

MAY 1-2, 2026 • TRAVERSE CITY, MI

Teach!
Michigan



EmpowerEd
Weekend

Powered by  **Teach For America**
Detroit



MAKE IT



EVERY CHILD.
EVERY DAY.

Table of Contents

Welcome	3
What is TeachMichigan?	4
Origin of TeachMichigan	6
Part 1: Teach For America Detroit’s Story	6
Part 2: The Launch of TeachMichigan	7
Vision 2027	8
Programs & Impact	9
Meet the Team	10
Event Logistics	11
Weekend Venue Locations, Parking & Shuttle	11
Hotel Details & Logistics.....	11
Travel Logistics.....	12
What to Pack and Self Care Tips	13
Agenda & Session Details	14
Friday, May 1 Schedule	14
Saturday, May 2 Schedule	15
Choice Sessions	17
Authentic & Impactful Leadership Sessions	18
People Centered Pedagogy & Practice Sessions	23
Innovation & Creativity in Education Sessions	28
System Change Sessions	32
Program Specific Offering Sessions	36
Interactive Elements and Networking: Whova App	39
Ask the Organizers	39
Additional Information	39
Social Media & Hashtags	40
Survey and Feedback	40
EmpowerEd Weekend Junk Journal Directions & Prompts	41
Empowered Weekend Cohort Time	44
Empowered Weekend District/School Collaborative Work Time Protocol	46
Thank You to Our Event Sponsors	48
Thank You to Our Partners	49
Floor Plans	50
Notes	52

Welcome



Across Michigan, you show up every day for your students with dedication, care, and an unwavering belief in what is possible. In classrooms, hallways, and school communities, you bring to life the commitment that guides this work: **Every Student. Every Day.**

As we gather for this EmpowerEd Weekend, we do so at a meaningful moment in the school year. With only a few weeks remaining, the pace begins to shift. It can be easy to simply push toward the finish line. But this moment matters.

That is the spirit behind this year's theme:



Making it count means being intentional in the weeks leading up to this gathering. It means using this weekend to reflect, learn from one another, and strengthen the practices already making a difference for students. And it means carrying that clarity back into your classrooms and schools to finish the year strong.

It also means looking ahead. The choices you make with students each day contribute to something much bigger. Together, educators across Michigan are working toward an ambitious goal: by 2030, doubling key student achievement milestones in Michigan's highest-poverty communities. Reaching that goal will not come from one program or one moment. It will come from the daily actions of educators who continue to show up for students and for one another.

This weekend is an opportunity to pause, connect, and recommit to the work ahead — both in the final weeks of this school year and as we begin thinking about the next one.

Thank you for the leadership, care, and commitment you bring to your students and communities. We are grateful for the role you play in this growing movement to ensure every child in Michigan receives an excellent education.

Welcome to EmpowerEd Weekend.

With love,

Your TeachMichigan Team

What is TeachMichigan?

TeachMichigan is a statewide initiative powered by **Teach For America Detroit** that invests in the retention, development, and ideas of high-impact educators who teach and lead in under-resourced public schools across the state of Michigan. The TeachMichigan initiative was built on the understanding that a high-impact educator has an outsized, measurable impact on a student's confidence, sense of safety, personal well-being, and academic growth – changing the life trajectory of students they support. TeachMichigan exists to advance systems change in our schools and communities so that our students receive the education they deserve.



Origin of TeachMichigan

PART 1 TEACH FOR AMERICA DETROIT'S STORY

In 2019, Teach For America Detroit began a bold evolution. We expanded beyond our roots as an entry-level teaching corps to design a dynamic new model focused on retaining and developing high-impact, mid-career educators, rising school leaders, and system-level changemakers. This shift reflected a clear understanding: experienced educators are the foundation of strong schools and lasting student success.

From 2019 to 2024, our fellowships delivered consistently strong results:

95%

of educators were retained over the full three-year fellowship.

100%

of principals reported satisfaction with TeachMichigan educators.

13
YEARS

Fellows brought an average of 13 years of classroom experience.

40%

of fellows identified as people of color, a rate three times higher than the state's overall educator workforce.

These outcomes led to the formal launch of TeachMichigan. The initiative is rooted in the belief that all students deserve excellent teaching, thriving school communities, and educators who reflect and understand their lived experiences.





PART 2 THE LAUNCH OF TEACHMICHIGAN

Building on the success of our fellowship model, the State of Michigan committed \$35 million to expand our talent strategy. This investment allowed us to recruit, retain, and develop more than 600 high-impact educators in poverty-dense communities across the state. It also positioned us to capture key learnings that inform changes at the system level.

Given the impact of our fellowship model, the State committed \$35 million to expand our talent strategy to recruit, retain, and develop up to 700 high-impact teachers in poverty-dense communities, and capture the learning necessary to inform system-level changes.

450
EDUCATORS

Since our statewide launch in Fall 2023, we have grown rapidly, deepened our partnerships, and refined our approach based on feedback from educators and communities. We are proud of what we have accomplished together. Here are

Our program currently supports more than 450 educators each year across Michigan, reaching over 120,000 students.

19
SCHOOL
DISTRICTS

Our work spans seven regions and 19 school districts, including communities across Michigan, including Southeast, West, Central (Lansing, Flint, and Saginaw), Northwest, and the Eastern Upper Peninsula.

96%

of educators credit TeachMichigan with making them better for their students and communities.

Vision 2027

Using competitive benefits, identify, recruit, and retain 700 high-impact educators into TeachMichigan fellowships.

Energize educators with best-in-class development, innovation funds, and a connected community.

1



2



3 years of retention, giving high-impact educators the time and resources to build a better system.

3



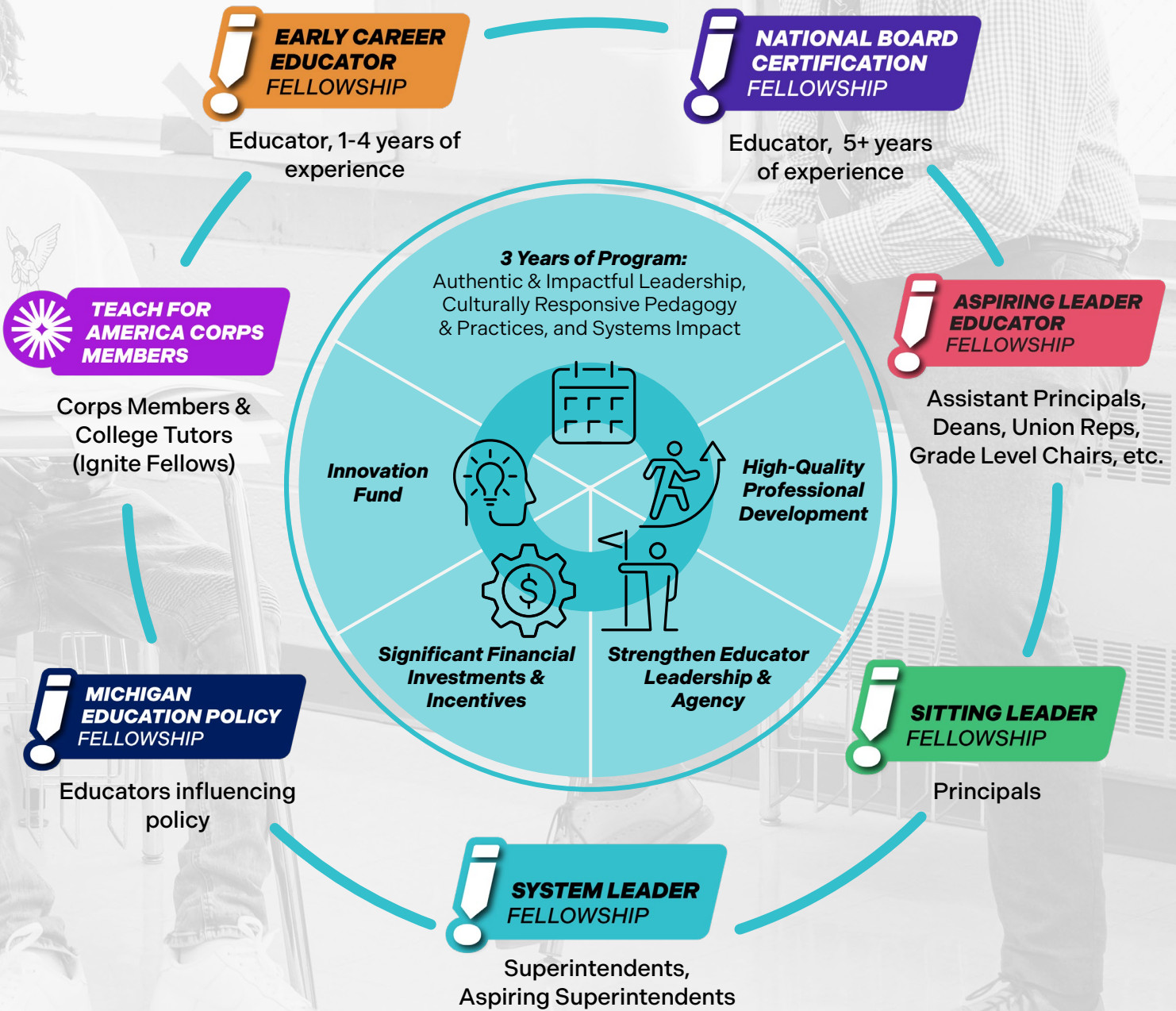
Amplify educator impact with a statewide media campaign.

4



Study initiative's scaled impact on student outcomes and educator retention, in partnership with MSU's EPIC.

Programs & Impact



Meet the Team



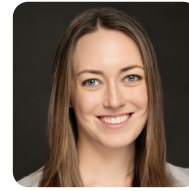
Cassandra Baptise
SMD, Educator Program & Partnerships



Jessica Barnes
MD, Marketing & Communications



Stacey Brown-Smith
MD, Strategic Partnerships



Marah Casey
VP, Revenue & Operations



Aster Chalmers
MD, Matriculation & Onboarding



Matt DeLaurence
MD, Partnerships



Alissa Gadouas
MD, Educator Fellowships



Armen Hratchian
Executive Director



Britani Humes
MD, Educator Fellowships



Monique Leaverson
SMD, Educator Fellowships



Monica Lewis
SMD, Educator Fellowships



Clare McKenna
MD, Program Initiatives & Impact



Sarah McManus
Director, Development & Operations



Susan Muskovitz
Director, Development



Nikhita Navani
SMD, Educator Fellowships



Michelle Navarro Ormsby
VP, Strategy & Campaign Leadership



Ada Parris
MD, Educator Fellowships



Tanya Porter-Baker
MD, Recruitment



Simone Reid
Manager, Operations



Brittiany Romero
Director, Data & Learning



Jacob Robinson-Suarez
SMD, Educator Program & External Affairs



Christy Scates
MD, Operations



Tiffany Scott
MD, Leadership Development



Courtney Segmen
SMD, Policy & Public Partnerships



Lizzie Stewart
MD, Educator Fellowships



Terrence West
MD, Communications & Public Relations



Jenise Williams
Director, Outreach & Alliances



Nathalie Williams
Manager, Operations

Event Logistics

Weekend Venue Locations, Parking & Shuttle

Transportation During EmpowerEd Weekend	All EmpowerEd Weekend events are taking place on site, at the Grand Traverse! For more information about the spaces we will be using, please look below.		
Date & Time	Session	Location	How do I get there?
Friday May 1, 2026 5:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.	Registration and Check-In	The Grand Traverse, Lobby	No transportation is needed for those staying at the hotel. For those driving into Traverse City, there is free parking on site. Address: 100 Grand Traverse Village Blvd, Acme, MI 49610
Friday May 1, 2026 7:00 p.m.-11:00 p.m.	Educator Recess	The Grand Traverse, Governor's Ballroom	
Saturday May 2 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.	Day of Learning	The Grand Traverse, Governor's Ballroom and Breakout Spaces (see Whova and signage for details)	

Hotel Details & Logistics

Hotel Information

The Grand Traverse

100 Grand Traverse Village Blvd
Acme, MI 49610

Things to Know

Arrival:

You will receive an email from fellowships@teachmichigan.org with your rooming information (if you have not received this email by April 20th, please reach out to nathalie.williams@teachforamerica.org)

Look for the TeachMichigan table in the lobby to register for the weekend.

Everyone will be assigned their own room, unless communicated via the logistics survey.

Checkout:

Saturday before breakfast - Please plan on being checked out and in the conference area no later than 8:00 a.m.

Bring your luggage down to the first floor lobby of the hotel. There will be a monitored room for you to leave your luggage for the duration of the event or you can elect to keep it with you.

Travel Logistics

Driving yourself?

For those driving into Traverse City, there is free parking on site.
Address: 100 Grand Traverse Village Blvd, Acme, MI 49610

Riding the bus?		
Location	Departing to EmpowerEd Weekend	Departing from EmpowerEd Weekend
Detroit	Boarding time: 3:45 p.m. UPrep- Middle School 5310 St. Antoine St, Detroit, MI 48202	Boarding time: 5:25 p.m.
Flint	Boarding time: 4:00 p.m. Buick Automotive Gallery 303 Walnut Street, Flint, Michigan 48503	Boarding time: 5:25 p.m.
Grand Rapids	Boarding time: 4:00 p.m. Ottawa Hills High School 2055 Rosewood Ave SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506	Boarding time: 5:25 p.m.
Kentwood	Boarding time: 3:45 p.m. Departure time: 4:30 p.m. KPS Transportation Lot Located behind Pinewood and EKFC 6150 Valley Ln Dr SE, Grand Rapids MI 49508	Boarding time: 5:25 p.m.
Lansing	Boarding time: 4:00 p.m. Eastern High School 626 Marshall St, Lansing, MI 48912 (In the BACK parking lot along Marshall Street)	Boarding time: 5:25 p.m.
Sault Ste. Marie	Boarding time: 3:15 p.m. Sault Area Public Schools 876 Marquette Ave, Sault Ste Marie, MI 49783	Boarding time: 5:25 p.m.
Saginaw	Boarding time: 4:00 p.m. Meijer 3360 Tittabawassee Rd, Saginaw, MI, 48604	Boarding time: 5:25 p.m.



Buses will leave **10 minutes** after boarding time and will not wait, please be prompt and arrive early if possible.

What to Pack and Self Care Tips

Materials

- A fully charged laptop
- Notebook
- Pen, Pencil

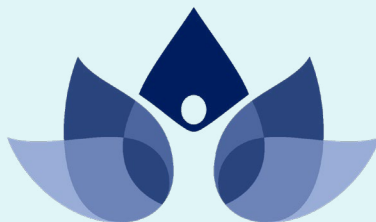
Attire

We recommend comfortable business casual attire, as there will be a range of education stakeholders in the room, including district leaders, and policymakers.

We also want to acknowledge some folks will be traveling Saturday evening, therefore you might consider having a change of clothes easily accessible in your luggage.

Additional items

A phone charger, reusable water bottle, comfortable shoes, business cards, earphones/headphones, umbrella, Light jacket or sweater (for varying indoor temperatures), any necessary medications, overnight bag (for those traveling).



Taking Care of Yourself at EmpowerEd Weekend

The well-being of our participants is of utmost importance. Here are a few ways we're promoting self-care throughout our EmpowerEd weekend:

- **Private Room(s):** If you are a nursing parent or if you would like a private space for prayer, reflection, or rest, please email Nathalie Williams at nathalie.williams@teachforamerica.org ahead of time for access to a designated room.
- **Access to elevators:** Some of our breakout rooms are up a flight of stairs. There are elevators available throughout the space. If you think you will need assistance, please reach out to Nathalie Williams at nathalie.williams@teachforamerica.org ahead of time.
- **Meals:** Meals provided throughout the weekend will include vegetarian and vegan options and other dietary restrictions that were noted in the logistics survey.
- **Health Precautions:** If you are feeling unwell, please take necessary precautions to ensure the well-being of others. Extra masks will be available—please visit the check-in table or speak to a TeachMichigan staff member if you need one

Agenda & Session Details

Friday, May 1 Schedule

Time/ Session Focus	Session Description	Who?	Location
Educator Recess 7:00 p.m. -11:00 p.m.	Come mix and mingle with the entire TeachMichigan community. Heavy hors d'oeuvres and drinks will be served.	Designed for all TeachMichigan community members, including school partners, educator champions, and staff.	The Grand Traverse, Governor's Ballroom



Saturday, May 2 Schedule

EmpowerEd Day

All sessions are **required** for educators unless they are identified as optional.

Time	Session Focus	Session Description	Location
7:00 a.m. to 8:20 a.m.	Registration	If you did not complete registration on Friday, please be sure to register at this time.	Governor's Ballroom
7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.	Breakfast (optional)	Join us as we enjoy breakfast and build community.	Governor's Ballroom
8:15 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.	Keynote	We will kick off our day of learning with a charge from our keynote speakers.	Governor's Ballroom
8:45 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Transition Time to Cohorts Sessions			
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	District Leader/ Fellow Cohort Time	Educators and leaders will spend time building community and learning alongside each other in their specific cohorts.	See the Whova App for Room Numbers
12:00 p.m. - 12:15 p.m. Scaffolded Transitions to Lunch by Cohort			
12:15 p.m. to 12:45 p.m.	Lunch	Grab lunch and get to know other fellows in TeachMichigan!	Governor's Ballroom
12:45 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Transition to Choice Session			
1:00 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.	Choice Session 1	Choice sessions are offered for all participants covering a range of topics to choose from aligned to participants' area of interest and focused on these four pillars: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Authentic & Impactful Leadership 2. People Centered Pedagogy & Practice 3. Innovation & Creativity in Education 4. Systems Change Choice session details and topics can be found later in this booklet.	See the Whova App for Room Numbers.

Saturday, May 2 Schedule Continued

EmpowerEd Day

All sessions are **required** for educators unless they are identified as optional.

Time	Session Focus	Session Description	Location
2:15 p.m. - 2:25 p.m. Transition to Choice Session			
2:25 p.m. to 3:40 p.m.	Choice Session 2	<p>Choice sessions are offered for all participants covering a range of topics to choose from aligned to participants' area of interest and focused on these four pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Authentic & Impactful Leadership 2. People Centered Pedagogy & Practice 3. Innovation & Creativity in Education 4. Systems Change <p>Choice session details and topics can be found later in this booklet.</p>	See the Whova App for Room Numbers.
3:40 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Transition back to District Time			
4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.		District Time provides dedicated space for teams to align, reflect on learning, and plan how to apply key insights to support Every Child, Every Day in their schools and communities.	See the Whova App for Room Numbers

Choice Sessions

In the afternoon, participants will have the opportunity to engage in one round of choice sessions where they will attend a one hour and 45 minute development session with key experts in fields ranging from design-thinking to best practices in DEI. All sessions are aligned to what we believe are three key pillars in development for educators/educational leaders:

1.



Authentic & Impactful Leadership

2.



People Centered Pedagogy & Practice

3.



Innovation & Creativity in Education

4.



Systems Change



AUTHENTIC & IMPACTFUL LEADERSHIP SESSION



Building Teams That Work

Andrea Black Evans

Andrea Black Evans is an equity centered leader, strategist, and community builder committed to fostering transformative learning environments for leaders. She serves as the Executive Director of Surge Academy, where she cultivates an intentional organizational presence across six cities, Washington DC, Philadelphia, Detroit, Las Vegas, Indianapolis, and Kansas City, ensuring Surge Academy's vision and impact remain rooted in excellence, authenticity, and connectedness.

Andrea is also the founder of The Lantern - Wayfinding Solutions, a leadership and strategy practice that helps individuals and organizations navigate complexity, strengthen team culture, and lead with clarity and purpose.

Before leading Surge Academy, Andrea began her career as a Teach For America corps member in Atlanta Public Schools and later served as a principal in Chicago Public Schools, where she led the transformation of an underperforming school into one in Good Standing. Under her leadership, the school achieved Level 1 status and secured more than one million dollars in grant funding to improve the campus and strengthen its instructional culture.

Andrea holds a Master of Education from Harvard University and a Bachelor of Arts from Fisk University. A proud Chicago native and first generation college graduate, she is deeply committed to pouring into others and creating spaces where leaders thrive. She lives and is anchored by the words of Ella Baker: "Give light and people will find the way."

Session Description: Healthy schools and organizations require healthy teams, yet many leaders are asked to guide adult teams without practical tools for addressing trust, accountability, and productive conflict.

This interactive workshop helps school leaders examine and strengthen the dynamics within their teams using Patrick Lencioni's Five Dysfunctions of a Team framework paired with bell hooks' concept of love as a leadership ethic rooted in care, commitment, trust, responsibility, knowledge, and respect.

Participants will engage in a structured Team Leadership Lab where they analyze real challenges from their own schools and diagnose where team dysfunction may be present. Through guided reflection, a team culture diagnostic, and collaborative planning, participants will identify patterns that may be limiting their team's effectiveness and design leadership strategies to move their teams toward stronger trust, accountability, and shared ownership of outcomes.

Participants will also engage in a guided trust building activity that models how leaders can begin creating vulnerability and openness within adult teams. This activity provides a practical structure participants can adapt and use with their own teams to begin strengthening trust.

Throughout the session participants will assess, reflect, practice, and apply strategies that support healthier team culture.

AUTHENTIC & IMPACTFUL LEADERSHIP SESSION



Leading Through Resistance

Dr. Jermaine Wilson

Dr. Jermaine Wilson is the Founder and CEO of Pivot Path Strategic Solutions and an Executive Leadership Coach dedicated to helping leaders design systems that create sustainable impact. He also serves as an Assistant Superintendent of Equity and Student Services, where he leads district-wide strategy focused on student dignity, professional learning, and systems coherence.

With a Ph. D. in Leadership and Policy Studies in Education, Dr. Wilson brings a disciplined, systems-level approach to leadership transformation. He partners with superintendents, executive teams, and education leaders across the country to strengthen strategic alignment, clarify authority, and cultivate high-performing leadership cultures capable of navigating complex change.

Through Pivot Path Strategic Solutions, he designs leadership cohorts, executive coaching engagements, and collaborative learning experiences that move leaders from reactive problem-solving to intentional architecture. His work integrates strategic clarity, emotional intelligence, and courageous decision-making to ensure initiatives move beyond intention to measurable implementation.

Dr. Wilson's mission is to equip bold leaders with the clarity, courage, and structural discipline required to lead what's next.



Kareeme D. Hawkins

Kareeme D. Hawkins is a Purpose Coach, Social-Emotional Learning expert, and National Director of Customer Success at RethinkEd, where she leads national strategy supporting hundreds of school districts focused on retention, growth, and measurable student impact.

With over a decade of experience in public education as a teacher, counselor, and district leader, Kareeme brings deep insight into the realities educators face every day. She partners cross-functionally with executive teams to align strategy, execution, and outcomes, ensuring that initiatives are not only implemented but internalized by the adults responsible for sustaining them.

Through her work with Pivot Path Strategic Solutions, Kareeme co-designs collaborative learning experiences that strengthen emotional intelligence, manage resistance, and build psychologically safe, purpose-driven cultures. Her facilitation blends data-informed strategy with human-centered leadership, helping educators navigate change with clarity and confidence.

Kareeme's mission is to help leaders and educators thrive so that every learner has the opportunity to succeed within systems built for impact.

Session Description on next page

AUTHENTIC & IMPACTFUL LEADERSHIP SESSION

Leading Through Resistance Continued

Session Description: Across the nation, initiatives rarely stall because of poor vision. They stall because pushback is misunderstood, authority is unclear, and communication breaks down across roles. When resistance is misdiagnosed, even strong strategies lose traction.

This session is a collaborative design lab where participants bring a real leadership or resistance challenge from their classroom, school, district, or policy context and actively move it forward. Rather than a presentation, the experience centers on educator voice, structured peer collaboration, and disciplined problem-solving.

Participants will:

- Diagnose resistance across emotional, structural, and strategic dimensions
- Clarify authority, decision ownership, and role alignment
- Identify communication breakdown points
- Draft a courageous conversation plan tailored to their real context
- Develop a 30-day implementation strategy

This session is dedicated to guided application. Participants will complete a structured resistance diagnostic, map stakeholder alignment, draft a conversation strategy, and leave with a concrete action plan ready for immediate implementation to transform resistance into forward momentum.

This session reflects the realities of education, including mandate fatigue, initiative overload, coalition leadership and the complexity of aligning stakeholders across classroom, school and system levels. Participants leave not just with insight, but with tools that help turn pushback into measurable progress.

AUTHENTIC & IMPACTFUL LEADERSHIP SESSION



Lead Self First

Brenda Belcher

Brenda Belcher is an Education Consultant, Leadership and Executive Coach, and former district administrator with more than two decades of experience in education. Over the course of her career, she has served as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and assistant superintendent, leading system-level work focused on student achievement, career and technical education, and leadership development.

As the owner of her own consulting practice, Brenda partners with school districts and organizations across Michigan to strengthen leadership capacity, build effective teams, and design high-quality career pathways. She currently coaches with Teach Michigan and collaborates with superintendents, principals, postsecondary institutions, and industry partners to align schools with real-world opportunities for students.

Brenda earned her Associate Certified Coach (ACC) credential through the International Coaching Federation and brings a disciplined, results-oriented coaching approach grounded in reflection, accountability, and practical action. She is passionate about helping leaders clarify their vision, strengthen their confidence, and build systems that produce measurable impact for students.

Born and raised in Detroit, Brenda remains deeply committed to expanding opportunity and excellence in education, one leader and one team at a time.



LaToyia Webb

LaToyia Webb earned her Bachelor's degree in Special Education from Eastern Michigan University and her Master's degree in Educational Leadership from Wayne State University, holding certifications in Special Education and K-12 Administration.

With 19 years of service to Detroit Public Schools Community District, LaToyia began her career as a Special Education teacher supporting students in the Emotionally Impaired and Resource Room programs, where she spent many fulfilling years advocating for and empowering diverse learners. For the past 11 years, she has served in leadership roles, and is currently serving as principal for a K-12 Campus.

She leads with compassion, integrity, and a people-first mindset. She believes in treating others with respect and modeling the expectations she sets for her school community. Her commitment is rooted in ensuring that every student in DPSCD experiences academic achievement, social growth, and emotional well-being in an environment that fully supports high-quality teaching and learning.

As a Sitting Leaders alum, LaToyia often shares that she truly loves her work — inspired daily by her students, supported by her staff, and strengthened through meaningful partnerships with parents and the broader community.

Session Description on next page

AUTHENTIC & IMPACTFUL LEADERSHIP SESSION

Lead Self First Continued

Session Description: Research from The Wallace Foundation¹ makes it clear that strong teams begin with strong leadership. In fact, it is second only to classroom instruction among school-based factors that impact student learning. Leaders don't just manage buildings; they shape the conditions where adults can do their best work, where goals are met, and where students can succeed.

Wallace's findings² reinforce a simple but important truth: how leaders show up matters just as much as what they do. Schools improve when leaders build trust, stay focused on instruction, provide consistent support, develop their people, and create clarity. Those results are closely tied to a leader's emotional intelligence, especially self-awareness.

Psychologist Daniel Goleman, known for his work on emotional intelligence, explains it this way: "If your emotional abilities aren't in hand, if you don't have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can't have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far".³ Leaders who understand their own triggers, manage emotions under pressure, and respond thoughtfully instead of reacting impulsively are far more likely to build strong teams and healthy cultures.

In today's schools, leaders are balancing academic expectations with the very real human needs of staff and, far too often, the basic needs of students. Self-aware leaders are better equipped to manage resistance, repair strained relationships, remain calm and consistent with constituents, and keep staff morale steady during challenging times. That steadiness builds a stronger school culture.

In this session, participants will not simply learn about these ideas; they will apply them. They will reflect on how they show up as current or aspiring leaders and identify patterns that either strengthen or strain their teams and colleagues. Participants will examine a current challenge and connect it directly to specific leadership behaviors. Each person will leave with one clear, intentional leadership move they are prepared to implement immediately.

Emotional intelligence isn't a "soft skill." It's a leadership skill. When leaders lead themselves well, they create the kind of school environment where adults stay, and students thrive.

PEOPLE CENTERED PEDAGOGY & PRACTICE SESSION



Defy Gravity

Silver Moore

Silver Moore is the Senior Director of Middle School Curriculum & Instruction at University Prep Schools in Detroit, where she works alongside instructional coaches, assistant principals, and school leaders to develop self-actualized, college- and career-ready students. Beyond her work in schools, she is the founder of Classroom Clapback, an education consulting platform that equips educators with culturally sustaining, social justice-oriented literacy resources to create classroom spaces that celebrate the genius of Black children. Silver is passionate about curriculum innovation, instructional equity, and transformative leadership and committed to reimagining education so that all students, especially Black youth, see themselves reflected in their learning experiences and have access to the tools they need to succeed.

Session Description: Defy Gravity: Interrupting Adultification & Rebuilding Systems that Let Black Girls Fly is an interactive workshop that challenges educators to examine how adultification, coded language, and disproportionate discipline shape Black girls' daily experiences in schools.

Participants will engage in bias-interruption practice through real classroom scenarios, learning a concrete protocol for pausing, reframing, and responding more equitably in moments of tension. The session then shifts to structured planning time, where educators audit their classroom norms, discipline practices, and school policies to identify where Black girls may be unfairly burdened and where lift is needed. Participants will leave with specific adjustments to policies and practices, along with measurable action steps to implement in their classrooms or school systems.

PEOPLE CENTERED PEDAGOGY & PRACTICE SESSION



The POWER of Classroom Management

Cory J. Chavis

Cory J. Chavis MBA is a K–8 building principal and district culture lead at Detroit Academy of Arts & Sciences, with 15 years of experience as an educator and 3 years as a building principal. He oversees classroom culture, PBIS implementation, restorative practices, crisis response, and instructional consistency across multiple grade bands. His daily work includes classroom walkthroughs, coaching teachers on behavior systems, supporting deans and instructional leaders, and designing prevention-focused structures that reduce disruptions and protect instructional time.

He has also served as a Detroit Police Department Chaplain, achieving the rank of Deputy Chief Chaplain, and as a two-term Governor-appointed member of the Michigan Community Corrections Board, bringing a systems-level perspective to leadership, behavior, and prevention work. Cory brings over 30 years of facilitation and public speaking experience and more than a decade of systems-level leadership in trauma-informed practice and violence prevention.

As a facilitator, Cory approaches professional learning as collaborative design work—not presentation, supporting educators in building practical, immediately usable classroom management systems grounded in real-world school contexts.

Session Description: Classroom management is often framed as control, compliance, or personality. This workshop reframes it as POWER—the power to protect instructional time, teacher energy, and student dignity through intentional systems.

Using the POWER framework (Procedures over personalities, Ownership, Warm-strict balance, Environment by design, Response not reaction), participants will engage in collaborative, hands-on work to diagnose real classroom challenges and design management systems that actually hold up in practice. The session prioritizes application, peer problem-solving, and guided design over presentation.

Participants will actively build a POWER-Based Classroom Management Blueprint they can implement immediately in their classroom or use to support others through coaching or leadership.

PEOPLE CENTERED PEDAGOGY & PRACTICE SESSION



The Accommodation Lab

DeDe Olthoff

DeDe Olthoff is a Kentwood-based elementary special educator and an alumna of the TeachMichigan Aspiring Leaders cohort. An advocate for neuroaffirming practices, DeDe focuses on inclusive learning design and collaborative problem-solving. She specializes in creating tangible systems that help Michigan educators implement and track accommodations effectively, ensuring every student has a seat—and a voice—at the table.

Devon Baker



Devon Baker is a neuroaffirming, strengths-based Occupational Therapist serving elementary students within Kentwood Public Schools. With a focus on sensory integration and equitable access, Devon specializes in identifying and leveraging the unique internal assets of every student. As a dedicated advocate for inclusive design, they partner with educators to create regulated, accessible environments where students can thrive on their own terms. Devon's work is rooted in the belief that when we design for a student's strengths rather than their deficits, we unlock their full potential for participation and joy in the classroom.

Rebekah Hall



Rebekah Hall is an Elementary Resource Teacher in Kentwood, MI, known for her student advocacy and commitment to inclusive excellence. Rebekah excels at seeing the “whole child,” quickly identifying the specific strengths that allow students to overcome barriers to learning. Her expertise lies in translating individual student needs into actionable classroom strategies that empower both the learner and the teacher. By fostering a culture of high expectations and tailored support, Rebekah ensures that inclusion is not just a placement, but a meaningful, successful experience for every student she serves.

Session Description: Too often, accommodations are viewed as a “checklist” for compliance rather than a bridge to equity. For many educators, the gap between reading an IEP and implementing it in a busy classroom feels insurmountable, leading to missed opportunities for student success and increased teacher burnout.

In this session, participants will move from theory to high-impact practice. Led by a multidisciplinary team, including special educators, an occupational therapist, and a former general educator, this workshop frames accommodations as a vital component of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). We will deconstruct the “why” behind neuroaffirming supports and provide a clear roadmap for the “how.”

Attendees will spend time in a “Design Lab” environment. Using provided templates, tools, and collaboration from other educators, participants will choose a session work path that fits their role.

Participants will leave not just with knowledge, but with a ready-to-use Implementation Kit, including a customized accommodation tracker and a bank of Tier 1 strategies that can be deployed on Monday morning to support all learners.

PEOPLE CENTERED PEDAGOGY & PRACTICE SESSION



Disruptions in a Schematic Play Lens

Jessica Kruger

Jessica Kruger is a middle school science teacher and Early Childhood Education professor based in Lansing, Michigan. With a background in Reggio Emilia-inspired leadership and over eight years as a center director, she brings a developmental lens to middle school classrooms and professional learning spaces. Jessica specializes in integrating play schema theory, CRPBIS, and Universal Design for Learning to reframe student behavior as communication rather than compliance. Passionate about equity, the Sustainable Development Goals, and student voice, she works to build classrooms and school cultures where curiosity, belonging, and big thinking thrive.

Session Description: What if the behaviors we label as “disruptive” are actually expressions of unfinished developmental patterns?

In this interactive session, educators will explore student behavior through the lens of play schema theory: a framework rooted in early childhood research that explains how children (and adolescents) organize their learning through repeated patterns of movement, exploration, and interaction. Participants will examine common classroom disruptions (movement-seeking, object manipulation, avoidance, repetition, boundary-testing, etc.) and reinterpret them as potential schematic drives such as trajectory, enclosure, transformation, connection, or rotation.

Rather than asking, “How do we stop this behavior?” we will ask, “What developmental need might be trying to express itself?”

Through case studies, reflection prompts, and collaborative analysis, participants will:

- Identify common play schemas and their behavioral expressions in upper elementary and middle school settings
- Reframe challenging behaviors as instructional data rather than defiance
- Examine how bias and interpretation influence adult responses to behavior
- Explore proactive classroom structures that align with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and restorative practices
- Develop practical strategies for designing learning environments that honor schematic drives while maintaining high expectations

By shifting from compliance-based responses to developmental understanding, educators will leave with tools to reduce reactive discipline, strengthen student-teacher relationships, and design classrooms that are both structured and responsive.

This session bridges instructional practice, equity, and behavioral systems by inviting educators to see behavior not as disruption but as communication.

PEOPLE CENTERED PEDAGOGY & PRACTICE SESSION



Designing for the 3%

Amaris Evans

Amaris Evans is a Detroit native and mathematics educator and program leader on the South Side of Chicago with over 15 years of experience in K-12 education. She is the Founder and Executive Director of Black Girls Do Math Too, a nonprofit organization dedicated to building confidence, visibility, and success for Black girls in mathematics through tutoring, mentorship, leadership development, and joy-centered programming. In addition to leading her nonprofit, Amaris serves as a CTE Education Pathway Lead and Program Coordinator for the Lindblom Teacher Apprenticeship, where she supports more than 150 aspiring educators and 60 mentor teachers in developing strong, sustainable pipelines into the teaching profession. Her leadership focuses on designing student-centered systems, protecting and developing leaders of color, and bridging classroom excellence with long-term opportunity.

Amaris is a national speaker and NCTM Lead Presenter, where she shares practice-ready frameworks for curating authentic joy, rigor, and belonging in mathematics classrooms. She is also a Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms Fellow traveling to Senegal, expanding her global perspective on math education, identity, and cultural exchange.

Session Description: What happens when we intentionally design classrooms for the students most often pushed to the margins? Designing for the 3% is a commitment to restructuring how we teach and lead so that Black girls and other historically excluded students experience learning as a space of power, belonging, and possibility.

This session moves beyond inspiration into systemic action. Participants will examine how instructional design, grading practices, discussion structures, and collaboration models either reinforce inequity or disrupt it. Together, we will explore concrete and scalable frameworks that shift classrooms from compliance driven environments to spaces rooted in joy, rigor, and identity affirming practice.

Drawing from mathematics education, educator pipelines, and global fellowship experiences, this session provides tools that translate across content areas. Attendees will leave with practice ready strategies to transform both classroom culture and the systems that shape it.

Designing for the 3% does not lower the bar. It redesigns the structure so more students can reach it.

INNOVATION & CREATIVITY IN EDUCATION SESSION



Designing AI That Works

Heather Gauck

Heather Gauck is an elementary special education teacher, instructional leader, and AI facilitator with over 31 years of classroom experience in Michigan public schools. She has presented on AI-supported instruction at the Michigan Virtual AI Summit, facilitated ongoing AI professional learning for school staff, and led webinars for MagicSchool AI focused on inclusive, ethical classroom implementation. Heather is a Teach Michigan Educator Policy Fellow and has completed over 45 hours of NEA professional learning focused on artificial intelligence, equity, and responsible use in education. As a Teach Plus Leading Edge Fellow, she engaged in a year-long exploration of AI, policy, and instructional practice, supporting educators in designing AI workflows that save time, increase accessibility, and center student needs.

Session Description: This session is a hands-on design studio where educators move beyond AI demos and into real classroom application. Participants bring a current instructional or student-support challenge—such as differentiation, accessibility, planning efficiency, or progress monitoring—and collaborate with peers to design an AI-supported workflow aligned to their context.

Using classroom-tested examples from Michigan schools, participants will experiment, revise, and reflect with guidance focused on ethical use, instructional alignment, and impact. The session prioritizes collaboration and practical decision-making over presentation. Participants leave with a ready-to-use AI plan they can implement immediately.

INNOVATION & CREATIVITY IN EDUCATION SESSION



Extend Your Coaching Reach

Sarah Tierney

Sarah Tierney is a senior leader at Teaching Lab Studio with over 16 years of experience in K–12 education, spanning classroom teaching, instructional coaching, content development, system-level strategy, and organizational leadership. She specializes in designing and scaling high-quality professional learning and integrating innovative tools into district and school systems in ways that strengthen—not replace—educator expertise. Prior to joining Teaching Lab, Sarah served as Managing Director of System Advising at Achievement Network, where she partnered with district leaders, state departments of education, and CMOs to design and implement comprehensive strategies for assessment, curriculum, and professional learning. She also led the launch of new regional partnerships across California, Massachusetts, and Tennessee and spearheaded the creation of Lessons from the Field, an open educational resource advancing equitable outcomes for students.

Session Description: Instructional coaches and leaders are being asked to provide high-quality, responsive support to educators—while managing large caseloads, multiple initiatives, and limited time. The result: coaching that often feels reactive rather than strategic.

This highly interactive working session is designed specifically for instructional coaches and instructional leaders (K–12) who are responsible for strengthening teaching and learning systems in their schools or districts. Participants will bring a real coaching challenge from their own context and spend the majority of the session building a practical support artifact they can use immediately.

Using Nisa—a coaching support platform designed to extend (not replace) human coaching capacity—participants will create a draft coaching plan, feedback tool, or deliberate practice resource for an actual teacher they support. Leaders will explore how extended coaching workflows can increase visibility and coherence across a system without adding reporting burden.

Participants will leave with:

- A free Nisa coach account
- A draft coaching artifact for a real educator
- A clearer workflow for extending coaching capacity
- Awareness of additional free tools that can complement their coaching systems
- Concrete next steps for implementation

This session connects directly to Michigan’s priority of ensuring high-quality instructional support so that teaching improves—and student learning outcomes follow.

INNOVATION & CREATIVITY IN EDUCATION SESSION



Write to Engineer

Lori Hall

Lori Hall is a veteran STEM educator with 30 years of experience in Saginaw Public Schools. She currently serves as an elementary STEM teacher and Camp Invention Director, specializing in equity-centered, hands-on learning experiences for all students – especially those with disabilities, girls, and BIPOC youth. Lori is a National Board Certified Teacher (Middle Childhood Generalist) and Teach Michigan Fellow, and was named a Mi-STEM Great Lakes Bay Region STEM Star in 2024. She is also a recipient of the Elementary Science Teaching Award from the American Chemical Society.

A former middle school science and math teacher, Lori has contributed to Mi-STAR curriculum development, led teacher mentoring through the MEA, and presented at MSTA, the Robert Noyce Conference, and ASCD. She is also a published co-author in the Journal of Teacher Action Research. Lori is committed to ensuring every learner sees themselves as a capable, valued STEM thinker – and that educators are empowered to build inclusive classrooms that reflect that.



Wendy Loper

Wendy Loper has dedicated 28 years to Saginaw Public Schools, bringing extensive experience across multiple grade levels and subject areas. Her teaching background includes 6th–8th grade math and science, as well as 4th and 5th grade self-contained classrooms. She currently serves as an elementary Title I math teacher, working with Kindergarten through 5th grade students, and Summer School Math Coach. In addition, she is the School Improvement Team Chairperson, Co-Chair of the Family Engagement Team, and a former mentor teacher.

Wendy plays a vital role in fostering student achievement and community involvement. She leads the planning and implementation of monthly Family Engagement events, including STEM Nights, and contributes to the design and delivery of professional development initiatives to support staff growth and instructional excellence.

Now in her second year as an Aspiring Leader – Teacher Leader Fellow through TeachMichigan, Wendy continues to strengthen her leadership capacity. Her work emphasizes equity, inclusive voice, empowerment, leveraging individual strengths, and addressing social barriers that impact both staff and students. She is deeply committed to cultivating a diverse and inclusive school community, ensuring that all students—particularly those who are underserved—are supported, valued, and empowered to succeed.

[Session Description on next page](#)

INNOVATION & CREATIVITY IN EDUCATION SESSION

Write to Engineer Continued

Session Description: STEM challenges can do more than build towers, they can build confident thinkers, writers and problem solvers. In this interactive workshop, participants will experience ready-to-use STEM lessons that intentionally integrate engineering design with both narrative and expository writing. Each challenge is structured to increase participation, build cross-curricular skills, and ensure that all learners (especially those historically underrepresented in STEM) have opportunities to lead, explain and reflect.

Participants will:

- Engage in hands-on engineering tasks
- Write a brief narrative from the perspective of a designer or problem-solver
- Develop an expository explanation using the Engineering Design Process
- Use an Equity Reflection Tool to analyze voice, participation and belonging

Attendees will leave with complete lesson outlines, writing prompts, assessment rubrics and facilitation language they can implement immediately in their elementary classrooms.

This session moves beyond theory and demonstrates how small design shifts in task structure and language can transform who participates, who speaks, and who sees themselves as capable in STEM.

SYSTEMS CHANGE SESSION



Feedback Under Pressure

Kris Thompson

Kris Thompson is an Industrial-Organizational Psychology practitioner and management consultant with a focus on leadership systems, performance optimization, and organizational design. She works with leaders navigating complexity, competing priorities, and structural pressure — helping them build feedback mechanisms that strengthen trust without sacrificing accountability.

With a background in systems thinking and applied behavioral science, Kris specializes in translating research on feedback intervention theory, 360-degree systems, and psychological safety into practical tools organizations can implement immediately. Her work emphasizes reciprocal accountability, clarity of expectations, and sustainable performance under stress.

Kris brings a cross-industry perspective to education, helping schools move beyond compliance-driven evaluation toward feedback systems that retain talent, reduce burnout, and improve execution across roles.

Session Description: Let's face it: feedback in schools can feel like that surprise pop quiz you weren't ready for — awkward, stressful, and sometimes completely ignored. Yet, when done right, feedback is one of the fastest ways to grow as a professional, strengthen teams, and actually get things done without pulling your hair out.

In Michigan's high-pressure educational landscape of overcrowded classrooms, endless mandates, and administrators juggling more priorities than a circus performer, feedback often happens top-down, one-off, or not at all. Educators feel voiceless. Administrators feel bombarded. And everyone wonders why morale and trust sometimes evaporate faster than your morning coffee.

This 90-minute interactive session flips the script. Participants will collaborate on designing feedback systems that actually work (structured, practical, and yes, safe) from every perspective: administrators, teachers, support staff, and even students. We'll tackle how to give and receive feedback without sparking defensiveness, burnout, or passive-aggressive emails.

Participants will leave not only with insight, but with tangible tools:

- A Feedback Friction Map to spot where systems break
- A sustainable 3-layer feedback loop
- 30-day micro-experiment plan for immediate impact

By the end, participants won't just understand feedback, they'll own a plan to make it actionable, reduce friction, and create a culture where giving and receiving feedback becomes a tool for growth instead of dread. Bring your opinions, your questions, and maybe a sense of humor.

SYSTEMS CHANGE SESSION



The Modern Teacher's Grade Book

Maddie Krawczyk

Maddie Krawczyk is a second-year high school social studies teacher and Teach For America–Detroit corps member who designs clear, sustainable systems to help teachers make sense of their classroom data. Her tools grew out of the real challenges of early-career teaching and have already been shared with educators across several Michigan schools, including through a recent presentation at Teach For America's corps member workshop in January. She has since supported fellow corps members across multiple schools in implementing data routines and progress-monitoring systems. Maddie focuses on creating easy-to-implement systems that cut through the noise of competing demands and surface what students actually need. Her work begins in her own classroom, where each tool starts as a practical solution to the day-to-day realities she faces with her students. She brings an engaging, collaborative, and grounded approach to professional learning, reflecting her commitment to helping educators build human-centered, doable, and immediately impactful systems for their classrooms.

Session Description: Early-career educators often drown in data without a clear way to use it. Teachers are expected to track everything, yet few are taught how to turn that information into insight. This session directly supports ongoing work around chronic absenteeism, MTSS-aligned progress monitoring, and equitable access to instruction by giving participants a practical, teacher-friendly system for transforming raw classroom data into real, instructional impact.

In this highly interactive workshop, educators will build their own customizable data tracker from scratch, using a model designed and tested in real Michigan classrooms. Through short demonstrations, structured build time, and collaborative problem-solving, participants will create a fully functional gradebook tool that visually identifies struggling students, reveals patterns in classroom management, predicts who needs intervention, and connects attendance trends to academic outcomes. This tracker is not simply a tech tool, but a framework for instructional planning, intervention design, and classroom culture shifts.

Participants will spend the session actively designing, editing, and personalizing their own spreadsheet system using their real rosters and classroom data. Small-group scenarios grounded in real data and common behavioral patterns will help teachers practice interpreting their data and selecting targeted instructional or classroom management responses.

Session Description on next page

SYSTEMS CHANGE SESSION

The Modern Teacher's Grade Book *Continued*

By the end of the session, educators will walk away with:

- A ready-to-use gradebook system aligned to their own classes
- A workflow for weekly data routines that saves time and reduces guesswork
- A clear method for identifying whether academic struggles stem from attendance, behavior, instruction, or accessibility
- A transferable framework they can adapt for project management, progress monitoring, parent communication, and student support meetings
- Increased confidence using data to drive instruction in a way that feels human-centered, not compliance-driven

This session is designed for early-career teachers and anyone responsible for student progress monitoring in a secondary education setting. Participants are active participants in this session, building, testing, and refining a tool they can take directly into the classroom to improve instructional decisions and classroom environment.

SYSTEMS CHANGE SESSION



Funding Shapes Everything

Heather Eckner

Heather Eckner serves as Director of Statewide Education at the Autism Alliance of Michigan (AAoM), where she leads initiatives focused on improving education systems for students with disabilities through policy, coalition-building, and family engagement. She convenes statewide partnerships at both grassroots and grasstops levels to advance systems change reform, most notably through the Michigan Special Education Finance Reform Blueprint.

Heather previously founded A2IDEAS, a special education advocacy nonprofit, and has experience as both an elementary classroom teacher and instructional assistant at Wayne State University's College of Education, where she developed family programming to support parents navigating the special education system.

She has extensive knowledge that encompasses all areas of eligibility and continuum of services in special education with a training emphasis in autism and dyslexia, and also served as a content advisor for the Michigan Dyslexia Handbook. Heather is a 2014 graduate of the Leaders in Policy Advocacy (LIPA) program, a 2021 fellow of Michigan Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (MI-LEND), a member of Leadership Detroit Class XLII, and has also served on the Executive Committee for the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC).

A parent of children with disabilities, Heather's advocacy is driven by her commitment to education, social justice, and empowering families and communities to create meaningful change.

Session Description: Michigan's special education funding structure doesn't just impact students with IEPs, it shapes staffing models, class sizes, intervention systems, instructional delivery, and district decision-making across the entire education system. In this collaborative workspace session, participants will explore how funding structures influence real classroom realities (from co-teaching capacity to MTSS implementation to behavioral supports) using Michigan-specific data and scenarios. Rather than presenting theory, this session functions as a structured design lab.

Educators and leaders will:

- Examine current demographic and disability trend data in Michigan
- Map how special education funding flows through their systems
- Identify pressure points where funding structure impacts instruction
- Develop a draft action map or advocacy alignment plan tailored to district-level needs

Participants will leave with a practical tool to guide internal conversations about funding, equity, and system design that is grounded in Michigan's current policy context and the MI Blueprint reform framework.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OFFERINGS SESSION



26-27 Strategic Planning Workshop for Sitting Leaders

Brianne Diaz

Brianne Diaz is the founder of the liberatory leadership coaching company, Let's Be Starlings, LLC. Breanne is committed to achieving educational equity by cultivating environments where school leaders and staff can work collaboratively toward transformational outcomes for students. Breanne is a former public school principal and current ICF Professional Credentialed Coach who holds an M.A. in Elementary Education. Breanne resides in Austin, Texas and Lisbon, Portugal with her husband, Zach, and her little dog, Flora. When she's not coaching and facilitating, Breanne enjoys hiking and wild swimming.

Session Description: This is an optional, joint "Part 2" strategic planning session for Year 1 and Year 2 Sitting Leaders. During this session, Sitting Leaders will build on the strategic planning work they started in their separate cohorts that morning. For this session, Sitting Leaders are encouraged to bring "+1" with them - either a Sitting Leader in the opposite year, an Aspiring Leader, or another thought partner who can help them plan out their Wildly Important Goals and leading indicators for the 26-27 school year. Sitting Leaders will leave this session with their 26-27 WIGs and leading indicators written into a strategic plan to share with their leadership teams and staff at school.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OFFERINGS SESSION



National Board Certification Collaborative Workspace

Emily De La Cruz

Emily De La Cruz is a passionate advocate for equity in education with over 20 years of unwavering commitment to educational excellence for all children. She brings extensive K–12 experience from both Miami and Detroit, where she has led and supported efforts to create high-impact learning environments rooted in rigor, joy, and inclusivity.

A National Board Certified Teacher in English Language Arts Early Adolescence (ELA–EA), Emily is deeply grounded in the science and art of literacy instruction. She has expertise in the Science of Reading and is known for her reflective practice and relentless pursuit of instructional excellence.

Emily is committed to dismantling inequitable structures and reimagining educational spaces where students—particularly those furthest from justice—experience joyful, authentic learning while achieving academic success. She centers her work on closing the opportunity gap and creating environments that uplift educators and place children at the heart of every decision. Always listening, learning, and growing, Emily leads with purpose, humility, and heart.

Session Description: This session is meant to be a collaborative and reflective environment where those educators pursuing National Board Certification can learn from each other, refine their goals, and develop actionable plans for enhancing their impact within the community.

The structure allows for a mix of individual reflection, group work, and feedback, ensuring a comprehensive and engaging experience.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC OFFERINGS SESSION



Team Coaching

Monique Gayles-Leaverson

Monique Gayles-Leaverson is an experienced educator with over 15 years in the field. She currently serves as Senior Managing Director of Educator Fellowships, where she leads the Aspiring Leaders Fellowship. Her work focuses on developing impactful school leaders.



Britani Humes

Britani Humes is the Managing Director of Educator Fellowships, where she co-leads the Aspiring Leaders Fellowship. A passionate educator with over 16 years of experience, she has served as both a teacher and leader in Detroit. She now supports the development of educators across multiple regions in Michigan, preparing them to lead and influence strong outcomes for students and staff.

Session Description: The Team Coaching session is an invite-only experience that revisits and deepens key learning from the TeachMichigan Team Coaching pilot by building on core elements from the prior session. Participants will reflect on their PDSA cycle progress, re-engage with instructional vision, observation, and feedback practices, and refine their action plans. The session will conclude with a final reflection and an opportunity to share comprehensive feedback on the pilot.

Interactive Elements and Networking: Whova App

Invitation code: TeachMichigan2026



Look out for an email from The Whova Team (event-noreply@whova.io) with confirmation that you have been added to the EmpowerEd Weekend event. If the app is still on your phone, you will automatically be added to the event. If you deleted the app, please redownload it.

With the app, you can:

- View the event agenda and plan your schedule
- Ask speakers questions in Session Q&A
- Plan in-person or virtual meet-ups such as a morning run, city tour, or even virtual coffee break with your fellow attendees
- Receive updates such as last minute schedule changes from the organizers
- Get presentation documents and slides (if the organizers uploaded them)

If you have not gotten an email and do not have access to the app, please reach out to nathalie.williams@teachforamerica.org for assistance.

Ask the Organizers

There are two ways to ask the organizers questions:

Public Questions:

If your question can be addressed publicly, please use the Community section of the Whova app and navigate to the group titled "Ask Organizers Anything". All questions asked in this group will be visible to other participants.

Tip: Before posting your question, take a moment to review the existing posts in this group. Your question might have already been answered.

Private Questions:

For questions that require a private response or involve sensitive information, please email us directly at fellowships@teachmichigan.org.

Tip: Provide as much detail as possible in your email to help us address your query efficiently.

Additional Information

Response Time:

We aim to respond to questions as promptly as possible. For public inquiries, check the Community section for updates. For private emails, expect a response within 24-48 hours.

Emergency Contact:

If you have an urgent issue or require immediate assistance, please reach out to the on-site event staff or call our emergency contact number provided in the event guide.

- Jacob Robinson-Suarez
(813) 802-6771

Social Media & Hashtags

Join the conversation online and amplify the impact of **EmpowerEd Weekend Spring 2026** by sharing your experiences, insights, and key takeaways. Use our official hashtags to connect with fellow attendees, highlight moments from the event, and spread the word about strengthening Michigan's education future.

Primary Hashtags:

#MakeltCountMI | **#TeachMichigan**
#EmpowerEdWeekend | **#PoweredByTFADetroit**

Tag us in your posts and stories to be featured on our official event channels:

 [@Teach_Michigan](https://www.instagram.com/Teach_Michigan)

 [TeachMichigan](https://www.facebook.com/TeachMichigan)

 [TeachMichigan](https://www.linkedin.com/company/TeachMichigan)

Special Features:

- Stay tuned for live updates and highlights on our social media channels throughout the weekend.
- The top 3 tagged posts will receive a special surprise gift!

Ways to Engage on Social Media:

- **Post about your favorite sessions & speakers** – Tag **@teach_michigan** and use **#MakeltCountMI**
- **Share behind-the-scenes moments** – from networking to panel discussions
- **Highlight key takeaways** – Use stories, reels, or posts to inspire others
- **Go live or share video clips** – Show how you're engaging with the weekend's events
- **Engage with other attendees** – Like, comment, and share posts to build connections

Tips for Posting:

Be Respectful: Ensure that any content you share respects the privacy and dignity of all participants.

Engage with Us: Use our hashtags to connect with the broader community and interact with posts from other attendees.

Spotlight: Your Posts Could Be Featured!

We'll be featuring attendee posts throughout the event! Use **#MakeltCountMI** and tag **@teach_michigan** for a chance to be featured on our official channels.

Survey and Feedback

At TeachMichigan, we strive to consistently improve and learn. Please check your email box for an email from **Qualtrics and TeachMichigan | TFA Detroit**. If you have not yet received your survey link by end of day Saturday, May 2nd or if you have any questions regarding your survey, please reach out to Brittany Romero directly at Brittiany.Romero@teachforamerica.org.

EmpowerEd Weekend Junk Journal Directions & Prompts

What is Junk Journaling?

Junk Journaling truly is whatever you want it to be! It is a form of scrapbooking with no parameters other than preserving moments in a fun and creative way.

How to Journal, TeachMichigan Style

With our Spring EmpowerEd Weekend theme centered on making it count, we wanted to create a meaningful way for educators to carry their learning – and their memories – with them beyond the weekend.

Stop by the **Junk Journaling Elevation Station** on Saturday to pick up supplies and start capturing your experience. You might glue your lanyard onto a page and surround it with the names of people who have been pivotal to your success this year. Or create a page filled with the quotes, strategies, and moments that have kept you motivated throughout the school year.

Once you're home, you can assemble your journal in whatever way feels most authentic to you. We've also included reflection prompts below to help guide your thinking and deepen the experience.

Make it creative. Make it personal. Most importantly – make it count!

Junk Journal Prompts

- What does the theme “Make It Count” mean to you? How have you lived into the theme this weekend and school year in general?
- What was the highlight of the 2026 Spring EmpowerEd Weekend? Why?
- What strategy, technique, etc. did you discuss this weekend that you are excited to take back to your school/district?
- What accomplishment(s) are you most proud of yourself for from this school year?
- Write a letter to yourself one year from now. What have you learned, accomplished, contributed to your school/district and the broader TeachMichigan community?
- At TeachMichigan, we believe that rest is a part of the fuel that helps sustain our work. How will you or have you committed to rest in ways that sustain you?





Empowered Weekend District/School Collaborative Work Time Protocol

Purpose: Create space for TeachMichigan fellows within the same school or district to synthesize their Empowered Weekend learning and identify actionable strategies to improve teaching and student outcomes in their school or district during Empowered Weekend.

Before this session fellows will have participated in their fellowship’s morning learning session and a choice session aligned to their interest.

Objectives: By the end of the TeachMichigan District/School Collaborative Work Time, Fellows will have:

- Synthesized the day’s learning
- Connected ideas to their own school context
- Identified one actionable leadership step
- Articulated the potential impact on teachers and students

Total Time: 50 minutes

Time	Agenda	Guiding Questions/Notes
10 minutes	End of Program Reflection: “What’s sticking with me?”	<p>Facilitators ask participants to reflect independently and jot down thoughts, before sharing responses to the whole group.</p> <p>Reflection Prompts</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>What idea, strategy, or concept from today most challenged or expanded your thinking?</i> 2. <i>What learning from today felt most relevant to your school or district context?</i> <p>Encourage facilitator to capture 2–3 of the group’s key takeaways.</p>
15 minutes	Making Meaning with Partner Dialogue	<p>With a partner or triad (from the same school when possible) participants should engage in conversation to share reflections and deepen understanding through dialogue.</p> <p>Guiding Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>How does the learning from today connect to opportunities currently present in your school?</i> 2. <i>What new leadership or teacher move or mindset might you need to adopt based on/to implement today’s learning?</i> <p>Encourage partners to listen for patterns or shared themes.</p>

Empowered Weekend District/School Collaborative Work Time Protocol Continued

Time	Agenda	Guiding Questions/Notes
22 minutes	Practical Application: From an Idea to Action	<p>In small groups (3–4 people) teachers or leaders now focus on practical application.</p> <p>Discussion Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>What is one strategy, tool, or idea from today that could realistically be implemented in your school?</i> 2. <i>What would it look like if this learning was fully implemented by your staff?</i> 3. <i>What conditions would need to be created for this learning to take root (time, culture, systems, support)?</i> 4. <i>Based on your responses to 1-3, what is your next actionable step in the next month? Prep for next year?</i> <p>Ask groups to identify one concrete leadership or teacher move they will take.</p>
3 minutes	Commitment Statements	<p>The facilitator will ask each participant to complete the commitment statement: <i>“One action I will take in the next 30 days as a result of today’s learning is…”</i></p> <p>Encourage participants to make the commitment specific and observable.</p> <p>Commitment statements will be collected via a google form.</p>

Thank You to Our Event Sponsors

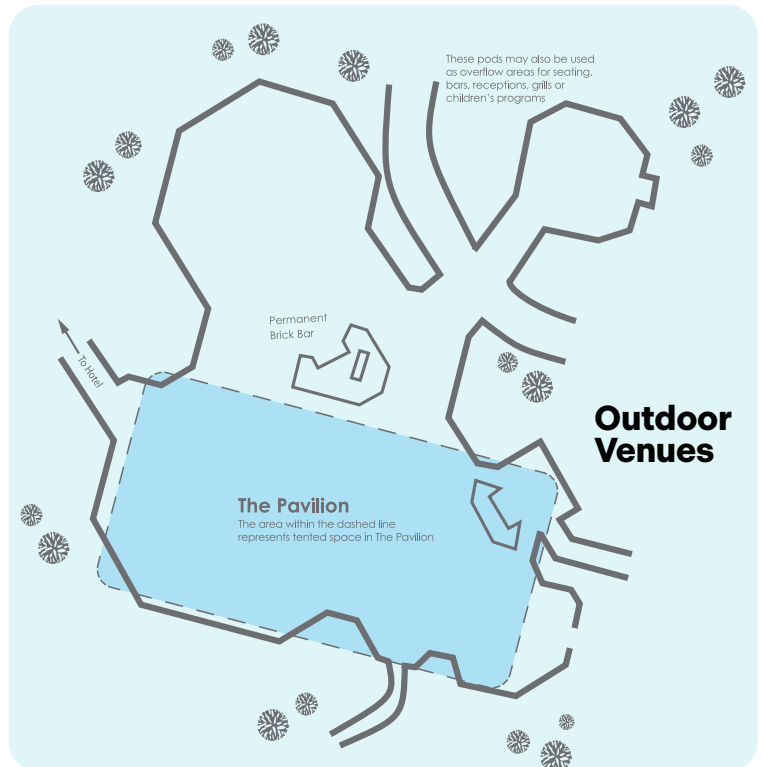
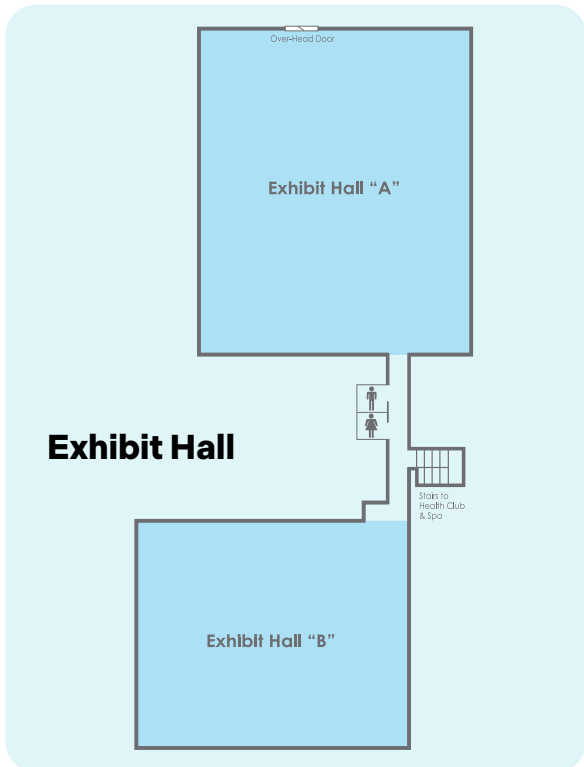
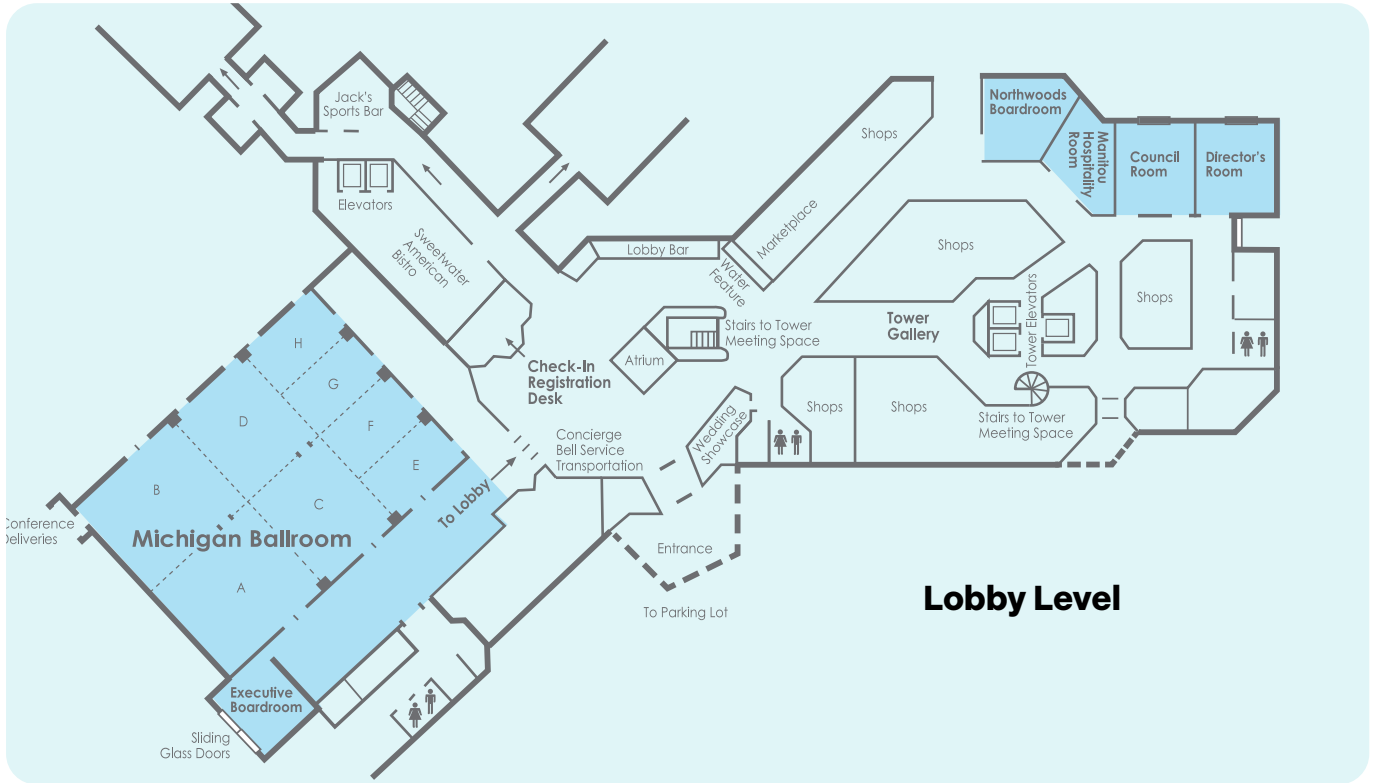


Thank You to Our Partners

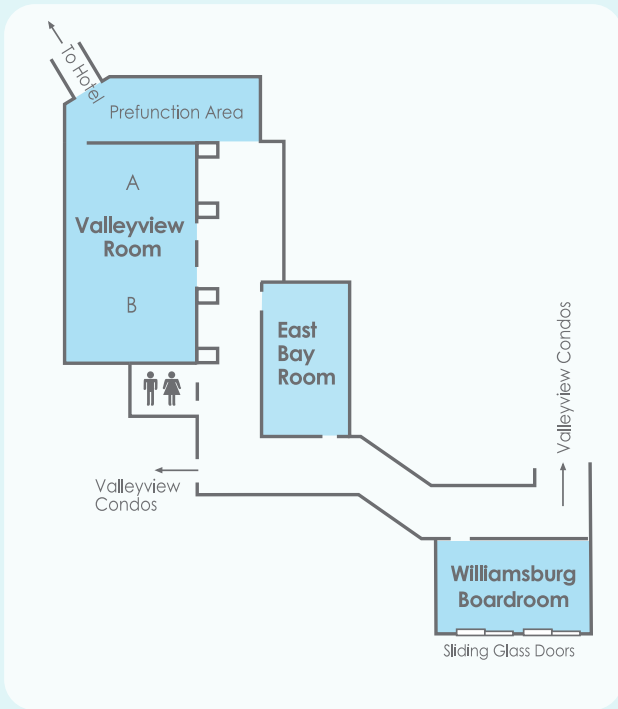
The State of Michigan



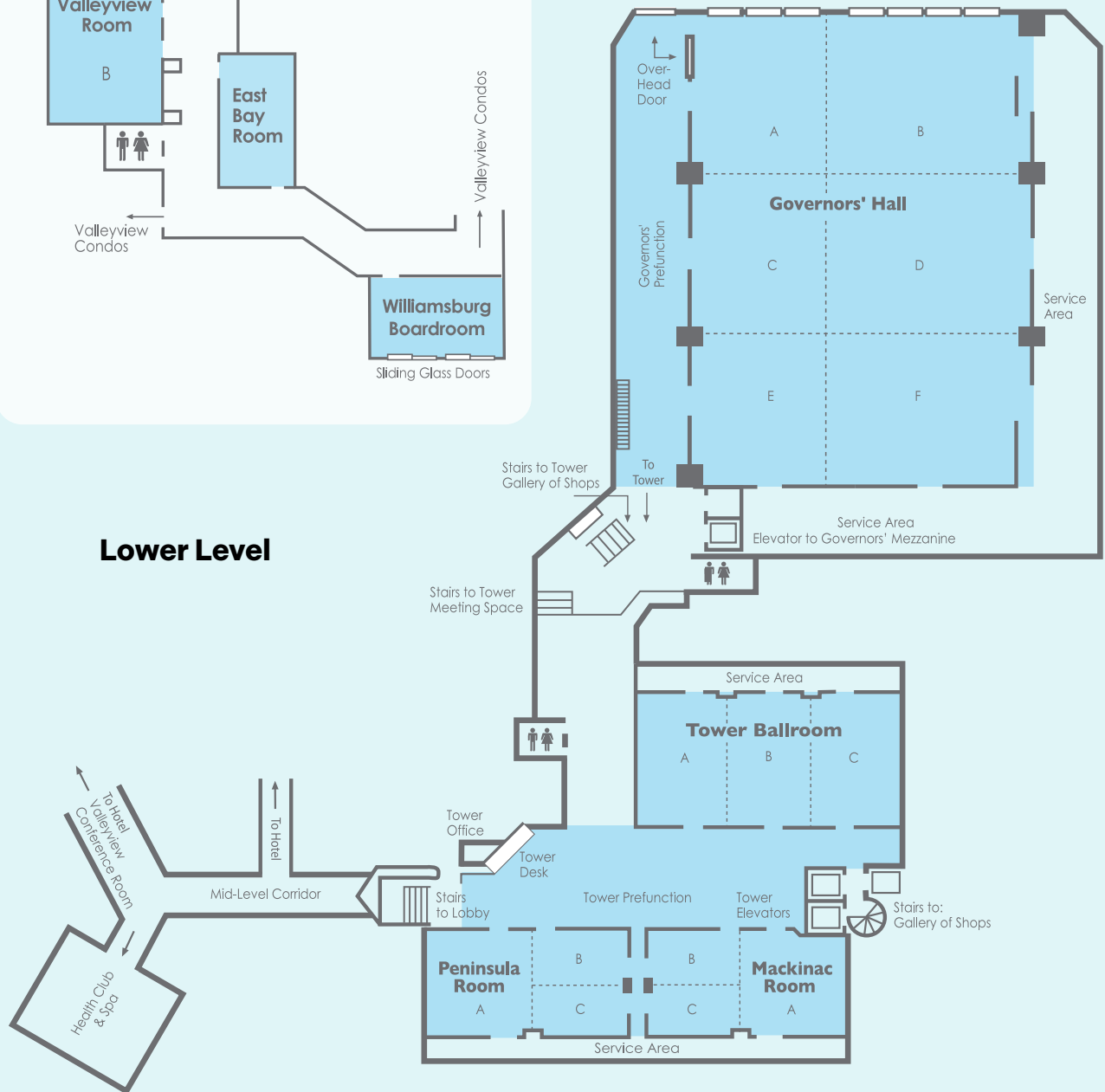
Floor Plans



Floor Plans



Lower Level



Join Us!

The challenges facing our schools and educators are systemic. It's going to require bold, sustained leadership at all levels to put Michigan student outcomes back on top.

Teach For America Detroit—through the TeachMichigan movement—is committed to bringing this vision to reality.



Learn more at teachmi.org and follow us:



[@Teach_Michigan](https://www.instagram.com/Teach_Michigan)

[@tfadetroit](https://www.instagram.com/tfadetroit)



[TeachMichigan](https://www.facebook.com/TeachMichigan)

[Teach-For-America-Detroit](https://www.facebook.com/Teach-For-America-Detroit)



[TeachMichigan](https://www.linkedin.com/company/TeachMichigan)

[teach-for-america-detroit](https://www.linkedin.com/company/teach-for-america-detroit)