

USAA Newsletter

Urban Superintendents Association of America , Inc.
www.usaa.org



Fall 2025, Vol. 2, Issue 2



Inside this Issue

- Greetings from the President, P. 2
- USAA Executive Committee, P. 3
- Summer Academy Recap, Pages 4-7
- Historical Perspective, Pages 8-9
- Academy Sponsors, P. 10
- Silver Sponsor Spotlight, Pages 11 -12
- A Note from the Executive Director, P. 13



Urban Superintendents Association Summer Conference Recap

The annual conference convened education leaders nationwide to exchange strategies, address critical challenges, and highlight innovative approaches to advancing equity and student success

Conference highlights and photo gallery begin on page 6.

From the Desk of the President

Greetings Esteemed USAA Colleagues,

The 2025–2026 school year is officially underway, and we've already kicked into high gear. Your leadership is both needed and deeply appreciated.

Thank you for bringing your strategic vision, innovative spirit, creative genius, caring heart, and tireless commitment to the students, families, educators, and communities you serve. Your work matters, every single day.

Please stay encouraged and steadfast in your purpose. Public education is the backbone of our democracy, and your dedication helps strengthen that foundation for generations to come.

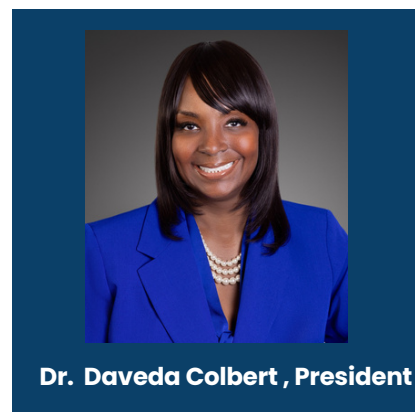
Let's make this school year remarkable, filled with impact, growth, and inspiration.

In 2025, USAA proudly hosted two incredible opportunities for educational leaders to shine:

- The Inaugural Women in Leadership Across the Nation Conference in March, held in Austin, Texas.
- The 30th Anniversary Celebration of the USAA Summer Learning Academy in July, hosted in New Orleans, Louisiana.

In a time that calls for bold courage and unwavering leadership, both events were timely, relevant, and deeply fulfilling.

Heartfelt thanks go to the Executive Board and our Executive Director for their continued visionary leadership, and to each USAA member for your steadfast commitment to excellence in education.



Dr. Daveda Colbert , President

Serving as a school district superintendent is both demanding and deeply rewarding. I'm grateful to walk this journey alongside such dedicated and passionate leaders. As always, I urge you to prioritize your own well-being. As you pour into others, don't forget to pour into yourself.

Reflection, rest, rejuvenation, and resetting are not luxuries, they are essentials. These practices restore the clarity, creativity, and resilience that visionary leadership requires.

It has been a honor and a privilege to serve as President of USAA this past year. As my term ends, I look forward with great confidence to the leadership of Dr. Jason Simeroth, who will continue advancing the mission of USAA and ensuring it remains innovative, dynamic, and responsive to the needs of our membership.

Here's to continued growth, a shared vision, and courageous leadership. The best is yet to come.

In solidarity and with gratitude,

Daveda

Daveda J. Colbert, Ph.D.
President, USAA Inc.

USAA Executive Committee Members

The USAA Executive Committee is comprised of dynamic leaders from across the United States. These individuals are at the forefront of innovation and excellence in education. Whether you are looking to collaborate, learn or find inspiration, this directory connects you with trailblazers who are shaping the future of education in our nation. Our Executive Committee is committed to serving the education community and we value their dedication.

Dr. Daveda J. Colbert, President

Wayne, MI

Dr. Jason Simeroth, President-Elect

Yukon, OK

Regina Rossall, Past President

Quartz Hill, CA

Dr. Sharon Desmoulin-Kherat, Secretary-Treasurer

Peoria, IL

Dr. Casey Allen, Vice President, At Large

Barlow, KY

Dr. Marlon King, Vice President, At Large

Jackson, TN

Paul Norton, Vice President, At Large

Austin, TX

Dr. J. R. Green, Vice President, Southeastern States

Winnsboro, SC

Dr. Eric Bracy, Vice President, Eastern States

Smithfield, NC

Dr. Gordon Amerson, Western States

Duarte, CA

Dr. Erin Keating, Vice President, Northeastern States

Scranton, PA

Danny Massey, Vice President, South Central States

Clute, TX

USAA SUMMER ACADEMY



Celebrating 30 Years of Leadership in Urban Education

The Urban Superintendents Association's 30th Anniversary Conference, held July 9–12, 2025, in New Orleans, marked a historic milestone in advancing educational excellence for America's urban school districts. The gathering brought together superintendents, thought leaders, and education innovators from across the country—each united by a shared commitment to equity, leadership, and the future of urban education.

This landmark convening was more than a celebration—it was a forum for inspiration, collaboration, and professional growth. Superintendents engaged in dynamic sessions that highlighted cutting-edge strategies, shared real-world challenges, and fostered solutions that will shape the next generation of urban schooling. The exchange of ideas and experiences created a powerful network of leaders who left New Orleans energized and equipped with new tools to strengthen their districts and communities.

Article and photo gallery continued on next page.



Urban Superintendents Association 30th Annual Summer Conference

The conference underscored the critical role of urban superintendents as change agents, not only within their districts but also on the national stage. By uniting voices from every corner of the country, the Association reaffirmed its mission to elevate urban education, champion equity, and prepare students for success in an increasingly complex world.

To capture the spirit of this milestone, we've included a photo gallery highlighting both the moments of serious dialogue and the lighter side of the gathering. From engaging panel discussions and strategy sessions to networking receptions and the cultural experiences of New Orleans, these images reflect the balance of learning, connection, and celebration that made the 30th Anniversary Conference truly unforgettable.

As the Urban Superintendents Association looks ahead to its next chapter, the 30th Anniversary Conference stands as a testament to the power of collaboration, the strength of shared vision, and the lasting impact of courageous leadership in education.

Thank you for being a vital part of our journey!



USAA Summer Academy Photo Gallery

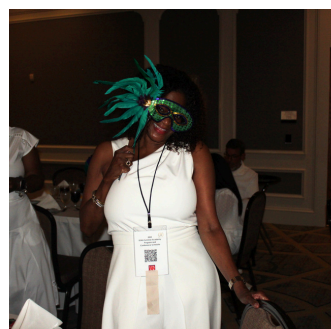
Visit our website – usaa.org for more photos!



White Party Memories

Relive the magic of our unforgettable White Party! From the stylish looks to the joyful moments shared, this photo gallery captures the spirit of the night.

Browse the highlights below—and don't forget, you can find even more photos from this spectacular event on our website – www.usaa.org. Click through, smile, and see if you can spot yourself in the celebration!



We extend our deepest gratitude to our keynote speakers for their invaluable contributions to the Summer Academy. Their thought-provoking insights and inspiring words have enriched our learning, strengthened our sense of purpose, and will continue to guide us in our shared commitment to excellence in education.



Dr. Anita Ward

Dr. Ward is Chief Growth Officer for Care Solace, working with 1,000 school districts and municipalities providing more than 21M individuals with equitable and inclusive access to mental health care.



Alton Frailey

Alton Frailey is a veteran professional educator of more than 40 years. Frailey retired in 2016 after serving as superintendent of the nearly 74,000-student fast growing and highly rated Katy Independent School District, near Houston, Texas for nine years. During his tenure, Katy ISD was ranked by Niche as the number one ranked school district in the Houston area.



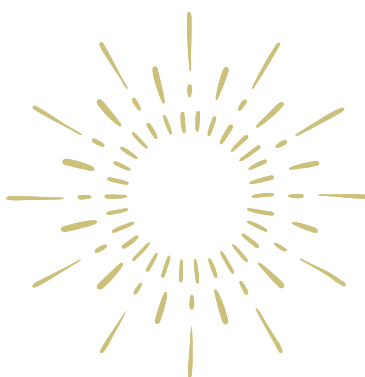
Dr. Jesus Jara

Dr. Jara's tenure as Superintendent of the Clark County School District (CCSD), the nation's fifth-largest, and his roles in other districts have resulted in significant academic achievements. Having arrived in this country from Venezuela as a child and navigating the education system as an English-language learner, Dr. Jara has gained unique insights into the need for inclusive and high-standard educational environments.



Dr. Roderick Sams

Dr. Sams is the Chief Development Officer for CENTEGIX, an organization focused on supporting communities in creating safer environments for its citizens. As a former award-winning principal, teacher, and coach, he has dedicated his professional life to sharing his personal mission of leading for learning.



Jill Lemond

Jill Lemond is Evolv Technology's Vice President of Education. She has more than 15 years of experience in education, serving the past twelve years at Oxford Community Schools in Oxford, Michigan.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A gold ribbon banner with the text "USAA Summer Academy Est. 1995" is centered on a red background. The banner is flanked by blue ribbon elements on both sides.

USAA Summer Academy
Est. 1995

Celebrating Excellence: The 30th Anniversary Summer Academy of the Urban Superintendents Association of America Inc. (USAA)

A Milestone of Educational Leadership

On July 9, 2025, the Urban Superintendents Association of America, Inc. (USAA) proudly marks a transformative milestone: the 30th Anniversary of its renowned Summer Academy. This three-decade journey represents far more than consecutive years of professional development—it embodies the evolution of urban educational leadership and the unwavering commitment to excellence that has defined USAA since its founding.

The 30th Anniversary of the Summer Academy stands as a testament to the vision that sparked USAA's creation in 1992, when educational leaders recognized the urgent need for a specialized organization dedicated exclusively to superintendents serving urban and urban-adjacent school districts. What began as a bold initiative to address the unique challenges facing urban education has flourished into America's premier professional development experience for urban, rural, and suburban superintendents.

Three Decades of Transformational Leadership Development

The Summer Academy launched in 1995, just three years after USAA's incorporation, during a pivotal moment in American urban education. As urban school districts grappled with resource disparities, demographic shifts, and complex socioeconomic challenges, the Academy emerged as a beacon of hope—a place where superintendents could gather, learn, and develop the specialized skills necessary to lead in urban environments.

Over thirty years, the Academy has evolved from a foundational professional development program into a sophisticated leadership laboratory where America's educational leaders forge their expertise. Each summer, superintendents arrive not just as participants but as partners in a collective mission to advance education through exemplary leadership.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Academy's three-decade legacy reflects USAA's core belief that all children can learn, regardless of their circumstances, and that superintendents serve as the architects of educational environments that transform this belief into reality. Through intensive programming focused on urban educational leadership strategies, the Academy has shaped generations of leaders who have returned to their districts equipped with cutting-edge knowledge, practical tools, and an expanded network of colleagues facing similar challenges.

The Foundation: USAA's Vision Realized

The 30th Anniversary of the Summer Academy represents the full realization of USAA's founding vision. When the organization was established with its 501(c)(6) tax-exempt status, its creators articulated five key purposes that have guided every Academy session:

- Facilitating Excellence Through Exchange:
- Advocacy Through Leadership
- Unity in Purpose
- Diversity in Leadership
- Membership Excellence

Looking Forward: The Next Chapter

As USAA celebrates this remarkable milestone, the 30th Anniversary of the Summer Academy serves as both a celebration of achievement and a launching point for the future. The Academy continues to fulfill USAA's mission of supporting "sitting superintendents as they radiate and direct their vision of academic excellence" while adapting to meet the evolving needs of urban educational leadership.

As urban educational landscapes continue to evolve, the Academy's role in developing and supporting effective leadership remains more crucial than ever. The 30th Anniversary of the Academy represents not just a celebration of past achievements, but a commitment to the continued advancement of quality education in America's communities through exceptional superintendent leadership.

The Urban Superintendents Association of America continues to serve superintendents who are dedicated to advancing academic excellence in urban, rural, and suburban educational settings, maintaining its exclusive focus on the unique challenges and opportunities that define educational leadership in the 21st century.

THANK YOU SPONSORS!

We are immensely grateful for the generous support of our sponsors. This year, we are thrilled to welcome new partners, including **ABCover**, **Curriculum Associates**, **Effective School Solutions** and **Pikmykid**, whose commitment enhances our capacity and contributes significantly towards our shared goals and initiatives. Their involvement makes a profound impact, and we are privileged to have their trust and partnership.

Gold Sponsors



Silver Sponsors

ABCover
Care Solace
Centegix
Curriculum Associates
Effective School Solutions
First Financial Group of America

Jason Learning
K12 Insight
Lightspeed Technologies
Pikmykid
Right At School
Veregy

Silver Sponsor Spotlight



JASON Learning Secures Three Wins at the 2025 Educators' Pick Best of STEM® Awards

JASON Learning is proud to announce that it has been named a winner in multiple categories of the 2025 Educators Pick Best of STEM® Awards, the only awards program created *by educators, for educators*, and judged by a qualified panel of STEM professionals. This national recognition highlights JASON's continued leadership in STEM education and its commitment to empowering students and teachers with cutting-edge, real-world learning experiences.

Operated in partnership with the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) and MCH Strategic Data, the Educators Pick Best of STEM® Awards celebrate the most innovative, trusted, and distinctive products and services in STEM education. Thousands of STEM educators from across the country selected this year's winners, spotlighting resources that are transforming teaching and learning in today's classrooms.

2025 Award-Winning Programs

Winner: Best of STEM Supplemental Videos and Activities: Pre-K to Grade 2

JASON Learning x Playwatch Kids – Blending joyful storytelling with inclusive, standards-aligned learning, this early childhood program nurtures STEM habits of mind through play-based videos, songs, and hands-on activities. Designed for Pre-K–2 learners, it reflects diverse identities and supports all educators in delivering high-quality STEM experiences. [Explore the Collection](#).

Winner: Best of STEM Freebies for Environmental Science

ReMA Recycling Collection – Created with the Recycled Materials Association (ReMA), this free K–12 resource collection features STEM activities, interactive games, and design challenges that spotlight sustainability and careers in recycling. It's a classroom-ready toolkit that brings environmental literacy and real-world problem-solving to life—at no cost to educators. [Explore the ReMA Recycling Collection](#)

Winner: Best of STEM for Environmental Science

EcoVillage – In this student-led content, upper elementary learners build a sustainable town from the ground up, making decisions about businesses, natural resources, and community needs. Created in partnership with Greenacres Foundation and Indian Hill Schools in Ohio, EcoVillage blends environmental science with entrepreneurship and civics, fostering systems thinking, creativity, and a lifelong stewardship mindset. [Explore EcoVillage](#).

Finalist: Trailblazer: Middle School STEM – Grades 4–8

Pathways to Your Future: STEM Career Exploration – This flexible, project-based curriculum created in partnership with Alexandria City Public Schools in Virginia introduces middle school students to in-demand careers across industries like cybersecurity, life sciences, and emerging tech. With diverse role models and real-world relevance, it fills the critical gap in early, equitable STEM career exploration—empowering students to connect their interests to future pathways. [Explore Pathways to Your Future](#).

Silver Sponsor Spotlight

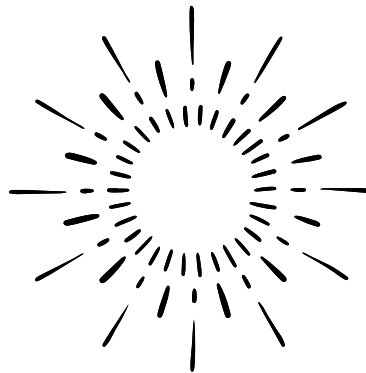


The Dual-Purpose Technology that Improves Learning and Emergency Response

Balancing student achievement, teacher autonomy, and school safety is essential for creating thriving classrooms. Students must have equitable access to instruction, teachers need tools that protect their voices and strengthen engagement, and schools require systems that maintain safety without disrupting learning. Solutions that address all three areas together ensure classrooms can remain focused, collaborative, and secure.

Lightspeed instructional audio systems help make this possible. Students spend most of their day listening, yet many lose critical content due to background noise or distance from the teacher. Younger learners especially struggle when speech is unclear, while teachers often strain their voices to compensate. By distributing sound evenly across the classroom, instructional audio improves clarity for every student, reduces teacher stress, and fosters calmer environments that support both academic growth and stronger connections.

Lightspeed's new Cascadia platform extends these benefits by combining clear instructional audio with integrated safety features. Connecting with schoolwide communication systems, it equips teachers with a microphone that delivers everyday clarity while also supporting safety protocols. The system provides two distinct options: an emergency alert button for urgent incidents and a two-way call button for direct communication with the office or security staff when assistance is needed. This dual functionality allows educators to keep learning on track while responding quickly to safety concerns, giving schools a single solution that advances achievement, supports teacher well-being, and reinforces a culture of safety.





A Note from the Executive Director

Reflecting on Our Summer Academy Journey

Dear Colleagues,

We had an incredible time in New Orleans as we celebrated the 30th Anniversary of our Summer Academy! This milestone event focused on the critical topic of school safety, bringing together education leaders from across the nation. Our distinguished keynote speakers—Jill Lemond, Rodrick Sams, Anita Ward, and Dr. Jesus Jara—delivered powerful and inspiring messages that resonated deeply with all attendees. Their expertise and insights provided valuable perspectives on creating safer learning environments for our students and staff.

Attendees left the conference energized and equipped with practical insights and actionable strategies to implement in their respective districts. The collaborative atmosphere fostered meaningful networking opportunities and knowledge sharing that will undoubtedly support improved safety measures in schools nationwide.

As we look ahead, we're excited to announce that our next Summer Academy will take place in Detroit, Michigan in July 2026. We hope you'll join us for another exceptional opportunity to work together, expand your professional network, and continue learning from one another as we advance our shared mission of educational excellence and safety.

Sincerely,

Dr. Wanda Cook-Robinson
Executive Director, USAA Inc.





https://www

Visit Our Website



Visit www.usaa.org.

Notes/Story Ideas

☐

☐

☐

☐

Contact USAA

Our mailing address has changed.
Please update your records with our
new address:

P.O. Box 461
Lake Orion, MI 48361
Phone: (248) 587-7429

Note: Remittances to the Urban
Superintendents Association of
America Inc.

All payments must be addressed to
the Urban Superintendents
Association of America Inc. The full
name of the organization must be
used.

