

RISING TOGETHER



Guiding Every Student Higher



2026 Federal Programs Institute

AUGUST 25-27 • Chattanooga Convention Center



McKinney-Vento
Homeless Programming Day



Extended Learning Project
Director Institute

Event Agenda

Table of Contents

Wi-Fi Instructions 2

2026 Federal Programs Institute Schedule 3

 Tuesday, Aug. 25 3

 Wednesday, Aug. 26 3

 Thursday, Aug. 27 3

Breakout Sessions Day 1 4

Breakout Sessions Day 2 5

Breakout Sessions Day 3 5

2026 Federal Programs Institute Session Descriptions 6

 General Sessions 6

Breakout Session Descriptions 7

Professional Learning Credits 13

Chattanooga Convention Center Map 13

Thank You 14

Wi-Fi Instructions

- Select the wireless network from the available network list: **ChattConventionCtr.**
- There is not a password required.

2026 Federal Programs Institute Schedule

Tuesday, Aug. 25

TIME	DETAILS	SPEAKER	ROOM
7:30 – 8:15 a.m.	Registration		Lobby
8:15 – 8:25 a.m.	Welcome	Jonathan Criswell Debby Thompson	Ballroom
8:25 – 8:40 a.m.	Red Bank High School Band	Hamilton Co. Schools	Ballroom
8:40 – 10:05 a.m.	Panel: Rising Together: A Tennessee Federal Programs Conversation	Angelia Askins Darrell Wooden Krista Cole Ronnie Mincey	Ballroom
10:05 – 10:20 a.m.	Break		
10:20 – 11:30 a.m.	Session Block 1	See next section	See next section
11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)		
1:00 – 2:10 p.m.	Session Block 2	See next section	See next section
2:10 – 2:35 p.m.	Refreshment Break		
2:35 – 3:45 p.m.	Session Block 3	See next section	See next section
3:45 p.m.	Adjourn		

Wednesday, Aug. 26

TIME	DETAILS	SPEAKER	ROOM
7:30 – 8:15 a.m.	Registration / Help Desk		Lobby
8:15 – 8:30 a.m.	Welcome & Announcements	Debby Thompson	Ballroom
8:30 – 10:00 a.m.	Bruman Federal Program Updates	Julia Martin	Ballroom
10:00 – 10:15 a.m.	Break		
10:15 – 11:25 a.m.	Session Block 4	See next section	See next section
11:25 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch (on your own)		
1:00 – 2:10 p.m.	Session Block 5	See next section	See next section
2:10 – 2:35 p.m.	Refreshment Break		
2:35 – 3:45 p.m.	Title I Eligibility: Reaching New Summits Through Exceptions	Maryanne Durski Debby Thompson	Ballroom
3:45 p.m.	Adjourn		

Thursday, Aug. 27

TIME	DETAILS	SPEAKER	ROOM
7:30 – 8:15 a.m.	Registration / Help Desk		Lobby
8:15 – 8:25 a.m.	Welcome & Announcements	Debby Thompson	Ballroom
8:25 – 8:50 a.m.	Blazing the Trail: Modernizing ePlan	Debby Thompson	Ballroom
8:50 – 9:35 a.m.	Trailside Insights from Census Data	Debby Thompson	Ballroom
9:35-9:50 a.m.	Break		
9:50 – 11:00 a.m.	Session Block 6	See next section	See next section
11:00 a.m.	Adjourn		

Breakout Sessions Day 1

	Room 3	Room 4	Room 5	Room 6	Room 9/10
Session Block 1 10:20 – 11:30 a.m.	Providing Stability, Guiding Success: Supporting Youth in Foster Care Jackie Jacobson	Guiding Programs Higher: Essential Insights for Every Director Mick Shuran	Routes to the Summit: Strengthening EL Program Models for the Climb Ahead Raven Cleveland	Climbing Together: Navigating Federal Civil Rights and State Law Chelsea Morgan Josselyne Blackard	Rising Through Equity: A Practical Guide to Comparability Compliance Lynn Dotson
Session Block 2 1:00 – 2:10 p.m.	Guiding Opportunity Higher: Strengthening Neglected and Delinquent Programs Erin Yarbrow Christian	Designed to Rise: Building Digital Workflows that Strengthen Title Program Compliance Ted Fuller	Compliance that Supports the Climb: The ESL Rule in Real-World Contexts Hannah Gribble	Charting the Trail from Policy to Practice Emily Cornute	Rising Above Barriers: Collaboration Strategies for Serving Students Experiencing Homelessness Vanessa Waters
Session Block 3 2:35 – 3:45 p.m.	Rising Together Through Flexibility: Ed-Flex in Tennessee Brinn Obermiller	Finding the Path Forward: Common ESSA Findings and Strategies for Success Heather Farley	Leading the Climb: A Title III Director Panel Hannah Gribble LEA Representatives	Climbing Together: Navigating Federal Civil Rights and State Law Chelsea Morgan Josselyne Blackard	Rising Together: Trail to Success: Understanding Student Homelessness Through Illustrations and Systems Support Vanessa Waters

Session has been or will be repeated.

Session presented by or with district leadership.

Breakout Sessions Day 2

	Room 3	Room 4	Room 5	Room 6	Room 9/10
Session Block 4 10:15 – 11:25 a.m.	Rising Together Through Flexibility: Ed-Flex in Tennessee Brinn Obermiller	Building Strong Foundations: Procurement and Contract Management for Federal Programs Taffe Bishop	Every Tier Counts: How to use ESSA Evidence to Guide Student Success Henry LaFallotte	Guiding Student Success Through Family Engagement Alisha Gilmore	Reaching Higher with Title II, Part A: Investing in Educators, Elevating Student Success Mark Gullion, Michelle Carter, Michelle Harless, Trassey Evans
Session Block 5 1:00 – 2:10 p.m.	Finding the Path Forward: Common ESSA Findings and Strategies for Success Heather Farley	Charting the Course: Strategic Funding for Student Success Allison Smith, , Ben Duffey, Elizabeth Johnson, Julia Sells Ladona Herrin, Stacy Alexander, Thersa McCormick	Compliance that Supports the Climb: The ESL Rule in Real-World Contexts Hannah Gribble	The Path to Better ESSA Data Teri Manning	Consult to Elevate Equitable Services: Meaningful Consultation in Action Michelle Harless

Breakout Sessions Day 3

	Room 3	Room 4	Room 5	Room 6	Room 9/10
Session Block 6 9:50 – 11:00 a.m.	Trailblazing Strong Internal Controls: Navigating the Path to Federal Program Compliance Shelby Ownbey	Building Strong Foundations: Procurement and Contract Management for Federal Programs Taffe Bishop	Routes to the Summit: Strengthening EL Program Models for the Climb Ahead Raven Cleveland	Guiding Student Success Through Family Engagement Alisha Gilmore	Rising Through Equity: A Practical Guide to Comparability Compliance Lynn Dotson

Session has been or will be repeated.

Session presented by or with district leadership.

2026 Federal Programs Institute Session Descriptions

General Sessions

Blazing the Trail: Modernizing ePlan

As every great trail evolves, improvements help travelers navigate with greater ease and confidence. Join us for an update on ePlan modernization, where we'll showcase efforts to simplify grant management, improve efficiency, and create a more user-friendly experience. You'll get a look at key enhancements, conceptual designs, and future plans as we continue shaping a better journey through the grant lifecycle.

Debby Thompson | Assistant Commissioner, Federal Programs and Oversight

Bruman Federal Update: News from Congress and Federal Agencies

In this session, attendees will hear the latest on federal policy and actions that impact education programs. From tracking funding allocations and the appropriations process to learning about a potential shift in grants management rules, this session will help attendees understand the funding and administrative changes that may be coming down the road and be prepared to address them. The session will also discuss highlights in educational flexibility, interagency agreements, and what Congress and federal agencies have planned for the future of education grants.

Julia Martin | Director of Policy and Government Affairs, Bruman Group

Rising Together: A Tennessee Federal Programs Conversation, *a Panel*

Like any successful summit, strong federal programs require collaboration, adaptability, and trusted guides along the way. Join Tennessee federal programs leaders from across the state for a candid conversation on grants management, compliance, implementation, and the changing federal landscape. Through shared experiences and practical insights, panelists will explore challenges, opportunities, and strategies that help districts support student success. Leave with new ideas, fresh perspectives, and connections to help your district continue the climb.

Scott Indermuehle | Sr. Director, IDEA & NEP Programs, with panelists

Angelia Askins | Hamilton County Schools

Darrell Wooden | Jackson-Madison County Schools

Krista Cole | Coffee County Schools

Ronnie Mincey | Union County Public Schools

Trailside Insights from Census Data

The path forward begins with understanding the landscape. Just as hikers rely on trail markers to stay on course, education leaders can use census data to identify emerging trends, anticipate challenges, and uncover opportunities. Join us for a practical session on gaining an understanding of census components to support strategic planning, data-driven decisions, and stronger outcomes for students.

Debby Thompson | Assistant Commissioner, Federal Programs and Oversight

Breakout Session Descriptions



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.

[You may also access this survey by clicking this link.](#)

Building Strong Foundations: Procurement and Contract Management for Federal Programs

Strong stewardship of federal funds begins with sound procurement practices. This session provides an overview of current procurement and contract requirements under Uniform Guidance, including documented procedures, contractor oversight, conflict of interest standards, approved procurement methods, domestic preferences, and required cost and price analyses. Participants will gain practical insights to strengthen compliance, promote transparency, and ensure resources are managed effectively to support student success.

Taffe Bishop | Regional Finance Consultant

Charting the Trail from Policy to Practice

Turning policy into action requires more than a clear vision. This session explores how organizations can navigate the path from policy development to implementation, overcome challenges, and achieve meaningful outcomes through effective collaboration and strategy.

Emily Cornute | Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs

Charting the Course: Strategic Funding for Student Success

Navigating federal funding opportunities can be complex, but thoughtful planning can create a clearer path to improved outcomes. This panel session will highlight how grant consolidation and ESSA flexibility can help school leaders maximize resources, strengthen school improvement efforts, and create greater impact for students and educators alike.

Allison Smith | Crockett County Schools

Ben Duffey | Alamo City Schools

Elizabeth Johnson | Pickett County Schools

Ladona Herrin | McKenzie Special School District

Julia Sells | Alvin C. York Institute

Stacy Alexander | Haywood County Schools

Theresa McCormick | Hardin County Schools

Climbing Together: Navigating Federal Civil Rights and State Law

Just as a successful mountain trek requires understanding the terrain, following trail markers, and staying prepared for changing conditions, ensuring compliance with federal and state education laws requires a clear understanding of the legal landscape. This session provides a practical overview of federal civil rights obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and their intersection with Tennessee law and rules. Participants will explore how federal and state requirements work together to protect students from discrimination, promote equal access to educational opportunities, and help districts confidently navigate the path to compliance.

Chelsea Morgan | Assistant Counsel

Josselyne Blackard | Assistant Counsel

Compliance that Supports the Climb: The ESL Rule in Real-World Contexts

Just as every hike presents new terrain and unexpected turns, supporting multilingual learners requires thoughtful navigation of Tennessee ESL requirements in day-to-day school settings. This session provides Title III leaders with an opportunity to work through realistic school-based scenarios, explore common compliance challenges, and strengthen their understanding of state expectations. Through guided discussion and practical problem-solving, participants will gain strategies to help them stay on the trail toward program compliance while successfully supporting multilingual learners along the journey.

Hannah Gribble | Title III & Migrant Education Program Grants Manager

Consult to Elevate Equitable Services: Meaningful Consultation in Action

Meaningful consultation is the foundation of effective Equitable Services. This session provides an overview of federal requirements, the roles and responsibilities of local education agencies (LEAs), and best practices for ensuring equitable access to federally funded programs for eligible private school students, educators, and families. Participants will explore the consultation process, FY28 agreement updates, compliance documentation, and practical strategies for building collaborative partnerships that support successful implementation and help all students reach higher levels of achievement.

Michelle Harless | Federal Programs Ombudsman and Title II Grant Manager

Designed to Rise: Building Digital Workflows that Strengthen Title Program Compliance

When compliance is built into everyday processes, schools can spend less time managing paperwork and more time supporting student success. This session explores how districts can leverage Google Forms, Google Sheets, and automated workflows to embed accountability, streamline fiscal management, strengthen audit readiness, and ensure consistent implementation of Title programs. Participants will leave with practical strategies for creating efficient, transparent systems that support stewardship of federal funds while helping guide every student higher.

Ted Fuller | Germantown Municipal School District

Every Tier Counts: How to Use ESSA Evidence to Guide Student Success

Rising together starts with making informed decisions that lead to stronger outcomes for students. In this session, participants will learn about the tiers of ESEA Evidence, explore resources for identifying evidence-based programs, and review new CFA requirements related to evidence. Attendees will leave better equipped to select and support initiatives that help schools and students continue reaching higher levels of success.

Henry LaFollette | East TN ESEA Coordinator

Finding the Path Forward: Common ESSA Findings and Strategies for Success

Strong compliance systems help ensure every student receives the support and opportunities needed to succeed. This session reviews the most common ESSA monitoring findings across federal programs, including Title I, Part A; Title I, Part C; English Learner programs; and supports for students experiencing homelessness. Participants will gain practical strategies for correcting findings, strengthening program implementation, and building sustainable processes that promote compliance and positive student outcomes.

Heather Farley | Director of ESEA Oversight

Guiding Opportunity Higher: Strengthening Neglected and Delinquent Programs

Supporting students in neglected and delinquent programs requires intentional planning, strong implementation, and continuous improvement. This session will guide LEAs through program requirements for Title I, Part A- Neglected and Title I, Part D, Subparts 1 and 2, while exploring practical strategies for planning, funding, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation. Participants will leave with tools and resources to strengthen compliance, improve program outcomes, and help students overcome barriers to success.

Erin Yarbrow Christian | Non-Traditional Educational Programs Manager

Guiding Programs Higher: Essential Insights for Every Director

Successful leadership requires both preparation and collaboration. Join TAFPA officers and colleagues from across the state as they discuss the top priorities every director should be monitoring, strategies for overcoming common challenges, and practical approaches that support effective program implementation and long-term success.

Mick Shuran | Director of Federal Programs, TAFPA President

Guiding Student Success Through Family Engagement

Guiding every student higher requires engaging families as active partners in the educational journey. Participants will explore Title I, Part A engagement requirements and discover strategies for creating welcoming, accessible opportunities that foster trust, strengthen school-family connections, and support improved outcomes for all students.

Alisha Gilmore | Middle TN ESEA Coordinator

Leading the Climb: A Title III Director Panel

Effective English learner programs are built through collaboration, problem-solving, and continuous improvement. Join experienced Title III leaders as they discuss common challenges, share successful practices, and offer practical guidance on program management, teacher support, compliance, family engagement, and data-driven decision-making.

Hannah Gribble | Title III & Migrant Education Program Grants Manager

Representatives from Maury County Schools, Putnam County Schools, and Robetson County Schools

Providing Stability, Guiding Success: Supporting Youth in Foster Care

Educational stability creates the foundation for student success. This session explores the ESEA requirements related to supporting youth in foster care, including the roles of local education agencies and child welfare partners. Participants will examine current research, promising practices, and collaborative strategies that help ensure students in foster care remain connected, supported, and positioned to achieve their full potential.

Jackie Jacobson | Non-Traditional Educational Programs Manager

Reaching Higher with Title II, Part A: Investing in Educators, Elevating Student Success

Effective educators are at the heart of student achievement. Join this panel discussion to explore strategic approaches for leveraging Title II, Part A funds to strengthen teacher development, support retention efforts, maximize instructional coaching, and align professional learning with identified needs. Participants will also receive an overview of the purpose of Title II funding and key fiscal considerations that support effective and compliant implementation.

Mark Gullion | Rutherford County Schools

Michelle Carter | Rutherford County Schools

Michelle Harless | Federal Programs Ombudsman and Title II Grant Manager

Trassey Evans | Arlington City Schools

Rising Through Equity: A Practical Guide to Comparability Compliance

As we work to guide every student higher, ensuring equitable access to resources remains a critical responsibility. This session explores the annual comparability requirement under ESSA §1118(c)(1), helping LEAs understand how comparability demonstrates that Title I, Part A funds supplement, rather than replace, state and local resources. Participants will look "under the hood" at the variables used in comparability calculations, review alternative testing options, and gain practical guidance for completing and submitting the comparability supplement in ePlan while maintaining compliance and supporting equitable opportunities for student achievement.

Lynn Dotson | West TN ESEA Coordinator

Rising Together Through Flexibility: Ed-Flex in Tennessee

Tennessee became an Ed Flex Partnership State in 2026, creating new opportunities for LEAs to request flexibility from certain federal requirements while maintaining accountability for student outcomes. This session will provide participants with an overview of the Ed Flex program, Tennessee's FY27 waiver opportunities, and the potential future of Ed Flex in the state.

Brinn Obermiller | Sr. Director of ESEA Oversight

Rising Above Barriers: Collaboration Strategies for Serving Students Experiencing Homelessness

Guiding every student higher requires strong partnerships that remove barriers and create pathways to success. This session highlights how homeless liaisons collaborate with housing agencies, early childhood providers, transportation partners, child welfare organizations, community-based agencies, and educational stakeholders to support students experiencing homelessness. Participants will gain an overview of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program, explore federal collaboration requirements under McKinney-Vento and ESSA, and learn practical strategies from the field that help ensure students are identified, enrolled, supported, and empowered to thrive.

Deanna Savage | Overton County Schools

Twyla King | Haywood County Schools

Vanessa Waters | McKinney-Vento & Immigrant Grants Manager

Rising Together: Trail to Success: Understanding Student Homelessness Through Illustrations and Systems Support

This interactive session uses the Rising Together: Trail to Success Challenge interactive learning experience to deepen participants' understanding of the educational barriers faced by students experiencing homelessness and to strengthen implementation of McKinney-Vento and other federally funded ESEA/ESSA programs. Participants will engage in a hands-on learning experience that illustrates the challenges and supports that affect educational access, stability, and success for students experiencing housing instability.

Vanessa Waters | McKinney-Vento & Immigrant Grants Manager

Routes to the Summit: Strengthening EL Program Models for the Climb Ahead

Helping English learners reach new heights requires more than selecting the right program model. This session explores how thoughtful program design, high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), English Language Development (ELD) resources, and effective instructional practices work together to support language acquisition and academic success. Participants will identify opportunities to strengthen existing programs so that educators can rise together in their efforts to guide every English learner higher.

Raven Cleveland | Statewide Manager of English Learners

The Path to Better ESSA Data

Strong data helps us make better decisions for students. This session will explore practical strategies for improving ESSA data quality, strengthening reporting processes, and understanding how accurate data supports funding, reporting, risk analysis, and student success. Together, we can build confidence in our data and elevate outcomes for every learner.

Teri Manning | Data Governance Manager

Title I Eligibility: Reaching New Summits Through Exceptions

Just as experienced hikers know there is more than one path to the summit, Title I eligibility includes exception provisions that can create new opportunities for schools and districts. This session will explore key exceptions within Title I eligibility requirements and how they may be used to support eligible schools, expand access to services, and address unique local circumstances.

Deborah A. Thompson | Assistant Commissioner, Federal Programs & Oversight

Maryanne Durski | Chief Financial Officer

Trailblazing Strong Internal Controls: Navigating the Path to Federal Program Compliance

Lace up your boots and join fellow LEA leaders, federal programs directors, and fiscal staff for a guided trek through the essentials of effective internal controls. This session provides practical strategies for staying on course with federal requirements while managing ESEA/ESSA-funded programs, covering financial management, budgeting, cash management, compensation, travel, equipment, procurement, and documentation. Participants will leave with the tools and confidence needed to navigate compliance challenges and keep their federal programs moving steadily toward success.

Shelby Ownbey | Regional Finance Consultant

Professional Learning Credits

The 2026 Federal Programs Institute received approval to offer TASL credit. Attendees not in TASL-mandated positions may obtain PDPs according to one's 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 daily check-ins at the registration table and session surveys at the conclusion of each session.

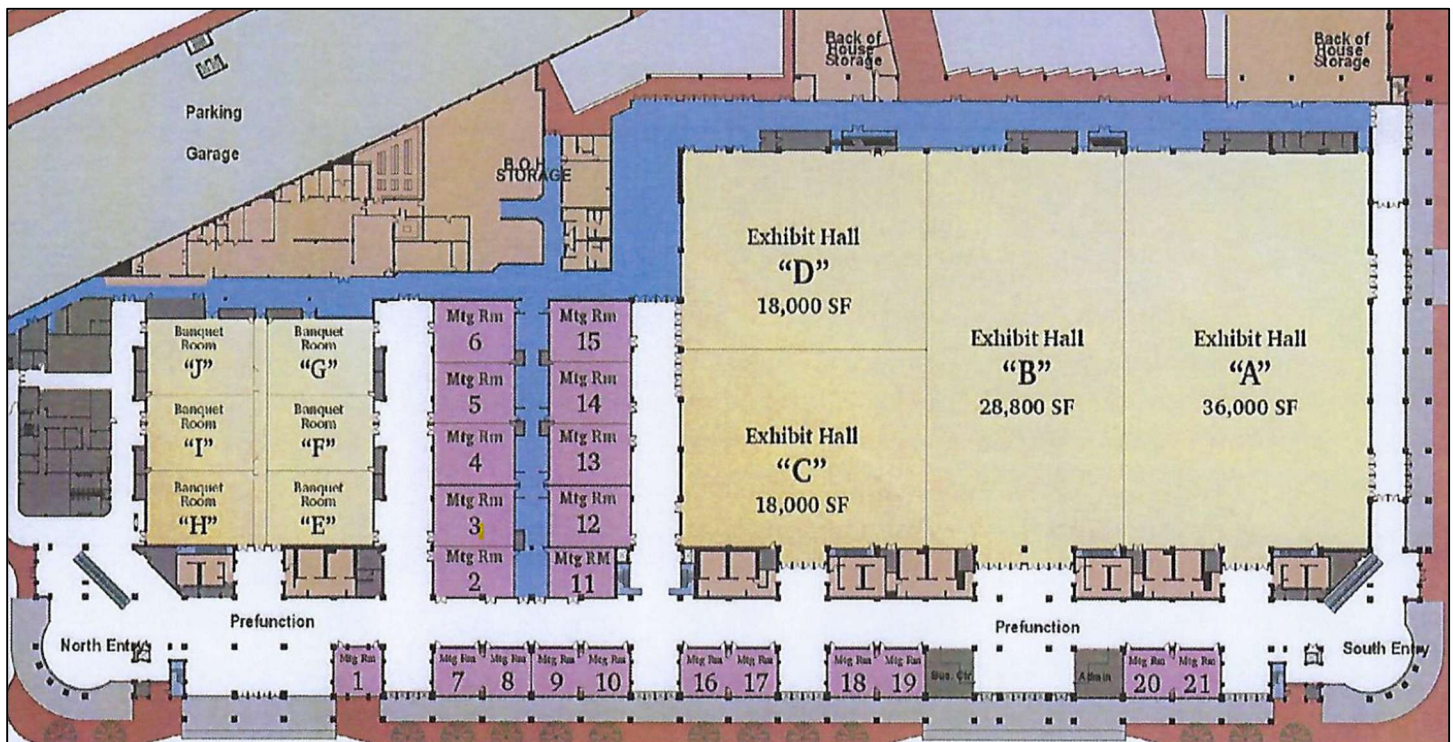
Below is a breakdown of the credit hour opportunities for the 2026 Federal Programs Institute:

Tuesday-Thursday

- Tuesday – 6 hours
- Wednesday – 6 hours
- Thursday – 4 hours

Certificates will be emailed to each participant by Sept. 15. Participants are responsible for using the certificate as evidence to request credit hours via their certification's requirements. Please contact Suzanne.Lewis@tn.gov with questions.

Chattanooga Convention Center Map



Thank You

We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the Red Bank High School Band, under the direction of Wimberly Kennedy, for joining us on opening day of the 2026 Federal Programs Institute (FPI). Their talent, enthusiasm, and dedication will help create a memorable start to our event and set a positive tone for the institute.



We are also grateful to our LEA panelists and presenters for sharing their knowledge, experiences, and best practices. Their willingness to engage in meaningful conversations and provide valuable insights will contribute greatly to the learning and collaboration that make this institute meaningful and impactful.



In addition, we would like to thank our attendees, department partners, and planning team members. Your participation and commitment to serving students and educators across Tennessee will make FPI a tremendous success. Together, we have the opportunity to learn from one another, strengthen professional connections, and explore new ways to support student achievement and educational excellence.

