



ELEVATE
CELEBRATE. INSPIRE. EMPOWER. *Teach.*

TEACHERS CONFERENCE

JULY 9-10 • DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Dr. Julie Schmidt Hasson (Mental Health and Wellness)



Chalk and Chances

Dr. Julie Schmidt Hasson is a professor, researcher, author, and certified resilience trainer. Julie teaches graduate courses at Appalachian State University and conducts research on teacher resilience and engagement. Before moving to higher education, Julie spent over twenty years as a K-12 teacher and principal. Julie is trained and certified by Dr. Amit Sood of the Mayo Clinic in the SMART (Stress Management and Resilience Training) framework. She uses this framework and her own research findings to help schools and districts increase teacher resilience and engagement, two keys to teacher retention. Julie is the author of four books, including *Pause, Ponder, and Persist in the Classroom: How Teachers Turn Challenges into Opportunities for Impact*. Julie has delivered talks and training across the United States as part of her mission to help teachers stay longer, grow stronger, and keep making an impact. Her popular TEDx Talk, *The Teachers We Remember*, has been viewed by educators around the world. She is also the co-host of the Lessons that Last podcast and the founder of the Teacher Recharge project. Julie unequivocally believes that it is possible to impact lives and still have a life.

Nicole Thompson (Building Culture Through Content)



Nicole Thompson Speaks

Nicole Thompson, Ed.S is an author and speaker. She is also a school psychologist and has served children from birth to young adults in different capacities for over twenty years. Nicole is the founder of GOAT Educators with a mission to heal student trauma with love. She is the author of *Reach to Teach: 7 Simple Trauma-Informed Steps to Help Urban Students Engage, Improve Grades, and Decrease Disruptive Behaviors Overnight*. Her work has been featured in Harvard School Mental Health Conference, Forbes, Psychotherapy Networker, FE News UK, Atlanta News First, and numerous other publications. She completed her undergraduate at Temple University and her graduate studies at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine with her Education Specialist Degree in School Psychology

Ashley Barefoot (Closing)



2025 Mississippi Teacher of the Year

Ashley Barefoot has been a teacher in Lamar County since 2005 and currently serves as the 4th and 5th grade gifted education teacher at Longleaf Elementary in Hattiesburg. A self-declared teacher nerd, she tries to learn something new every year to keep up with her gifted students. She is a National Board Certified Teacher, a Google Certified Educator, and a National Geographic Certified Educator. She loves traveling and learning and tries to do a little of both each summer. As a National Endowment for the Humanities Landmarks Scholar, she visited Walden Pond while reading Thoreau in 2017, dug into archaeology and American Indian culture in Mesa Verde National Park in 2016, explored the concept of wilderness in the Adirondack Mountains in 2015, and studied the civil rights movement in Jackson, Mississippi in 2013. She analyzed environmental history in Boulder, Colorado with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History in 2013, served as an Earthwatch Teach Earth Fellow in Costa Rica in 2010, and spent a month backpacking in the Olympic Mountains with the National Outdoor Leadership School in 2009. In college, she spent a year as an international exchange student in England. She loved it so much she returned the next two summers to backpack across Europe! Her latest passion is Teaching with Primary Sources. After becoming a Primary Source Certified Educator through TPS Mississippi in 2021, she served as an online course facilitator for Teaching Students to Ask Their Own Primary Source Questions with the Right Question Institute in 2021-2023. She was thrilled to explore primary sources at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. in 2022. Learning alongside experts who are passionate about their work inspires her to bring that same sense of discovery, wonder, and hard work to her classroom. Outside of school, she recharges her introvert batteries with her cats and a pile of books while her partner referees ice hockey tournaments.

WIFI NETWORK: DSUGUEST

SCHEDULE: WEDNESDAY, JULY 9

7:30 AM – 8:30 AM

Registration

Ewing Hall
Main Lobby

8:45 AM – 9:00 AM

Welcome

Jobe Hall
Auditorium

9:00 AM – 9:45 AM

Keynote Address

Mental Health and Wellness
Dr. Julie Schmidt Hasson, *Chalk and Chances*

Jobe Hall
Auditorium

Breakout Session Key



Joyful School
Communities



Culture Building
Through Content



Mental Health and
Wellness



Teacher Leadership
Opportunities



Teacher Recruitment
and Retention



Work Life Balance

Breakout Session 1

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Retirement Benefits

Ewing 210

Centron Lenoir and Bria Wright, Public Employees Retirement System (PERS)



Whether you are an educator, physician, county supervisor, engineer, clerk, accountant, or one of myriads of other public employees serving the state of Mississippi, one of the most valuable benefits of your employment is the promise of a secure retirement with the Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi (PERS).

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

The Personality Trap: How Your Dispositions Shape (and Sabotage) Your Work-Life Balance

Ewing 214

Emily Pollard, Heartbeat Education Group



Many teachers/admins feel burnt out; they care deeply, overextend, and take their work home. This session will help you recognize how personality traits can both help and harm your ability to create healthy work-life boundaries. Discover your work style and learn mindset shifts that support balance and sustainability in the classroom and beyond.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Bridging the Gap: Education and Poverty in Mississippi

Ewing 222

Kristi Higginbotham, Mississippi Department of Education



This session is designed for educators dedicated to enhancing their understanding and effectiveness in teaching students from low-income families. Participants will engage in evidence-based practices that address the unique challenges faced by these students, including social, emotional, and academic barriers.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

From Content To Community: Teaching That Builds Belonging

Ewing 239

*Dr. Marsha Peoples, Madison County School District
2025 Mississippi Administrator of the Year*



During this interactive PD session, participants will discuss school wide and classroom culture, how we can embed culture into our content, and ways that we can positively impact our school and classroom cultures.

Target Audience: Novice Teachers (0-3 years); Elementary Teachers

RISE to the Challenge: Mentoring That Encourages, Supports, and Retains

Ewing 315

Kalea White, Jasmine Rosemon, and Lorie Yates, Rankin County School District



Learn how a comprehensive, district-wide mentoring program builds teacher confidence, capacity, and commitment from the start. This session highlights effective structures, relationship-building strategies, and joyful practices that empower new teachers, grow teacher leaders, and strengthen school communities—ultimately improving retention, instruction, and teacher satisfaction.

Target Audience: Lead Teachers/Teacher Leaders

Decision Making for Students with Disabilities

Ewing 324

Erin Hendricks, Mississippi Department of Education



This session will discuss the basic rights of students with disabilities and focus on the importance of procedural safeguards. Participants will discuss making decisions about the least restrictive environment and understand the profound impact these decisions can have on student outcomes.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Joy in Career & Technical Education: How Hands-On Learning Creates Purpose

Ewing 329

Alexis Reed, Yazoo City School District



Student engagement is a growing challenge. This session explores how Career and Technical Education (CTE) transforms learning through hands-on, purpose-driven instruction. Discover practical strategies to build joyful, engaging classrooms that boost confidence, relevance, and real-world connections—leaving students more motivated, empowered, and prepared for success.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Decoding Specific Learning Disabilities

Ewing 331

Stacy Davis, Mississippi Department of Education



Participants will review the definition and history of Specific Learning Disabilities, examine specific learning disability eligibility criteria, and identify specific learning disability subcategories.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Engaged, Effective, and Still Exhausted: The Burnout Puzzle in Special Education

Ewing 334

Dr. Blair Crigler, Mississippi Department of Education



This session explores the relationship between teacher efficacy and burnout among special education teachers, highlighting surprising findings and implications for retention, support, and professional development. Attendees will gain insights into how confidence in engagement, instruction, and management uniquely impacts emotional exhaustion and teacher well-being.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Breakout Session 2

11:15 AM – 12:15 PM

Managing Your Classroom and YOUR Mental Health

Ewing 210

Dr. Sarieta Pollard, Mississippi Department of Education



This training focuses on evidence-based strategies in classroom management as well as guided practices to manage your own mental health as an educator.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

The Psychology of Play: Bringing Joy, Curiosity, and Choice Back to Learning

Ewing 214

Emily Pollard and Ashlee Martin, Heartbeat Education Group



Joy isn't fluff—it's fuel for learning. In this lively, research-informed session, discover how play, curiosity, and choice boost student engagement and teacher energy. Leave with fresh ideas for building joyful classroom routines and reigniting your own creativity. Perfect for anyone craving more meaning and magic in their teaching.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Creative Solutions for Students Suffering Learning Loss During COVID-19

Ewing 222

Clint Jordan and Christy Jordan, Lafayette County Schools



COVID-19 created an emergency school system full of inequity leading to student learning loss. Through creative measures, schools can develop opportunities and serve students who experienced learning loss. In the Lafayette County School system, we have owned our shortcomings while developing a program for academic recovery and graduation assistance.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

From Content To Community: Teaching That Builds Belonging

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2025 Mississippi Administrator of the Year



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Target Audience: Lead Teachers/Teacher Leaders

From Connection to Growth: The Benefits of Professional Membership

Ewing 324

Kelly Riley, Mississippi Professional Educators (MPE)



Professional associations facilitate communication, connection and professional growth opportunities for their members. This session will explore how MPE supports our members' professional growth

journeys and their development as teacher leaders via advocacy, communication, technical assistance, grants, scholarships, professional learning opportunities, and more.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Reignite Your Passion: What's Your Why?

Ewing 329

Denise Harrison, Mississippi Department of Education



In this session, we will take a trip down memory lane to reconnect with the passion that first led us into education. Over time, the demands of teaching and supporting students and their families can sometimes overshadow the deep sense of purpose that brought us here. Together, we will reflect, share, and rediscover the joy and fulfillment that come with our roles as educators. This session will also remind us why we do what we do, continuing to make a lasting impact in the lives of our students and their families.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Teaching for Conceptual Understanding in Science

Ewing 331

Dr. Kevin Gaylor, Mississippi Department of Education



Teaching for Conceptual Understanding in Science equips educators to reveal core science concepts for deeper student sensemaking. Participants will intentionally use the three dimensions of science teaching, offering students authentic science experiences.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Engaged, Effective, and Still Exhausted: The Burnout Puzzle in Special Education

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Dr. Blair Crigler, Mississippi Department of Education



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Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Learning Lunch and Exhibitor Workshop

12:30 PM – 2:00 PM

Jacob Conference Center

Lunch will be provided. Participants are encouraged to utilize this time to visit the Exhibitor Workshop in the main lobby of Ewing Hall.

Breakout Session 3

2:15 PM – 3:15 PM

If I Could Turn Back Time: Time Saving Tips for Teachers with AI

Ewing 210

Dr. Sara Platt, University of Mississippi, School of Education



This workshop will teach you the time-saving power of AI. Tools like Suno, GammaAi, and ChatGPT will demonstrate the power of creating presentations, websites, songs to teach content, and e-mails in a snap.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Leadership Unlocked: Exploring Opportunities for Teacher Leadership within Your School

Ewing 214

Dr. Braxton Stowe, University of Mississippi and Principal Corps



Discover the vital role of teacher leaders in shaping school reform and improvement. This session dives into the conceptual framework of teacher leadership, exploring what makes a school culture ripe for successful teacher leadership opportunities. Participants will reflect on their leadership style and carve out a path to embrace exciting teacher leadership opportunities within their school.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Behavior Strategies for THAT Student

Ewing 222

Melanie Wells, Rankin County School District



How do you motivate THAT student? Do you need help motivating students who are unmotivated? Join this session to learn behavior strategies focused on the whole child and their social, emotional, and behavioral needs. Learn how to effectively build relationships. Leave with strategies you can implement immediately.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Speak Life: From Burnout to Joy Through Story and Voice

Ewing 239

Ebonee Johnkin, Foundation for the Mid South



This session helps teachers move from burnout to joy using the power of storytelling and intentional communication. Learn how to reclaim your voice, set healthy boundaries, and build joyful classroom communities through story and reflection. Leave with practical tools to “speak life” into your work and school culture.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

The Impact Algorithm: Selecting High-Quality Materials that Make a Difference in Mathematics Achievement (Abridged)

Ewing 315

Tommisha Johnson, Ed.S., Mississippi Department of Education



In this abridged version of the full-day session, educators will explore and learn how to effectively utilize the HQIM Rubric to evaluate instructional resources that possess best practices for mathematics teaching and learning, align content with practice standards, and promote conceptual coherence across grade levels and content. Additionally, the session will provide hands-on guidance on leveraging the state’s virtual textbook sample platform to review and assess state-adopted materials for district adoption.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

The Most Valuable Commodity in Education!

Ewing 324

Dr. Dennis Bunch, University of Mississippi

Logan Cheek, Kosciusko School District



What variables are most important to a successful initiative to improve a school's culture - revisioning the goals of the school to developing and retaining the best teachers possible.

Target Audience: Novice Teachers (0-3 Years); Lead Teachers/Teacher Leaders

Celebrating Students and Teachers: How Cultural Competence Improves School Culture

Ewing 329

Dr. Vicki Davidson, Tougaloo College



There is no single right way to teach, but there are plenty of ways to become a great teacher. Respectful, inclusive, and responsive teachers are committed to continuous learning, including efforts to increase their cultural competence and to improve their school culture. During this session, the presenter will share engaging strategies used by partnering schools that can be implemented in other schools to create a joyful school community and celebrate students and teachers throughout the school year.

Target Audience: Novice Teachers (0-3 years); Lead Teachers/Teacher Leaders; Elementary Teachers; Veteran Teachers; Secondary Teachers;

Mindful Teaching: Empowering Educators Through Mental Health & Wellness

Ewing 331

Dr. Kelly Ballard, Mississippi University for Women



Educators will explore practical strategies for nurturing their own mental health and wellness. Learn how to recognize stress, build resilience, and cultivate mindfulness to enhance your well-being and create a positive, supportive classroom environment. Empower yourself to thrive both personally and professionally.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Celebrating Mississippi's Stories Included in America's 250 Years: Using the Inquiry Design Model to Build Engaging Culture Through Media Arts

Ewing 334

Leslie Hebert, Mississippi Public Broadcasting



Join us in celebrating the rich tapestry of stories through our journey of independence, democracy, and individual freedom from the Mississippi Public Broadcasting vault. The MPB Learning Team is anxious to share a dynamic, hands-on session that celebrates Mississippi's rich and diverse stories through The American Revolution Initiative from PBS. Participants will explore how the Inquiry Design Model (IDM) promotes critical thinking, cultural appreciation, and content-rich instruction. Using clips from MPB's newly digitized collection, attendees will collaborate to build media-enhanced lessons aligning the Mississippi's Arts Learning Standards and the Artistic Process with the enduring themes of America's 250 years. This session honors Mississippi's role in our nation's journey and equips educators to elevate student voices, inquiry, and engagement through designing culturally responsive curriculum. Leave inspired with tools to integrate history, media arts, and inquiry in meaningful ways.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Breakout Session 4

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

Retirement Benefits

Ewing 210

Centron Lenoir and Bria Wright, Public Employees Retirement System (PERS)



Whether you are an educator, physician, county supervisor, engineer, clerk, accountant, or one of myriads of other public employees serving the state of Mississippi, one of the most valuable benefits of your employment is the promise of a secure retirement with the Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi (PERS).

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Carrying the Lion: The Right Fit for Improving Student Performance

Ewing 214

Thomas Pipkin, University of Mississippi



Enhancing health and physical education for Mississippi students fosters overall well-being, improving focus, academic performance, and emotional resilience. Quality programs promote lifelong fitness habits, reducing health disparities while supporting cognitive development. A strong foundation in physical education ensures students are prepared for success, both in the classroom and beyond.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Finding Time - Literally

Ewing 222

Kathi Wilson, Kathi Wilson, LLC



Time is fixed. There is only so much time in a day. Where does one find the time to deal with the responsibilities of work, home, and life? This workshop provides techniques and strategies to make the most of the time you have been given.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work: Building a Culture of Student Success One Teacher at a Time

Ewing 239

Tremain Johnson and Monica Anderson, Holmes County Consolidated School District



Join us for "Teamwork Makes the Dream Work," a dynamic session focused on innovative teacher recruitment and retention strategies. Discover how fostering joyful, collaborative school communities empowers educators, boosts morale, and drives student success—one teacher at a time. Ignite passion, build lasting connections, and transform your school into a thriving learning environment!

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

What's New, What's Next: Understanding the 2025 MS CCRS for Mathematics

Ewing 315

Tommisha Johnson, Ed.S., Mississippi Department of Education



Join us for an informative and interactive session exploring the 2025 Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards (MS CCRS) for Mathematics. This session will walk participants through the readoption process, highlight major updates and instructional shifts, and outline what to expect as we prepare for full implementation in the 2025–2026 school year. Participants will leave with a clear understanding of how the changes support stronger alignment, rigor, and student outcomes.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

From Chalkboard to ChatGPT and Everything in Between: How Co-Mentoring Can Lead the Turn in Teacher Retention

Ewing 324

Carrie Johnikin, Laurel School District



Locked in with OG and GenZ. We'll explore how veteran and novice educators can blend experience with innovation. This interactive session will encourage veteran and novice teachers who are true and new to leadership and legacy embrace tools not only for themselves, but to better mentor and retain teachers.

Target Audience: Veteran Teachers; Novice Teachers (0-3 years);

Building Relationships, Building Mississippi in Rural Schools

Ewing 329

Devon Brenner, Patti Permenter, and Bradley Long, Mississippi Rural Education Association

Panel: Lindsay Colyer, Mississippi School of the Arts, Kenneth Watson, Lauderdale County School District, Todd Willis, Tate County School District



How do we promote education in our rural areas? The relationships teachers build support student learning. Join the Mississippi Rural Education Association (MSREA) for a panel discussion as they discuss experiences building relationships to build student success with MSREA Rural Teacher of the Year participants.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Growing Readers: Deep Roots, Strong Branches, One Literacy Vision-School-Wide Focus Texts

Ewing 331

Ashlee Martin and Stephen Cooper, Booneville School District and Heartbeat Education Group



Year after year, educators are faced with the challenge of helping students retain and build upon core literacy skills. In this updated session, we'll share how our school-wide literacy framework has continued to grow stronger—bridging grade levels, boosting engagement, and inspiring both teachers and students. Through the use of shared focus texts and common literacy links, we've seen students begin to make deeper connections across content areas and across grade levels, creating a more unified and vibrant school culture. This is not your typical "sit and get" session—it's a hands-on, idea-packed experience. Participants will walk away with adaptable graphic organizers, curated text suggestions, and actionable strategies that can be immediately implemented. Whether you're a teacher or administrator, you'll leave energized with a clear vision and the tools to foster lasting literacy growth and school-wide connection.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Happy Classrooms, Joyful Learning: Creating a Fun & Engaging School Culture

Ewing 334

Morgan Jones, Mississippi Department of Education



Unlock the secrets to transforming your classroom into a dynamic learning environment where every student is captivated, engaged, and eager to learn. Discover practical strategies that will not only capture your students' attention but also inspire and motivate them to reach their full potential.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

SCHEDULE: THURSDAY, JULY 10

7:30 AM – 8:30 AM

Check In

Ewing Hall
Main Lobby

8:30 AM – 9:15 AM

Welcome and Keynote Address

Building Culture Through Content

Nicole Thompson, *Nicole Thompson Speaks*

Jobe Hall
Auditorium

9:15 AM – 9:45 AM

Exhibitor Workshop

Ewing Hall

Breakout Session Key

					
Joyful School Communities	Culture Building Through Content	Mental Health and Wellness	Teacher Leadership Opportunities	Teacher Recruitment and Retention	Work Life Balance

Breakout Session 5

10:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Cultivating Connection: Building Culture Through Content

Ewing 210

Tremain Johnson and Monica Anderson, Holmes County Consolidated School District



Discover innovative strategies to integrate relationship-building and cultural relevance into daily content. Learn how to foster a positive, engaging classroom environment that promotes joy, rigor, and inclusivity—empowering teachers to create a school culture where students thrive academically and socially through meaningful content.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

What's Knowledge Got To Do With It?

Ewing 214

Jill Hoda and Kelli Crain, Mississippi Department of Education



In this session, teachers will: understand the acquisition of reading, debunk the comprehension myth, understand the comprehension truth, determining the critical role of knowledge, internalizing instructional implications of knowledge, and building background knowledge while utilizing knowledge building curriculum.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Love 'Em ALL

Ewing 222

Zane Thomas, Chickasaw County School District

2025 Mississippi Alternate Administrator of the Year



Inspired by a conversation with Super Bowl champion coach Tony Dungy, this session shares powerful, real-life stories showing what it truly means to love every student. Discover how one idea has shaped a career—and how it can reshape your school culture.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Building Stronger Sentences with ScratchJr: A Creative Coding Approach

Ewing 239

Lori Matzek, Mississippi State University Extension



Are you an Elementary teacher struggling to fit everything in? This session introduces a five-lesson unit integrating ScratchJr computer coding with sentence-building, showing how integrating CS and literacy boosts engagement and learning. Participants will gain practical strategies to teach writing and programming together through storytelling, literature, and hands-on activities.

Target Audience: Elementary Teachers

Intentional, High-Quality Instructional Practices for Mathematics

Ewing 315

Tommisha Johnson, Ed.S., Mississippi Department of Education



Participants will look closely at the content-specific, high-quality instructional practices based on the research of national mathematics education organizations and identified as critical to effective teaching and learning of the Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Mathematics. This content includes the Instructional Shifts for Mathematics, Effective Teaching Practices for Mathematics, Standards for Mathematical Practice, the five mathematical representations, small group instruction, and the effects of the instructional environment.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Dyslexia Defined

Ewing 324

Penny Bethany and Lyndsey Robinson, Mississippi Department of Education



This session will explore the definition of dyslexia, how the brain acquires the reading skill, characteristics and signs of dyslexia, common myths about dyslexia, differences of screeners and evaluations, testing and classroom accommodations, the importance of the structured literacy approach to teaching reading, and helpful resource information.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Practical Ways of Emphasizing a Culture of Care in the Classroom

Ewing 329

Kristin Javorsky and Kim Smith Holmes, Mississippi State University



Do you and your students feel cared for at school? Caring is an act that requires both a giver and a receiver. Come learn how to be better at both giving and receiving care in your elementary classroom through simple practices that are creative and authentic. Includes a make-and-take activity.

Target Audience: Elementary Teachers; Veteran Teachers; Novice Teachers (0-3 years)

Empowering Educators to Better Support English Learners

Ewing 331

Sandra Elliott, Mississippi Department of Education



This interactive session is designed to provide teachers with practical strategies to support EL growth in the four language domains of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Strategies and Hacks for Twice-Exceptional Students

Ewing 334

Lorie Sisk and Mathis Sheriff, Mississippi Department of Education



Unlock the potential of your twice-exceptional students with our engaging conference presentation! Dive into innovative strategies and practical hacks designed specifically for educators. Discover how to nurture their unique strengths while addressing challenges, all while fostering an inclusive classroom environment. Join us for an inspiring session that empowers you to make a difference!

Target Audience: Elementary Teachers

Breakout Session 6

11:15 AM – 12:15 PM

Retirement Readiness with the Mississippi Deferred Compensation 457b Plan

Ewing 210

Katrina Yarbrough, Empower



Preparing for Retirement and the Steps you can take from Day One throughout Retirement

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Culture-Building Through Content: An AI Approach to Student-Centered MAAP Mastery

Ewing 214

Lauren Lewis, Lauren Lewis Consulting

Brittany Green, TND Consulting



Discover how to use a custom GPT powered by MAAP-aligned resources to create engaging, student-interest-driven ELA test prep. This session equips educators to build classroom culture and empower learners through culturally responsive content generation that supports mastery, motivation, and meaningful connections to high-stakes assessment material.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Love 'Em ALL

Ewing 222

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2025 Mississippi Alternate Administrator of the Year



Inspired by a conversation with Super Bowl champion coach Tony Dungy, this session shares powerful, real-life stories showing what it truly means to love every student. Discover how one idea has shaped a career—and how it can reshape your school culture.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Creating a Classroom Community Grounded in Care

Ewing 239

Cindy Melton and Katherine Horlock, Mississippi College



Discover how building connected, caring classrooms can foster joyful school communities. This session offers practical strategies rooted in relational pedagogy, social-emotional learning theory, and inclusive practices to help K12 educators create emotionally supportive spaces where all students feel safe, valued, and empowered to thrive.

Target Audience: Novice Teachers (0-3 years); Elementary Teachers; Lead Teachers/Teacher Leaders;

Coaching for Success: Keeping Teachers First

Ewing 315

Rufus Hill, Mississippi Department of Education



This session emphasizes the power of relationships in instructional coaching. During the session, participants will explore practical strategies for offering authentic support, fostering trust, and prioritizing teachers' needs. Participants will learn how relational coaching empowers educators, boosts effectiveness, and builds a positive, growth-focused school culture.

Target Audience: Lead Teachers / Teacher Leaders

Exploring New Pathways In Education

Ewing 324

Valerie Steele, Rankin County School District



This session explores how creating new educational pathways can enhance motivation and academic performance by addressing behavioral, neurological, and psychosocial development. What if outcomes—and funding—accounted for more than academics, including training, time, and experiential learning? Attendees will leave inspired to implement new strategies, reigniting the joy of teaching all students.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Integrating Social-Emotional Learning into the School Culture

Ewing 329

Freda Braddock, Columbia Southern University



COVID-19 reshaped education and spotlighted the need to support the whole educator. This workshop aligns with the conference theme to "celebrate, inspire, and empower" the mind, body, and spirit of Mississippi's educators through Social-Emotional Learning strategies that foster self-awareness, relationships, and holistic well-being across school communities.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Teaching for Conceptual Understanding In Science

Ewing 331

Dr. Kevin Gaylor, Mississippi Department of Education



Teaching for Conceptual Understanding in Science equips educators to reveal core science concepts for deeper student sensemaking. Participants will intentionally use the three dimensions of science teaching, offering students authentic science experiences.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

Starting the School Year On Track with MTSS

Ewing 334

Mathis Sheriff and Sandra Elliot, Mississippi Department of Education



This interactive session will provide all educators with an understanding of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports and how to support students as soon as school begins. Topics will include MTSS components, the MTSS MSIS portal, and identifying and supporting 2-day students.

Target Audience: All Conference Attendees

12:30 PM – 1:00 PM

Jobe Hall Auditorium

Closing Keynote

Closing and Farewell

Ashley Barefoot, 2025 Mississippi Teacher of the Year

MY AGENDA AT A GLANCE

Write in your session choices to use as a quick reference and to document the session code. *Session codes are given at the end of each session and MUST be recorded on the conference survey to receive credit.

Wednesday, July 9th			
Time	Session Title	Location	Session Code
8:45 AM – 9:00 AM	Welcome	Jobe Hall Auditorium	
9:00 AM – 9:45 AM	Opening Keynote Dr. Julie Schmidt Hasson	Jobe Hall Auditorium	
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM Breakout Session 1			
11:15 AM – 12:15 PM Breakout Session 2			
12:30 PM – 2:00 PM Learning Lunch and Exhibitor Workshop		Ewing Hall	
2:15 PM – 3:15 PM Breakout Session 3			
3:30 PM – 4:30 PM Breakout Session 4			
Thursday, July 10th			
8:30 AM – 9:15 AM	Welcome and Keynote Nicole Thompson	Jobe Hall Auditorium	
9:15 AM – 9:45 AM Exhibitor Workshop		Ewing Hall	
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM Breakout Session 5			
11:15 AM – 12:15 PM Breakout Session 6			
12:30 PM – 1:00 PM	Closing Keynote Ashley Barefoot	Jobe Hall Auditorium	

CEU INSTRUCTIONS

- All participants are responsible for recording and tracking all session codes given throughout the conference. Codes will be provided at the end of each session. Participants may earn up to 1.2 CEUs.
- All registered participants will receive a link to the conference survey at the conclusion of the conference. Session codes should be submitted through the conference survey. Credits will not be issued without completion of the conference survey.
- CEU certificates will be emailed to participants. Please allow a minimum of two weeks after the conference for processing. Once CEU certificates are received, participants are responsible for entering earned credits into the MECCA system through the MDE.
- For questions regarding CEUs contact Christina Liverett by email at cliverett@wmcarey.edu or by phone at (601) 318-6609.

OFFICE OF TEACHING AND LEADING STAFF

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