

**2023 Annual MADSEC Directors' Academy**  
*"Back to the Sea" - Bar Harbor, Maine*



**[Conference Information](#)**

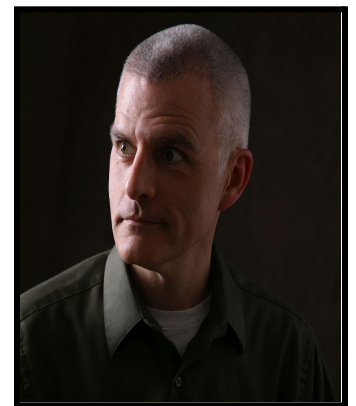
**[Register here](#)**

**Speakers:**

**Rushton Hurley: *The Stories that Inspire Educators to Reach All Learners***

Rushton Hurley has worked and studied on three continents as a Japanese language teacher, school principal, teacher trainer, and inspirational speaker. He founded and directs the educational nonprofit Next Vista for Learning, which houses a free library of creative educational videos at NextVista.org, and holds masters degrees in Education and East Asian Studies from Stanford University.

The author of three books, Rushton's fun and thoughtful talks center on inspiration and creativity, technology and leadership, avenues for engaging learning, the power of digital media and tools for collaboration, and personal and professional perspectives in a technology-infused, ever-changing world.



Rushton loves to travel, makes occasionally successful attempts to take a good picture, cleans up after his cats, and considers himself to have married up.

## ***The Stories that Inspire Educators to Reach All Learners***

We regularly hear from school leaders that they and their teams are committed to reaching all learners. Those who work with services for children with disabilities understand, however, that at many schools, the complexities of providing services can be seen as a burden on an already full list of tasks.

One of the more effective, but not often enough used, tools for helping administrators embrace and foster more inclusive strategies is the focused, shareable story. Stories of successes with students can be powerful and build support within the community for programs that inspire children who might otherwise be left behind. These stories can be done with simple and often free digital media tools, and done in a way that properly protects the privacy of all involved.

In this talk and the following workshop, we'll look at how stories in general, and educator- and student-produced stories in particular, can be part of helping more teachers and other members of the educational team improve how they serve and inspire all students.

### ***Erin Frazier: Updates from the Office of Special Services & Inclusive Education***



Erin Frazier began her job as Director of Special Services & Inclusive Education Birth to 22 in Maine in 2019. Prior to her role as state director, Erin served as a special education administrator, principal of a public special purpose program, an IEP coordinator, a special educator, and a paraprofessional in a special purpose private school. Erin believes the best part of leading special education in Maine is the capacity to support changes state-wide, including increasing resources in underserved communities, providing engaging professional development and training, and coordinating with general education initiatives to promote equity, innovation, and inclusion in Maine

Erin enjoys walking her dog, Denver, traveling, listening to social justice and aviation podcasts, and knitting. She maintains close ties to the art community as a past professional artist.

## **Eric Herlan and Legal Team from Drummond Woodsum: *A Year in Review (2022-2023)***

### **Eric Herlan**



Eric Herlan has been representing public school districts for more than 30 years on a variety of legal issues, focusing on both special education and general education law questions. In addition to his legal practice, Eric is a published author and regularly lectures on school law topics in Maine, New Hampshire, and across the country to a wide variety of audiences - His presentations are energetic and entertaining. Eric has been recognized by Best Lawyers in America, a guide to leading lawyers in the country, and in the New England Super Lawyers in the category of Education Law.

Eric grew up in Winter Harbor, Maine, and he is a proud graduate of Sumner Memorial High School.

### **Isabel Ekman**

Isabel Ekman primarily represents school districts on a diverse and ever-evolving spectrum of issues including special education and disability law, student rights, student discipline, and Title IX issues. An experienced litigator, Isabel regularly represents her clients in state and federal courts, as well as in hearings before administrative agencies.. A sought-after thought leader in the education space, Isabel conducts customized trainings on special education law and Title IX compliance at the K-12 level. She has published numerous works on these topics, and is also frequently invited to present at conferences and events. Her expertise and professionalism earned her recognition by New England Super Lawyers as a Rising Star in the field of Schools and Education, and on the Best Lawyers "Ones to Watch" list in the field of Education Law.



Isabel enjoys spending time with her husband and daughters – especially exploring Maine’s beaches and traveling. Having lived in Paris, France, Isabel speaks French fluently.

## **Rachel Sears**



Rachel Sears represents public school districts in a wide range of complex and rapidly-developing legal issues with an emphasis on special education and disability law. Rachel has substantial experience in matters arising under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, as well as accompanying state and federal regulations. Rachel is an experienced litigator who appears in special education due process proceedings and in appeals before the U.S. District Court and the First Circuit Court of Appeals. She also works diligently to help her clients resolve disputes in order to avoid litigation.

Rachel grew up in Maine, is the granddaughter of public school educators, and enjoys spending time outdoors with family and friends, especially boating, gardening, skiing, running and wandering.

## **Penelope Wheeler-Abbott**

Penelope Wheeler-Abbott works with schools and municipalities as a non-lawyer consultant and advocate providing guidance on wide-ranging education and human resources matters including special education, school administration, investigation, personnel evaluation, supervision, and policy development. As a former school administrator, Penny has extensive experience in dealing with employee, student, and education issues of all kinds. She maintains her certifications as a teacher, building administrator, and assistant superintendent.



In her free time, Penny can be found exploring and hiking in Maine and New Hampshire. She also enjoys knitting, reading, and spending time with her family including her two almost-adult children.