

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

CHARTER SCHOOLS OFFICE

May 2026 Board Communication

❖ Board Member's Constitutional Oath of Office

Michigan law requires all public officers to take an oath to the State Constitution and the United States Constitution. Board members are considered public officers, and as such, must take the oath once appointed or reappointed to the Board of Directors.

Board members that were reappointed to the Academy's Board of Directors by the Ferris State University Board of Trustees this year will need to be administered their constitutional oath of office prior to their term expiring June 30, 2026. The school leader/management company will make arrangements for the oath to be administered, as well as witnessed by a notary public.

The final step in the board member reappointment process is for the school leader/management company to submit in Epicenter the completed Oath of Public Office and Acceptance of Office form, under the submission type *Board Member Signed Constitutional Oath and Acceptance*.

❖ Virtual Board Professional Development Opportunities

The final webinar in the 2025-2026 board professional development series is [Strengthening School Board/Authorizer Partnerships](#). It is scheduled for Tuesday May 12th at 7pm. For more information, please register for this session. Board members, look for an email invitation from AirWin Educational Services with registration information.

In case you missed the previous virtual board professional development sessions, below are links to the recordings. If you would like a copy of a presentation or handouts, please contact Sharon Hopper at SharonHopper@ferris.edu.

[Navigating Your Role as a New Board Member](#)

[Leading with Purpose: Mission-Driven Decision-Making](#)

[Strategic Oversight vs Micromanagement](#)

[Data-Driven Governance for Student Achievement](#)

[Ensuring Effective Financial Oversight](#)

[Growth Planning: Expanding Impact, Not Just Enrollment](#)

[Evaluating Contracts: Tools for Accountability](#)

Annually boards are required to obtain three (3) professional development credits, by two (2) or more board members. When you attend/listen to a professional development session, please share key takeaways with the rest of the board—whether through a brief written summary or a short update at a meeting. Your FSU Field Representative will include that information in their board report and we will update our database with the earned credit.

❖ Board of Directors Question Toolbox

The Ferris State University Charter Schools Office is happy to provide you with a few questions to help further your conversations this month. The question focus could come from one or more of our four School Support Pillars: Academics, Fiscal, Operations, and Compliance.

Please note that this is meant as a reference, some items may not apply to all schools, and that there are many questions a board member may choose to ask. If you have questions, please reach out to your Field Representative or the Ferris State University Charter Schools Office.

We will focus on Pillar #2 Fiscal:

- What systems are in place to ensure that petty cash and student activity funds are conducted in compliance with best practice models to prevent fraud and embezzlement?
- How do each of our significant budget categories directly affect student outcomes?
- Are there sufficient resources to meet or exceed our specific expectations for accelerating learning gains and closing the achievement gap?
- Is the school on target to meet the budgeted student count? If not, do current financial forecasts include the lower student count and is there a plan to mitigate funding decreases?
- How do the salaries of neighboring schools for their school leadership, teachers and other staff compare to ours? Are our salaries competitive?
- Could board members benefit from additional training to understand the financial information provided in the monthly board packet?

❖ Important Dates

May 8, 2026 - Ferris State University Board of Trustees Meeting

May 12, 2026 – Board Professional Development Webinar [Strengthening School Board/Authorizer Partnerships](#)

❖ Important Epicenter Deadlines

June 1, 2026 – Academic School Calendar

June 1, 2026 – Annual Board Calendar

June 1, 2026 – Budget – Legal Notice for Public Hearing

April 30, 2026 – Budget 3rd Quarter Financial Statements

❖ 2026 Summer Leadership Conference

Board members please encourage your school leaders to register and attend the Summer Leadership Conference on July 21-22, 2026 in Bay City. Ferris State University has partnered with Lake Superior State University to bring educational leaders together from across the state. The conference is completely funded by FSU and LSSU for their respective schools, which includes all meals, SCECHS credit, hotel accommodation and mileage reimbursement. For further details on what your school leaders will experience, please see the attached information.

❖ Budget Hearing

Typically, a public school board holds their required budget hearing in May or June of every year before adopting next year's annual budget. The budget hearing may be scheduled before, during or after a regular public meeting or the board may schedule a special meeting for the sole purpose of the budget hearing. Regardless of when it happens, a budget hearing requires strict adherence to the Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act and the Open Meetings Act. The key legal requirements are:

- ✓ A notice of the budget hearing must be published in a local newspaper at least six (6) days before the hearing date.
- ✓ The notice must state the date, time and location of the meeting, as well as the location where the proposed budget is available for public inspection.
- ✓ During the budget hearing the public has a right to address the board regarding the proposed budget.
- ✓ The budget hearing minutes must state the date, time and location of the hearing, board members present and absent, public comment and board action taken.

If the board holds the budget hearing during the regular public meeting, the minutes must reflect the start and end times of the budget hearing. Below are the steps and a sample script board members may find useful.

1. Board President: *"Can I get a motion to suspend the rules for a public hearing?"*
Board Member: *"I move to suspend the rules for a public hearing."*
A Different Board Member: *"I second."*
Board President: *"It has been moved and seconded to suspend the rules for a public hearing at [TIME]. Those in favor to suspend the rules for a public hearing say "aye", those opposed say "nay"."* Announce the results of the vote.
2. The Board President calls the budget hearing to order.
"I now call to order this public hearing on the proposed budget for [NAME OF SCHOOL] for the fiscal year 2026-2027, held on [TODAY'S DATE AND TIME]. Proper notice was published in [NAME OF NEWSPAPER] on [DATE] in accordance with Michigan legal requirements."
3. The Board President states the purpose of the budget hearing.
"The purpose of this hearing is to present the proposed 2026-2027 budget and to receive public input, comments and questions regarding the budget. A copy of the proposed budget has been available for public inspection at [LOCATION/WEBSITE] since [DATE]."
4. The school's financial representative presents the proposed budget, highlighting key points such as, details at the function level, beginning and ending fund balances, assumption of foundation amount and assumption of FTEs (student enrollment). During the presentation board members may ask questions and seek clarification about line items, justifications for increase, key assumptions, etc.
5. The Board President seeks public comment.
"We will now open the floor to public comment. We ask that you limit your comments to [NUMBER] minutes to allow time for others to speak."
The board listens to comments and takes notes, but does not respond/debate.

6. The Board President closes the budget hearing and returns to the regular board meeting.
"Hearing no further public comments, can I get a motion to close the budget hearing and resume rules to return to the regular board meeting."
Board Member: *"I move to close the budget hearing and resume rules to return to the regular board meeting."*
A Different Board Member: *"I second."*
Board President: *"It has been moved and seconded to close the budget hearing and resume rules to return to the regular meeting at [TIME]. Those in favor to close the budget hearing and resume rules to return to the regular board meeting say "aye", those opposed say "nay"."* Announce the results of the vote.
7. The final step in the process is for the board to formally consider the proposed budget for next year.
Board President: *"Is there a motion to adopt the 2026-2027 budget as presented?"*
Board Member: *"I move to adopt the 2026-2027 budget as presented."*
A Different Board Member: *"I second."*
Board President: *"It has been moved and seconded that we adopt the 2026-2027 budget as presented, any discussion?"*
Allow time for board members to discuss. Board members may ask questions of the school's financial representative they may have or to clarify concerns raised in the public comment section.
"Those in favor to adopt the 2026-2027 budget as presented say "aye", those opposed say "nay"."
(or a roll call vote). Announces the result of the vote.

Michigan requires that within 15 days after the board adopts its annual budget for the following year, and after any subsequent amendments to that budget, the budget must be posted on the school's website under Transparency Reporting. In addition, the budget and its amendments must be submitted in Epicenter and include:

- Board Resolution
- Detailed at the function level
- Beginning and ending fund balances
- Assumption of foundation amount and
- Assumption of FTEs (student enrollment).

❖ Any Questions?

You may contact your FSU Field Representative or Sharon Hopper if you have any questions regarding this Board Communication. Important and/or urgent information that cannot wait until the next Board Communication will be sent to you by email.

2026 Summer Leadership Conference

July 21-22, 2026

DoubleTree Hotel
One Wenonah Park Place
Bay City, MI 48708

Presented By



FULL CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2026			
3:00 – 5:00 p.m.	Conference Registration – Outside of Salon DoubleTree Hotel Check-In Begins @ 4:00 p.m.		
4:30 – 5:30 p.m.	Heavy Appetizers		
Keynote Speaker #1 – Tiki Davis			
	Salon		
5:15 p.m.	Welcome and Introduction		
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.	Keynote #1 – Tiki Davis “Total Commitment”		
WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2026			
8:00 – 9:15 a.m.	Conference Registration – Outside of Salon		
8:15 – 9:15 a.m.	Breakfast		
Keynote Speaker #2 – Larry Bell			
	Salon		
9:15 a.m.	Welcome and Introduction		
9:30 – 11:30 a.m.	Keynote #2 – Larry Bell “The Unstoppable Administrator”		
Morning Sessions			
	Salon	Davison I-IV	
11:40 – 12:30 p.m.	Ways to Empower Your Staff Larry Bell	The Four H’s Tiki Davis	
12:30 – 1:30	Lunch		
Afternoon Sessions			
	Salon	Davison I & II	Davison III & IV
1:40 – 2:30 p.m.	Hot Topic Leader Panel Brian Lynch, Bay City Academy Joshua Sobczak, Huron Academy Ryan Culey, Battle Creek Montessori Academy Isaiah Pettway, WAY Academy	Strategic Planning: Using a Comprehensive Dashboard to Demonstrate Improvement and Success Dave Tebo	AI for Educators Part 1 Kent ISD EdTech Team
Afternoon Snacks in Main Hallway			
	Salon	Davison I & II	Davison III & IV
2:40 – 3:30 p.m.	Leading Special Education with Clarity and Confidence Sarah VanderBaan	Listening to Students to Help Improve Our Schools Dave Tebo	AI for Educators Part 2 Kent ISD EdTech Team

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Keynote Speaker #1 – July 21, 2026 @ 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Total Commitment

📍 Salon

In this powerful keynote, I take you through the trials and tribulations of my life—from being stabbed in the neck to navigating some of the darkest places imaginable. But through every setback, I made a decision: I would stay totally committed to the end goal. Throughout this talk, I share real moments where total commitment wasn't optional—it was necessary. I break down how that same level of commitment can help you transform your life and impact others—not only your friends and family, but more importantly, your students, both current and future.

ABOUT TIKI DAVIS:

Tiki Davis has a compelling story of resilience, opposition, and heartbreak. At 9 years old, he nearly lost his life when a stranger broke into his home and stabbed him in the neck. From that moment on, survival became personal and hope became necessary.

Tiki's first dream was football. Even when that dream was taken from him, he refused to quit. Through grit, discipline, and an unbreakable will, Tiki overcame the odds to become one of the top oil and gas engineers in the world and a powerful public speaker. But titles and success didn't come easy and they didn't come alone. Everything Tiki has built is rooted in determination, faith, and the decision to move forward when quitting felt easier.



Tiki Davis

Public Speaker, The
TiKi Factor

Keynote Speaker #2 – July 22, 2026 @ 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

The Unstoppable Administrator

📍 Salon

This keynote is centered around helping everyone feed the "fire" that burns in the hearts of those unstoppable administrators who live by the mantra, "I will not be stopped!" This keynote is about the "it" factor that drives some administrators to succeed regardless of circumstances. Using research, humor, and real-world examples, the presenter exhorts every participant to rise to the unstoppable greatness we all possess.

ABOUT LARRY BELL:

Larry Bell is a 30-year veteran in education. He taught at Garfield High School, a diverse school of more than 3,000 students speaking 36 languages, where he became known for innovative strategies that helped both struggling students and gifted learners succeed. He later served 7 years as an admin for Prince William County Schools, supporting 67 schools, more than 3,000 teachers, and over 50,000 students. His work in this role earned him a \$550,000 federal grant to pilot his educational strategies and the Mary Hatwood Futrell Award from the Virginia Education Association. Bell has delivered keynote presentations at major conferences across the United States and hundreds of regional and local events. A graduate of The Citadel, Bell is now a full-time educational consultant and business owner.



Larry Bell

Educational Consultant,
Empowering Presentations
Inc.

Wednesday, July 22, 2026

Morning Sessions – 11:40 – 12:30 p.m.

Ways to Empower Your Staff

Salon

This session will provide strategies to empower your staff so they can better support the administration, reach the most challenging students, and feel that they are major stakeholders in the building. I will provide participants with seven strong initiatives that build trust and confidence between the administrative and teaching staff. I will also provide several crucial academic strategies that have been shown to reach even the most resistant, recalcitrant students. Participants will break into small groups and share ideas for implementing these research-based, powerful initiatives.

ABOUT LARRY BELL:

Larry Bell is a 30-year veteran in education, including 15 years as a classroom teacher, during which he was nominated for the National Agnes Mayer Outstanding Teacher Award. As an educator, he became known for innovative strategies that helped both struggling students and gifted learners succeed. Bell has delivered keynote presentations at major conferences across the United States. A graduate of The Citadel, Bell is now a full-time educational consultant and business owner.



Larry Bell
Educational Consultant,
Empowering
Presentations Inc.

The Four H's

Davison I-IV

The Four H's, is designed to challenge individuals to reflect, connect, and grow through shared experiences. I'll begin by giving a brief refresher of my personal story—highlighting key moments of adversity, perseverance, and transformation—to set the tone and create an open, honest environment. From there, we move into an interactive workshop built around the Four H's: Hero, Hardship, Highlight, and Humor. Through this workshop-style session, participants will walk away with a renewed mindset, stronger connections with their peers, and a greater understanding of how their experiences shape who they are becoming. The Four H's isn't just a session—it's a reset.

ABOUT TIKI DAVIS:

Tiki Davis, known for the Tiki Factor, is a man with a compelling story of resilience, opposition, and heartbreak. Through grit, discipline, and an unbreakable will to keep going, Tiki overcame the odds to become one of the top oil and gas engineers in the world and a powerful public speaker. Today, Tiki travels the country teaching the Tiki Factor principles: Total Commitment, Imagination, Kindred Spirits, and Investment in Yourself. His mission is simple but bold—to help people get unstuck, rise above their circumstances, and develop the resilience to live out their dreams.



Tiki Davis
Public Speaker, The
Tiki Factor

Wednesday, July 22, 2026

Afternoon Sessions #1 – 1:40 – 2:30 p.m.

Hot Topic Leader Panel

Salon

This conference session features a four-leader panel focused on increasing enrollment and strengthening school culture. Panelists will share how strategic marketing, community engagement, and intentional outreach have driven enrollment growth, along with the systems they've implemented to boost staff morale, elevate staff voice, and foster shared ownership. Through a facilitated discussion, leaders will highlight key strategies and lessons learned. The session will conclude with an audience Q&A, offering practical, actionable insights for participants to apply in their own schools.



Speakers:

Brian Lynch, Bay City Academy
Joshua Sobczak, Huron Academy
Ryan Culey, Battle Creek Montessori Academy
Isaiah Pettway, WAY Academy

Strategic Planning: Using a Comprehensive Dashboard to Demonstrate Improvement and Success

Davison I & II

In this session, we will explore how a well-designed dashboard can transform strategic planning from a static document into a living system of improvement. Participants will examine how to align key performance indicators to district priorities, establish leading and lagging measures, and create visualizations that are clear enough for boards and community members while still meaningful for internal teams. We will discuss how dashboards support transparency, equity-focused decision making, and continuous improvement cycles. By the end, you will have a framework for designing or refining a dashboard that tells a compelling story of progress, highlights areas for action, and builds confidence in your organization's direction. Strategic planning becomes less about reporting and more about demonstrating real, measurable growth.



David Tebo
Ottawa ISD Director of Innovation Services

ABOUT DAVID TEBO:

David Tebo helps leaders and organizations unlock their potential through visionary thinking and actionable design. At Ottawa ISD, he guides teams through transformative change using design thinking, systems leadership, and project-based methodologies. He blends strategic planning with creativity, supporting leaders from inspiration to implementation — always rooted in equity, empathy, and people-centered progress. Drawing on expertise in education, AI integration, and future-focused learning, he helps clients clarify their vision, embrace adaptive change, and create meaningful, sustainable impact.

Wednesday, July 22, 2026

Afternoon Sessions #1 – 1:40 – 2:30 p.m.

AI for Educators – Part 1

Davison III & IV

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping the way we live and work, pushing us to rethink how we lead and learn. This workshop is designed for K-12 education leaders who want to lead with confidence and clarity in the age of generative AI. In this hands-on and discussion-oriented session, we'll explore AI through the lenses of literacy, ethics, and fluency. We will dive into how you can use AI to boost productivity, enhance learning experiences, and empower learners.

ABOUT THE KENT ISD EDTECH TEAM:

Since the onset of generative AI, the **Kent ISD EdTech Team** (Keith Trampler, Sarah Wood, and Katherine Fredrickson) has been supporting educators around the state as they consider how to adopt AI and use it as a tool for good. Building a strong foundation in AI Literacy and Ethics, they've helped educators find ways to improve their productivity, amplify learning experiences, and empower their learners. The Kent ISD has created many workshops, tools, resources, and activities, to help educators lead the conversation on AI in K-12 education.



Kent ISD Team
Kent ISD Education Technology
Consultants

Afternoon Sessions #2 – 2:40 – 3:30 p.m.

Leading Special Education with Clarity and Confidence

Salon

This session equips school leaders with the knowledge, mindset, and practical tools needed to effectively lead special education programs, moving beyond basic compliance to focus on building strong systems that support students with disabilities while empowering staff and partnering with families. Leaders will strengthen their understanding of legal foundations while gaining clarity around their role in supervision, decision-making, and instructional quality. The session emphasizes balancing high expectations with meaningful support, using data to guide improvement, and fostering collaboration between general and special education teams.



Sarah VanderBaan
Choice Schools Chief of
Specially Designed
Instruction and Student
Services

ABOUT SARAH VANDERBAAN:

Sarah VanderBaan has over 22 years of experience in education, including 15 years in charter schools. She has served as a middle school Resource Program Teacher, West Michigan Special Education Content Leader, and MAASE Region 3 Board Representative, and has led a team of 150 special educators. Sarah has taught students from early childhood through high school in both general and special education settings, including three years at The American International School in Hong Kong. She has represented MAPSA on Michigan's Special Education Advisory Committee and teaches special education courses in the PIIT program. She

Wednesday, July 22, 2026

Afternoon Sessions #2 – 2:40 – 3:30 p.m.

Listening to Students to Help Improve our Schools

📍 Davison I & II

This is a practical, forward-focused session designed to help educators move beyond surveys and into meaningful dialogue. We will explore structured ways to gather authentic student perspectives, analyze themes without defensiveness, and translate feedback into actionable school improvement strategies. Participants will examine protocols that elevate student voice across grade levels and learn how to create psychologically safe spaces where students feel heard—not managed.



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**SCAN QR CODE BELOW FOR CONFERENCE
FEEDBACK FORM**



THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS!