

Early Learning Conference 2024

Virtual: March 18-22

Keynote Address:

Equity in Early Childhood Service Delivery and Outcomes ❤️🗨️🧱🧑🏫📺

Dr. Brenda Jones Harden | Professor of Child and Family Welfare at Columbia School of Social Work and Immediate Past Board President at Zero to Three

Early childhood is a time of vulnerability and opportunity, especially for young children who are poor or racially minorities. This session will address how poverty and race affect young children's experiences and outcomes. The promise of early childhood intervention will be emphasized, with a particular focus on its benefits for children who are reared in impoverished and minoritized contexts. How to incorporate BASICS strategies into early childhood interventions will be explored.

1) Compassion for Self: The Act of Taking Back Our Power ❤️

Dr. Marnie Aylesworth | Director, The Pennsylvania Key

Proclaiming that self-care is the antidote to the unprecedented challenges we face as early childhood professionals is not only out of touch, it is harmful. As a collective profession and with common humanity in the forefront of our minds, we will discuss the need for a community of care approach. We will discuss strategies for connection and resilience that go beyond the typical self-care strategies so that we can regain the power of pause and presence, equipping us for a life of well-being.

2) The Basics of Block Play: Supporting the Whole Child Through Block Play 🧑🏫🧱

Katie Bauer | Director, BLOCK Fest: Twiga Foundation

Hailey Michalk | Educational Consultant, BLOCK Fest: Twiga Foundation

Block play is building the future thought-leaders in the STEAM field while growing and developing other important aspects of development. Block play opens the door to enhancing early learning skills, child development, family engagement, literacy, language acquisition, and STEAM education. We believe experiencing block play ignites learning, boosts imagination, and engages children, families, and caregivers. Join us to explore block play benefits, stages of block play, and the effect block play has to strengthen the whole child and help equip parents and educators to incorporate block play into everyday experiences.

3) Using math games to promote equity and culturally-responsive family engagement in early childhood 🧱

Kristen Reed | Managing Project Director, Education Development Center (EDC)

Dr. Jessica Young | Principal Research Scientist, Education Development Center (EDC)

Supporting families to talk about math and do math at home with their young children is a key strategy for narrowing the early math opportunity gap. Using photos and video, we will explore how children can do math in the classroom, at home, and in the community in ways that are playful, joyful, and inspire them to find math in their lives everyday and everywhere. Using a culturally-responsive lens, we will provide examples of using math games to build relationships between educators, families, and children. We will draw from games, puzzles, and game materials that are freely available on our website (www.ym.edc.org) with directions and videos in English, Spanish, and Portuguese (with Haitian Creole coming soon). Throughout the session, we will discuss how these strategies prepare children for kindergarten and are grounded in the five Basics principles.

4) Learning Naturally: An Outdoor, Nature-based Approach to Early Childhood Education

Christie McKelvie | Co-Founder and Director, Rooted & Free Nature School

The top indicators of positive mental health among children ages 3-5 years are affection, resilience, positivity, and curiosity (CDC). However, 1 in 6 U.S. children from 2-8 years have a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder, and older adolescents are experiencing increasing rates of anxiety and depression. Is there an early childhood education solution that fosters these positive mental health outcomes as well as social, physical, and academic growth? A solution that connects all 5 TFEC Basic Principles? Yes, naturally! Join us as we explore the science behind nature-based play and learning and how incorporating these practices fosters healthy minds, bodies, and spirits of students and staff alike. Time outside with children is not simply recess, it is a holistic approach to living and learning. Walk away empowered to apply research-backed, place-based strategies for deeper connections between students, staff, and the natural world.

5) The Power of Stories: Selecting the Best Books and Related Activities for Preschoolers

Stefanie Paige Wieder | Early Childhood Education Consultant and Speaker

A preschooler's experiences with books can shape their future! Throughout the early years, literacy development is intertwined with language, cognitive, social-emotional and motor growth. Join literacy expert Stefanie Paige Wieder, M.S.Ed. to discover the building blocks for scaffolding preschoolers' literacy skills and come away with practical tips and activities for the children in your care. In this session you will learn: what research tells us about how 3 to 5-year-olds acquire language and literacy skills, how to select the best books for each stage of young children's development, and easy-to-implement literacy activities for preschoolers in your care.

6) Behavior Mastery: Taking your Power Back!

Ron Shuali | Author and Motivation Speaker

Are you tired of cookie-cutter behavior management techniques that just don't work? This Behavior Mastery session is the one-of-a-kind solution you've been searching for. Ron Shuali has developed an innovative approach that's revolutionizing the way teachers manage behaviors of neurotypical and neurodiverse students. With this session, you'll learn how to create a customized and effective plan that fits ALL the students in your classroom.

7) Kimochi Puppets: Social Emotional Curriculum

Danielle Archulet | Assistant Director, Bethel Preschool & Daycare

In this session, you will learn about the new Kimochis curriculum and how to easily implement it into your everyday instruction. The goal is to use the kimochi tools that were designed to give children the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to recognize and manage their emotions, demonstrate caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations constructively. It sounds too good to be true, but I promise it is worth ALL the hype.

8) The Basics Movement

Dr. Ron Ferguson | Founder and President of The Basics

This twenty-minute compilation combines five short videos that provide an orientation to The Basics Movement. The first explains how and why The Basics initiative started, the second covers early brain development issues that make the work urgent, the third introduces five core principles--The Basics Principles-- around which the work is organized, the fourth gives the overarching vision for communities, and the fifth lays out the core tools.