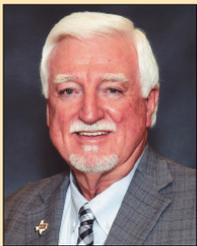




**MARCH 3 - 5, 2024 | HILTON AUSTIN AIRPORT**

*Presented by the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals*

# MAKING Middle School Matter!



**From the Executive Director:  
Archie E. McAfee**

Former U. S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan said at the National Forum's Annual Schools to Watch Conference, June 23, 2011, "The middle grade years have sometimes been called the "Bermuda

Triangle" of K-12 education. It's a time where students sink or swim, and sail into choppy waters with few pedagogical stars by which to navigate. Scholars in the field have described the history of middle grades reform as marked by "continual tinkering and persistent dissatisfaction."

As a former high school principal, I once worked with a school superintendent who said, "National Merit Scholars and prison inmates are both made in middle school." From both statements we can understand the complexity and challenges of middle level education. Students enrolled in the middle school years are undergoing drastic hormonal differences and other changes brought on by physical growth. It is often said that middle grade years are a period of immense change and considerable turmoil. All of which can be overwhelming even to the most well-adjusted child.

Middle level education can be the most challenging of the years in K-12 education, yet it is a time in which educators can

make the greatest difference in the lives of their middle level students. Harnessing the power of change, both physically and mentally, in our students can lead to great accomplishments during the middle level years.

As you attend this Making Middle School Matter Symposium, we encourage you to seek out those teachers and principals who have been successful in developing the middle school model that ensures great success for all students. Your attendance at this conference indicates your desire to provide the best education possible for your students. We salute you for your efforts and encourage you to continue to strive for solutions to the challenges that you face in helping your students to find success in the middle level years.

Secretary Duncan concluded his remarks by stating, "The middle grades are clearly no longer the age of innocence—and the mission of middle grade school leaders and educators to create safe schools must take on new urgency. I hope that you will leave here today with a renewed sense of urgency—both to make the middle grades safe and to dramatically accelerate achievement for all young adolescents."

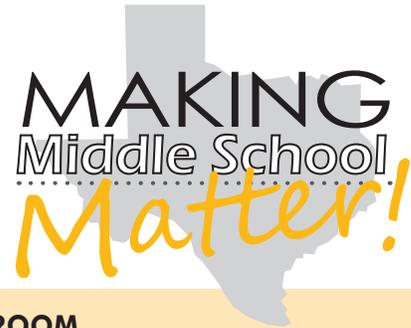
The Motto of the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals illustrates our vision for student success, "Above All, Students First."

# TASSP Making Middle School Matter Symposium

MARCH 3 - 5, 2024 | HILTON AUSTIN AIRPORT HOTEL

Sunday, March 3, 2024

11:00 AM - 5:00 PM | REGISTRATION



1:00 PM - 2:00 PM | OPENING GENERAL SESSION | BERGSTROM BALLROOM



**• DR. ADAM DOVICO - WHEN KIDS LEAD**

Bold. Courageous. Innovative. Thoughtful. All leadership characteristics that we attribute to great adult leaders in our society. It should be unsurprising then that we have children in our classrooms, teams, and clubs with those very same traits. However, oftentimes these virtues go unnoticed or remain hidden. As adults, we have the ability to cultivate, empower, and refine these skills in our children to create powerful young leaders. Learn from Adam ways to build these leaders in your classrooms and schools so that we provide them the opportunities to become even better adult leaders.

2:15 PM - 3:15 PM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS - SET 1

**• DR. ADAM DOVICO: Stop! Collaborate and Listen .....(Set 1 & 2) Bergstrom A**

Why must students remain quiet while learning? We learn best when we collaborate, discuss, and debate. This session will make you talk! Join Adam as he takes you through some of his favorite collaborative activities like *Speed Chats*, *Four Friends*, and *College Course Creation*.

**• SEAN CAIN: Awareness to Expertise:**

**The Instructional Journey on the Road Less Traveled.....(Set 1 & 2) Bergstrom B**

Expertise is not developed by accident. Building expertise is a focused, purposeful, and collaborative endeavor. In other words, the opposite of how schools have recently been forced to operate. Move forward and embrace the forgotten practices and processes that accelerate every teacher's journey from Awareness to Expertise. Presentation is aligned with the books, *The Fundamental 5 Revisited: Exceptional Instruction in Every Setting*, by Sean Cain, Mike Laird, Sherilynn Cotten, and Jayne Ellspermann; and *Little Things Matter: Management Lessons From Exceptional School Leaders*, by Sean Cain and Dr. Mike Laird.

**• CULLEN CARROLL: You Don't Teach to Mastery, You Spiral to Mastery ..... (Set 1 & 2) Bergstrom C**

Do you know the importance of continuous review but struggle to develop a simple and practical plan? This session aims to give participants a simple and systematic structure that can be easily implemented and pay huge dividends to student performance.

**• KATHLEEN ECKERT: (SET 1) Do Your Teachers Feel Appreciated? .....(Set 1 only) Bergstrom D**

Add up ARDs, 504s, state assessments, department meetings, staff development trainings, parent emails and conferences, and grading guidelines, and the sum total is that teachers are constantly being pulled in 20 different directions. On top of that, as much as administrators want to show appreciation to teachers, our hands are tied by financial guidelines and budgets. See how I make my teachers feel valued and appreciated through a variety of strategies that let my teachers know they are the best! Participants will leave with ideas to quickly and easily implement for little or no cost.

**• KATHLEEN ECKERT: (SET 2) School Administrators as Instructional Leaders.....(Set 2 only) Bergstrom D**

What does it mean to be an Instructional Leader? Does a school administrator need to know the state standards for all contents taught on their campus? The answer is no! So, how do you become an impactful Instructional Leader? This session will teach you strategies and give ideas to catapult you into a successful Instructional Leader on your campus.

**• DR. DAVID WALDHERR: Passing the TSIA2 Begins in Middle School..... (Set 1 & 2) Del Valle**

The greatest contributor to TSIA2 pass rates are the fundamental skills underlying this test. Since grades 6-8 are the formative TSIA2-aligned skills years, this is the greatest opportunity for students to gain an advantage. Attend, contribute and discuss how middle school can contribute four times more to passing this dual credit exam than a high school TSIA2 program.

3:15 PM - 3:30 PM | SNACK BREAK

3:30 PM - 4:30 PM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS - SET 2 (REPEAT OF SET 1 EXCEPT BERGSTROM D - SEE ABOVE)

Monday, March 4, 2024

7:00 AM - 5:00 PM | REGISTRATION AND EXHIBITS OPEN

7:15 AM - 8:00 AM | BREAKFAST

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM | MORNING GENERAL SESSION | BERGSTROM BALLROOM



• MARK MCLEOD: Keep the Fire Burning

Have you lost some of your passion? With all of today's challenges and obstacles, it's easy to lose your fire. Join Mark as he helps you rediscover the joy of being an educator. By sharing real-life examples and stories, Mark hopes to rekindle your flame to make a difference in the lives of students and adults!

9:00 AM - 9:15 AM | BREAK / VISIT EXHIBITS

9:15 AM - 10:15 AM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS - SET 3

• MARK MCLEOD: Motivate the Unmotivated ..... (Set 3 & 4) Bergstrom A

Learn proven ways to motivate even the "hardest-to-motivate." Have you ever wondered why some strategies work on certain students and adults but not others? Join Mark as he shares how to choose your motivational techniques to match the needs of each individual. Expect to leave this session with strategies that will help you motivate students and adults to reach their fullest potential.

• SEAN CAIN: The Little Things Matter: Leadership Lessons

From Exceptional School Leaders ..... (Set 3 & 4) Bergstrom B

Can the leadership learning curve be accelerated. Yes, with the right information and examples. The Little Things Matter shares the practices consistently used by exceptional school leaders. Trial and error works, but it takes a long time. Why wait? Speed up your leadership learning curve and become the leader your campus needs, and you want to be. Presentation is aligned with the book, Little Things Matter: Management Lessons From Exceptional School Leaders, by Sean Cain and Mike Laird.

• JAKE WILLIAMSON: (Set 3) Utilizing Horace Mann Partnership to Improve Staff Morale..... (Set 3 only) Bergstrom C

Discussion of services & programs we offer that are free to educators as well as benefits associated with our products as well as the effect of inflation on home & auto premiums.

• JAKE WILLIAMSON: (Set 4) School Partnerships with Horace Mann ..... (Set 4 only) Bergstrom C

Discuss the workshops, programs and benefits of utilizing Horace Mann on your campus.

• SCHOOLS TO WATCH: Sharyland North JHS - Ivan Karr, Principal ..... (Set 3 & 4) Bergstrom D



Explore the Heart of Sharyland North JH | Our session delves into proven strategies for fostering a positive and supportive learning environment, ensuring that educators can connect with and understand the unique needs of each student. Furthermore, we spotlight the implementation of high expectations and innovative instructional methods, empowering educators to cultivate a dynamic and engaging classroom that promotes academic excellence and student success.

• SCHOOLS TO WATCH: Jaime Jr HS - Ruben Peña, Principal..... (Set 3 & 4) Del Valle



Igniting Minds: Engaging Instructional Strategies for Middle School Success | Join us for an enlightening presentation designed to transform the middle school learning experience! In "Igniting Minds," we will explore dynamic and innovative instructional strategies that captivate the attention of middle school students, fostering a love for learning and academic success. Attendees can expect an engaging session that combines theory with practical, hands-on examples to demonstrate how to create an interactive and stimulating classroom environment.

10:30 - 11:30 AM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS - SET 4 (REPEAT OF SET 3 EXCEPT BERGSTROM C - SEE ABOVE)

11:30 AM - 1:00 PM | LUNCH ON YOUR OWN AND VISIT EXHIBITS

Monday Continues...

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS - SET 5

• JESSICA CABEEN: Expect the Best: Creating a High Performing Culture..... (Set 5 & 6) Bergstrom A

Educational leaders and dedicated educators hold the power to shape the future by creating an environment where students not only acquire knowledge but also thrive. Beyond textbooks and lesson plans lies the heart of education thriving school culture that nurtures creativity, resilience, and meaningful learning experiences. In this inspiring session, Jessica, drawing from her extensive experiences in leadership roles across the K-12 educational system, will share strategies and practical approaches that can help you foster a vibrant school culture on your campus.

• SEAN CAIN: Noteworthy Note Making .....(Set 5 & 6) Bergstrom B

The easiest way to embed more critical writing in classrooms is through daily, authentic note making. Join best-selling education authors, Cain and Laird, as they share an easy to implement note making process that works with all subjects, all students, all the time. Presentation is aligned with the books, *The Fundamental 5 Revisited: Exceptional Instruction in Every Setting*, by Sean Cain, Dr. Mike Laird, Sherilynn Cotten, and Jayne Ellspermann, and *Noteworthy Note Making*, by Sean Cain.

• SCHOOLS TO WATCH: Chapa Middle School - Lisa Walls, Principal ..... (Set 5 & 6) Bergstrom C



Chapa Middle School was designated a School to Watch in 2011 and has been Redesignated for the fourth time in 2024. We are a Title 1 campus with 68% of students on free/reduced lunch and have created a highly invested community of parents, teachers, and students through a variety of family events. Discover ways to revitalize the life of your campus and community culture by hosting events such as Guy's and Girl's Night Out, Coffee with the Counselors, #DADSQUAD, Coffee House, Talent Show, and our Chapa 5k Challenge. CMS has also created positive behavior interventions and supports for our campus so that our students are successful. We have ideas such as Student of the Month, Rockstars, and Cougar Cash. Come hear our journey on maintaining our Schools to Watch designation and learn some tools on how to implement these ideas.

• KAT PASTOR: Character Strong - Creating a Culture of Clarity, Competence and Consistency.. (Set 5 & 6) Bergstrom D

What does it take to create an intentional school culture and climate where people want to show up everyday vs feel like they have to show up? The culture of your school isn't the sole responsibility of the building principal or the leadership program. How do we get staff to buy in and engage? How do we encourage every student to be a leader and be connected to the school community? In this interactive and resource-packed session, you will learn a framework for powerful culture change and will walk away with low-burden, high-impact strategies and tools to make an impact right now.

• AARON SANDERSON & ANDREW ROBERTS: Sirius-ly Drive Student Engagement

for STAAR 2.0 Thinking .....(Set 5 & 6) Chennault

Discover how to enhance student engagement and facilitate deeper learning needed for rigorous STAAR 2.0 tests. Our team will present practical tools and strategies that support greater student ownership of learning that leads to greater mastery of TEKS and STAAR test performance.

• SCHOOLS TO WATCH: Clint Jr HS - Noemi Gallego, Principal ..... (Set 5 & 6) Del Valle



Join us for an engaging presentation that explores the transformative journey of creating campus community bonds. We will delve into the power of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) practices, highlighting their role in fostering a supportive learning environment. Additionally, discover the profound impact of restorative circles as we discuss their implementation in resolving conflicts and promoting a sense of belonging. Let's embark on a collaborative exploration of strategies to cultivate a thriving campus community where every individual feels valued and connected.

2:00 PM - 2:15 PM | SNACK BREAK AND VISIT EXHIBITS

2:15 PM - 3:15 PM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS - SET 6 (REPEAT OF SET 5 - EXCEPT BERGSTROM D)

3:15 PM - 3:30 PM | SNACK BREAK AND VISIT EXHIBITS

3:30 PM - 5:00 PM | AFTERNOON GENERAL SESSION | BERGSTROM BALLROOM



- SCHOOLS TO WATCH RECOGNITION & AWARDS CEREMONY (3:30-4:00)
- JESSICA CABEEN: Dream Big, Live Colorfully, Lead Boldly: Developing Your Best Self at School and Home

Today's educators have pressures that can become barriers to maintaining wellness in aspects of life. In this session we will explore ways in work and life to set your own goals and priorities in the different quadrants of balance (positional, personal, professional, and passion). We will learn ways to manage processes more effectively so you can be present at the moment, diffuse difficult situations with families, staff and parents so you can leave school, and rekindle your own passions so your students and staff can see the real you. In order to lead at work and live a life we need to find ways to thrive, not just survive in the busy pace of leading, learning, and living life. As a principal, wife, mom, daughter, student, and teacher, Jessica has a passion to learn and share ideas that will provide educators with strategies to lead at home and at school. Come prepared to make a commitment to change, and find ways to make it happen.



Tuesday, March 5, 2024

7:15 AM - 8:00 AM | TACO BAR BREAKFAST

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS - SET 7

• MONICA WASHINGTON: Building Inclusive Classrooms:

How to Build Spaces that Honor all Students ..... (Set 7 & 8) Bergstrom A

What do we actually mean when we say the words "inclusive classroom"? In this session, Monica Washington will guide teachers in discussions and reflections about what an inclusive classroom looks, feels, and sounds like. She will share with teachers some concrete examples and strategies for building and sustaining inclusive classrooms. Teachers will gain a reflection tool and have an opportunity to think about how they can wrap inclusive practices into their lessons and relationship-building with students.

• SEAN CAIN: The Fundamentals of Emotionally Healthy Classrooms..... (Set 7 & 8) Bergstrom B

High-yield instructional practices are high-yield because they meet the needs of the whole child. Learn how the better implementation of The Fundamental 5 and other key practices are the foundation of an emotionally healthy and supportive classroom for all students. Presentation is aligned with the books, The Fundamental 5 Revisited: Exceptional Instruction in Every Setting, by Sean Cain, Dr. Mike Laird, Sherilyn Cotten, and Jayne Ellspermann; and Stealth SEL: Healthy Social Emotional Learning Through Enhanced Pedagogy, by Sean Cain and Dr. Tricia Tsang.

• SCHOOLS TO WATCH: Jaime Jr HS - Ruben Peña, Principal ..... (Set 7 & 8) Bergstrom C

United We Stand: Fostering A Sense of Belonging Amongst Junior High School Students | Junior high school students are caught in a delicate balance between childhood and the verge of adulthood, experiencing many types of emotions. Their days oscillate between joy reminiscent of younger years and the angst of adolescence, as they grapple with their evolving identity. One moment they feel a profound sense of belonging, and the next, they may feel conspicuously out of place. Seeking acceptance, they often navigate a complex social landscape, where they are constantly learning to reconcile the lightheartedness of youth with the emerging realities of growing up. This session focuses on the effective methods a small rural junior high school campus employed to enhance a sense of belonging among its students.

• DR. DAVID WALDHERR: The Ups and Downs of Increasing Middle School

Math, Reading and English Proficiency ..... (Set 7 & 8) Bergstrom D

NAEP Proficiency is two thumbs down, teacher and student stress are up, parental approval is down, CCMR requirements are UP, student engagement is down. Attend this session for tips on managing the ups and downs of increasing math and reading proficiency. This lively session will show participants how middle school increases proficiency (before it's too late in high school).

9:15 AM - 10:15 AM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS - SET 8 (REPEAT OF SET 7)

10:15 AM - 10:30 AM | BREAK

10:30 AM - 11:30 AM | CLOSING GENERAL SESSION | BERGSTROM BALLROOM



• MONICA WASHINGTON: Centering our Students: How Seeing Them and Hearing Them Keeps them Connected

In this keynote, Monica Washington will discuss the ways in which we can create classroom spaces in which students feel a sense of belonging. She will share personal stories and some concrete examples to build and sustain positive relationships and student engagement.

11:45 AM - 1:30 PM | STW TRAINING/LUNCH..... Del Valle

(For Newly Designated Campus Staff Only)

Thank You for Attending!

## About the Speakers



• **JESSICA CABEEN** - Jessica Cabeen is the Principal of Alternative Educations Programs in Austin, Minnesota. Previously, she was the principal of Ellis Middle School there, and the principal of the “Happiest Place in Southeastern Minnesota,” the Woodson Kindergarten Center. She has been an assistant middle school principal, a special education assistant director, and special education teacher. Jessica was named the 2021 ED Dive National Principal of the year, 2017 Minnesota National Distinguished Principal of the Year, and was awarded the NAESP/VINCI Digital Leader of Early Learning Award in 2016. She is a NAESP Middle Level Fellow and a Future Ready Principal. Jessica is the author of *Hacking Early Learning* and co-author of *Balance Like a Pirate, Unconventional Leadership, and Lead with Grace: Leaning into the Soft Skills of Leadership*.



• **SEAN CAIN** - Sean Cain spent the formative years of his career working in difficult instructional settings. Recognized for the success of both his students and the systems he designed and implemented, he quickly moved up through the instructional leadership ranks. This culminated in his last public education position as State Director of Innovative School Redesign (Texas). Currently, Cain serves as the Chief Idea Officer for Lead Your School (LYS), a confederation of successful school leaders dedicated to improving student, campus, and district performance.



• **CULLEN CARROLL** - Cullen Carroll is a part of the Lowman Education Team. He has a master’s degree from Lamar University and a bachelor’s degree from Sam Houston State University. He previously worked in Texas Schools for 10 years across East Texas as a teacher, coach, bus driver, assistant principal, and principal. As a previous principal, he had experience with working at campuses that are between 75% and 90% economically disadvantaged and with turnaround campuses. He led two campuses out of improvement required to being academically acceptable.



• **DR. ADAM DOVICO** - Dr. Adam Dovico is an accomplished Nationally Board Certified teacher, curriculum facilitator, principal, college professor and director, speaker, and author. His work in school transformation, equitable instructional practices, and leadership has been shared with tens of thousands of educators from around the world through his decade-plus of delivering professional development to schools and districts, keynotes around the country, and numerous books and articles that he has written.



• **KATHLEEN ECKERT** - Kathleen Eckert, author of *School Transformation Through Teacher Appreciation*, knows teachers are vital to the success of any school. During her years as a building principal, Kathleen made teacher appreciation her top priority and her teachers pushed the school and students to excellence. Under Kathleen’s leadership Hillwood Middle School was named a Texas and National School to Watch, School Transforming Learning from N2Learning, Best Middle School from US News & World Report, and received the first Texas Whole Child Award from ASCD. Kathleen herself was a finalist for the H-E-B Excellence in Education Principal Award and was invited to participate in the School to Watch Leadership trip to China. Now, Kathleen works to inspire and help school administrators value, support, and appreciate their teachers.



• **JAKE WILLIAMSON** - Jake is a former Middle School educator and current Agency Consultant with Horace Mann Insurance for Educators. Working with many schools across the state of Texas, he has helped administrators with programs that build staff morale, retain employees, and help getting funding for various projects. Horace Mann offers no-cost resources to educators to help those who serve the community plan their financial future, including Student Loan Solutions accounts, local and online financial wellness workshops, and classroom crowdfunding assistance in partnership with DonorsChoose. More than insurance and retirement, Horace Mann programs help educators succeed both in and out of the classroom.



• **MARK MCLEOD** - Mark inspires educators to be encouragers (not discouragers) and positive forces (in a too-often negative world). He’s taken his enthusiastic, encouraging message to all parts of the country-teaching educators how to meet the students’ number one need: unconditional love - WHILE they teach with absolutely powerful and workable strategies that motivate, raise achievement, and make classroom management, manageable! Mark’s educational experience includes the roles of teacher, coach, assistant principal, principal, motivational speaker, professional-development instructor, and educational consultant. He’s been honored twice as Teacher of the Year and selected as Mississippi’s Region 4 Administrator of the Year. Mark knows what it is like to “be in the trenches.”



• **KAT PASTOR** - Kat Pastor has passionately served as a student and educator advocate for over 20 years in the roles of coach, student council advisor, school counselor at the secondary level and financial aid counselor/ordinator of student employment and adjunct professor at the post-secondary level. Through Kat’s leadership, her school counseling department received both state and national recognition, including ASCA RAMP recognition in 2020. Kat has facilitated professional development with various state and national associations, along with individual schools and districts. Kat has also served on numerous local, state and national associations, boards and committees. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology, a Masters in Education in Student Affairs and School Counseling from Northern Arizona University.

## About the Speakers



• **ANDREW ROBERTS** - Andrew Roberts is a lifelong educator—first as a teacher and then as a developer of instructional materials. He attended Johns Hopkins University on a scholarship where he earned a Master of Arts in Teaching. Andrew has experience in teaching both children and adults—both in the inner city and in the Appalachian Mountains—in subjects as varied as reading, science, and mathematics. While teaching in a school for low-income Texas students, he participated in a three-year NSF-funded curriculum-writing project. Andrew then joined a major publisher and rose to become the head of the Mathematics Department. In 2012, Andrew started Sirius Education Solutions to help schools better align their curriculum with how the TEKS are tested in STAAR.



• **AARON SANDERSON** - Before his promotion to Director of Marketing, Aaron Sanderson served as Product Manager at Sirius Education Solutions, leveraging his background in education and product development to craft products that directly served the needs of Texas administrators, educators, and students. Aaron applied his unique insight to transform educational complexities into intuitive, user-friendly solutions. Drawing from his own journey as a Texas teacher, he's committed to creating products that enable educators to succeed, fostering a positive impact on student achievement.



• **DAVID WALDHERR** - David Waldherr grew up in Stevens Point, WI, and as a first-generation, low-income student attended the University of Wisconsin on a full scholarship gaining an Honors Degree in economics and political science. He earned his JD at the Chicago-Kent College of Law. Gained a full-time position with Harcourt Legal and Professional Publications and became their National Director of Testing in 1985. In 1990, started Cambridge in his apartment kitchen. His prep materials are currently used by over 1200 partner schools and companies nationwide.



• **MONICA WASHINGTON** - Monica Washington is the founder of M.U.S.E. Education, and through her work, helps educators create meaningful, uplifting student experiences. A decorated educator of over twenty-five years, Monica has received honors and awards from a wide variety of organizations for her leadership, advocacy, and classroom instruction. She is a 2015 Milken Unsung Hero Fellow and a 2015 NEA Foundation Global Fellow. Through M.U.S.E., Monica supports educators through workshops, speaking engagements, and blogging. In 2021, Brightbeam named Monica one of the top twenty-one rising women in the country for her equity and advocacy work. Monica is passionate about educational equity, and she serves as an Ambassador for Equity for the Education Civil Rights Alliance. Additionally, she serves on the Board of Directors for the National Education Association Foundation and The National Network of State Teachers of the Year. Monica is the 2014 Texas Teacher of the Year and a 2023 inductee into the National Teachers Hall of Fame.

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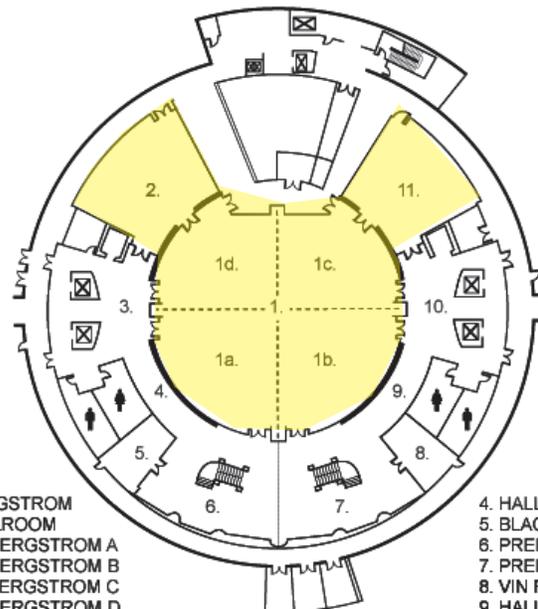


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1. BERGSTROM BALLROOM
- 1a. BERGSTROM A
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- 1c. BERGSTROM C
- 1d. BERGSTROM D
2. CHENNAULT
3. PREFUNCTION D

4. HALLWAY A
5. BLACKBIRDS
6. PREFUNCTION A
7. PREFUNCTION B
8. VIN FIZ
9. HALLWAY B
- 10- PREFUNCTION C
11. DEL VALLE

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