

Catalyst: Business and Leadership Summit
Lancaster, PA | March 9-10, 2026
Religious vs. Non-Religious for Title Funding

Keynote	Non-Religious	Religious
#1 Private Schools: The Future is Ours!	100%	0%
#2 How Leaders Lose Their Way	100%	0%
#3 Potential & Pitfalls of AI	100%	0%
#4 Leadership in All Directions	100%	0%
Workshops	Non-Religious	Religious
Future-Ready Schools: Leading Hybrid Organizations with Clarity & Confidence	100%	0%
Why Entrepreneurship Programs Ignite Engagement, Attract Donors, and Become Self-Sustaining	100%	0%
Strategic Income Planning for Private Christian Schools	100%	0%
The Employee Lifecycle: Takeaways to Implement Quickly	100%	0%
The Blasphemy of the Empty Seat	100%	0%
Planning and Executing Major Gift Fundraising Meetings	100%	0%
Talking to Your Donors About the Federal Tax Credit Scholarship Program	100%	0%
Anchor Schools: Raising the Tide of Non-Public Education	100%	0%
Engaging Sharp Conflict and Volatility Redemptively	100%	0%
Proactive Recruitment	100%	0%
Faithful Stewards of Safety: Protecting Private School Communities with Wisdom & Purpose	100%	0%
Help. Our Campaign is Killing the Annual Fund. How to Win at Both!	100%	0%
A Strategic Financial Plan that Works	100%	0%
Federal Tax Credit Scholarship: What HOS Need to Know and Do Now	100%	0%
Called to Lead: Foundations for Women in Leadership	100%	0%
The Practical Applications of AI in Your School	100%	0%
Leave Laws: Mandatory & Optional	100%	0%
Overcoming Barriers to Improving Governance		
Funding Your Mission and Vision While Growing Your School's Giving Culture	100%	0%
Effective Strategic Planning: You Can Do It!	100%	0%
From Access to Sustainability: Using the Federal Tax Credit Scholarship Strategically	100%	0%
TOTAL AVERAGE	100%	0%



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Day 1		
Time	Title	Description
10:30 AM ET	Future-Ready Schools: Leading Hybrid Organizations with Clarity & Confidence *Dr. Cy Smith	This workshop equips school leaders to understand and master the unique hybrid nature of Christian schools—educational institution, ministry, and business—in a rapidly shifting cultural and competitive landscape. Drawing from real-world experience and current trends, we will explore how to strengthen mission clarity, build organizational excellence, and make strategic decisions that create long-term sustainability. Participants will leave with practical insights for navigating change, communicating impact, and ensuring their schools remain resilient and “future ready.”
11:15 AM ET	Why Entrepreneurship Programs Ignite Engagement, Attract Donors and Become Self-Sustaining *Stephen Carter	Schools across the country are discovering that well-designed entrepreneurship programs do more than teach business skills—they drive strong student engagement, re-energize donor groups (especially alumni parents), and become financially self-sustaining. In this session, we will share real case studies showing how student-run businesses can differentiate schools in competitive markets, reconnect supporters, and generate meaningful annual revenue, often after repaying a start-up loan within one to three years.
12:00 PM ET	LUNCH	
1:00 PM ET	Private Schools: The Future is Ours! *Simon Jeynes	Simon Jeynes challenges school leaders to look ahead with confidence and clarity in a rapidly changing educational landscape. Drawing on real-world insights and practical experience, this keynote explores the opportunities, responsibilities, and strategic choices that will shape the next chapter of private education. Attendees will leave encouraged, informed, and equipped to lead their schools boldly into the future.
1:50 PM ET	Roundtable Discussion	
2:10 PM	Break	
2:30 PM ET	Strategic Income Planning for Private Schools *Nita Carr	Private schools face growing financial pressures while working to remain accessible and sustainable. In this session, Dr. Nita Carr will explore how to develop a strategic, diversified income plan. Participants will learn practical approaches to strengthen financial sustainability through multiple revenue streams, including tuition strategy, grants, donations, and school choice programs. Attendees will gain actionable insights for long-term stability and growth.



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	<p>The Employee Lifecycle: Takeaways to Implement Quickly *Chris Loncar</p>	<p>HR professionals in schools often juggle multiple responsibilities, making it difficult to prioritize beyond urgent demands. This session explores each stage of the employee lifecycle—Attraction, Recruitment, Onboarding, Retention, Development, and Separation—and highlights practical, high-impact actions that support progress and a strong workplace culture. Ideal for HR departments of one or professionals managing HR alongside other roles, this session offers clear, realistic takeaways you can implement right away.</p>
	<p>The Blasphemy of the Empty Seat *Simon Jeynes</p>	<p>Bring your enrollment sheet to this workshop and take away at least two retention/recruitment strategies that will cost you nothing except time and execution. Let's ensure that next year our schools have more children in them than last year. Whether you are losing children, gaining children, or stable but not full, this workshop will have value for you.</p>
	<p>Planning & Executing Major Gift Fundraising Meetings *Chris Dudley</p>	<p>Master the art of successful major gift fundraising meetings in this engaging and interactive session for independent school heads and development professionals. AdvancementEDU Founder Chris Dudley provides a proven, step-by-step approach for the critical meetings in the major gift process. Whether you're new to major gift fundraising or looking to refine your skills, this program is an essential resource for taking your donor interactions to the next level.</p>
	<p>Talking with Your Donors About the Federal Tax Credit Scholarship Program *Phil Puleo</p>	<p>With the passage of the "One Big Beautiful Bill" (July 4, 2025) and the creation of the Educational Choice for Children's Act (ECCA), a new federal educational tax credit program was created. With this comes a lot of questions that we will explore during this session: (1) What does this tax credit scholarship credit look like and how can it be used? (2) What does this mean for my school and for my students? (3) How do I incorporate this into my financial aid program and annual budget? (4) How do I use this program in partnership with other state programs? (5) How do I talk to donors about this without harming my other annual fundraising efforts?</p>
	<p>Anchor Schools: Raising the Tide of Non-Public Education</p>	<p>As schools look toward 2030 and beyond, the need for strategic partnerships and sustainable operating models continues to grow. Phileo Shared Services addresses this need by offering collaborative solutions that create alternative revenue streams, strengthen educational quality, and support long-term sustainability in a competitive landscape. Developed by DCCS, Phileo fosters innovation and shared resources to</p>



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		help K-12 schools and values-based organizations thrive together. Backed by decades of experience and leadership, Phileo promotes regional collaboration so that schools, educators, and students all benefit from higher-quality outcomes.
3:15 PM ET	Break	
3:30 PM ET	Engaging Sharp Conflict and Volatility Redemptively *Chad Dirkse	Schools generally maintain positive relationships with families and stakeholders but change and challenging circumstances can sometimes lead to conflict, heightened emotions, and escalated concerns. This session explores practical frameworks for engaging productively during high-tension situations and navigating disagreement with clarity and professionalism. Participants will review real-world examples of complex parent interactions, along with proactive strategies to anticipate issues, de-escalate conflict, and strengthen trust during difficult moments.
	Proactive Recruitment *Chris Loncar	Recruitment remains a critical priority for today's school leaders. With sudden turnover, constrained budgets, and a limited pool of missionally aligned candidates, many organizations find themselves stuck in a cycle of reactive hiring. This session will explore how to break that cycle by developing forward-looking strategies that position your school to attract and retain high-quality, mission-fit talent—not just for today's vacancies, but for the future needs of your school.
	Faithful Stewards of Safety: Protecting Private School Communities with Wisdom & Purpose *Nathan Triezenberg	School leaders are entrusted with the care and guidance of their school communities. This workshop explores school safety through the lens of responsible leadership, ethical decision-making, and proactive preparation. Participants will gain a clear, values-aligned framework for making safety decisions with confidence and clarity, ensuring their schools remain places of trust, growth, and well-being while advancing their core mission.
	A Strategic Financial Plan that Works *John Klingstedt	Financial planning is meant to be a process to help in decision making for your future, not a final destination. This session will focus on financial planning best practices, as well as discussing how to make a financial plan that can be used and understood by all the leaders of an organization.
	Help. Our Campaign Is Killing the Annual Fund. How to Win at Both! *Tim Connor	Many private schools fear a significant decline in annual giving during a capital campaign and assume it is unavoidable—but it doesn't have to be. This session helps school leaders understand why annual giving remains critical before, during, and after a campaign, and how lack of planning often contributes to the very decline leaders hope to prevent. Participants will learn how intentional



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		strategy, thoughtful donor engagement, and realistic capacity planning can allow capital campaigns and annual fundraising to succeed simultaneously.
	Federal Tax Credit Scholarship: What HOS Need to Know and Do Now *Shanda Adams	This practical, 45-minute session equips Heads of School with a clear, leader-level understanding of the Federal Tax Credit Scholarship—without getting lost in policy details. Participants will explore how the program works, clarify the school's role versus the SGO's role, and identify the key leadership decisions required for readiness, including tuition policies, enrollment capacity, and communication strategy. The session will also address risk versus reward considerations and provide simple, ready-to-use messaging for boards and parents. Attendees will leave with a short list of immediate next steps and guidance on where to access ongoing support and resources.
4:15 PM ET	Networking Time	
5:00 PM ET	Dinner	
6:00 PM ET	How Leaders Lose Their Way *Peter Greer	This workshop invites leaders to reflect on how mission drift happens and how to guard against it over the long haul. Drawing insights from How Leaders Lose Their Way, participants will explore common pressures, distractions, and definitions of success that can quietly pull leaders off course. Through practical examples and guided reflection, attendees will gain tools to stay disciplined, build strong accountability, and lead with clarity, integrity, and long-term faithfulness to their mission.
7:30 PM ET	END OF DAY	
Day 2		
7:45 AM ET	Called to Lead: Foundations for Women in Leadership *Carol Aversa	By the end of this session, participants will gain clarity on the role of women in leadership, identify essential leadership traits, and reflect on their own leadership identity and purpose. They will also leave with practical, actionable strategies they can apply immediately in their leadership roles.
8:45 AM ET	Potential and Pitfalls of AI *Pete Marra	Artificial Intelligence is reshaping our world faster than most of us can keep up. Pete Marra of the Colson Center explores the promise AI holds for transforming how we live, work, and learn, alongside the very real risks it introduces to the future of education.
9:30 AM ET	Roundtable Discussions	
10:00 AM ET	BREAK	
10:15 AM ET	The Practical Applications of AI in Your School *Pete Marra	Artificial Intelligence is a powerful tool that is already changing the way schools operate. This session focuses on concrete AI applications, including demonstrations of AI tools, how to write



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		and use AI prompts, along with ways to streamline workflows, and support schools
	Overcoming Barriers to Improving Governance *Ken Schuetz	Regional leaders in independent school associations report alarming numbers of Head of School departures; many if not most of which can be linked to a poor relationship with their governing board of directors. Despite clear and present threat to schools, schools often choose not to invest in improving their governance functions. This session will explore common barriers to improving governance and lead a discussion on how to overcome those barriers.
	From Access to Sustainability: Using the Federal Tax Credit Scholarship Strategically *James Elliott	This 45-minute workshop helps school leaders move beyond short-term thinking to use the Federal Tax Credit Scholarship as a strategic tool for enrollment stability and long-term sustainability. Participants will examine current enrollment pressures, explore how scholarships can support access and mission-fit families, and learn how to plan for multi-year growth without resorting to reactive discounting. The session will highlight common pitfalls to avoid, including overpromising aid and misaligning internal communication. Attendees will engage in a brief planning exercise to clarify how the scholarship fits into their three-year strategy and who should own implementation moving forward.
	Leave Laws: Mandatory and Optional *Philip Scott	We will cover the main leave laws for medical and disability (FMLA and ADA) as well as the basics of PTO and vacation time policies.
	Funding Your Mission & Vision While Growing Your School's Giving Culture *Jan Stump	Learn how to strengthen your school's fundraising by adopting a relational approach to major gift development. This session introduces a practical framework for building a healthy, mission-aligned culture that treats donors as true partners while creating sustainable funding for long-term success. Participants will explore six core fundraising principles and gain tools for cultivating strong donor relationships, making confident asks, and achieving lasting results.
	Effective Strategic Planning: You Can Do It! *Doc Sherrill	Drawing on more than fifty years of leadership experience, this session focuses on three essential questions that must be addressed to build a strong strategic plan. The presenter will share four proven strategies that help answer these questions and provide clear guiding principles for effective planning. Participants will also learn a practical timeline for engaging all stakeholders in the process. Each attendee will receive a Strategic Planning Toolkit and two additional handouts designed to support future planning efforts.
11:00 AM ET	BREAK	



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11:15 AM ET	Leadership in All Directions *Kurt Unruh	Education today sits at the center of significant cultural change, placing tremendous responsibility on school leaders to steward people, resources, and systems with wisdom and clarity. In this keynote, Kurt Unruh invites leaders to reflect and re-center their work around three essential leadership directions: leading up, leading out, and leading inward. Drawing on real-world experience and practical insights, the session offers encouragement and a clear challenge to lead with excellence, focus, and resolve amid pressure, rapid change, and organizational complexity. Participants will leave grounded, encouraged, and equipped with a practical framework they can apply to their leadership roles and daily decisions.
12:15 PM CT	END OF DAY	