

Conference Agenda

8:15 AM - 8:50 AM	Registration & Light Breakfast	Performing Arts Center (PAC)
9:00 AM—9:30 AM	Opening Keynote Mark Harrison, Florida Teacher of the Year	Performing Arts Center (PAC)
9:45 AM—10:40 AM	Session 1	Building 9 (STEM)
10:45 AM—11:40 AM	Session 2	Building 9 (STEM)
11:45 AM—12:55 PM	Lunch	Building 9 (STEM)
1:00 PM—1:50 PM	Session 3	Building 9 (STEM)
2:00 PM—2:55 PM	Session 4	Building 9 (STEM)



**Opening Keynote 9:00-9:30: Mark Harrison 2026 Florida Teacher of the Year
Performing Arts Center (PAC)**

Session 1: 9:45-10:40	Session 2: 10:45-11:40	Session 3: 1:00-1:55	Session 4: 2:00-2:55
BUILDING 9 (STEM)			
<p>Mark Harrison <i>A Carousel Approach for Engaging Lessons</i> Room 101</p>	<p>Ali Messenger, Ph.D. and Heather Futch <i>No More Science Fair Stress: Demystifying the Process for Teachers and Students</i> Room 134</p>	<p>Heidi Walker <i>Clarity Over Coverage: Using Released Items to Align to the True Demand of B.E.S.T.</i> Room 101</p>	<p>Karen Welch, Ed.D. <i>Seeing Learning in Real Time: Using the Formative Assessment Process in Elementary Classrooms</i> Room 234</p>
<p>Lee Reed <i>Participation Without Pressure: Tools for Getting Every Student Involved</i> Room 201</p>	<p>Lee Reed <i>The Hidden Wounds of Teaching: Moral Injury in Today's Schools</i> Room 201</p>	<p>Elizabeth Carroll, Ed.D <i>Growing Great Teachers from Day One</i> Room 133</p>	<p>Dawn Cross, Ph.D. <i>Building Critical Thinking Through Conversations</i> Room 134</p>
<p>Sharron Cuthbertson, Ph.D. <i>Rethinking Classroom Management</i> Room 233</p>	<p>Emily Newsome <i>A Snapshot of Math Matrix: Growing Math Instruction Through Practice</i> Room 133</p>	<p>Dr. Amy Yarick-Bullock and Dr. Amy Mahone <i>Building Classrooms where Student Thinking Thrives</i> Room 201</p>	<p>Leigh Ann Norris <i>Do You Have Fun in the Classroom?</i> Room 233</p>

Breakfast will be served from 8:15 AM to 8:50 AM in the PAC.

There will be light snacks and beverages available throughout the day in Building 9, Room 120.

Lunch will be served from 11:45 AM - 12:55 PM in Building 9, Room 120.

Additional seating is located throughout building 9, Pine Square, and outside.



Innovate, Inspire, Impact

Concurrent Presentations

Session 1: 9:45 AM–10:40 AM

A Carousel Approach for Engaging Lessons

Room 104

In this session, participants will explore how a carousel structure empowers students to tackle complex academic challenges through an experience centered on budgeting and decision-making. Attendees will walk through the steps for successful implementation and learn how to adapt this collaborative structure to their specific content area.

Topic: Instructional Strategies and Engagement

Target Audience: All

Presenter: Mark Harrison, Florida Department of Education

Email: 2026fltoy@gmail.com

Mr. Harrison holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Florida and earned the Civics Seal of Excellence from the state of Florida. He has served as a dedicated sponsor for both the Civics and Debate team and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. With a teaching background ranging from elementary and high school to adult education, he is dedicated to equipping students with the skills they need to succeed. From mock trials at the local courthouse to in-depth study of the Constitution, he is passionate about teaching students to become informed, engaged citizens.

Participation Without Pressure: Tools for Getting Every Student Involved

Room 201

Many students want to participate — they just don't want to feel exposed, embarrassed, or put on the spot. This fast-paced, highly practical session gives teachers a toolkit of low-risk, high-engagement strategies that get every learner involved without anxiety or pressure. Participants will explore techniques like call and response, rhythm-based language routines, group performance structures, curiosity-driven activities, and other approaches that make participation feel safe, joyful, and automatic.

Teachers leave with ready to use routines they can plug into any subject area to boost attention, reduce off-task behavior, and create a classroom culture where students lean in — not away — from learning.

Topic: Student Engagement

Target Audience: Elementary, Middle and High School

Presenter: Lee Reed, ESE Teacher, Santa Fe High School

Email: leereed@rocketmail.com

After a successful career in sales, Mr. Reed wandered into education and has loved every minute of it. He is a special education teacher at the high school level here in the States and frequently travels to SE Asia to teach English during his summers off.



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Concurrent Presentations

Session 1: 9:45 AM–10:40 AM

Rethinking Classroom Management

Room 233

This interactive session discusses classroom management issues and provides strategies and replacement skills to support teachers.

Topic: Classroom Management

Target Audience: Child Care and Elementary School

Presenter: Sharron Cuthbertson, Ph.D. Florida Gateway College

Email: sharron.cuthbertson@fgc.edu

Dr. Cuthbertson has been in the Teacher Preparation Academy at FGC for 13 years. She has a Ph.D. in Special Education with a focus on Early Childhood Education. Prior to FGC, Dr. Cuthbertson worked in the classroom with PreK children with special needs for 8 years and is experienced working with children from infants through sixth grade.



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Concurrent Presentations

Session 2: 10:45 AM–11:40 AM

The Hidden Wounds of Teaching: Moral Inquiry in Today's Schools Room 201

Many new teachers enter the profession with deep purpose, only to find themselves overwhelmed not by exhaustion, but by the ethical and emotional conflicts built into today's classrooms. This session introduces the concept of moral injury—the distress that occurs when teachers are prevented from doing what they believe is right for students—and explores why it is a major driver of early-career burnout. Participants will learn how moral injury differs from stress, how to recognize early warning signs, and how to build protective habits that sustain integrity and purpose.

Designed especially for pre-service and beginning teachers, this session offers practical language, reflective tools, and research-informed strategies to help them stay grounded in their values while navigating real-world pressures. The goal is simple: to help new educators remain whole, hopeful, and committed during the most vulnerable years of their careers.

Topic: Teaching Strategies

Target Audience: Pre-service and Beginning Teachers

Presenter: Lee Reed, ESE Teacher, Santa Fe High School

Email: reedlw@gm.sbac.edu

Mr. Reed is a special education teacher, consultant, and professional development leader whose work centers on the lived realities of today's educators. After a successful career in sales, he shifted into teaching for the final chapter of his professional life — a decision that led him to classrooms in Cambodia, Vietnam, and now North Central Florida. His cross-cultural experience has shaped a deep respect for teachers' moral commitments and the pressures that threaten them.

Mr. Reed was first introduced to the concept of moral injury at a medical conference he attended with his wife, a professor of nursing at the University of Florida. Hearing clinicians describe the psychological and ethical wounds experienced by soldiers and healthcare workers, he recognized striking parallels in the teaching profession. His work now focuses on helping educators name, understand, and repair moral injury so they can remain whole, grounded, and effective in the work they love.



Concurrent Presentations

Session 2: 10:45 AM–11:40 AM

No More Science Fair Stress: Demystifying the Process for Teachers & Students

Room 134

This in-service training is designed to help teachers feel confident guiding students through the science fair process. Participants will learn how to break down science fairs into manageable steps—from helping students develop meaningful questions to designing simple experiments, collecting data, and communicating results. The session will introduce practical strategies, classroom-friendly tools, and age-appropriate approaches that support inquiry-based learning without overwhelming teachers or students. By the end of the training, educators will leave with clear guidance, ready-to-use resources, and a framework that helps students transform curiosity into structured scientific investigation.

Topic: Student Engagement & Educational Technology

Target Audience: Elementary, Middle, and High School

Presenters: Ali Messenger, Ph.D., Florida Gateway College, and Heather Futch, UF/IFAS Extension CED/4-H Agent

Email: ali.messenger@fgc.edu

Dr. Messenger is a professor in the Department of Water Resources at Florida Gateway College, where she has dedicated over 12 years to developing and delivering innovative instruction in water resources and environmental sciences. Her teaching practice reflects a deep commitment to student engagement and applied learning. Beyond the classroom, she serves as the Director of the Suwannee Valley Regional Science and Engineering Fair, where she works to cultivate scientific inquiry and STEM participation among students across the region.

Ms. Futch works with UF/IFAS Extension Columbia County as the County Extension Director and 4-H Youth Development Agent. With nearly 20 years of experience in Extension education, she is dedicated to strengthening communities through education, leadership, and hands-on learning opportunities. Heather holds a BA in Sociology, a BS in Psychology, and an MSA in Youth Development Leadership, and multiple advanced trainings and certifications, all of which support her work in developing innovative programs centered on youth leadership, STEM education, environmental stewardship, agriculture, life skills, and community engagement. Her work also supports volunteers, schools, families, and community partners through outreach initiatives, grant development, organizational leadership, and collaborative programming designed to create meaningful local impact.



Concurrent Presentations

Session 2: 10:45 AM–11:40 AM

A Snapshot of Math Matrix: Growing Math Instruction Through Practice Room 133

Join us for a hands-on exploration of what drives meaningful math learning. Together, we'll unpack the relationship between math proficiency, rich tasks, and productive classroom mathematics discourse. Experience these ideas the way students do! This session offers a sneak peek into Math Matrix, a free micro-credential for Florida K–12 math teachers that blends practical strategies with powerful professional learning. Expect to collaborate, reflect, and walk away with ideas you can use immediately.

Topic: Student Engagement

Target Audience: Elementary, Middle, and High School

Presenters: Emily Newsom, University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning

Email: kirklande@ufl.edu

Ms. Newsom is a dedicated educator with over 20 years in the classroom, primarily in mathematics instruction, providing support to students and teachers in grades K-12. Ms. Newsom is a part of the mathematics team at the UF Lastinger Center for Learning, where she researches, creates, and facilitates professional learning for mathematics teachers across the state of Florida.



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Concurrent Presentations

Session 3: 1:00 PM–1:50 AM

Clarity over Coverage: Using Released Items to Align to the True Demand of B.E.S.T Room 101

This session focuses on using released test items to better understand the level of thinking required by the Florida B.E.S.T. ELA benchmarks. Participants will analyze how benchmark expectations show up in assessment items and reflect on the alignment between those expectations and classroom instruction. The goal is to build clarity around rigor and support stronger instructional alignment.

Topic: Testing and Benchmarks

Target Audience: Elementary, Middle, and High School

Presenter: Heidi Walker, Florida Gateway College

Email: hidrat@gmail.com

Ms. Walker is an experienced educator and literacy professional with a background spanning K–12, higher education, and state-level educational support. She currently serves as an Academic Teacher with the Florida Department of Corrections, where she supports adult learners in developing literacy and academic skills for successful reentry. Previously, she worked as a Program Specialist with Just Read, Florida!, where she supported statewide literacy initiatives, professional development, and implementation of Florida’s B.E.S.T. ELA standards. Her work included collaborating with district leaders, developing instructional resources, and facilitating professional learning aligned to evidence-based reading practices.

Ms. Walker’s K–12 experience includes teaching grades 2–12 and serving as a Curriculum Resource Teacher and Instructional Coach. In these roles, she supported teachers through coaching cycles, data analysis, and the implementation of research-based instructional strategies grounded in the science of reading. In addition, she teaches in higher education as an instructor for Florida Gateway College, where she prepares future educators in early literacy, emphasizing explicit, systematic instruction, differentiation, and assessment practices aligned to state standards.

Across all roles, her work is rooted in improving literacy outcomes through strong instruction, meaningful coaching, and alignment to evidence-based practices.



Concurrent Presentations

Session 3: 1:00 PM–1:50 AM

Building Classrooms Where Student Thinking Thrives

Room 201

This interactive session explores how instructional design can increase rigorous student thinking through teaching practices that maximize both participation and cognitive engagement. Grounded in cognitive science and classroom-based examples, participants will examine how different strategies can move classrooms beyond passive compliance toward meaningful engagement. Through discussion, video analysis, and collaborative application, educators will reflect on the broader purpose of education and consider how intentionally designing for student thinking can strengthen engagement, deepen learning, and improve instructional outcomes across content areas and grade levels.

Topic: Instructional Strategies

Target Audience: Preservice and In-Service Teachers

Presenters: Dr. Amy Yarick-Bullock and Dr. Amy Mahone

Email: yarickamy@gmail.com

Dr. Yarick-Bullock has over ten years of experience in education across a variety of K-12 settings and roles. Her professional background includes experience as an elementary and high school teacher, MTSS coordinator, school counselor, and administrator. She recently earned a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy with research focused on leadership in high-performing schools. Currently, she works for a State Education Agency supporting educators and school leaders with instructional improvement and student achievement initiatives.

Dr. Angie Mahone's professional experience includes serving as a classroom teacher, instructional coach, and leader in the school improvement space across education contexts in Florida and Illinois. She holds a master's degree in Urban Teaching and recently completed my doctoral studies at Florida State University, earning a degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. My research focused on sustainable school improvement through the lens of principals' experiences and sensemaking. Dr. Mahone currently serves as an educational leader at a state education agency, where she supports school and district leaders with school improvement initiatives and efforts to strengthen outcomes for students. Dr. Mahone's professional interests include sustainable school improvement, instructional leadership, principal decision-making, and the cognitive science of learning.



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Concurrent Presentations

Session 3: 1:00 PM–1:50 AM

Growing Great Teachers from Day One

Room 133

Growing great teachers doesn't just happen, but depends on clear structures and strong mentorship from day one. This hands-on session explores practical and sustainable ways to support pre-service and beginning teachers as they transition into the realities of the classroom. Using evidence-based practices, this session highlights strategies that build confidence and strengthen instructional practice. Participants will examine common challenges new teachers face and leave with actionable ideas for fostering professional growth and promoting teacher retention through targeted support systems.

Topic: Supporting Beginning Teachers

Target Audience: All

Presenter: Elizabeth Carroll, Ed.D., Florida Gateway College

Email: elizabeth.carroll@fgc.edu

Dr. Elizabeth Carroll began her career in higher education at Florida Gateway College as Coordinator of EPI/ Alternative Certification, then as Coordinator of the Bachelor of Elementary Education, and currently serves as Associate Dean, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Teacher Preparation. A former K-12 teacher, she is passionate about teaching and learning and committed to continuous growth. Dr. Carroll holds an EdD in Curriculum and Instruction and actively seeks opportunities to collaborate with others to support pre-service and beginning teachers in developing their skills in evidence-based practices.



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Concurrent Presentations

Session 4: 2:00 PM–2:50 AM

Seeing Learning in Real Time: Using the Formative Assessment Process in Elementary Classrooms Room 234

This session introduces elementary teachers and teacher candidates to the formative assessment process as an ongoing cycle that informs day-to-day instruction. Participants will explore clear learning targets, practical “checks for understanding,” and how to use evidence of student learning—especially from students with disabilities and those in the lowest quartile—to make immediate instructional adjustments. Throughout the session, participants will actively engage in the same formative practices they are learning about.

Topic: Assessment

Target Audience: Elementary School

Presenter: Karen Welch, Ed.D. Florida Gateway College

Email: karen.welch@fgc.edu

Dr. Welch serves as an assistant professor and coordinator of the Bachelor of Elementary Education Teacher Preparation Program at Florida Gateway College, where she supports pre-service teachers in developing effective, research-based instructional practices. In this role, she designs and teaches coursework, supervises candidates in their field and clinical placements, and collaborates with schools and mentor teachers to ensure high-quality, authentic classroom experiences. Her professional experience in education also includes planning and delivering standards-based instruction, modeling best practices in literacy and assessment, and providing detailed feedback to teacher candidates to strengthen their lesson planning, classroom implementation, and reflective practice.

Building Critical Thinking Through Conversations Room 134

With increasing importance being placed on guiding children as they develop critical thinking and language skills, classroom conversations have become a large part of kindergarten readiness support. With teacher assessments such as CLASS focusing heavily on classroom conversations, many teachers and centers are finding it necessary to find ways to support teachers in having deeper conversations. This session will allow participants to actively engage in conversation strategies to support learning - and CLASS scores!

Topic: Instructional Strategies and Engagement Target

Audience: Child Care and Early Elementary

Presenter: Dawn Cross, Ph.D, Florida Gateway College

Email: dawn.cross@fgc.edu

Dr. Cross has a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction and has a background in early childhood and elementary education



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Concurrent Presentations

Session 4: 2:00 PM–2:50 AM

Do You Have Fun in the Classroom?

Room 233

Learning should be exciting, engaging, and memorable—for both students and teachers! In this interactive session, you will discover how classroom themes can transform everyday lessons into meaningful learning experiences that capture students’ attention and spark their enthusiasm. Explore creative strategies, hands-on activities, and engaging games designed to motivate learners, increase participation, and create a positive classroom environment.

Topic: Sun, Sand, and Student Engagement

Target Audience: All

Presenter: Leigh Ann Norris, Hamilton County Schools

Email: leigh.norris@hamiltonfl.com

Leigh Ann Norris is an educator, wife, and mother to Trey, 30 and Kaleigh, 27 . Leigh Ann began teaching 29 years ago and is proud to have spent all 29 of those years in Hamilton County, a Title I district in North Florida. She is dedicated to serving the rural community around Hamilton and the town of Jasper. Leigh Ann uses the challenges she faced as a young student to inspire her teaching practice. In her fourth-grade classroom, Leigh Ann uses authentic themes, creative hands-on lessons, and everyday household items to help students embrace math as an essential part of daily life. Along with her engaging lessons, Leigh Ann communicates with her students through quarterly data chats. This not only allows students to understand their academic needs but also gives Leigh Ann an opportunity to discuss the high expectations and goals she has for each student.

Leigh Ann has represented her district as the Hamilton County Teacher of the Year in 2013 and 2020. Leigh Ann’s innovative approach to math instruction was highlighted when she was selected as a Florida Teacher of the Year finalist in 2020 and was a recipient of the Florida Governor’s Shine Award for educators. In 2024 she was recognized as an Curriculum Associates Extraordinary Educator class of 2024. Leigh Ann has presented professional development across Florida sharing her love for motivating and engaging both students and educators. Along with her classroom and teacher leadership activities, Leigh Ann has served as a member of the Florida Teacher Lead Network and the Florida High Impact Teacher Corps. Those who have experienced Leigh Ann’s passion for getting students excited about learning and mathematics call her “The Queen of Engagement”. While this title is great, Leigh Ann is most proud of seeing her former students become leaders in Jasper and beyond.

