



February 1-3  
2024



FEATURING PRE-CONFERENCE  
EVENT WINTER LEADERSHIP  
INSTITUTE AT THE SCIENCE  
MUSEUM OF MINNESOTA



**2024**  
**mnaeyc**

Minnesota Association for the  
Education of Young Children

# ANNUAL STATE CONFERENCE

REGISTRATION  
OPEN 11/15

**RiverCentre**  
**St. Paul, MN**



**KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**

**FRIDAY: STEVE GROSS**

LIFE IS GOOD PLAYMAKERS

**SATURDAY: DIANNE HAULCY**

THE FAMILY PARTNERSHIP



# Location

MnAEYC's Annual Conference will be held February 2-3, 2024 at the RiverCentre St. Paul

175 West Kellogg Boulevard

St. Paul, MN 55102

Winter Leadership Institute is a pre-conference event held February 1, 2024 at the

Science Museum of Minnesota

120 Kellogg Boulevard

St. Paul, MN 55102

# Fees

<b>Membership Level &amp; Non-Member Rates</b>	<b>Winter Leadership Institute Only</b>	<b>Friday OR Saturday</b>	<b>2 Day Rate</b>	<b>3 Day Rate</b>
<b>Premium Level Members</b>	\$115	\$165	\$255	\$335
<b>Standard, Entry or Family Level Members</b>	\$125	\$175	\$310	\$410
<b>Non-Member Rates</b>	\$130	\$210	\$320	\$425

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

# Scholarship Information

MnAEYC is Partnering with the Greater Twin Cities United Way to give a number of Scholarships to this conference. For more information or to apply, 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 \$129 per night. Visit our website for the reservation link.

# Event Schedules

Winter Leadership Institute  
Science Museum of Minnesota  
Thursday 2/1/2024

8:30-9:00 Registration  
9:00-9:30 Welcome & SMM  
9:30-11:30 General Session  
11:30-12:30 Lunch  
12:30-2:30 Afternoon Breakouts  
2:30-5:00 Free time at the Museum

MnAEYC Annual  
Conference  
RiverCentre, St Paul  
Friday 2/2/2024

7:00-8:00 Registration/Exhibits  
9:00-9:30 Welcome & Keynote  
Speaker  
9:30-10:00 Break/Exhibits  
10:00-11:30 Session 1  
11:30-12:45 Lunch/Exhibits  
12:45-2:15 Session 2  
2:15-2:30 Break/Exhibits  
2:30-4:00 Session 3

MnAEYC Annual  
Conference  
RiverCentre, St. Paul  
Saturday, 2/3/2024

7:30-8:00 Registration/Exhibits  
9:00-9:30 Welcome & Keynote  
Speaker  
9:30-10:00 Break/Exhibits  
10:00-11:30 Session 4  
11:30-12:45 Lunch/Exhibits  
12:45-2:15 Session 5  
2:15-2:30 Break/Exhibits  
2:30-4:00 Session 6



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# Winter Leadership Institute

Thursday, February 1, 2024  
Science Museum of Minnesota

9:00-9:30 Registration

9:30-11:30 General Session

## The 4 Key Ingredients to Creating an Optimal Environment for your Team

**Ant Toombs**, Senior Playmaker Guide & Outreach Specialist

We've boiled down 30+ years of field experience into a 4-step framework that Early Childcare Professionals in building corrective, optimal environments, and experiences for both staff and children alike. Through a thoughtful blend of fun, experiential activities and discussions, staff will explore ways to enhance joyfulness, social connection, internal control, and active engagement in their work and walk away with concrete tools to apply with their staff...well...the very next day.

11:30-12:30 Lunch & Museum Exploration

12:30-2:30 Afternoon Breakout Sessions (Choose One)

### 1. Early Childhood Community Wisdom

**Jamie Bonczyk & Mike Huber**

The importance of Early Childhood Education is increasingly recognized by the culture at large, but the story is often told by people with little or no connection to day-to-day work. Join us to share your wisdom and find your voice as we create a better world for Minnesota's children.

### 2. Experiencing the SMM Race Exhibit

**Candace Yates & Heather Charmoli**

Spend time exploring and reflecting on the Race exhibit at the SMM. After exploring on your own, we will lead a discussion about what the teachings mean for our work in the early childhood field.

2:30-5:00 Explore the Museum on Your Own



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# KEYNOTE FRIDAY

## The Healing Power of Play and Optimism



Optimism is powerful. When human beings strengthen their ability to see and focus on the goodness and value in themselves, others, and the world around them, their social, emotional, and cognitive superpowers emerge. Optimism, however, is fragile. Chronic stress, fear, and overwhelming adversity can weaken and destroy our capacity for optimism. This inspiring presentation by Steve Gross, helps Early Childhood Professionals discover the power of optimism to create safe, loving, joyful, and engaging environments where kids can heal, grow, and thrive. Using research, humor, and personal stories from 30+ years of work with kids and their caretakers, Steve will share how practicing optimism can bring out the best in ourselves, our colleagues, and our children.

**Steve Gross** In the late 1980s, Steve Gross, MSW, began running playgroups for homeless children in Greater Boston. His only goal was to help our most vulnerable kids. His focus on play, joy, relationships, and environment caught the attention of trauma response experts. By the early 90s, Steve was called upon to lead widespread healing efforts for communities impacted by war, natural disaster, gun violence, poverty, addiction, and illness. Following his field experience, Steve and a trusted team of researchers and colleagues developed the Life is Good Playmaker Project - a series of transformative workshops, retreats, and tools that serve more than 16,000 Early Childhood professionals and help more than 1 million kids overcome trauma every year. Today, Steve inspires audiences with true stories of how optimism can be harnessed to overcome adversity, and how early childhood educators can cultivate a more optimistic disposition to insulate children against toxic stress and create life-changing relationships to help them heal, learn and grow.

# KEYNOTE SATURDAY

## How to Talk to Young Children About Race: What is happening in our Classrooms



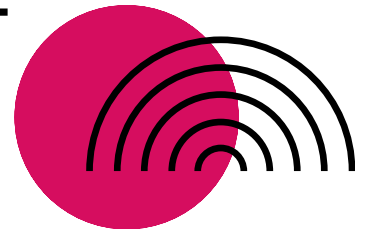
Research states that by the time a child enters Kindergarten, their implicit biases are already set in and very difficult to move. Early childhood programs can be a great way for children to start learning about the world, including how to build relationships with other children and adults. But part of this learning also involves absorbing the implicit biases in their environment, including unconscious assumptions about race. Including data and information from guests on the MPR podcast *Early Risers*, this workshop will allow participants to learn how children develop their racial bias from birth. Learn strategies and language for teachers and caregivers to analyze their own implicit bias. Participate in analyzing how you would respond to real world classroom scenarios of young children and issues of racial bias.

**Dianne Haulcy**, Dianne Haulcy is the President and CEO of The Family Partnership. A Minneapolis based non-profit that operates two therapeutic preschools and several early childhood home visiting programs. She has 30 years of experience in the non-profit sector with experience directing early childhood programs and many other housing and human services programs all serving inner-city, low-income, ethnically diverse populations. She has worked on early childhood policy for the City of Minneapolis and as the Senior VP of Family Engagement at Think Small, the leading organization serving early childhood professionals and families in the Twin Cities metro area. She is also currently the host of a popular podcast focused on how to talk to very young children about race and racism called *Early Risers* sponsored by Little Moments Count and Minnesota Public Radio. Dianne is the 2023 MnAeyc Evelyn House Award Winner.



# Friday, February 2

## Session 1



### **1.2 Preventing the Development of Bias**

Bill Svrluga

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Helping Very Young Children (ages 1-5) Thrive in an Increasingly Diverse World. This session will be a “Before Racism” program overview. The Before Racism Program posits that the next significant frontier in reducing bias, in particular race bias in America is to reach and teach very young children at their very earliest stages of cognitive, social-emotional, and language development—at the first moments they start to notice and feel differences between themselves and others. It is at these times when they begin to sense and internalize racial identity and, by definition, the potential for racial bias.

#### Five Core Premises

- Children are not born racist.
- Children begin to notice differences between themselves and others at a very young age and begin to make judgments and develop biases about those differences soon thereafter.
  - White people need to assume greater responsibility for actively addressing and preventing the development of bias, in particular racial bias.
  - The content of the Before Racism program is informed and shaped in consultation with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) communities.
  - The program is based on the integration of science and developmentally appropriate early childhood educational practices

### **1.3 Creation and Use of 'Third Spaces' in Early Childhood Centers**

Mike Huber and Kylie Cooper

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Even in the most thoughtfully designed classrooms, some children can get overwhelmed from all of the sensory input that comes with a group of busy young children. A cozy corner (quiet zone, alone zone, etc.) can be helpful for children, but the ambient noise can still be stressful. Third spaces can be found in hallways, entryways and other liminal spaces. Third spaces allow time and place for children to connect with adults in smaller groups or one-on-one. Third spaces can also be a place for family members to connect with other family members, turning open door policies into opportunities for a sense of community and belonging.

When a center intentionally creates spaces that are inviting and purposeful that span beyond the classroom walls, educators gain flexibility and strategies for self-regulation and behavior management. Meanwhile families are provided the space and time for authentic connection with other families, teachers and support staff. All of this creates a vibrant learning community for all involved. Join us to discuss ways to rethink collaborative spaces in your center.

### **1.4 Child Care Center Licensing - Updates and Information from MN DHS**

Lisa Mills

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Representatives from the MN Department of Human Services will share information and updates for licensed child care centers. Topics will include legislation, the Provider Hub, the Modernization Project, BGS and more.



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## 1.5 Play for the Planet

Ozge Metin Aslan

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This workshop is the final report of a completed Project in Turkey. The results and experiences obtained within the scope of the project will be shared. The project, entitled Play for the Planet: Supporting Creativity and Sustainability in Early Childhood Education has been selected for the 2023 Education for Sustainable Development Award from World OMEP. It aims to support young children's creativity, imagination, and problem-solving skills by letting them create their own free play with loose materials. It also introduces them to the concept of sustainable development through play. It also promote quality education by providing Playworker Training to pre services preschool teachers and introducing children to the concept of sustainable development through play. The project has another three objectives: 1) to increase the awareness of pre-service preschool teachers towards free play and to help them create a safe and stimulating environment for children to explore, experiment, and engage in play-based activities that promote creativity, socialization and facilitate their play. 2) to support families to enhance their children's creativity and self-confidence and to educate them about sustainability; and 3) to raise awareness of free play with loose parts materials among families and children. The project follows the 7Rs principle: respect, reflect, rethink, reuse, reduce, recycle, redistribute. It has been running in three phases since 2021 and has reached 8 university graduates, 40 pre-service preschool teachers, approximately 650 preschool children and 300 families. It will be a guide for practitioners, schools and early childhood experts working in the field.

## 1.6 Culturally Appropriate Strategies for Engaging with Somali Families and Children

Anisa Ali

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Let's explore strategies and culturally appropriate methods for professionals and caregivers who work with Somali families and children. Gain insights into the Somali culture, values, and beliefs so you can build strong relationships with Somali families and children.

## 1.7 Data Made Simple

Katie Hoffman

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We see and use data every day, in every part of our work. It can be as simple as changing the way you set up your classroom environment based on trends and patterns you see in your group of children. Join us for a discussion on how to see these everyday data points and how to use them to advocate for your needs as an educator and the needs of the children and families you serve.

## 1.8 Applying Montessori Principles Across the Lifespan Continuum

Molly O'Shaughnessy, Diana Alvarez Forero, Natty Bibiana Hels, Yolima Chambers

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Each child born is an adventure into a better life and represents an opportunity for change and creativity. Maria Montessori looked at human development across the continuum from infancy to maturity. She states that the road to optimal development follows a twofold objective: Constructing suitable environments that are congruent with life and bringing a new attitude towards children on the part of adults. Our session will explore the roots of Maria Montessori's pedagogy and learn how Centro Tyrone Guzman has applied these principles with the Latine Community throughout their intergenerational programming with their Montessori home visiting program (before and after birth), Siembra Montessori (Children's House), youth and elders (including those with dementia). Centro Tyrone Guzman and Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM) have been partners for over ten years. Montessori Partners Serving All Children, an initiative of MCM, forms partnerships with local communities to increase access to high-fidelity Montessori early children education, and to strengthen the bonds between home, school, and community in a culturally responsive way. \*Centro Tyrone Guzman has chosen to use "e" in place of the Spanish-language masculine "o" to recognize the fluidity of gender that exists beyond this gender binary. We are committed to gender inclusion and recognize the contributions of all persons



## **1.9 Kindergarten Transition Supports for MN Teachers of African American children**

Nikole Logan

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This workshop pairs with the kindergarten transition materials designed for MN teachers of urban African American children, as facilitated for MDE and the Collaborative Ideation projects. Teachers and Administrators seeking to explore the materials as well as application for their children, families, and staff, will be supported to investigate the Ecosystem, documents, and resources designed to support continuity from early care and education settings through kindergarten entry.

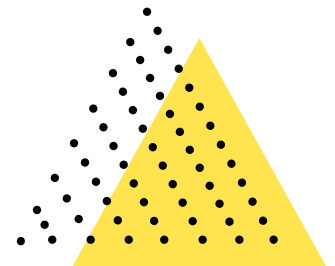
## Friday, February 2 **Session 2**

### **2.1 Promoting professionalism for early childhood educators: How to implement culturally responsive practices grounded in an ethical framework**

Kelly Sadlovsky

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This session identifies key characteristics of professionalism and ethical conduct for early childhood educators that foster inclusive learning environments for students and families. Implementing inclusive practices requires educators getting to know the individual needs of students and families which supports the theoretical foundation of developmentally appropriate practices. Professional practitioners work to build on the strengths of each individual and celebrate differences which creates a stronger sense of community and expands learning opportunities for all. Strategies for maintaining professionalism while creating strong relationships with families will be explored and some common challenges will be identified. Reflection on biases and previous experiences that impact current practices as educators will guide discussions on intentional awareness and cultural responsiveness as professionals. The NAEYC Code of Ethics (2011) will be examined and used to respond to ethical dilemmas in the field with opportunities for participants to expand on different scenarios and explore various perspectives. Key terminology will be identified to provide a shared context in discussions that connects theory to practice so that the information is applicable. Participants will be encouraged to reflect on individual and program philosophies and identify ways that these are reflected in current practices. Participants will use the ethical framework to identify strengths in professional practices and areas for improvement. Participants will consider how professionalism is reflected in both words and actions which can be felt in the overall tone of the environment. Closing discussions will focus on ways professional educators can model consistency in ethical decision-making that advance equitable outcomes.



### **2.2 Early Literacy Instruction: Where it began and how did we get here?**

Lucy Arias

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As early childhood educators, we know the importance of quality early learning experiences for children. Literacy development starts early in life and is highly correlated with school achievement. This session will provide an overview of how early literacy development is interrelated and interdependent to all of the domains of a child's development: physical, social-emotional, cognitive, language, and literacy. Participants will leave with professional knowledge about early literacy and evidence-based recommendations.

## **2.3 80x3: Resilient from the Start**

Jamie Bonczyk and Leo Howard III

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With 80 percent of brain growth occurring before a child's third birthday, our youngest neighbors and their caregivers are at a crucial time for positive brain development that can steer the trajectory of a life. An estimated 12,000 3-year-olds living in the Twin Cities have been exposed to at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE), some of which can lead to trauma that can have lasting impacts. In 2019, Child Trends reported that, "Children exposed to traumatic life events are at significant risk for developing serious and long-lasting problems across multiple areas of development. However, children are far more likely to exhibit resilience to childhood trauma when child-serving programs, institutions, and service systems understand the impact of childhood trauma, share common ways to talk and think about trauma, and thoroughly integrate effective practices and policies to address it—an approach often referred to as trauma-informed care (TIC)."

By partnering with community, Greater Twin Cities United Way identified 3 Key Strategies to address these findings: Build capacity for child development centers to recruit new and retain existing Early Childhood leaders and educators. Train and coach Early Education leaders and educators in trauma-sensitive care and healing-centered engagement. Build capacity for child development centers to support families. Come to this session to hear about how 80x3 partners have been working together and what we have learned.

## **2.4 What Can We Learn From Teachers in Ghana?**

Meg Thomas

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What can we learn from teachers in Ghana? What can they learn from us? Two early childhood professionals, one from Ghana and one from the US, built a collaborative project to support Ghanaian teachers to incorporate more play-based learning in their kindergarten classes. We strove to do this in ways that were both culturally rooted and based in strengths of this particular teaching force. As we engaged a small group of experienced Ghanaian early childhood teachers in learning about play, we observed the incredible skills these teachers had in creating direct instruction that clearly addressed different learning styles and incorporated lively English language learning. Through video clips and group discussion, we'll put this project into the context of US struggles to provide effective education for African American students, and the historical connection between the US and West Africa due to the transatlantic slave trade. We'll talk about what we can learn from Ghanaian classrooms where children's home languages and learning styles are respected and valued and brainstorm ways that what we are seeing might be used in our own settings. Dr Osafo-Acquah from the University of Cape Coast in Ghana and several Ghanaian teachers will participate through pre-recorded video clips.

## **2.5 Age of Consent: Information and Education for all Ages**

Jane Straub

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Teaching consent is more than talking about sex. From "just say no" to "affirmative consent" we have begun the conversation but have left out the youngest population. Young children can learn about giving and receiving permission to touch, hug or kiss another person and permission to use or play with another's toys. By teaching them about body boundaries, they can start to learn they have control of their own body. Teaching and responding to "no", "stop" or "take a break" are simple concepts for children to understand. Knowing medically/anatomically correct body parts is imperative in child abuse investigations. Having a child who also comprehends consent, the right to say "no" to touches, telling a trusted adult if someone breaks their safety rule is one step toward prevention. As children grow, lessons evolve to incorporate consent within a relationship. Understanding the need to give and receive permission is crucial in prevention sexual violence. Children deserve to be empowered with knowledge, language and actions.

## **2.6 Helping Families Connect to Early Childhood and Family Support Resources**

Shawn Holmes

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Help Me Connect is an online navigation resource that helps expectant families, families with young children, and professionals working with families connect to services in their local communities that support healthy child development and family well-being. Since its launch in 2021, the site has welcomed over 260,000 visitors from all regions of Minnesota and neighboring states and provided access to a directory of 13,000+ state and local programs. This session will include a brief history and overview, user analytics, a live demo of Help Me Connect, and an interactive discussion to learn about the needs of families in your community and how this resource may be used to support your work and the families you serve.

## **2.7 Interventions for Preventing Suspensions and Expulsions Through Behavioral Observation and Documentation**

Carrie Zelin Johnson

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Use ongoing objective observations and behavioral record keeping to prevent suspensions and expulsions of children in early care and education programs. Keep and utilize records and behavioral assessment information to work with families, staff, and administrators to support children's positive experiences in early care environments. Explore implicit bias and how it affects objectivity, policies, and procedures related to evaluating children's behavior and subsequent suspensions and/or expulsions.

## **2.8 Montessori 101**

Rachel Hansen Morris

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Montessori education is a child-centered, hands-on approach that empowers children to own their education, with guidance and support from teachers. Geared toward individuals new to Montessori, this presentation will provide an overview of Montessori principles and how a Montessori learning environment for young children is set up to support child development. Participants will learn how and why choice, movement and repetition are supported and encouraged in a Montessori setting, and how Montessori materials facilitate self-directed learning.

## **2.9 Enhancing Our Children's Self-Esteem**

Julie Koritz

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What is self-esteem and how do we enhance a child's self-esteem? Learn various ways to boost a child's self worth and strengthen their confidence. Participants will learn self-concept do's and don'ts and a variety of activities to enhance the self-esteem of children in their care.

# Friday February 2

## Session 3



### **3.1 Grief in Early Childhood: Equip Children to Thrive**

Michele Benyo

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Grief is not something early childhood educators typically include in their lesson plans. Maybe they should. Everyone experiences loss of some kind in the early years, but a child's grief too often is overlooked and sidelined by well-intentioned but not always helpful efforts to make them feel better. Learn helpful, practical ways to acknowledge children's grief, along with tools and approaches to teach “good” grief and equip young children with skills to thrive beyond loss. Teaching children about grief, coping, and optimism raises their resilience and prepares them not only to handle their own inevitable losses in life, but also to have empathy for and support others who grieve.

### **3.2 The Successful Learner Equation**

Olivia Christensen and Kate Dole

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Early Learning Services is shifting its language away from “Kindergarten Readiness” and “School Readiness” to “Supporting Successful Learners.” Given that eligibility and enrollment in kindergarten is voluntary and age-based, there is no such thing as “ready” or “not ready” for kindergarten. The Successful Learner Equation is used to recognize and uplift the individuals, programs, and systems that contribute to the success of each learner, and reminds us that it is not the responsibility of the child to be “ready” for school. It is the responsibility of adults, schools/programs, environments, communities, and systems to be ready to support each child.

### **3.3 Collaboration for Transformation: Strategies and Reflections from a Partnership Toward Early Childhood Organizational Change**

Nicole Evans and Candace Yate

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This session will highlight specific action steps and a blueprint for transforming organizations as they delve into the BIG work of equity. The work is about centering diversity, equity, inclusion and a sense of belonging so that it is not an addition to the plate, but it IS the plate! Our change theory is based on organizational systems approach.

Current leadership programs don't address the need for early childhood leaders to bring their whole selves and identities into the work of leading today's organizations while also holding the responsibility of crafting the organizational culture and working within often broken systems. In addition, early childhood leaders are often asked to carry this big work – alone. This session will examine our journey and a framework for leaders that highlights a specific pathway that centers empowerment, co-powering and antiracism.

We strive to equip leaders with necessary tools to transform through action. We ensure that through this learning session that we are guiding, that we will assist leaders in making BEST practices in equity centered, anti-racist organizations...COMMON practices in their organizations.

### **3.4 Leadership Transitions: Succession Planning and Developing your Internal Pipeline**

Amanda Ziebell Mawanda

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Join Propel Nonprofits to learn the basics about transition planning, from emergency plans to succession plans, so that you are not caught unaware! This session will focus on how to build out plans that can help in times of transition and on how to prepare your staff ahead of time by building your leadership pipeline.

### **3.5 Why Do Mixed Delivery Partners and Partnerships Make a Difference—Where Do We Start?**

June Reineke and Jeanne Dickhausen

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Building early learning and care partnerships that lead to a “mixed delivery” early childhood system within your community helps assure that: families and their children have access to high-quality early childhood programming; professionals share resources so that they can connect professional learning opportunities, programs, and practices; and children are asked to make fewer and more meaningful transitions. We will present a continuum of strategies for building partnerships and illustrate the ideas by highlighting the work being done in communities around the state as they hurdle challenges and build relationships that pave pathways for children’s success.

### **3.6 Navigating Supports Available for the Early Childhood Workforce**

Kelly Kazeck

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Learn about a variety of supports available for people interested in entering or advancing in the early childhood workforce. We will look at new legislation that impacts the workforce, examine financial supports, review support programs, share communication efforts, and more.

### **3.7 Building Professional Development Plans for Working with Multilingual Learners and their Families**

Carmen Cook and Cindy Check

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Early childhood programs need to be equipped to meet the needs of multilingual children and their families. This workshop will give a brief foundation for working with MLL and explore approaches and tools to creating a practical and meaningful professional development plan for program staff.

### **3.8 Centro Tyrone Guzman’s Home Visiting Program**

Diana Alvarez Forero

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Come and learn about how Centro Tyrone Guzman’s early childhood program is integrating home visits into their services and how this has impacted teaching and community relationships. Centro Tyrone Guzman is committed to contributing to the well-being of Latine families through a holistic and intergenerational approach to education, health and wellness. Centro Tyrone Guzman envisions a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive Latine community that belongs and contributes to the social and economic vitality of Minnesota.

### **3.9 Parenting Parents**

Julie Koritz

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When this course is complete, participants will have an understanding of how to communicate with parents when dealing with a variety of issues including the importance of building trusting relationships with parents. Some of the topics that will be explored are: positive guidance, nutrition, sleep issues, etc. We will also discuss ways to talk to parents about touchy topics such as biting, hitting, picking their child up late, parents who are dissatisfied with your care and talking to a parent of a child who has a special need. At the end of this course, participants will be able to apply what they have learned with their own situations with parents. The information will be presented in a positive way, which will help parents be more open to working with providers to resolve any conflicts that may arise.

# Saturday February 3

## Session 4



### **4.1 Community Story Collection and Sensemaking**

Molly Sullivan and Dustin Parks

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This workshop will guide participants through the process that MN StoryCollective is using to gather community stories, facilitate community story analysis, and then use these findings to inform the development of responsive policy and programs. We will discuss a full cycle of story collection, sensemaking, action labs, and reflection. Participants will leave the session with an understanding of the power of this community engagement model.

### **4.2 Achieve - The MN Center for Professional Development: Who We Are!**

Dani Thompson and Matt Evans

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Explore the role of Achieve – The MN Center for Professional Development. Learn how Achieve supports the Individual, Trainer, RBPD, and Course Writer Memberships in Develop as well as Course Approval, and Training Sponsor Organization Approval. Recognize how your education and training results in the assignment of a MN Career Lattice Step. Review Achieve’s website at [www.mncpd.org](http://www.mncpd.org) to locate helpful resources and to stay informed on updates and changes.

### **4.3 Integrating Anti-bias Education into Our Thinking and Practice**

Carrie Zelin Johnson and Heather Charmoli

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Integrating Anti-bias Education is the responsibility of classroom staff and early childhood program leadership alike. Through video vignette examples and reflective discussions, participants 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, diversity, and equity, children’s social identity development, and making decisions about culturally responsive environments and curriculum experiences.

### **4.4 Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Focus on Infants and Toddlers**

Angela Kapp

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Based on the book *Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Focus on Infants and Toddlers*, this course will review key practices of DAP and connecting DAP to excellent teaching. A drawing will be held to win a copy of the book.



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#### **4.5 "Can they REALLY climb on that?" Exploring the Attitudes, Perceptions, and Benefits of Big-Body/Rough-and-Tumble Play**

Ross Thompson

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For some, hearing the phrase "Rough-and-Tumble" play immediately puts them on high-alert. For others, it might sound like a helpful addition to their room but aren't quite sure how to start/include it safely. And there are likely many others with a myriad of other feelings and questions about it (i.e. "What's the difference between big-body and rough-and-tumble play?"). Come join me to learn about the benefits and ways to include this very needed style of play for ALL children in your space.

#### **4.6 Tools for the DEI Journey**

Candace Yates

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This workshop leads participants through a series of interactive and reflective activities to help identify the tools needed to deepen their commitment and resolve along the DEI journey. Participants will answer the questions "What does it mean for me to do the work?" and "What do I need to stay committed?"

#### **4.7 Using Story Play to Develop Language Skills for Young Learners**

Michael Lockett

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Session will focus on ways in which storytelling and "Story Play" can improve students' speech, listening, vocabulary, reading comprehension reading fluency and can pave the way to learning new languages. Be prepared to laugh and participate as you learn how effectively use stories as a teaching tool.

#### **4.8 Understanding Minnesota's Early Educators: Findings from the 2023 Early Care and Education Workforce Study**

Angela Butel, Emma Kurth, & Marah Weidensee

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This session will share an overview of the 2023 Early Care and Education Workforce Study, a research project recently completed by the state of Minnesota in partnership with Wilder Research. This study used a survey and focus groups to gather information about the size and demographics of the early care and education (ECE) workforce and early educators' education and experience, economic wellbeing, and professional development interests and needs. The session will include a presentation of key findings and include time for discussion about how this new data source can be used to better support the ECE workforce.

#### **4.9 Self Care, Child Care, World Care - In Nature**

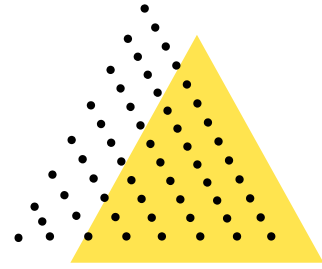
Karen Walburg

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How do you practice self-care? What gifts can we receive when we practice mindful, centered self-care, especially when in nature? How might those gifts and that practice influence us personally, and professionally, as members of our global society and beyond? Let's explore together these questions and look at examples of how the gifts of self-care time in nature have influenced some Early Childhood Educators. How might you be able to experience those gifts?

# Saturday February 3

## Session 5



### **5.1 Gardening, Cooking, and Nature-Based Learning with Young Children**

Sheila Williams Ridge, Ayuko Boomer, and Alyssa Wilt

Explore the wonderful world of gardening and cooking with young children. In this session, we will share ways to engage children throughout the gardening process from planting to eating. We will include recipes and techniques for using school gardens to create healthy, economical, and delicious foods for and with children ages 2-5 years old and nurture family connections. Nature is all around us and gardening in a variety of spaces offers opportunities for children to create meaningful memories and knowledge. Studies continue to point to the benefits of nature education and time outdoors, making the accessibility of programs like this to all children of growing importance. Cooking with the produce they grow helps children learn about diversity, health, and wellness.

### **5.2 Advocacy with NAEYC**

Maria Estlund

Join Maria to learn how MN compares to other states in the nation on early childhood legislation and advocacy work. Maria will share some ideas for your advocacy journey.

### **5.3 Minnesota's Progress on the Unifying Framework**

Heather Charmoli

Join Heather to learn about which policy changes from 2023 align to the national Unifying Framework initiative. Minnesota has made great strides this year, but there is always more work to be done. We will compare our success to the success of other states. We will also be discussing MnAEYC's 2024 Legislative Priorities.

### **5.4 Tips, Tools, and Activities to Promote Focus & Attention Skills in Young Children**

Raelene Ostberg

Identify evidence-based methods to promote children's "Executive Functioning" Skills, the critical higher-level thinking skills needed to cognitively control one's behavior. In order to learn and follow directions, children need to be able to attend to and focus on the task at hand. During this session, participants will explore numerous strategies, hands-on tools, and fun activities that will help young children improve self-discipline and develop the attention skills needed to behave well. You will have an opportunity to engage with other educators during a round-robin brainstorming session as you compile ideas to address the reasons behind a child's lack of focus. When implemented in your early childhood setting, these activities will bolster children's ability to attend, decrease challenging behaviors, and help children get more out of the educational experiences you provide.

## 5.5 The Art Of (and Learning That Comes With) Storytelling

Ross Thompson

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Oral storytelling has been around since our earliest civilizations; supporting the teaching of countless lessons. However, it seems technology has taken over the telling of our stories, removing us (the human element) more and more as times goes on. Come learn how to put storytelling back into your "teacher pocket," as it's an invaluable tool that can support any academic topic or educational domain. Don't believe me? Come see... and hear... for yourself!

## 5.6 Connecting With Your Public Library

Kelsey Johnson-Kaiser and Jennie Walker Knoot

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Public libraries across the state offer tools and resources for early educators, from books and booklists to e-resources and more, but where do you find them? Public librarians know that early childhood educators have critically important roles, and want to connect and support your work. During this interactive session, we'll explore common resources public libraries offer and highlight free resources available statewide from Saint Paul Public Library and Debra S Fish Early Childhood Library. In addition, we'll discuss common needs of early childhood educators, and how libraries can more effectively meet these needs.

## 5.7 Why Advocacy? Strategies for Driving Change

Tina Rucci and Lydia Boerboom

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Participants will Learn definition and types of policy and advocacy, will review examples of grassroots advocacy and lobbying, and discuss why advocacy is crucial to advancing systems change. They will also hear from advocates who engage in different types of advocacy at the individual and organizational levels.

Participants will explore advocacy resources and three concrete ways to advocate during the 2024 legislative session (Kids Count on Us Day on the Hill, Advocacy for Children Day, Start Early Funders Coalition Parent & Provider Advisory Group).

## 5.8 Becoming a trainer with TARSS

Melissa Donovan

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Trainer and Relational-based Professional Development Specialist Support program (TARSS) is a DHS-funded grant to support trainers, coaches, and relationship-based professional development (RBPD) specialists in the early education field. This presentation will delve into the critical role of early childhood trainers in shaping the education and development of young minds. To provide valuable insights into the process of becoming a successful early childhood trainer. We will explore the qualifications, responsibilities, and essential skills needed to excel as an early childhood trainer.

## 5.9 Embracing What Matters

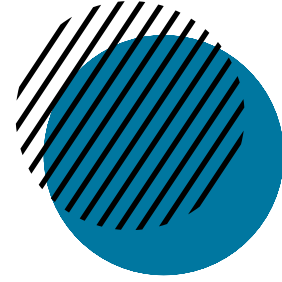
Sue Starks. - (Faith-Based Session)

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Early childhood teachers, challenged by the push and pull of given expectations may struggle to keep learning experiences aligned to developmentally appropriate practices however our children deserve to play and learn amidst relationships and contexts that intentionally support them as learners, thinkers, and doers. Come join a faith-based conversation reminding us of the foundations of teaching young children - child development, relationships, an emphasis on social emotional development, and the power of play!



Saturday, February 3  
**Session 6**



## **6.1 How the MN Loose Part Laboratory, STEAM/STREAMS, and Spiritual Flourishing Work Together to Create a Better World and More Resilient Children**

Deborah Schein

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Participants will also learn how playing with Loose Parts helps move learning from STEM to STEAM to STREAMS. The “R” represents values beginning with “R” such as respect, resiliency, responsibility, reason, recycling. The “S” represents all things having to do with spiritual flourishing which engage feelings of wonder, awe, joy, inner peace, empathy. (Schein, 2018). When children play with LP, the integration of learning and spiritual flourishing take place whether we talk about or not. One only has to look at a person’s face to observe a glow of light and joy; possibly a reflection of creativity, imagination, and integration. We, at the LPL see this glow often.

Lisa Miller’s neurological research shares that each human being is 1/3 spiritual at birth. The remaining 2/3 of human spiritual growth occurs through the environment in which we live, the activities we engage in, and the relationships that we build. The LPL encourages all educators to provide play for their students that will help children grow their spirit in this way while also helping the earth by using recycled material. Ultimately, the world will be better off and children will be more resilient.

## **6.2 Assessing Children as a Playmaker**

Bonita Lacey

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As a Life is Good Playmaker; Prioritizing FUN helps us stay present, enjoy the moment, and build deeper relationships. As an educator providing observation and assessment with children, how do we use Play as a fundamental part of everything we do. We’ll use hands-on activities to enhance / energize and rethink how we observe and assess children. Using strategies, have some fun together, and harness the power of our community to help goodify challenges related to our assessment practice.

## **6.3 Building Relationships for Program Success and Harmony**

Heather Charmoli

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The basis of all of our work is relationships. When relationships are not strong, morale is low, conflict is high and the children begin to feel the impacts of the emotional states of the grown ups. When children do not know what to do with their emotions, they tend to react in ways that grown-ups find challenging. So how can we create relationships that bring together colleagues,



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## **6.4 Calming the Storm: Evidence-based Strategies for Addressing Toddler Aggression and Reduce Future Aggressive From Occurring**

Raelene Ostberg

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Identify the common triggers fueling toddler aggression in group settings. Learn adult responses to aggression that will help toddlers learn to cope with strong feelings and to express anger appropriately in the future. Analyze video of adult responses to identify which would be useful in your environment. Discover coaching techniques for working with toddlers during aggressive moments that help build toddlers' self-regulation skills, diminish destructive behaviors, and increase calm in your early childhood environment.

## **6.5 High-Quality Play in Early Childhood: Defending the Benefits and Discussing the Challenges**

Ross Thompson

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Are there REALLY levels of quality when it comes to play? Short answer -- absolutely! Play is likely something we all value in our work with young children, but how integrated is it in your own classroom/family/personal life? Is play at the bedrock of your educational philosophy, or is it the "reward" for after the table work is completed? Come join the discussion about what distinguishes high-quality play and why that including that level/amount of play sometimes needs a bit (or at times, a lot) of defending.

## **6.6 Becoming Play Champions**

Jodie Riek

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This session will introduce participants to the World Forum World Play Working Group, "Debunking the Myths of Play" resource and the new Action Planning Professional Development form. Participants will receive hands-on resources to use; engage in small group learning activities; and will leave with a plan of action to use in their services.

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- define, advocate and strengthen play opportunities for children.
- develop a professional development opportunity on play for families and/or colleagues.
- be a Play Champion!

## **6.7 Humor and Laughter as Intentional Teaching Strategies in Early Childhood Education**

Becky Hegstad

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Research has shown that humor and laughter benefit learning in early childhood. Humor and laughter also benefit teachers. However, despite the benefits, research has also shown that teachers may be hesitant to use humor and laughter for fear of "losing control," not feeling inherently funny, or because teachers feel they have not been taught how to use humor effectively. There is a gap between teachers' beliefs and practices around utilizing humor in the classroom.

This workshop will examine what we know about early childhood humor as it relates to learning. Characteristics of humor at different developmental stages will be highlighted and ideas about what this means for curriculum and assessment will be discussed. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their own teaching practices and consider if they are utilizing humor optimally for both relationship-building and instruction. Concrete suggestions for both planned and spontaneous humorous practices in early childhood settings will be proposed.

## **6.8 Embedding Technology in Early Childhood**

Melissa Donovan

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This course aims to equip educators and caregivers with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively integrate technology into early childhood education. Participants will explore the benefits and challenges of using technology in the classroom, discover age-appropriate tools and resources, and learn best practices for promoting healthy screen time habits for young children.

## **6.9**

Sara Mulso

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Faith Based Session - More information Coming Soon



# Presenter Biographies

**Anisa Ali**, Anisa Ali has been in Minnesota for the pasted 23 years. Anisa has a background in Early Childhood Education, working for Head Start program for 14 years. Anisa Ali has a BA degree in Gender and Culture Studies from Metropolitan State University. Anisa is deeply committed to advocating for and attending to the needs of multi-culturally diverse, under-served immigrants, refugees, and low-income families. In addition, Anisa has been working as Community Health Service Coordinator with Homeless Families with young children since 2007. *(session 1, Culturally Appropriate Strategies for Engaging with Somali Families and Children)*

**Diana Alvarez Forero**, Early Childhood Programs Director at Centro Tyrone Guzman. Diana first joined Centro in 2017, She has BA in Finance and International Relations and a graduate-level degree in Financial Management. She has overseen the Siembra Montessori early learning program and the maternal health programs at Centro since 2020. Before coming to Centro, Diana worked in Colombia and the UK. In Colombia she worked in the private and public sectors In Colombia for 6 years In the UK she worked for a nonprofit that assisted immigrants in accessing education and legal services. She has also worked in local government at the municipal level in Princeton, NJ, focusing on affordable housing and human services. *(session 1, Applying Montessori Principles Across the Lifespan Continuum)*

**Lucy Arias**, Lucy Arias is the Early Language and Literacy Specialist at the Minnesota Department of Education. She is a longtime early childhood educator with over 25 yrs. of experience that includes preschool teacher, program director, early childhood research, ECFE teacher, advocacy, and Early Childhood Care and Education professional development. *(session 2, Early Literacy Instruction: Where it began and how did we get here?)*

**Michele Benyo**, Michele Benyo is a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist®, early childhood parent educator and coach, and founder of Good Grief Parenting. After Michele's 6-year-old son died of cancer, her 3-year-old daughter said, "Mommy, half of me is gone." This heartbreaking statement focused Michele's career as an early childhood parenting specialist on the impact of grief on young children, particularly after sibling loss. She helps parents, early childhood professionals, and other caring adults recognize young children's grief and provide the support they need to cope with loss and build resilience for life. Michele authored the preschool curriculum for Camp Noah, a nationally recognized resiliency camp for children impacted by a disaster or crisis, as well as curriculum for Child Care Aware of Minnesota on the social-emotional support children need after experiencing trauma. *(session 3, Grief in Early Childhood: Equip Children to Thrive)*

**Natty Bibiana Hels**, Youth Programs Director, Centro Tyrone Guzman. Natty was born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia. During her college years, she worked as the Assistant Director at an early learning center, where she witnessed the importance and value of high-quality education in supporting the health and well-being of children and youth. She graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Design from El Bosque University in Bogotá and remained passionate about supporting education and youth development. Natty has worked at Centro Tyrone Guzman since 2015. In 2021, she completed the "Anti-Bias Anti-Racism" cohort through the Indigenous Montessori Institute, and in 2023 she graduated from the "Montessori Leadership: Transforming Self, Community & Society" program through The Whole School Leadership Institute in partnership with Loyola University Maryland Center for Continuing Education. In her free time, Natty enjoys outdoor activities with her family, and she is also an animal lover who enjoys birdwatching. *(session 1, Applying Montessori Principles Across the Lifespan Continuum)*

**Lydia Boerboom**, Lydia Boerboom is an Early Childcare Community Organizer at Kids Count on Us. *(session 4, Why Advocacy? Driving Strategies for Change)*



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# Presenter Biographies

**Jamie Bonczyk**, Jamie oversees “80×3: Resilient from the Start” for Greater Twin Cities United Way. She is a leader in early childhood education who strives to create social-impact networks, change initiatives and partnerships that create sustainable health and education outcomes for children, families and educators. Her background includes the roles of executive director of an early learning non-profit, Head Start administrator, adjunct instructor, author, professional development content creator, and preschool teacher. Jamie has a bachelor’s degree from Minnesota State University Moorhead and a master’s degree from Roosevelt University, both in early childhood education. She completed a Head Start Management Fellowship at UCLA and an Early Childhood Policy Fellowship through Bank Street College of Education. She lives in Richfield, MN with her tween daughter, her husband of 15 years and their poodle, Buddy Bear. *(session 2, 80x3: Resilient from the Start)*

**Ayuko Boomer**, Ayuko Boomer is a toddler teacher, student-teacher mentor, and parent educator at the Child Development Laboratory School. She holds an MS in Education from Sarah Lawrence College and a Minnesota Teaching License in ECE/Elementary Education and Parent Education. Ayuko Uezu Boomer has worked in early childhood education since 2001. *(session 5, Gardening, Cooking , ad Nature-Based Learning with Young Children)*

**Angela Butel** is the Child Development Services Data and Policy Analyst at the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). She works with data about families’ access to child care and the child care workforce to help DHS better support child care providers. Angela has an undergraduate degree from Macalester College in St. Paul, MN and a master’s degree in Public and Urban Policy from The New School in New York, NY. Before joining the state of Minnesota, she worked in a variety of roles focused on using quantitative and qualitative data to improve government services at the City of Minneapolis, City of New York, and City of Portland, OR.

**Yolima Chambers**, Adult and Aging Programs Director, Centro Tyrone Guzman. Yoli has worked at Centro Tyrone Guzman since 2012. She has a professional degree in International Business. She is a Cultural Consultant in Dementia Care and is a Certified Montessori Elder Care Practitioner by AMI and Brush Development Company. Over the past ten years, Yolima has provided leadership in developing a Montessori influence across the organization, with particular expertise in eldercare. In her free time, Yolima loves spending time with her family. She is enjoying being a mom and she is also an animal lover and enjoys going on walks with her dog, Bella. *(session 1, Applying Montessori Principles Across the Lifespan Continuum)*

**Heather Charmoli**, Heather is the Program Administrator for the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (MnAEYC) where she manages programming, communications, and initiatives. Prior to MnAEYC, she spent 11 years directing an early childhood program and has been in the field for a total of 17 years. She serves on the advisory group for United Way's 80x3 initiative, is part of the Early Childhood Crisis Workgroup, and serves on the Transforming Minnesota's Early Childhood Workforce group, is a CARE Fellow alum, in addition to conference coordinating for the ELEA. Heather also works as a trainer for Think Small and owns Charmoli Training and Consulting. *(session 3, Integrating Anti-bias Education into Our Thinking and Practice; session 5, Minnesota's Progress on the Unifying Framework; session 6, Building Relationships for Program Success)*

**Cindy Check**, Cindy Check has a master’s degree in leadership and a bachelor’s degree Early Childhood Education. Between us we have experience in being preschool teachers, program administrators, ECFE teachers, ECSE teacher, EC Screening, EC program evaluation, and contract work with state agencies related to MLL. *(session 4, Building Professional Development Plans for Working with Multilingual Learners and their Families)*



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# Presenter Biographies

**Olivia Christensen**, Olivia Christensen is an Education Specialist in Early Learning Services at the Minnesota Department of Education. Her work focuses on kindergarten through grade 3 related initiatives. Olivia is a former early childhood teacher and teacher educator. She holds an M.Ed. from Loyola College, her Montessori Certification from the Montessori Center of Minnesota, and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Minnesota. (session 3, *The Successful Learner Equation*)

**Carmen Cook**, Carmen Cook works as a member of the Early Childhood Studies Faculty at Metro State University and is a PhD Candidate in Early Childhood Education. Between us we have experience in being preschool teachers, program administrators, ECFE teachers, ECSE teacher, EC Screening, EC program evaluation, and contract work with state agencies related to MLL. (session 4, *Building Professional Development Plans for Working with Multilingual Learners and their Families*)

**Kylie Cooper**, Kylie Cooper is the Executive Director of Rise Early Learning Center. Kylie previously served as the Assistant Director of Education Quality for Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington (CAPRW), and the Workforce Development Coordinator for Child Care Aware of Minnesota. Kylie holds an MA Ed in Early Childhood Education and is driven to shine a light on the impact that high-quality early childhood education can have on society as a whole. In 2018, Kylie was recognized as an “Exchange Leader” by Child Care Exchange magazine. She has served as Co-President for the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children (MnAEYC) and has been a Master Trainer certified through the Minnesota Center for Professional Development since 2015 (MNCPD). (session 1, *Creation and Use of 'Third Spaces' in Early Childhood Centers*)

**Jeanne Dickhausen**, Jeanne Dickhausen, MA ED ECE (Head Start Collaboration Director, Minnesota Department of Education) supports the Head Start programs by overseeing the distribution of state funds, ensuring Head Start programs, children and families are represented in state systems and agencies including the Governor's State Advisory on Early Education and Care Council. Prior to her current position, she has worked in and with Community Action and Head Start programs in multiple roles from parent to program administrator. (session 3, *Why Do Mixed Delivery Partners and Partnerships Make a Difference—Where Do We Start?*)

**Kate Dole**, Kate Dole is an Education Specialist with the Early Childhood Special Education team. In her role at MDE, Kate provides technical assistance and professional development on due process and implementation of best practices in Part C and Part B/619 and works closely with her colleagues in general education to bring an ECSE perspective to work that supports early learning. Kate spent 13 years as a speech-language pathologist in both ECSE and at the elementary level in Minnesota public schools, including three years as an ECSE Program Lead. Kate holds an M.A. in Speech-Language Pathology from the University of Minnesota, an M.A. in Public Policy and Leadership from the University of St. Thomas, and a Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (session 3, *The Successful Learner Equation*)

**Melissa Donovan**, Melissa Donovan, with almost 20 years in early care and education, holds a Master's in Early Childhood Education. She's a Training Specialist at the University of Minnesota's CEED, involved in the TARSS project, an Expert Trainer and Course Writer through Achieve-MNCPD, and current president of MNAEYC. 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 current 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. (session 2, *Becoming a Trainer with TARSS*; session 5, *Embedding Technology Technology in Early Childhood*)

**mnaeyc**

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# Presenter Biographies

**Maria Estlund**, Maria is the State Policy Specialist at the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Maria has nearly a decade of experience in early childhood education policy, collaborating with early childhood providers and educators, advocacy partners, and policymakers to influence policy and public funding. In her current role, Maria supports NAEYC's state affiliate and advocacy partners to advance workforce-related policies and investments in alignment with the Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession. Before joining NAEYC, Maria was the Senior Policy Associate at Illinois Action for Children in Chicago and worked in the Illinois General Assembly on Senate legislative staff. Maria lives in Madison, Wisconsin, with her husband and one-year-old daughter.

**Nicole Evans**, Dr. Nicole Evans (she/her) is the Director of Leadership and Coaching at Embracing Equity. She embodies a lifelong passion for education, shaped by her upbringing in the home of an esteemed educator. From a young age, she eagerly shadowed her role model and father, spending countless hours in his classrooms. With an impressive 27-year career in education, Dr. Evans has excelled in various roles, including teacher, assistant principal, principal, and as the executive director of urban education at a prominent HBCU. In her current capacity as the Director of Leadership and Coaching, Dr. Evans spearheads Embracing Equity's esteemed year long Leadership Residency program. Her guidance and expertise empower emerging leaders to navigate the complexities of today's educational landscape while fostering an unwavering commitment to anti-racism. Through this transformative initiative, Dr. Evans facilitates the translation of principles into tangible actions, ensuring that organizations and leaders authentically embrace anti-racist practices. *(session 3, Collaboration for Transformation: Strategies and Reflections from a Partnership Toward Early Childhood Organizational Change)*

**Matt Evans**, Matt Evans obtained his bachelor's degree from the University of Minnesota in Psychology with a minor in Mathematics. He has been in the field of Early Childhood for over 13 years with organizations such as Think Small and Child Care Aware of Minnesota. Throughout this time, he has been serving educators, trainers, and coaches by providing customer service, technical assistance, creating resources, professional development opportunities, and building relationships. Matt works with our Professional Development team to support Trainers, RBPD Specialists, and Training Sponsor Organizations with the approval system and Develop as well as provide outreach to other organizations. *(session 4, Achieve - The MN Center for Professional Development: Who We Are!)*

**Rachel Hansen Morris**, (she/her) is the Mentorship Manager at Montessori Center of Minnesota in St. Paul, supporting current and future Montessori educators. She has worked in the Montessori field for 20 years, including as a lead teacher/guide working with children ages 3-6 for over a decade. In addition to an Association Montessori Internationale Primary Diploma, Rachel holds an MEd from Loyola University in Maryland and a BA in Studio Art from Macalester College. She is the parent of two young adult Montessori alum and lives in St. Paul, MN with her husband where she also has a side hustle as a letterpress printer, sewist, and maker of Montessori materials.

**Becky Hegstad**, An award-winning educator, Rebecca Hegstad, M.Ed. has taught infants through adults in a wide variety of educational settings. Currently, Hegstad is a Program Director focusing on infants and toddlers at the University of Minnesota's Child Development Laboratory School. Professional development has been a large part of Hegstad's focus, having presented to international audiences and working as a trainer for regional early childhood world language and culture educators. Hegstad started researching and writing about the relationship between early childhood laughter and learning during her graduate studies, and her master's thesis has been downloaded over 500 times in 59 countries in the past year. Hegstad's latest focus has been examining how teachers could be trained to utilize humor and laughter as intentional teaching strategies in early childhood education. *(session 6, Humor and Laughter as Intentional Teaching Strategies in Early Childhood Education)*

# Presenter Biographies

**Katie Hoffman**, Katie Hoffman is the Director of Quality Improvement for the Coordinating Office. She has worked on Child Care Aware of Minnesota's Quality Improvement team for over 8 years and in the field of early childhood for over 30 years. In her role at Child Care Aware of MN, she oversees the implementation of Parent Aware with her team by supporting Quality Coaches and Recruiters and collaborating with the Rating, Financial Supports, and Professional Development teams. She recently participated in the workgroup that spent the last three years examining the structures of Parent Aware and developing a Parent Aware Racial Equity Plan. She has experience in the field as a classroom teacher, a nanny, education coordinator, and center director. These experiences are what drive her desire to make positive changes for educators, children and families, and her passions include infant and toddler care and development, adult learning and coaching, equity, and team building. Katie sees the next few years as one of the most exciting times in her career in this field, filled with opportunities and hope. *(session 1, Data Made Simple)*

**Shawn Holmes**, Shawn Holmes is the Help Me Connect Coordinator at the MN Department of Health. She leads a cross-agency team from the MN Departments of Health, Education, and Human Services that is responsible for maintaining and improving an online, early childhood navigator that connects expectant families and those with young children (birth – 8 years old) with services in their local communities. Shawn previously worked in the Children & Youth with Special Health Needs Section at MDH as the coordinator of the Follow Along Program - a statewide developmental and social-emotional screening program provided through local public health departments for children birth to 36 months who are at risk of health or developmental issues. *(session 2, Helping Families Connect to Early Childhood and Family Support Resources)*

**Leo Howard III**, Leo Howard comes to the 80x3 initiative after serving in a direct service role for a majority of his career. In his time as a youth worker, it became evident that proactive not reactionary solutions and responses were needed for the myriad of issues his community faced daily. At his core, he is a youth worker, aiming to address the needs of his community through love, education, tangible resources, and early intervention. The goal is to not only give the same support and love to our next generation of young people, but to take it a step further and normalize wellness and mental health. Getting our people to a space of thriving instead of surviving. *(session 2, 80x3: Resilient from the Start)*

**Mike Huber**, Mike Huber, MAEd is the author of Inclusion Includes Us: Building Bridges and Removing Barriers in Early Childhood and Embracing Rough and Tumble Play and numerous articles for Child Care Exchange, Teaching Young Children and The Active Learner magazines. He is the co-host of the podcast Teaching with the Body in Mind and frequent guest on That Early Childhood Nerd. Mike is the Director of Curriculum at Rise Early Learning Center. Mike has served on the Boards of MnAEYC, Child Care Aware MN, International Play Association USA and Transforming Families. He has been awarded the Evelyn House award (2018), Kate Davidson Tanner award (2012), and recognized as an Exchange Leader in 2018. *(session 1, Creation and Use of 'Third Spaces' in Early Childhood Centers)* Kelsey Johnson-Kaiser, Kelsey Johnson-Kaiser is the Youth and Family Services Manager for Saint Paul Public Library. *(session 5, Connecting With Your Public Library)*

**Angela Kapp**, Angela started in the field over 30 years ago as an infant teacher. Before opening her first early childhood program 11 years ago, she worked for Early Head Start and NAEYC as an Assessor. She currently owns EduLink LLC, where she develops in-person and on-demand training courses for early childhood providers. *(session 2, Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Focus on Infants and Toddlers)*



# Presenter Biographies

**Kelly Kazeck**, Kelly works in the Early Learning Services division as the Early Childhood Workforce Collaboration Specialist. 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. She went on to gain her Birth to Third Grade teaching license from St. Cloud State University. Through the years Kelly has been an early educator in both private and public early childhood programs. Prior to state work she was an Early Childhood Program Coordinator for a school district in central Minnesota. Kelly is excited to be providing support to the early childhood workforce at the state level now. *(session 2, Navigating Supports Available for the Early Childhood Workforce)*

**Julie Koritz**, Julie Koritz is an Early Childhood Specialist who has over 30 years of experience working with young families and children. Her work has focused on working with diverse families who have young children with multiple risk factors. She has her M.Ed in Family Education, her undergraduate degree in Child and Family Studies, is a licensed Parent Educator and has her Infant-Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement. Some of her experience includes: leading home visits, facilitating parenting groups and parent-child interaction, training early childhood professionals and devising and teaching classes. *(session 2, Enhancing Our Children's Self Esteem; session 3, Parenting Parents)*

**Emma Kurth** (she/her) serves as the Early Care and Education Business Supports Specialist for the Governor's Children's Cabinet, an interagency partnership that takes a data-driven and results-oriented approach to center children, youth and families in state government. Emma completed her undergraduate degree and M.Ed in Early Childhood Education at the University of Minnesota. Before joining the Children's Cabinet team, Emma worked in a variety of roles in the ECE field, including as an infant teacher, assistant director and director in early childhood programs, and as a Child Care Center Licensor at the Minnesota Department of Human Services, supporting new child care programs in their first year of licensure.

**Bonita Lacey**, Hello all, my name is Bonita Lacey. I am a seasoned early childhood educator, trainer, and coach with over 30 years of experience in the field. I have worked in a variety of capacities including being an early childhood teacher, curriculum developer, certified early childhood trainer, state trainer and coach for new and experienced early childhood teachers. I am passionate about and skilled in supporting early childhood teachers and administrators effectively adopt and utilize evidence-based and culturally appropriate tools for assessing, teaching and achieving developmental outcomes for children from culturally and economically diverse families. *(session 6, Assessing Children as a Playmaker)*

**Michael Lockett**, Dr. Mike Lockett is a retired (33 years) teacher and school administrator. He has given more than 4000 programs across 32 states and in 17 countries at schools, libraries, conferences and for groups of all sizes. Lockett is the author of 13 bilingual picture books for young children, 4 Trade Paperback Picture Books, a YA novel for teens and adults and 6 audio storytelling CDs/DVDs. He has published more than 200 articles and stories for teachers. His international work has included a vast amount of experience working with early childhood teachers throughout Taiwan and China where his work helps teachers teach English as a Foreign Language. *(session 4, Using Story Play to Develop Language Skills for Young Learners)*



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# Presenter Biographies

**Nikole Logan**, Dr. Logan's early and ongoing work as a community organizer has paired well with her urban teaching and parenting education career. Collectively these experiences intertwined to design and administer Saint Paul Public Schools former Office of Early Learning's family engagement and community partnerships where she recently departed her role as the Supervisor for PreKindergarten Family Engagement and Community partnerships. There she designed, and built capacity for, a team of individuals to work with early care and education providers within communities, as well as families, community residents, prekindergarten teachers, and school administrators. She is now the owner of People of Victory LLC where she is an independent consultant supporting teachers of young children, families, and community through program design, implementation, curriculum writing, professional learning, coaching, and more. To date, her most rewarding role yet is as mother to three wonderful children who are also students in Saint Paul Public Schools. *(session 3, Kindergarten Transition Supports for MN Teachers of African American children)*

**Ozge Metin Aslan**, I am a play researcher and also a free play activist. I believe that free play is the only way for learning and exploring. My background field is early childhood education. I got PhD in 2013. I have been an associate professor for 4 years at the Department of Preschool Education, Alanya Alaaddin Keykubat University in Turkey. I have been also a research scholar University of Minnesota, Institute of Child Development, Child Development Laboratory School for one month. During my Ph.D. I was a research scholar at the University of Minnesota, Institute of Child Development, Dr. Nicki Crick's Social Lab during 2011-2012. I finished my postdoctoral research at Maryland University Faculty of Education Child, Relations and Culture Center Child and Family Relations Studies between 2014-2016 with Dr. Kenneth H. Rubin about shy and introverted children's play behavior and peer relations. I have a Persona Dolls Training Certificate and a Forest Education Training Certificate. My interest areas are early childhood programs: emergent curriculum, play-based curriculum, guided play, nature-based curriculum, playworker, social and emotional learning at preschool, DAP, Work Sampling System, and preschool teacher education. *(session 1, Play for the Planet)*

**Lisa Mills**, The Licensing Division's Child Care Center Licensing Unit will gather topic-specific experts from throughout DHS to provide the latest information for licensed child care centers. *(session 1, Child Care Center Licensing - Updates and Information from MN DHS)*

**Sara Mulso** I'm passionate about all things early childhood and committed to helping support young children and their families. In addition to training, I am the director at Woodbury Lutheran Preschool.

**Molly O'Shaughnessy**, Co-Director of Pedagogy and Co-Director of 3-6 Primary Training. Molly O'Shaughnessy is an accomplished AMI trainer, consultant, and lecturer. She has led the Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM) for 25 years of expansion, growing a teacher training center into a movement to bring high-quality Montessori education to hundreds of under-resourced children and communities. In 2008 O'Shaughnessy opened MCM's campus in the Payne-Phalen neighborhood in East St. Paul. The campus includes an early childhood center, a teacher training center, and a one-of-a-kind Montessori Museum. A noted authority in the field of Montessori training, she is in demand as a speaker nationally and internationally. She has presented keynotes and workshops across the United States, Australia, Canada, China, Europe, and Mexico. She has consulted on several Montessori projects nationally and internationally. She has a Master's degree in Education from Loyola University in Maryland and a Bachelor's degree from the College of St. Scholastica. She serves as Community Faculty for Metropolitan State University and served as an adjunct faculty for St. Catherine University for several years. In June 2016 she was given the Early Childhood Honors Award by the Start Early Funders Coalition for her "unwavering dedication to improving the lives of young children and their families. She also received the Wisdom of the Elders Award granted by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) in recognition of leadership throughout the Montessori community as an educator, writer, and innovator (2015-2016). *(session 4, Interventions for Preventing Suspensions and Expulsions Through Behavioral Observation and Documentation)*

# Presenter Biographies

**Raelene Ostberg**, Raelene Ostberg is the Founder of Thriving Together, an organization dedicated to developing and delivering transformative, fun, and inspiring educational opportunities for early childhood educators and the trainers, coaches, and leaders who support them. She obtained a B.A. in Theater and M.Ed. in Family Education from the University of Minnesota. Raelene brings a unique and interesting range of perspectives to her Collaborating with Families series as she has partnered with early childhood educators to successfully raise her own two daughters while she served families for over 20 years in different capacities. In addition to being a parent, Raelene has also worked as a Home Visitor, Parent Educator, and Staff Coordinator with Early Childhood Family Education. Participants love Raelene's energy, enthusiasm, and theatrical storytelling that bring proven strategies to life. (*session 5, Tips, Tools, and Activities to Promote Focus & Attention Skills in Young Children; session 6, Calming the Storm: Evidence-based Strategies for Addressing Toddler Aggression and Reduce Future Aggressive From Occurring*)

**Dustin Parks**, 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 Healing, and the Hunger Free Schools Campaign. Other previous experience includes a Fulbright Research Scholarship (2018, Peru) and experience as a volunteer teacher, giving classes on English, GED-level Algebra, and Financial Analysis in Excel. In his free time, he enjoys fixing and riding bicycles, playing music, and camping.

**June Reineke**, June Reineke, PhD (Early Childhood Collaboration Specialist, Minnesota Department of Education) supports the state voluntary prekindergarten program, P3 Initiative, mixed delivery partnerships, and other projects that encourage collaborations and alignment between community and school early learning systems. Prior to her current position, she has worked in teaching and learning settings at 2- and 4-year higher education, community, and school early childhood programs. (*session 3, Why Do Mixed Delivery Partners and Partnerships Make a Difference—Where Do We Start?*)

**Jodie Riek**, Dr. Jodie Riek has been involved in Early Childhood Education for more than thirty years, through a range of educational environments including childcare, primary education, vocational and higher education. Beginning her career in Australia, she has worked in both childcare and elementary classrooms, as well as fulfilling the roles of Teacher-Librarian, Digital Pedagogy Coach, and Head of Mentoring. Currently, Jodie holds the Paul & Mary Ann Schmidt Endowed Professorship of Early Childhood Education; is the Early Childhood Program Coordinator and an Associate Professor at University of Minnesota Duluth. Her current research interest areas are restoring play pedagogy in early year's primary classrooms, and the impact of pedagogical learning communities on the practices of early childhood teachers. (*session 5, Becoming Play Champions*)

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# Presenter Biographies

**Tina Rucci**, Tina Rucci is the Advocacy Manager at Greater Twin Cities United Way, providing support and leadership for the organization's policy agenda driving equitable systems change aligned with the impact areas of household stability, educational success, and economic opportunity. Tina leads the organization's efforts to dismantle systemic barriers through legislative action, amplifying community voices and cultivating strategic partnerships. Tina is passionate about the intersection between all of United Way's impact areas, and holds a master's degree in Peace and Justice Studies from the University of San Diego. *(session 4, Why Advocacy? Strategies for Driving Change)*

**Kelly Sadlovsky**, Dr. Kelly Sadlovsky has served in the field of Education for over 30 years with roles as classroom teacher, center director, accreditation specialist, trainer/coach, family advocate, curriculum specialist, certified course writer for MN, higher education faculty instructor, and higher education administrator. Kelly owned a large licensed and accredited early learning center in the Twin Cities for over 12 years (infant through grade three) that served a large population of high risk families including teen mothers, parents with special needs, military families, and dual language learners. She has also served for multiple terms on the University Assessment Council for Concordia University, MNAEYC Board of Directors, NAEYC validator (ECE and higher education programs), and consulting editor for NAEYC publications. Dr. Sadlovsky currently serves as the Chair for the Department of Graduate Education and Program Chair for the M.A.Ed. with emphasis in Early Childhood Program at Concordia University, St. Paul. Kelly has a PhD in Education, an M.A.Ed. with emphasis in Early Childhood, and a B.A. in Child Development. She is married with three grown children and six grandchildren, and enjoys spending time with family. *(session 3, Promoting professionalism for early childhood educators: How to implement culturally responsive practices grounded in an ethical framework)*

**Deborah Schein**, Deb has been an early childhood educator since 1972; receiving her PhD in ECE with a focus on spiritual development in 2012. She has taught at several colleges most recently for the Masters in education program at Champlain College. She is the founder of Growing Wonder which supports ongoing research, dialogue, and activities around spiritual development, nature, play, peace, and well-being. Deb has written two books on spirituality and is currently an editor for Soul to Soul; a journal for practitioners and researchers interested in all aspects of children's spirituality. She is also founder of a rock garden located at Bass Lake in Saint Louis Park. *(session 6, How the MN Loose Part Laboratory, STEAM/STREAMS, and Spiritual Flourishing Work Together to Create a Better World and More Resilient Children)*

**Sue Starks** Dr. Sue Starks serves as the chair of early childhood licensure at Concordia University—St. Paul. She teaches within the Birth to Grade and K-6 Elementary licensure tracks and supervises early childhood field experiences. Prior to her time at Concordia, Dr. Starks worked as a preschool teacher and program administrator for over 15 years. She trained for the state of Minnesota on the Social Emotional Pyramid model for the last 13 years and spends time in classrooms working with and coaching teachers, observing, and interacting with young children on a regular basis. In addition, Dr. Starks presents at conferences sharing her knowledge and expertise, alongside learning a tremendous amount from other early childhood professionals.



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**Jane Straub**, Jane Straub serves as the Training Director for CornerHouse Interagency Child Abuse Evaluation and Training Center. She has been working in the violence prevention and intervention field for over 25 years and has worked with youth and families for more than 30 years. In addition to providing advocacy and support, Jane is a national trainer on topics such as the impact of trauma (ACE Study), trauma-responsive care, child sexual abuse, domestic violence and sexual violence, stalking, trafficking, cyber/bullying, reproductive coercion, healthy relationships, consent and supporting disclosure. She was instrumental in creating the curriculum “From Trauma to Resilience: Fostering Hope through Trauma Informed Care”. Her training audience ranges from pre-school to college-age students, victim/survivors to offenders, parents, teachers, community leaders and all professionals working with youth and adults. One of Jane’s goals is to work collaboratively with fields such as law enforcement, all components of health, education, social services and business to collectively connect the dots of risk and prevention, to provide coordinated services to create hope and health for all of our children and families. (*session 2, Age of Consent: Information and Education for all Ages*)

**Molly Sullivan**, Molly Sullivan is the Coordinator of MN StoryCollective for Minnesota Management & Budget 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 of diverse community stories so that State programs, policies, and practices better meet the needs of all 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 MMB, 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. (*session 4, Community story collection and sensemaking*)

**Bill Svrluga**, Whether it’s being one of the founders of five nonprofits (Jeremiah Program, Twin Cities RISE!, Greater Minneapolis Food Bank/Second Harvest, Ujamaa Place) that dramatically improve the lives of economically poor people or Before Racism focused on preventing the development of bias, in particular racial bias in very young children, or helping start a new General Mills company – Yoplait USA, helping communities of color achieve their goals or helping an orchestra produce better music, Bill is relentless in rethinking the status quo and getting better results. Bill’s passion for meaningful redesign was born in the civil rights movement, refined in higher education, matured in Corporate America and honed in many years of starting nonprofit businesses and consulting for-profit, nonprofit and public sector organizations around the country. Bill’s decision many years ago to split his time between strategy consulting and addressing inner city issues has served my clients well. Bill brings multi-sector experience and perspectives to bear on their thorniest challenges. (*session 1, Preventing the Development of Bias*)



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**Meg Thomas**, Meg Thomas has been working in the field of early childhood education for more than 40 years as a teacher, consultant, coach, curriculum writer and adjunct faculty member. She has a life long passion for anti-bias education and participated in the Culturally Relevant/ Anti-Bias Leadership Education Project and numerous other educational opportunities to support her learning and growth in this area. In 2022/23 she made two trips to Ghana to connect with, support and learn from Ghanaian teachers

*(session 1, What Can We Learn From Teachers in Ghana?)*

**Ross Thompson**, Ross Thompson has been in the world of Early Childhood for nearly 20yr: spending all of those years as a classroom teacher, as well as many of those years as a college course instructor, professional development trainer, educational consultant, Reggio Inspired Network of MN board and committee member, ECE program creator, and most recently adding neighborhood bus driver to his tall stack of many hats. With an undergrad and master's degree in ECE from the U of MN, Ross' philosophical and pedagogical beliefs are deeply rooted in play, as well as seeing children as competent and capable agents of their own learning. *(session 4, The Art of (and the learning that comes with) Storytelling; session 5, High-Quality Play in Early Childhood: Defending the Benefits and Discussing the Challenges; session 6, "Can they REALLY climb on that?" Exploring the Attitudes, Perceptions, and Benefits of Big-Body/Rough-and-Tumble Play)*

**Dani Thompson**, Dani Thompson is a Professional Development Analyst at Achieve. She holds a bachelor's degree in Family Consumer Science: Family Life and Child Development and has also completed a certificate program in Instructional Design. She has been with Achieve for over 5 years and specializes in supporting the Course Writer Membership, Course Approval, and Higher Education Transcript Evaluation. *(session 5, Achieve - The MN Center for Professional Development: Who We Are!)*

**Anthony (Ant) Toombs Sr.** is the Senior Playmaker Guide and Outreach Specialist for The Life is Good Playmaker Project (LiGPP), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission to spread the power of optimism to help kids heal. Throughout his 15 years with LiGPP, Ant has partnered with thousands of Early Childhood professionals across the United States and Haiti to help create more safe, loving and joyful environments for kids to engage, connect, and explore. Ant, along with the entire LiGPP team believes that when children grow to see the good in themselves, the good in others and the good in their world - their social, emotional, and cognitive superpowers emerge. Today, Ant inspires audiences with true stories of how optimism can be harnessed to overcome adversity, and how ANYONE can cultivate a more optimistic disposition to insulate against toxic stress, connect more easily, and experience more joy.

**Jennie Walker Knoot**, Jennie Walker Knoot is the librarian at Think Small's Debra S Fish Early Childhood Library. *(session 4, Connecting with Your Public Library)*

**Karen Walburg** For many years Karen has been privileged to observe and experience children's intrinsic connection with nature. In her teaching career at Westwood Early Childhood Center she has witnessed the benefits that time in nature brings to children as well as families and colleagues. Finding ways to encourage and support opportunities for those soul-filling, spirit thrill, learning and growing experiences has become one of her greatest joys.

**Marah Weidensee** is an Early Learning Analyst in the Early Learning Services Division of the Minnesota Department of Education. She analyzes qualitative and quantitative data on the early childhood workforce and coordinates data for workforce initiatives across agencies. Marah began working in the Early Learning Services Division as a student worker in 2022 before receiving her Master's degree in Public Policy from the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs in May 2023.



# Presenter Biographies

**Shelia Williams Ridge**, Sheila Williams Ridge is the Director of the University of Minnesota Child Development Laboratory School. She has an EdD in Education Leadership, an MA in Education, and a BA in Biology. She is a 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. Sheila has worked in the early childhood field since 2000. (*session 5, Gardening, Cooking, and Nature-Based Learning with Young Children*)

**Alyssa Wilt**, Alyssa Wilt is a preschool teacher and mentor for student teachers at the University of Minnesota Child Development Lab School. She holds an M.Ed. and Minnesota Teaching License in ECE and Elementary Education. She is also an instructor in the Early Childhood Program at the University of Minnesota. She has worked in the early childhood field since 2016. (*session 5, Gardening, Cooking, and Nature-Based Learning with Young Childhood*)

**Candace Yates**, Candace Yates (she/her) has worked in the field of early childhood education for 19 years as a teacher, coach, trainer, and administrator. As a passionate gardener, she embraces the opportunity to cultivate both people and plants, wherever she is. Her own journey has been one filled with relearning, restoration, revelation, and redemption. Candace's desire is to see others embrace their own development with excitement and experience the growth, healing, and wholeness reserved for them. Candace currently serves as Vice President of Equity and Programs Supports for Think Small where she focuses her efforts on equity-centered leadership development and program management and is a member of the Parent Aware Advisory Committee, 80x3 Advisory, Voices and Choices for Children Coalition, and the MNAEYC Board of Directors. She is also a Qualified Administrator of the Intercultural Development Inventory and holds a BA in Spanish Studies from the University of MN-Twin Cities, and certificates in Diversity and Inclusion from Cornell University and the University of Florida's Muma College of Business.

**Carrie Zelin Johnson**, Carrie Zelin Johnson M.Ed.(she/her) has served in various consultant roles to help individuals, organizations and schools achieve equitable outcomes for over 25 years in MN. Carrie has a Master of Ed. in Educational Leadership with a minor in Ed. Psychology from the UMN and was a Mental Health Practitioner for 14 years. She has served on a PK-8 charter school board, led home visiting programs and directed and founded accredited preschools and other community initiatives. In those roles she ensured full implementation of culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and interventions and effective parent and staff development. Currently, she is a Program Officer at the Greater Twin Cities United Way and Coordinator of the Start Early Funders Coalition. Being a parent and a grandparent has given her unique lived experiences and insights on both viable community solutions and persistent systemic barriers impacting children, youth and families and the fields of education and mental health. She is a human rights and public policy advocate with a focus on social emotional learning and teaching, the arts, and equity in MN and beyond.

**Amanda Ziebell Mawanda**, Amanda Ziebell Mawanda has over twenty years of nonprofit experience and works at Propel Nonprofits as a Senior Strategic Services Consultant. Her work focuses on helping organizations manage change, transitions and all the big questions that come with running a mission-driven nonprofit. (*session 3, Leadership Transitions: Succession Planning and Developing your Internal Pipeline*)