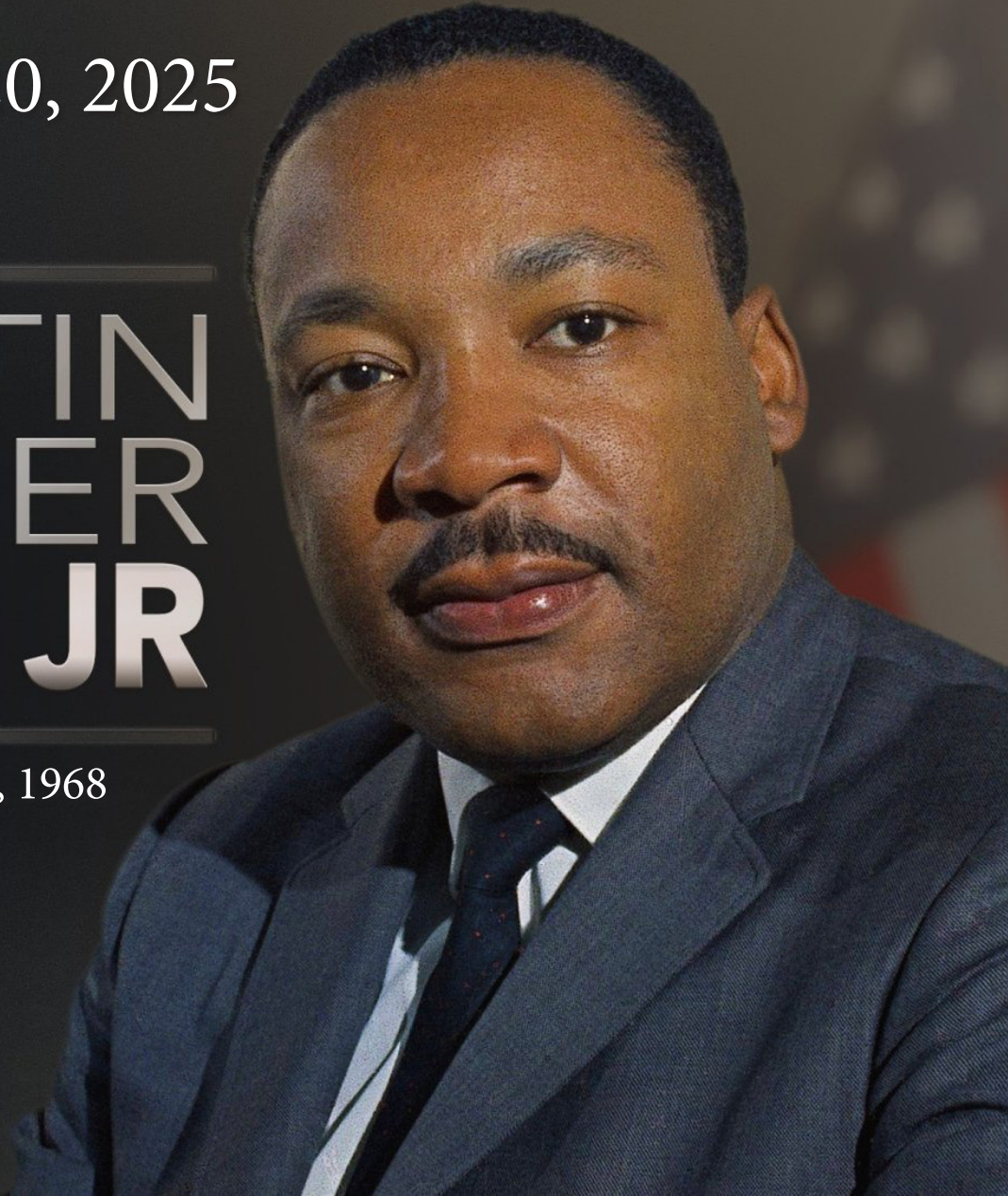


As we remember the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. this week, NAPSEC thanks you for granting us the opportunity to support you in your dedicated service to individuals with disabilities.

Monday, Jan. 20, 2025

# MARTIN LUTHER KING JR

Jan. 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968



*“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”*

*–MLK, Jr.*



**NAPSEC**

National Association of Private Special Education Centers



## NCASES Mission

Ensure that special education programs and services maintain excellence through demonstrable adherence to a set of established national standards.

## About Us

NCASES was established in 1992 by the National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC) in response to a need for an accreditation process that uniquely addresses private special education programs and the populations they serve.

A subsidiary of NAPSEC, NCASES is overseen by a Board of Directors and managed by a Commission composed of experts in the field. All NCASES Board members, Commissioners, and Site Reviewers serve on a voluntary basis.

## Why Seek NCASES Accreditation?

- Achieve recognition for excellence in special education based on expert peer review
- Improve services through adherence to national standards of best practice
- Demonstrate the high quality of your programs to students, families, referral sources, funders, and other stakeholders
- Establish agency improvement goals

NCASES provides an accreditation process that effectively and systematically evaluates private special education and adult learning programs. The entire process welcomes diversity of educational practice and innovation and recognizes the importance of evaluating services to meet student/client needs.

Accreditation is based on a self study of compliance to fifty two standards covering the range of processes, procedures, and practices critical to the functioning of a special education setting. After submitting the self study, applicant agencies undergo a comprehensive site review performed by a highly trained team of experts in the field of special education.

Now offering the option for an **integrated accreditation** through our partnership with the **Council on Accreditation (COA)**.

## Contact Us

**Danielle Damm, Executive Director**  
20 F Street NW, Suite 700, | Washington, DC 20001-6705  
202.434.8225 | [napsec@napsec.org](mailto:napsec@napsec.org) | [www.ncases.org](http://www.ncases.org)



The National Commission for the Accreditation of Special Education Services (NCASES) is an affiliate of the National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC)

# CASA MEMBERS

## COUNCIL OF AFFILIATED STATE ASSOCIATIONS

### CALIFORNIA

**California Alliance of Child and Family Services**  
[www.cacfs.org](http://www.cacfs.org)

**CAPSES-California Association of Private Special Education Services**  
[www.capses.org](http://www.capses.org)

### CONNECTICUT

**CAPSEF - Connecticut Association of Private Special Education Facilities**  
[www.capsef.org](http://www.capsef.org)

### ILLINOIS

**IAPSEC-Illinois Association of Private Special Education Centers**  
[www.iapsec.org](http://www.iapsec.org)

### MARYLAND

**MANSEF-Maryland Association of Nonpublic Special Education Facilities**  
[www.mansef.org](http://www.mansef.org)

### MASSACHUSETTS

**MAAPS-Massachusetts Association of 766 Approved Private Schools**  
[www.maaps.org](http://www.maaps.org)

### NEW JERSEY

**ASAH-Serving The Private Special Education Community Since 1974**  
[www.asah.org](http://www.asah.org)

### VIRGINIA

**VAISEF-Virginia Association of Independent Specialized Education Facilities**  
[www.vaisef.org](http://www.vaisef.org)





# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

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## **Karen McCollough**

Karen McCullough is a nationally known keynote speaker delivering High Content, High Energy, High Humor. Karen McCullough is called a Branding Expert (she worked with Ralph Lauren), a Social Media Enthusiast (she tweets), and a Millennial Evangelist (she sees the future). She's an award-winning speaker who inspires and empowers organizations and individuals to evolve, grow, and realize their true potential for excellence. She has a 20 year business background as a retail CEO- she knows first hand, sales, marketing, branding, employee retention, and the "art of managing and promoting young employees". Some of her clients include McDonalds, General Dynamics, Shell Oil, Marriott Hotels, Procter & Gamble, Exxon, Symantec, HP Enterprise, Humana, and McGraw-Hill. Karen believes that enduring success is the combination of talent, attitude, relationship building, and the ability to adapt and change. Achieving your goals requires honesty to identify what it is that is getting in your way and the courage to change.

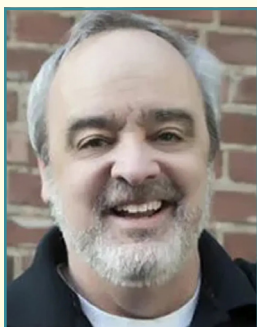
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## **Kelsey Tainsh**

Kelsey Tainsh has been through more in her 33 years than most will endure in a lifetime. Successfully overcoming a brain tumor at only 5 years of age, Kelsey went on to be a happy, healthy kid and a champion athlete. 10 years later, at 15, it all came crashing down when the tumor returned followed by a crippling stroke. Her friends had disappeared, her right side didn't function and she became paralyzed with fear and self doubt. Despite her significant physical challenges, she worked hard to pull herself up and charged back into life graduating magna cum laude from the University of Florida and going on to work for one of the most recognized companies in the world – The Coca-Cola Company. Today, this remarkable young woman has become a champion for the rest of us. An acclaimed professional speaker and para snowboarder, Kelsey travels the country speaking to students, organizations and corporations about the power of persistence and perspective.

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## **Gerry Brooks**

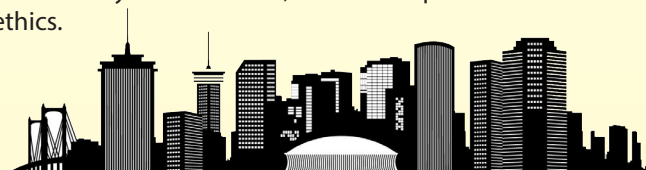
Gerry Brooks has been an educator for 25 years, beginning as a third grade teacher in Palm Bay, FL. He earned his masters in administration and has been an elementary principal for 15 years. Originally using humorous videos to encourage his staff, Gerry has become a national encourager for teachers through social media and speaking events. He is a voice for teachers, but his passion is leading others to be responsible for their own personal climate and culture in the workplace. His book, "Go See the Principal," outlines strategies for taking on this responsibility. Gerry and his wife, Kelly, have three adult children and live in Lexington, KY. He currently has a following of over 3.2 million people.

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## **David B. Rubin, Esq.**

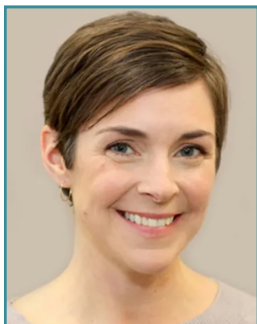
David B. Rubin, Esq., is a sole practitioner in Metuchen, New Jersey and of counsel to The Busch Law Group, LLC. A graduate of Duke University and Rutgers Law School, Mr. Rubin represents public school districts and private schools throughout New Jersey. He has served as Chair of the National School Boards Association's Council of School Attorneys, and President of the New Jersey Association of School Attorneys, and is co-author of *The Ethical Educator: Pointers and Pitfalls for School Administrators* (Rowman & Littlefield 2022). Mr. Rubin has attained an AV rating from the Martindale-Hubbell legal directory, is listed in SuperLawyers Magazine and Best Lawyers in America, and is a frequent author and lecturer in the fields of education law and legal ethics.





# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

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## **Lindsay Wagner, MOT, OTR**

Lindsay Wagner is an occupational therapist who has been practicing in the field of autism for 19 years. As the Director of Neurodiversity and Community Inclusion at the League School for Autism, she consults with community-based organizations, employers, and schools on autism education and neurodiversity-affirming practices and leads the implementation of the program's SCERTS® Model. Lindsay is a certified Autism Spectrum Disorder Clinical Specialist and a doctoral candidate in Bay Path University's Health Sciences department.

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## **Michael John Carley**

Michael John Carley is an author, school and business consultant, and former Executive Director in the autism, neurodiversity, mental health, disability, and DEI worlds. He runs New York University's Connections Program for Global Students with Autism, and is the current Neurodiversity & Leadership Advisor for the League School for Autism. He is the author of *Aspergers From the Inside Out* (2008), *Unemployed on the Autism Spectrum* (2016), and *The Book of Happy, Positive, and Confident Sex for Adults on the Autism Spectrum...and Beyond!* (2021).

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## **Cheray Christiansen**

Cheray Christiansen is a dedicated Compliance Manager at LifeScope, where she has been an integral part of the team for the past 14 years. In this role, Cheray ensures that the organization adheres to all state and federal regulations, as well as the standards set by accrediting bodies. Her expertise and commitment to compliance has been instrumental in maintaining the highest levels of operational integrity and safety. One of Cheray's notable achievements at LifeScope is the development and implementation of a comprehensive workplace violence prevention program. This initiative, guided by OSHA's recommendations, has significantly enhanced the safety and well-being of all LifeScope employees. Cheray's proactive approach and attention to detail have made her a trusted leader in the field of compliance.

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## **Harry Schaeffer**

Harry Schaeffer is currently retired but prior to retiring he spent over 35 years in senior leadership at an organization that provides services to individuals with significant intellectual disabilities and medically complex. Programs offered include Early Intervention, School, Adult Day, and Group Homes for both children and adults. Harry's responsibilities included operational oversight of all programs and services, budget development, strategic planning, quality assurance and quality improvement. He is an NCASES site reviewer and a member of the NCASES standards and process committees.



# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

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## **Peter York**

Peter York is Principal and Vice President of Analytic Solutions at BCT Partners, with over 25 years of experience in evaluation and nonprofit consulting. He specializes in developing analytic techniques that leverage machine learning and big data to create predictive, prescriptive, and rigorous evaluation models for social change, including in child welfare, education, and disability services. York has led numerous research projects with major foundations and government agencies. He authored "Funder's Guide to Evaluation" and co-authored the Rockefeller Foundation's "Measuring Results in the Age of Big Data." A sought-after speaker, York regularly presents on evaluation, capacity building, and data analytics at professional conferences.

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## **Abbie S. Fink**

Abbie S. Fink is president of HMA Public Relations. She has been with the firm since 1993, most recently serving as vice president/general manager. Her varied marketing communications background includes skills in media relations, digital communications/social media strategies, special event management, community relations, issues management and marketing promotions for both the private and public sectors, including such industries as healthcare, financial services, professional services, education, economic development and real estate, government affairs and tribal affairs, as well as not-for-profit organizations. Fink serves as HMA's primary media and digital communications trainer. She has conducted training sessions for a variety of organizations including professional services organizations, not-for-profit organizations, government agencies and trade associations.

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## **Gabby Caroselli**

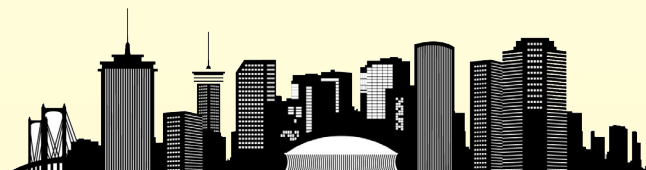
Gabrielle (Gabby) Caroselli is the Director of Quality and Evaluation at Nexus Family Healing, a behavioral health organization providing residential, community-based, and foster and adoption services across the US. Gabby has worked on quality improvement projects throughout her career for nonprofits and for-profit entities. She has led multi-disciplinary teams across the early education, restorative justice, and behavioral health fields. She understands the value in managing projects and processes, and believes strongly in the development and investment in staff. Gabby holds a Bachelor's Degree in International Relations from Boston University and a Master's of Education from George Mason University. Outside of work, she enjoys traveling, cooking, and is currently learning to speak Italian.

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## **Ra Shone Franklin**

Ra Shone Franklin is veteran school administrator over twenty-five years in school leadership and several years supporting leading principals. During that time, he has been fortunate to work in rural, urban, and suburban communities serving youth from every type of social economic background. As a supervisor he sees himself as a dream manager that maximizes the potential of each employee. As a leader he is adept at understanding the art and science of leadership. He is the product of two teachers. A husband and father of two daughters. He is a sports fan and a student of history. He has a broad range of expertise from strategic planning to student achievement and restorative practices. The focus of his career has been to ensure a better future for children that most need support.



# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

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## **Amanda Link, M.A., BCBA, LBA, LGPC**

Amanda Link has over 15 years of experience providing behavior analytic services to a wide range of individuals in nonpublic school, home, and clinic settings. Currently, Amanda works for Sheppard Pratt Schools as a Regional Behavior Services Manager, where she supports behavior programming across multiple schools and provides supervision to staff seeking national certification in applied behavior analysis. Amanda earned her master's degree in clinical psychology before completing post-graduate certificates in applied behavior analysis and professional counseling. Amanda is a licensed behavior analyst (LBA) and graduate-level professional counselor (LGPC) in the state of Maryland and a member of the Maryland Association for Behavior Analysis and the Association for Contextual Behavioral Sciences.

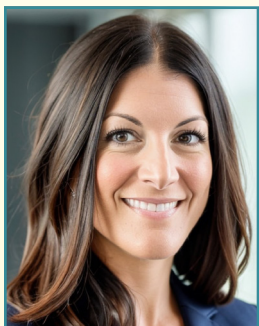
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## **Dr. Megan Anders, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA**

With over 15 years of experience in the special education field, Megan Anders, PhD, BCBA-D, has worked extensively with individuals with severe disabilities in the school, home, and adult services settings. Megan also works for Sheppard Pratt Schools as a Regional Behavior Services Manager providing consultation and supervision for prospective BCBAs. Dr. Anders holds a master's degree in special education, a PhD in Applied Behavior Analysis, and is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and Licensed Behavior Analyst in Maryland. Dr. Anders is a member of Maryland Association for Behavior Analysis and the Association for Behavior Analysis International.

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## **Danielle Damm**

Danielle Damm has served as Executive Director and CEO of NAPSEC since 2018. She leads the organization's advocacy efforts in shaping public policy to positively impact individuals served in member programs while supporting the growth of a collaborative membership network of nonpublic special education and adult service programs. Danielle is a government relations professional and former congressional staffer with a decade of experience working with elected officials and private sector clients in Washington, DC. She has counseled heads of state and cabinet-level officials and has played a leadership role in directing influential advocacy campaigns for education, human rights, and global health issues.

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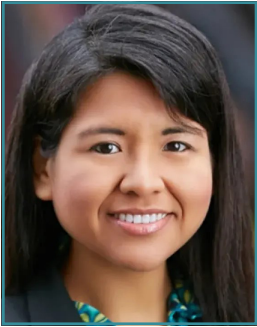
## **Michael Kelly**

Michael L. Kelly is the Executive Director, and Treasurer of the Board of Directors for the Boston Higashi School, Inc. located in Randolph, Massachusetts. Mike has been serving as the School's Executive Director since 2008. Mike is a licensed Certified Public Accountant in Massachusetts, has been with the Boston Higashi School for 35 years and held prior positions as the School's Chief Financial Officer and Chief Operating Officer. Mike has also worked in Public Accounting including several years at the Accounting Firm of Ernst and Young as a Manager and Senior Manager. Mike earned a degree in Business Administration from Salem State University and obtained a Certificate of Leadership in Private Special Education from Suffolk University. In 2024, Mike assumed the role as Treasurer on the Board of Directors of NAPSEC after serving for two years as a member of NAPSEC's Finance Committee. In addition to the current Treasurer's position at NAPSEC, Mike has and continues to serve on the Audit Committee, Contracts and Reimbursement Committee, and the Government Affairs Committee for the Massachusetts Association of Approved Private Schools (Maaps).



# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

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**Magaly R. Cheng, Partner, Clark Lau LLC**

Magaly Rojas Cheng is a partner at Clark Lau LLC in Boston, Massachusetts. She counsels employers and employees on various immigrant and non-immigrant processes. She also assists clients in obtaining permanent residence, with a particular emphasis on PERM labor certification applications. She enjoys working closely with clients to understand their objectives and provide a clear strategy to help accomplish them. Prior to joining Clark Lau LLC, she was an immigration attorney in Worcester, Massachusetts, where she assisted clients with family- and employment-based petitions and permanent residence applications including consular visa applications. As an active member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), she serves as a member of the Department of State Liaison Committee.

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**Vincent W. Lau, Managing Partner, Clark Lau LLC**

Vincent W. Lau is the managing partner of Clark Lau LLC in Boston, Massachusetts and he counsels employers and employees on a range of temporary and permanent immigration options. He enjoys taking complex immigration legal concepts and breaking them down into tangible and comprehensible ideas for employers and employees. It is with this same spirit that he speaks regularly at immigration conferences across the country, serves fellow immigration attorneys in leadership roles with the American Immigration Lawyers Association's government liaison committees, and teaches business immigration at Boston College School of Law. Vince received his B.A., cum laude, in Political Science from Yale University, M.A. in Higher Education Administration from the Boston College School of Education, and J.D. from the Boston College School of Law. Vince has been voted among "The Best Lawyers in America" since 2010, listed with "Who's Who Legal Thought Leaders: Corporate Immigration," and ranked by "Chambers & Partners Immigration Legal Rankings – Nationwide and Global."

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**Cheryl A. White, MSM**

Cheryl A. White, MSM currently serves as the Chief Operating Officer at the League School for Autism, bringing over two decades of expertise in nonprofit management and special education. She has researched teacher retention and student voice in programming. Cheryl has led several organizational improvement initiatives and consultations. Cheryl is a licensed Special Education Administrator and is a doctoral student at Bay Path University, Educational Leadership program.





# CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

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## **Blu Santee**

Blu Santee is a seasoned professional in risk management and safety, currently serving as a Vice President and Risk Services Manager at HUB International Limited. HUB is a leading full-service global insurance broker providing property and casualty, life and health, employee benefits, investment and risk management products and services. With over 25 years in the field, Blu brings a wealth of experience in risk consulting and regulatory compliance across diverse industries such as construction, manufacturing, healthcare, education and many other various industries. In his current role, Blu leads a team of risk consultants in central and northern California, focusing on developing and implementing effective risk mitigation strategies for HUB clients. His expertise encompasses various areas including, but not limited to employee and leadership training, company culture development, emergency management, industrial hygiene assessments, regulatory compliance, program development and workers' compensation cost reduction. Blu's contributions extend beyond his managerial role; he has actively participated in national committees and international safety advisory boards. He is also recognized as a professional keynote speaker and trainer, sharing his insights on safety and leadership at numerous conferences across the U.S. His comprehensive knowledge and dedication to enhancing workplace safety makes him a valuable asset in the risk management sector.

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## **Dr. Shawn Kurrelmeier-Lee**

Dr. Shawn Kurrelmeier-Lee is a mission-driven, results-oriented leader with years of experience in the nonprofit sector. Shawn is the President and CEO of Chattanooga Montessori Foundation. Shawn was previously the Chief Reading Officer for Read 20, a community-wide early literacy initiative for almost 20 years. Prior to Read 20, Dr. Kurrelmeier-Lee was the Vice President of the Public Education Foundation, Vice President of United Way of Greater Chattanooga and the Executive Director of the regional Center for Nonprofits. From 1991-2000, Shawn was the Vice President of the Siskin Foundation and Director of the Siskin School, a private school for children with disabilities birth through age 13. Shawn was a consulting teacher and supervisor in special education and an elementary and middle school teacher in the beginning of her career. Shawn has taught at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in the MPA program and Southern Adventist University in the Master's in Education program. In addition, Shawn has consulted and facilitated strategic planning, board development, and program development for many organizations. Shawn is a NCASES site reviewer and was a commissioner for NCASES from 2004-2013. Shawn has helped to create two private specialty schools, one for adults with intellectual disabilities and one for children focused on birth to five with an emphasis on multi-cultures. Shawn wrote the licensing regulations for Tennessee for educating adults with intellectual disabilities. In addition, Shawn was honored to be named a Woman of Distinction Award in 2007 and the Alpha Delta Kappa Award for Doing Good in 2010.



# NOTES

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