



Minnesota Association for the
Education of Young Children



Annual Conference

Building Connections for a Great Start

Save the Dates: January 31-February 1, 2025

Winter Leadership Institute January 30, 2025

Location

MnAEYC's Annual Conference will be held January 31, February 1, 2025 at the

RiverCentre St. Paul
175 West Kellogg Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55102

Winter Leadership Institute is a pre-conference event held January 30, 2025 at the

Science Museum of Minnesota
120 Kellogg Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55102

Fees

Membership Level & Non-Member Rates	Winter Leadership Institute Only	Friday OR Saturday	2 Day Rate	3 Day Rate
Premium Level Members	\$120	\$170	\$260	\$345
Standard, Entry or Family Level Members	\$135	\$175	\$315	\$420
Non-Member Rates	\$135	\$220	\$330	\$435

For complete information on fees and cancellation policies, visit our website.

Scholarship Information

MnAEYC may partner with organizations to offer Scholarships to this conference. For more information, visit our website.

Hotel Accommodations

MnAEYC has reserved a block of hotel rooms at the Hampton Inn at 200 Seventh Street W in St. Paul. Rooms are \$115 per night. Visit our website for the reservation link.

Event Schedules

Winter Leadership Institute
Science Museum of Minnesota
Thursday 1/30/2025

8:00-8:20 Registration & Welcome
8:20-8:30 Welcome & Announcements
8:30-10:30 NEAR Science Presentation
10:45-12:45 Scholarships Panel
12:45-1:45 Lunch
1:45-3:45 Self-Care & Compassion Fatigue
3:45-4:00 Closing Remarks
4:00-4:30 Networking & Museum Exploration

MnAEYC Annual
Conference
RiverCentre, St Paul
Friday 01/31/2025

7:00-8:00 Registration/Exhibits
8:00-9:30 Welcome & Keynote
9:30-10:00 Break/Exhibits
10:00-11:30 Session A
11:30-12:45 Lunch/Exhibits
12:45-2:15 Session B
2:15-2:30 Break/Exhibits
2:30-4:00 Session C

MnAEYC Annual
Conference
RiverCentre, St. Paul
Saturday 02/01/2025

7:30-8:00 Registration/Exhibits
8:00-10:00 Session D
10:00-10:15 Break/Exhibits
10:15-12:15 Session E
12:15-1:15 Lunch/Exhibits
1:15-3:15 Session F

Winter Leadership Institute

Thursday, January 30, 2025

Science Museum of Minnesota

8:30 - 10:30 Session 1 Understanding NEAR Science: Building Self-Healing Communities

Learn how childhood adversity impacts our lives, the lives of our children, and the health of our communities. This presentation highlights key findings from the fields of neurobiology, epigenetics, epidemiology, and resilience research, demonstrating the impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on health and well-being and offering strategies to build resilience.

The goal of this presentation is to build a common understanding about NEAR Science as a starting point. All are welcome, and we encourage diverse cultural and identity groups to attend this presentation. Each of us hold wisdom to create healthier communities, and attendees are encouraged to think about how this information can be applied within their own family, work life, and community.

10:45 - 12:45 Session 2 Early Learning Scholarship Panel

Enjoy a moderated discussion about early learning scholarships. Panelists include participants from Minnesota's Department of Children Youth and Families; The Greater Twin Cities United Way, the state's central payer for scholarships; a scholarship recipient family; an early intervention representative, and a scholarship recipient school.

12:45 - 1:45 Lunch

1:45 - 3:45 Learn, Play, Breathe! Self Care Strategies for Early Childhood Educators

Explore strategies to reduce stress, take time to breathe, address compassion fatigue, and increase joy in your day-to-day work with children and families. Discover a deeper awareness of toxic stress and its impacts on the caregiver. Identify sources of support and develop a plan for simple self-care routines to enhance well-being and resilience.

Friday Keynote: Dr. Jodie Riek

Get Loud, Be Proud and PLAY!!



ECIPs, KCFs, SEPs, School Readiness... can we just say PLAY?? This keynote will focus on reclaiming play as the foundation of pedagogical practices in the field of early childhood, that is from birth to third grade, while still addressing the standardized requirements placed upon us as early childhood professionals. We will discuss how we can reimagine, redefine and reinstate play as core to not only our work, but more importantly to early care and learning experiences of young children. It's a child's right!

Dr. Jodie Riek has been involved in Early Childhood Education for more than thirty years, through a range of education environments including childcare, elementary education, vocational and higher education. Jodie began her career in Australia working in childcare centers for over ten years in a variety of teaching and management positions within the sector. Transitioning to public education in 2007, she fulfilled the roles of Early Years Classroom Teacher, Teacher-Librarian, Digital Pedagogy Coach, and Head of Mentoring. In 2012 she began working in higher education and is currently an Associate Professor and Program Coordinator of the Early Childhood Education program at the University of Minnesota Duluth. Her current research interest areas are restoring play pedagogies in early elementary classrooms and the impact of pedagogical learning communities on the practices of early childhood teachers.

Friday, January 31, 2025

Session A 10:00 - 11:30 am

Session A2 will be in room 2, and Session A3 will be in room 3, etc.

Session A2: The Connected Classroom: Better outcomes start with YOU

Presenter: Molly Breen

Audience: Infant Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators; General Audiences

Tips and tricks for behavioral challenges only take us so far in the classroom and beyond. In this session, participants will learn science-supported strategies for creating connected classroom communities and increasing their own wellbeing.

Session A3: Nature-Inspired Learning: Outdoor Emergent Curriculum for Young Children

Presenters: Sheila Williams Ridge, Ayuko Boomer

Audience: Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers

This session will explore how an emergent curriculum approach can foster meaningful learning in outdoor settings. Participants will discuss how the natural environment can be a rich and engaging setting for encouraging curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking in young children. We will share practical strategies for observing children's interests and using those insights to shape a responsive, play-based curriculum that grows with their developmental needs and discoveries. This session will also highlight the benefits of outdoor learning for social, emotional, and cognitive development. Through discussions and hands-on activities, participants will have the opportunity to explore ways they can integrate natural elements into their teaching practices while encouraging children to engage with the world around them.

Session A4: Supportive Coaching for Teachers

Presenters: Sharon Rosenberg-Scholl

Audience: Directors/Administrators

Our coaching program at our school sets up teachers up for success and helps them to meet their professional goals. Come learn what's working for us and how you can plan for teacher support and success at your school.



Friday, January 31, 2025

Session A5: Bilingual Nature Education Through a Cross-Cultural Lens: Practices from the Chinese American Community

Presenter: Peng Liu-Nelson

Audience: Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators; General Audiences

Minnesota ranks second in the United States for the number of nature education programs and has recently begun implementing legislation to support their development. However, despite policy support, we still face numerous challenges. According to a 2022 national survey only 5% of Asian children participate in early nature education programs. To date, Minnesota has not conducted a systematic survey on the participation of different ethnic groups in nature education programs. Our goal is to provide inspiration and practical advice for other similar bilingual nature education programs, community projects, and formal school programs (Pre-K to 3rd grade). We will focus on exploring how to establish and advance bilingual nature education programs across different cultural backgrounds, and how to localize and culturally integrate educational content in ways that adapt to local needs.

Session A6: Empowerment Through Understanding: Exploring the Trauma-Informed Care Section of the Knowledge and Competency Framework and its Impact on Executive Functioning

Presenter: Jamie Bonczyk and Trinette Potts

Audience: General Audiences

Gain insights into the components of Trauma Informed Care (TIC) , its relevance in early childhood education, and its profound impact on executive functioning. Explore practical strategies for fostering executive function skills and nurturing positive relationships among young children within educational settings, especially for those that have experienced traumatic events or experiences.

Session A7: Improving Minnesota's Draft Licensing Standards for Child Care Centers

Presenters: Brandon Tice

Audience: Directors/Administrators; Infant Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers; General Audiences;

Join the DHS Child Care Regulation Modernization team as they share some of the key updates DHS has made to the draft revised licensing standards which was in response to stakeholder feedback that the department received on the initial public draft during Summer 2024.

Participants can expect to learn about significant changes to the draft licensing standards and have an opportunity to provide input to inform further improvements to the draft licensing standards. We look forward to a collaborative discussion to improve childcare licensing standards for childcare centers in Minnesota.

Friday, January 31, 2025

Session A8: Desarrollo de un segundo idioma en Educación Temprana (Second language development in Early Childhood Education)

Presenters: Carolina DuFault

Audience: Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators; Infant Teachers; General Audiences
Language Track: Spanish

Join us for a session focused on developmentally appropriate practices in dual language and immersion settings aimed at fostering second language development in early childhood. Participants will gain valuable insights and practical strategies that can be easily integrated into daily interactions with children. Please note that this presentation will be conducted primarily in Spanish. Don't miss this opportunity to enhance your teaching practices and support bilingual development in young learners!



Session A9: The Power of Stories: Exploring Community Stories for Meaningful Solutions

Presenters: Molly Sullivan and Dustin Parks

Audience: General Audiences

This workshop will guide participants through the process that MN StoryCollective is using to gather community stories, facilitate community story analysis, and use these findings to inform the development of responsive policy and programs. We will collectively engage with MN StoryCollective data from over 1,100 submissions across Minnesota. Participants will leave the session with an understanding of the power of this community engagement model, new learning to inform their own work, and hopefully some new relationships.

Friday, January 31, 2025

Session B4: Three Keys to Successful Infant and Toddler Classrooms

Presenters: Elizabeth Hessler and Heather Charmoli

Audience: Infant Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Directors/Administrators; General Audiences

Learn how to set up effective environments, build healthy relationships, and set your routines and class schedules for success in infant and toddler classrooms. Leave with practical tips you can implement tomorrow.

Session B5: African Immigrant Parents' Engagement in their Young Children's Education

Presenters: Ariri Onchwari and Dr. Eve Metto

Audience: General Audiences; Infant Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators

In Minnesota, 26% of the immigrant population is from the continent of Africa. As is the case with BIPOC communities in general, the power of family engagement in the African immigrant population has not been sufficiently harnessed in the education system. This presentation is grounded in Black critical race theory that emphasizes the persistent global anti-blackness and how it pervasively often shows up in picture books and the education curriculum and system in general. Some of the content covered in the presentation will also apply to all black communities in America with different histories as well as other recent immigrants from different parts of the world. The presentation will offer a broad and inclusive definition of family engagement as critical in recognizing potential aspects of family engagement that are hidden in plain sight.

Specifically, I will unpack stereotypes about Africa and discuss how these stereotypes are received, passed on and inadvertently cause harm to all the children, regardless of their racial and other diversities. We will explore counter-narratives by exploring cultural capital, funds of knowledge and other strengths African immigrants possess and how they could be utilized to broaden the education experiences of all children. Exploring African art, music, storytelling, and critiquing picture books will be incorporated throughout the presentation. Participants will learn and explore ways of sharing such experiences with children as well as involving families



Friday, January 31, 2025

Session B6: Navigating Change in Early Childhood

Presenters: Jamie Bonczyk and Leo Howard III

Audience: Infant Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators; General Audiences

Explore the dynamic landscape of early childhood education and learn how to effectively manage change using the ADKAR (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement) Change Management Framework. This session will guide participants through practical strategies to implement changes at both the classroom and program levels. Gain insights from the 80x3 initiative, which aims to ensure every child in Minnesota receives trauma-sensitive care during the critical first three years of life. Join us to enhance your ability to support and adapt to the evolving needs of early childhood education.

Session B7: Young Hearts Open Minds: Helping Children Thrive in a Racially Diverse World

Presenters: Marie Lister

Audience: Infant Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators; General Audiences

Our young children today will soon be tomorrow's leaders. They will work and live with an increasingly rich diversity of people. This session will focus on how early childhood educators can use best practices and science backed strategies to prevent the development of bias, in particular racial bias. Our goal is to help educators, families, and children learn to appreciate and embrace differences so they can have greater academic, social, and career success.

Session B8: Self-Care in Nature

Presenters: Karen Walburg

Audience: General Audiences

Come together to explore the concept of Self-Care in Nature on personal, professional, organizational and community levels. Could the concept reach even further?

As we explore and learn together we will experience a Self-Care time in Nature and create a memento to use now and in the future.

Session B9: DHS Licensed Child Care Centers - Navigating Child Care Center Licensing Staffing Requirements with Confidence

Presenters: Lisa Mills and Rena Henjum

Audience: General Audiences; Directors/Administrators

This presentation will provide a comprehensive understanding of child care center staffing requirements in compliance with Minnesota DHS licensing standards. Attendees will gain strategic insights into ways licensing is in place to support programs and their workforce as they work to meet the needs of the children in care. Additionally, DHS staff will also present information on potential 2025 legislative proposals, including Child Care and Development Fund federal compliance and technical corrections.



Friday, January 31, 2025

Session C 2:30 - 4:00 pm

Session C1: Earn Your Early Childhood Award in English OR Spanish**

Presenters: Hope Doerner & Carolina DuFault

Audience: Infant Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators; General Audiences; Minneapolis College is now offering courses in English OR Spanish. You can currently earn an 18-credit certificate or a 33-credit diploma in either language. We are working to also add the 60-Associate in Applied Science (AAS) in Spanish and hope to have that within the next 2 years. The AAS degree along with our Transfer Pathway AS are available in English. Come learn about the many scholarship and grant opportunities to pay for your college education and learn more about the language options at our campus. The session will be in English and Spanish!



Session C2: It's All About the Brain! Using Music to Unlock Young Brains for Reading

Presenter: Ann Kay

Audience: Infant Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators; General Audiences
Have fun singing, playing singing games, and learning how to help children develop basic music skills. No prior music training is necessary. Learn about neuroscientific research that has revealed that auditory processing is the key to language and literacy. Singing and basic music skills are primary ways to develop the brain's auditory processing, auditory memory, phonological awareness, and beat synchronization. Note: children who cannot pat a steady beat are likely to struggle with reading!

Session C3: Jump Into Child Care: A Grassroots Solution to Building Workforce Capacity

Presenters: Dr. Jodie Riek & Peg Johnson

Audience: General Audiences; Directors/Administrators

In 2022, a small group of committed professionals from Duluth, Minnesota banded together to find a solution to the ongoing issue of the lack of people entering the field of early childhood and how this was impacting the availability of childcare placements, not only in centers, but also in family childcare as well. The Jump into Child Care (JICC) project is a special project arising from the work of the local Child Care Talent Pipeline Workgroup which is facilitated in partnership by the Northspan, a private non-profit community development service, and the Northland Foundation, a place-based, publicly supported foundation. This session will discuss the Jump into Child Care process from inception to present day and future plans; including successes, challenges, and the need to be flexible. The aim of the session is to share and advocate for communities to start their own grassroots initiatives to address the child care workforce issue.

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Session C4: Playful Learning, Brain Development and Environment Design - It's more than where to put the furniture.

Presenters: Dr. Kathryn Murray

Audience: Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators

This session will provide participants with an understanding of three levels of the brain, Survival, Emotional and Thinking that underpin the Brain-SET Environments Formula. Using practical examples and photos to explain the 3 Pillars of Design and 16 Design Elements we will make connections between the classroom environment, the needs of the developing brain, playful learning, and the 23 Human Skills required for successful adulting. Practical strategies to implement small but significant changes in the classroom will be described. Participants will leave the session with a plan for their classroom, a feeling of empowerment and an understanding how the environment can add to classroom well-being.

Session C5: Nurturing Connections: Strategies for Working with West African Families and Building Strong Caregiver-Parent-Child Relationships

Presenter: Jamesetta Ross Diggs

Audience: Infant Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators

This interactive session invites caregivers and program managers to engage deeply with the West African culture and heritage, offering a closer look into the dynamics of everyday family life and the unique aspects of child-development within these communities. By fostering an understanding of cultural values, caregivers will learn how to support children's sense of belonging and identity within their learning spaces. The goal is to equip early educators with culturally responsive tools to create inclusive learning environments that celebrate all children and foster meaningful connections with families.

Session C6: Empowering Spaces: Considerations for a Dynamic Work Environment

Presenters: Vicki Filteau

Audience: Infant Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators; General Audiences

Every day, we work so hard to connect with and nurture our children while we create bridges with families to facilitate safe, nurturing, and stimulating environments for children and families. Well, what about US? What about our environment? Do we feel safe? Nurtured? Connected? Do we have opportunities to grow? To thrive? This session focuses on what we need to create a truly empowering space and ideas to overcome typical workplace struggles, which can also be applied to personal lives as well. We will explore an overview of dynamic considerations, including our own identity and needs, styles of interaction, conflict resolution ideas, personal and team dynamics, and how to give feedback. Strategies will be discussed and shared that can help achieve satisfaction and fulfillment, both personally and professionally. Participants will have an opportunity to reflect on who they are and how to advocate for needs in an effective way. This session is also a wonderful reflection tool to think about your own work environment- what is working or what can be changed in terms of communication, relationship-building, or structure to create and maintain an Empowering Space.

Friday, January 31, 2025

Session C7: Great Start Compensation Support Payment Program: Updates and Feedback

Presenters: Roz Zuest, Dana Ellingson, Allegra Montanari, Alex Hassan

Audience: Directors/Administrators; General Audiences

Since launching in October 2023, the Great Start Compensation Support Payment Program Team has been working hard to share transparent updates and gather input directly from you, our incredible child care workforce. Come hear details about what's coming in the future like the Use of Funds Report, digital child enrollment and attendance, and taking advantage of receiving your payments via direct deposit. We are committed to making this program effective, efficient, and equitable, so bring your questions and feedback about the program so we can continue designing together.

Session C8: Cultural Resilience and Ethical Emotional Practices: Integrating Chakras and Neurochemicals in SEL

Presenter: Tascha Just

Audience: Directors/Administrators; General Audiences

This workshop explores global aspects of shame, resilience, and neurochemical responses, providing professionals with practical strategies. Participants will gain insights into the cultural and developmental dimensions of shame, coupled with evidence-based techniques to foster resilience and mitigate shame across various settings. The workshop integrates discussions, theoretical knowledge, and real-world application, enabling participants to earn continuing education credits, including those focused on ethics and cultural competency.

The central theme is understanding neurochemical responses linked to shame and resilience. Participants will explore how activities affecting dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin, endorphins, and cortisol influence emotional regulation and resilience. Alongside theoretical concepts, attendees will be equipped with practical tools and strategies that can be immediately applied in their professional practice. The workshop will provide quick-reference strategies for de-escalation, calming, and resilience-building.



Session C9: Empowering Generational Greatness – EGG Toolkit for the Preschool Classroom

Presenters: Trinette Potts & John Everett Till

Audience: Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators; General Audiences

Discover why Empowering Generational Greatness, the proven toolkit for building lifelong resilience and focus, is developmentally appropriate for 3 to 5-year-olds. Develop an understanding of Executive Function skills and Self-Regulation skills and how these skills buffer against ACEs, close opportunity gaps, and boost K-readiness by using the latest brain research and application in the classroom. Articulate the importance of resilience and identify activities and experiences that help children be resilient.

Saturday, February 1, 2025

Session D: 8:00 - 10:00 AM

Session D2: Ditch the Worksheet! Turning Worksheets into Play-Based Learning Experiences for Young Children

Presenters: Dawnita Gallo and Ann Sandeen

Audience: Preschool Teachers

The NAEYC publication, *Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs*, Fourth Edition, identifies nine Principles of Child Development and Learning and Implications that Inform Practice to guide the work of early childhood education professionals. The third principle states, "Play promotes joyful learning that fosters self-regulation, language, cognitive, and social competencies as well as content knowledge across disciplines. Play is essential for all children, birth through age 8." During this workshop, participants will discuss and brainstorm ways to turn a worksheet into a play-based learning experience.

D3: Synchronize to Optimize

Presenter: Cindy Goldade

Audience: General Audiences; Directors/Administrators; Preschool Teachers

Stress impacts one's ability to be fully present, focused, and connected. Identify stress triggers and how one's sensory intake changes in stress. Experience Brain Gym® movements to move through stress and into PACE—positive, active, clear, and energetic—while presenting. This session will help focus, organization, comprehension, coordination, memory, social, and communication skills so that learning can be optimized!

D4: Integrating Anti-Bias into Our Thinking and Practice

Presenter: Carrie Zelin Johnson

Audience: General Audiences

Integrating Anti-Bias Education is the responsibility of classroom staff and early childhood program leadership alike. Through video vignette examples and reflective discussions, participants will learn how to relate positive cultural messages about children from a variety of backgrounds and engage families in conversations to determine what types of learning activities would reinforce the home-school connection. This session provides a practical and integrated framework for anti-bias education. Discussion topics include the diversity education continuum, facilitating conversations with children about identity development, and making decisions about culturally responsive environments and curriculum experiences.



Saturday, February 1, 2025

Session D5: Navigating Conflict

Presenters: Heather Charmoli

Audience: General Teachers

Explore conflict styles, when to use them, and some step-by-step conflict resolution action plans. Learn how to redirect conversations are not headed down a productive path to improve your communication skills. This class improves professionalism (KCF-VI).

Session E: 10:15 - 12:15 PM

Session E2: Parenting Parents

Presenter: Julie Koritz

Audience: Infant Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators; General Audiences

Explore how to effectively communicate with parents when dealing with a variety of issues. Some of the topics that will be examined are: disciplining kids, nutrition, sleep issues, etc. Recognize different ways to talk to parents when dealing with touchy topics such as biting, hitting, picking their children up late, parents who are dissatisfied with your care and discussing a child with a special need. This information will be presented to help professionals communicate in a positive way, which will help parents be more open to working together with providers to resolve any conflict that may arise.

Session E3: Brain Development: Seeing and Supporting Children's Active Bodies

Presenter: Melissa Donovan

Audience: Preschool Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Infant Teachers;

This course supports teachers in creating learning environments that promote the development of children's large motor skills. It provides high-quality training for adult learners, centered on three key principles: relevance, responsiveness, and reflection. The course engages learners by offering content tailored to their professional needs, encouraging active participation, and fostering self-reflection to enhance learning retention and application.

Session E4: Kita Lessons for American Preschools

Presenter: Alyssa Wilt

Audience: Preschool Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Infant Teachers

During the summer of 2024, the presenters traveled to Germany to study German early childhood centers. Presenters will share an overview of practices in German preschools and how they can be implemented in American early childhood classrooms in developmentally appropriate ways. They will highlight positive experiences and practices used that were observed. Attendees will learn about different types of teaching styles from Germany, be allowed to reflect on current practices used in their rooms, and consider ways they can adapt their practices to best support children.



Saturday, February 1, 2025

Session E5: Building Relationships for Program Success and Harmony

Presenter: Heather Charmoli

Audience: General Audiences

Learn eight building blocks of successful relationships and how they impact interactions. Explore boundaries, safety, listening, and more to be your best in relationships. Discuss opportunities to build relationships with current and future children, families, staff, and partners/vendors of your program. We will troubleshoot some current relationship challenges participants are experiencing.



Session F: 10:15 - 12:15 PM

Session F2: Social and Emotional Development During Infancy and Toddlerhood

Presenter: Julie Koritz

Audience: Infant Teachers; Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers; Directors/Administrators; General Audiences

This class will examine some of the different stages of social and emotional development during infancy and toddlerhood. Some of the topics that will be covered are: trust vs. mistrust, autonomy and independence vs. shame and doubt, communication with the baby, smiling, stranger anxiety, social referencing, attachment and peer relations. The class will also cover various ways to enhance infants and toddler's social emotional development through a variety of activities.

Session F3: Let's Get Cooking: Tools & Recipes for Seasonal Cooking with Young Children

Presenter: Sheila Williams Ridge and Britney Stark

Audience: Toddler Teachers; Preschool Teachers;

In this interactive session, we will explore the joy and benefits of seasonal cooking with young children ages 2-5 including language development, math, fine motor skills, and more. Participants will learn how to prepare and implement cooking experiences that foster curiosity, appreciation, and a love for healthy food. We will discuss strategies for connecting cooking activities to your curriculum areas of nutrition, sustainability, and cultural diversity. We will also share age-appropriate options for tools and recipes, and tips for involving children, emphasizing the importance of using seasonal ingredients.

Saturday, February 1, 2025

Session F4: Early Childhood Screening: What's It All About

Presenter: Vicki Filteau

Audience: Toddler Teachers;Preschool Teachers;Directors/Administrators;General Audiences;Infant Teachers;
This session provides a detailed explanation of the screening process- what it is, the purpose of screening and why it is important, who can provide screening, the components of the process, and our role in helping families and promoting screening. Discussion is welcomed regarding ideas for screening recruitment, barriers, and intervention.

Session F5: Courageous Conversations: Discussing A Child's Development with Families

Presenter: Carrie Zelin Johnson

Audience: Infant Teachers;Toddler Teachers;Directors/Administrators;General Audiences;
Communicating with families when there are concerns about their child's development requires careful planning and preparation. Identify best practices for building cultural competency in partnerships with families and a strategy to promote healthy child development. Model how positive parent-child interactions can foster warm and nurturing relationships within the family structure. Utilize relationship-based and reflective practice to engage parents and caregivers in courageous conversations that will lead to better outcomes for children experiencing developmental concerns.



Meet the Presenters:



Molly Breen (A2)

Molly Breen (MA, ECE) has worked with kids and families for two decades as an educator, an administrator, and a trainer. A believer in lifelong learning, her heart is in early childhood where the seeds of curiosity, character, and community are planted. Through her work as a practitioner in the classroom with children, Molly has developed a broad expertise in curriculum development and instruction, behavior guidance, and social-emotional learning. In her role as a program director, she has created innovative approaches to professional and program development, family engagement, and community outreach. She believes working with children and families has the potential to change the world!

Sheila Williams Ridge (A3, F4)

Sheila Williams Ridge is the Director of the University of Minnesota Child Development Laboratory School. She has a BA in Biology, an MA in Education, and an Ed D in Education Leadership. She is also co-author of the book, *Nature-Based Learning for Young Children: Anytime, Anywhere, on Any Budget*, published by Redleaf Press, and several other publications on nature-based learning. She is passionate about encouraging nature-based play and the lasting developmental benefits of a relationship between children and nature.

Ayuko Boomer (A3)

EdD., Hamline University. Minnesota Teaching License in ECE, Elementary Education, and Parent Education. Ayuko Uezu Boomer has worked in the early childhood education field since 2001. She is a toddler teacher and mentors and supervises teacher candidates at the Child Development Laboratory School (CDLS). She is also a parent educator serving families at the CDLS.

Sharon Rosenberg-Scholl (A4)

Sharon Rosenberg-Scholl has been an educator for over 30 years and is the director of Temple Israel Early Childhood Center, a Reggio-inspired, diverse, Jewish preschool in Minneapolis.

Peng Liu-Nelson (A5)

Peng Liu-Nelson is a co-founder of ZIRAN, PhD student of Culture and Teaching at the University of Minnesota, and a former Waldorf early childhood teacher and immersion teacher.

Grace Li (A5)

Co-founder, Co-president of ZIRAN (Zone for Integrated Resources and Alliances with Nature): a grassroots environmental nonprofit dedicated to uniting communities, experts, and social innovators to drive positive change for a healthier, more sustainable future. She is a designer and business strategist, passionate about leveraging marketing and innovation strategies to advance climate action and sustainability initiatives.

Jamie Bonczyk (A6, B6)

Jamie Bonczyk (she/her) lives with her family in Richfield, Minnesota, where she works with Greater Twin Cities United Way as a Program Officer for “80x3: Resilient from the Start” – an innovative region-wide initiative to increase capacity to provide trauma-sensitive early child care in a safe, stable environment that supports child resilience (80x3.org). She comes to this work as an awarded early childhood education leader known for creating social-impact networks, change initiatives, and partnerships that create sustainable health and education outcomes for children, families, and educators. Jamie is a systems-level thinker adept at translating vision and strategy into operational plans.

Trinette Potts (A6, C9)

Trinette Potts, EGG Project Manager, is responsible for overseeing efforts to scale the EGG Toolkit curriculum, training, and implementation, engaging children and caregivers statewide. She is an accomplished professional with demonstrated success in developing and implementing strategic approaches to drive market growth and bottom-line profitability. With over 24 years in the early childhood field, she has worn many hats, starting in direct care as a Child Care Business Owner. She has also served as a Child Care Center Director, Child Care Business Coordinator, Business Development Specialist, Financial Business Professional, Business Consultant, approved Trainer and Course Writer within the MN State Professional Development System, and Professional Development Specialist for The Council of Professional Recognition.

Brandon Tice (A7)

Brandon Tice is a policy professional with over 10 years of experience working to improve education, youth development, and child care policies. Prior to his role at DHS, he worked to improve grant management and communications processes at the Minnesota Department of Education and led policy and communications work for the nonprofit advocacy group Ignite Afterschool as well. In his free time, Brandon enjoys going on runs, reading great books (Middlemarch is his current read!) and spending time with his wife Sarah and two-year old daughter Jane.

Carolina DuFault (A8, C1)

Carolina DuFault is the current Bilingual Early Childhood Education Faculty at Minneapolis College, where she teaches courses in both Spanish and English. She previously served as the District Program Facilitator for the Department of Early Childhood at Minneapolis Public Schools. More recently, she was the President of the Minnesota Reading Association and a former board member at The Works Museum.

In her current role, Carolina teaches future Early Childhood Educators, utilizing her bilingual skills to instruct on Early Childhood subjects. She integrates professional development, develops and implements curriculum and instruction, and advises students on pathways to career success. A passionate advocate for Early Childhood Education and Second Language Education, she came to the United States through the Amity Exchange Program.

With 20 years of experience as a bilingual Early Childhood Educator across all ECE grades and bilingual settings, Carolina has been recognized with the Excellence in Child-Centered Teaching Award in 2014 from Minnetonka Public Schools. She holds a B.A. in Early Childhood Education from the Catholic University of Chile, an M.A. in Bilingual Education from the Central University of Chile, and a Dual Language and Immersion degree from the University of Minnesota. Currently, she is pursuing her Doctorate in Higher Education at St. Cloud State University.

Molly Sullivan (A9)

Molly Sullivan is the Manager of MN StoryCollective for the State of Minnesota. The goals of MN StoryCollective are to facilitate a community feedback loop and provide a regular, flexible source of qualitative information, including diverse community stories so that State programs, policies, and practices better meet the needs of families. Molly grew up in New York and attended NYU. After graduating, she worked for Transportation Alternatives and the New York Institute for the Humanities. She moved to Minnesota to attend the Humphrey School and during her time in graduate school, she co-founded TerraLuna Collaborative, a cooperatively-owned evaluation firm. Upon graduation, she went on to work for the Human Capital Research Collaborative and then Minneapolis Public Schools where she launched the Grow Your Own program to diversify the teaching workforce. Immediately prior to joining MN StoryCollective, she was the Director of National Initiatives at First Children's Finance. Molly is an active volunteer with several organizations in the Twin Cities. You can often find Molly hiking with her family, baking cakes, or checking out a huge stack of library books.

Dustin Parks (A9)

Dustin Parks loves stories, data, and the outdoors. He currently works as the Engagement Lead for MN StoryCollective. This work especially meaningful, as many of the programs and services that MN StoryCollective aims to inform have made an impact on his own life, both as a child and adult. Before MN StoryCollective, Dustin led research projects at NewPublica, including engagements for clients such as Little Moments Count, MinneMinds, the Redleaf Center for Family Health, and the Hunger-Free Schools Campaign. Other previous experience includes a Fulbright Research Scholarship (2018, Peru). In his free time, he enjoys fixing and riding bicycles, playing music, and camping.

Melissa Donovan (B1, E4)

With almost two decades of early-care workforce experience, Melissa Donovan brings a wealth of expertise to her various roles. Throughout her career, she has served as a Family Child Care Provider, Trainer, Center Director, and has been actively involved in MnAEYC as the board president. She is also an Expert Trainer and Course Writer through Achieve-MNCPD.

Melissa's educational qualifications include a master's degree in Early Childhood Education, and she is currently pursuing a graduate certificate in infant and early childhood mental health. In her current capacity, she serves as the Training Specialist at the Center for Early Education and Development (CEED) at the University of Minnesota, on the TARSS project.

Lucy Arias (B2)

Lucy Arias is the MDE's Early Education Language and Literacy Specialist. Her career in early childhood spans 30 years and includes being a classroom teacher, program director, researcher, family educator, and advocate.

Kelly Kazeck (B2)

Kelly Kazeck recently transitioned from the MDE to the new Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) as the Early Childhood Workforce Collaboration Specialist in the Early Learning Services division. Kelly began her career in early childhood almost 30 years ago as a Family, Friend, and Neighbor provider and then a Licensed Family Child Care provider. Kelly holds a Minnesota birth to grade three teaching license and has taught in private and public early childhood programs, including Early Childhood Family Education and School Readiness. Prior to state work, Kelly was the Early Childhood Program Coordinator for the Big Lake Public School District. Kelly is excited to be working at the state level to support the early childhood workforce across Minnesota through various workforce efforts.

Amy Warzybok (B3)

Amy has her M.A. in Early Childhood Education from Sonoma State University and her B.S. in Business from the University of Minnesota. Before Dodge, Amy taught preschool using a Reggio Emilia approach, managed family, preschool, and camp programs in nature and environmental centers, and was an Adjunct Child Development Professor.

Elizabeth Hessler (B4)

Since October 2023 Elizabeth has been working as a Community Engagement Coordinator at Think Small, while working on her B.S. in Special and Regular Early Childhood Education at UW-Whitewater. She has her A.A.S. in Early Childhood Education from Madison College, in Madison, Wisconsin, where she worked in infant and toddler classrooms for 5 years.

Heather Charmoli (B4, D4, E4)

Heather Charmoli, M.A. (She/Her) is the new Professional Development Services Coordinator. She is also Owner of Charmoli Training & Consulting where she provides professional development and consulting services for the early childhood field. Heather has a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Northern State University in Aberdeen, SD, and a master's degree in educational leadership from St. Mary's University of Minneapolis. She worked with MnAEYC for a couple of years and spent 17 years in early childhood direct care roles including director, assistant director, and teacher. She serves on the advisory group for United Way's 80x3 initiative, is a MnAEYC Conference planning committee member, and is a CARE Fellow alum.

Ariri Onchwari (B5)

Dr. Ariri Onchwari is a first generation immigrant from Africa, who brings to this presentation her lived experience as a mother of black children in Minnesota, and her expertise as an early childhood teacher educator and scholar. Dr Onchwari has been an early childhood educator for over 20 years, and taught several courses at the University of Minnesota Duluth, and in Kenya. Her research and service is grounded in culturally responsive practices. Her diversity work at the university and community has extended beyond the classroom, and has included doing parenting groups with African immigrant parents in Duluth, and co-founding a robust mentoring program for Employees of Color and American Indians at UMD.

Her current areas of research and service include: African immigrants' adjustment to the education system, engaging teacher candidates in antiracist praxis, and, using collaborative study groups to engage families and teachers in exploring antiracist pedagogy.

Dr. Eve Metto (B5)

Dr. Eve Metto is a first-generation immigrant from Kenya and is an assistant professor in the Chemistry and Biochemistry department at University of Minnesota Duluth. Dr. Metto uses stories from her culture to break down chemistry concepts to her diverse students, as well as her young daughters. As a chemistry enthusiast and engaged parent, Dr Metto has volunteered both in her children's school and in the community, to demonstrate basic chemical reactions and processes, using simple household and kitchen materials. She uses such opportunities to introduce children to some materials that represent her culture. Dr Metto will also share strategies she uses to ground her children in their culture with the goal of giving ideas for the classrooms.

Leo Howard III (B6)

Leo Howard III serves as the Program Manager for Greater Twin Cities United Way's 80x3: Resilient from the Start initiative and an adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota. His academic background includes a Master's degree in Youth Development Leadership, complemented by a wealth of experience in youth and community engagement. He is deeply committed to empowering the youngest learners and those doing the transformative work of shaping and guiding them.

Marie Lister (B7)

Marie Lister graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2012 with a Masters of Education and a teaching license in Early Childhood and Early Childhood Special Education. Ms. Lister has worked in the field of early childhood education for 18 years and is currently a preschool teacher and the Director of Teaching and Research at the Childhood Development Center at the University of Minnesota. In addition to her work for the UofM, Ms. Lister is a Coach and Facilitator for the program Before Racism, where she supports early childhood teachers in their efforts to prevent the development of bias in young children. Ms. Lister is passionate about supporting the social and emotional development of young children through and anti-bias lens and helping families and communities access the resources they need to ensure that quality early childhood education is accessible to all.

Lisa Mills (B9)

Lisa Mills | Child Care Center Training Specialist, Licensing Division

Rena Henjum (B9)

Rena Henjum | Child Care Center Training Specialist, Licensing Division

Hope Doerner (C1)

Hope Doerner has been a faculty in Early Childhood Education since 2003 at Minneapolis College. Her educational background is a BS in Sociology minor in Psychology, a Master of Art in Business Management and a Master of Art in Education focusing on Early Childhood. She has been in the Early Childhood field for over 35 years. She has field experience with children from birth to age 12 as a direct educator and as a program director.

She is passionate about creative positive culturally responsive environments for children to thrive and develop at their own pace and tries to model that in her college courses. To do that, she continues to stay connected with colleagues in the field and participates in many statewide activities to make sure she is bringing the most current information to her college classrooms. She is a fierce advocate for the ECE field and works tirelessly to find ways to honor past work and credentials in addition to finding funding for tuition to eliminate any hardship for educators to earn a college award. As the only full-time faculty in the Early Childhood Education Department at her college, she was pivotal to the development and implementation of the Spanish track at the college. She was a part of the interview team that located and hired the bilingual faculty that currently teaches the courses.





Ann Kay (C2)

Ann C. Kay is the education coordinator for the Rock 'n' Read Project, a MN nonprofit dedicated to using singing to unlock children's potential for reading and learning. She created A Song a Day: Brain Prep for Pre-Readers, 50 sequenced lessons for PreK and K teachers that help children develop basic music skills to enable auditory processing, the key to proficient reading. Formerly, Ann was an elementary music teacher, choir director, and instructor of music and classroom teachers. She was also associate director of graduate music education at the University of St. Thomas where she founded, directed, and instructed teachers in the Kodály certification program for 18 years.

Peg Johnson (C3)

Peg Johnson has been involved in child and family care for almost three decades, having been a founder and center director in Duluth, Minnesota of a program focusing on supporting and caring for not only the child, but their families also. Her work was recognized by the Minneapolis-based McKnight Foundation in 2010 when she was recognized with the Virginia McKnight Binger Awards in Human Service. Peg continues to serve the profession by working as an early childhood consultant in the northern Minnesota area to support directors and staff in child care services. She also serves as a substitute child care teacher in the Duluth area and is the Jump Into Child Care initiative coordinator and co-founder.

Dr. Kathryn Murray (C4)

Dr Kathryn Murray is passionate about creating opportunities to give children the best possible start in life. She is proud to be the founder of Future Strong Education Consultancy, based in Australia. She is the creator of the original Brain-SET Environments Formula™, an early childhood pedagogy grounded in research and over 40 years of personal experience in the education field. Kathryn is an international environment design expert, an award-winning early childhood education specialist, highly sought-after Keynote speaker and workshop facilitator. She is a mentor, coach, and author. She has written numerous articles on productive environments, teaching practices, wellbeing, and parenting. Kathryn works globally and is grateful to have had the opportunity to support children, educators, teams, leaders and parents to be all they can be.

Jamesetta Diggs (C5)

Jamesetta Ross Diggs is the founder of Social Learning For Littles, a certified early childhood educator, and a parent coach dedicated to equipping parents and caregivers to support young children's personal and social development. With her experience as a preschool teacher, family educator, and community organizer, she advocates for the healthy development of young children and the well-being of their families. Her work emphasizes empowering families with the tools to foster nurturing and resilient environments that allow children to thrive.



Vicki Filteau (C6, F5)

Vicki Filteau is a dynamic facilitator who brings authenticity, sparkling energy, space for learning community discussion, and extensive experience to the table. Vicki has worked in the field of education and serving others for over 25 years in various roles in family childcare, center programs, Head Start, schools, group homes, and as a Parent Aware/ CLASS/Inclusion coach. Her goals are to provide you with practical tools, strategies, and ideas, along with a sense of CONNECTION and INSPIRATION as we come together to discuss ideas for our shared dedication to children and families. In terms of the Empowering Spaces session, Vicki has worked in numerous capacities from entry-level to supervisory positions, in very diverse environments, so she can provide rich information for a quality experience in her session. Her areas of passion and expertise cover a wide range of interests including community connection, social and emotional development, understanding Autism, behavioral guidance, cultural literacy, advocacy, inclusion, self-care, and wellness. In her spare time, Vicki enjoys researching, crafting, enjoying the outdoors, taking pictures, travelling, and spending time with friends and family. Vicki lives in the Apple Valley/ South Metro area with her husband and son, and travels throughout the state to facilitate training, assist people with their CDAs, and consults regarding a variety of needs.

Roz Zuest (C7)

Roz Zuest, Supervisor, Great Start Compensation Support Payment Program at the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF): Roz has been serving in the realm of early childhood care and education since the 1990s in a variety of roles, dedicating much of her focus to supporting the adults doing the frontline work with children and their families. Currently, Roz serves as the supervisor for the Great Start Compensation Support Payment Program where effectiveness, efficiency, and equity are centered to increase compensation for our valued early educators.

Dana Ellingson(C7)

Dana Ellingson, Specialist, Great Start Compensation Support Payment Program at the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF): Dana brings close to 30 years of experience in early childhood care and education, passionately supporting those who care for and offer enriching learning experiences to Minnesota's youngest learners. In her current role, Dana finds joy in working as a Program Specialist on the Great Start Compensation team, increasing compensation to dedicated child care providers.

Allegra Montanari (C7)

Allegra Montanari, Change and Learning Lead at Slalom: Allegra works to center people at every step of technological development. Since July 2023, she has been partnering with the State of Minnesota's Department of Youth, Children, and Families to support change and communications for the Great Start Compensation application feature in the Provider Hub. Allegra works across the diverse landscape at the State of Minnesota with key partners so that people feel informed and supported as the Great Start Compensation team strives to meet its goals.

Alex Hassan (C7)

Alex Hassan, Change Lead at Slalom: Alex has over a decade of experience as a change enablement leader. For the last year and a half, she has been partnering with the State of Minnesota's Department of Youth, Children, and Families on the development and implementation of the Enrollment & Attendance feature in the Provider Hub. Her primary focus has been collaborating with the State of Minnesota to build holistic engagement, feedback, and communication strategies that will support providers and State of Minnesota teams.

Tascha Just (C8)

Tascha Just, Ed.S, NCSP, is an accomplished school psychologist and the founder of SEL Academy. As the President-Elect of the Minnesota School Psychologists Association (MSPA), she brings over 20 years of expertise in transforming educational environments and promoting social-emotional learning.

With ancestry spanning three continents and a childhood divided between small towns and urban America, Tascha draws from a rich tapestry of cultural experiences and brings a unique perspective to her work. Her mission is to foster resilience through collaborative education and acceptance, empowering neurodiverse and highly sensitive individuals to find balance and peace amid life's highs and lows.

John Everett Till (C9)

John Everett Till, Chief Operating Officer at The Family Partnership, is responsible for all program areas, and leads two-generation (2Gen) and brain science-informed program and policy strategies at The Family Partnership in Minneapolis, Minnesota. John holds an M.S. in Biological Sciences; his research was on the neuroscience of sensory and cognitive development in children. He is also the EGG Enterprise Manager at TFP.

Since 2017, John has led efforts to develop and scale EGG Toolkit, a novel whole family approach to boost executive functioning and school readiness with preschool children and their parents, as well as with parents in home visiting programs and parenting groups. In 2019, Harvard Center on the Developing Child – Frontiers of Innovation selected EGG for a planning grant for national replication and scaling, followed by an implementation grant in 2020-2021. EGG has now been piloted in five states, and in the fall of 2021 won Minnesota Council of Nonprofits' Innovation Prize.

In March 2023, John completed a Promising Ventures Fellowship for EGG with Promise Venture Studio, an organization established to incubate, foster, and scale innovations in the early childhood field, and was also a participant in the Gates Foundation's Measures for Early Success initiative, an effort to advance equity-centered measurement of executive functioning and school readiness. In 2024-2025, John is scaling EGG statewide in Minnesota with support from a legislative appropriation.

Dawnita Gallo (D1)

Dawnita Gallo, Ph.D. has 25+ years working in the field of early childhood education, including as a classroom teacher and director. At present Dr. Gallo is an early childhood education faculty at Minnesota State University Moorhead.

Ann Sandeen (D1)

Ann Sandeen has been working in early childhood education for three years, gaining experience with infants through preschoolers. A recent graduate of Minnesota State University Moorhead, Ann holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood education. She is currently working as a long-term substitute in a preschool classroom and is excited to continue her journey in the field, pursuing her passion for providing high-quality early childhood education.

Cindy Goldade (D2)

UWRF Faculty, Cindy Goldade holds a masters in Montessori and a bachelors in preschool through grade six. Cindy taught 3-6 year-olds at her school in Ham Lake, Minnesota for ten years before homeschooling her own children. She wrote Keys to Literacy and continues to teach the Montessori Literacy Foundations course at UWRF. She teaches locally and around the world as a Course Writer and Master Trainer for MN ACHIEVE, International Faculty for Brain Gym®, tutor for homeschool cooperatives, and more.

Carrie Zelin Johnson (D3, F6)

Carrie is a program officer on the community impact team, where she drives education outcomes and leads the Start Early Funders Coalition and the Parent and Provider Advisory group. She is working to build a community where all people thrive regardless of income, race, or place. Carrie has worked in the early childhood field for more than 30 years and a variety of different positions leading to a variety of perspectives on working with young children.

Julie Koritz (E3, F3)

Julie Koritz is an early childhood specialist who has over 35 years of experience working with families and young children. Her work has focused on working with diverse families who have multiple risk factors. She has her M.Ed in Family Education, her undergraduate degree in Child and Family Studies and her Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement. Some of her experience includes: training early childhood professionals, facilitating parenting groups and parent-child interaction and devising and teaching classes,

Alyssa Wilt (E6)

M.Ed., Minnesota Teaching License in ECE/Elementary Education Alyssa Wilt is currently a preschool teacher and mentor for student teachers at the University of Minnesota Child Development Lab School. She is also an instructor in the EC program at the University of Minnesota. She has worked in the early childhood field since 2016.

TaylorMae Ippolito (E6)

M.Ed Early Childhood Education, Minnesota Teaching License in ECE/Elementary Education TaylorMae Ippolito is a current toddler teacher and mentor for student teachers at the University of Minnesota Child Development Laboratory School. They have worked in the early childhood field since 2020.

Britney Stark (F4)

Britney Stark is an Administrator and Educator at the University of MN Child Development Laboratory School. She has over 20 years of experience as an early childhood educator with a focus on nature and environmental early childhood education and leads the school's nutrition program.

