



UW-WHITEWATER
**EARLY CHILDHOOD
CONFERENCE**

APRIL 11 - 12, 2025

Friday, April 11 Sessions

Friday Session One – KEYNOTE: 8am-9:15am

You Deserve Joy! Reduce Stress, break through Barriers, and Make a Plan to Increase Your Own Personal Joy Factor, TODAY.

Raelene Ostberg, M.Ed, National Keynote Speaker and Director

Thriving Together LLC

<https://www.thriving-together.com/>

Providing care and education for young children and supporting those who do is intense emotional labor and can easily lead to exhaustion and burn out. The reality is, when you work in a career that consumes your heart, mind, and sometimes sanity, it can be difficult to just leave it behind. Taking care of others can become the main mode of operation and the most important person might just get left behind – you. Taking time to restore and nurture yourself is critical to be your best and to enjoy your important work!

Join this transformative keynote presentation to discover methods to crush the obstacles that increase stress and steal your joy, feel energized in your critical role caring for and educating young children, have fun and get inspired listening to entertaining, real-life stories that show the easy-to-apply strategies in action, and make a plan to increase your own personal joy factor starting right away. You will take away numerous techniques to help you increase gratitude, reduce stress, and get the most out of your unique journey.

Adults

Friday Session Two: 9:30 – 10:45am

201. From Struggles to Success: Maximize Your Potential

Prerna Richards, CEO & Founder

Together We Grow

<https://togetherwegrow.online/>

This empowering workshop is designed for all early childhood educators seeking to unlock their full potential. Discover how stress affects individuals and teams, and develop self-awareness by exploring your personal strengths and style. Learn to cultivate mindfulness, intentionality, and emotional intelligence (EI) to enhance well-being, build meaningful connections, and create a positive impact in your work and beyond. **Adults**

203. Advancing Work in ECE Programs: Virtual Observations and Panel Discussion Focused on Advancing Education, Partnering with Agencies, and Deepening Understanding of Pedagogical Practices.

Kiley Vethe, Drop-In Site Manager/Lead Teacher

UW-Whitewater Children's Center

<https://www.uww.edu/childrenscenter>

This presentation will offer a series of virtual classroom observations and open dialogue to explore pedagogical practices, partnerships between ECE programs, local agencies, and community organizations. A panel of expert educators, early childhood advocates, and community partners will engage with participants and discuss collaborative partnerships that support inclusive, community-driven learning environments. UWW Children's Center Drop In-Site Manager/ Lead Teacher will facilitate the panel making connections to the observation. Program Enrichment Coordinator will explore how Reggio Emilia-inspired practices can transform an ECE program. Center Director will discuss partnerships and program administration. UWW Professor/Program Coordinator will offer insight to educator advancement of education through the MSE ECE Policy program. **Adults**

204. Nature Songs That Tell the Truth!

David Stokes, Educator Entertainer Naturalist

Frog Chorus Nature Education

www.dwstokes.com

Using short participatory songs, David will share his enthusiasm for teaching about nature in a fun, accurate manner. Songs such as: Froggie, Bats Eat bugs, Owl Moon, and many others will be shared with accompanying concept facilitators (puppets, toys and live creatures). **Preschool**

205. Using Assessment to Support Developmental Concerns

Naomi Rahn, Associate Professor

Brooke Winchell, Associate Professor

University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

In this session, participants will be introduced to assessment tools and practices to identify and support developmental concerns in young children. An overview of specific screening and assessment tools will be provided. Participants will learn how to use assessment information to decide what to teach to help support development. Participants will engage in an activity to gain skills in talking with families about developmental concerns and learn about early intervention and special education resources at the state and local level. **Infants, Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten**

206. Reflection: The First Step to Examine Bias to Cultivate Inclusivity and Civil Discourse

James-Etta Goodloe Reed, Adjunct Instructor

University of Wisconsin - Whitewater

Journals have been kept for centuries, and the research of BL Seaward (2020) discusses how journal writing gives voice to everyday experiences and can be used as a tool to manage stress. Implementing strategies that help students build a strong sense of belonging with inclusivity and civil discourse is heavy work. Additionally, journaling can promote critical self-reflection where problems might arise and evolving worldviews and contradictions are challenged. Self-awareness is vital in the work of teachers because it is the teachers beliefs and biases that influence how they connect with and also learn from their students and their families. This presentation will require participants to reflect deeply on their own identity, culture and bias. Throughout this session participants will develop understanding of the importance of culturally responsive teaching in early childhood education, the research and theory behind it. Participants will develop awareness of their own strengths and gaps, reflect on best practices and design actionable strategies toward becoming more culturally aware. **Adults**

207. Making Music with Infants and Toddlers: HOW? WHY? WHAT?

Carole Stephens, Early Childhood Music and Movement Specialist

Macaroni Soup!

www.macaronisoup.com

Babies arrive in the world ready to learn language, stretch their bodies and find delight in sounds. Making music through the first three years becomes a pathway to communication, interpreting emotions and creating healthy attachments with others. Let's explore developmentally appropriate songs, chants and simple movement activities to lay down a happy soundtrack for the littles in your care. **Toddlers**

210. The Power of Intentional Play: Using Sensory Play Kits to Support Early Emotional Literacy Skill Development & Bridge Other Complex Topics

Abbie Pabon, Founder

Present Not Perfect Play Co.

www.presentnotperfectllc.com

Dive into the world of sensory play as it relates to building early emotional literacy skills, healthy social development, problem solving skills, resilience, and more in this interactive workshop where participants will get to create and build their very own unique sensory kit while learning research-based play strategies on how to use the sensory play kits in their work with children. Through a neurodiversity affirming lens, Present Not Perfect Play Co. uses a scaffolded approach of connection, co-regulation, and creating meaning through the powerful use of metaphor in play to process and express feelings and build children's emotional agility. **Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3, Families**

211. The Language of Behavior: Practical and Proactive Strategies for our Youngest Learners

Lizzy Augustin, WI Statewide Early Childhood SEL Coach

EL-TAI/ Cesa 1

This session will explore behavior as a form of communication for our youngest learners. Learning will focus on the brain science of the developing child, early developmental milestones, and researched-based strategies. Participants will walk away with proactive universal supports to create engaging learning environments and practical learner-centered strategies. **Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten**

213. Career Development: Beginnings and Beyond

Erica Schepp, Career and Professional Development Specialist

Danette Espindola, Career Development Counselor

WECA

Explore the various career pathways available to those just joining the early childhood field to those having decades of experience and education in the field. Learn how the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association's free Career Development Counseling service can be utilized to identify the right path for your career journey. **Adults**

214. Adults at Play

Edie Baran, Arts Integration Teaching Artist

ArtSpark Productions

When was the last time that you got to play without all the responsibilities of being The Teacher? Now's your chance to stop the clock, turn off those phones, relax and play! This is your opportunity to engage in creative dramatic play from the adult perspective. While most of the activities can be adapted for use in your classrooms, the focus for this workshop will be on YOU. We will play numerous theatre games (no need to get nervous – there's no performance), expand our creativity, and top the workshop off with some relaxation time and activities. Wear comfortable clothes you can move in. This workshop is a combination of theatre games, music, movement, and silence. **Adults**

215. Starting Small: Nurturing Fairness, Compassion, and Acceptance

Sandy Queen, Director

Lifeworks

For most children, the classroom is the first ongoing social structure outside their family. "Fair" and "not fair" are often the first two moral judgments that a child makes, using "fairness" as a way to both comply with, and resist, rules. Their days are full of little injustices and even in a safe classroom, a child can feel lost and frightened at any moment. What they learn about themselves and others from classroom experiences help develop attitudes and values about fairness, justice and acceptance that will follow them throughout their lives.

This session looks at the early lessons children learn from being in our class--from other children and from us as they strive to create meaning and safety in their environment, as they deal with peers and adults who are different from themselves and their families, the skills necessary for making and keeping friends, identifying, appreciating and celebrating differences-- and the powerful impact that we, as adults, have in their sense of social belonging and equality as we intentionally create an environment that emphasizes compassion and understanding -lessons they may not experience anywhere else in their lives. **Kindergarten, Grades 1-3, Grades 4-5**

216. Taming the Temperament: Those Terrible Twos

Cheryl Hovey, President EzEd2Go/Program Director Fischer College

EzEd2Go/Fisher College

www.EzEd2Go.com

Do you ever scratch your head and wonder: Why did this child have a meltdown over me wanting to hold his hand? Why do they get angry when you move their cubby? This workshop will define temperament; What is known about temperament and how this information can be used to optimize a child's growth and development. **Infants, Toddlers, Preschool**

217. The Brain Loves a Song!

Maryann Harmon, Founder of Music with Mar/Educational Consultant

Music with Mar

www.musicwithmar.com

Repeatedly, research has shown that music is the only activity that utilizes the entire brain. Combining that with knowing that the early years are the ones where we make the most difference, this workshop demonstrates through movement and activity why the brain responds to music so easily. As early childhood educators, we are engineers / designers of brains! How exciting is that? The instructor will move from discussion to active participation. Music and books will be used to demonstrate how to best utilize these tools in an educational setting. **Toddlers, Preschool, 4K**

218. From Frantic to Fun: Tools to Create Classrooms Full of Laughter and Joy

Dana Staser, President/Owner, Dana Staser Consulting, LLC

Betsy Diamant-Cohen, Founder, Mother Goose on the Loose

www.danastaserconsulting.com

Capture the fun and joy of teaching! "Frantic to Fun: Tools to Create Classrooms Full of Laughter and Joy" is an interactive presentation designed for teachers, family engagement staff, and leaders. Discover how music, movement, songs, puppets, and more can enhance the social-emotional learning of your students while fostering an engaging and inspiring environment! You'll gather strategies and free resources from the award-winning Mother Goose on the Loose program for both daily classroom activities and home visits. Additionally, you'll build your confidence in teaching social-emotional skills, managing classroom behaviors, and increasing joy and laughter in the learning experience. **Infants, Toddlers**

Friday Session Three: 11:00 – 12:15pm

301. Sensational Science, Stories, and Serendipity

Edie Baran, Arts Integration Teaching Artist

ArtSpark Productions

By integrating stories and creative movement, your students will enhance their understanding of science (e.g., the life cycle of plants) in this engaging process. The drama/storytelling component engages our imaginations; creative movement aids in retention of learning: we remember best what we learn through our bodies. This hands-on workshop is adaptable to your current curriculum needs. All your students, regardless of abilities, can have a role in this integration of drama and science. Be prepared to move in this hands-on workshop! **Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3**

302. Building Your Child's Executive Function Toolbox

Katelyn Mabry, ADHD Life Coach

Journey Through ADHD LLC

www.katelynmabry.com

Are you dedicated to building a toolbox of tools and strategies for your child/students with neurodivergent brains, but you are not sure where to start? If so, this is the session for you! During this session, we will dive deeper into each of the executive function skills that often pose a challenge for our kids with neurodivergent brains both at home and in the classroom setting. We will walk through the areas of emotional regulation, getting started (activation) & task switching, time management, working memory, organizing & prioritizing, regulation of attention, metacognition, and adapting to changes. Every child has a different variety of needs and that's why we will learn and collaborate to discover how you can best build your child/ren's toolbox both at home and in their school environments! Come ready to learn and ask questions! We are on this journey to grow together! **Grades 1-3, Grades 4-5.**

303. Every Bookshelf Tells a Story: Using Book Audits to Deepen Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging in your Classroom Environment

Amanda Burns, Project Manager, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

Evy Gildrie-Voyles, Early Childhood Educator, VA Kids

The bookshelves in a classroom tell a story of who is welcomed, valued, seen, and included in our space and in our communities. Every child deserves to see themselves in their book collections and to see windows into the lives of others who may differ from themselves. This hands-on workshop will offer tools and resources for conducting a book audit for your classroom or program's book collection. **Infants, Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3, Grades 4-5, Adults, Families**

304. OH WOW! Not EWE YUCK!!

David Stokes, Educator, Entertainer, & Naturalist

Frog Chorus Nature Education

www.dwstokes.com

Using short stories, songs, and live animals, we will examine the beauty, wonder and excitement of common animals that many people don't like. Turtles, snakes, mice etc. will be in the room. Concept facilitators will be given away. **Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3, Families**

305. Creating Confident, Capable Children through Music

Maryann Harmon, Educational Consultant / Founder of Music with Mar

Music with Mar

musicwithmar.com

Too often children already have a list of things they think they are not good at. Teachers are so stressed about cognitive abilities, they neglect to get the TOTAL child ready for school / life in general, to include not only exposure to multi-languages, math or science skills, but social skills as well. Music is the best and easiest way to do that. Through the use of well-thought out music and movement activities (including child-directed activities, listening games and use of various languages), children will have a list of things they feel capable of doing. **Toddlers, Preschool, 4K**

307. Make Music a Super Power in Your PreK/K Classroom!

Carole Stephens, Early Childhood Music and Movement Specialist

Macaroni Soup

www.macaronisoup.com

Easy-peasy zipper songs, chants, fingerplays and movement activities to have ready to fill a minute or ten minutes. Not a singer? Not a problem! You can do this! Join Miss Carole for a serotonin boost you can pass on to your students on Monday - and beyond!

Preschool

308. Use Shared Reading to Foster Theory of Mind Development in Young Children

Beverly Trezek, Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin - Madison

Lauren Zepp, Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin - Whitewater

In this interactive session, participants will be introduced to the concept of Theory of Mind (ToM) and its relationship to later literacy and social-emotional development. ToM includes using words to describe emotions (e.g., happy, angry) and explain mental states (e.g., think, know), as well as understand the thoughts and feelings of others and comprehend figurative language, lies, and sarcasm. The presenters will demonstrate the teaching strategies that foster ToM development through the use of a well-known children's book (i.e., Elephant and Piggie). Participants will have the opportunity to practice and reflect on the application of the teaching strategies in relation to their professional work. Resources for identifying children's books that foster ToM development in young children will also be shared and discussed. **4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3**

309. Bubbles 101

Terrie Schmoldt, Advanced Learning Coordinator, Oregon School District

Marissa Schmoldt, Presentation Consultant & Agriculture Specialist, Bubbles 101

Are you ready to get your hands wet and participate in bubble experiments? This is a hands-on, hands-wet, participatory session of fun and exploration as we conduct a plethora of bubble experiments! Bring a friend! We will be making Bubbles and Memories!

Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3

311. Flawlessly Unperfect: Thriving as an Excellent Early Childhood Educator

Megan Thornburgh, Head of Early Childhood & Director of Student Services

Madison Country Day School

www.readtoinspire.com

In early childhood education, the pursuit of excellence often feels at odds with the inevitability of imperfection. This presentation explores how embracing imperfection can enhance your effectiveness as a teacher while reducing stress and burnout. Through practical strategies and real-world examples, we'll examine how to set realistic expectations, reframe challenges, and cultivate a growth-oriented mindset.

Participants will learn how to maintain high professional standards without striving for unattainable perfection. Together, we'll discuss how to leverage mistakes as opportunities for growth, foster resilience in ourselves and our students, and build confidence in navigating the unpredictable realities of early childhood education. This session offers a fresh perspective on balancing excellence with self-compassion, equipping you with tools to thrive personally and professionally. Walk away with actionable insights to create a more joyful, sustainable teaching practice. Embrace the beauty of being "flawlessly UnPerfect"! **Adults, Families**

312. Routines Rule!

Linda Armas, Educational Consult

Prepare Parents LLC

www.prepareparents.com

No classroom toolbox is complete without effective routines! Design a personalized plan that will utilize the ROUTINES RULE! framework. Routines work together with your current practices to minimize trouble spots in your role with children, promote positive behavior, stimulate responsibility, and enhance classroom harmony. Explore the tried-and-true process of creating effective routines for your professional and/or personal applications. All children, even those with difficulties, disabilities, and disorders thrive. Automatized routines make way for more time, attention, and focus for unfamiliar and challenging tasks. Under Linda's guidance, you (and your team) will design ROUTINES RULE! plans that children will gladly achieve to meet your expectations! **Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3, Families**

314. Transition Songs: Moving Your Day Along!

Colleen Hannafin, Early Childhood Music

North SideMusic

www.northsidemusicwi.com

Transitions between activities can provide a positive classroom balance and can be a learning experience itself. This presentation will feature a balance of activities using songs and chants for those times a day that you move your children from one activity to the next. From outdoor play to hand washing, snack time, circle time, and so on.

Come sing and move along, while improving language skills and vocabulary, develop better self-esteem and discipline, while creating a calm, orderly environment. **Toddlers, Preschool, 4K**

315. The Essentials: What Every Child Needs to Survive and Thrive

Sandy Queen, Director

Lifeworks

Why do some kids rise above and thrive, while others seem to struggle from the beginning? What do children need to be a Thriver? How can we as educators provide the experiences and a social/emotional environment that encourages positive development and success? Security is the absolute foundation on which this is built, from the very beginning of life. This is fostered by the very FIRST essential for every child: bonding. From that foundation, we encourage the child to build both an inner world of self-reflection and thought, and an external world of creativity and relationships that support and encourage a successful presence in the external world.

This session looks at the essentials to making this happen: Bonding, development of an interior life, image making, creative expression, and relationship development. These essentials begin and follow, the developmental ladder each child climbs, adding new rungs to a strong early foundation. What activities and strategies can we use to make sure these essentials are understood and promoted in our classrooms? It IS possible, and Fun! **Infants, Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3**

317. Building Self-Esteem and Self-Regulation Skills Using Rhymes and Songs

Betsy Diamant-Cohen, Founder, Author, and Trainer

Mother Goose on the Loose, LLC

www.mothergooseontheloose.com

A quick overview of brain research will be followed by a hands-on demonstration of partnering rhymes and songs with activities to build executive function skills. An example is how to use a Humpty Dumpty flannel board activity to practice turn taking, paying attention, and following directions, while also building self-esteem and learning to show appreciation to others.

Descriptions of ways to adapt songs and rhymes in a variety of settings and a relevant hand-out will enable participants to incorporate this method and the associated activities into their own programs. Session participants will feel empowered by the recognition given to their unique role in the development of children's executive function, early literacy, and school readiness skills.

Participants will "take home" new ways to incorporate research findings into practical activities and will understand how to use simple explanations to educate parents regarding the importance of playful interaction with their children. **Infants, Toddlers, Families**

318. Are you Funnier Than a Four-Year-Old? Learning Through Play with STEM

Shawn Wolf, Kids Learning Coordinator

Kenosha Public Library

Learning through play is not just for kids! Come experience our STEM playground equipped with wind tunnels, light table, ramps, a conveyor belt, and lots of loose parts. Take on special challenges created by children and see how joy, meaning, engagement, iterations, and social interaction contribute to learning. **Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3**

Friday Lunch Hour: 12:15 – 1:15pm

L50. STEM Playground

Shawn Wolf, Kids Learning Coordinator

Kenosha Public Library

It's lunchtime and this is your playground! Come play with some big STEM toys including wind tunnels, light table, ramps, and a conveyor belt. Toys range from homemade to big budget and show how these engaging opportunities can be accessible for any learning environment. **Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3**

Friday Session Four: 1:15 – 2:30pm

401. Joyful Noise: Enriching Early Education with Music

Steve Girman, ECE Instructor

Waukesha County Technical College

milwaukeeesteve.com

Since the dawn of civilization, music has been a powerful tool for bringing people together and fostering a sense of belonging. In every classroom, music can play a vital role in creating a "caring community" where students live and learn in "harmony." This workshop will introduce participants to new ways to support routines, transitions and achieve learning goals through simple songs and fingerplays. Shut off the screen and discover how music can transform your classroom into a joyful space. **Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten**

402. Instructional Strategies to Develop Early Literacy Skills in Alignment with Act 20

Lauren Zepp, Assistant Professor of Special Education

University of Wisconsin - Whitewater

As identified in WI's Act 20 and current reading research, strong early literacy skills are predictive of future reading achievement. This interactive session will equip early childhood educators (3k - 1st grade) with instructional strategies to build early literacy skills in the areas of phonological and phonemic awareness, as well as alphabet knowledge. These skills are especially critical for learners with disabilities and multilingual learners. Toward the goal of preparing all children to become proficient readers, participants will define key areas of early reading development and practice instructional routines to target each skill. Participants will also receive resources for assessment and instruction in early literacy skills, as well as recommendations for continued professional learning. **Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3**

403. Raise Educators Wages, Lower Turnover and Increase Quality through Scale: A Secret to Greater Success

Bob Davis, Owner/Founder

Inspire Early Childhood and Little Explorers Preschool

<http://inspireearlychildhood.com/> and <https://littleexplorerspreschool.com/>

Our Early Childhood Education field is in crisis. One of the main reasons for this crisis is that our educators are usually paid very low wages. The average wage in WI is around \$15 an hour. That's just not competitive in today's world. As a result, many great educators have left the field. How can we change this trend and reestablish a skilled and well compensated workforce? This presentation is about "economies of scale". As schools get larger, some expenses do not grow linearly with income. That produces extra margin which can be used in several ways, one of which is raising educator wages. See models of how this can work in different sized schools with different tuition rates, wages and staffing. Let's discuss the advantages and challenges of using this strategy to strengthen your school's economic system and how this strategy could potentially be used to solve the EC workforce shortage in about 75% of WI communities. **Adults**

404. Welcoming Children Who Were Adopted and Their Families Through Our Language, Actions, and Understanding

Robin Fox, Professor Emerita

University of Wisconsin - Whitewater

Children who were adopted have always attended early childhood programs but there has been little training for teachers related to the topic of adoption. In this presentation we will discuss how to welcome and support children who were adopted (along with their families) through thoughtful curriculum, material selection, and language. **Infants, Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3, Grades 4-5, Adults, Families**

406. Getting REAL: Using Repeats, Edits, Authors, and Leads to Promote Young Children's Language

Patty Becker, Associate Professor, Viterbo University

Liv Thompson, Graduate Student, University of Wisconsin - Whitewater

The relationship between adult talk and children's language learning has been well documented. One framework pre-service and in-service early childhood educators can use to analyze, reflect on, and plan adult talk is Repeats, Edits, Authors, and Leads (REAL, Boyd, 2014). In this session, the presenters will (a) describe characteristics of adult talk that promote young children's language, (b) compare three adult talk frameworks, (c) and discuss pre-service early childhood teachers' reflections on the use of the REAL framework. Participants will analyze an adult-child discourse sample for use of the REAL strategies and share examples of how they use adult talk in their classrooms. **Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten**

407. Understanding Play through the Lens of Infants and Toddlers

Bonnie Spencer, Early Childhood Consultant

EIC Training

www.eic-training.com

Explore the transformative role of play in infant and toddler development through observation, self-reflection, and hands-on activities. Using the Thinking Lens tool, this session equips educators with inclusive strategies to foster creativity, exploration, and relationships, creating rich, developmentally appropriate play experiences for every child. **Infants, Toddlers**

408. A Collaborative Process of Discovery

Jenalee Johnson, Program Enrichment Coordinator

University of Wisconsin – Whitewater Children's Center

Join us for an engaging professional development session on how the University of Whitewater Children's Center successfully planned and executed Art in Motion: A Collaborative Process of Discovery, a community art exhibit that emphasized the creative process over the final product. This presentation will take you through the journey of collaboration, showcasing how the center brought together children from all classrooms and multiple organizations throughout the community to create a dynamic, process-focused art experience. We will explore how each partnership contributed to fostering a rich, hands-on environment where children engaged in meaningful, exploratory art-making that celebrated creativity, expression, and discovery. Attendees will learn about the collaborative planning, logistical coordination, and pedagogical strategies involved in this multi-faceted project. This session will provide practical insights for fostering community connections, promoting process-based art, and creating inclusive educational opportunities through art that highlight the journey of learning, rather than just the finished piece. **Infants, Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Adults, Families**

410. Empowering Voices: Advocacy Strategies for Early Childhood Education

Tanya Wooden, Engagement Specialist

Kayla Gardner, Engagement Specialist & TEACH Scholarship Counselor

WECA

Wisconsinearlychildhood.org

This session equips early childhood educators with the tools and strategies to become effective advocates for their field while actively engaging families and communities in the advocacy process. Attendees will learn how to collaborate with legislators, community leaders, families, and other stakeholders to champion the importance of quality early childhood education. The presentation provides step-by-step guidance on identifying key individuals to approach, fostering family and community partnerships, crafting compelling messages, and confidently sharing personal stories that highlight the profound impact of early education. Participants will leave with actionable insights to amplify their voices, build strong alliances with families and communities, and drive meaningful, collaborative change that benefits children, families, and the early childhood profession. **Adults, Families**

411. Use your Program's Protective Gear: Policies, Contracts, and Risk Management

Kimberly Yehle, WEESN Finance Specialist, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

Dan Eckhardt, WEESN Financial Team Coordinator, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

Childcare programs can be put in difficult situations if they don't have some of the proper tools in place to proactively attend to those situations before they become problems. Join us for this interactive session where we will examine important questions including What makes a contract legally binding? How does being a Mandatory Reporter reduce my risk for doing business? and why do handbooks need to have policies and procedures? Learn more about risk management and the tools you have at hand to protect your program! **Adults**

412. Adventures and Printmaking

Anne Tillett, Adult and Student Services Coordinator, University of Wisconsin - Whitewater

Cara Craig, Home Visitor Parent Educator, Childcare Network of Evanston Head Start/Early Head Start

Through hands-on experiences, this workshop will provide participants the opportunity to explore printmaking as a flexible, process-focused artform. The workshop will include how to incorporate other learning domains into the artmaking process, WMELS standards, resources, and book extensions. It will support educators in bringing the experiences into toddler and preschool classrooms and also talk about opportunities for children from 0-100. As a group, participants will discuss and develop ideas to introduce children to talking about art with examples of printmaking throughout history, use open ended questions, and make art experiences an opportunity for educators to have fun, express themselves, and pass along a love for art. **Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten**

413. Wisconsin Registry: Building Your Career Pathway

Devan Valona, Operations Coordinator, Wisconsin Registry

Jackie Bleskacek, Professional Development Operations Strategist, Wisconsin Registry

Join us to explore Wisconsin Registry services, potential career pathways, and opportunities available to the field. Learn how to build your career pathway, whether it is increasing your Career Level or meeting continuing education requirements. This includes opportunities like Child Care Foundational Training and Registry Credentials. The Wisconsin Registry has resources to support your growth in the early care and education field. **Adults**

414. Circle of Friends: Circle Time Songs and Activities

Colleen Hannafin, Early Childhood Music

North Side Music

www.northsidemusicwi.com

Let's "Ring-around-the Rosie" and "Rumble to the Bottom" with our "Circle of Friends". Music and movement songs presented in a circle setting, adaptable for individual, partner and group spaces. Materials presented include simple math (e.g., geometric shapes, number recognition, addition) and letter recognition. Original and traditional songs, movement, world songs and dances will be shared. **Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten**

415. Roots of Resilience: Stress Less, Connect More – Discover the Transformative Power of Relationships

Cheryl Hovey, President EzEd2Go/Program Director Fischer College

EzEd2Go/Fisher College

www.EzEd2Go.com

In helping infants and toddlers overcome the effects of toxic stress. This dynamic workshop equips early childhood providers with practical strategies to recognize signs of stress and build strong, nurturing connections that foster resilience and growth. Join us to gain insights, tools, and inspiration for making a lasting difference in the lives of our youngest learners.

Infants, Toddlers, Preschool

416. Getting it Done Right: Four Leadership Tools to Increase Staff Retention, Collaboration & Satisfaction

Dana Staser, President/Owner

Dana Staser Consulting, LLC

www.danastaserconsulting.com

Participants will learn how casting vision, program design, communication, and staff engagement impact program culture and performance. Collect strategies to directly address conflict, issues of professionalism, and effective communication. Obtain hands-on leadership tools to support building an effect team. **Adults**

417. Classroom Experiences Designed to Prepare Early-Stage Clinicians to Work with Children and Families Affected by Cleft Lip and Cleft Palate

Michael Hammer, Associate Professor; Director, Airway Sensory Physiology Laboratory, UW-Whitewater

Payton Navis, Research Assistant, UW-Whitewater

Children (and their families) with cleft lip and/or cleft palate face a number of challenges in early development including: feeding, swallowing, & nutrition; speech, language, & hearing; parent, sibling, & family bonding; and each has the potential to impact further social, cognitive, emotional, educational, physical, and health development. In this highly interactive session, we will provide (a) succinct fundamental background focused on healthy craniofacial development, (b) focused details about cleft lip and cleft palate, (c) functional consequences and potential impact of cleft lip and cleft palate, and (d) practical evidence-based approaches to assessment and intervention for children and families affected by clefts of the lip and/or palate. In particular, we will emphasize hands-on educational activities for participants to emphasize the key learning objectives and to share our own experiences of teaching these key concepts to early-stage clinicians. **Infants, Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3, Grades 4-5, Families**

Friday Session Five: 2:45 – 4:00pm

501. Nursery Rhyme Math

Terrie Schmoldt, Advanced Learning Coordinator, Oregon School District

Marissa Schmoldt, Presentation Consultant & Agriculture Specialist, Bubbles 101

We're going beyond phonemics and rhyming! We are measuring, estimating, graphing, and having fun. Bring a friend and get your math on! We will conclude with a field day of Nursery Rhyme Olympics! **Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten**

502. Skills and Strategies for Children with Hearing Difference to Promote Language Development

Kacie Hajducki, Graduate Student, University of Wisconsin - Whitewater

Alyssa Meier, Graduate Student, University of Wisconsin - Whitewater

Access to language is crucial for language development. For children with hearing loss, access to language becomes more challenging. This presentation will give educators the opportunity to learn about the different strategies to support children with hearing differences from the perspective of future speech language pathologists. The presenters will also share their experiences participating as clinicians in a playgroup for young children who are hard of hearing or deaf. **Infants, Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Grades 1-3, Grades 4-5**

505. So, You Need to have a Parent Meeting?!

Michelle Doughty, School Age Director

Kettle Moraine YMCA

Often, professionals encounter the need to meet with families to discuss challenging behaviors yet may find themselves uncertain about the next steps after initiating the conversation. They meet, discuss the behaviors, but then what? How can this information be translated into a concrete plan to support the child?

A critical step in addressing challenging behaviors is collaborating with families to understand these behaviors and develop an action plan aimed at helping the child succeed in the program. This workshop provides participants with the tools needed to effectively engage with families and collaboratively create a behavior support plan. **Adults**

506. Stress and Resilience: Strengthening Well-Being for Early Childhood Professionals

Anna Barthen, Inclusion Content Specialist

Nicole Cusimano, Social and Emotional Content Specialist

YoungStar Connect and Shine Early Learning

<https://youngstarconnect.my.site.com>

This course offers early childhood educators strategies to recognize stressors and explore ways to build resilience in both their personal and professional lives. Participants will reflect on techniques to enhance emotional well-being and consider practical approaches to finding balance and maintaining a positive outlook in their work. The training aims to support educators in navigating challenges with greater ease and promoting a healthier, more resilient mindset. **Adults**

507. Understanding Play through the Lens of Infants and Toddlers

Bonnie Spencer, Early Childhood Consultant

EIC Training

www.eic-training.com

Explore the transformative role of play in infant and toddler development through observation, self-reflection, and hands-on activities. Using the Thinking Lens tool, this session equips educators with inclusive strategies to foster creativity, exploration, and relationships, creating rich, developmentally appropriate play experiences for every child. **Infants, Toddlers**

508. Budgeting at its Best: When Your Heart and Head Meet Head-On

Kimberly Yehle, WEESN Finance Specialist, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

Dan Eckhardt, WEESN Financial Team Coordinator, Wisconsin Early Childhood Association

Budgeting is both a science and an art. Come and investigate some of the technical aspects of budgets, like computing your cost-per-child, while also exploring how your budget is a document of your program's values. By having a balanced view of your budget and its purpose, you'll be ready to implement financial decisions from a meaningful foundation. **Adults**

509. Optimizing Home/School Communication

Linda Armas, Educational Consultant

Prepare Parents LLC

www.prepareparents.com

It can be hard to find the time to chat with your students' parents at drop-off and pick-up. After all, you're either busy helping a class full of little ones settle into their day, or to stay happily engaged when everyone is tired and wants to get home. Still, it's important to make meaningful connections with parents for the good of your students. This session will help you to do so in less than 1 minute per day! Even better, your kiddos will be your assistants in making it happen! We will also discuss ways to structure Parent-Teacher Conferences - how to enhance information-sharing, while implementing a way that all stake-holders respect time parameters.

Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Kindergarten, Adults, Families

510. Early Childhood Hootenanny

Emcee, Carole Peterson, Early Childhood Music and Movement Specialist

Emcee, David Stokes, Educator, Entertainer & Naturalist

Join many ECC performers as they gather for music, story-telling and laughter. This is a great way to end the conference and see some of your favorite performers on stage together.

Friday Session Six: 6:00pm – 8:00pm (OPTIONAL)

601. Make a Circle Documentary Screening and Discussion UW-Whitewater and WECA Staff

From an award-winning filmmaking team, MAKE A CIRCLE follows a group of childcare providers who are determined to change how our society values the education of its youngest citizens. With a mix of humor, outrage, and passion, MAKE A CIRCLE captures the magic early educators create in the classroom, the struggles they endure at home, and their tireless activism for their profession. The result is a promising blueprint for fixing our broken childcare system. Join local early educator leaders from WECA and UW-Whitewater for the screening of this documentary followed by discussion and the opportunity to network and collaborate with other early educators.

Saturday, April 12 Sessions

Saturday Session One: 8:30 – 11:30am

1A. Challenging Behavior Triage: Exchanging Stressful Moments for Joyful Learning

Prerna Richards, MBA, CEO & Founder

[Together We Grow LLC](#)

Learn the intersection between the brain, behaviors, and learning. Discover how to break the stress cycle in your early childhood environment. Explore how to reduce triggers that result in distressed children who are more likely to push back. Identify the different brain states that result in many of the difficult behaviors you experience. Explore methods you can use before, during, and after emotional outbursts. Develop a kind, loving, firm and fair approach that emphasizes relationships and leaves you (and the children you care for) feeling empowered. Collect tried and tested methods for creating a harmonious learning environment.

1B. Working with Challenging Behaviors: Why Children Misbehave and What You Can Do About It!

Raelene Ostberg, M.Ed, National Keynote Speaker and Director

Thriving Together LLC

<https://www.thriving-together.com/>

Learn how typical developmental patterns, stress, sleep, trauma, and the environment impact children's behavior and fuel challenges. Identify positive communication techniques and easy-to-apply guidance methods that will prevent challenging behaviors from occurring, encourage gleeful cooperation, and reduce dreaded power struggles. Utilize a positive behavior intervention support tool you can use to effectively address the challenging behaviors you experience and tailor your response to the individual child's stage. Obtain hands-on teaching tools that teach children what they need to learn, reduce stress, smooth transitions, build in positive routines, and promote the development of skills the child needs to behave well.

Saturday Lunch Hour: 12:15 – 1:15pm

Optional Session: L51. Art Gallery Walk

Jenalee Johnson, UW-Whitewater Children's Center

<https://www.uww.edu/childrenscenter>

Step into the world of collaborative, process-based art at this unique professional development session. Participants will have the opportunity to walk through an interactive art exhibit in the University Center designed to showcase the beauty and power of the creative process in early childhood education. The exhibit highlights a variety of art projects created through the collaborative efforts of children, educators, and community partners, with an emphasis on the journey rather than the final product. **Infants, Toddlers, Preschool, 4K, Adults, Families**

Saturday Session Two: 1:00 – 4:00pm

2A. Challenging Behavior Triage: Exchanging Stressful Moments for Joyful Learning

Prerna Richards, MBA, CEO & Founder

[Together We Grow LLC](#)

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