

NON-TRADITIONAL & ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION SUMMIT

NAE 2026

Bridging Systems · Changing Lives

APRIL 7-8 · PUTNAM COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER



Event Agenda

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Wi-Fi Instructions

- Select the convention center’s wireless network from the available network list: **Welcome Center Guest**. Enter password **guestwireless** to sign in.
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Professional Learning Credits

The 2026 Non-Traditional & Alternative Education Summit received approval to offer TASL credit. Attendees not in TASL-mandated positions may obtain PDPs in accordance with their LEA or agency guidelines, CEO Credit for Directors of Schools, or CCFO (CPE) credit for finance-related certification. To earn professional learning credit, evidence of attendance must be demonstrated by completing all session feedback surveys.

Below is a breakdown of the credit hour opportunities for the 2026 Non-Traditional & Alternative Education Summit:

- **Tuesday:** 7 credit hours
- **Wednesday:** 4 credit hours

Certificates will be emailed to each participant within 30 days of the conclusion of the conference. Participants are responsible for using the certificate as evidence to request credit hours via their certification’s requirements.

Presentation Survey

Note: Please use this QR code to provide feedback for each breakout session. The survey will allow you to indicate the title of the session and can be submitted multiple times throughout the day to accommodate each session you attend.

This survey can also be found by clicking: [Session Feedback Form 2026 Non-Traditional & Alternative Education Summit – Fill out form](#)



2026 Non-Traditional & Alternative Education Summit Schedule

Tuesday, Apr. 7

TIME	DETAILS	SPEAKER
7:30 – 8:30 a.m. CT	Registration	
8:30 – 8:45 a.m. CT	Welcome	Debby Thompson
8:45 – 9:45 a.m. CT	Future Ready TN	Deborah Knoll
9:45 – 10:00 a.m. CT	Break	
10:00 – 11:15 a.m. CT	TRIAD Presentation	Bethany Creech
12:30 – 1:20 p.m. CT	Session Block 1	See session block schedule.
1:30 – 2:10 p.m. CT	Session Block 2	
2:40 – 3:30 p.m. CT	Session Block 3	
3:30 p.m. CT	Adjourn	

Wednesday, Apr. 8

TIME	DETAILS	SPEAKER
7:30 – 8:30 a.m. CT	Registration	
8:30 – 9:20 a.m. CT	Session Block 4	See session block schedule.
9:30 – 10:20 a.m. CT	Session Block 5	
10:30 – 11:20 a.m. CT	Session Block 6	
11:20 p.m. CT	Adjourn	

Session Block Schedule

		Waterfall 1 – Legal	Waterfall 2 – Alt Ed	Waterfall 3 - Facility
Tues. April 7	BLOCK 1 12:30 – 1:20 p.m.	Individualized Advising Deborah Knoll	When a Student Tells You No: Task Refusal and Behavioral Regulation in the Classroom Bethany Creech	Strengthening Support: A DCS Collaborative Roundtable Martina E. Stump
	BLOCK 2 1:30 – 2:10 p.m.	Justice-Involved Youth Erin Christian	From Crisis to Restoration: Practical Restorative & Mental Health Strategies for Alternative School Success Dr. Momodou Keita	The Fundamentals of IEPs Susan Userly
	BLOCK 3 2:40 – 3:30 p.m.	Building Postsecondary Pathways in Non-Traditional and Alternative Education Catherine Bledsoe	Looking at Student Learning Together Mid Cumberland CORE Team	Best Instructional Practices for English Learners in an Alternative Setting Raven Cleveland
		Waterfall 1 – Legal	Waterfall 2 – Alt Ed	Waterfall 3 - Facility
Wed. April 8	BLOCK 4 8:30 – 9:20 a.m.	Overview of Special Education Requirements in Juvenile Detention Centers Scott Indermuehle & Taylor Jenkins	Cultivating Self-Regulated Learning in Our Students Dr. Suzie Estes	RTI² for Academics and Behavior (RTI²-A+B) Aligned Implementation and Data-Based Decision-Making Dr. Haley Richardson
	BLOCK 5 9:30 – 10:20 a.m.	Avoiding Claims of Discriminatory Discipline Shaundraya Hersey & Courtney Boykin	Wild Geese: Building Restorative Cultures That Create Change Josiah Holland	Elevating Student Experiences through Data Dr. Michelle V. Wilson
	BLOCK 6 10:30 – 11:20 a.m.	Legal Roundtable Shaundraya Hersey	Meet the Council Roundtable Leslie Watson	Supporting Justice-Involved Youth: A JDC Dialogue Erin Christian

2026 Non-Traditional & Alternative Education Summit

Session Descriptions

General Sessions

Future Ready TN: A Unified Strategy for Preparing Every Student for Postsecondary, Workforce and Military Success

Tennessee's FutureReadyTN framework aligns education, workforce, and economic priorities to ensure every student graduates with a clear pathway to success. This session explores the state's Four Pillars strategy—Credentials of Value, Individualized Advising, Seamless Transitions, and Work Based Learning—and how these pillars work together to transform the high school experience. Participants will also learn how the FutureReadyTN Portal integrates data, pathway tools, and workforce insights to support informed decision-making for students, educators, and employers.

Deborah Knoll | Assistant Commissioner of Postsecondary, Workforce, CTE and Military Readiness

Reframing Behavior: Trauma-Informed Practices

This session will highlight common needs of students with behavioral concerns in the school setting. The link between trauma and behavior will be covered, as well as information about common difficulties for students who may have had adverse experiences, and how this can inform behavior support for these students.

Bethany Creech, M.S., BCBA, LBA | TRIAD

Breakout Session Descriptions

Avoiding Claims of Discriminatory Discipline

This session is designed to help school and LEA staff understand federal civil rights laws and how to avoid claims of discriminatory treatment when disciplining students. It focuses on how to ensure discipline practices are applied fairly, consistently, and lawfully across student groups.

Shaundraya Hersey and Courtney Boykin | Tennessee Department of Education

Best Instructional Practices for English Learners in an Alternative Setting

English Learners in alternative and non-traditional school settings often receive limited instructional time while navigating interrupted schooling, trauma, and gaps in academic language development. This session provides educators with a practical overview of key foundations of second language acquisition and demonstrates how those principles translate into effective classroom practice. Participants will examine concepts such as stages of language development and comprehensible input, and then apply those ideas through high-impact instructional strategies designed for short instructional blocks and flexible learning environments, using interactive activities and modeled examples.

Raven Cleveland | Statewide Manager of English Learners

Building Postsecondary Pathways in Non-Traditional and Alternative Education

This session focuses on intentional postsecondary transition planning for students in nontraditional and alternative education settings. Participants will explore how aligned IEP transition planning, student voice, and coordinated services can support meaningful pathways to employment, education, and independent living, even in high-mobility environments.

Catherine Bledsoe | Manager of Special Education Postsecondary Transition

Cultivating Self-Regulated Learning in our Students

This session examines how educators can intentionally design classrooms that foster self-regulated, self-directed learners. Participants will explore key structures—coherence, clarity, consistency, connection, and choice—and leave with practical strategies they can immediately implement to help students take ownership of their learning.

Dr. Suzie Estes | WCS Alternative School

This session examines how educators can intentionally design classrooms that foster self-regulated, self-directed learners. Participants will explore key structures - coherence, clarity, consistency, connection, and choice and leave with practical strategies they can immediately implement to help students take ownership of their learning.

Dr. Suzie Estes | WCS Alternative Learning Center

Elevating Student Experiences through Data

This session explores how intentional data collection and use can strengthen student experiences in nontraditional and alternative learning environments. Participants will learn how data gathered throughout admission, instruction, and discharge processes informs individualized planning, supports continuity of learning, and improves outcomes for students with complex needs

Dr. Michelle V. Wilson | Director of Education, Compass Intervention Center and McDowell Center for Children

From Crisis to Restoration: Practical Restorative & Mental Health Strategies for Alternative School Success

Learn practical restorative and mental health strategies for responding to student crises in alternative school settings. This session introduces a clear, repeatable approach that promotes safety, accountability, and reengagement in learning.

Momodou Keita | Director of Student Services, Barlett City Schools

Individualized Advising

This session highlights how High School and Beyond Plans support personalized advising that helps students clarify goals and plan meaningful postsecondary, workforce, or military pathways. Participants will examine student impact, implementation lessons, and practical resources that strengthen advising practices, particularly in alternative and flexible learning settings.

Deborah Knoll | Assistant Commissioner of Postsecondary, Workforce, CTE and Military Readiness

Justice-Involved Youth

This session provides an overview of educational requirements and responsibilities for serving students placed in juvenile detention centers. Participants will review state policy, compliance considerations, attendance and coding practices, and resources that support continuity of education and student rights during detention and reentry.

Erin Chistian | Non-Traditional Education Programs Manager

Legal Roundtable

This roundtable provides an opportunity for participants to engage in guided discussion on current legal considerations impacting schools and alternative education settings. Attendees will ask questions and gain practical insights to support legally sound decision-making in day-to-day practice.

Office of General Council | Tennessee Department of Education

Looking at Student Learning Together

Join ELA, Math, SPED, CTE, and Data consultants from the Mid Cumberland CORE team for an informal round table conversation about how educators use different sources of information—from formative checks for understanding to larger assessment data—to guide instructional decisions. Together, we will explore practical ways to notice patterns in student learning, adjust instruction, and support students in making meaningful progress. Whether you're looking for new ideas, want to share what's working in your program, or simply want to connect with others doing similar work, we hope you'll pull up a chair and join the conversation.

Mid Cumberland CORE Team | TN Department of Education

Meet the Council Roundtable

This session offers a brief introduction to the Alternative Education Advisory Council and its work to support high-quality non-traditional learning. Attendees will gain an understanding of the council's purpose and priorities, followed by an open Q&A for insights and discussion.

Facilitated by: Leslie Watson | Alternative Education NEP Program Manager

Overview of Special Education Requirements in the JDC Setting

This session will cover the overarching federal and state requirements for serving students with disabilities in juvenile detention centers. The session will also focus on the requirements for completing a compliant prior written notice.

Taylor Jenkins and Scott Indermuehle | Tennessee Department of Education

RTI² for Academics and Behavior (RTI2-A+B) Aligned Implementation and Data-Based Decision-Making

This session provides an overview of aligned RTI² implementation for both academic and behavioral supports. Participants will learn how to use multiple data sources to identify student needs, design tiered interventions, monitor progress, and make informed instructional and referral decisions that support student success.

Haley Richardson | Sr. Manager of Intervention, Academics

Strengthening Support: A DCS Collaborative Roundtable

Join us for a guided conversation with the DCS Education staff. We will discuss areas of concern and in need of improvement, approaches to best support student outcomes, utilizing funding streams effectively, and other collaborative areas of focus that may arise.

Martina E. Stump | Department of Children's Services

Supporting Justice-Involved Youth

This discussion focuses on strategies and practices that support the academic, social, and emotional needs of justice-involved youth. Participants will explore collaboration across education and juvenile justice systems, examine common challenges, and share approaches that promote continuity, belonging, and successful reentry into learning environments.

Facilitated by: Erin Christian | Non-Traditional Education Program Manager

The Fundamentals of IEPs

This session will provide an overview of the components of a high-quality, student-centered IEP. The objective is to ensure educators feel confident in addressing the components of an IEP beyond compliance expectations.

Susan Usery | Senior Director of Special Education Programs

When a Student Tells You No: Task Refusal and Behavioral Regulation in the Classroom

This session will present a simple method to de-escalate students who exhibit chronic refusal and increase the likelihood of their long-term success and cooperation in the classroom.

Bethany Creech, M.S., BCBA, LBA | TRIAD

Wild Geese: Building Restorative Cultures That Create Change

This session explores how restorative practices and trauma-informed approaches can shift schools from managing behavior to creating meaningful change. Participants will examine student motivation, reflect on their program's mission, and learn frameworks that build stronger, more supportive school cultures.

Josiah Holland | Williamson County Schools