LEADERSHIP CONNECTIONS™

McCormick Center FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP AT NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

The Time is NOW

Leadership & Advocacy

April 26-28, 2023

Program Booklet

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WELCOME
to Leadership Connections 2023

Welcome to Leadership Connections! It's indeed a pleasure and honor to share this virtual space for the premier national conference for early childhood leaders. As we host our 22nd annual conference—and our third virtual conference—we are very excited to have you all join us.

By participating in Leadership Connections, you have embraced an opportunity to make lasting connections with other early childhood education leaders who know your joys, needs, and challenges intimately. Like you, they understand the importance of advocacy to achieve the goal of thriving children and families, which is the theme of this year's event.

Sometimes people shy away from viewing themselves as advocates, thinking it refers only to influencing legislation or policymakers. This interpretation is too narrow and ignores how advocacy and leadership go hand in hand. Advocacy is about promoting our work as an early childhood education profession. Advocacy is about taking action to ensure equity and inclusion are on the front burner of all decisions we make as leaders. Advocacy is about ensuring sufficient funding to effectively serve all children in our programs, including those with special needs. Whether you are a program owner, director, quality specialist, instructor, state agency representative, coach, or teacher leader, know that you are in the right place to grow your knowledge and skills to become a more effective advocate and leader.

We are thrilled to introduce our extraordinary lineup of speakers, including our opening keynote speaker, Brandy Jones Lawrence, Senior Analyst at the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment; our Visionary Leadership Award honoree, Carol Brunson Day, President of Brunson, Phillips & Day Consultants; our public policy forum keynote speaker, Lauren Hogan, Managing Director of Policy and Professional Advancement at the National Association for the Education of Young Children; and our closing keynote speaker, Lynette Fraga, consultant and leader in the field of child care, early learning, and equitable systems change.

It is a pleasure to have Luis Hernandez, Early Childhood Education Specialist, and McCormick Center Advisory Council member, return to officiate throughout the Leadership Connections conference. Luis is adept at ensuring you will have a successful conference experience that is filled with fun, and joy, as well as professional growth and reflection opportunities. I know you will be in excellent hands for our three-day event!

We continue to research best practices in delivering a virtual experience that delivers the quality you expect from Leadership Connections. Please know that the McCormick Center team is here to make your virtual conference experience a memorable one. If there is anything you need, we are here to help. While we have gained many new friends during our three years of being virtual, we are excited to announce that we will return to an ***in-person conference*** in 2024.

We hope to "make new friends and keep the old" when we transition to our new conference venue at a new time of year! Stay tuned for more information and an insider's view as we plan Leadership Connections 2024!

I look forward to meeting you in sessions and being inspired by you all in the coming days.

On Wednesday afternoon, from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm, I will host a virtual networking session. As the new Interim Executive Director of the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, I invite you to this very informal session so that you can get to know me better and for me to connect with you about what's on your mind at Leadership Connections 2023!

Welcome, and many thanks,

Kimberlee J. Hendricks

Kimberlee J. Burt-Hendricks
McCormick Center Interim Executive Director

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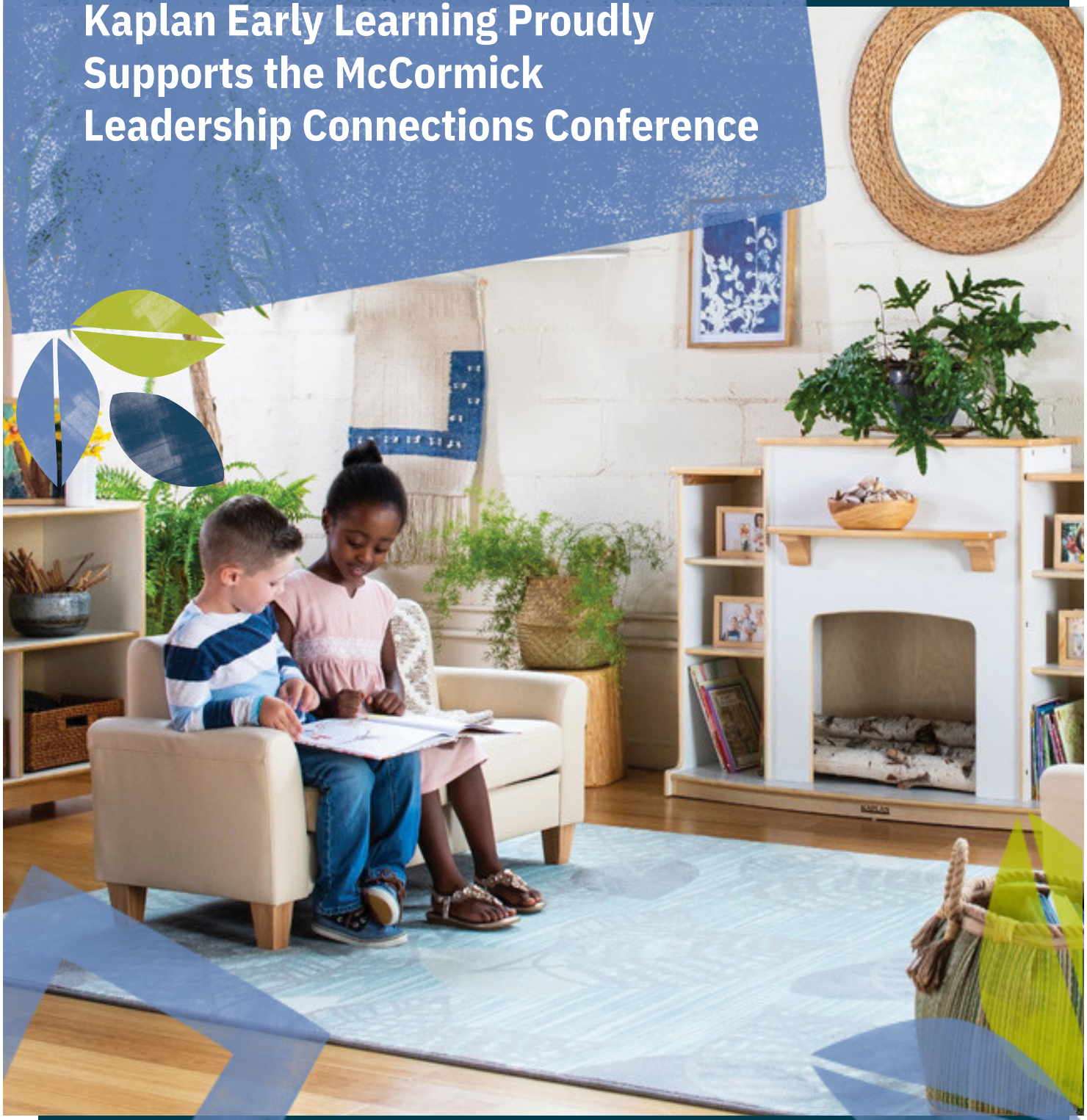

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Advisory Council

DECARLA BURTON
Founder, Supporting Professionals Network Association (S.P.N.A.)

GEANIA DICKEY
Consultant, Arkansas State University Childhood Services

LYNETTE M. FRAGA
Consultant

LUIS HERNANDEZ
ECE Specialist

Kristie Kauerz
Director, National P-3 Center, School of Education and Human Development, University of Colorado Denver

M.-A. LUCAS
Principal, Lucas and Associates

DEBI MATHIAS
Director of Early Childhood Education Quality Improvement Systems, BUILD Initiative

MARICA COX MITCHELL
Senior Director, Early Childhood, Bainum Family Foundation

BELA MOTÉ
President and Chief Executive Officer,
Carole Robertson Center for Learning

KAREN PONDER
Distinguished Fellow,
The BUILD Initiative

CINDY ROJAS-RODRIGUEZ
Executive Director,
Together4Children

KATHLEEN VILLANO
Program Manager, ECPL at The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning

CASS WOLFE
Chief Strategy Officer,
Child Care Services Association

Technical Support

Email leadershipconnections@nl.edu with questions.

Help for Attendees

Log in to the conference platform – Attendee Hub

Option 1

- Locate an email from **April 20** and/or **April 23** with the Subject: "Leadership Connections 2023: Participant Welcome."
- Follow the steps in the email to log in.
- Save the email to reference each day of the conference.

Option 2

- Go to the conference website and click "Enter Leadership Connections Live Event."
- Enter your first and last name and email used to register and click "next."
- You will receive an email containing a verification code. Return to the browser, enter the code and click "Log in."

Note: Verification codes can only be used once and expire after 24 hours. If you're logging in on multiple devices, you'll receive a new verification code for each.

Conference Home Page

Follow the directions above to access the Conference Platform (Attendee Hub). Your log in is good for 24 hours, and then you will need to log in process again with the two-step verification code.

Help for Exhibitors

Utilize these features to connect with attendees:

- Be live in your booth during breaks to "meet now" with those who stop by the booth.
- Make appointments with individuals or groups.
- Chat with participants.
- Check "Contact Us" for any messages received.

Help For Speakers

Log in 15 minutes prior to your session using the link provided by your moderator.

Zoom Assistance

We will also be using Zoom for the conference.
Download Zoom: Zoom.us/download

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#LC2023
#LeadershipConnections

Schedule at a Glance

TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 2023

Morning Workshop: 9:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., CT

"Updates to the Whole Leadership Framework - Responding to Voices from the Field"

Break

Afternoon Workshop: 1:00 – 4:15 p.m., CT

"Making the Case for Child Care"

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26, 2023

9:00 – 9:45 a.m., CT
Networking Forums

10:00 – 11:30 a.m., CT
Opening General Session Keynote Address by Brandy Jones Lawrence

Break

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m., CT Concurrent Sessions

Break

1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m., CT Concurrent Sessions

Break

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m., CT
Networking Forum: Connections

THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 2023

9:00 – 9:45 a.m., CT
Networking Forums

10:00 – 11:30 a.m., CT
Public Policy Forum General Session Featuring Lauren Hogan

Break

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m., CT Concurrent Sessions

Break

1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m., CT Concurrent Sessions

Break

3:30 – 4:30 p.m., CT
Networking: Ice Cream Social & Scavenger Hunt

FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 2023

9:00 – 9:45 a.m., CT
Networking Forums

10:00 – 11:30 a.m., CT
Leadership Colloquium Carol Brunson Day, Visionary Leadership Award Recipient

Break

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m., CT Concurrent Sessions

Break

1:45 – 3:15 p.m., CT
Closing General Session Keynote Address by Lynette Fraga

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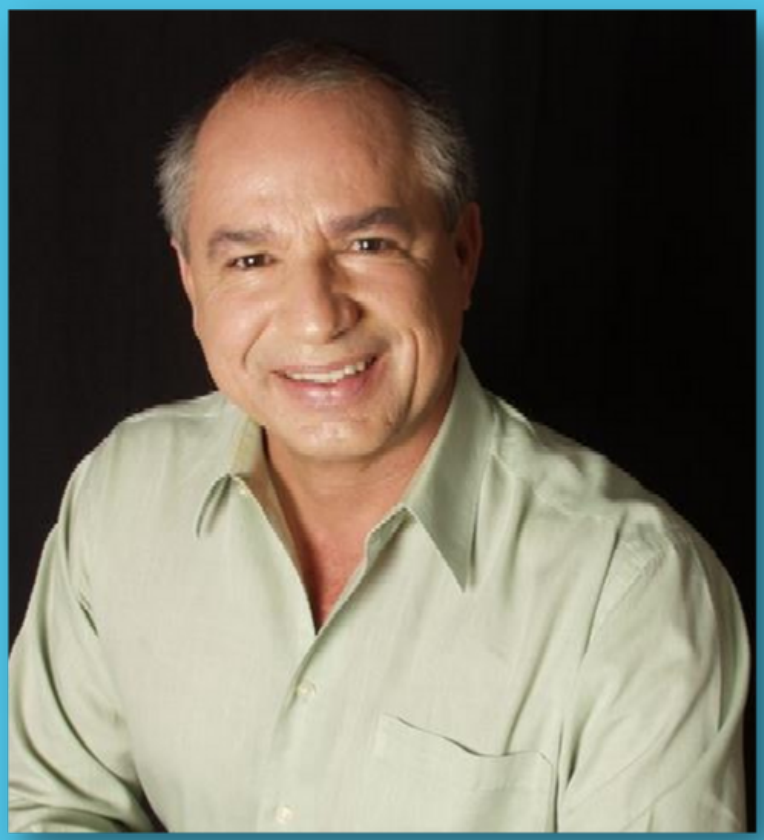
Master of Ceremonies

Luis Hernandez

Early Childhood Education Specialist



Luis A. Hernandez, Early Childhood Education Specialist, brings solid expertise based on his work history in Head Start, Pre-K programs, colleges and universities, child care resource and referral agencies, and ECE management. His expertise includes early literacy, dual language learners, adult learning practices, changing demographics and diversity, and ECE management and leadership topics. As a regular presenter and keynote speaker at national, state, and local conferences, Luis is highly regarded for his motivational and energizing presentations. In addition, Luis is an author. His book, “Learning from Bumps on the Road,” focused on leadership topics and is a compilation of presentations and conversations with three fantastic leaders in the field. Mr. Hernandez is active in a number of organizations that support children and family interests.

Opening Keynote

Wednesday, April 26

Brandy Jones Lawrence

Sr. Analyst, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment

Brandy is a seasoned early childhood policy and advocacy leader with over 20 years of experience in state and federal early care and education policy development, analysis and consultation, early learning program partnership development and philanthropy. During her long tenure at the Start Early (formerly the Ounce of Prevention Fund) in Chicago, Brandy helped to lead efforts to secure one of Illinois' largest sustained increases in state birth-to-five funding. Additionally, she was a founding leader of the Start Early's National Policy Consultation team where she led work supporting advocates and organizations across the country with customized birth to five state policy, financing and strategy expertise and also helped lead the expansion and development of Educare Schools across the country. Brandy served as the State Program Manager at the Pritzker Children's Initiative, a project of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, where she managed a diverse array of national and state-based investments to support improved and equitable developmental outcomes for infants and toddlers. Brandy was the Senior Director at Bank Street College Education Center where she advanced partnerships to design and implement infant-toddler teacher residencies and apprenticeships programs. Currently, Brandy is a senior analyst at the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) where her work focuses on California-specific policy analysis and leadership, to advance research and systems solutions informed by the experiences and priorities of early educators and the children and families they serve. Brandy holds a Master's of Public Policy from the University of Chicago and a Bachelor's of Science in Human Development and Social Policy from Northwestern University. She resides in the Chicago area with her three children, Dean, Layla, and Theo.

Lauren Hogan

Managing Director of Policy and Professional Advancement, NAEYC

Lauren Hogan is the Managing Director of Policy and Professional Advancement at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). After joining the organization in 2015, Lauren has grown a portfolio that includes federal and state policy and advocacy, higher education accreditation, implementation of efforts to support and advance the early childhood workforce, technical assistance, and applied research. With her guidance, NAEYC has built both its policy team and its nonpartisan policy agenda with a focus on centering the voices of educators, shared leadership, capacity building, diversity, and equity. Lauren previously served as the Vice President of Programs and Policy at the National Black Child Development Institute and began her career working with an after-school program in Louisville, Kentucky, later serving as the director of an early literacy and family support program in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She also served as a Rappaport Public Policy Fellow in the Department of Social Services in Boston, MA. Lauren earned a bachelor's degree from Yale University and a Master's degree in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School.

Leadership Colloquium

Friday, April 28

Visionary Leadership Awardee

Carol Brunson Day

President, Brunson, Phillips & Day Consultants

Carol Brunson Day is the President of Brunson, Phillips & Day Consultants. She had a Master's in Early Childhood Education from the Erickson Institute and a Ph.D. In Education from the Claremont Graduate School. Carol's experience includes serving as the President and CEO of the National Black Child Development Institute and President and CEO of the Council for Professional Regulation. Her awards include a Distinguished Fellow of the Council for Professional Recognition and a Lifetime Achievement Award for dedicated service to the field of Family Child Care.

Closing Keynote

Friday, April 28

Lynette Fraga

Consultant

Formerly the Chief Executive Officer of Child Care Aware® of America (CCAoA) for over a decade, Lynette M. Fraga, Ph.D., is a passionate practitioner, advocate, and leader in the field of child care, early learning, and equitable systems change working to advance the accessibility of quality childcare experiences for all children in support of healthy growth and development.

Dr. Fraga began her career in early childhood as a teacher in infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms, and has since held positions at the local, state, and national levels within the nonprofit, corporate and higher education sectors.

Dr. Fraga holds a doctoral degree in Family Studies from Kansas State University, a master's degree in Human Relations from the University of Oklahoma, and a bachelor's degree in Special Education from the University of Arizona.

2023 NATIONAL WORKFORCE REGISTRY ALLIANCE CONFERENCE

16-20 OCTOBER 2023
OMAHA, NEBRASKA

DISCUSSIONS AND INSIGHTS

- **SPECIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITY: State Leadership Symposium on October 17th, limited attendance**
- Active Co-LAB-oration using Open Space methods to leverage network wisdom
- 20+ sessions highlighting existing workforce data, collection systems, and innovation
- Learn more about Equity-centered design (ECD) vs human-centered design in the selection of - and engagement with - its design target

REGISTRATION

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CALL FOR PROPOSALS OPEN:

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Conference Presenters

Berna Artis
Founder & CEO,
The Artful Education Consulting

Benjamin Bayly
*Assistant Professor of Family Studies, Child and Youth Development, P*enn State University Better Kid Care

Jill Bella
Bella Mattina Consulting

Jamie Bonczyk
Program Officer, 80x3:Resilient from the Start, Greater Twin Cities United Way

Barbara Bredell-Searle
Program Quality Assessor, Pennsylvania Key

Beth Cannon
Speaker | Trainer | Coach, Beth Cannon Speaks | Leader's Lounge Solutions

Tracy Cheney
Education Consultant,
Three Cheers Consulting

Marilyn Chu
Early Childhood Education Consultant and Professor Emeritus,
Western Washington University

Tiffany Crump-Winters
Policy & Leadership Intern, Erikson Institute Policy and Leadership Department

Atena Danner
Professional Development Facilitator,
Erikson Institute

Sally D'Italia
Founder & CEO,
Saremi Education Consultants LLC

Kate Engle
Facilitator, Kate Engle

Rebecca Escott
Early Learning/Out-of-School Time Specialist,
Penn State University Better Kid Care

Flora Gomez
Professional Development Strategist,
Teach for Teachers, Inc.

Ashley Harms
Executive Director, Amity Society of Freeport/ Amity Day Care and Learning Center

Janet Humphryes
Co-Founder and Principal Coach,
Dynamic Coaching Systems

Ijumaa Jordan
Early Childhood Consultant,
Ijumaa Jordan Consulting

Kristen Klaassen
Co-Founder and Principal Coach,
Dynamic Coaching Systems LLC

Julia Koumbassa
Professional Development Director,
Educa Ltd.

Amy Lang
Sexuality Educator, Birds & Bees & Kids

Lucy Lewin
Founder, Lucy Lewin Ltd

Elandriel Lewis
Manager, Early Learning and Training,
United Way of Greater Nashville

Michelle Long
Program Quality Assessor, Pennsylvania Key

Conference Presenters

Sarah Lukas
Director of Academic Operations,
National Louis University

Susan MacDonald
Professional Speaker, Coach and Author,
Inspiring New Perspectives

Marie Masterson
Senior Director of Quality Assessment,
McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership

Kelly Matthews
WEESSN Co-director,
Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

Mary Muhs
Academic Program Director, Early Childhood Education, Rasmussen University

Amy Nelson
Social Emotional Learning Consultant,
Emotional Milestones

Peg Oliveira
Executive Director, Gesell Program in Early Childhood at the Yale Child Study Center

Cassandra ONeill
Founder and CEO,
Leadership Alchemy LLC

Kathe Petchel
Client Relations,
HINGE Early Education Advisors

Mary Quest
Faculty, Erikson Institute

Perna Richards
CEO & Founder, Together We Grow

Shuntae Richardson
Administrative Assistant IV, McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership

Cynthia M B Robinson
CEO / Transformational Coach / Consultant / Author, CMBR - Authentic Childcare Making Better, LLC

Krystal Ross
Director of Early Childhood, Gads Hill Center

Mitch Rucker
Mather Strategies

Anita J. Rumage
ExceleRate Pilot Program Manager,
Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development

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Conference Presenters

Kimberly Sopher-Dunn
Director of Education and Community Capacity Building, New Birth Center for Community Inclusion

Carla Sparks
Faculty Lead, Educational Leadership - National College of Education, National Louis University

Ken Spero
CEO, SchoolSim

Paula Steffen
Assessor, McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership

Teri Talan
Senior Policy Advisor, McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership

Elizabeth Tertell
Visiting Assistant Faculty, Lewis University

Nancy Toso
Owner/Director, Nancy L Toso Consulting Group

Kate Warach
Director, Jewish United Fund

Laura Wilhelm
Vice President, Professional Learning Services, Kaplan Early Learning Company

Carrie Zelin Johnson
Program Officer, Early Childhood, Greater Twin Cities United Way

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Pre-Conference

Tuesday, April 25

9:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., CT | Morning Session

Updates to the Whole Leadership Framework - Responding to Voices from the Field

Marie Masterson, *Senior Director of Quality Assessment,* McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership

Teri Talan, *Senior Policy Advisor,* McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership

Jill Bella, Bella Mattiina Consulting

The Whole Leadership Framework, first published in 2017, has been updated and revised to include critical changes to Leadership Essentials, which are the foundational competencies and behaviors necessary for creating a culture of caring, equity, and improvement. This session will present the revised components of Leadership Essentials, including culturally responsive leadership, continuous quality improvement, and personal and professional self-awareness, with a focus on tools and strategies necessary to revitalize program success. In addition, it will introduce updates to Administrative and Pedagogical Leadership to align with current research, the needs of the profession, and feedback from the field. Participants will be invited to engage in dialog about the practical implications of embedding the Whole Leadership Framework in programs and systems.

1:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m., CT | Afternoon Session

Making the Case for Child Care

Mitch Rucker, Mather Strategies

Participants will learn about the inner workings of the state and federal legislative process, how to find and contact elected officials, and how to prepare what to say in an email, phone call, or meeting. This workshop will teach individuals how to make their voices heard, advocate effectively for the issues that impact our field, and demystify politics and the legislative process found in the U.S. Congress, the state capitol, the local school board, or city hall.

Whole Leadership Tracks

Whole Leadership represents the interdependent relationship that exists among three leadership domains. A balanced perspective is necessary when performing leadership functions in early childhood programs.

Leadership Essentials

Creating a culture of caring, equity, and improvement in early childhood programs. Leadership Essentials include foundational competencies and behaviors necessary for relationship building and motivating people to achieve shared goals. Reflective and intentional practice are the hallmarks of Leadership Essentials.

Pedagogical Leadership

Facilitating a community of learning that builds on the strengths of children, families, and staff. Pedagogical Leadership includes ensuring fidelity to research-based curricula, assessing children's development and learning, using data for evaluation, optimizing learning environments, and empowering families.

Administrative Leadership

Coordinating work and mobilizing people to ensure the organization remains stable and continues to thrive. Administrative Leadership includes systems thinking and development.

Day 1

Wednesday, April 26

9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m., CT | Networking Forums

Opening General Session Keynote

With Keynote Speaker Brandy Jones Lawrence

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., CT

The activist movement to create an effective, publicly funded early care and education system reinforced by a valued, professionally supported, well-compensated workforce is 135 years in the making. These efforts and ideas echo through and define today's conversations for reform as the current ECE workforce crisis has exposed enduring inequities in preparation, working conditions, and compensation. As Early educators, administrators, and policy leaders, we must ground ourselves in lessons of the past while resetting our intention and efforts to center the needs of both children and their educators, who are the lynchpin of quality. To realize a truly effective public early care and education system, we must emerge as adaptive and courageous leaders who demand racial, gender, and economic justice for the ECE workforce, now.

Session 1

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m., CT | Concurrent Sessions

Navigating Uncharted Waters the Gen Z Puzzle: How to Embrace their Unique Qualities in the Workplace

Kathe Petchel, *Client Relations,* HINGE Early Education Advisors

Managing the incoming Gen Z employees presents a golden opportunity for a savvy and sensitive school leader. Let's face it: not only are they not going anywhere, but soon they will be our parent consumers too! Embracing a generation that averages 100 or more texts a day, easily multitasks using five screens simultaneously, with an attention span of eight seconds, is a challenge! Kathe Petchel, from Hinge Advisors Client Relations team, will lead an entertaining and thought-provoking presentation that includes strategies for embracing the sometimes quirky, socially responsible, family-oriented Z's.

Winning Beyond the Workshop: A Strategic Approach to Choosing the Right PD

Flora Gomez, *Professional Development Strategist,* Teach for Teachers, Inc.

How much has it cost you to send staff to training workshops without seeing real growth and change in their knowledge, skillsets, or practices? When you factor in registration, classroom coverage, and payroll to attend, your good intentions could create a bottomless hole in your professional development budget. PD is not one-size-fits-all, so attending a workshop or course is rarely enough to see the growth and development you desire when registering for the course in the first place.

In this session, you will learn strategies to help you confidently and strategically work with your teaching staff to select professional development activities that yield a return on your investment of time, money, and energy. Most importantly, when you apply these strategies, you can expect to see advancement in your teachers and the children and families with whom they work.

Day 1

Wednesday, April 26

Session 1 (Continued)

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m., CT | Concurrent Sessions

A is for Advocacy: Self-Advocacy Isn't Selfish

Laura Wilhelm, *Vice President, Professional Learning Services,* Kaplan Early Learning Company

Advocacy means standing up for a cause. What better cause than our own programs? In this session we'll explore some of the hurdles and pitfalls in program leadership, and point to concrete supports to help you move beyond daily challenges and frustrations into visionary leadership.

The Art of Receiving and Giving Feedback through Coaching

Krystal Ross, *Director of Early Childhood,* Gads Hill Center

The first years of any journey are the most critical, and this is especially important for new Head Start Leaders. During the early years of leadership, feedback is essential to the proper development of the leader. Feedback is constant and exists in many forms - appreciation, guidance, and encouragement. Good, constructive feedback enables us to learn and adjust from mistakes and works best when given and received through a feedback loop. This feedback loop consists of Input, Processing, Implement, Output, & Evaluation. This session will support new leaders in understanding the different forms, sources, and ways to process feedback and effectively utilize the feedback loop.

Finding Your Inner Calm: Tips to Support Emotional Regulation When Drama is at Play!

Cassandra ONeill, *Founder and CEO,* Leadership Alchemy LLC

Drama is a given in our work and lives. What if it was possible to access inner peace during times of drama? The drama triangle is involved in almost all work-related conflicts - the good news is that we can avert it. This session will begin with an overview of the drama triangle and how to recognize it. Once identified, participants will learn how to get out of the drama triangle and prevent it in the future.

Navigating the Nonsense Be the Manatee: Affirming Advice for Your Leadership Journey

Sarah Lukas, *Director of Academic Operations,* National Louis University

Carla Sparks, *Faculty Lead, Educational Leadership - National College of Education,* National Louis University

Participants will engage in an interactive experience based on the presenters' best-selling book, Be the Manatee: Affirming Advice for Your Leadership Journey. Both humorous and motivational, this session will involve participants interacting with the authors and collaborating with peers as they reflect on their current leadership dispositions and build next steps for mindful and ethical advancement in their leadership skills. The participants will make connections to their own leadership experience including handling negativity, repairing and advancing relationships, working with different leadership styles, and ensuring harmony at work. Participants will leave with the confidence they need to navigate any nonsense that comes their way!

Day 1

Wednesday, April 26

Session 1 (Continued)

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m., CT | Concurrent Sessions

Building Positive Relationships and Interactions

Nancy Toso, *Owner/Director,* Nancy L Toso Consulting Group

"Young children experience their world as an environment of relationships, which affect virtually all aspects of their development." What is a relationship, and how do we effectively develop them? In this workshop, we will explore why positive relationships are so meaningful, how to create an environment that fosters them, and how your interactions help facilitate them. We will also share concrete strategies to incorporate positive and impactful interactions into your daily practice. This session will include many opportunities for participants to join the discussion through chat, break-out rooms, and video reflections.

Uncovering and Challenging White Feminist Values in Early Childhood Education

Ijumaa Jordan, *Early Childhood Consultant,* Ijumaa Jordan Consulting

Kelly Matthews, *WEESN Co-director,* Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

What place does White Feminism have in early childhood programs? Join Ijumaa and Kelly for an exploration of the construct of White Feminism, identifying what it might look like in action, and distinguishing concepts that early educator leaders need to be aware of when performing the critical work of anti-racism.

Session 2

1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m., CT | Concurrent Sessions

Work with Me! Supporting Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Amy Nelson, *Social Emotional Learning Consultant,* Emotional Milestones

To support neurodivergent professionals, we must recognize that different brains need different approaches! Diverse needs necessitate a variety of strategies to create a positive, productive, and neuro-inclusive workplace. This workshop will dispel common misconceptions about neurodiversity and provide an affirming strengths-based approach to help you better understand, appreciate, and support your neurodivergent staff and students. Participants will identify neurodiversity and learning differences; review barriers to participation and assess accommodations to promote productivity; and explore strategies for creating a neuro-inclusive workplace.

Session 2 (Continued)

1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m., CT | Concurrent Sessions

The Elephant in the Room (Provider BURNOUT)

Cynthia M B Robinson, *CEO / Transformational Coach / Consultant / Author, CMBR - Authentic Childcare Making Better, LLC*

As nurturers, caregivers, small business operators, and leaders, we expend a tremendous amount of time and energy meeting the needs of others. This session focuses on the needs of the individual, often neglected, and the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle to offer consistent, professional service. In addition to customizing quality service, as leaders, we can further preserve and protect our longevity by investing in self-care skills.

Leading with Strengths: How to Build a Great Team

Lucy Lewin, *Founder,* Lucy Lewin Ltd

When we understand and claim our strengths, and those of others, we can discover the key to high levels of motivation, engagement, achievement, and results. Everyone needs a coach and mentor who understands the right questions to ask to change your thinking and move you to accountability and action. This session will give you the tools to consider who makes a great mentor and how to own your strengths.

Accelerating Administrator Preparation and Improving Decision-Making Through Simulations

Ken Spero, *CEO,* SchoolSim

Specific skills are essential to be a great Early Childhood Leader, but often, experience is missing. Experience implies the ability to use good judgment in even the most complex situations and the resilience to handle the associated blowback that is sure to follow. We know experience is the best teacher, yet frown upon a surgeon who practices on her patients. Like a flight simulator, leaders gain authentic experience through simulations without placing students in danger, increasing leadership capacity and improving decision-making skills in a risk-free environment. This session allows participants to experience a simulation and benefit through a complex scenario and peer-to-peer learning.

How to Promote Equity and Voice through Discussion, Design, and Facilitation

Mary Quest, *Faculty,* Erikson Institute

Elizabeth Tertell, *Visiting Assistant Faculty,* Lewis University

We will examine the connections between discussion design and participant presence, and their relation to the social construction of knowledge. The Community of Inquiry model (Garrison et al., 2003) will provide a framework for discussion design and facilitation, encouraging social and cognitive engagement and reflection. We will explore how to support group dialogue and the idea of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005). Discussions that ask participants to share their experiences as cultural insiders support individual and group learning. In addition, we review the idea of teaching presence, where individuals with unique perspectives and ideas facilitate group learning. Teaching presence supports equity and voice in discussions and learning.

Session 2 (Continued)

1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m., CT | Concurrent Sessions

Unpacking Early Childhood Compensation Practices: A Thorough Exploration via Jewish ECE Programs

Ariela Greenberg, *Founder and CEO,* The Greenberg Team

Kate Warach, *Director,* Jewish United Fund

Early childhood compensation has been a topic for nearly half a century. What was once merely conversation amongst those in the field has now, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, become a general topic of conversation. These new conversations arose in the public arena in the Build Back Better Act and the Inflation Reduction Act. Early childhood educators saw policies that respected them as professionals, only to have those sections left on the cutting room floor. This first-of-its-kind study explores the salaries and educational backgrounds of Jewish early childhood program teachers nationwide. In this presentation, attendees will learn about the different typologies of educators in the United States Jewish early childhood system and how we will use these data to inform new initiatives for early childhood advocates.

Breaking Down Barriers: Paths to Decolonizing Data and Language Habits for Empowerment and Inclusion

Tiffany Crump-Winters, *Policy & Leadership Intern,* Erikson Institute Policy and Leadership Department

Atena Danner, *Professional Development Facilitator,* Erikson Institute

We do the work we do because we want to help and heal - not harm or dehumanize. However, our reports, proposals, data briefs, and impact papers often cause unintentional harm with unexamined language. Erikson Institute's Policy and Leadership team is here to help. In this session, you'll learn about our workshop offerings that can support generative examination of your data and language outputs, identify problem points, and set a course for improved practice. Whether you want to be more confident about your understanding of data or you want to learn ways to talk and think that do the least harm for the most good, you'll discover learning experiences that can set you on a path toward success for your team, project, or organization.

Widening the Lens: Looking at Quality from a Program Administration Perspective

Shuntae Richardson, *Administrative Assistant IV,* McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership

Paula Steffen, *Quality Training Specialist,* McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership

Using a “wide angle lens” to examine quality involves not only measures of the classroom learning environment but also examining perceptions of the center’s organizational climate and the leadership practices in promoting program sustainability and supporting classroom quality. This session will focus on how The Program Administration Scale, 3rd Edition (PAS 3E), can measure and improve Whole Leadership practices in center-based programs. Using the PAS 3E as a guide, participants will explore the rationale for assessing Whole Leadership practices, receive an overview of the structure and format of the PAS, and discover how it measures and improve program quality.

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m., CT | Networking Session

Day 2

Thursday, April 27

9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m., CT | Networking Forums

Public Policy Forum
From a Moment to Momentum: The Power of the Profession in Action

Public Policy Forum Keynote by Lauren Hogan

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., CT

When we center the diverse voices, experiences, and expertise of early childhood educators, our collective advocacy becomes increasingly powerful. In this opening session, we'll look back at our field's advocacy successes, reflect on our challenges, and look ahead to what's happening now and next. Together, we'll talk about how educators and states are building on and aligning with the *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession* to respond to the child care crisis with continued, shared resolve to advance a diverse, effective, equitable, well-prepared, well-supported, and well-compensated early childhood education profession across states and settings, in order to help children, families, and our communities thrive.

Session 3

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m., CT | Concurrent Sessions

Hiring and Retaining Myths Debunked

Prerna Richards, *CEO & Founder,* Together We Grow

Most industries, especially the service industries like early childhood, struggle to find and retain qualified staff. The stress levels and burnout rates are high. During this informative and engaging session, we will discuss myths surrounding hiring and retaining. We will discuss practical and effective ways to go from the mindset of hiring- to recruiting, retaining - to growth, and then share the GIE model to transform the team you have into your dream team. You will leave this session renewed with ideas and strategies to go from survival to thriving.

The Role of Collaboration, Connection, and Change in Community Impact

Jamie Bonczyk, *Program Officer, 80x3:Resilient from the Start,* Greater Twin Cities United Way

Carrie Zelin Johnson, *Program Officer, Early Childhood,* Greater Twin Cities United Way

Greater Twin Cities United Way's 80x3: Resilient From The Start seeks to collaborate, connect, and create change to address persistent systemic challenges in the early childhood education and care landscape. The innovation process occurs in three stages; listening, co-creating, and amplifying, and can serve as a model for programs seeking to center community voice and solutions, de-center power, and create positive change at the program, organizational, or community level. The vision for this innovation is to increase the capacity and quality of trauma-sensitive care in early childhood centers and make it easier for families to access what they need to be stable and thrive through exploring three key strategies: Train and coach leaders and educators in trauma-sensitive care and healing-centered engagement; build capacity for centers to support families; and build capacity for centers to recruit new and retain educators.

Session 3 (Continued)

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m., CT | Concurrent Sessions

Challenging White Feminism & Patriarchy in School Leadership

Kate Englel, *Facilitator,* Kate Engle

Ijumaa Jordan, *Early Childhood Consultant,* Ijumaa Jordan Consulting

The history of the feminist movement in the United States has been centered on the needs and values of white women and their children. Meanwhile, early childhood education has often been devalued by its connection to white patriarchal ideas of women as natural nurturers rather than valuing and compensating the expertise and leadership of Black and Indigenous women of color. We will practice uncovering patriarchal and white feminist values in early childhood leadership and challenging sexism and racism in programs and the classroom. This session will center on the work and experiences of Black, Indigenous women of color.

It Really IS All in Your Head: The Three Parts of the Brain and Their Impact on Behavior

Tracy Cheney, *Education Consultant, Early Childhood,* Three Cheers Consulting

This training will first assist attendees in reflecting on their triggers (hot-button behaviors) to determine how to respond more beneficially when those occur. Second, we will learn about the brain's top priority of ensuring safety and how that impacts our reactions to people and events. Third, we will discuss the three parts of the triune brain, their functions, and what strategies we can use in our daily lives.

Kid-Safe Workplace: Red Flags & Warning Signs in Adults & Staff

Amy Lang, *Sexuality Educator,* Birds & Bees & Kids

An informed staff is a safer staff. When you and your staff know what to watch out for in other adults and are empowered to talk about it, we are all safer. You will learn Current statistics on child sexual abuse, including who abuses, how often it's unreported, and how often children tell the truth about abuse; "Sexual Misconduct" and warning sign behaviors in adults; Clear "red flag" behaviors; Scripts and tips for talking to a co-worker about their concerning behavior; and General Tips for creating a safer workplace.

The Economics of Quality Childcare: It is Possible to be Profitable and Provide High Quality Care

Kathe Petchel, *Client Relations,* HINGE Early Education Advisors

Understanding the economics of an early childhood program isn't what typically attracts directors and owners to the early childhood field. But it may make their dreams come true: quality environments, engagement for children, and the peace of mind that well-managed finances bring is no unicorn! This session will engage and support owners and directors as they learn subtle but powerful financial habits designed to provide a healthy financial picture. If you've wanted to know best practice expense percentages, the appropriate amount of rent, or ways to mitigate labor costs, this session is for you.

Day 2

Thursday, April 27

Session 4

1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m., CT | Concurrent Sessions

Going Big in Wisconsin: Building Shared Services Statewide

Kelly Matthews, *WESSN Co-director,* Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

Have you been hearing abuzz about Shared Services? Take a deep dive into the history of and current services offered by the Wisconsin Early Education Shared Services Network, known as WEESSN. Take inspiration and gain insights – a story of ongoing iteration, innovation, and making the most of the opportunities presented to us! It is astonishing what a small group of dedicated people can do!

Fortifying the Infant-Toddler Workforce through Evidence-Informed PD and In-House Coaching

Benjamin Bayly, *Assistant Professor of Family Studies, Child and Youth Development,* Penn State University Better Kid Care

Rebecca Escott, *Early Learning/Out-of-School Time Specialist,* Penn State University Better Kid Care

In order to ensure healthy development among infants and toddlers, caregivers must provide a warm, safe, and stimulating environment. Infant and toddler educators must be equipped with best practices regarding their interactions with the children in their care. Professional development and coaching support have been shown to be promising mechanisms for improving the quality of early care. However, infant-toddler programs face various challenges in implementing coaching support and providing professional development, making these programs unsustainable. In this session, we describe Click, Coach, Connect - an evidence-informed program designed to provide a sustainable model of professional development and coaching support for infant-toddler teachers. Click, Coach, Connect is unique in that it pairs on-demand professional development with an in-depth coaching guidebook, and internal program teachers or directors serve as coaches to their peers.

Design and Implement Policies Through a Mental Health Lens

Mary Muhs, *Manager, Academic Program Director, Early Childhood Education,* Rasmussen University

Policies are the backbone of any early childhood education program. It goes without saying that we must follow regulations or policies that allow us to remain in business or keep our children safe. However, can we rethink how these policies are worded, shared, and implemented? As we write policies for our program, what can we ask ourselves to help us see the policies from multiple perspectives and with an emotionally supportive lens? Using widely accepted tools, such as Developmentally Appropriate Practices or the Tenets for Work with Infants, Children, and Families, program leaders reflect on how their policies respect differences, maintain integrity, honor beliefs, and preferences, and meet the cultural expectations of the families. Program leaders can work to ensure that the program's climate supports the many diverse wellness and mental health needs of the families and children in their care.

Session 4 (continued)

1:45 p.m. – 3:15 p.m., CT | Concurrent Sessions

A Special Welcome: Creating and Sustaining Family Friendly Programs

Luis Hernandez, *ECE Specialist*

Each of us appreciates a warm welcome, a pleasant encounter, and a reassurance of safety and security. As an early childhood education team, our individual and collective behaviors and attitudes are reflected in our immediate interactions and environments. All children, families, and staff are part of a learning community that embodies welcoming relationships. The session will provide practical tips for implementing strategies to uplift the spirit of family friendliness and warm welcomes.

Practices to Support Equity and Inclusion with Families and Staff

Elandriel Lewis, *Manager, Early Learning and Training,* United Way of Greater Nashville

Many early childhood leaders desire to create an environment that is equitable and inclusive to all. To achieve this goal one must first have the tools needed to provide this environment. This session will offer concrete practices to use with families and staff to help ensure everyone feels seen, heard, and included.

S.T.A.Y. Interviews: 4 Solid Strategies to Pay Attention to Retention

Beth Cannon, *Speaker, Trainer, and Coach,* Beth Cannon Speaks | Leader's Lounge Solutions

Wouldn't you love knowing who on your staff is locked, loaded, and in for the long haul? A S.T.A.Y. Interview, or retention interview, is a one-on-one conversation that helps employers understand what might make an employee leave or stay before they even consider hopping to another job. In this session, you'll learn how to gain insight into retaining employees while they're still employed, and hopefully, show your best performers that you value them and their place in your center. Learn the four questions to see if your superstars intend to S.T.A.Y. plus get some practical tips on "pulse checks" throughout the year.

What Early Childhood Educators Wish Their Leaders Understood About Child Development

Peg Oliveira, *Executive Director,* Gesell Program in Early Childhood at the Yale Child Study Center

School leaders matter. Research suggests principals have the second highest in-school impact on student achievement after teachers. With the growth in the inclusion of public pre-k classrooms in elementary schools, beyond technical leadership competency, it's increasingly important that elementary school leaders have a strong understanding of pre-K and early learning and know how to translate their skill set to their youngest students. Yet, many school principals, superintendents, and instructional leaders have little or no training in early childhood and feel unprepared to guide and evaluate teachers of young children. As such, we will share five basics of child development that will better inform administrators and allow them to bring a trained eye to observing early educators and children in the classroom.

3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m., CT | Networking Session

Day 3

Friday, April 28

9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m., CT | Networking Forums

Paula Jorde Bloom Leadership Colloquium

With Visionary Award Recipient Carol Brunson Day
10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., CT

Join us as Carol Brunson Day, a renowned leader in early childhood care and education, shares her journey of visionary leadership. Carol's integrity, fresh perspective, and role as a trailblazer in the field garnered her distinction as our 2023 Leadership Connections Visionary Award recipient.

Session 5

11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m., CT | Concurrent Sessions

Continuous Quality Improvement: The ExceleRate Illinois (QRIS) Pilot Experience

Anita J. Rumage, *ExceleRate Pilot Program Manager,* Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development

Ashley Harms, *Executive Director,* Amity Society of Freeport/ Amity Day Care and Learning Center

In this pilot, Illinois is helping childcare center directors make continuous quality improvement part of their everyday work. The project supports better staff salaries, additional staff members, and leadership consultation for directors. Learn the results from the project manager and center director.

Supporting Family Child Care Business Practices: Business Administration Scale Community of Practice

Barbara Bredell-Searle, *Program Quality Assessor,* Pennsylvania Key

Michelle Long, *Program Quality Assessor,* Pennsylvania Key

Family Child Care providers often join the ECE field because they love children. They open their homes to nurture, care for, and educate children from working families. Many family childcare programs struggled to keep their business running at the onset of the COVID pandemic as few of these providers come into the field with a business background and do not have a corporate office to handle the business side of their program. PA leadership heard the provider's needs and developed a CoP focused on business practice support specific to family child care programs. This session follows the development, implementation, and outcomes of the PA BAS CoP, as well as the benefits of offering supportive services to programs through a CoP format.

Day 3

Friday, April 28

Session 5 (continued)

11:45 a.m. - 1:45 p.m., CT | Concurrent Sessions

Growing Early Childhood Leaders and Learners for Equitable, Inclusive and Socially Just Programs

Marilyn Chu, *Early Childhood Education Consultant and Professor Emeritus,* Western Washington University

Kimberly Sopher-Dunn, *Director of Education and Community Capacity Building,* New Birth Center for Community Inclusion

This session will support you in reflecting on yourself as a mentor, coach, or supervisor as both a learner and a leader through Relationship-based Professional Development. The session will explore what ECE leaders can consider to grow and sustain healthy organizations that reflect the vision of their collective partnerships. Participants will leave with strategies to promote equitable, inclusive, and socially just ECE programs.

Supercharge Your Professional Learning Experiences!

Susan MacDonald, *Professional Speaker, Coach and Author,* Inspiring New Perspectives

Creating professional learning experiences that truly engage and inspire adult learners can be challenging. You will need a clear plan to keep staff motivated and invested in their ongoing professional growth. Discover innovative and concrete strategies for designing and delivering impactful professional development. In this workshop, you will gain new ideas for establishing learning communities where adults feel empowered with the mindset, focus, and motivation to achieve their professional goals. You will also learn about a wide range of resources to help you expand your repertoire of activities and practices to create or support a diverse community of adult learners.

Cultivating Connections with Leadership Presence and Boundaries

Berna Artis, *Founder & CEO,* The Artful Education Consulting

Sally D'Italia, *Founder & CEO,* Saremi Education Consultants LLC

Early Childhood Leaders wear multiple hats and play many roles daily. We serve, support, and stretch ourselves to the breaking point because we feel obligated to. This session provides a close look at leaders being present with effective communication, cultivating a culture where people feel they belong, and setting healthy boundaries as imperative facets of our work. They impact time, effort, employee morale, productivity and trust along with the mission and values of your school and organization.

Day 3

Friday, April 28

Session 5 (continued)

11:45 a.m. - 1:45 p.m., CT | Concurrent Sessions

Implement a Coaching Mindset to Uplift and Inspire

Janet Humphryes, *Co-Founder and Principal Coach,* Dynamic Coaching Systems
Kristen Klaassen, *Co-Founder and Principal Coach,* Dynamic Coaching Systems

With so many demands on early childhood staff in all positions, we need to realistically look at what we can do to promote quality for children and families. We must support staff in compassionate ways that uplift and inspire, enabling them to provide the social and emotional support everyone needs as we emerge from this pandemic. Implementing a coaching mindset throughout the program results in a dynamic community of learners, with all staff purposely engaged in thinking through challenges. Join this session to explore and practice some basic and intermediary coaching skills needed to make this happen!

Bolstering Teacher Growth and Reflection with Learning Stories

Julia Koumbassa, *Professional Development Director,* Educa Ltd.

Learning Stories are not just an assessment tool for children. They are also powerful tools to support teacher reflection and, consequently, growth. In this session, we will discover how leaders and coaches bolster teacher growth and development through inquiry and reflection, using Learning Stories as their guide.

Closing General Session
Reflection into Action: Designing, Creating and Activating Change for Children

With Keynote Speaker Lynette Fraga
1:45 p.m. - 3:15 p.m., CT

Given the pace of work and the many roles we fill, it is often difficult to pause, even for a moment, to strategize on what the next day holds, let alone what is needed for early childhood programs, systems or policy. Yet, reflecting before action can be just what we need before advancing transformative policy change for our programs and services.

Scholarship Winners

Kayli Bontrager
Family & Community Engagement Specialist for Birth to Five Illinois: Region 11

Mona Webber
Director at the Goddard School in Darien, IL

Click here to read the full winner biographies

2023 Paula Jorde Bloom Scholarship Recipients

The Paula Jorde Bloom Scholarship, first awarded in 2019, is intended to support emerging and aspiring early childhood leaders who are dedicated to providing the highest quality care and education for children and families. The scholarship was established by Paula's family after her passing in 2018 and highlights her legendary devotion to improving early childhood professional standards.

Paula understood the important and complex role of program leaders, and she realized that children and families depend on them and passionately advocated for a spotlight on them. Paula dedicated her life to bringing national attention to the critical role program leaders play in ensuring high-quality early childhood education for children. She worked to bring credibility to their roles and to support the ongoing professional development of their core competencies.

While Paula was able to found and build the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership into a thriving, nationally recognized early childhood leadership organization from an initial grant of just $600, she recognized that best-in-class professional learning requires financial support. This scholarship is one means of such support.

Thank you for a great conference!

Follow us for updates about the 2024 ***in-person*** national Leadership Connections conference.

McCormickCenter.nl.edu