

# Growing through Leadership Connections™

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## Overcoming Challenge with Courage

The McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership equips leaders with key strategies for success and empowers the profession as a catalyst for positive change. As part of this mission, our founder, Paula Jorde Bloom, established the enduring legacy of the [Leadership Connections Conference](#). For 21 years, this vital gathering of decision-makers, leaders, policymakers, and partners has provided a forum for renewal, meaningful learning, inspiration, and professional growth.

The April 25-29, 2022 Leadership Connections, *Overcoming Challenge with Courage*, offers timely resources to strengthen the collective impact of the profession. Multiple keynote speakers, breakout sessions, the Public Policy Forum, Leadership Colloquium, and celebration of the Visionary Leadership Awardees add to the dynamic exchange of ideas with the goal of increasing the effectiveness of early childhood leaders and strengthening the policies and systems that anchor the field.

## Increasing personal and collective impact

During the pandemic and especially during challenging times, Leadership Connections offers support, information, strategies for success, and networking to sustain and energize early childhood leaders. The conference provides opportunities to explore the latest trends and issues in the field and engage with other leaders to tackle issues and generate solutions. Participants express how much the conference has expanded their professional vision, revitalized their personal mission, and fueled practical planning. Below are just a few examples:

- "I believe this is the best conference for leaders in early childhood who are looking for inspiration, new ideas, networking opportunities, and a complete professional experience. Everyone who attends feels a sense of belonging and respect."
- "I am always delighted and amazed how much I continue to learn and enjoy this conference after 11 years."
- "This was my second year attending Leadership Connections. I always leave feeling inspired and ready to apply the skills I have learned."
- "As always, this conference was outstanding. The presenters were knowledgeable and passionate about the work we do and left me feeling very positive about the field of early childhood leadership. I left with ideas to take back and implement in my program."
- "The content of the workshops and guest speakers reaffirmed my ideas about being in a supervisory position, with strategies to use in improving my leadership skills as well as leaving with a feeling of support."
- "Through this conference, I gathered at least ten big ideas and tools that I can use in my work and to share with others in the field through my work, in addition to a few life-changing ideas. The

over-reaching ideas are empowerment, supporting the growth of staff, creating environments for growth, and taking care of yourself in the process of supporting others."

- "The keynotes were inspiring, and the sessions were topical and engaging. I will be watching recordings of the sessions that I was not able to attend. This is an exciting benefit of the virtual format. In making choices about how to spend my budget for conferences, Leadership Connections is always at the top of the list."

### The Paula Jorde Bloom Scholarship Fund

Paula's vision included supporting the competencies of program leaders and bringing credibility to the importance of their roles as gatekeepers to quality. A foundational goal of the conference is to support new and emerging leaders in achieving their professional goals through the Paula Jorde Bloom Scholarship Fund. Recipients demonstrate commitment to advocacy for young children and their families and are active in creating positive change in the field. They are dedicated to providing the highest quality care and education for children and families and use the Whole Leadership Framework to guide program success. We extend congratulations to the following leaders, who are the recipients of the 2022 Paula Jorde Bloom Scholarships:



**Sim Loh** is a family partnership coordinator at Children's Village, a nationally-accredited Keystone 4 STARS early learning and school-age enrichment program in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, serving about 350 children. She supports children and families, including non-English speaking families of immigrant status, by ensuring equitable access to education, health, employment, and legal information and resources on a day-to-day basis. She is a member of the Children First Racial Equity Early Childhood Education Provider Council, a community member representative of Philadelphia School District Multilingual Advisory Council, and a board member of Historic Philadelphia.

Sim explains, "I ensure families know their rights and educate them on ways to speak up for themselves and request for interpretation/translation services. I share families' stories and experiences with legislators and decision-makers so that their needs are understood. Attending Leadership Connections will help me strengthen and grow my skills in all domains by interacting with and hearing from experienced leaders in different positions. With newly acquired skills, I seek to learn about the systems level while paying close attention to the accessibility and barriers of different systems and resources and their impacts on young children and their families."



**LaDoris Lee** is from Chicago, Illinois, where she has spent the past 16 years working as a teacher, director, assistant, and nanny in home, center-based, corporate, and non-profit settings. She is an Erikson graduate student, a 2021-2022 Early Childhood Education Teach Plus Fellow, and is expanding her impact through consulting. LaDoris explains, “Each experience has added to my skill set and allowed me to witness inequitable experiences of early learners in these various settings. Seeing the various practices has challenged me to develop age-appropriate methods to successfully manage my classrooms with acceptance, diversity, inclusivity, and equality at the foundation. As I embark on the next steps of my journey in early care and education, I want to be sure that I can lead successfully. Leadership Connections will help me grow and strengthen my leadership skills by providing me with leadership essentials that will increase my ability to lead.”

### Your opportunity to contribute

Your donation to the Paula Jorde Bloom Scholarship Fund can help support emerging leaders and strengthen their circle of influence. Perhaps you have benefited from attending Leadership Connections in the past or plan to attend in the future and want to make a contribution. The combined donations of caring supporters make it possible for deserving leaders to discover new levels of professional growth and effectiveness. If you would like to help further the vision and legacy of Paula Jorde Bloom, please scroll to the bottom of the [donation page](#). Please indicate “Paula Jorde Bloom Scholarship” when making your gift. If you are an emerging or growing leader, we invite you to apply to be a recipient of the 2023 scholarship.

### Leaders as gatekeepers to quality

How does attending Leadership Connections become a springboard for positive change? “Everything early childhood administrators do in their [leadership roles](#) directly or indirectly influences their programs’ trajectories toward excellence.” [Program leaders](#) with specialized training are more likely to support the professional development of their teaching staff, secure and maintain program funding, and achieve center accreditation. They are more effective in creating positive change.

Importantly, participation in specialized training strengthens the [effectiveness of leaders](#) in their capacity to improve program quality. Leaders are more confident, have greater clarity about their leadership roles, and are more effective in pedagogical leadership tasks. They develop skills to [stabilize the programs and systems](#) essential for children and families. They contribute to equity in the early childhood workforce and improve child and community outcomes.

### Additional opportunities

As you explore opportunities for professional growth, consider contacting your state [quality rating and improvement system](#) to identify professional development funding opportunities. In Illinois, connect with your local [resource and referral agency](#) to locate available scholarships. Outside of Illinois, check out the Child Care Aware [search page](#) and enter your zip code. You may want to look for additional professional development funds unique to your state, such as the Illinois [Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity Scholarship Program](#). Ask about early childhood leadership scholarships at your local community college,

university, and city workforce initiative. Finally, remember that Leadership Connections and other conferences offer discounted early bird and group rates. Be sure to subscribe to our [mailing list](#) to receive early notifications.

We invite you to join us for the virtual 2022 Leadership Connections conference, April 25-29. We know you will come away with innovative strategies to strengthen program capacity, embed equity and excellence, and become more effective advocates on behalf of children and families. We look forward to joining with you as we expand our legacy and impact.

**Marie Masterson, Ph.D.**, is the director of quality assessment at the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership. She holds a doctorate in early childhood education, is a licensed teacher, and is a national speaker and author of many books and articles that address research-based, practical skills for high-quality teaching, behavior guidance, quality improvement in early childhood programs, and leadership. She is a contributing author and editor of the book, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Birth Through Age Eight, Fourth Edition*.