



AEF. ACADEMY





The Arizona Educational Foundation (AEF) Academy is deeply committed to professional development that promotes growth, renewal, and lasting impact. By collaborating with Arizona's top educational leaders, AEF Academy designs and delivers premier learning experiences that are both purposeful and meaningful. These courses prioritize real-world relevance, encourage innovation, and promote collaboration - ensuring that educators are supported, inspired, and prepared to lead with confidence and excellence.

Explore. Plan. Grow.

Discover AEF Academy's latest course offerings and register today to elevate your career or program pathway!

Register for classes at:

<https://azedfoundation.org/news-events/events/>



Head & Mind: Unlocking the Power of Social Emotional Learning

July 9, 2026, 11:00AM – 11:45AM, Virtual

Tiffani Jaseph, 2026 Arizona Teacher of the Year

Join Tiffani for an interactive session on the powerful role social emotional learning plays in special education classrooms. Together, we will explore how intentional SEL practices can create stronger connections, increase student access, and help all learners engage more fully in the classroom. Participants will leave with a clearer understanding of how SEL supports both belonging and learning for students with diverse needs.

Spelling Bee 101: How to Enroll and Get Started

August 18, 2026, 5:00PM – 6:00PM, Virtual

Erik Rendelman, AEF Director of Programs & Partnerships

Join the Arizona Educational Foundation for an informative session designed to help schools confidently navigate the Spelling Bee process. Whether you're a first-time coordinator or simply need a refresher, this session will walk you through how to enroll your school through the Scripps National Spelling Bee website and understand the steps that follow. We'll break down key differences in the process for public, charter, private, and homeschool groups, as well as highlight important dates and deadlines for the school, regional, and state-level Bees. Participants will leave with a clear understanding of how to prepare students, communicate with families, and ensure a smooth and successful Bee season from start to finish. Perfect for school coordinators, principals, and anyone supporting student competitions, this session will set you up for a year of spelling success.

National Board 101: Your Path to Certification

August 20, 2026, 4:30PM – 5:30PM Virtual

Donnie Dicus, AZ K-12 Center Program Director, Kendall Waite, AZK-12 Center Program Director

Are you curious about National Board Certification but not sure where to begin? This introductory session is designed for teachers who want to learn more about the National Board process, what certification involves, and how to take the first steps with confidence.

During this session, participants will explore the foundations of National Board Certification, including the Five Core Propositions and the Architecture of Accomplished Teaching. We will also discuss helpful starting resources, what candidates can expect from the process, and available funding opportunities that may help support certification costs.

By the end of the session, teachers will have a clearer understanding of what National Board Certification is, why it matters, and how to begin planning their own path toward certification.



Giving Arizona Schools the Shine They Deserve: How the AEF Shine Squad Can Impact Your Campus.

August 26, 2026, 9:00AM – 10:00AM, Virtual
Danielle Gilmore, AEF Chief Strategy Officer

Every school campus is unique and has unique needs. From updating playground equipment, campus beautification, and volunteer training, AEF strives to assist wherever possible. The AEF Shine Squad is designed to help schools complete projects, fill volunteer needs, and increase community support. AEF works with each school through a simple survey to identify needs, call to clarify safety needs, and then ongoing support based on identified priorities.

Pathway to Excellence: Using AEF A+ Program to Building Resilient Rural Schools



August 26, 2026, 3:30PM – 4:30PM, Virtual
Ginny Sautner & Shannon Williams
(2025 A+ School of Excellence Principals)

AEF is committed to supporting and encouraging high standards and excellence in our rural communities. Hear the compelling stories of two rural public elementary schools that chose to embark on the AEF A+ School of Excellence journey.

This meaningful experience strengthened their leadership as building administrators, increased student achievement, and strengthened community connections. Most importantly, hear how the process empowered students to believe in their own potential, despite the unique challenges rural schools often face. We enthusiastically invite anyone interested in the A+ School of Excellence pathway to join us as we share our stories, lessons learned, and the positive transformation this journey has inspired by our resilient rural schools.



Introduction to AI in Education

September 12, 2026, 9:00AM – 11:00AM, Virtual
Jonathan Perrone, AEF teachSTEM Program Coordinator

Hosted by the Arizona Educational Foundation, this 2-hour virtual workshop introduces educators and administrators to artificial intelligence tools for teaching and administration. Designed for beginners, participants will explore practical AI applications through hands-on experience with ChatGPT, MagicSchool AI, and other educational platforms. You'll learn to streamline lesson planning, create assessments, and enhance administrative tasks while addressing ethical considerations and student safety. Participants will leave with sample prompts, implementation strategies, and policy guidance to confidently integrate AI into their educational practice. Perfect for educators ready to harness AI as a powerful tool for teaching and administration.

Spelling Bee 101: How to Enroll and Get Started

September 15, 2026, 5:00PM – 6:00PM, Virtual

Erik Rendelman, AEF Director of Programs & Partnerships

Join the Arizona Educational Foundation for an informative session designed to help schools confidently navigate the Spelling Bee process. Whether you're a first-time coordinator or simply need a refresher, this session will walk you through how to enroll your school through the Scripps National Spelling Bee website and understand the steps that follow. We'll break down key differences in the process for public, charter, private, and homeschool groups, as well as highlight important dates and deadlines for the school, regional, and state-level Bees. Participants will leave with a clear understanding of how to prepare students, communicate with families, and ensure a smooth and successful Bee season from start to finish. Perfect for school coordinators, principals, and anyone supporting student competitions, this session will set you up for a year of spelling success.

Recognize. Nominate. Celebrate: A Proven Model for Teacher of the Year Programs

September 16, 2026, 9:00AM – 10:00AM, Virtual

MJ Boyter, Sahuarita Unified School District Director of Professional Development and Curriculum & Ryan Carle-Ogren, Sahuarita Unified School District Director of Professional Development and Curriculum

Recognize. Nominate. Celebrate: A Proven Model for Teacher of the Year Programs outlines a thoughtful and replicable approach to honoring exceptional educators through the AEF Teacher of the Year Program. Developed by the Sahuarita Unified School District, this model streamlines each step of the nomination process - from recognizing school-site Teachers of the Year to selecting district-level honorees and formally supporting nominations at the state level. The session will explore key components such as timelines, application procedures, selection committees, and criteria to help establish a strong foundation for celebrating outstanding educators across Arizona.

Dyslexia & Policy: Meeting the Needs of Students with Dyslexia - For Administrators

September 17, 2026, 5:00PM - 6:00PM, Virtual

Dr. Jan Spooner, PhD, School Principal

Dyslexia affects up to 20% of our students, and school districts are required to provide evidence-based instruction to support their needs. However, these requirements have been challenging to implement. This presentation will equip administrators with information about systems of support for students with dyslexia.

We will focus on:

- Dyslexia - what is it, and how did we get here?
- ADE requirements of school districts and teachers
- Instructional models
- One school's story



A+ School of Excellence Presentation (Application, Process, & Timelines)

September 22, 2026, 5:00PM – 6:30PM, Virtual

Brett K. Bonner, 2010 A+ School Principal, AEF Director of Professional Development & Dean of AEF Academy

Still have questions about the A+ School of Excellence application process? Join us for an A+ informational virtual session. Learn more about the process, timelines, helpful insights, and get all your questions answered before the application is due August 2027.

PRVNT Collaborating to Advance School Safety- Course Discussion*



***Must complete the PRVNT course through ASU prior to this session**

September 22, 2026, 4:00PM-5:00PM, Virtual

Dr. Sarah Lindstrom-Johnson, Professor/Family & Human Development, Arizona State University

Develop collaborative dynamics among school stakeholders, such as parents, educators, administrators, mental health professionals and school resource officers. Explore case studies and exercises practical for applying strategies in group settings.



Systems Leadership in Schools: You Really Can't Do It All

September 24, 2026, 5:00PM – 6:00PM, Virtual

Dr. David Mandel, Executive Vice President, Waters Center for Systems Thinking

Leading in a school system presents principal's with a consistent quandary - what matters most and what can I do to impact student achievement? Systems thinking helps provide a framework and cognitive structures to think about the systems that we live and work in so that we can find leverage for change when we can't do it all. By enhancing your systems thinking capacity, you will be more able to think through complex challenges, arrive at possible solutions, engage your community, and lead continuous improvement grounded in the four traits of effective principals. You will leave the session with concrete strategies from systems thinking to guide your own decision-making and with ways to inspire deeper thinking by others so that you can find leverage for change in your system.

<https://waterscenterst.org/>

**Sign up for PRVNT courses through ASU here*





Teacher Inquiry Made Simple: Using Classroom Data to Improve Practice

September 24, 2026, 4:00PM – 4:45PM, Virtual

Tyler Hill, 2026 AEF Ambassador

Every classroom generates valuable data. This session introduces a simple inquiry process that helps educators turn everyday classroom observations, student work, and participation patterns into meaningful instructional decisions. Participants will leave with practical tools to immediately support reflection and improve practice. Your classroom is talking. Let's listen!

Writing on the Wall: Making Thinking Visible with Vertical Boards

in ELA

October 1, 2026, 4:00PM – 4:45PM, Virtual

Teresa Anthofer, 2026 AEF Ambassador

Vertical boards transform classroom discussion from passive, limited participation to visible thinking. In this session, participants will explore how vertical dry erase surfaces can increase student engagement, strengthen collaboration, and make analysis more dynamic. Through videotaped lessons, ready-to-use strategies, and practical implementation tips, attendees will learn how to use vertical boards for close reading, vocabulary development, argumentative writing, feedback and reflection, and collaborative discussion. Educators will leave with adaptable techniques that promote movement, accountability, and deeper student thinking.

Spelling Bee 101: How to Enroll and Get Started

October 6, 2026, 5:00PM – 6:00PM, Virtual

Erik Rendelman, AEF Director of Programs & Partnerships

Join the Arizona Educational Foundation for an informative session designed to help schools confidently navigate the Spelling Bee process. Whether you're a first-time coordinator or simply need a refresher, this session will walk you through how to enroll your school through the Scripps National Spelling Bee website and understand the steps that follow. We'll break down key differences in the process for public, charter, private, and homeschool groups, as well as highlight important dates and deadlines for the school, regional, and state-level Bees. Participants will leave with a clear understanding of how to prepare students, communicate with families, and ensure a smooth and successful Bee season from start to finish. Perfect for school coordinators, principals, and anyone supporting student competitions, this session will set you up for a year of spelling success.



Supporting Students with Dyslexia - For Teachers

October 15, 2026, 5:00PM - 6:00PM, Virtual

Dr. Jan Spooner, PhD, School Principal

Dyslexia affects up to 20% of our students, but many teachers have not been trained to support these struggling readers. This presentation will equip teachers with knowledge and understanding of dyslexia and enable them to provide the support students with dyslexia need in our classrooms.

We will focus on:

- Dyslexia - what is it, and what are some signs and symptoms?
- Structured literacy - a template for reading instruction
- Accommodations and modifications for students with dyslexia
- Social/emotional implications of dyslexia

Innovate with CAD & 3D Printing

October 24, 2026, 9:00AM - 11:00AM, AEF Headquarters (326 E. Coronado Rd., Phoenix)

Jonathan Perrone, AEF teachSTEM Program Coordinator

Discover the possibilities of AEF's Innovation Lab in this hands-on training hosted by the Arizona Educational Foundation. This session invites educators to unlock the creative potential of Computer Aided Design (CAD) and 3D printing. Perfect for those new to the field or eager to expand their skills, participants will be guided through the basics of TinkerCAD, a free and accessible online design tool. You'll learn essential skills for creating 3D models and bring your designs to life using Bambu 3D printers. Each educator will leave with a unique 3D-printed item they designed and practical, classroom-ready ideas to inspire students in 3rd grade and beyond. This session supports Arizona standards for Computer Science and Educational Technology, and the projects can be adapted to enrich learning across all content areas. Additionally, we'll introduce our robust STEM Lesson Plan Database, featuring over 2,000 lessons, including dozens focused on 3D printing. With shared access to one of our eight 3D printers per small group and expert support throughout, you'll be prepared to make 3D printing an engaging part of your teaching toolkit, empowering students with hands-on design and engineering experiences.



The Hidden Struggle: Supporting Students with Dyslexia Through SEL & Classroom Accommodations

October 29th, 2026, 4:00PM - 4:45PM, Virtual

Becky Hill, 2026 AEF Ambassador

This session focuses on supporting students with dyslexia through social-emotional learning (SEL) and effective classroom accommodations. Participants will explore how dyslexia impacts academic performance, confidence, and behavior while learning strategies to create supportive and inclusive learning environments.



Robotics in the Classroom: Engaging Students Across K-12

November 14, 2026, 9:00AM – 11:00AM, AEF Headquarters (326 E. Coronado Rd., Phoenix)

Jonathan Perrone, AEF teachSTEM Program Coordinator

Join the Arizona Educational Foundation in AEF's Innovation Lab for an exciting, hands-on training in classroom robotics, crafted for K-12 educators at all experience levels. Using dynamic robots like Sphero Indi, Sphero Bolt Mini, and LEGO Spike Prime, you'll spend the majority of the session working directly with these tools to explore effective ways to integrate robotics into your curriculum. The training covers essential programming and coding skills, while showcasing robotics connections across content areas such as Science, Computer Science, Educational Technology, Literacy, and Math. You'll also gain access to our comprehensive STEM Lesson Plan Database, which includes over 2,000 lessons, dozens focused on robotics, to support your instructional planning and provide ready-to-use classroom ideas. This session combines pedagogical insights with hands-on practice, ensuring you're equipped to spark curiosity and critical thinking in your students through robotics at any grade level.

A+ School of Excellence Presentation (Application, Process, & Timelines)

November 17, 2026, 5:00PM – 6:30PM, Virtual

Brett K. Bonner, 2010 A+ School Principal, AEF Director of Professional Development & Dean of AEF Academy

Still have questions about the A+ School of Excellence application process? Join us for an A+ informational virtual session. Learn more about the process, timelines, helpful insights, and get all your questions answered before the application is due August 2027.



PRVNT Conceptual Foundations of School Safety Planning- Course Discussion*

***Must complete the PRVNT course through ASU prior to this session**

December 1, 2026, 4:00PM - 5:00PM, Virtual

Dr. Sarah Lindstrom-Johnson, Professor/Family & Human Development, Arizona State University

Expectations and roles of school safety staff, including school resource officers, mental health professionals, and others.

*Sign up for PRVNT
courses through ASU
here





AI Alliance: What's happening in AI & Who is the alliance? How does the alliance support Arizona school districts and educators?

December 3, 2026, 9:00AM – 10:00AM, Virtual

Dr. LeeAnn Lindsey & Dr. Michelle Watt

Whether you are new to AI or already exploring how it can support teaching and learning, this session is designed for you. Join Dr. LeeAnn Lindsey and Dr. Michelle Watt as they share how schools can take practical steps toward becoming more AI literate using the AI Guidance Guide. Participants will explore key ideas from the guide, discuss how it can support thoughtful AI use in schools, and consider ways to build shared understanding among staff and administrators. This online session will provide clear starting points and useful next steps for school teams looking to navigate AI with confidence and purpose.

Pathway to Excellence: Using AEF A+ Program to Building Resilient Rural Schools



January 13, 2027, 3:30PM – 4:30PM, Virtual

Ginny Sautner & Shannon Williams (2025 A+ School of Excellence Principals)

Hear the compelling stories of two rural public elementary schools that chose to embark on the AEF A+ School of Excellence journey.

This meaningful experience strengthened their leadership as building administrators, increased student achievement, and strengthened community connections. Most importantly, hear how the process empowered students to believe in their own potential, despite the unique challenges rural schools often face. We invite anyone interested in the A+ School of Excellence pathway to join us as we share our stories, lessons learned, and the positive transformation this journey has inspired by our resilient rural schools.



Introduction to AI in Education

January 23, 2027, 9:00AM – 11:00AM, Virtual

Jonathan Perrone, AEF teachSTEM Program Coordinator

Hosted by the Arizona Educational Foundation, this 2-hour virtual workshop introduces educators and administrators to artificial intelligence tools for teaching and administration. Designed for beginners, participants will explore practical AI applications through hands-on experience with ChatGPT, MagicSchool AI, and other educational platforms.

You'll learn to streamline lesson planning, create assessments, and enhance administrative tasks while addressing ethical considerations and student safety. Participants will leave with sample prompts, implementation strategies, and policy guidance to confidently integrate AI into their educational practice.

Perfect for educators ready to harness AI as a powerful tool for teaching and administration.

Giving Arizona Schools the Shine They Deserve: How the AEF Shine Squad Can Impact Your Campus.

January 27, 2027, 9:00AM – 10:00AM, Virtual

Danielle Gilmore, AEF Chief Strategy Officer

Every school campus is unique and has unique needs. From updating playground equipment, campus beautification, and volunteer training, AEF strives to assist wherever possible. The AEF Shine Squad is designed to help schools complete projects, fill volunteer needs, and increase community support. AEF works with each school through a simple survey to identify needs, call to clarify safety needs, and then ongoing support based on identified priorities.

A+ School of Excellence Presentation (Application, Process, & Timelines)

February 9, 2027, 5:00PM – 6:30PM, Virtual

Brett K. Bonner, 2010 A+ School Principal, AEF Director of Professional Development & Dean of AEF Academy

Still have questions about the A+ School of Excellence application process? Join us for an A+ informational virtual session. Learn more about the process, timelines, helpful insights, and get all your questions answered before the application is due August 2027.

Dyslexia & Policy: Meeting the Needs of Students with Dyslexia - For Administrators

February 11, 2027, 5:00PM - 6:00PM, Virtual

Dr. Jan Spooner, PhD, School Principal

Dyslexia affects up to 20% of our students, and school districts are required to provide evidence-based instruction to support their needs. However, these requirements have been challenging to implement. This presentation will equip administrators with information about systems of support for students with dyslexia.

We will focus on:

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Exploring Microelectronics: Engaging Students with Coding and Circuits

February 13, 2027, 9:00AM – 11:00AM, AEF Headquarters (326 E. Coronado Rd., Phoenix)

Jonathan Perrone, AEF teachSTEM Program Coordinator

Join the Arizona Educational Foundation in AEF's Innovation Lab for a hands-on journey into microelectronics, designed for K-12 educators eager to bring coding and interactive electronics into their classrooms. Using versatile tools like Makey Makeys, micro:bit, and Hummingbird Bit kits, participants will explore how to engage students in creating circuits, coding small devices, and building simple robots. This workshop offers educators a practical introduction to these microelectronics, along with project ideas that connect to real-world applications and support educational technology, computer science, and STEM standards. You'll also gain access to our extensive STEM Lesson Plan Database, which includes over 2,000 lessons, dozens focused on microelectronics and coding, to support your instructional planning and provide ready-to-use classroom activities. Teachers will rotate through activities that demonstrate how these tools can bring subjects like science, technology, and art to life, empowering students to invent and innovate. Leave with sample projects, classroom-ready activities, and the confidence to integrate microelectronics into your curriculum at any grade level.

PRVNT De-escalation and Crisis Response in School- Course Discussion*

***Must complete the PRVNT course through ASU prior to this session**

February 23, 2027, 4:00PM - 5:00PM, Virtual

Dr. Sarah Lindstrom-Johnson, Professor/Family & Human Development, Arizona State University

Identify common triggers and early warning signs of student crises, understand different types of school-based crises and assess their severity to determine appropriate interventions.



Digital Design & Entrepreneurship

February 27, 2027, 9:00AM – 11:00AM, AEF Headquarters (326 E. Coronado Rd., Phoenix)

Jonathan Perrone, AEF teachSTEM Program Coordinator

Hosted by the Arizona Educational Foundation in AEF's Innovation Lab, sponsored by Communications, this hands-on workshop invites educators to explore graphic design and making through tools like Cricut machines, heat transfer vinyl, and sublimation. Participants will rotate through design and making stations, using software like Canva and Cricut Design Space to create custom projects. You'll work with Cricut Maker 3 machines, sublimation printers, and heat presses to learn techniques for creating classroom materials and student-led projects. Teachers will leave with sample projects like vinyl stickers or sublimated items, plus practical ideas for integrating design thinking into their classrooms. We'll also demonstrate connections between design and entrepreneurship, showing how these creative skills can inspire student innovation and business thinking across all grade levels.



Arizona Coalition of Education Foundations (ACEF) – Program Overview Session

March 2, 2027, 5:00PM – 6:00PM, Virtual

Dr. Marianne Lescher ACEF Program Coordinator

Interested in strengthening or starting an education foundation in your school district? Join us for an informational session to learn how the Arizona Coalition of Education Foundations (ACEF) supports districts and foundation leaders across the state. ACEF is a statewide network focused on building capacity, sharing best practices, and connecting peers to help education foundations grow, lead, and thrive.

This session is designed for current education foundation staff and board members, as well as school and district leaders exploring how to launch a foundation of their own.

Participants will gain an overview of ACEF membership benefits, including access to professional development, fundraising strategies, board development resources, and a collaborative network of education leaders. In addition, ACEF members receive access to the National Association of Education Foundations (NAEF), opening the door to national-level resources, trainings, and connections that further strengthen local impact.

You'll also hear directly from a current ACEF member, who will share their experience and insights, followed by an opportunity for open Q&A.

Whether you're looking to enhance an existing foundation or take the first steps toward building one, this session will provide valuable information, real-world perspectives, and a clear path forward.



Supporting Students with Dyslexia - For Teachers

March 4, 2027, 5:00PM - 6:00PM, Virtual

Dr. Jan Spooner, PhD, School Principal

Dyslexia affects up to 20% of our students, but many teachers have not been trained to support these struggling readers. This presentation will equip teachers with knowledge and understanding of dyslexia and enable them to provide the support students with dyslexia need in our classrooms.

We will focus on:

- Dyslexia - what is it, and what are some signs and symptoms?
- Structured literacy - a template for reading instruction
- Accommodations and modifications for students with dyslexia
- Social/emotional implications of dyslexia



A+ School of Excellence Presentation (Application, Process, & Timelines)

April 6, 2027, 5:00PM – 6:30PM, Virtual

**Brett K. Bonner, 2010 A+ School Principal, AEF Director of Professional Development
& Dean of AEF Academy**

Still have questions about the A+ School of Excellence application process? Join us for an A+ informational virtual session. Learn more about the process, timelines, helpful insights, and get all your questions answered before the application is due this summer.



PRVNT Potential Benefits and Harms of Technology for School Safety- Course Discussion*

***Must complete the PRVNT course through ASU prior to this session**

April 27, 2027, 4:00PM-5:00PM, Virtual

Dr. Sarah Lindstrom-Johnson, Professor/Family & Human Development, Arizona State University

Explore the opportunities and challenges of using technology to enhance school safety. Through discussion and real-world examples, participants will examine how technology can support communication, prevention, and crisis response while considering potential risks related to privacy, trust, and student well-being.

**Sign up for PRVNT
courses through ASU
here*

