

Welcome to the

11TH ANNUAL

SUMMIT

— ON NEVADA EDUCATION —

**Embracing our Purpose.
Committing to Progress.**

Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026
Stan Fulton Building
#NVEdSummit

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EDUCATION



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Welcome to the 11th Annual Summit on Nevada Education.

We are pleased to bring together education and mental health professionals, community and policy leaders, and researchers to share best practices, address challenges, and explore innovative solutions in support of the communities we serve.

This year we are focused on embracing our purpose and committing to progress. From school choice and workforce development, to cultivating community-embedded support partnerships, our collective efforts drive change. As we lead using innovative practices, creating new programs, and investing in future generations, advancing mental health and education outcomes for Nevadans requires an all-hands approach. We invite you to lean in, learn, and connect-taking the lessons from today beyond with a renewed sense of resolve.

As we move forward, we hope you are challenged, encouraged and energized for the work ahead. We look forward to the ideas, partnerships and momentum that will come from today's Summit.

Thank you for joining us today.

In community,

Danica G. Hays, Ph.D.
danica.hays@unlv.edu



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Saturday, February 7

8:00 a.m......Registration, Breakfast, and Networking

8:30 a.m......Welcome and Opening Remarks

9:00 a.m......Panel Discussion

Please refer to page 7 for speaker bios.

State and Future of Nevada Education and Mental Health

with:

Clayton "CJ" Anderson, Jhone Ebert, Matt McNair, and Victor Wakefield
facilitated by Rocío Hernández

10:00 a.m......Breakout Sessions

Please refer to pages 8-9 for session descriptions and presenter bios.

Salon A

The Classroom Outside the Classroom: How Community Organizations Support Learning Outcomes

Presented by:

Andy Bischel and Lisa Morris Hibbler

Salon C

Making Education Matter: Fostering the Future of Nevada's Workforce

Presented by:

Irene Bustamante Adams, Milt Stewart, and Xue Xing

Room 220

Getting Them and Keeping Them: How Leaders Drive Teacher Retention and Advancement

Presented by:

Miguel Gonzales, Abigail Johnson, Anthony Nunez, and Andrea Womack

Gaming Lab

Ask the Audience: Student-Led Innovations Empower Education

Presented by:

Dillon Booker and Andy Lott

11:00 a.m......Breakout Sessions

Please refer to pages 10-11 for session descriptions and presenter bios.

Salon A

Attractive Alternatives: How Charter and Private Schools Are Attracting More Students than ever

Presented by:

Yuying Fan, Benjamin Feinstein, and Mike Taack

11:00 a.m......Breakout Sessions (Continued)

Salon C

Planting the Money Tree: School Finance Challenges and Successes

Presented by:

Justin Dayhoff, Brad Marianno, Punam Mathur, and Tamara Shear

Room 220

Transforming Student Well-Being in Nevada: The Power of the CIS-UNLV Partnership

Presented by:

Jamie Chazan, Maddie Clark, and Kathy Rudd

Gaming Lab

Supporting the Village: Family Partnership in Early Childhood Education

Presented by:

Janice Lee, Michael Mitchell, and Jenna Weglarz-Ward

Noon.....Luncheon Networking

12:45 p.m......College of Education Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

Please refer to pages 12-13 for inductee bios.

2:00 p.m......Keynote

Please refer to page 6 for speaker bio.

What 17,500 Girls Taught Us: The Research-Based Roadmap for Supporting Today's Girls

Presented by:

Lisa Hinkelman



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Keynote Speaker

What 17,500 Girls Taught Us: The Research-Based Roadmap for Supporting Today's Girls

Imagine having an honest conversation with 17,502 teenage girls about what's really going on in their lives. That's exactly what The Girls' Index™ did — and their answers paint a picture we can't ignore. Dr. Lisa Hinkelman takes this mountain of data and shows us a path forward. Through evidence-based strategies that address the real issues, you'll leave equipped with concrete tools, a clear action plan, and renewed resolve to positively impact the outcome.



About the presenter:

Lisa Hinkelman is a nationally recognized expert on girls' education and development with a knack for making research both meaningful and enjoyable. As the founder and CEO of Ruling Our eXperiences, also known as ROX, she has transformed the lives of over 50,000 girls through evidence-based programming that is now implemented in nearly 600 schools across 44 states.

Her groundbreaking research, The Girls' Index™, surveyed more than 17,500 girls nationwide and has become the definitive resource on girls' development, confidence, and aspirations. A former professor at The Ohio State University and best-selling author of "Girls Without Limits," Dr. Hinkelman brings both academic rigor and real-world wisdom to her work. Her insights have been featured in NBC News, *Forbes*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. She also recently addressed the United Nations General Assembly on teen girls' mental health.

Thank you, sponsors!

This event is brought to our community thanks to the generosity of this year's Summit on Nevada Education sponsors:

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Panelists

What Now? What's Next? Sizing up the future of education and mental health in Nevada

Education and mental health research, resources, and programs have come under unprecedented scrutiny in the past year. Policies have shifted. Funding has been cut. Where do we go from here? Our panel of experts will discuss a wide array of challenges and opportunities in our state's education and mental health landscape and offer their insights and advice to put and keep us on a positive trajectory.

The panel will be facilitated by *The Nevada Independent's* education reporter, Rocío Hernández and includes:



Superintendent of the Elko County School District CJ Anderson leads with a steadfast commitment to identifying and embracing our purpose through community-driven innovation. Guided by the district's newly established Portrait of a Learner, CJ prioritizes a holistic approach to education that balances rigorous college and career-ready pathways with essential mental health supports. Under his leadership, ECSD has expanded its CTE offerings and implemented vital wellness initiatives to ensure students are equipped with the skills necessary to thrive in a constantly-evolving world.



In her more than 30 years in education, **CCSD Superintendent Jhone Ebert** has dedicated her career to ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed. With her strong track record of improving student outcomes across Nevada, focusing on expanding college and career readiness, advancing innovation and equity in classrooms, and fostering a culture where employees feel valued and students thrive.



Chancellor Matt McNair brings decades of leadership experience across higher education, public service, and philanthropy to his role at the Nevada System of Higher Education. A former Navy JAG officer and chief deputy attorney general for the State of Nebraska, McNair has also served in senior executive roles at The Ohio State University and the Oregon Health & Science University Foundation. He is focused on building long-term stability, increasing alignment with Nevada's workforce needs, and helping Nevada's institutions deliver on their statewide mission.



Nevada's Superintendent of Public Instruction Victor Wakefield began his career as a classroom teacher and recruited hundreds of high-potential leaders to join Teach For America, where he held numerous leadership positions at the local, regional, and national levels. In addition, he has shaped Nevada's education policy by serving on Nevada's State Board of Education and as Senior Fellow at the Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities.

About Rocío Hernández:



Raised in Las Vegas, **Rocío Hernández** is a K–12 education reporter at *The Nevada Independent*. With a background covering immigration and education she recognizes the importance of informing communities about the policies that shape their lives.

Breakout Presenters - Session 1

Salon A

The Classroom Outside the Classroom: How Community Organizations Support Learning Outcomes

The full portrait of a Nevada learner would not be complete without the contributions of our community partners. Join the Boys & Girls Clubs of Southern Nevada and Shaquille O'Neal Foundation for a conversation on how they are driving student success outside of the classroom, including social and mental health supports, after-school programs, and career exploration in Southern Nevada.

About the presenters:



Lisa Morris Hibbler is the executive director of the Shaquille O'Neal Foundation and a vanguard leader. Her background includes 27 years at the City of Las Vegas, where she served as deputy city manager and chief community services officer. Her leadership and expertise have left a significant mark on the community she serves and she has collected many accolades, including being an inaugural member of the College of Education's Hall of Fame.



President and CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Southern Nevada, **Andy Bischel**, has spent over a decade expanding access to after-school programs that prepare kids for their future. By building strong funding partnerships and engaging the community, he helps ensure Southern Nevada's youth have the support, opportunities, and gain skills needed to succeed.

Salon C

Making Education Matter: Fostering the Future of Nevada's Workforce

In today's economy, tying education to career development is more important than ever. How do we build career exploration opportunities into K-12 learning environments? How can we better prepare students to enter vocational and/or higher education with reassurance that their learning experiences will correlate to career success? Join us for a conversation on advancements and successes in Nevada's workforce development efforts.

About the presenters:



Deputy Director and Chief Strategy Officer for Workforce Connections **Irene Bustamante Adams** stands out as a dynamic leader on Southern Nevada's Local Workforce Development Board. In 2025 she was elected as President of the Clark County School Board and the Nevada Association of School Boards, where she helps shape education policy across 17 counties.



CEO of Nevadaworks, **Milt Stewart** leads statewide efforts to strengthen Nevada's workforce by aligning education, training, and employer needs. Through strategic partnerships with businesses, training providers, and government agencies, he works to expand access to job-specific training, remove barriers to employment, and support upskilling initiatives that prepare workers for long-term career success.



Associate Professor **Xue "Cher" Xing** focuses on career and technical education, student learning and workforce preparation. Her research also includes college and career preparation for adolescents and young adults, and career development for working adults.

Room 220

Getting Them and Keeping Them: How Leaders Drive Teacher Retention and Advancement

Nevada is closing the teacher workforce gap through innovative recruitment and preparation programs, but how do we get them to stay? Like most career fields, teacher retention is distinctly tied to how employees feel about their leadership. This session will discuss educational leadership strategies that attract dedicated educators for the long haul.

About the presenters:



In addition to his role as chair of the Department of Educational Psychology, Leadership and Higher Education, **Miguel "Mike" Gonzales** served as the program coordinator for the college's educational psychology and leadership program. His research expertise includes school technology leadership, education innovation, and leadership development.



Abigail Johnson has over 20 years of experience as a middle school principal. She fosters strong teacher retention and growth by building agency, clarity, and collective efficacy through vibrant professional learning communities. By aligning instruction with meaningful professional development, she empowers educators to collaborate, take ownership, and continuously refine their practice.



After serving five years as an elementary teacher, mentor, and interventionist Cheyenne HS Principal **Anthony Nuñez** shifted gears to an administrative role. He actively works in the education community to improve the system for educators, students, and families. He has since brought Cheyenne's teacher vacancy rate from 37% in 2022 to 3.5% at the start of this school year.



CCSD School Associate Superintendent **Andrea Womack** has had more than 25 years in education and a passion for increasing student achievement through transformational leadership and innovative change. As a strong proponent of student success, Andrea believes that with consistent structures, great teachers, and strong leadership, all schools can achieve success.

Gaming Lab

Ask the Audience: Student-Led Innovations Empower Education

What happens when we turn the classroom over to the students? Learn about the Futurescapers program, where a team of students sketched out bold visions for what's next in education. We'll also explore the Youth College and Career Readiness Program where students get to "try on" a career while they're still in high school.

About the presenters:



Dillon Booker is a dynamic educator and policy advocate dedicated to systemic change and student success. Committed to addressing teacher shortages through equity, cultivate and retain top teaching talent within Nevada, Booker is the founder of the Built Different Leadership Institute and an ambassador and professor for the Silver State Education Foundation.



With a background in performance and education, **Andy Lott** approaches learning like a live production grounded in trust and collaboration. As managing director of the IAN Hub, he works alongside young people and communities to design joyful, purpose-driven learning experiences that build agency, community, and real-world solutions.

Breakout Presenters - Session 2

Salon A

Attractive Alternatives: How Charter and Private Schools Are Attracting More Students than ever

School choice continues to be front of mind for families across Nevada. What's the draw? Learn from a panel of leaders in the charter and private school space and the ideas and innovations that are driving increased enrollments.

About the presenters:



Yuying Fan is the founder of Baby University and Noble Collegiate Academy, a dual language (Mandarin Chinese/English) PreK-12 program, which offering high-quality dual-language education using an integrated curriculum with diverse cultural elements and a team-teacher approach.



Benjamin Feinstein, founder and executive director of Vegas Vista Academy. He has been in education since 1989, and served over 15 years in the CCSD as a teacher, coordinator, and administrator. Benjamin has also led IB programs and founded several schools across Southern Nevada.



Mike Taack, founder, CEO, and head of school for the Western Youth Leadership, Engagement, and Empowerment School (WYLEES), is LeveragED Launchpad fellow. He served as an educator in the CCSD for 12 years. He also works with Nevadans for the Common Good and UNLV's Youth Rebel Start Academy.

Salon C

Planting the Money Tree: School Finance Challenges and Successes

Nevada is currently ranked 46th in per-pupil spending. Are there better ways to manage school finances to fuel student success? Join key voices in the school finance conversation as we explore innovative ideas for school funding.

About the presenters:



Prior to his appointment as CCSD's chief financial officer, **Justin Dayhoff** served as assistant state superintendent of financial planning, operations, and strategy for the Maryland State Department of Education. He brings over 15 years of experience in K-12 education finance, policy, and systems leadership.



Associate Professor **Bradley Marianno** is the director of the Center for Research, Evaluation, and Assessment. He is a frequently requested expert on local and state education policies, including, education labor and unions, collective bargaining, and school finance.



Former executive director of the Elaine P. Wynn & Family Foundation, **Punam Mathur** is a speaker, trainer, writer, and corporate leader, advancing community engagement in the arts, diversity and inclusion, child welfare, and education. Now, Punam works on education reform for the Nevada Department of Education and serves on the Commission on School Funding.



Opportunity 180 Chief Executive Officer **Tamara "Tam" Shear** works collaboratively with colleagues, partners, and our community to ensure all students and families in Nevada, especially our most underserved, have access to great public schools and people in those schools who are deeply committed to their success.

Room 220

Transforming Student Well-Being in Nevada: The Power of the CIS-UNLV Partnership

Explore how the Communities in Schools-UNLV partnership brings mental health support directly into schools to help students thrive emotionally and academically. This session looks at the mental health challenges facing Nevada's K-12 students, what limits access to care, and how collaborative, school-based approaches can make a real difference.

About the presenters:



Senior Director of grants for Communities In Schools of Nevada **Jamie Chazan** has dedicated over 20 years to working with nonprofit organizations. With experience in public and private grants as well as program management, Jamie has led initiatives that empower students, secure access to housing, improve nutrition, mental health, and create equitable pathways to learning.



Associate Professor **Madeline "Maddie" Clark** is a board-certified clinical mental health counselor with supervisory endorsement in Nevada and Virginia. Maddie's clinical experience includes serving in- and out-patients. Her research interests include poverty and social class issues in counseling.



Kathy Rudd, program director at Communities In Schools of Nevada, has nearly 15 years working as a principal, teacher, and coach in charter schools, CCSD, and Teach for America. This UNLV alumna creates learning environments that support both adults and students to thrive as whole humans.

Gaming Lab

Supporting the Village: Family Partnership in Early Childhood Education

While "it takes a village to raise a child." may be true, it begs the question of who is supporting the village? Join the discussion about family support in early childhood education, including outreach, interventions, and resources.

About the presenters:



Director of the Office of Early Learning and Development, **Michael Tomas Mitchell**, has worked in early childhood education for over 15 years. The UNLV alum and former Teach for America corps member is motivated by his own experiences as a young learner to make upward social mobility through education attainable for all students.



Janice Lee is the state coordinator for the Nevada TACSEI Pyramid Model Partnership, leading training and technical assistance for early childhood programs. With more than 20 years of experience in the field, her work focuses on early childhood social-emotional development, challenging behavior, autism and developmental disabilities, and positive behavior support.



Associate Professor **Jenna Weglarz-Ward's** research explores the inclusion of young children with disabilities in community settings through family-centered practices. She serves on a variety of state and national early childhood-related councils, including the Nevada Early Childhood Advocacy Council, Council for Exceptional Children's early childhood division, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Hall of Fame

This honor recognizes individuals whose exceptional contributions in education, mental health, policy leadership, workforce development, and service have made a lasting impact on our community. These honorees represent the pinnacle of dedication and innovation. Their commitment to excellence continues to inspire positive change in Nevada and beyond. Induction into the Hall of Fame is a tribute to these leaders, showcasing the profound legacy they leave for future generations of educators, advocates, and changemakers. Join us in celebrating our 2026 class' achievements and their commitment to building a brighter, more equitable future for all.



Proud native Nevadan **Dale Erquiaga** is a nationally recognized strategist, policymaker, and storyteller working in education, workforce development, and nonprofit sectors. Dale previously served as the national president and CEO of Communities In Schools where he expanded service by more than 100,000 students, and raised over \$110 million. Dedicated to education throughout his career and across the state, he led community outreach and strategic planning as the executive director of CCSD's Government Affairs, Public Policy, and Strategic Planning office. He advocated for education reform and funding efforts as Nevada's superintendent of public instruction. Most recently, Dale helped the Nevada System of Higher Education through a difficult transition as the acting chancellor, striving for a unifying vision and direction to serve Nevada's diverse educational and workforce development needs.



Carolyn Reedom has served CCSD schools and Southern Nevada communities for more than four decades. She began her career in 1970 as a classroom teacher and advanced through nearly every level of school leadership, becoming CCSD's first Black female principal. Dr. Reedom spent 23 years as a principal and later served as assistant superintendent for the Southeast Region. As principal of John C. Vanderburg Elementary School, she led the creation of the \$1.4 million Rain Forest Biosphere and Marine Laboratory and guided the school to become CCSD's first state-designated High Achieving elementary school. At the district and regional levels, she helped launch CCSD's first international school and contributed to early efforts that evolved into the Standard Student Attire policy. Her commitment to education extends well beyond the district through decades of civic and community leadership.



Sandy Miller, is a proud graduate of CCSD schools and an even prouder UNLV College of Education alumni, having earned her bachelor's degree in special education and teaching. After teaching at Thomas Elementary School, she became Nevada's First Lady in 1989 and continued to make education her first priority for 10 years. Sandy led the creation of numerous family programs, such as the Nevada Institute for Children's Research & Policy, Family to Family Connection, and the Time To Teach program. CCSD honored her by naming the Sandy Searles Miller Academy for International Studies in recognition for her contributions. She continues her efforts with the Nevada Partnership for Inclusive Education and the board at Sunrise Hospital & Medical Center and Sunrise Children's Hospital.



Communities In Schools of Nevada (CIS) places full-time, professionally trained site coordinators in 117 Title I and high-needs schools statewide, supporting nearly 100,000 K-12 students facing barriers to academic success. By increasing access to critical resources, CIS helps students stay in school and graduate on time. Through a statewide network of more than 120 nonprofit, business, and agency partners, CIS brings the community into schools to meet students' unique needs. Support ranges from eyeglasses, dental and health care, and counseling to food, school supplies, clothing, and housing assistance. Using an evidence-based model of integrated student supports, or wraparound services, CIS works to close opportunity gaps. In the 2024-2025 school year, CIS case-managed high school seniors achieved a 97 percent graduation rate.

These inductees join our distinguished inaugural class:



Gary Ackerman



Peter Guzman



Lisa Morris-Hibbler



Wayne Tanaka



Boys & Girls Club of Southern Nevada

LEADING THE WAY IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

The UNLV College of Education proudly supports youth and adult apprenticeships that prepare educators and mental health professionals to strengthen Nevada's workforce.



Nevada Forward Apprenticeship Program

Students earn a bachelor's degree (with no out-of-pocket cost) while working full-time as a classroom educator.

Youth Rebel Start Academy

High school students earn dual enrollment credits while completing an apprenticeship in education, community health, or IT/cybersecurity.

School and Community Mental Health Worker Apprenticeship

Students earn a bachelor's degree while preparing for careers like youth wellness coach, youth advocate, and school counselor.



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Beyond Dual Enrollment: Reframing Early College as a Pathway to Identity Development, Opportunity, and Workforce Readiness

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Presented by:
Sebern Coleman Ph.D.

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We wish to acknowledge and honor the Indigenous communities of this region, and recognize that the university is situated on the traditional homelands of the Nuwuvi, Southern Paiute People. We offer gratitude for the land itself, for those who have stewarded it for generations, and for the opportunity to study, learn, work, and be in community with this land.

Tell us how we did

Complete our post-event survey.



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