MACAE
Michigan Adult, Community & Alternative Education Association

THE MICHIGAN ADULT, COMMUNITY & ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION PRESENTS

LEARNING *WITHOUT LIMITS*

2026 Annual Conference

November 10-13, 2026
VanDyk Mortgage Convention Center,
Muskegon, MI



WELCOME TO THE 2026 MACAE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Conference Attendees,

On behalf of the Michigan Adult, Community, and Alternative Education (MACAE) Association, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2026 MACAE Annual Conference. This year's theme, "Learning Without Limits," reflects the limitless potential of our learners and the important work we do to expand pathways to education, employment, and opportunity across Michigan.

This event provides an opportunity for educators, administrators, and partners from across the state to come together to learn from one another, share ideas, strengthen partnerships, and explore innovative approaches to serving adult and alternative education learners. Together, we can continue breaking down barriers, embracing new possibilities, and creating pathways that meet learners where they are and help them reach where they want to go.

As we come together in Muskegon, I encourage you to take full advantage of the opportunity to connect with colleagues, exchange ideas, and bring new strategies back to your programs and communities. Most importantly, let's celebrate the learners who inspire this work and the dedicated professionals who make their success possible every day.

Thank you for all that you do to ensure that learning truly has no limits.

Sincerely,



Kristen Swiantek
Executive Director

MACAE
Michigan Adult, Community & Alternative Education Association

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

PREMIER SPONSOR

MiLEAP
Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential

Office of Higher Education

CAREER PATHWAYS & WORKFORCE SUCCESS STRAND SPONSOR

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

BREAKFAST SPONSORS

EN GEN

orijin

EXHIBITOR RECEPTION SPONSOR

BurlingtonEnglish
The Publisher that Cares

POWER BREAK SPONSOR

ICD
Islamic Center of Detroit
المركز الإسلامي في ديترويت

GIVEAWAY SPONSOR

MCAN
MICHIGAN COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

EXHIBITOR FRIEND OF MACAE SPONSORS

CBL COACHING FOR BETTER LEARNING

MY VIRTUAL ACADEMY
Commit. Believe. Achieve.
800-297-2119

CASAS

MI TESOL

Subject

Alpha II
ACADEMIC SUCCESS VIA AUTHENTIC INTELLIGENCE
www.alpha2-learning.com

COABE
Lead. Equip. Empower

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE

Tuesday, November 10, 2026

12:00 – 6:00 PM.: Exhibitor Set Up & Registration

3:00 – 6:00 PM: Attendee Registration

3:00 – 4:00 PM: MACAE Board of Directors Meeting

4:30 – 5:30 PM: First Time Attendees Informational Session

7:00 – 10:00 PM: President's Reception at Pigeon Hill Brewing Company

Wednesday, November 11, 2026

7:30 AM: Registration Opens

8:00 – 9:00 AM: Breakfast

9:00 – 9:30 AM: Welcome & Overview of Conference

9:30 – 10:30 AM: Keynote Address

10:45 – 11:45: AM: Breakout Session 1

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM.: Lunch

12:45 – 1:45 PM: Breakout Session 2

2:00 – 3:00 PM: Breakout Session 3

3:00 – 4:00 PM: Burlington English Exhibitor Reception

4:00 – 5:00 PM: Breakout Session 4

6:00 – 9:00 PM: Networking Event at Sociobowl

6:00 – 9:00 PM: Games at Hotel

MACAE
Michigan Adult, Community & Alternative Education Association

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE

Thursday, November 12, 2026

8:00 – 9:00 AM: Breakfast

9:00 – 9:30 AM: Welcome & Annual Meeting

9:30 – 10:30 AM: General Session

10:45 – 11:45: AM: Breakout Session 5

11:45 AM – 12:45 PM: Lunch

12:15 – 12:50 PM: Awards

12:50 – 1:00 PM: Basket Raffle & 50/50 Drawings

1:15 – 2:15 PM: Breakout Session 6

2:45 – 3:45 PM: Breakout Session 7

4:00 – 5:00 PM: Breakout Session 8

7:00 – 10:00 PM: Karaoke at Unruly Brewing Company

Friday, November 13, 2026

8:00 – 9:00 AM: Breakfast

9:15 – 10:15 AM: Breakout Session 9

10:30 – 11:45: AM: Michigan Adult Education: Annual Update & Strategic Outlook

11:45 AM – 12:00 PM: Closing Remarks

12:00 PM: End of Conference

MACAE
Michigan Adult, Community & Alternative Education Association

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

DAY 2

Wednesday, November 11, 2026



EDWARD DESHAZER

Education Advocate & Speaker

Edward DeShazer is an award-winning school leader, speaker, and author whose story is a powerful example of what can happen when someone believes in a learner's potential. Once labeled "at-risk" and placed in special education, Edward faced significant challenges in school before educators, coaches, and mentors helped him see what was possible.
Today, Edward speaks about closing the "Believe'ment Gap"—the gap between what people are capable of achieving and what others believe they can achieve. His message challenges educators and leaders to recognize potential, remove barriers, and create opportunities for every learner to succeed.

DAY 3

Thursday, November 12, 2026



MICHAEL EVANS

Executive Director, Kalamazoo Literacy Council

Michael D. Evans is Executive Director & Chief Literacy Advocate of the Kalamazoo Literacy Council. He is the facilitator of the Adult Literacy Collaborative of Kalamazoo County, which serves as a forum to determine adult literacy priorities, identify and expand resources, and align services and programs in the county. He is a fellow and mentor for the Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) Academy, which is facilitated by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and is a Verified TPM Talent Supply Chain Manager. He is the convener of the Edison ECE Career Pathway, which recruits, trains, and supports community residents to pursue careers as Early Learning Professionals.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

DAY 4 *Friday, November 13, 2026*



PATRICK BROWN

State Administrative Manager for Adult Education, Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Opportunity - Workforce Development

Patrick Brown is the State Administrative Manager for Adult Education Services at the State of Michigan, where he leads programming, policy, technical assistance, grant oversight, and professional development for adult education.

With a decade of experience in education and adult learning, Patrick has taught English, served as Executive Director of the Michigan Adult, Community and Alternative Education Association, and most recently served as Director of Adult Student Attainment at the Michigan College Access Network.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Tuesday, November 10, 2026

12:00 - 6:00 PM Pre-Function Area	Exhibitor Setup & Registration	
3:00 - 6:00 PM Pre-Function Area	Attendee Registration	
3:00 - 4:00 PM Bear Lake	MACAE Board of Directors Meeting	
4:30 - 5:30 PM Bear Lake	First Time Attendees Informational Session	Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)
7:00 - 10:00 PM Pigeon Hill Brewing Company (895 4th Street, Muskegon)	President's Reception	Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Key

- HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY/HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION
- ADULT BASIC EDUCATION/LITERACY/COMMUNITY EDUCATION
- ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
- ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION
- TECHNOLOGY, AI & DIGITAL LITERACY
- LEADERSHIP
- CAREER PATHWAYS & WORKFORCE SUCCESS *(Generously sponsored by Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity, Workforce Development)*

***Denotes vendor presentation

Wednesday, November 11, 2026

7:30 AM **Pre-Function Area**	**Registration Opens**
8:00 - 9:00 AM **Section BC Room**	**Breakfast** ***(Generously sponsored by Orijin)*** Add to Google Calendar · Add to Outlook Calendar · Add to iCalendar (Apple)
9:00 - 9:30 AM **Section BC Room**	**Welcome & Overview of Conference** Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)
9:30 - 10:30 AM **Section BC Room**	**Keynote Address** Edward DeShazer, Education Advocate & Speaker Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)
10:45 - 11:45 AM	**Breakout Session 1**
A-1 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**From Literacy Crisis to Community Opportunity: The Power of Business Partnership** Melissa Moore, Executive Director, Read Muskegon & Rachel Gorman, President & CEO, Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce *What happens when businesses stops seeing literacy as someone else's problem—and start seeing it as an opportunity to strengthen the entire community?* *Join Melissa Moore, Executive Director of Read Muskegon, and Rachel Gorman, President & CEO of the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce, for a candid and inspiring look at a new partnership designed to engage the business community in addressing Muskegon County's literacy crisis. Together, they'll explore why literacy matters to businesses, how nonprofits and businesses can move beyond traditional sponsorship models, and what it looks like when community partners come together to build solutions. Participants will leave with practical ideas for engaging businesses as investors, advocates, and active partners in creating stronger communities.*
A-2 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**GED Options, A Pathway for In-School Students** Ann Evers, Sr. Test Product Development and Innovation Research Manager, GED Testing Service & Patricia Kane, High School Equivalency Coordinator, LEO-WD *Michigan's newly approved GED Options program provides an alternate pathway for eligible youth and young adults to earn a high school equivalency credential without withdrawing from school. Students remain enrolled while working toward their GED through individualized instruction, test preparation, and academic support. GED Options helps districts re-engage struggling learners, reduce dropouts, and offer a flexible path to completion tailored to each student's needs. Programs can integrate GED instruction into existing services, keeping students connected to their school community as they pursue graduation and future career or postsecondary opportunities.*

A-3 Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Relationships Still Matter in the Age of AI

Dr. Brianne Steele, Adult Education & CTE Consultant, Macomb ISD

Relationships still matter to Generation Z AND help them gain skills and grow as individuals. Session participants will hear the results of a qualitative study and discuss its application to their work.

Bear Lake Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Empowering Adult Learners to CLEP Success

Gini Beran, Consultant, Michigan College Access Network & Jenny McArdle, Senior Director of College Access, Michigan College Access Network

This session explores practical, research-informed strategies for guiding adult learners as they prepare for CLEP exams. We'll cover how to identify skill gaps, tailor study plans to busy schedules, leverage prior learning, and boost test confidence. Participants will leave with actionable tools to help adults accelerate degree completion, reduce tuition costs, and navigate common barriers to returning to education.

Section D Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

**From Idea to Impact: How Subject.ai Is Changing Digital Curriculum

Jack Rutstein, Partnerships Manager, Subject.ai & Greg Hershler, Senior Partnerships Manager, Subject.ai

Explore the origin and evolution of Subject.ai and how AI is transforming digital curriculum. Attendees will learn how educator-driven, AI-powered content can increase instructional flexibility, support multilingual learners, and reduce teacher workload without sacrificing quality. Through real-world examples and practical takeaways, this session highlights innovative approaches districts can implement as they navigate the future of digital learning.

Section BC Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

AI as a Scaffold for Structured Literacy - Dyslexia

Hamid Ahari, Literacy Coordinator, Literacy Center of West Michigan

Explore how AI and assistive technology can support structured literacy for adult learners with dyslexia. Using the Cognitive Partner Model, this session examines practical strategies for combining AI with explicit, multisensory instruction to strengthen phonological awareness, fluency, comprehension, and digital skills. Participants will explore how tools such as speech-to-text and text-to-speech can reinforce learning, support writing and reading development, and increase access to content. The session will also highlight how educators can guide AI use as a learning scaffold while keeping human instruction at the center, helping learners build confidence, independence, and a stronger digital identity.

Fox Lake Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	****Using Technology to Support Adult Learners in Incarcerated Settings** Alex Castillo, Strategic Account Manager, Orijin & Shannon Forte, Account Executive, Orijin *Incarcerated individuals face some of the highest barriers to education — yet technology is opening new doors. This session explores how purpose-built digital tools are transforming learning in correctional settings, expanding access to career pathways, digital literacy, and postsecondary opportunities for adult learners who need it most.* *Presenters will share real-world examples of evidence-based programming deployed across incarcerated settings to support learner engagement, persistence, and workforce readiness. Attendees will leave with practical strategies, implementation insights, and a deeper understanding of how equity-centered, trauma-informed approaches can be embedded into technology-driven instruction.*
11:45 AM - 12:45 PM **Section BC Room**	**Lunch** Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)
12:45 - 1:45 PM	**Breakout Session 2**
A-1 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**Building Digital Resilience** Ethan Harig, Program Coordinator, Washtenaw Literacy *As the world shifts to become more and more digitally driven, how do we help learners adapt to rapidly changing software, interfaces, and requirements? The answer is Digital Resilience. Digital Resilience is: "having the awareness, skills, agility, and confidence to be empowered users of new technologies and adapt to changing digital skill demands". Building Digital Resilience can help learners prepare to adapt and problem solve on their own in the digital realm, allowing them to participate in digital communities, access useful tools and access critical information such as bank records and health updates.*
A-2 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**Adult Ed, Anywhere: Making Virtual Learning Work** Wendy Grzych, Supervisor, Romulus Adult Education and RVLC & Theo Rick, Enrollment Specialist and Data Analyst, Romulus Adult Education *Discover the data-driven frameworks and practical workflows needed to build, manage, and sustain a thriving online learning program. This presentation provides a step-by-step roadmap for mastering the entire student journey in a virtual environment. Attendees will gain actionable insights on how to execute targeted digital recruitment campaigns and optimize flexible, secure screening for pretesting and posttesting. The session also addresses the core challenges of remote learning by detailing proven student retention models, intentional teacher interaction workflows that prevent isolation, and strategic tracking metrics that successfully drive students toward program completion.*

A-3 Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

**Turn Up the Talk: Engaging Activities for Adult English Learners

Anne Damiecka, ESOL Specialist and Midwest Territory Manager, Cambridge University Press & Assessment

Adult English learners need plenty of opportunities to use language—not just study it. In this interactive session, explore practical, engaging classroom activities designed to increase student talk time, strengthen communication skills, and bring more energy and enjoyment to learning. Drawing on a variety of resources and activity types from Ventures, we'll look at ways to turn language practice into meaningful pair and group interaction while also reinforcing important academic and language skills. Participants will experience activities themselves, consider simple ways to adapt them for different levels and classroom settings, and leave with practical ideas they can use right away to get students talking, learning, and connecting.

Bear Lake Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Successfully Passing a School Recreation Millage

Brian Puffer, Community Education Director, Saline Community Education - Saline Area Schools

Did you know your school district may be able to pursue a recreation millage to support community programs and services? Learn from Saline Area Schools' experience with the CARES Millage, which has supported recreation, enrichment, senior services, and community education opportunities for 26 years—and was successfully renewed for a third time this past summer. This session will explore the planning, communication, partnerships, and community engagement strategies that can help build and sustain support for a recreation millage.

Section D Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

**TABE-ing with Compassion: Addressing Educational Trauma to Build Persistence

Dr. Gabriela Anaya, Director of Adult/Workforce Solutions, Data Recognition Corporation

Intake testing can create anxiety and barriers for adult learners before their journey even begins. Learn practical strategies to make TABE administration more supportive, accessible, and learner-centered—from low-stress proctoring and UDL strategies to human-centered score debriefs that connect learners to education and career pathways.

Section BC Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Parents Leading the Way: Breaking Barriers to Educational Excellence Across Generations

Charese McLean, Director, Flint Parent Collaborative

What becomes possible when parents help identify barriers, shape solutions, and lead the work? Explore the Flint Parent Collaborative's parent-led approach and a 2-Generational model that connects children's literacy, adult education, workforce development, and family economic stability. Participants will explore strategies for strengthening families, elevating parent leadership, and building more responsive educational systems.

Fox Lake Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**Compliance to Completion: Supporting Students with IEPs in Alternative Education** Tina Williams, Director, Alternative Educational Academy of Iosco County and the Alternative Educational Academy of Ogemaw County & Stephanie Davis, Special Education Supervisor, Alternative Educational Academy of Iosco County and the Alternative Educational Academy of Ogemaw County *Special education in alternative education doesn't always fit neatly into a traditional model. How do we stay compliant while creating flexible pathways that meet students where they are? This session takes attendees inside the special education practices of two alternative education charter schools, highlighting practical systems for meeting state and federal requirements, meaningful accommodations, and alternative pathways to completion.*
2:00 - 3:00 PM	**Breakout Session 3**
A-1 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	****Think It Through: Building Problem-Solving Skills That Stick** Carol Bible, Implementation Specialist, Essential Education *Problem-solving is essential for adult learners' confidence, motivation, and real-world success. This session explores the role of problem-solving skills in daily life and learning, as well as some reasons our adult learners struggle with it. I will share research, classroom examples, and practical tools teachers can use to help students develop critical thinking skills, strengthen independence, and make learning more relevant and impactful.*
A-2 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**Talent Pipeline Management ® (TPM) Strategies for Adult Education** Michael Evans, Executive Director and Chief Literacy Advocate, Kalamazoo Literacy Council *Getting a job that pays a living wage is a major motivation for many adult learners. This session will explore how adult education providers can partner with employers to create career pathways for adult learners and workers utilizing the Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) framework. This employer-led approach to talent development is being implemented across Michigan and throughout the country. Examples of adult education providers using the TPM framework will be shared along with ways to apply TPM to other high-demand industry sectors.*
A-3 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**No Cringe Required: Creating a Welcoming Environment from Day 1** Olivia Rivera, Class Coordinator, Literacy Center of West Michigan *Establishing a safe and welcoming classroom environment begins the moment a learner steps into the classroom. While educators should be intentional in their body language, dress, and facial expressions, it is also of utmost importance to choose first-day activities wisely. Attendees will learn low prep activities that educators can do in the first few days of class. Participants will engage with some of the activities presented and discuss ways they can be modified for different groups of learners.*

Bear Lake Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Innovate to Elevate: Advancing Adult Education with 107a

Samantha Zentner, Adult Education Instructor and Curriculum Developer, Zeeland Adult Education/OAISD Thompson M-TEC, & Tonia Castillo, Director of Adult Training, OAISD Thompson M-TEC

Project Elevate highlights the seven completed 107a Innovation micro-credentials developed for adult learners. This session will walk participants through each micro-credential—its purpose, instructional scope, student readiness, and workforce alignment—while showcasing the finished products available for implementation.

The micro-credentials include Customer Service, Technology: Spreadsheets for Life, Manufacturing Foundations, Foundations in Healthcare, Math for Construction, ServSafe Prep for ESL and AI Foundations. Attendees will also explore how aligned Ed2Go courses extend these credentials, offering flexible pathways that support learner persistence, skill building, and career advancement.

Section D Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

**Pro“WHAT”eracy?

Greg Stultz, Training Coordinator, ProLiteracy New Readers Press

Do you know that a ProLiteracy Organizational membership is included with your MACAE membership? Well, it is! Join this session to learn about the tools and resources, professional development opportunities, advocacy, and discounts you may be missing.

Section BC Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

**Important Tools for the Classroom

Mellissa Hultstrand, Michigan GED State Relationship Manager, GED Testing Service & Ann Evers, Senior Test Product Development and Innovation Research Manager, GED Testing Service

This session introduces adult educators and administrators to the GED® test and key instructional resources. Participants will review the four GED® content-area tests, GED Ready®—the official practice test—and tools such as the Assessment Guide for Educators, Performance Level Descriptors, and High Impact Indicators. The session also introduces the GED TestPrepped Coaching program. Attendees will leave with practical strategies to strengthen classroom instruction and access to free educator resources that support learner success.

Fox Lake Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Community Education Roundtable Discussion

Brian Puffer, Community Education Director, Saline Community Education - Saline Area Schools, Nancy Crandell, Director, Bedford Public Schools & Connie Cox, Community Education Director, Milan Area Schools

Join fellow Community Education professionals for an engaging roundtable focused on the programs, challenges, and opportunities shaping our field. We'll exchange ideas and best practices related to facility management, enrichment programming, before- and after-school care, staffing, marketing, and much more. Come ready to share, learn, collaborate, and connect with colleagues from across the state.

3:00 - 4:00 PM **Pre-Function Area**	**Burlington English Exhibitor Reception** Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)
4:00 - 5:00 PM	**Breakout Session 4**
A-1 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**Creative Partnering - ProLiteracy, Libraries, and Coffee Shops** Jenny Luzar, Literacy Coordinator, Iosco Regional ESA *In an eight county region in Northeast Michigan, we do not have one primary storefront or location housing our literacy machine. Instead, we rely on partnerships and space with area libraries and coffee shops- and materials by ProLiteracy. Come hear about our creative flexibility, fueled by individual learner needs!*
A-2 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**Building a Sustainable Career: Navigating the Journey from GED Completion to Financial Stability** Anthony Lechota, Adult Education Instructor, Mott Community College - Workforce & Economic Development & Gail Bowman, Administrator, Mott Community College - Workforce & Economic Development *This session maps out a comprehensive, end-to-end pathway designed to guide individuals from foundational education to long-term economic independence. Attendees will explore actionable strategies for integrating GED completion, targeted career training, and financial literacy into a cohesive roadmap that prepares learners for employment. Join us to learn how aligning job readiness, retention tactics, and career growth leads to lasting financial stability and sustainable success for students.*
A-3 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**Beyond the Textbook: Building Clinical Communication Skills for Multilingual Healthcare Apprentices** Melissa Reddy, Class Coordinator, Literacy Center of West Michigan & Linda Hoxha, Education Coordinator, Corwell Health *Explore how the Literacy Center of West Michigan partnered with Michigan's largest employer to prepare adult learners for Medical Assistant apprenticeships through English language classes, certification support, and paid on-the-job training. The presentation highlights the innovative Patient Provider Conversation Class, which addresses the hidden language of healthcare by helping learners practice authentic patient interactions that traditional textbooks often overlook.*
Bear Lake Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	****From Assessment to Achievement: Using TABE and TABE CLAS-E data to Drive Student Success** Mike Johnson, National Adult Education Director, Data Recognition Corporation *This session explores how educators can use TABE assessment data to identify learner strengths and skill gaps, interpret Individual Profile Reports, and implement evidence-based instructional strategies for adult and English language learners. Participants will discover how TABE Edge, extends assessment into instruction by providing targeted practice activities in Reading, Mathematics & Language.*

Section D Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Beyond IET, the value of Pre-Apprenticeships (MARC) and Apprenticeships in Adult Ed

Gigi Salka, Chief of Workforce Development, Zaman International

What is the MARC (Michigan Apprenticeship Readiness Certificate)? Why Apprenticeships? This workshop will explain the value of a MARC certification, and how you can turn your IET program into an apprenticeship ready training. We will discuss how to engage with training providers and employers in order to offer the MARC certification as a pathway for apprenticeships. We will also dive into the value of apprenticeships as a career path for adult learners, especially for those with limited English proficiency.

Section BC Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

**Updates from GED Testing Service

Mellissa Hultstrand, Michigan GED State Relationship Manager, GED Testing Service

This session is designed specifically for GED® Instructors/Educators. First, we will review 2026 MI GED testing data and then we'll review the many updates we have made in the last year to the score report, GED App, GED Manager, the GED® website and student accounts, ensuring you are informed about the latest enhancements. Some time will also be spent reviewing the GED® Educator Portal, where we'll show you how easy it is to locate valuable teaching resources, recordings of professional development sessions, classroom materials, and print-ready guides—all available for free to GED® instructors.

Fox Lake Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Learning Without Limits Behind Bars: GED, Practical Skill Gains and IET in County Jails

Mandi McDonald, Special Initatives Coordinator, Iosco RESA Adult Education & Nicole Hatch, Program Coordinator and Lead Teacher, Iosco RESA Adult Education

Explore strategies for aligning measurable skill gains with practical reading and math support in county jail education programs. This session will highlight adult education curriculum, in-person remediation, and practice materials that promote student learning and skill gains. Participants will also explore state-approved IET programs, licensure exam preparation, reentry planning, and strategies for supporting student motivation, continued education, and workforce entry after release.

6:00 - 9:00 PM

Sociobowl (441 W. Western Ave., Muskegon)

Networking Event

Join MACAE for an evening of networking, food, drinks, and fun at SocioBowl! Connect with colleagues from across the state while enjoying appetizers, duckpin bowling, and yard games. It's a great opportunity to build connections and enjoy some friendly competition with the MACAE community.

Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)

6:00 - 9:00 PM
Bear Lake Room

Game Night

Looking for a more relaxed evening? Join us at the hotel for a game night! Enjoy a laid-back evening of conversation, competition, and fun with fellow attendees. Choose from a variety of games while connecting with colleagues in a casual, welcoming setting.

Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Thursday, November 12, 2026

8:00 - 9:00 AM
Section BC Room

Breakfast *(Generously sponsored by EnGen)*

Power Potential. Unlock Talent. Upskill with English.

Add to Google Calendar | Add to Outlook Calendar | Add to iCalendar (Apple)

9:00 - 9:30 AM
Section BC Room

Director's Update & Annual Meeting

Add to Google Calendar | Add to Outlook Calendar | Add to iCalendar (Apple)

9:30 - 10:30 AM
Section BC Room

General Session

Michael Evans, Executive Director and Chief Literacy Advocate, Kalamazoo Literacy Council

Add to Google Calendar | Add to Outlook Calendar | Add to iCalendar (Apple)

10:45 - 11:45 AM

Breakout Session 5

A-1 Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Beyond "Repeat After Me": Practical Pronunciation Strategies for Adult Educators

Amy Cheadle, DESL Program Coordinator, Office of Global Michigan

This interactive session introduces practical strategies for explicit pronunciation instruction, focusing on the sounds, stress, rhythm, and other features of spoken English that support intelligibility and real-world communication. Participants will practice techniques and activities they can immediately incorporate into classroom, workplace, and online ESL instruction.

A-2 Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

**Innovations in English Upskilling for IET and Career Pathway Outcomes

Tadd Wamester, Senior Director of Workforce and Government Partnerships, EnGen, Katie Thompson, IET and IELCE Coordinator, Troy Continuing Education & Dikea Riley, Deputy Executive Director of Adult Education, Detroit Public Schools Community District

This presentation will highlight how adult education programs in Michigan have used EnGen to support transitions to IET and other short-term credential programs. English upskilling can help learners pursue career pathways, employment, and advancement opportunities. EnGen's new platform includes a Writing Helper tool that provides rapid feedback, while allowing instructors to see both the original passage and the feedback learners received. Learn how to bring workforce-focused English training to students across proficiency levels, educational backgrounds, including ITPs, and sector-specific interests. This interactive session will also provide strategies for integrating more workforce development and contextualized content into ESL and ABE programs.

A-3 Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Rehearsing Possible Futures: Theatre, Education, and the Right to Imagine Otherwise

Morgan Davies, Pathways to Options Specialist & Professor, Lansing School District and Jackson College

Education isn't only about preparing students for a predetermined future. It can be a place where learners rehearse possible futures. We will seek to answer the question: what future is your classroom allowing your students to rehearse-- and what future might it be unintentionally making impossible to imagine?

Bear Lake Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Building A Strong Foundation: New Director Training for Adult Education in Michigan (Invite Only)

Patrick Brown, Adult Education Manager, LEO-WD & Patty Higgins, Departmental Specialist, LEO-WD

Stepping into the role of an adult education director brings exciting opportunities—and unique challenges. This session is designed specifically for new directors across Michigan who are ready to strengthen their leadership, deepen their understanding of state expectations, and build a confident path forward. Participants will explore Michigan's adult education landscape, including key policies, accountability requirements, and program performance measures. The session will highlight effective strategies for program management, data-driven decision-making, staff development, community partnerships, and fostering learner success.

Section D Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Clearing the Path: A Whole-Person Approach to Student Success

Daynan Brown, Support Coordinator, Eaton RESA Adult Education &
Liza Glanton-Miles, Career Navigator, Eaton RESA Adult Education

Students bring far more than academic needs into the classroom. Transportation challenges, mental health concerns, test anxiety, limited access to resources, and uncertainty about career pathways can create barriers to success. This presentation will explore how an integrated, whole-person approach can address these barriers while strengthening students' academic, personal, and career outcomes. By bringing together a range of coordinated supports within a holistic framework, this approach is designed to meet students where they are and provide the resources they need to thrive.

Section BC Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Beyond the Surface: How Close Reading Removes Limits on Adult Learners

Jennifer Blanchard, Adult Education Manager, EDSI

Close reading, or reading a text multiple times with a specific analytical purpose, is foundational to the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education and embedded in Reading Anchor Standard 1. This session explores what close reading is, why it works, and how metacognition helps adult learners use the skill independently. Participants will examine research, practice the close reading process, and learn strategies for modeling metacognitive thinking. Attendees will leave with a practical framework, ready-to-use strategies, and a resource on using AI for passage selection and lesson planning.

Fox Lake Room	**LEO-WD Office Hours: HSE Drop-In** *Meet one-on-one with staff from the State Adult Education Office to work through questions, issues, or challenges related to HSE programs and receive individualized guidance and support.* Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)
11:45 AM - 12:45 PM **Section BC Room**	**Lunch & Awards** Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)
12:45 - 1:00 PM **Section BC Room**	**Basket Raffle & 50/50 Drawings** Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)
1:15 - 2:15 PM	**Breakout Session 6**
A-1 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**Beyond the Checklist: Rethinking Graduation Requirements in Michigan** Rashell Bowermann, Instructional Consultant, Michigan Department of Education *The graduation requirements are often interpreted as a checklist of courses that every student must complete. In reality, the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) was designed around demonstrated proficiency of high school content standards, not seat-time or a one-size-fits-all sequence of courses. The MMC provides far more flexibility than most educators realize. In other words, algebra II is not a requirement. This engaging session will challenge common misconceptions and demonstrate how districts can leverage MMC flexibilities and Personal Curriculum (PC) options to create meaningful, individualized pathways to a diploma. Participants will explore practical examples, dispel common myths, and discover innovative approaches that connect graduation requirements to students' Educational Development Plans (EDPs), career aspirations, and postsecondary goals.*
A-2 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	****From Skills to Success: Using Competency-Based Tools to Measure Work Readiness** Elizabeth Gotschall, National Program Specialist & CASAS Navigator for Michigan, CASAS *As adult education programs expand pathways to employment and economic mobility, educators need clear ways to demonstrate that learners are work ready. This session explores how the CASAS Competency Framework and Work Readiness Checklists provide measurable evidence of learner readiness and help address skill gaps.* *Through hands-on activities and authentic learner profiles, participants will practice assessing work readiness and explore how competency-based tools support learner-centered intake, placement, instruction, and progress monitoring. Attendees will also learn ways to connect assessment results to instructional and workforce decisions, strengthen partnerships with employers and workforce agencies, meet Department of Labor requirements, and create more transparent pathways to career success.*

A-3 Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Help Your Adult ESL Students Get More Involved as a Parent

Jennifer Bond, MACUL Ballmer Grant Facilitator, MACUL & Cathy Wolfe, ESL Instructor, Zeeland Adult Education

Our schools and society have shifted to digital for so many things. It can be overwhelming to figure out how to navigate registrations, platforms, sites and even more overwhelming if English is not the primary language for our families. These videos will be a tool to help families have a better understanding of the education system and after school programming, how to communicate with schools, and how to navigate commonly used platforms. Even better...the videos have an assortment of translations available! Family-Home Partnerships are essential, and the goal is to help multilingual families feel more connected, therefore becoming more involved.

Bear Lake Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

The Promise of Adult Education & Employer Partnerships: Workplace-Based IETs

Marcus Little, Senior Director of Programs, Literacy Center of West Michigan & Wendy Falb, Executive Director, Literacy Center of West Michigan

The Literacy Center of West Michigan has been a state and national leader in both IETs and Workplace-based ESL for nearly a decade. In the past 30 months, in a partnership with Corewell Health and local training providers, it has developed an innovative project to provide workplace-based IETs to upskill incumbent workers and new hires from entry-level roles into CNA, MA and Pharm Tech positions on an earn-to-learn model. This project offers a model for building up robust pipelines of talent across a variety of sectors to address the critical need for skilled workers in the state and achieving the 60 by 30 goal.

Section D Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

MCAN and You: Resource from the Michigan College Access Network

Jenny McArdle, Senior Director of College Access, Michigan College Access Network & Shelley Lowe, Director of Educated Workforce Strategy, Michigan College Access Network

Gain a deeper understanding of the offerings Michigan College Access Network (MCAN) provides to the state and to its partners (aka you). We have opportunities that practitioners working with adult learners can take advantage of: grants, training, convenings, resources, and more! MCAN exists to create an ecosystem in which our state can equitably meet the talent needs of today and tomorrow. We seek to ensure that every student in Michigan has the opportunity to access and attain a certificate or degree. We are not a membership organization, but rather, we serve any and all partners in the state who are committed to this work. Nearly everything we offer is free (or we'll pay you to implement!). As an innovative, data-driven organization, we are constantly launching new initiatives and strategies to help reach Sixty by 30, but we know it can be hard to keep all of the opportunities straight. The presenters will share how you can take full advantage of MCAN offerings.

Section BC Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**One Hub, Many Pathways: Using a Career Exploration Events Site to Make Informed Career Decisions** Karrie Brown, Business Solutions Manager, West Michigan Works! *This session highlights how the West Michigan Works! Career Exploration Events site serves as a centralized hub connecting students, parents, and the community to meaningful career exploration opportunities. Attendees will learn why parent engagement is critical in career decision-making and how a shared events platform can expand awareness, access, and participation in both internal and external career exploration experiences. The Career Exploration Events portal is a one stop hub for information on careers in agribusiness, construction, healthcare, hospitality, information technology, and manufacturing.*
Fox Lake Room	**LEO-WD Office Hours: MAERS Drop-In** *Meet one-on-one with staff from the State Adult Education Office to work through questions, issues, or challenges related to MAERS and receive individualized help.* Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)
2:15 - 2:45 PM **Pre-Function Area**	**Networking & Exhibitor Break** Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)
2:45 - 3:45 PM	**Breakout Session 7**
A-1 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**Beyond the Diploma: Connecting Adult & Alternative Learners to What's Next** Danielle Yanssens, Program Developer for Continuous Improvement, My Virtual Academy *Earning a diploma is an important milestone, but it shouldn't be the finish line. Programs can help learners identify meaningful next steps and prepare for them before graduation.* *This interactive session explores practical ways to integrate career exploration, employability skills, postsecondary planning, financial aid awareness, and employer and community partnerships into the learner experience. Participants will identify strategies to strengthen transitions to employment, training, or postsecondary education without creating new programs or adding staff.*
A-2 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	****What's New at CASAS** Elizabeth Gotschall, National Program Specialist & CASAS Navigator for Michigan, CASAS *Welcome to CASAS! Whether you're new to our community or just curious about our latest work, this session is the perfect place to start. Join our CASAS Navigator for Michigan, Elizabeth Gotschall, as she shares exciting assessment and TOPSpro Enterprise updates. These developments help you measure student and program progress more efficiently and accurately so you can focus on what matters most – serving adult learners in the upcoming school year.*

A-3 Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Empowering Community Tutors: Essential Strategies for Teaching Adult Literacy

Jessi Pavey, Operations Manager, Kalamazoo Literacy Council

Equip community volunteers with the confidence, tools, and practical strategies they need to become effective reading instructors. Designed for literacy program coordinators and adult education leaders, this hands-on session explores how to turn everyday volunteers into effective tutors.

The session features a ready-to-use, plug-and-play training curriculum, along with a customizable option that allows organizations to select and tailor components to fit their program needs.

Beyond volunteer onboarding, this presentation introduces a broader vision for a standardized, statewide approach to adult literacy training across Michigan. By uniting organizations around a shared framework, the goal is portability: ensuring trained tutors can move between communities with their certification recognized, without repeating training.

Whether volunteers are seasoned educators or new to teaching, attendees will gain ready-to-use training modules, practical coaching techniques, and strategies to help adult learners achieve their reading goals while building a stronger, more connected literacy network statewide.

Bear Lake Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

More than a GED: Healthcare Certification/ Licensure Alongside GED/HSD

Jessie Comden, CTE Program Navigator, Kent ISD Adult Education

In this session participants will follow the step by step process for Phlebotomy and Certified Nurse Assistant training with Kent ISD Adult Education. Ensuring students are vetted properly and know what is expected of them is key to creating a successful pathway to a valuable certification. While Kent ISD offers several Career Technical training opportunities, our Healthcare fields (including Phlebotomy and CNA) are workhorses. When students walk away with these certifications and licensures they find it much easier to walk in to a successful career.

Stacking credentials, including lower level resume builders, helps students gain confidence toward the larger goal of becoming a CNA or Certified Phlebotomist.

Section D Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

**Let's Get a Level Gain! Proven Strategies for Maximizing CASAS Gains

Louie Paras, Customer Manger, Burlington English & Stephanie McMaster, ESL Instructor, Starkweather Academy

Ready to turn test preparation into an engaging learning experience and help students make real CASAS gains? Join Stephanie McMaster of Plymouth-Canton Community Schools and Louie Paras of BurlingtonEnglish for a practical, interactive session showcasing how to use BurlingtonEnglish's Prepare for CASAS STEPS course both in and beyond the classroom. Discover strategies that help students build confidence, reduce test anxiety, and stay motivated while developing the skills they need for success. Stephanie and Louie will share classroom-tested activities, engagement techniques, and practical tips you can put into action immediately.

Section BC Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Making Every Dollar Count: Understanding and Optimizing Adult Education Budgets

Sue Muzillo, WIOA Title II AEFLA Financial Specialist, LEO-WD, Tamera Osborne, Financial Analyst for Section 107 Funding, LEO-WD, & Stacie Zeien, State Funds Coordinator, LEO-WD

Adult education programs are being asked to do more than ever—often with budgets that feel increasingly strained—so this session dives into the realities, challenges, and opportunities surrounding adult education funding today. We will explore how budget structures work and how policy decisions help shape what programs can deliver. Participants will examine practical strategies for aligning spending with learner needs, policy and real-world examples. We will review some best practices for designing an efficient, student-centered budget. This session is a great resource for program directors, coordinators and adult education finance staff looking for a clearer understanding of the adult education funding landscape and actionable tools to support financial administration and long-term program success.

Fox Lake Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

LEO-WD Office Hours: Keywe Drop-In

Meet one-on-one with staff from the State Adult Education Office to discuss questions, issues, or challenges related to Keywe and receive individualized guidance and support.

4:00 - 5:00 PM

Breakout Session 8

A-1 Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

**Personalization, Localization, and Always-On Support for Adult Learners

Jack Rutstein, Partnerships Manager, Subject.ai & Greg Hershler, Senior Partnerships Manager, Subject.ai

Adult and alternative educators are stretched thin while learners arrive with wildly different reading levels, languages, and schedules. This interactive session shows how AI can close that gap without replacing the teacher. Using Subject's Spark AI as a working example, we'll walk through four practical capabilities and how programs are using them today: Personalization (instant, standards-based scoring and feedback that adapts to each learner), Localization (a differentiation engine that translates content, adjusts any text to the right reading level, and reads aloud for multilingual and lower-literacy learners), the Homework Helper (a 24/7 tutor with full context on what a learner has studied), and the Teaching Assistant (a co-teacher that supports planning, instruction, and real-time learner support). Attendees will see live examples, discuss where AI fits in their own programs, and leave with a simple framework for evaluating and adopting AI tools responsibly. Bring a device — we'll try it together.

A-2 Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Getting Your Foot in the Door: From First Connection to Workforce Partnership!

Karyn Goven, Senior Director of Workforce Development, MiSide, Chad Gibbs, Workforce Education Manager, Michigan Works! Southeast, Rana Al-Igoe, Administrator, Oakland80, & Tammy Brown, Adult Education Supervisor, Troy Continuing Education

Not sure how to approach your local Michigan Works! agency or what to say once you get a meeting? This interactive panel discussion will bring together workforce professionals to share their experiences, lessons learned, and practical strategies for starting the conversation. Panelists will discuss how to make the right connection, explain your program's value, identify shared goals, and build a relationship that supports learners and job seekers. Participants will have an opportunity to ask questions and gain real-world advice for turning a first introduction into a meaningful workforce partnership.

A-3 Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

From GED to Opportunity: Connecting Contextualized Learning to High School Credit and Career Pathways

Heather Holland, Adult Education Director, Sparta Area Schools Adult Education

This session explores how contextualized, standards-aligned GED instruction can create flexible pathways to high school completion, postsecondary education, and employment. Participants will examine career-contextualized GED curriculum and practical approaches for connecting GED content to Michigan high school standards and credit requirements. Examples will show how these connections can support competency-based credit, curriculum development, transcript review, and career-focused instruction. Attendees will gain strategies to reduce curriculum development time, expand access, and create more flexible pathways for adult learners.

Bear Lake Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

**Connecting to the Workforce through ConnectAble's LaborTrack and Inclusive Curriculum

Dr. Treg Hopkins, Co-Founder, Connectable Inc. & Jenn Wigginton, Membership Director, Connectable

Discover how ConnectAble helps adult education programs strengthen the bridge between learning and employment through LaborTrack and an inclusive, workforce-focused curriculum. This session will explore practical ways programs can track career readiness, connect learners with employers, and align instruction with real-world workforce needs. Participants will see how inclusive curriculum can support diverse learners while building durable skills, confidence, and pathways to meaningful employment. Attendees will leave with ideas for using technology and instruction together to create stronger workforce connections and better student outcomes.

Section D Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Choosing the Right HSC Platform: An Honest Roundtable on Features, Fit, and Academic Integrity

Renae Gowen, Supervisor, Dearborn Adult and Community Education

Choosing an online high school completion platform is a major decision, but programs often have limited opportunities to hear directly from educators who use these systems every day. This interactive roundtable will compare Subject, EdgeEX/Edgenuity, and Edmentum through an honest discussion with adult education professionals representing each platform.

Panelists will explore instructional features, course offerings, customization, reporting, staff workload, student engagement, accessibility, implementation challenges, and overall program fit. The conversation will also address the challenge of protecting academic integrity while providing flexible, learner-centered opportunities for adult students.

Moderator Renae Gowen will guide the discussion with shared questions, audience Q&A, and time for shared experiences. Participants will leave with a clearer understanding of each platform's benefits and limitations, questions to ask vendors, and considerations for determining the best fit for their students and programs.

Section BC Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Growing Strong Workforce Readers: Teaching the Struggling Reader

Chris Miller, National Consultant of Adult Education and Workforce Development, Aztec

Learning without limits begins when adult learners can move beyond reading words to interpreting, evaluating, and applying information in academic, training, workplace, and everyday settings. This participatory session strengthens educators' knowledge of effective reading instruction through authentic texts such as schedules, safety procedures, emails, charts, and technical documents. Participants will explore research-based strategies for building vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and critical thinking; identify reading barriers; select effective scaffolds; and adapt materials for struggling readers. Attendees will leave with practical, classroom-ready strategies that build confident, capable readers and expand opportunities for continued learning, training, and success.

Fox Lake Room

LEO-WD Office Hours: Adult Education Budgets Drop-In

Meet one-on-one with staff from the State Adult Education Office to discuss questions, issues, or challenges related to adult education budgets and receive individualized guidance and support.

Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)

7:00 - 10:00 PM Unruly Brewing Company (360 W. Western Ave., First Floor, Muskegon)

Networking Event

Karaoke is a favorite MACAE conference tradition, and we're bringing it back! Join us at Unruly Brewing Company for an evening of drinks, networking, and karaoke. Come connect with colleagues from across the state, unwind after a full day of learning, and enjoy a lively night with the MACAE community. Take the mic, cheer on your colleagues, and help us keep the tradition going!

Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Friday, November 13, 2026

8:00 - 9:00 AM **Section BC Room**	**Breakfast** Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)
9:15 - 10:15 AM	**Breakout Session 9**
A-1 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**Rethinking How School Happens: How Districts, Nonprofits, and Community Organizations Partner for Alternative Education** Tiffany Rouser, Associate Director, GEARup2Lead & Winston Stoody, Executive Director, GEARup2Lead *GEARup Pathway partners with school districts and community organizations to create a more flexible, individualized path to earning a high school diploma. Students remain enrolled in an accredited public high school while GEARup provides smaller learning groups, flexible scheduling, one-on-one mentoring, and individualized pacing support to help them stay on track toward graduation.* *The model also brings in community partners for tutoring, social-emotional learning, health and fitness, arts and cultural exposure, career exploration, workforce preparation, and other supports that strengthen the whole student experience.* *In this interactive session, presenters will share how this district–nonprofit–community partnership model works, how responsibilities are divided, lessons learned, and practical considerations for creating similar alternative pathways for students who need a different way to experience school.*
A-2 Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**Beyond the Classroom: Supporting Immigrant and Refugee Learners in Michigan** Amy Cheadle, DESL Program Coordinator, Office of Global Michigan, Laura Hofman, Immigration Law Advisor, Office of Global Michigan & Roger Tijerina, Workforce Development and Training Coordinator, Office of Global Michigan *This session will explore current issues and trends affecting immigrant and refugee learners in Michigan, including changes in legal status and updates on public benefits such as SNAP and Medicaid. It will also showcase OGM programs and resources related to language access, workforce integration, digital inclusion, and navigating essential systems and services. Participants will gain a better understanding of the barriers faced by immigrants and refugees in Michigan and explore practical ways adult education providers can strengthen partnerships, connect learners to opportunities, and create more responsive pathways to success.*

A-3 Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Designing Workforce-Driven Pathway Programs: From Compliance to Career Impact

Chris Miller, National Consultant of Adult Education and Workforce Development, Aztec

Strong IET programs do more than meet WIOA requirements—they create accessible pathways to credentials, employment, and advancement. This interactive session explores how to align the three IET components with labor market information, employer input, participant needs, and valuable credentials. Attendees will examine single sets of learning objectives, contextualized instruction, partner roles, learner supports, and outcome measures. They will leave with practical tools for launching, evaluating, or strengthening IET programs that move from compliance to career impact.

Bear Lake Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Supercharging Adult Education Workflows with Gemini Notebook

Jessi Pavey, Operations Manager, Kalamazoo Literacy Council & Julie Hyatt, Adult Program Coordinator, The Legacy Center for Community Success

Are you looking to streamline curriculum development or maximize your organization's impact? Discover the transformative power of Gemini Notebook in this practical, high-impact presentation tailored specifically for adult basic education (ABE) instructors, literacy program coordinators, and administrators.

Join us to explore how this source-grounded AI tool functions as your ultimate productivity and research partner. For educators and instructional designers, we will demonstrate how to instantly transform dense instructional materials, community resources, and literacy frameworks into differentiated lesson plans, contextualized learning modules, and engaging study materials drastically cutting down prep time. For administrators, we will focus on strategic applications, showing how to leverage Gemini Notebook to analyze complex grant criteria, synthesize community data to draft compelling proposals that improve grant outcomes, and rapidly generate clean infographics to communicate program milestones to stakeholders.

Whether your goal is to simplify daily instruction for low-level learners or secure vital funding to expand your community programs, you will leave this session with actionable prompts, real-world adult education use cases, and a clear framework for integrating AI responsibly into your practice.

Section D Room

Add to Google Calendar
Add to Outlook Calendar
Add to iCalendar (Apple)

Building Employment Opportunities for Adult Learners with Disabilities

Justin Skibin, Business Relations Specialist, Michigan Rehabilitation Services & Shawn Madden, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Michigan Rehabilitation Services

Building employment opportunities for adult learners with disabilities. This includes partnering with employers, understanding hiring incentives available to businesses, creating inclusive workforce pathways, and helping educators connect learners with MRS services.

Section BC Room Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)	**MAERS Alternative Placement – An Optional Assessment Placement for HSE Participants** Brian Frazier, Departmental Specialist, LEO-WD & Sue Johnson, Data Specialist, LEO-WD *A must attend for programs who offer GED and HiSET instruction. An adult learner has a goal of earning a GED/HiSET. Yet, we make them take an assessment to determine where their beginning levels start. This makes sense for many new adult education learners, however, what if the participant has already taken a GED/HiSET practice or official test in the past? How can we utilize these previously taken GED/HiSET tests as a placement versus having the participant test with a TABE or CASAS assessment?* *In addition to going over the rules and options of alternative placement, we will have members of a few programs who have been piloting the alternative placement for the past few months available to answer questions and explain the data they have gathered to date on this option for our HSE learners.*
10:30 - 11:45 AM **Section BC Room**	**General Session - Michigan Adult Education: Annual Update & Strategic Outlook** Patrick Brown, Adult Education Manager, LEO-WD Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)
11:45 AM - 12:00 PM **Section BC Room**	**Closing Remarks** Add to Google Calendar Add to Outlook Calendar Add to iCalendar (Apple)
12:00 PM	**End of Conference**

Thank You for Joining Us!

Thank you for being part of the 2026 MACAE Fall Conference. We're grateful for your participation, partnership, and commitment to expanding opportunities for adult learners across Michigan.

We'd love to hear from you! Please take a few minutes to complete our Conference Evaluation and share your feedback. Your input helps us make future MACAE events even better. We hope you leave inspired, connected, and ready to continue *Learning Without Limits.*