

 school connect
SUMMIT



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Blood Donation

JANUARY 27, 2026

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@ GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY

3300 W. Camelback Road
Phoenix, AZ 85017



School blood drives save lives and inspire teens to give back. Nearly 10% of all donations come from high schools, and young donors often become lifelong supporters.

Hosting a drive teaches leadership and teamwork while helping patients who need blood every two seconds.



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SUMMIT 2026

Ignite
PARTNERSHIP

Welcome to the 12th Anniversary School Connect Summit!

What I love most about the School Connect Summit is the energy that comes from bringing together positive, passionate leaders who are deeply committed to bringing out the best in students—igniting their potential and shaping a bright future. I love the active, hands-on experience as we gather around tables, share our talents and experiences, and collaborate to solve real challenges together. And I love the way we genuinely care for one another along the way.

People like you inspire me to wake up every morning excited to do work that truly matters—together.

I couldn't be more excited to be together!

With sincere gratitude,

Tracey Beal
Founder & CEO, School Connect

Tracey



CHAMPIONS OF A Stronger Arizona

 FIRST THINGS FIRST

When kids start strong, the benefits ripple outward: better academic outcomes, healthier lives, and reduced burdens on social services. Join us and help make Arizona more resilient, equitable, and prosperous.



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FIRSTTHINGSFIRST.ORG/CHAMPION

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WIN BIG.



YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP

Phoenix highschoolers can apply to win upto\$3000 in scholarships for overcoming adversity and giving back to the community. Apply for FREE for the Outstanding Phoenix Youth Leader Award by March 1.

[Phoenix.gov/education](https://phoenix.gov/education)



EVENT HOST

Eric J. Rodriguez

EVENT HOST SPONSOR



*Innovation Strategist and Leadership Advisor
Host, The Future of Human Experience Podcast*

Eric has spoken at conferences and with organizations across the United States and internationally, engaging audiences across education, technology, nonprofit, and corporate sectors. His background spans engineering, operations, human resources, and global strategy, including more than a decade at Intel supporting leaders navigating large scale transformation.

He is also the host of The Future of Human Experience, a podcast that explores how leaders across industries are addressing real world challenges and intentionally designing more human centered organizations, systems, and learning environments. These conversations shape Eric's belief that the future will be defined not only by innovation, but by how thoughtfully we apply it in service of people and communities.

Eric's work focuses on helping leaders respond to change in ways that strengthen trust, clarity, and human connection, particularly where education, workforce readiness, and community impact intersect.

He welcomes continued dialogue with leaders who believe progress is measured not only by speed or scale, but by what and who we choose to prioritize.



Connect with Eric

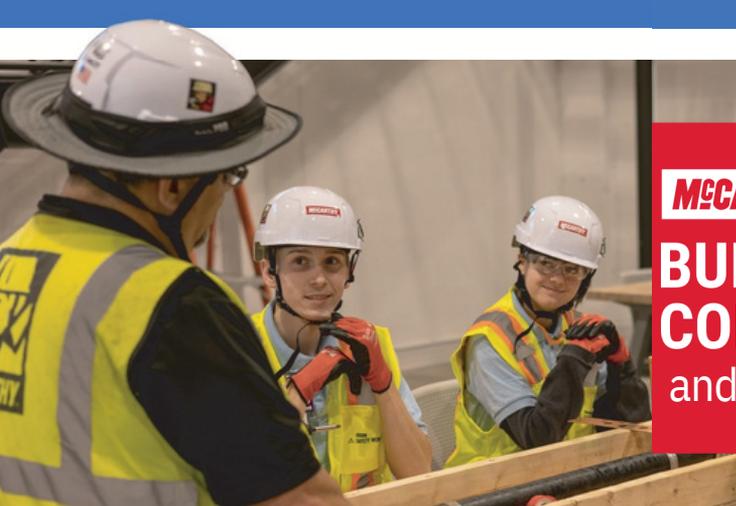
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MCCARTHY

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KEYNOTE

Kristy Siefkin

Keynote Speaker | CEO & Founder
Kristy Siefkin Communications

Keynote Sponsor: 

Kristy Siefkin helps leaders become more confident, persuasive communicators in high-visibility moments. She works with leaders and teams to strengthen executive presence, deliver clear and compelling messages, and communicate in ways that build trust and alignment and inspire action.

An Emmy-recognized journalist and executive communications expert, Kristy brings more than 20 years of experience broadcasting on NBC, CBS, FOX, Animal Planet, and Discovery, where she developed a deep understanding of how people process information and make decisions under pressure.

Today, Kristy works across education, nonprofit, public-sector, healthcare, and business organizations. Drawing on her research at Duke University in human behavior, Kristy's GoTo Speaker Method™ helps leaders communicate clearly on camera, on stage, in the boardroom, and one-on-one; build buy-in for important initiatives; and guide teams and communities through complex decisions and change.

When she's not speaking or coaching, you'll find Kristy road-tripping and hiking with her feisty Norwich terrier, Poppy Monsoon.



Keynotes | Group Workshops | Executive Coaching | Media
Training | On-Camera & Live Event Hosting



Connect with Kristy



kristysiefkin.com



AGENDA

7:30 AM Vendor Showcase

Hosted by: Showcase Emcee and Showcase Director

Dondi Rodriguez, *Pastor, Local & Global Outreach*, Pure Heart Church
Ramiro Alvarez, *Public Information Officer*,
Pendergast Elementary School District

9:00 AM Live Student Performances

Highland High School Concert Choir

Students, Highland High School, Gilbert Public Schools
Katie Bortnem, *Choir Director*

Welcome from Grand Canyon University

Dr. Carol Lippert, *Assistant Vice President, K-12 Educational Development*,
Grand Canyon Education

Student Performance Acknowledgment

Melinda Morrison Gulick, *CEO*, First Things First

Event Host Welcome: When Community Shines Brightly

Eric J. Rodriguez, *Innovation Strategist and Leadership Advisor*
Host, The Future of Human Experience Podcast

Advancing Life Saving Student Initiatives: Presenting Sponsor, Vitalant

Anna Oliver, *Senior Director, Donor Recruitment*, Vitalant

Founders Welcome and Story

School Connect, Pure Heart Church

Tracey Beal, *Founder & CEO*, School Connect
Dr. Dan Steffen, *Senior Pastor*, Pure Heart Church

School Impact Story: Greenway Middle School

- Shea Duryea, *Director of Community Relations & Programming*, School Connect
- Matt Lersch, *Principal*, Greenway Middle School, PV Schools
- Stacey Alejo, *Assistant Principal*, Greenway Middle School, PV Schools
- Jorge Ontiveros, *Principal*, North Canyon High School, PV Schools
- Efren Alejo, *Family Pastor, Youth Ministry*, Calvary North
- John Dowd, *Director of Community Engagement*, CORE Construction

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Pictured: Highland High School Concert Choir



**Highland High School
Concert Choir**



**Madison Rose Lane
Elementary School Choir**

Board of Directors

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Dr. Jen Cruz

John Dowd

Shelly Hornback

Dr. Robbie Koerperich

Jerome Parker

Dr. Dan Steffen

Dr. Paul Tighe

Zach Papuga

Subcommittee Members

Ramiro Alvarez	Dr. Robbie Koerperich
Arthur Brown	Rosey LaVine
Jessica Buttles	Danielle Lerner
Brian Capistran	Deb Lupnacca
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Anthony Hampton	Dr. Jason Reynolds
Shelly Hornback	Dondi Rodriguez
Dr. Jennifer Johnson	Kendra Smiley
Margaret Judson	Dr. Dan Steffen

The Power of Partnership

An Introduction to the School Connect CAFE

Shea Duryea, *Director of Community Relations & Programming,*
School Connect

Facilitated CAFE Table Conversations

Table Facilitators and Attendees

5 Key Conversations Shaping Education

How Teacher Retention, Literacy, Student Resilience, Student Attendance and Career Pathways Are Shaping the Landscape of Education

Dr. Jacqui Clay, *Cochise County Superintendent of Schools*

STEM Game Day Statewide

■ ACEC ARIZONA TEAM

Event Host: Eric J. Rodriguez

- **Jordan Kurlin, PE**, *Team A Section Manager, Roadway Engineering Group,*
Arizona Department of Transportation
- **Zach Lambros, PE**, *Senior Project Engineer, Land Development,* Dibble
- **Nicolai Oliden, PE**, *Southwest Geography-Highways West Group Leader,*
Jacobs
- **Mike Olson, PE**, *Project Manager,* Dibble

Valley Readers Literacy Partnership

Phoenix Suns/Phoenix Mercury Foundation

■ PARTICIPATING SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- Alhambra Elementary School District
- Laveen Elementary School District
- Tempe Elementary School District
- Washington Elementary School District

Levan Scott Academy Literacy Initiative

Kelli Packnett, *Vice President, Education & Engagement,*
Bridge of Grace Ministries

Amy Todia, *Love Our Schools Director,* Love Fort Wayne

Facilitated Table Conversations: The 5 Key Conversations Shaping Education

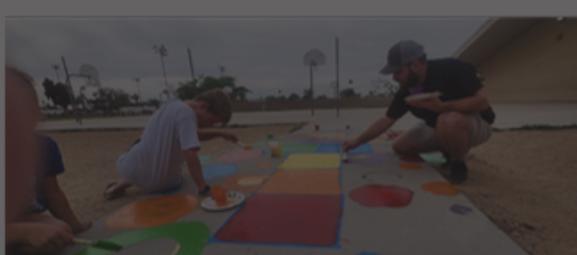
Dr. Jaqui Clay, Eric J. Rodriguez, Table Facilitators and Attendees



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AGENDA

The Strength and Resilience of Miami Unified

Dr. Richard Ramos, *Superintendent*, Miami Unified School District
TreShawn Kumparak, *Student*, Miami Unified School District

Keynote Introduction

Paul Kubik, *Project Director*, Southwest Education Group,
McCarthy Building Companies

Keynote Address

Get the Story Straight: Communication that Builds Stronger Partnerships

Kristy Siefkin, *Keynote Speaker | CEO & Founder*, Kristy Siefkin Communications

Table Discussions

- Interactive Table Conversations, Facilitated by Kristy Siefkin

Student Performance Acknowledgment

Brenna Pirozok, *BSW, MAOL, Manager of School Partnerships*, Right At School

Live Student Performance

Madison Rose Lane Elementary School Choir, Madison Rose Lane Elementary,
Madison Elementary School District
Adam Roach, *Choir Director*

Event Host Announcements and Closing Remarks

Eric J. Rodriguez, *Innovation Strategist and Leadership Advisor*
Host, The Future of Human Experience podcast

Thank You Annual Partners!



SPEAKERS

SUMMIT 2026
Ignite
PARTNERSHIP



Dondi Rodriguez



Ramiro Alvarez



Eric J. Rodriguez



Melinda
Morrison Gulick



Katie Bortnem



Dr. Carol Lippert



Anna Oliver



Dr. Dan Steffen



Tracey Beal



Jorge Ontiveros



Matt Lersch



Stacey Alejo



Efren Alejo



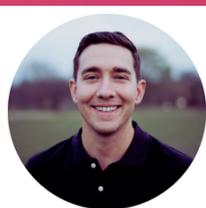
John Dowd



Shea Duryea



Dr. Jacqui Clay



Jordan Kurlin



Zach Lambros



Nicolai Oliden



Mike Olson

SPEAKERS



Kelli Packnett



Amy Todia



Dr. Richard Ramos



Treshawn Kumparak



Paul Kubik



Kristy Siefkin



Brenna Pirozok



Adam Roach



Michael Wilson



Dr. Robbie Koerperich



Sammy Chagolla



Danielle Airey



Dr. Jennifer Johnson



Todd Steffen



CHASSE Building Team is a proud supporter of
School Connect AZ

Check out how we're
'Building to make a difference...'
at CHASSE.us!

GenTech EDU

▶ MISSION

Prepare today's kids
for tomorrow's future.

▶ WHAT WE DO

▶ IMPACT NUMBERS

100+
Schools

350+
Classrooms

32,000
Students

GenTechEDU offers schools a turnkey solution for STEM education that can be flexibly integrated into the academic school day. GenTech provides everything needed: a cutting edge curriculum, all materials, and is taught by expert GenTech STEM instructors. GenTech programs introduce real world technology skills into classrooms preparing students for the future workforce.



CURRICULUM

- Hands on, industry aligned STEM curriculum focused on real-world applications.
- Exciting lessons like rockets, robotics, AI, drones, circuits, coding and cybersecurity.
- All K-12 Courses align with ADE, CTE, CS Standards



INSTRUCTORS

- GenTech instructors are college computer science majors and professionals with technical expertise.
- GenTech fills teacher shortages by integrating directly into the school day with flexible scheduling.



MATERIALS

- GenTech provides all the equipment, robots, digital devices, hardware, software, coding platforms, and electronics.
- GenTech provides onsite support for ongoing program sustainability.

gentechedu.com

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michael@gentechsupport.com

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Welcome to the Vendor Showcase Featuring:

EXHIBITORS

Thank You!

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THE SCHOOL + COMMUNITY *EVENT OF THE YEAR*

