

STRONGER TOGETHER



CONFERENCE AGENDA

February 2-4, 2026
JW Marriott Austin





Sunday **FEB 1**

3:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Exhibitor Registration

Registration Opens

Monday **FEB 2**

7:30 AM

Registration Opens

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM

Breakfast with Exhibitors

8:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Pre-Conference Sessions

SESSION I

The Legal Panel

This pre-conference session will feature a panel of special education attorneys and will cover the latest legal updates, case law, and compliance guidance impacting how districts serve students with disabilities.

From due process trends and MDR decisions to evolving state and federal requirements, the panel will break down what you need to know now, and what to watch for next. Participants will have the opportunity to hear multiple legal perspectives, gain practical takeaways for their districts, and ask questions on the issues that matter most.

SESSION II

Powered Productivity 2026: AI, Apps and Tools to Get More Done with Less Stress

Beth Z, Your Nerdy Best Friend

Still drowning in emails? Passwords driving you nuts? Wondering how AI can actually help instead of just overwhelm you? You're in the right place.

Your Nerdy Best Friend, aka Author Beth Ziesenis, is back with a newly updated, power-packed workshop that tackles your tech troubles head-on. You'll explore the latest tools, apps and AI shortcuts that actually make your workday easier—without breaking the budget or making your head explode.

This isn't tech for tech's sake. It's practical, fun and totally doable, no matter your comfort level.

- Get hands-on with new, budget-friendly tools that solve real-life problems;
- Explore what's actually new with AI (and what's just noise);
- Trade tips with your colleagues for apps and ideas that really work;
- Walk away with fresh strategies to save time, stay safer online and finally feel on top of it all.

Monday cont.
FEB 2

8:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Pre-Conference Sessions (Cont.)

SESSION III

Empowering Educators, Feelings, Fuel and Fire

Phuong Lien Palafox

In a season of policy shifts, funding changes, and persistent staffing shortages, many special education leaders feel as though they are steering while the tracks keep changing. This workshop offers a much-needed pause — a chance to name the weight of constant change, reconnect with the “why” that drew us to this work, and chart a course forward that centers students while sustaining the professionals who serve them.

Through the Empowering Educators Framework, participants will explore human-centered, evidence-based approaches to leading special education teams with intentionality, clarity, and compassion.

Emphasis will be placed on strategies that ensure compliance, leverage interdisciplinary collaboration, and maximize the impact of funding and resources.

Participants will leave with actionable hope: concrete tools to prioritize needs, align their teams, and sustain both outcomes and personal capacity in a way that reminds us that we are, indeed, stronger together.

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

Lunch on Your Own

1:00 PM - 2:15 PM

Welcome & Opening General Session

Making a Difference

Steve Gilliland

Focusing on the conscious choices we make every day that impact the lives of others, Making a Difference™ is an eye-opening and heartfelt keynote detailing how to positively influence people in every imaginable way, regardless of position or status. Each of us has the potential to transform the culture of an organization through our actions and attitude.

2:15 PM - 3:00 PM

Break with Exhibitors

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Learning Lab Sessions

4:00 PM - 4:30 PM

Break with Exhibitors

4:30 PM - 5:30 PM

Learning Lab Sessions

8:00 PM - 11:00 PM

TCASE Together Event

After a day of learning and leading, unwind with colleagues at the TCASE Together evening social event. Enjoy a sweet spread of desserts, lively music, and plenty of time to connect with new and old friends.

Sponsored by TCASE, empowER and TCASE Services by Design



Tuesday

FEB 3

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM

Breakfast with Exhibitors

8:30 AM - 9:45 AM

General Session

State of the State

Andrea Chevalier, PhD, TCASE

Kristin McGuire, Texas Education Agency

This session will provide special education leaders with the latest information on policy priorities, compliance expectations, and statewide initiatives that are shaping programs and services across districts.

Sponsored by Bayes Achievement Center

9:45 AM - 10:30 AM

Break with Exhibitors

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Learning Lab Sessions

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM

Lunch on Your Own

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Learning Lab Sessions

2:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Break with Exhibitors

2:30 PM - 3:30 PM

Learning Lab Sessions

3:30 PM - 4:00 PM

Break with Exhibitors

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Learning Labs



Wednesday

FEB 4

8:00 AM - 8:30 AM

Breakfast

8:30 AM - 9:45 AM

General Session

Hot Topic Impacting Special Educators

The only constant in special education leadership is change, and special educators know that better than anyone. This general session will tackle the most pressing issues facing districts.

Because the landscape evolves so quickly, the specific topics will be finalized closer to the event to ensure you hear the latest developments that matter most.

9:45 AM - 10:00 AM

Break

10:00 AM - 11:15 AM

Closing General Session

A Legislative and Political Outlook – What It Means for Special Education Leaders

Andrea Chevalier, PhD, TCASE

Texas special education leaders face a rapidly shifting legislative and political landscape that directly impacts their work every day. From funding debates to accountability measures, compliance expectations, and the politics shaping education policy, it's essential to understand not just what's happening, but what's coming next.

During this session, policy experts will break down the latest state and federal updates, provide insights into outcomes from the 89th legislative session and beyond, and share what these developments mean for your programs, your teams, and the students you serve.