

	Ascot	Brayton	Lenox	Waverly	Wilton
<u>Thursday</u>					
5:00pm-8:00pm	Registration Open - Garden Court				
6:00pm-8:00pm	Welcome Reception - Garden Court				
<u>Friday</u>					
7:30am-8:30am	Breakfast & Exhibitors - Garden Court				
8:30am-9:00am	Welcome Remarks - Ballroom				
9:00am-9:30am	Networking & Exhibitor Break				
<u>Session 1</u> 9:30am-10:30am	In the Future of School Learners Lead, Adults Guide, and AI Supports	Parental Choice: The Power to Decide	Defining Success: Measuring and Achieving Excellence in Alternative Learning Environments	Research on Hybrid Schools	Scrappy to Sustainable: Edupreneur Finance
10:30am-11:00am	Networking & Exhibitor Break				
<u>Session 2</u> 11:00am-12:00pm	Preventing Burnout for Edupreneurs	Beyond Subjects: Montessori Principles & Cross-Curricular Learning in Alternative Education?	Hands-On Project Based Learning - Live!	Empowering Exceptional Learners	Finding Your Niche: 5 Microschool Models
12:00pm-1:30pm	Lunch & Keynote Session - Ballroom				
1:30pm-2:00pm	Networking & Exhibitor Break				
<u>Session 3</u> 2:00pm-3:00pm	Expanding Learning Through Partnerships	Culture of Parents & Students as Stakeholders	Building Bridges to Hybrid Accreditation	Guiding Educators for Microschool Success	AI Without Fear: The Must-Have Tools for Teachers, Students, and Neurodivergent Learners
3:00pm-3:30pm	Networking & Exhibitor Break				
<u>Session 4</u> 3:30pm-4:30pm	Can Edupreneurs Thrive in a Non-ESA State?	Happiness Matters: Mental Health at School	Low-Effort Marketing Strategies	A Peek at Kerry McDonald's New Book, Joyful Learning!	Founders Helping Families Take the Leap
6:00pm	Dinner At Leisure				
<u>Saturday</u>					
7:30am-8:30am	Table Topic Breakfast & Exhibitors - Garden Court/Ballroom				
8:30am-9:00am	Keynote Session - Ballroom				
9:00am-9:30am	Awards / Sponsor Remarks				
<u>Session 1</u> 9:30am-10:30am	Revolutionize Education with Project-Based Learning (PBL)	Mastering the Media: Messaging and Strategies	Building a Sustainable School Business	Resilient by Design	PechaKucha Presentations
10:30am-11:00am	Networking & Exhibitor Break				
11:00am-12:00pm	Panel Talk: Questions from the Crowd / Closing Remarks				

Session 1: 9:30am-10:30am

In the Future of School Learners Lead, Adults Guide, and AI Supports

Room: Ascot

In this forward-thinking session, we explore a bold vision for the future of education—one where learners take the lead, adults serve as guides, and artificial intelligence becomes a powerful tool for personalized support. Through real-world examples and practical strategies, discover how schools can shift from compliance-driven models to dynamic ecosystems of self-directed learning enhanced by AI. Whether you're an educator, school leader, or innovator, this session will inspire and equip you to rethink roles, redesign systems, and reimagine what school can be.

Presented By: Dr. Tyler Thigpen, Maria Covaci-Druhora, and Lana Toler of The Forest School: An Acton Academy and Institute for Self Directed Learning

Parental Choice: The Power to Decide

Room: Brayton

US constitutional rights allow parents to unlock the best educational path for their children; understanding the options and the limits of those options can be confusing and difficult. This session will break down homeschooling in Georgia and key financial support programs, including the new Georgia Promise Scholarship. Interested in opening a micro-school or hybrid program? We'll discuss the accreditation process for Georgia school founders

Presented By: Kenisha Skaggs, Soar Academy Augusta / David DeLugas, ParentsUSA

Defining Success: Measuring and Achieving Excellence in Alternative Learning Environments

Room: Lenox

Measuring and Achieving Excellence in Alternative Learning Environments Success in education looks different across hybrid learning environments, micro-schools, and homeschool settings—but how do we define and measure it effectively? This session will explore strategies for recognizing and executing success in alternative learning models. Our expert panel will break down key components, including:

- Personalized Ecosystems of Learning – Recognizing and documenting success in a personalized environment; using a process-based model to document and validate progress
- Literacy Tools for Educators – Master the Science of Reading through a deep dive into "Matching Reading Data to Interventions: A Simple Tool for Elementary Educators", an essential resource for identifying foundational reading needs
- What's Next? – Preparing students for accelerated learning, transcripts and college pathways through post-secondary planning.

Attendees will leave with actionable insights and tools to implement in their own learning environments, ensuring student success beyond traditional metrics.

Presented By: Jill Dunlap Brown, Columbia Academy For Learning And Enrichment / April Huard, Clonlara School / Lasharn Ferroudj, Putting Education First

Research on Hybrid Schools

Room: Waverly

Join this session to learn about the latest research on hybrid schools and education policy! This panel will feature a 50-state scan of choice policies, featuring policy gaps and opportunities directly related to hybrid schooling. It will also include some of the latest updates from the National Hybrid Schools Survey, including analysis from a policy experiment on regulations of school choice program and from a survey experiment on teacher hiring practices in hybrid schools.

Presented By: John Thompson, KSU National Hybrid Schools Project / Matt Lee, KSU National Hybrid Schools Project / Ben DeGrow, ExcelinEd

Session 1: 9:30am-10:30am

Scrappy to Sustainable: Edupreneur Finance

Room: Wilton

Innovation in education is often driven by passion but keeping it financially and operationally sustainable is where the real challenge begins. In this panel, we bring together business professionals and grassroots founders who have built their unique entrepreneurial dreams from the ground up. We'll dive into essential financial considerations, common operational pitfalls, and practical tools to keep your school running smoothly—without letting bookkeeping and budgets pull you away from educational innovations. Whether you're bootstrapping or seeking outside funding, we'll explore what it takes to navigate the early years successfully, when (or if) you need a CPA, and how to separate personal and business finances. Come ready to learn from both the strategic and the scrappy approaches to finance and operations!

Presented By: Genevieve Peterson, A One-Room Schoolhouse / Rory Eakin, KaiPod Learning / John Foster, Middle School MBA

Session 2: 11:00am-12:00pm

Preventing Burnout for Edupreneurs

Room: Ascot

We all think burnout will never happen to us, until it does. We influence so many lives that it is imperative to take steps to prevent burnout for ourselves as well as for the longevity of our programs. In this interactive workshop, we will discuss and explore different strategies for preventing and dealing with burnout to ensure our own mental health and the health of our programs! Come learn from Elmarie Hyman, the founder of 12-year old Learn Beyond The Book, with 3 in-person locations in California as well as live Zoom courses. In the 12 years, Elmarie has learned and implemented many strategies to deal with this potential problem of burnout to now would love to share with other edupreneurs. Key Learning Objectives: Define burnout; Identify the signs and symptoms; Discover, discuss, and workshop strategies to prevent burnout; Learn how to successfully delegate and train others to ensure longevity of programs

Presented By: Elmarie Hyman, Learn Beyond the Book

Beyond Subjects: Montessori Principles & Cross-Curricular Learning in Alternative Education

Room: Brayton

As education shifts toward more flexible, student-centered models, alternative schools are rethinking traditional subject-based instruction. This interactive session explores how Montessori principles and cross-curricular learning can be integrated into hybrid schools, microschools, and co-ops to create interdisciplinary, hands-on, and holistic learning experiences.

Montessori's emphasis on independent learning, hands-on materials, and multi-age collaboration aligns seamlessly with cross-curricular approaches that blend subjects into meaningful, real-world projects. Participants will discover practical strategies for designing flexible learning environments where students take ownership of their education, develop critical thinking skills, and explore interdisciplinary connections.

Through real-world examples from elementary to high school, participants will learn how to: Adapt Montessori principles to hybrid and micro-school settings, fostering student autonomy; Implement cross-curricular learning in high school to deepen engagement and understanding; Design project-based, interdisciplinary activities that integrate science, math, language arts, and social studies; Create flexible assessment models that emphasize mastery, creativity, and real-world application.

This session will provide actionable insights for educators, administrators, and school founders looking to break away from rigid subject silos and build dynamic, holistic learning environments in alternative education models.

Presented By: Mere Jones, Hazelwood Prep / Desiree Corbin, MindSprout Montessori

Session 2: 11:00am-12:00pm

Hands-On Project Based Learning - Live!

Room: Lenox

It's time to get our hands dirty. In this hands-on, interactive experience, you'll work with a team to experience a mini-project-based learning experience on fast forward where you'll explore, create and present. You'll laugh, learn, collaborate and build all while identifying best practices for creating engaging, project-based learning experiences to promote deeper learning in your microschoool. Facilitated by Rock by Rock (a K-5 project-based learning platform) and project-based microschoool founders you won't want to miss it.

Presented By: Jeff Imrich, Rock by Rock

Empowering Exceptional Learners

Room: Waverly

Students with exceptionalities thrive in learning environments that honor their unique strengths, challenges, and learning trajectories. Ensuring their success requires not only effective instructional strategies but also a collaborative and informed educational team. This panel of experienced educators and entrepreneurs will share practical strategies for fostering success among diverse learners, including those with learning differences, neurodivergence, giftedness, and twice-exceptionality, as well as students facing behavioral or emotional challenges.

Discussion topics will include identification, one-on-one behavioral support, project-based and interest-driven learning, multi-age classroom integration, asynchronous learning, acceleration, and effective transition planning. Special attention will be given to equipping and aligning educational teams—teachers, administrators, and support staff—to recognize and meet the needs of exceptional learners. Learn how to build buy-in, advocate for flexible learning pathways, and implement evidence-based strategies that allow all students to reach their full potential.

Join us in exploring innovative, research-backed approaches that empower exceptional learners and ensure every student receives the support they need to thrive. A Q&A session will follow to address specific challenges and insights.

Presented By: Genevieve Peterson, A One-Room Schoolhouse / Molly Isaacs-McLeod, Gifted Unlimited, LLC / Kenisha Skaggs, Soar Academy Augusta / JoDee Wilch, Teach to the Child / Elizabeth Ruddell, Beacon Academy

Finding Your Niche: 5 Microschoool Models

Room: Wilton

In an ever-changing educational landscape, leaders face many challenges. This session equips you with essential tools and strategies while fostering a resilient mindset to navigate obstacles. We will explore the significance of reconnecting with your school's original vision and mission while also establishing a solid foundation for sustainable success and support. Discussions will focus on strategies to boldly confront doubt and external pressures that may try to shake your resolve. We'll create a practical "Resilience Toolkit," with techniques to reconnect with core values and reignite inspiration on difficult days. This session empowers leaders, strengthens resolve, and reaffirms purpose.

Presented By: Carolyn Byer, Head of KaiPod Catalyst Program / Sarah Harrington, Founder, Solstice Hybrid Academy / Joanna Cervantez, Founder, A Fuller Education / Christina Jones, Founder, Academy of Creatives / Latoya Nelson, Founder, The Attuned Community School / Tom Dowell, Founder, Moreana Boys Academy

Session 3: 2:00pm-3:00pm

Expanding Learning Through Partnerships

Room: Ascot

Learner-centered instruction empowers students by fostering agency, creativity, and love of learning. While many innovative schools share this approach, gaps in resources, staffing, and subject matter expertise can limit learning opportunities. This session will explore how partnerships with organizations like Outschool can bridge these gaps by providing access to a wide array of expert-led, online classes. Attendees will learn how such collaborations can enhance curriculum offerings, create flexible learning opportunities, and support students in pursuing their passions and building future-ready skills.

Presented By: Cassie Olguin, Outschool, Inc. / Darla Baquedano, Spark Community Schools / Kaneshia Adams, The Learning Lounge

Culture of Parents & Students as Stakeholders

Room: Brayton

This session explores how to deepen parent engagement and empower students as active stakeholders in hybrid educational environments. By examining the community-centered approaches of THREAD Academy, DeKalb Christian Home Educators (DCHE), and Eastside Academic Studies, participants will gain insight into fostering shared responsibility, civic advocacy, and volunteer-driven operations. Discover how each model leverages parents' and students' strengths to create resilient learning communities and impactful, sustainable partnerships.

Key Learning Objectives: The goals are to understand practical strategies to engage parents as partners and learn how to foster student ownership and community involvement through volunteerism and social programming. We will explore volunteer-driven models that build sustainable, engaged school communities without full-time staff, and examples of an educational sweat equity system. Participants will leave with an actionable plan to implement these community-building practices within diverse learning environments.

Presented By: Nicole Doyle, Georgia Black Home Educators Network / Denice Dixon, TREAD Educational Services / Michelle Shaw, Eastside Academic Studies, Northeast Independent Preparatory Academy

Building Bridges to Hybrid Accreditation

Room: Lenox

This session is for schools seeking accreditation to qualify for ESAs or to award accredited diplomas. We will guide leaders and educators from nontraditional educational centers through the pathway to accreditation, focusing on how schools with innovative instructional and assessment methods can meet the requirements. Moderated by Sharon Masinelli, Dr. Jay Wansley from Cognia will discuss how nontraditional schools are eligible for Cognia accreditation and what evidence can be presented to meet learning standards, even when alternative assessments are utilized. Mr. Andrew Shahan from Acton Academy Buckhead will share his experiences with the accreditation process regionally.

Presented By: Sharon Masinelli, St. John the Baptist Hybrid School / Jay Wansley, Cognia / Andrew Shahan, Acton Academy

Friday, April 25th

Session 3: 2:00pm-3:00pm

Guiding Educators for Microschool Success

Room: Waverly

As the micro-school movement grows, more educators are transitioning into flexible, student-centered learning environments. However, this shift requires a mindset and strategy overhaul. Successful teachers must embrace unlearning—letting go of outdated practices, biases, and assumptions to foster growth and adaptability. This session provides a roadmap for teachers to successfully transition into micro-schools, covering unlearning rigid structures, embracing innovation, and applying their expertise in a new, dynamic setting. Participants will gain actionable coaching strategies to support educators in thriving within the micro-school ecosystem.

Presented By: Benita Gordon, Global Education Concierge BG, LLC / Tiffany Blassingame, The Ferguson School

AI Without Fear: The Must-Have Tools for Teachers, Students, and Neurodivergent Learners

Room: Wilton

AI isn't coming—it's already here. And the best part? It's not here to replace teachers—it's here to make your job easier! Join three microschool innovators as they unveil the most powerful, classroom-tested AI tools that are saving teachers time, engaging students, and creating new opportunities for special needs learners.

Denise will introduce you to game-changing AI tools that help teachers plan faster, grade smarter, and stay organized. Jennifer will explore cutting-edge AI tools that turn students into creators, researchers, and innovators. And, Lasharn will leverage AI tools to empower neurodiverse students, including those with ADHD, dyslexia, and autism.

By the end of this session, you'll walk away with:

- Practical AI tools you can implement immediately
- Confidence in using AI for teaching and learning
- A roadmap for bringing AI into your microschool without fear

Microschool educators are already pioneers. Don't let AI pass you by—come discover how it can supercharge your teaching and transform your students' learning!

Presented By: Jennifer Wolverton, Microcollective for AI, Robotics, and the Sciences (MARS) / Denise Rudolph, Compass Prep Academy / Lasharn Ferroudj, Putting Education First

Session 4: 3:30pm-4:30pm

Can Edupreneurs Thrive in a Non-ESA State?

Room: Ascot

This panel will discuss what it's like to live in a non-ESA state; how grassroots efforts are actively being deployed to bring about legislative change; what edupreneurs do in terms of revenue when no assistive funding exists; and what a policy expert believes will be the ultimate resolution and when.

This panel brings together experienced microschool founders, policy experts, and advocates from an ESA-free state to discuss unique challenges and successes. Attendees will gain insight, inspiration, and practical strategies to overcome legal and funding obstacles - from navigating legislative barriers to building resilient educational communities without state support.

Presented By: Sharon Sedlar, PA Families for Education Choice / Colleen Hroncich, Cato Institute / Jennifer Kempin, Waldorf Microschool / Lynn Swanson, yes. every kid. foundation.

Happiness Matters: Mental Health at School

Room: Brayton

Mental health in education matters now more than ever. Mental illness is at an all-time high and we are just scratching the surface of seeing the impact on education and society. Alternative education is showing the impact that joy has on learning (and life) - kids are bursting with excitement, begging to go to school, and learning more than they ever have before.

Participants attending this session will leave:

- Inspired by a community that values joy in education
- Reflecting on how they already support mental health and how to communicate it effectively with their stakeholders
- Equipped with actionable steps to elevate mental health and happiness in their own educational spaces

Presented By: Heather DiNino, Elements Academy

Low-Effort Marketing Strategies

Room: Lenox

Managing a microschool involves juggling numerous responsibilities, from overseeing student progress to supporting families. Finding time and resources for marketing can be challenging, especially on a limited budget. This session is tailored for microschool founders and educators seeking practical, cost-effective strategies to attract new families and enhance community engagement without overwhelming their schedules. Through hands-on activities and ready-to-use worksheets, you'll develop a personalized marketing roadmap tailored to your microschool's needs. This approach ensures that marketing efforts are both effective and manageable, fostering growth without adding to your workload.

By implementing these low-budget marketing strategies, you can enhance your microschool's visibility and attract new families while focusing on your primary educational responsibilities.

Presented By: Bonnie Schneider, enrollEDGE Marketing

A Peek at Kerry McDonald's New Book, Joyful Learning!

Room: Waverly

From the bestselling author of *Unschooling* comes an exploration of new, low-cost K-12 learning models that favor individualized, student-centered education. On bookstore shelves this summer, *Joyful Learning* features the entrepreneurial parents and teachers who are building creative schooling options across the US. Some of those featured entrepreneurs are here with us in Atlanta and will join Kerry for a discussion of their founder journeys and lessons learned along the way. Kerry will also share her favorite book excerpts, along with special ordering details.

Presented By: Kerry McDonald, Foundation for Economic Education / Jack Pannell, Founder, Trinity Arch Preparatory Academy for Boys / Laura George, Founder, Compass Prep / Kanisha Adams, Founder, The Learning Lounge / Mercedes Grant, Founder, Path of Life Learning

Friday, April 25th

Session 4: 3:30pm-4:30pm

Founders Helping Families Take the Leap

Room: Wilton

Every family envisions what a meaningful education could be: personal, purpose-driven, and a true reflection of their values. Yet, that vision often feels out of reach. As more families seek something distinct, VELA founders are offering flexible, innovative education models centered around families. But what causes families to take the leap to these new programs? What are the most helpful strategies and tools for recruiting families? Hear from local VELA founders—Nicole Doyle, April Jackson and Keyanna Moreau—about how and why families are choosing to own their education and what that might mean for the future of education. Participants will also get a sneak peek at VELA's latest endeavor to support this rapidly growing marketplace.

Presented By: Nicole Doyle, Georgia Black Home Educators Network / April Jackson, PASS Network and Black Microschools ATL / Keyanna Moreau: C.H.O.I.C.E. Preparatory Academy

Saturday, April 26th

Session 1: 9:30am-10:30am

Revolutionize Education with Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Room: Ascot

Let's Collaborate, Create, and Innovate! This session will dive into Project-Based Learning and we will discuss what it is, why it is important, and how to implement it in your learning environment. We will also provide interactive examples of PBL in action! Our hope is to help participants get a true feel for the Project-Based Learning experience and leave the session with tips and resources for how to implement it successfully. Oh, and did we mention we will be giving away a cool raffle prize :)

Presented By: Mercedes Grant, Path of Life Learning / Harold Lee, Jr., Kidvation Global / Brent Wheelbarger, Kidvation Global

Mastering the Media: Messaging and Strategies

Room: Brayton

This media training session will teach participants how to leverage the media as a powerful tool to spread their message and reach a wider audience. Participants will learn strategies to attract media attention, craft messages based on research-driven insights and effectively engage with reporters. The session will also cover essential techniques for mastering interviews, as well as addressing and dispelling common myths surrounding school choice. By the end of the training, participants will be equipped to communicate confidently and persuasively, ensuring their message resonates with the public.

Presented By: Chantal Fennell, EdChoice

Session 1: 9:30am-10:30am

Building a Sustainable School Business

Room: Lenox

Running a school is more than a passion—it's a business that needs financial sustainability to thrive. In this session, we'll explore key strategies for balancing growth, profitability, and legacy. Through an interactive activity, you'll assess your school's business strengths and identify opportunities for improvement. Walk away with practical steps to strengthen your operations, increase financial stability, and build a lasting impact.

Presented By: Sara Davis, KSU, Family Enterprise Center

Resilient by Design

Room: Waverly

In an ever-changing educational landscape, leaders face many challenges. This session equips you with essential tools and strategies while fostering a resilient mindset to navigate obstacles. We will explore the significance of reconnecting with your school's original vision and mission while also establishing a solid foundation for sustainable success and support. Discussions will focus on strategies to boldly confront doubt and external pressures that may try to shake your resolve. We'll create a practical "Resilience Toolkit," with techniques to reconnect with core values and reignite inspiration on difficult days. This session empowers leaders, strengthens resolve, and reaffirms purpose.

Presented By: Ashley Wagner, Petrichor School / Ashley Brodbeck, Riverside Academy

PechaKucha Presentations

Room: Wilton

Discover the fast-paced and visually engaging world of Pecha Kucha! In this unique presentation style, each speaker shares their story using 20 image-based slides shown for just 20 seconds each—resulting in a quick, impactful 6 minutes and 40 seconds. With a focus on storytelling over explanation, this session offers a compelling look into the journeys of hybrid and micro schools and organizations. Don't miss this opportunity to be inspired and energized by their experiences.

Presented By: Denise Rudolph, Compass Prep Academy / Kenisha Skaggs, Soar Academy Augusta / David DeLugas, Parents USA / Desiree Corbin, MindSprout Montessori / Elmarie Hyman, Learn Beyond the Book / Yalonda Chandler, Legacy Builders Academy / Alexandra Batista Rodriguez, Steps Learning Center, LLC / April Huard, Clonlara School / Genevieve Peterson, A One-Room Schoolhouse