INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR TRUANCY AND DROPOUT PREVENTION

114th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Charting the Course:

Connection as the Anchor to Truancy and Dropout Prevention



October 18-21, 2026

Omni Corpus Christi Hotel
900 N. Shoreline Blvd.
Corpus Christi, TX

Stronger Connections. Brighter Futures.

Hotel Map

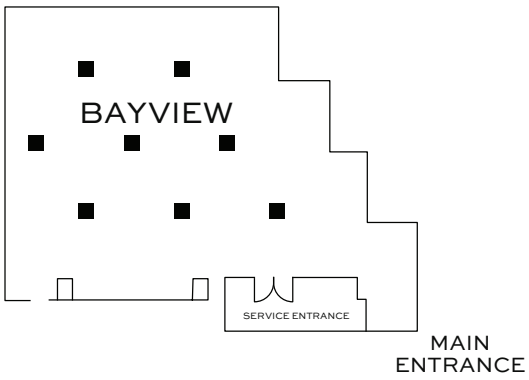
Conference Courtesy

We appreciate your help in creating an engaging and respectful learning environment for everyone.

- Please silence cell phones and other electronic devices during sessions.
- If you need to take a call, please step into the foyer so others can remain focused on the presentation.
- We ask that you keep conversations to a minimum during sessions and save networking and catching up for breaks.
- Please note: Internet access is not available in the meeting rooms, so we encourage you to download or save anything you may need before entering a session.

Most importantly, thank you for giving our presenters and fellow attendees your full attention. Your focus and participation help make this conference a meaningful experience for everyone.

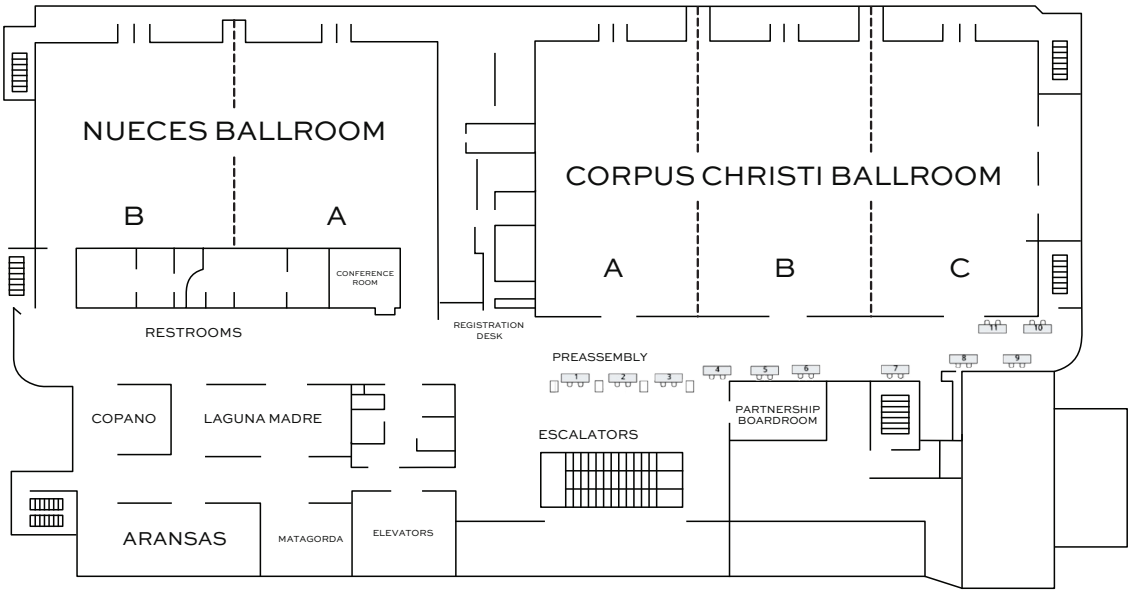
FIRST FLOOR



Sponsorship/Vendor Booth Assignments

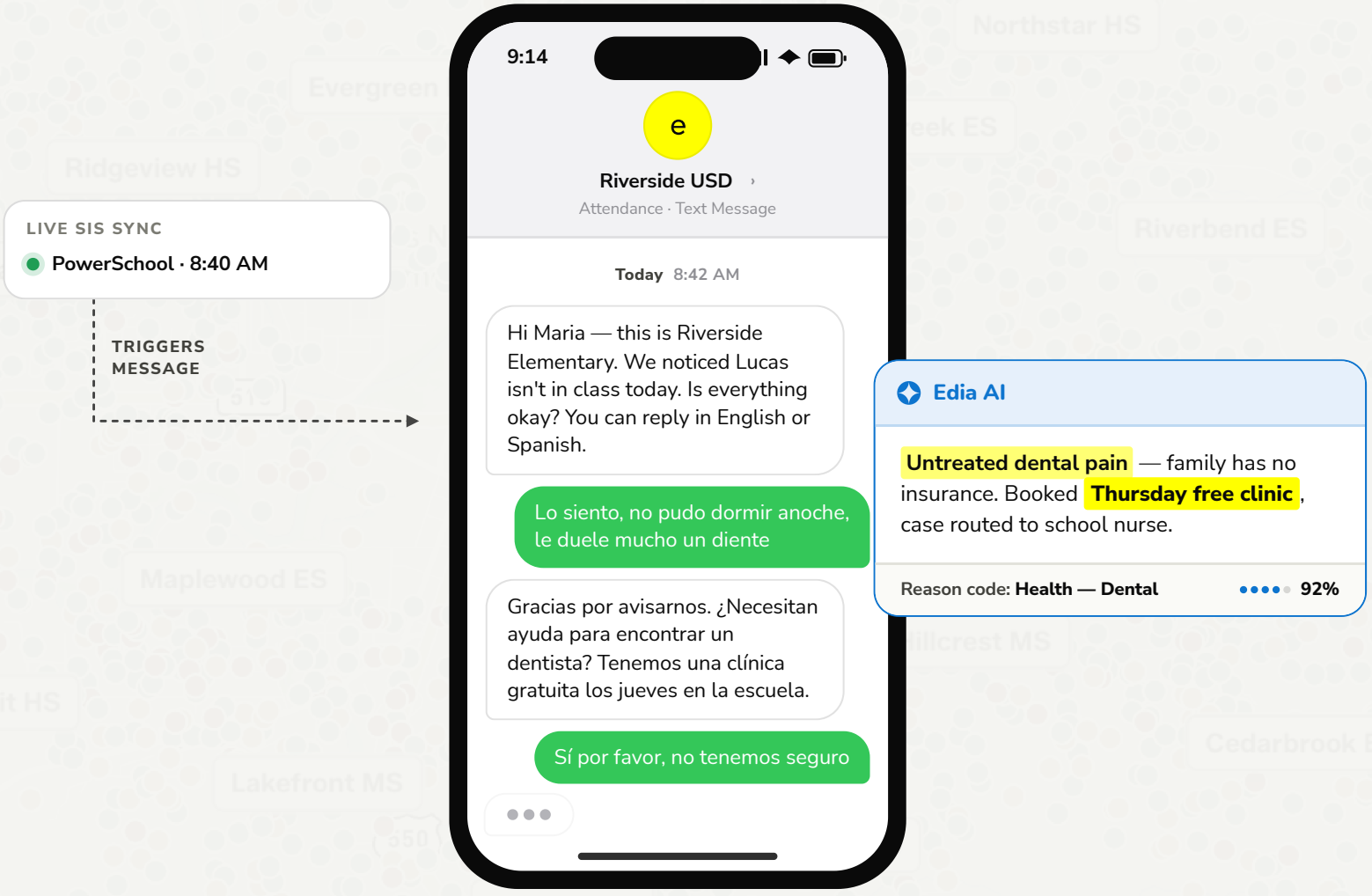
Company	Booth
Edia	1
ParentSquare	2
RaaWeeK12	3
Grad Solutions	4
School Status	5
Quatrain Analytics	6
EveryDay Labs	7
August Schools	8
Grand Canyon University	9
Attendance USA	10
Texas Challenge Academy	11

THIRD FLOOR



Cut chronic absenteeism in half. Starting Monday.

Within minutes of an unexplained absence, Edia talks to families in their language — finds out what's really going on, and gets the right intervention started before the day is over.



–50% Chronic absenteeism

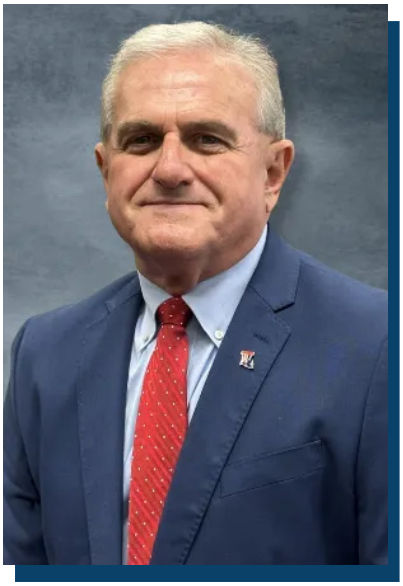
>60% Parent reply rate

105+ languages

edia.app/attendance

Welcome to the 114th Annual Conference of the International Association for Truancy and Dropout Prevention!

Message from the Executive Director:



On behalf of the International Association for Truancy and Dropout Prevention, it is my pleasure to welcome you to Corpus Christi, Texas. We are grateful to have you with us as we come together from across the country to learn, connect, share ideas, and strengthen the work we do on behalf of students and families. This conference is more than a gathering of professionals—it is an opportunity to build relationships, exchange solutions, and return to our schools and communities inspired to make a difference. Thank you for being part of IATDP and for the important work you do every day. We hope your time here is both meaningful and memorable. If you need anything, please let me know.

Keith LeLeux
IATDP Executive Director

Message from the President:



It is an honor to welcome you to Corpus Christi, Texas. Our theme, "Charting the Course: Connection as the Key to Truancy and Dropout Prevention," reflects an important truth: students rarely disengage all at once—they drift. Attendance challenges and dropout are signals that a student may be losing sight of what's important, and our response must be guidance, support, and connection.

Connection is our compass. Students stay engaged when they know someone notices, listens, and believes they belong. But dropout prevention takes more than one person—it takes a crew of educators, families, community partners, and professionals working together to keep students connected and on course.

Over the next few days, we will share strategies, research, and stories that help us navigate challenges, make course corrections, and strengthen the connections that matter most. Our destination is more than graduation. It is becoming an anchor so that kids feel a sense of belonging, engaged, and hopeful.

Thank you for being part of this crew and for joining us as we chart a course where connection is the key.

Susan Holloway
IATDP President

¡Bienvenidos a Texas!



On behalf of the Texas Association for Truancy and Dropout Prevention, it is an honor to welcome you to the great state of Texas and to beautiful Corpus Christi for the 114th Annual IATDP Conference. We are especially proud to welcome colleagues from across the nation to South Texas—a place where strong communities, deep traditions, and a commitment to students come together. We hope you take time to learn, connect, share your experiences, and enjoy the warmth and hospitality of our Texas community. Thank you for joining us as we continue charting the course for student success.

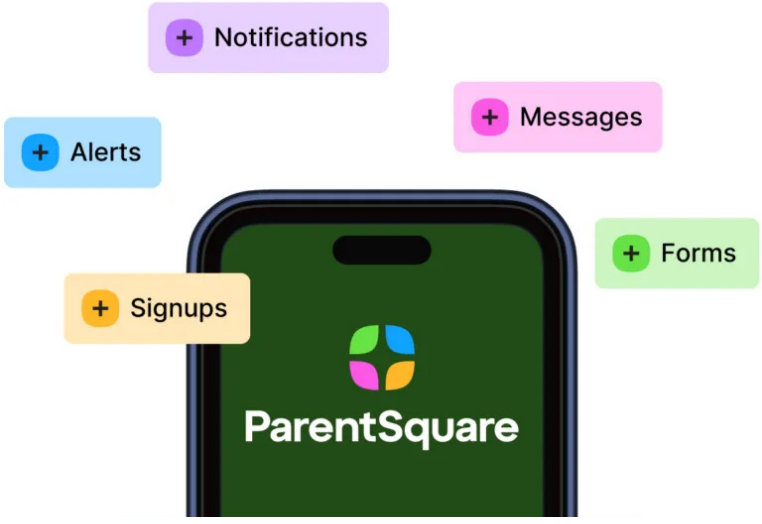
Dr. Xochitl Echeverz
TATDP President

TATDP
Texas Association for Truancy & Dropout Prevention

The K-12 family engagement platform built to reach every family

One unified platform for communication, websites, attendance, and payments - built to reach every family, without barriers

ParentSquare



Executive Committee

The International Association for Truancy and Dropout Prevention (IATDP) is an association of educators, government officials and stakeholders whose history of truancy and dropout prevention efforts date back to 1911.

Our mission is to create a partnership which facilitates the dissemination of information, emerging practices and research designed to support learning and increase high school graduation rates.

The goal of IATDP is to improve the efforts of practitioners to reduce the number of students who elect to dropout of school by sharing our common experiences and intervention strategies.

The Executive Committee's goal is to uphold the IATDP mission statement and represent the organization as its leaders.



Susan Holloway
President



Keena Howell
President-Elect



John Cox
1st Vice-President



Dr. Rollan Moore
2nd Vice-President



Angela Miller Royal
3nd Vice-President



Brian Hartsell
Treasurer



Jeremy Doucet
Secretary



Keith LeLeux
Executive Director

Board of Directors

The International Association for Truancy and Dropout Prevention (IATDP) is deeply grateful for the dedication and leadership of our Board of Directors. Their guidance, expertise, and unwavering support play a vital role in advancing our mission and strengthening our impact on truancy and dropout prevention efforts worldwide.

Alabama
Charlayne Jordan-Riley, John Plump

Arkansas
Quintin Sullivan, Leslie Paschal Barnes

California
Roberto De la Rosa Jr

Florida
Jill Kolasa

Georgia
Laurie Chesshire, Paul Pursell

Illinois
Luke Saeger, Michelle Sears

Indiana
Inga Lewis-Shannon, Tara Nelson

Kentucky
Joshua Bradford, Jessica Duty

Louisiana
Gwendolyn Pullard, Dr. Brenda Moore, Dwayne Taylor

Maryland
Katherine Ronan, Tracey Dolina-Watkins

Michigan
Tracy Long, Jessica Whetsone

Mississippi
Erik Elorriaga, Michelle Hutsell

Missouri
Courtney Martin

North Carolina
Savannah Allman, Angela Whiteside, Tonya Withers

Oklahoma
Kyle Hoff, Adrian K. John

Pennsylvania
Katie Rendon, Madison Kohler

South Carolina
David Corley, Jessica Marz

Tennessee
JB Blocker IV, Kelly Henderson, Laura Quinn

Texas
Nicole Evans, Kathleen Cady, Dr. Richard Woods

Utah
Benjamin Carrier, Garrett Russell

October 17, 2026 - Saturday

4:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.	PRE-CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

October 18, 2026 - Sunday

2:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.	EXECUTIVE BOARD & BOARD OF DIRECTORS SET-UP
4:00 P.M. – 6:00 P.M.	CONFERENCE REGISTRATION/CHECK-IN
6:00 P.M.- 8:00 P.M.	OPENING GENERAL SESSION

Topic	*Presenter*	*Location*
Welcome Remarks	**Susan Holloway** IATDP President Friendswood, Texas	First Floor- Bayview Room
Welcome to Texas & Introduction of Keynote	**Dr. Xochitl Echeverz** TATDP President Houston, Texas & Uruguay	First Floor- Bayview Room
Keynote Speaker	**Dr. Linda Villarreal** Kingsville, Texas	First Floor- Bayview Room

PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION FOOD, DRINKS & NETWORKING	FIRST FLOOR- BAYVIEW ROOM Entertainment provided by Mariachi Tierra Mia Tuloso Midway High School under the direction of Tony De La Rosa, Tuloso Midway ISD, Corpus Christi, Texas

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Linda Pompa Villarreal



Born and raised in Corpus Christi, Texas, Dr. Linda Pompa Villarreal is a lifelong educator whose career has been dedicated to strengthening public education and improving opportunities for students throughout Texas. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from Texas A&I University and her doctorate from Texas A&M University–Kingsville. Dr. Villarreal previously served as Interim Dean of the College of Education and Human Performance at Texas A&M University–Kingsville, where she continues to serve students as a clinical professor. She is also the co-founder of Ed-Point, LLC, an educational consulting firm that supports educators and school systems in creating organizations focused on excellence, effective leadership, and high-quality learning for every student.

Her distinguished career includes serving as Executive Director of the Education Service Center, Region 2, as well as a superintendent of schools, campus principal, and classroom teacher. She has trained and inspired educators across Texas and throughout the nation, always challenging them to remain champions for children and steadfast in the purpose of public education—transforming the lives of students. Dr. Villarreal has also served as an adjunct professor for Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi and Louisiana State University Shreveport. In addition, she recently served as a member of the Del Mar College Board of Regents.

Known for her passion, energy, and servant leadership, Dr. Villarreal believes that education is not simply a profession—it is a calling. Of all the roles she has held, her greatest joys are being an educator, wife to Juan, mother to Carlos, and grandmother to Benjamin and Ava.

October 19, 2026 - Monday

7:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.	REGISTRATION / CHECK IN
7:00 A.M. – 8:00 A.M.	BREAKFAST - CORPUS CHRISTI / BALLROOM A
8:00 A.M. – 9:30 A.M.	MORNING GENERAL SESSION

Topic	*Presenter*	*Location*
Welcome Remarks	**Keith LeLeux** IATDP Executive Director Lake Charles, Louisiana	Third Floor- Corpus Christi Ballrooms
Posting of the Colors	**Color Guard** Texas A&M Corpus Christi	Third Floor- Corpus Christi Ballrooms
National Anthem	**Flour Bluff High School Choir** Director Fernando Fernandez Jr. Flour Bluff ISD, Corpus Christi TX	Third Floor- Corpus Christi Ballrooms
Introductions	**Susan Holloway** IATDP President Friendswood, Texas	Third Floor- Corpus Christi Ballrooms
Presentation	**Sydney Smith** Platinum Sponsor EDIA San Francisco, California	Third Floor- Corpus Christi Ballrooms
Keynote Speaker	**Mandy Benedix** Pearland, Texas	Third Floor- Corpus Christi Ballrooms

Keynote Speaker

How to Keep Becoming When the Work Keeps Changing

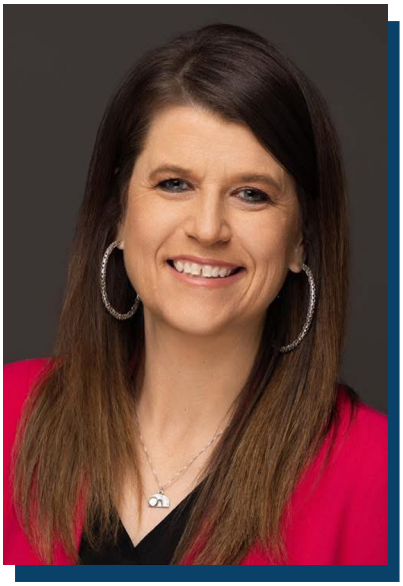
Mandy Benedix

Change is inevitable, but growth is optional. When your work is centered on showing up for students and families, it's easy to lose sight of how you are showing up yourself. This keynote invites us to turn some of that attention inward. We'll explore how intention, curiosity, and hope help us navigate change without losing ourselves in the process. Because no matter how long we've been doing this work, there is still room to grow.

Mandy Benedix worked in public education for 26 years. During her final 11 years in education she served as the Mentor Specialist in Pearland ISD where she created and oversaw the district wide RISE mentoring program, connecting over 2100 students with a mentor during that time.

Mandy is also the founder of Rooted Together, an organization that seeks to provide opportunities for people to find their voice and to find community with others.

She resides in Pearland, Texas with her husband of 21 years, Curt, as well as the true leaders of their home, their two dogs, Jax and Max. Curt and Mandy have one son, Brady who is a junior at Texas A&M University.



October 19, 2026 - Monday (Cont.)

9:45 A.M. - 10:45 A.M.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS #1	
Topic	***Presenter***	***Location***
The Hidden Driver of Chronic Absenteeism: Why School Avoidance Must Reshape Truancy Practice	**Jayne Demsky** Founder, School Avoidance Alliance, LLC Mahwah, New Jersey	Aransas
We Cannot Control Every Absence: We Can Control Every Response	**Dr. Erik E. Oral** CEO Quatrain Analytics Houston, Texas	Laguna Madre
From Absenteeism to Achievement: Reengaging Students Through Personalized Learning, Mentoring, and Community Partnerships	**Vel Smith**, Executive Director of Partnerships **Kimberly Santoni, Sr.** Account Manager- Grad Solutions, Gilbert, Arizona	Corpus Christi Ballroom A
Controlling What We Can: Reducing Absenteeism, Truancy, and Dropout Risks	**Angela Miller Royal**, Coordinator Student Support Services **Jill Kolasa**, Director of Student Services Hernando County School District Brooksville, Florida	Corpus Christi Ballroom B
The Intervention Strategy That Reduced Chronic Absenteeism by 36%	**Dr. Tameka Lewis**, District Student Attendance & Dropout Prevention Coordinator Grand Prairie, Texas **Taylor Hejl**, Account Executive SchoolStatus, Austin, Texas **Roberto De la Rosa Jr.**, Attendance Administrator **Bryan Campoy**, Director, Innovative Programs Kern High School District, Bakersfield, California	Corpus Christi Ballroom C

RaaWee ATTENDANCE+™
Purpose-built for Attendance. Powerful enough for your Biggest Goals!

October 19, 2026 - Monday (Cont.)

11:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS #2	
Topic	***Presenter***	***Location***
Beyond the Absences: Heart, Humor & Keeping It Real	**Dr. Xochitl Echeverz** Houston, Texas & Uruguay **Crystal San Martin** Katy, Texas & Mexico Student Support Facilitators Katy Independent School District Katy, Texas	Aransas
Student Mental Health in South Texas Schools: Truancy and Dropout Prevention	**Dr. Yolanda Reyna**, Assistant Principal Corpus Christi, Texas **Dr. Guang Zeng**, Associate Professor Texas A&M University Corpus Christi, Texas **Dr. Kimberley James**, Superintendent Willis, Texas	Laguana Madre
From Absence to Achievement: Innovative Strategies for Truancy Reduction and Dropout Prevention in Urban School District	**Rhonda Motley**, Supervisor **Marvin Brown**, Graduation Rate Initiatives Team (GRIT) Specialist **Katrina Taylor**, Full-Service Schools Director **Wendy Dunlap** High School Programs Executive Director Duval County Public Schools Jacksonville, Florida	Corpus Christi Ballroom A
Less Paperwork, More Outreach: Unifying Attendance, Behavior, and Academic Signals to Prevent Dropout with AI	**Sydney Smith** **Jonathan Pacheco** Regional Directors- EDIA San Franscisco, California	Corpus Christi Ballroom B
From Barriers to Breakthroughs: Targeted Action Planning for Better Attendance	**Sharon Bradley**, Director, Dallas, Texas **Xavier Warren**, The Colony, Texas RaaWeeK12 Attendance+	Corpus Christi Ballroom C
12:00 P.M. - 1:15 P.M.	LUNCH ON YOUR OWN/VISIT THE VENDORS/NETWORK IATDP BOARD OF DIRECTORS LUNCHEON ARANSAS	

NOTES:

October 19, 2026 - Monday (Cont.)

1:15 P.M.- 3:00 P.M.	AFTERNOON GENERAL SESSION	
Topic	***Presenter***	***Location***
(Really Good) Door Prizes plus Coffee & Treats	**Dr. Rollan Moore**, 2nd Vice-President Lafeyette, Louisiana **Angela Miller Royal**, 3rd Vice-President Brooksville, Florida	Third Floor Corpus Christi Ballrooms
Business Meeting: **-Meeting Minutes** **-Finance Report** **-Association Report** **-Election of 3rd VP**	**Susan Holloway**, President **Jeremy Doucet**, Secretary, Jennings, Lousiana **Brian Hartsell**, Treasurer, Knoxville, Tennessee **Keith LeLeux**, Executive Director	Third Floor Corpus Christi Ballrooms
Introduction of Keynote	**Dr. Keena Howell**, President-Elect Rockville, Maryland	Third Floor Corpus Christi Ballrooms
Keynote Speaker	**Dr. Ruby K. Payne** Corpus Christi, Texas	Third Floor Corpus Christi Ballrooms
3:30 P.M.-5:30 P.M.	USS LEXINGTON "BLUE GHOST" SELF-GUIDED TOUR	

Keynote Speaker

Educating Students Experiencing Homelessness, Instability, and Disengagement

Dr. Ruby K. Payne



Dr. Ruby K. Payne is an internationally recognized bestselling author, speaker, educator, and leading voice on poverty, education, and economic mobility. Her work has helped shift the national conversation around poverty and the ways economic instability, environment, and access to resources can affect learning, behavior, and opportunity. Dr. Payne has written or coauthored more than 50 books, including the bestselling A Framework for Understanding Poverty, now in its seventh edition with nearly two million copies sold. Her recent works include Emotional Poverty in All Demographics, the IPBA Gold Medal-winning Before You Quit Teaching, and Educating Students Experiencing Homelessness, Instability, and Disengagement: The Impact of the Autonomic Nervous System.

Her work with students experiencing homelessness and instability explores how the autonomic nervous system influences learning, behavior, and disengagement. It also examines how unstable resources, environmental demands, and the pressures of survival can affect students' ability to navigate school, while providing educators with practical tools for supporting engagement, learning, and connection. In 1996, Dr. Payne founded aha! Process, a publishing and consulting organization dedicated to helping individuals, families, schools, and communities better understand and address the challenges associated with poverty and instability. Through aha! Process, her work has reached audiences around the world, including Australia, China, Europe, India, North America, and Southeast Asia.

October 20, 2026 - Tuesday

8:00 A.M.- 12:00 P.M.	CONFERENCE REGISTRATION/CHECK-IN
7:00 A.M. – 8:00 A.M.	BREAKFAST - CORPUS CHRISTI / BALLROOM A
8:00 A.M. – 9:00 A.M.	MORNING GENERAL SESSION

Topic	*Presenter*	*Location*
Introduction of Keynote & Presenter	**Dr. Keena Howell** IATDP President Elect	Third Floor- Corpus Christi Ballrooms
Presentation	**Michelle Peña-Thompson** Silver Sponsor Parent Square Goleta, California	Third Floor- Corpus Christi Ballrooms
Keynote Speaker	**Dr. Stephen Sroka** Cleveland, Ohio	Third Floor- Corpus Christi Ballrooms

Keynote Speaker

Heartware before Hardware: Truancy and Dropout Prevention is all about Trusted Relationships

Dr. Stephen Sroka, PhD, FASHA

Trusted relationships may be the most important variable for truancy and dropout prevention.. The traditional challenges of building relationships are the 4 C's: Communication, Collaboration, Cultural Competency and Caring. The keynote will explore, demonstrate, and model the 4 C's to make them come alive.



This motivational keynote is filled with "tips from the trenches" to help keep you and your students, staff and community safe and healthy so they feel valued, engaged, connected so they can learn more, live well, and will stay in school. It is packed with cutting-edge information, practical strategies and heartfelt stories about leadership, equity, the Whole Child, mental health, kindness, the power of words, behavioral threat assessment, the trauma-informed brain, ACEs (adverse childhood experiences), SEL (social emotional learning}, stress management, and school and community climate and safety to help build trusted relationships to help make students and adults feel supported, connected and belonging for success.

Dr. Stephen Sroka has spoken worldwide with The Power of One message, how one person can make a difference. Steve died while presenting a school in-service. A principal, superintendent, and two SROs and others saved his life and changed his message. He now talks about how you need The Power of Many, how it takes a team, to make a lasting difference. Research-based and reality-driven, this session offers honesty, humor, and hope. It stresses the importance of Resiliency and the 4 P's: Purpose, Passion, Pride and Persistence. It will warm your heart, stir your soul and ignite your brain. Let's see if it can spark the fire and the WHY within you for truancy and dropout prevention.

October 20, 2026 - Tuesday (Cont.)

9:15 A.M. - 10:15 A.M.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS #3	
Topic	***Presenter***	***Location***
Less Paperwork, More Outreach: Unifying Attendance, Behavior, and Academic Signals to Prevent Dropout with AI (Repeat Session)	**Sydney Smith**, Regional Directors EDIA **Jonathan Pacheco**, Regional Directors EDIA San Francisco, California	Aransas
The Hidden Driver of Chronic Absenteeism: Why School Avoidance Must Reshape Truancy Practice (Repeat Session)	**Jayne Demsky**, Founder School Avoidance Alliance, LLC. Mahwah, New Jersey	Laguna Madre
Connection-Not Compliance-Keeps Students Present, Supported and Successful	**Michelle Peña-Thompson**, Regional Director Parent Square Dallas, Texas	Corpus Christi Ballroom A
Pathways to Presence Initiative (Repeat Session)	**Jennifer W. Gardner**, Assistant Superintendent **Dr. Rollan L. Moore**, Director **Jameka McKinley**, Coordinator Lafeyette Parish Schools Lafeyette, Louisiana	Corpus Christi Ballroom B
What 1 Million Students Taught Us: 3 Shifts That Actually Reduce Chronic Absenteeism	**Erik Elorriaga**, Senior Account Executive SchoolStatus Lomita, California	Corpus Christi Ballroom C

schoolytics
by EveryDay Labs

October 20, 2026 - Tuesday (Cont.)

10:30- 11:30 A.M.	CONCURRENT SESSIONS #4	
Topic	***Presenter***	***Location***
From Absence to Achievement: Innovative Strategies for Truancy Reduction and Dropout Prevention in Urban School District (Repeat Session)	**Rhonda Motley**, Supervisor **Marvin Brown**, Graduation Rate Initiatives Team (GRIT) Specialist **Katrina Taylor**, Full-Service Schools Director **Wendy Dunlap** High School Programs Executive Director Duval County Public Schools Jacksonville, Florida	Aransas
Pathways to Presence Initiative (Repeat Session)	**Dr. Rollan L. Moore**, Director **Jameka McKinley**, Coordinator Lafeyette, Louisiana	Laguna Madre
Meaningful Shifts for High Impact Early Intervention	**Cindy Welling**, Head of Customer Experience Schoolytics by EveryDay Labs Redwood City, California	Corpus Christi Ballroom A
National Guard Dropout Prevention/Recovery Program	**David De Mers**, Program Director Texas ChalleNGe Academy Columbus, TX	Corpus Christi Ballroom B
Dropout Prevention is a Team Sport: Attendance Assistant by August Schools	**Nathan Foreman**, Regional Director August Schools New York, New York	Corpus Christi Ballroom C

Ballroom Transition: Please exit the Ballrooms immediately following Session 4 at 11:30 a.m. to allow staff to prepare for the Awards Luncheon. Enjoy a break and visit our vendors while you wait. The luncheon will begin promptly at noon.

12:00-2:30 P.M.	AWARDS LUNCHEON

Installation of Executive Committee Board Officers..... Susan Holloway
Installation of Board of Directors..... Susan Holloway
Presentation: Hear the Vision .....Dr. Gentle-Genitty
Person of the Year Award ..... Susan Holloway
Program of the Year Award .....John Cox
Introduction of Keynote Speaker .....John Cox
Keynote Speaker ..... Jones Loflin

Keynote Speaker

Charting Your Course Requires Being As Focused As A Bee

Jones Loflin



Every day, you pour yourself into students and families who need you, showing up, connecting, believing in them when no one else will. But somewhere in all that giving, how focused are you on charting YOUR course for success?

Building on the fascinating world of honeybees and the "permissions" they give themselves, you'll learn a simple yet powerful way to align your time and energy toward what matters most. You'll say no without guilt, protect the moments that recharge you, and show up for your students and families without running on empty.

If connection is the anchor, then focus is the chain that holds it. Your course matters. Aren't you ready to get buzzed about charting it?

Jones Loflin helps leaders and teams cut through distractions, overcome overload,clarify priorities, and focus on the right work at the right time. He specializes in leadership development, time management, and change management. With more than 30 years of experience, he has worked with organizations such as FedEx, Choice Hotels, Fidelity Investments, and the U.S. military. A keynote speaker, real-life beekeeper, and author of multiple books including Juggling Elephants, Jones is known for practical insights, memorable metaphors, and presentations that audiences remember and use.

For more than 30 years, Jones has worked with organizations such as FedEx, Choice Hotels, Fidelity Investments, Clayton Homes, and the U.S. military to strengthen leadership, improve focus, and find greater opportunity in times of change. His approach helps individuals and teams make better decisions about how they invest their time and energy. Residing in North Carolina, Jones cherishes time with his wonderful wife Lisa, their two amazing daughters, two "really cool" sons-in-law and one perfect grandson.

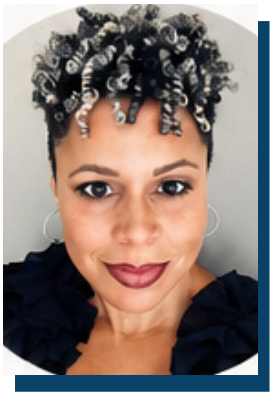
Notes:

October 21, 2026 - Wednesday

9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.	CLOSING SESSIONS #4	
Topic	***Presenter***	***Location***
OPTION A- Hearing Officer Training- specialized instructions to conduct fair, legal, and orderly administrative hearings	**Dr. Natasha White**, Administrator Montgomery County Public Schools Rockville, Maryland	Aransas
OPTION B- Attendance Talk with Dr. Gentle-Genitty followed by Conference Reflections, Focused Team Planning & Networking	**Dr. Carolyn Gentle-Genitty** Pioneer of Attendance Science Founder of Attendance USA, Author Indianapolis, Indiana & Belize **Shelneka A. Marsalone** Executive Director, Attendance USA	Corpus Christi Ballroom C

Hearing Officer Training - specialized instructions to conduct fair, legal, and orderly administrative hearings

Dr. Natasha White



This interactive Session will explore the critical responsibilities of hearing officers, including a review of key legislation, best practices for conducting impartial hearings, and guidance on crafting clear, legally sound decisions.

Using adult learning principles, the presenter will engage participants through multiple modalities to foster practical skills, reflective discussion, and legal insight.

Dr. Natasha White was born and raised in the snowy city of Buffalo, New York. She earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees from the State University of New York before relocating to Maryland to begin a career in education. Over the course of her career, she has served in five Maryland school districts in various roles across the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Dr. White earned her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership for Changing Populations from Notre Dame University. She has held both school-based and central office leadership positions, consistently focusing on promoting equitable outcomes for all students—regardless of race, income, language, cational needs, or zip code. Most recently, she served as Director of Appeals for Montgomery County Public Schools, where she deepened her expertise in policy development, administrative law and regulatory compliance.

Notes:

Attendance Talk with Dr. Gentle-Genitty followed by Conference Reflections, Focused Team Planning & Networking

Dr. Carolyn Gentle-Genitty & Shelneka A. Marasalone



Dr. Carolyn Gentle-Genitty:

Dr. Carolyn Gentle-Genitty is the founder and CEO of Attendance USA and the architect of Attendance Science™, the field she built to answer one question: what makes people show up? Where most conversations about absence stop at compliance and punishment, Gentle-Genitty built the evidence base, the instruments, and the national infrastructure to understand it. She is also co-founder and VP of INSA, CEO of Pivot Attendance Solutions, and past president of the International Association of Truancy and Dropout Prevention, giving her a rare vantage point across research, practice, and policy at once.

Her signature contribution, the Perception of School Social Bonding (PSSB) instrument, took fifteen years to develop and is now endorsed by the American Psychological Association. Grounded in Hirschi's Social Bond Theory and validated on more than 3,500 students, PSSB is the basis of an international pilot study spanning Poland, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, and England. Her companion instruments and frameworks, including the Family Stability Construct and the PRESENCE research model, have carried her work past 1,700 Google Scholar citations and 310,000 views and downloads across more than 160 countries.

Gentle-Genitty led the founding conference of Attendance USA in May 2025, convening more than twenty scholars and policy leaders from Harvard, Columbia, Johns Hopkins, and beyond to release a national manifesto on attendance and absenteeism. She has since built out a biennial Research to Practice Summit, a regular Indiana Attendance Science Institute, and a national platform for translating research into district-level and statewide practice.



Shelneka A. Marsalone:

Shelneka A. Marsalone is the Executive Director of Attendance USA™ and Founder of We Got Goals LLC, where she provides education and organizational consulting and technical assistance. A former state education consultant, she specializes in chronic absenteeism, family engagement, school avoidance, student homelessness, and relationship-centered approaches to improving attendance. Her work focuses on translating research into practical strategies that help schools and communities better understand the conditions influencing why students show up. Marsalone is also the author of Homelessness: Educators' Guide to Understanding, Assessing & Supporting Students and works nationally to advance Attendance Science™ and strengthen systems of support for students and families.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Attendance Intelligence Brief • Tools + templates • Family stability resources • Classification + data supports • Webinars • Podcasts • Articles • Partnerships

STAY CONNECTED

AttendanceUSA.org

info@attendanceusa.org

LinkedIn: Attendance USA

Attendance USA Connection Podcast

WHO SHOWED UP FOR YOU?

SIGN UP

PURCHASE BOOK

AUSA PODCAST

Concurrent Sessions:

The Hidden Driver of Chronic Absenteeism: Why School Avoidance Must Reshape Truancy Practice

Jayne Demsky

Every district is tracking chronic absenteeism. Almost none are identifying its most misunderstood cause: school avoidance. While no federal tracking system exists, a decade of daily work with school teams and families consistently shows school avoidance drives a significant share of chronic absenteeism, making it the largest unaddressed factor in attendance improvement.

Participants will learn to distinguish school avoidance from truancy and other attendance challenges. They will understand why the most commonly used interventions miss the mark for avoidant students: attendance letters focused on legal consequences, attendance contracts, and incentive programs fail to address the mental health challenges, neurodiversity, and school-related factors that most often drive absences. This session offers a foundational understanding drawn from leading researchers, clinicians, and real-world school and family experience.

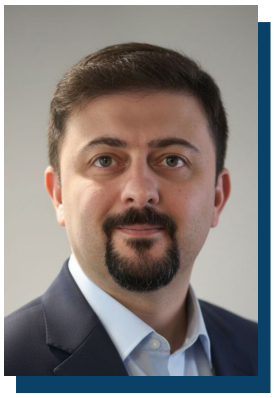


Jayne Demsky is the founder of the School Avoidance Alliance and a national authority on school avoidance and chronic absenteeism. Her perspective and guidance are fueled by daily, direct engagement with educators and caregivers across the country, combined with ongoing collaboration with the nation's leading school attendance researchers, expert clinicians, and global stakeholders through the International Network on School Attendance (INSA) and her role as a founding member of Attendance USA. Under Jayne's leadership, the School Avoidance Alliance has become the premier provider of systemic professional development for hundreds of schools and thousands of educators across 42 states and 8 countries. She is the author of Overcoming School Avoidance, What to Do When Your Kid Won't Go to School (Hachette, 2025), and her work has been featured in USA Today, The Washington Post, Education Week, and CBS News. Jayne is dedicated to equipping school-based teams with the foundational understanding, data-informed strategies, and systemic guidance necessary to identify and resolve the complex barriers keeping students from returning to school.

We Cannot Control Every Absence. We Can Control Every Response.

Dr. Erik E. Oral

Schools cannot control every reason a student misses school, but they can control how consistently and effectively they respond. Most districts already have attendance data, thresholds, policies, and intervention requirements. The challenge often begins after a concern is identified: Who owns the next action? How quickly does intervention occur? Does follow-up happen? When should a case escalate? And how do we know whether our response made a difference?



This session introduces a practical framework for turning truancy and chronic absenteeism management into a consistent, measurable process. Participants will explore how response time, clear ownership, intervention tracking, follow-through, documentation, and outcome measurement can create accountability while keeping the student at the center. The goal is simple: ensure every attendance concern receives an appropriate, timely, and measurable response.

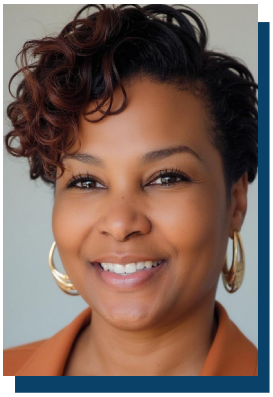
Erik E. Oral, PhD, is the Founder and CEO of Quatrain Analytics, a K–12 educational technology company focused on developing practical, process-driven solutions for school districts. He holds a PhD in Financial Economics and a bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering, bringing an analytical and systems-oriented perspective to complex educational challenges.

Dr. Oral leads the development of iSwiit, a platform designed to help school districts transform policies and responsibilities into structured, measurable workflows. His work in attendance and truancy management focuses on intervention, response time, accountability, consistent follow-through, and meaningful performance measurement. His broader professional background includes executive leadership, operations, data analysis, and process improvement.

From Absenteeism to Achievement: Re-Engaging Students Through Personalized Learning, Mentoring, and Community Partnership

Vel Smith & Kimberly Santoni

Chronic absenteeism is one of the leading indicators of student dropout. This presentation explores proven strategies for re-engaging at-risk students through personalized learning, mentoring, flexible educational pathways, and community partnerships. Attendees will learn how to identify barriers to attendance, implement targeted interventions, and build support systems that help students stay connected to school and successfully earn their diplomas. Drawing from the Graduation Solutions model, the session provides practical tools that schools and districts can use to improve student engagement, attendance, and graduation outcomes.



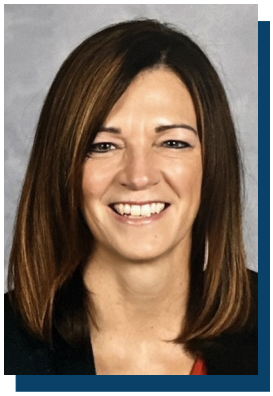


Notes:

Controlling What We Can: Reducing Chronic Absenteeism Truancy and Dropout Risks

Angela Miller Royal & Jill Kolasa

Chronic absenteeism and truancy continue to impact student achievement, school culture, and graduation outcomes, often increasing the risk of student dropout. This session will highlight practical, evidence-based strategies schools can implement to improve attendance, strengthen student engagement, and support dropout prevention efforts. Participants will explore best practices for early identification, relationship-building, family engagement, data monitoring, and multidisciplinary intervention teams. The presentation will also examine effective truancy prevention processes, attendance incentive programs, and targeted supports for students at risk of disengagement and dropping out. Attendees will learn how to focus on factors within their control while creating systems that remove barriers to attendance, re-engage students, and promote long-term success. Participants will leave with actionable tools, resources, and strategies that can be immediately implemented to reduce chronic absenteeism, increase student connectedness, and support graduation outcomes.



Angela Miller Royal:

Angela Miller Royal serves as the Coordinator of Student Support Services for the Hernando County School District in Brooksville, Florida. She began her career in education in 1999 and includes classroom teaching, school leadership, and district-level administration. She served as an English teacher at both the middle and high school levels, a writing coach, an intervention specialist, and a participant in Florida Department of Education assessment committees. She also served as a school administrator for 10 years in both elementary and high school settings, gaining extensive experience in student support, school improvement, attendance initiatives, and family engagement. Additionally, she serves as a Mental Health Coordinator, Youth Mental Health Awareness Trainer, and Third Vice President forIATDP. In her current role, Angela leads district efforts focused on reducing chronic absenteeism, addressing truancy, improving student engagement, and supporting dropout prevention. Angela is passionate about helping educators implement practical, evidence-based strategies that ensure eve1y student has the opportunity to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.



Jill Kolasa:

Jill Kolasa serves as the Director of Student Services for the Hernando County School District in Brooksville, Florida. With 34 years in education, Jill is an experienced educator specializing in student behavior and support services for grades K-12. Jill also serves as a Member of the Board of Directors for the International Association for Truancy and Dropout Prevention (IATDP), supporting efforts to improve student attendance, engagement, and educational outcomes nationwide. Her professional experience includes 10 years as a special education teacher, 10 years as a behavior analyst, and 10 years as an interventionist and high school administrator. Through these roles, she developed expertise in student services, school climate, behavior intervention, attendance improvement, and student engagement. In her current role, she oversees district initiatives focused on mental health services, attendance and truancy prevention, school counseling, student wellness, and school safety. Passionate about creating safe, supportive learning environments, and increasing school connection for students and families.

Notes:

The Intervention Strategy That Reduced Chronic Absenteeism by 36%

Dr. Tameka Lewis, Roberto De la Rosa Jr., Bryan Campoy & Taylor Hejl

A Texas district and a California district in that analysis share what that looked like from the inside. Grand Prairie ISD reduced its chronic absenteeism rate by 8% in a single year while reaching nearly 50,000 families with targeted outreach. Kern Union High School District documented an 11.4% reduction in absences among students whose families participated in attendance conferences. The data across all 89 districts points to three consistent drivers: personal outreach before absences compound, early identification before students reach chronic status, and sustained year-over-year commitment. Practitioners from both districts share their intervention sequences, what worked, and what they'd do differently. Attendees leave with strategies they can adopt immediately.



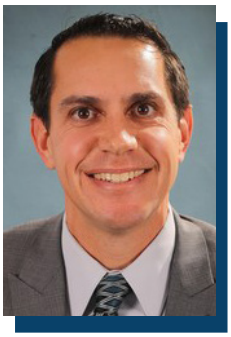
Dr. Tameka Lewis:

Dr. Tameka Lewis serves as the Student Attendance and Dropout Prevention Coordinator for Grand Prairie ISD, where she leads district wide efforts to improve attendance through data-driven strategies, early intervention, and meaningful family engagement.



Roberto De La Rosa:

Roberto De La Rosa is an educator and administrator with the Kern High School District, currently serving as Attendance Administrator. As Chairperson and District Representative for the Student Attendance Review Board (SARB), he leads efforts to address chronic absenteeism, strengthen family engagement, and support student success through collaborative intervention strategies. Roberto is passionate about helping schools create supportive environments that keep students connected to learning and on track for success.



Bryan Campoy:

Bryan Campoy serves as the Director of Innovative Programs for the Kern High School District in Bakersfield, California. In this role, he oversees educational options, as well as Attendance Accounting, Homeless and Foster Youth services, and the Student Attendance Review Board (SARB). Beyond his district responsibilities, Bryan is an active member of the California State SARB, co-chairs the Truancy Reduction & Attendance Coalition of Kern (TRACK), and actively participates in the California Association of Supervisors of Child Welfare and Attendance (CASCWA). Bryan regularly presents on topics related to attendance improvement, truancy prevention, and chronic absenteeism.



Taylor Hejl:

Taylor Hejl brings a unique blend of practitioner insight and K-12 systems expertise to her role as a Regional Account Executive at SchoolStatus. With a background as a Licensed Specialist in School Psychology (LSSP), she understands firsthand the complexities schools face in supporting students, engaging families, and driving meaningful outcomes.

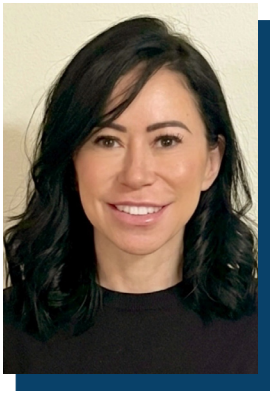
Beyond the Absences: Heart, Humor & Keeping It Real

Xochitl Echeverz & Crystal San Martin

Apparently, "I come to school every day" and "I have 32 absences" can both be true. Just ask a teenager.

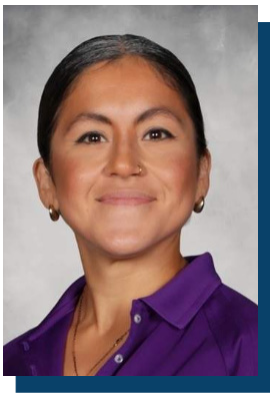
Thirty-two absences tell you there's a problem. Thirty-two absences don't tell you what the problem is. Our job is to identify the barrier, bridge the gap between where students are, and what it will take to move them a step closer to graduation. Through real student experiences, personal stories, and plenty of humor, we'll explore how to uncover barriers, build authentic relationships, and hold students accountable without losing empathy...or our minds.

No academic theories we'll forget by Monday. Just heart, humor, tough love, and practical strategies for when to hold the line and when to ask one more question.



Dr. Xochitl Echeverz:

Xochitl Echeverz is a Student Support Facilitator with more than two decades of experience in education. She currently serves as President of the Texas Association for Truancy and Dropout Prevention (TATDP) and has previously served as an At-Risk Administrator and Student Attendance Specialist in the Greater Houston area. Fiercely passionate about student advocacy, Xochitl combines tough love, humor, high expectations, and unwavering support, all grounded in one simple belief: authentic relationships with students, families, and colleagues are where the real work begins



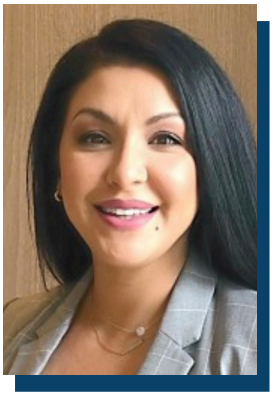
Crystal San Martin:

Crystal San Martin serves as a Student Support Facilitator dedicated to increasing graduation rates and supporting at-risk youth. Drawing on a decade of real-world experience, including roles as a Specialized Juvenile Probation Officer and a CPS
Investigator who helped pilot the Harris County Drug Court Program, she combines empathy with strategic problem-solving. Holding a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work and an MBA, Crystal helps educators look beyond attendance numbers to remove barriers and re-engage
students.

Connection-Not Compliance- Keeps Students Present, Supported and Successful

Michelle Peña-Thompson

Chronic absenteeism is one of the strongest predictors of academic failure and dropout and at its root is often a breakdown in connection, not just compliance. While student-focused interventions are essential, they're rarely enough on their own. The family is often the missing partner in the equation. This session re-frames family engagement as an act of connection, one of the most powerful, yet underused, tools in our truancy and dropout prevention toolkit. We'll explore how authentic family partnership drives real gains in attendance, and participants will leave with an Attendance Team blueprint of strategies to build trust, deepen communication, and empower families as true partners. Move beyond compliance-driven notices and build a culture where connection — not compliance — keeps students present, supported, and successful.



Student Mental Health in South Texas Schools: Truancy and Dropout Prevention

Dr. Yolanda Reyna, Dr. Guang Zeng, & Dr. Kimberley James,

This study explores elementary teachers' sense of self-efficacy as first responders to student mental health needs in the classroom. Using a qualitative single-case study design, researchers collected data from 5 kindergarten through fifth-grade general education teachers through semi-structured interviews, demographic profiles, and a reflexive journal. Findings revealed that most participants reported a low sense of self-efficacy when navigating student mental health challenges during classroom instruction. The study underscores the growing role of teachers in supporting students' social-emotional and mental well-being and highlights the need for enhanced professional development, pre-service teacher preparation, and school-based support systems. Implications for educational policy and practice are discussed.



Dr. Yolanda Reyna:

Accomplished educational leader, administrator, and adult educator with more than three decades of experience in public education, including campus administration, instructional leadership, federal and special programs, assessment, student discipline, curriculum and instruction, career and technical education, school improvement, and adult education.

Experienced in serving students and educators across elementary, secondary, and postsecondary settings. Demonstrated ability to lead complex educational programs, develop staff, support diverse student populations, coordinate state and federal requirements, analyze student data, strengthen instructional practices, and create educational pathways that prepare individuals for college, careers, and lifelong success.

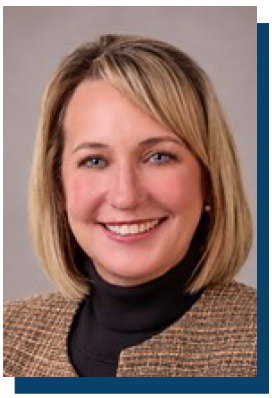


Dr. Guang Zeng:

Dr. Guang Zeng is a tenured associate professor and doctoral faculty member in the Department of Educational Leadership in the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi. Dr. Zeng earned her Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, and her academic work focuses on education policy and policy practice, school mental health, educational administration, and science education.

Dr. Zeng has published extensively in these areas, utilizing quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research approaches. Her scholarship has significant implications for truancy, dropout prevention, and student well-being.

In addition to her research, Dr. Zeng is passionate about mentoring doctoral students and collaborating with educators and school leaders to address educational challenges affecting students and communities in South Texas and across the nation.



Dr. Kimberley James:

Dr. Kimberley James serves as the Superintendent of Willis ISD, having been appointed to the role in April 2024. She has over 30 years of experience in public education, starting as a special education teacher in Aldine ISD in 1990. Before coming to Willis ISD, she served as the Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction and Chief of Staff at Corpus Christi ISD, as well as a principal and teacher in Humble, Aldine, and Aransas County ISDs. She holds a bachelor's degree from Southwest Texas State University, a master's degree from Stephen F. Austin State University, and a Doctor of Education from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

From Absence to Achievement: Innovative Strategies for Truancy Reduction and Dropout Prevention in Urban School District

Rhonda Motley, Marvin Brown, & Wendy Dunlap

This presentation highlights a comprehensive district wide approach to reducing chronic absenteeism and increasing graduation rates through strategic attendance interventions, data analysis, home visit protocols, cross-functional collaboration, and student re-engagement efforts. Participants will gain practical tools and strategies that can be immediately implemented within their districts to identify at-risk students, strengthen attendance systems, and improve graduation outcomes.

Rhonda Motley:



Rhonda Motley is a dedicated educational leader with more than 30 years of experience committed to improving student outcomes and creating pathways to graduation. She currently serves as the Supervisor of the Graduation Rate Initiative Team (GRIT) and Attendance for Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, Florida, where she leads district wide efforts focused on increasing graduation rates, reducing chronic absenteeism, strengthening truancy intervention, and reengaging students who have become disconnected from school.

Throughout her career, Mrs. Motley has served in multiple leadership roles, including principal, vice-principal and assistant principal, and was recognized as Assistant Principal of the Year for 2018–2019. Her leadership has contributed to significant graduation and attendance initiatives, including supporting a school graduation rate of 99% and helping advance districtwide systems for early identification, attendance intervention, truancy case management, and dropout prevention.

Marvin Brown:



Marvin Brown is a dedicated District Specialist with Duval County Public Schools, specializing in supporting high schools with students who are at risk of not graduating. With a strong foundation in school counseling, Marvin brings years of hands-on experience working directly with students across several high schools in the district, helping them navigate academic challenges and stay on track toward graduation.

Marvin's work is rooted in a deep commitment to dropout prevention and post-secondary readiness. He has a proven track record of guiding students who may require non-traditional pathways to success, including those pursuing alternative diplomas or GED programs. His strategic support helps students re-engage with their education and plan for life after high school, whether through college, career training, or the workforce.

Wendy Dunlap:

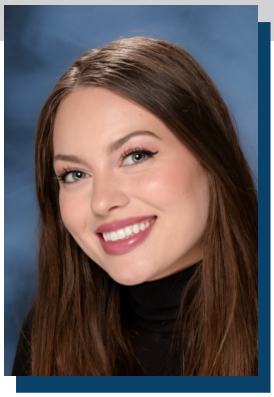


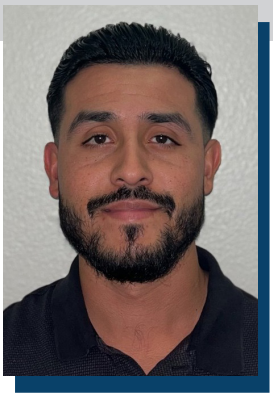
Wendolyn Dunlap is an accomplished educational leader with over 25 years of service with Duval County Public Schools currently serving as Executive Director of Acceleration and Student Support Programs. She oversees a multifaceted body of work that includes high school acceleration programs, school counseling, behavioral health services, graduation initiatives, student records, and truancy, leading a team of more than 80 staff members. With a strong focus on improving student attendance and engagement, Wendy is leading district wide efforts to address chronic absenteeism through expanded prevention, early intervention, and targeted attendance supports. Recognizing that attendance is closely connected to student well-being and belonging, her work also encompasses district wide mental health initiatives that strengthen emotional wellness, and trauma-informed practices.

Her approach centers on equipping school-based leaders with tools, strategies, and supports needed to strengthen attendance practices, address barriers to regular attendance, and create school environments where students feel connected, supported, and engaged.

Less Paperwork, More Outreach: Unifying Attendance, Behavior, and Academic Signals to Prevent Dropout with AI

Sydney Smith & Jonathan Pacheco





Participants will collaborate with peers to audit their current attendance workflow, identify where staff hours are lost to manual reporting, and share strategies for redirecting that time toward high-impact outreach. Walk away with a practical framework for replacing reactive truancy letters with proactive data-informed support, and connect with fellow district leaders tackling the same challenges across districts.

From Barriers to Breakthroughs: Targeted Action Planning for Better Attendance

Sharon Bradley & Xavier Warren



In this interactive, solutions-focused session, participants will explore targeted strategies for addressing some of the most common root causes of absenteeism, including school avoidance, mental health concerns, transportation barriers, peer conflict, etc. Participants will work through real-world scenarios and develop targeted attendance action plans. Leave with practical strategies, tools, and a problem-solving framework you can immediately use to turn attendance barriers into breakthroughs.

Sharon Bradley:

Sharon Bradley is a national educational consultant, podcast host, speaker and author who served as Student, Family and Community Services Director in the Plano Independent School District where she helped shape the district's approach to truancy prevention and character development for all students. Throughout her 25 years in education, she served as student services director, alternative high school principal, assistant principal, dropout prevention program coordinator, general education teacher, and special education teacher. She was named a 2024 "Leader to Learn From" by EducationWeek Magazine. In 2023, she was named "Person of the Year" by the IATDP and a D CEO Innovation in Education finalist.

Sharon Bradley is a graduate of Mississippi State University where she earned her bachelor's degree in Special Education; and her master's degree in Educational Administration from Prairie View A & M University.

Xavier Warren:



Xavier Warren is an NFL alumnus, education leader, and lifelong advocate for students and families. Following his professional football career, he dedicated more than 40 years to public service across juvenile support, youth advocacy, behavioral services, and public education.

His career began in juvenile services, where he spent 15 years with the Tarrant County Juvenile Services Department in Fort Worth, Texas, followed by two years as Program Director for the Dallas County Youth Advocate Program. He later transitioned into public education, serving 23 years in Special Education and Attendance, where he continued his commitment to supporting at-risk youth and strengthening student outcomes.

Alongside his professional roles, Xavier has provided more than a decade of leadership within the Texas Association for Truancy and Dropout Prevention (TATDP), serving as Treasurer from 2014 to 2024 and President from 2024 to 2026. In these roles, he helped strengthen the organization, expand its membership and reach, and advance effective strategies for truancy prevention, dropout prevention, and student success.

He currently works with districts to develop practical strategies that improve attendance, strengthen relationships, and create better outcomes for students.

Pathways to Presence

Jennifer W. Gardner, Dr. Rollan L. Moore, & Jameka McKinley

Chronic absenteeism is one of the strongest predictors of academic failure and dropout — and at its root is often a breakdown in connection, not just compliance. While student-focused interventions are essential, they're rarely enough on their own. The family is often the missing partner in the equation. This session re-frames family engagement as an act of connection, one of the most powerful, yet underused, tools in our truancy and dropout prevention toolkit. We'll explore how authentic family partnership drives real gains in attendance, and participants will leave with an Attendance Team blueprint of strategies to build trust, deepen communication, and empower families as true partners. Move beyond compliance-driven notices and build a culture where connection — not compliance — keeps students present, supported, and successful.

Jennifer W. Gardner:

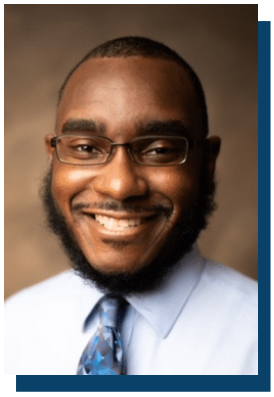


Jennifer Walet Gardner is the Assistant Superintendent of Administration and Operations for the Lafayette Parish School System, where she leads district wide operational initiatives supporting more than 29,000 students and thousands of employees. Her portfolio includes human resources, insurance, child welfare and attendance, school safety, emergency preparedness, facilities coordination, transportation, technology, and oversight of the district's School Resource Officer (SRO) program.

Jennifer's career spans more than 26 years, all with Lafayette Parish School System, giving her a unique perspective on educational leadership from the classroom to the executive level. She has served as a teacher, academic coach, assistant principal, principal, and assistant superintendent, building a reputation for thoughtful leadership, strategic problem-solving, and operational excellence.

Known for translating complex challenges into effective systems, Jennifer has strengthened district wide safety practices, improved organizational efficiency, and built collaborative partnerships that support schools every day. Her experience balancing operational leadership with the needs of students, educators, families, and community stakeholders makes her a trusted voice on school safety, organizational leadership, and the critical work that allows teaching and learning to thrive.

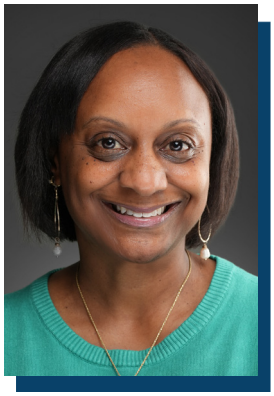
Dr. Rollan L. Moore:



Moore has over 19 years of experience in the field of education. He has served as a classroom teacher, academic behavior coordinator, assistant principal, and principal in several public school systems within the state.

Moore has engaged in several instructional reform programs, including Harvard School Turnaround Leaders Institute, National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), National Institute for School Leaders (NISL), and School Administration Manager (S.A.M.) Project. He has been a part of several boards and associations, including the Lafayette Parish 4-H Foundation Board and Louisiana Association of Principals.

Jameka McKinley:



Jameka McKinley is the Child Welfare and Attendance Coordinator. She has 26 years of experience in public education. Proven expertise in fostering positive learning environments, implementing innovative interventions, and leading initiatives that drive student success. Adept at staff leadership, strategic planning, and community engagement. Committed to advancing inclusive educational experiences for all learners.

What 1 Million Students Taught Us: 3 Shifts That Actually Reduce Chronic Absenteeism

Erik Elorriaga

Chronic absenteeism won't improve until systems do—and we have the data to prove it. This session shares end-of-year attendance trends from over one million K–12 students. More current than state or federal datasets, these insights reveal what's truly driving absences—and what's working to reduce them.

We'll break down three critical shifts emerging from the field:

- Reaching families with timely, targeted, positive communication—what to automate and what needs a personal connection
- Building a culture of attendance that meets evolving state policies
- Moving from lagging reports to real-time intervention, predicting absence patterns just 60 days in, and biannual data deep-dives

Using real examples from districts of all sizes, you'll walk away with strategies that are proven to reduce chronic absenteeism and recover lost learning time across all demographic groups. Whether you're starting fresh or refining your current approach, this session will help shape a stronger 2026–27 attendance strategy.



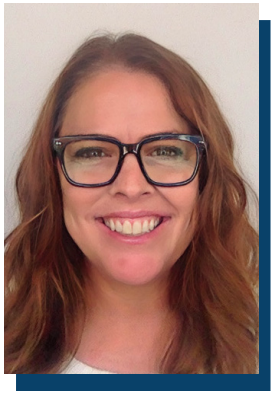
As a former special education and para-professional helping students with severe educational needs accomplish huge success, Erik Elorriaga is currently charged with increasing student achievement, family engagement, and overall attendance across schools while focusing heavily on curbing chronic absenteeism by knowing all students by need and by name to create a culture of showing up every day.

Meaningful Shifts for High Impact Early Intervention

Cindy Welling

While districts nationwide are implementing numerous strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism and raise graduation rates, educators are still finding it challenging to return to pre-pandemic levels and get all students on track for success. Access to data is an important first step in any effective campaign, but real change happens when practitioners can strategically take action on the data, and work across silos to support students.

Join attendance and MTSS expert Cindy Welling, Head of Customer Experience at Schoolytics by EveryDay Labs to share new insights uncovered from years of successful attendance improvement and MTSS work nationally. From these data insights, we'll dig into strategic ways that practitioners can unlock new ways to support students and families in improving attendance and overall outcomes, including both high touch and low touch strategies to build a strong culture of attendance all year long, and early intervention to yield stronger student outcomes.



Cindy Welling is the Head of Customer Experience for Schoolytics by EveryDay Labs, leading the delivery of products and services that enable district leaders to improve student outcomes. Cindy brings over a decade's experience as a school improvement expert to her work, with expertise in addressing chronic absenteeism, MTSS, and academic improvement, advising districts across the country, analyzing data, facilitating professional learning sessions, coaching administrators/teachers and implementing research-based systems. Prior to joining EveryDay Labs she served in the Comprehensive School Assistance Program at WestEd and as the Director of Curriculum and Training for G&M Consulting Services. Cindy began her career in the classroom, teaching high school math and science, before becoming an assistant principal and founding school principal in an Arizona school district.

National Guard Dropout Prevention/Recovery Program

David De Mers



The National Guard Youth Challenge Program (NGYCP) is a tuition-free 22 week residential program that leads, trains, and mentors 15½ – 18-year-olds who have dropped out, or are at significant risk of dropping out of school. It utilizes military-type training based on structure, discipline, and consistency to teach struggling adolescents the skills needed for their future success, embodied in eight core components—academics, physical fitness, health and hygiene, citizenship, life skills, job skills, leadership/followership, and service to community. This time-proven curriculum holistically addresses cadets' shortcomings, in a controlled environment that removes outside distractions, such as unhealthy social circles and negative influences.

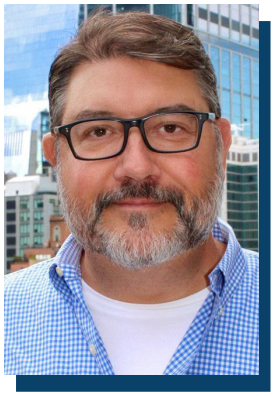
The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program operates 31 Youth ChalleNGe Programs and 8 Job ChalleNGe programs in 24 States.

David De Mers serves as the Program Director for the Texas ChalleNGe Academy in Eagle Lake, Texas. With a BS in Psychology and two decades of leadership in both non profit and government youth programs, he has dedicated his career to helping young people grow and succeed. David approaches his work through a Trauma Informed Care lens, ensuring that every youth interaction is grounded in understanding, compassion, and resilience.

A U.S. Army veteran, he calls Columbus, Texas home, where he lives with his wife, Monique, and their daughter, Savannah.

Dropout Prevention is a Team Sport: Attendance Assistant by August Schools

Nathan Foreman



Getting a student back in school takes the clerk, the social worker, the nurse, and the principal all seeing the same picture at the same time, and knowing who's doing what next. This session is for attendance and truancy officers who are ready to stop chasing that coordination by hand. We'll walk through how the August Schools Attendance Assistant automates the tracking that takes up your week, puts every member of the support team on the same page, and makes it clear who needs to step in so the right people can act before a student falls further behind.

Nathan Foreman is the Director of Sales at August Schools, where he's enabled districts and schools across North America to connect health and behavioral data that's often scattered across separate systems. He's spent two decades in K-12 sales, leading tuition, enrollment, and school management programs for educational organizations.



2025 Person of the Year

Melvin Cole



Melvin Cole grew up in South Memphis, surrounded by gangs, violence, and drugs, with little supervision or positive male role models. By 14, he was a father and a gang member, facing circumstances that left him few paths forward. Despite these challenges, he graduated from Whitehaven High School and earned a football scholarship to Bowling Green State University. However, a college football injury derailed his dreams, leaving him with no guidance or support. Struggling to provide for his daughter, Melvin turned to selling drugs and was ultimately incarcerated after being injured during a drug deal.

While serving over two years in Ohio State Prison, Melvin vowed to turn his life around and help others avoid the same fate. He developed a plan to support struggling young men, giving them the tools and hope to succeed. After earning a bachelor's degree in Sports Management, Melvin founded PURE Youth Athletic Alliance in 2012, a private non-profit school dedicated to transforming the lives of young men in the city of Memphis.

Under his leadership, PURE Academy has become a beacon of hope, sending countless young men to college, many as first-generation college students, who might never have had the opportunity. Melvin's mission is to instill hope and demonstrate that a better future is always possible, using his own life as proof that transformation is attainable.

Notes:

2025 Program of the Year

Heal The Hood Foundation of Memphis



Heal the Hood Foundation of Memphis is a dynamic nonprofit organization founded in 2005 by Memphis native LaDell Beamon. Beamon was just awarded the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award for the award-winning work, accomplished through his life's work. This work includes finding and constructing the longest running positive motivational school tour in the city of Memphis, creating multiple creative platforms that has attracted national celebrities to Memphis to work in transformational programs, created the urban comic book "Wake Up Tour Evolution" that attracted actor/director Robert Townsend to the city of Memphis, and much more. As of lately, Beamon has been busy with the historic launch of the first Urban Superhero Comic Book Vending Machines in the city of Memphis to encourage literacy amongst inner city Black and Brown students.

Mission Statement: Heal The Hood Foundation of Memphis' purpose is to implement and find creative methods to provide educational, cultural, and social economic and community change in the city of Memphis and surrounding areas that are heavily populated by youth crime, violence, and other social deviant patterns of behaviors through multi-media science.

HTH has reached over 500,000 youth in Memphis and the surrounding areas with our style of artistic educational outreach. The model that is used has attributed to Heal the Hood Foundation of Memphis being a 16-year partner with the Memphis Shelby County School System and various other not for profits and community outreach organizations.

As it relates to youth that have been drastically affected through the shift in learning within the Memphis Shelby County School System, we realize the desperate importance of bringing disenfranchised youth the opportunity to advance and excel placing them back on track as well as motivating them and their families.



International Association for Truancy & Dropout Prevention

Historical Facts of the Association:

Founder: William L. Bodine



Prior Associatio

1911-1936 National League of Compulsory Education Officials (NLCEO)

1937-1956 National League to Promote School Attendance (NLPSA)

1957-2002 International Association of Pupil Personnel Workers (ISPPW)

2003-Present International Association for Truancy & Dropout Prevention (IATDP)



1914 National Conference

...for all
the children of
all the people

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR TRUANCY & DROPOUT
PREVENTION

THINGS TO DO IN CORPUS CHRISTI

For Conference Attendees Staying at the Omni

USS Lexington

Explore a WWII-era aircraft carrier, from flight deck to interior spaces. It was the first U.S. carrier to have women serve aboard and was featured in Pearl Harbor (2001), Midway (1976) and War and Remembrance (1988-1989).

McGee Beach

Put your feet in the sand at this convenient downtown beach, a short trip from the Omni.

Texas Surf Museum

Discover the history and culture of surfing along the Texas Gulf Coast.

Art Museum of South Texas

Explore regional and contemporary art in a beautiful bayfront setting.

Corpus Christi Marina

Enjoy a relaxing walk among the boats with beautiful Corpus Christi Bay views.

Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History

Discover local history, science, culture and maritime heritage.

Norma Urban Park

Take in waterfront views and capture some great photos.

Downtown Dining

Find seafood, cafés, bars and waterfront restaurants within easy reach of the Omni.

Selena Memorial — Mirador de la Flor

Visit the iconic waterfront memorial honoring the beloved Tejano music legend.

Waterfront Walk & Sunset

Stroll the downtown seawall, enjoy marina and bay views, and watch the sunset.

★ FAMOUS PEOPLE FROM CORPUS CHRISTI

Selena • Eva Longoria • Farrah Fawcett • Lou Diamond Phillips • NASCAR's Bobby & Terry Labonte

✦ TWO COOL FACTS:

The original Whataburger opened in Corpus Christi in 1950.

The Port of Corpus Christi is cited as the nation's sixth-largest port.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR TRUANCY & DROPOUT PREVENTION

...for all the children of all the people

Please use QR codes below for association sign-ups.

Hearing Officer Sign-Up

USS Lexington Activity

Nomination Board of Directors

Nomination to 3rd VP

Conference Agenda

Conference Survey

Thank you for your participation!

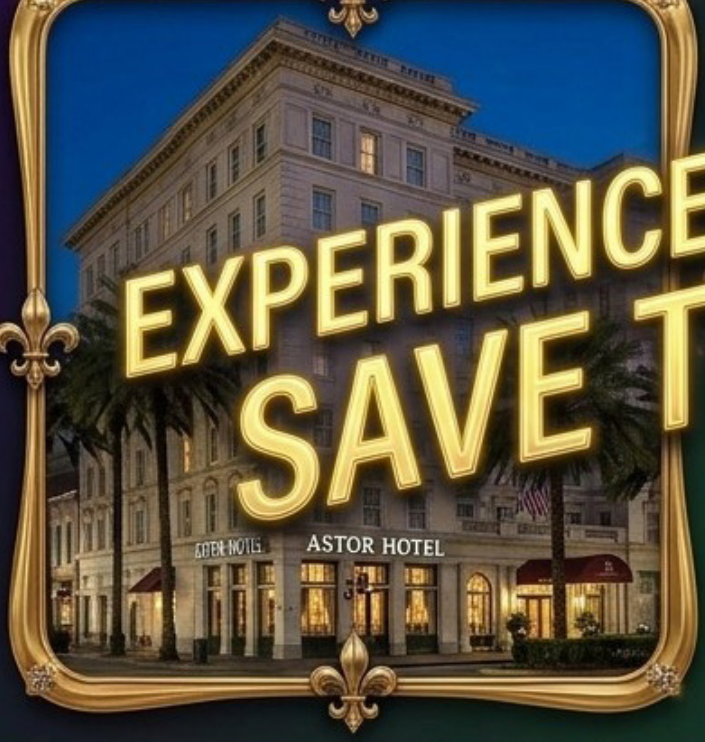
JOIN US

IN NEW ORLEANS NEXT YEAR

FOR THE 115th IATDP ANNUAL CONFERENCE

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR TRUANCY AND DROPOUT PREVENTION

OCTOBER 17-20, 2027





EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC: SAVE THE DATE

HOTEL VENUE:

Astor Crowne Plaza
739 Canal St @ Bourbon St
New Orleans, LA 70130

OCTOBER 17-20, 2027

VENUE OF THE NEXT ANNUAL CONFERENCE:
THE ASTOR CROWNE PLAZA

FOR MORE DETAILS:

For more details, visit: **iatdp.org**

Thank You

TO OUR SPONSORS, VENDORS, AND PARTNERS!

Charting the Course:

Connection as the Anchor to Truancy and Dropout Prevention

PLATINUM SPONSOR

edia

SILVER SPONSOR

ParentSquare®

SWAG BAG SPONSOR

Grad Solutions®

BRONZE SPONSORS

RaaWeeK12 ATTENDANCE+

EveryDay Labs

August Schools™

VENDORS

SchoolStatus

Quatrain Analytics

GCU Grand Canyon University™

USA ATTENDANCE

Texas Challenge Academy™

PARTNERS

BUILD PEARLAND Proud®
Pearland ISD
Independent School District
Communications Dept.
Victor Bushfield

TATDP
Texas Association for Truancy & Dropout Prevention

THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS.

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY CORPUS CHRISTI
Color Guard

VISIT CORPUS CHRISTI
Jaclyn Kiefer

Together We Make a Difference