

# Committed To Kids

## Session Descriptions

2026

**Note:** Class times and the full training schedule will be posted soon and additional topics may be added.

### Friday Keynote Speaker - Diane Goyette

Overcoming Challenging Behavior with the Four C's:  
A Mother-Daughter Story

### Saturday Keynote Speaker - Jenna (Fleming) Dunham

They're Not Giving You a Hard Time — They're Having a Hard Time:  
A New Way to See Behavior in Early Childhood

### Session Topics

#### You Care for Kids, Let's Care for Your Future

Childcare professionals spend their days investing in the next generation, but too often their own financial future gets pushed aside. This session highlights the importance of retirement planning and shares simple, practical steps to help you get started. Whether you are a center owner or a staff member, you will leave with greater clarity, encouragement, and actionable steps you can begin right away.

Instructor: Amber Walker

#### Brains and Boxes - Part 1

This training is part of a 3-part series, *Brains and Boxes: An Approach to Classroom Management*.

This session introduces a research-based behavior management approach for early childhood classrooms that supports high-quality learning environments, guides behavior, fosters brain development, and builds social-emotional skills. Grounded in a blend of educational theories, this modern approach supports both educators and children while strengthening partnerships with families.

Participants will learn how to set clear classroom expectations, support social-emotional development, and understand behavior as a form of communication. Using

the Brains and Boxes Model and the 6 Sides Method, teachers will gain practical strategies, tools, and resources to confidently implement this approach in their classrooms.

## **Brains and Boxes Part 2**

This training is part of a 3-part series, *Brains and Boxes: An Approach to Classroom Management*.

In this workshop, participants will learn about common categories of special needs in early childhood and how they are identified, screened, and supported within classroom settings. We will explore community resources available to support children and families, including Early Childhood Intervention (ECI). Participants will also gain practical tools for partnering with families of children with developmental delays or disabilities and learn effective strategies for having sensitive conversations when making referrals.

## **Brains and Boxes Part 3**

This training is part of a 3-part series, *Brains and Boxes: An Approach to Classroom Management*.

In this session, participants will learn strategies for building strong partnerships with families through effective communication during parent-teacher conferences. They will explore how to document children's growth and behavior to support meaningful conversations about development.

The session also includes research-based information on the four parenting styles and how they influence child development. Participants will learn how to use this understanding to strengthen family engagement, inform lesson planning, and support positive behavior in the classroom.

Instructor: Kristin Miller, M.Ed.

## **When Kids Act Up: Supporting Children and their Parents**

Instructor: Jenna (Fleming) Dunham MEd, LPC, NCC

## **Singing, Dancing, and Moving through Pre-K!**

Technology continues to evolve, but children's developmental needs remain the same. In this session, we will go "back to the basics" while exploring meaningful ways to incorporate music and movement into the classroom. From fingerplays to transition

songs, participants will leave with a variety of ready-to-use ideas they can implement right away.

Instructor: Sharilyn Woodall

## Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

This introductory training explores the foundational concepts of infant and early childhood mental health through an early relational health lens. Participants will gain an understanding of how mental health begins at birth and is shaped through everyday interactions between infants and their caregivers. The session highlights how early relationships and experiences influence brain development, emotional regulation, and lifelong well-being.

Participants will be introduced to key concepts such as attachment, co-regulation, serve-and-return interactions, and the impact of stress on development. The training also emphasizes the importance of caregiver well-being, recognizing that supporting adults is essential to supporting infants.

Grounded in the principles of Early Relational Health (ERH), this session promotes a strengths-based, culturally responsive approach to working with families. Participants will explore how professionals, organizations, and systems play a role in fostering healthy relationships and positive outcomes for young children.

Instructor: Charlie Aldaya

## Take back your time!

A guide to achieving life balance by prioritizing what truly matters, finding confidence in your choices, and being present in each moment.

Instructor: Maria Harrington

## Teaching Every Child: Differentiation Strategies for High-Quality Early Childhood Classrooms

**Spanish:** This workshop supports early childhood teachers and program leaders in understanding and implementing effective differentiation practices that respond to the diverse needs, abilities, and learning styles of young children.

Participants will explore practical strategies to adapt instruction, classroom environments, and interactions based on each child's developmental level. The session emphasizes the role of observation and assessment in identifying where children are in their learning and how to provide appropriate support and challenge.

Special attention will be given to inclusive practices, including support for children with diverse learning needs and those receiving or who may need special education services (SPED). Participants will learn how differentiation promotes equity, engagement, and positive outcomes while maintaining high-quality early childhood standards.

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

- Understand the purpose and principles of differentiation in early childhood
- Use observation and assessment to guide instructional decisions
- Implement practical strategies across daily routines and learning activities
- Support diverse learners, including children with developmental delays or special needs
- Strengthen inclusive, responsive classroom practices

This workshop promotes a child-centered approach that ensures every child is supported, challenged, and given the opportunity to succeed.

Instructor: Estrella Ohana

## **Singing, Dancing, and Moving through Pre-K!**

Technology continues to change, but children’s developmental needs remain the same. In this session, we will go “back to the basics” while exploring a variety of ways to incorporate music and movement into the classroom. From fingerplays to transition songs, participants will leave with a bank of ready-to-use ideas they can implement right away.

Instructor: Sherilyn Woodall

## **Feel, Move, Grow**

This presentation guides caregivers in helping children engage all their senses through outdoor exploration. Participants will explore how experiences in nature support development across visual, tactile, auditory, olfactory, and movement-based senses (kinesthetic, vestibular, and proprioceptive).

Through hands-on, practical strategies—such as color scavenger hunts, nature sound exploration, texture-based play, and movement activities like climbing and balancing—caregivers will learn how to create meaningful sensory experiences that support regulation, coordination, and overall development.

The session also highlights opportunities to incorporate taste experiences through outdoor learning, including gardening, sampling fresh foods, and simple nature-

based cooking activities. These experiences help foster healthy habits while deepening children's connection to the natural world.

Participants will leave with a variety of inclusive, easy-to-implement ideas to create enriching outdoor environments that promote learning, health, and wonder through all the senses.

Instructor: Charlie Aldaya

### **Micro Trainings: An engaging and cost effective training method.**

Staff are required to complete ongoing training hours, and ensuring that happens often lands right on top of an already full to-do list.

You could outsource training and hope something meaningful sticks. Or you can choose training that actually engages your staff in a way that is enjoyable, memorable, and applicable—while still aligning with your mission, vision, and values.

And since budgets are always a consideration, you need something that is both effective and affordable.

That's where Micro-Trainings™ come in—a fast, practical way to help staff meet required training hours in just 15 minutes per week. Developed by early childhood expert Sarah Smith, Micro-Trainings are designed to be engaging, easy to implement immediately in the classroom, and grounded in real practice.

Each training includes built-in follow-up, assessment, and coaching support for leaders, along with meaningful, ready-to-use content for teachers.

Instructor: Sarah Smith

### **Raising Readers (Early Literacy)**

This professional development course is designed for educators of toddlers and pre-kindergarten children who want to intentionally connect STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) concepts with early literacy development. Participants will explore developmentally appropriate strategies that nurture curiosity, language development, critical thinking, and problem-solving through play-based learning.

Through hands-on experiences and real classroom examples, educators will learn how to use picture books, storytelling, and inquiry to deepen children's understanding of STEAM concepts while providing high-quality literacy experiences.

Instructors: Alejandra Soule and Daisy Guerrero

## The Language of Behavior

This training explores how young children communicate through their behavior, particularly when language and social–emotional skills are still developing. Participants will learn to interpret challenging behaviors as meaningful communication, examine stages of language development, and apply research-based strategies to prevent and respond to challenging behavior.

Instructor: Elizabeth Fields

## Meeting the Sensory Needs of Your Child

**Spanish:** A bilingual session designed for child-care providers and directors, offering clear, practical guidance on supporting children’s sensory needs and social-emotional development. Participants will deepen their understanding of developmental milestones and learn simple, effective strategies to create responsive, emotionally supportive environments.

Instructor: Amanda Sickert

## Stability Starts with Support

A stable preschool workforce is essential for high-quality early learning experiences. This session presents research findings from a study exploring how directors and teachers experience and define retention in preschool programs.

Participants will examine the structural, relational, and emotional factors that contribute to teacher stability, as well as common barriers that often go unaddressed. The training emphasizes the importance of supportive leadership and shared responsibility in fostering workplace environments where teachers can grow and remain long-term.

Instructor: Dr. Candace Akers

## What's the Weather Like Today?

Shifting your mindset about coworkers can change the climate of your workplace. Sometimes we interpret a colleague’s words or actions as a storm, when it may just be a passing moment. Through reflection and practical tools, you’ll learn how to clear assumptions, practice curiosity, and build a climate of trust—creating a more positive, collaborative team environment.

Instructor: Sarah Smith

## **Block Play: Stacked with Learning Potential**

One source describes blocks as “the tool you can’t teach without.” Join this session on block play to explore the truth behind that statement. Participants will examine what defines a block, explore different types, and learn how to effectively set up a block area.

We will also discuss the stages of block play, the benefits for children, and the teacher’s role in supporting learning. Through active participation, you’ll gain a deeper understanding of what children are truly learning through block play and how to best support their development.

Instructor: Jennifer Fernandez

## **Trauma Informed Care in Early Childhood Education**

This presentation explores the principles and practices of trauma-informed care in early childhood education. Participants will gain a foundational understanding of trauma and its impact on the developing brain, behavior, and emotional regulation in infants and young children. The session will also introduce Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their long-term effects on health and learning.

Attendees will learn how to create safe, responsive, and nurturing environments, and how to engage with young children and families in ways that are compassionate, supportive, and developmentally appropriate.

Instructor: Kimberly Alberico

## **Weaving Words & Wonder: Integrating STEAM and Literacy in Toddler and Pre-K Classrooms**

This professional development course is designed for educators of toddlers and pre-kindergarten children who want to intentionally connect STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) concepts with early literacy development. Participants will explore developmentally appropriate strategies that nurture curiosity, language development, critical thinking, and problem-solving through play-based learning.

Through hands-on experiences and real classroom examples, educators will learn how to use picture books, storytelling, and inquiry to deepen children’s understanding of STEAM concepts while providing high-quality literacy experiences.

Instructors: Carly Barnes, Allie Duffy

## Understanding Language Development Through a Multilingual Lens

**Spanish:** A bilingual session for child-care providers and directors focused on how young multilingual learners develop language and how their communication skills grow over time. Participants will explore practical strategies to support language development and create environments that celebrate and strengthen children's multilingual identities.

Instructor: Amanda Sickert

## Creating School Culture

This session is designed for child care center administrators and leadership teams. Participants will gain tools to help them recognize what makes their school unique. We will explore what sets a center apart and how its culture impacts administrators, staff, students, and families within the community.

Participants will also have the opportunity to reflect on their own personalities and leadership tendencies, and how these influence the school environment and the community they serve. This interactive session includes both verbal discussion and active participation.

Instructor: Brandy Crumley

## The Silent Teacher

We all need as much support as we can get when working with a group of young children. The key to successful group care begins with effective classroom management. Learn how to use your environment with intention to create a more organized, engaging, and less stressful day.

Instructor: Jerri Thompson

## Worms, Wiggles, and Wonders: DIY Nature Activity Backpacks

This session offers practical, hands-on activities educators can use to expand children's awareness of and engagement with nature both inside and outside the classroom. A collection of backpacks filled with low-cost, theme-based materials will be featured to inspire ideas for creating your own nature-based activities and lessons.

Instructor: Rhonda D Richardson

## Reconocer y Reportar el Abuso Infantil

**Spanish:** Los educadores ingresan a esta profesión porque se preocupan por los niños y quieren que crezcan seguros, apoyados y libres de daño. Aunque puede ser difícil pensar en el abuso afectando a los niños en nuestras aulas, comprender las señales es esencial para proteger su bienestar. Como educadores, a menudo somos adultos de confianza en la vida de un niño y tenemos la responsabilidad de ser reporteros obligatorios.

Esta sesión ofrece orientación práctica sobre cómo reconocer y reportar el abuso infantil, con información local de profesionales del Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center (WCCAC). Los participantes aprenderán sobre las diferentes formas de abuso, comportamientos comunes de captación (grooming), señales de alerta y síntomas, así como los pasos para realizar un reporte.

Diseñada para generar confianza y claridad, esta capacitación empodera a los educadores para tomar acciones informadas y apropiadas, siendo el adulto de confianza que cada niño necesita.

Instructor: Mia Martinez

## Don't Bottle It Up! (Class Capacity 20 Students)

Paint with guided support from a professional art instructor. Fairy lights inside the bottle add a creative, dramatic effect. *(All supplies provided.)*

No prior painting experience is needed—this session is designed for all skill levels. Participants will explore creativity, relaxation, and expression while creating a meaningful keepsake and engaging in a supportive, collaborative environment.

### Key Benefits of Art for Mental Health

- **Emotional Expression:** Art provides a safe way to express complex emotions that may be difficult to put into words.
- **Stress & Anxiety Reduction:** Creative focus can create a calming, meditative experience that reduces stress.
- **Mindfulness & Focus:** Art encourages present-moment awareness through attention to color, texture, and process.
- **Improved Self-Esteem:** Completing a creative project builds confidence and a sense of accomplishment.
- **Trauma Processing:** Art can support reflection and healing through safe exploration of experiences.
- **Brain Engagement:** Creative activity stimulates multiple areas of the brain, supporting connection and cognitive processing.
- **Social Connection:** Group art experiences foster community, connection, and reduced feelings of isolation.

Instructor: Kimberly Keller

## Following Their Lead: Finding Math in Play, Talk, and Curiosity

Young children build powerful mathematical foundations long before formal instruction. In this session, participants will explore essential precursor concepts—attributes, comparison, change, and pattern—and practice how to “mathematize the day” through play, routines, and joyful interactions.

Using the C.A.I.R. approach (Carefully Attends & Intentionally Responds), participants will learn how to listen closely, respond with purpose, and build rich mathematical language that deepens understanding. Together, we will explore how everyday, child-led classroom experiences can become powerful opportunities for early problem-solving and confident mathematical thinking for both children and adults.

Instructor: Angelica Lopez

## The Business of Childcare

The presentation will explore strategies for anticipating and avoiding common financial challenges in early learning centers.

Instructor: Rhoda Taylor

## Crisis Management - Oh no! Now what?

We all need as much support as we can get when working with a group of young children. The key to successful group care begins with effective classroom management. Learn how to use your environment with intention to create a more organized, engaging, and less stressful day.

Instructor: Jerri Thompson

## Buckets Away: How the Vagus Nerve Impacts Children's Behavior

This session explores the role of neuroscience in the classroom, with a focus on the vagus nerve and its connection to children’s emotional and behavioral regulation. Participants will learn about “bucket activities”—practical, research-based strategies that support self-regulation both inside and outside the classroom.

Instructor: Rhonda D Richardson

## Seguridad Corporal para Cuidadores

**Spanish:** Todos queremos que nuestros hijos estén seguros, por eso les enseñamos muchas reglas de seguridad: desde mirar a ambos lados antes de cruzar la calle hasta saber cuándo pedir ayuda. Sin embargo, muchos cuidadores pueden

sentirse inseguros sobre cómo hablar de la seguridad corporal de manera apropiada para el desarrollo de los niños pequeños.

Esta sesión está diseñada para generar confianza y claridad en los educadores de la primera infancia. Los participantes aprenderán un lenguaje práctico y apropiado para la edad que ayude a los niños a comprender su cuerpo, reconocer situaciones potencialmente inseguras y utilizar reglas simples de seguridad para pedir ayuda.

La sesión explorará el desarrollo típico en la primera infancia, cómo los cuidadores pueden apoyar un desarrollo saludable y cómo las interacciones diarias pueden reforzar la seguridad corporal de manera respetuosa y empoderadora.

Los educadores saldrán con herramientas concretas que podrán aplicar de inmediato en sus aulas y programas para apoyar la seguridad, autonomía y bienestar de los niños.

Instructor: Mia Martinez

### **Process Art for Adults (Class Capacity 20 Students)**

Process art in preschool focuses on the creative process and exploration, rather than the final product. Children are encouraged to experiment, express themselves, and use various materials and techniques without set guidelines. There's no right or wrong way for their art to look, and they're free to explore and decide what they want to create.

Here's what process art looks like in preschool:

**Open-ended:** There's little to no instruction, and children are in control of what they create.

**Child-led:** Children choose how and what materials to use, and can come and go from their art as they please.

**Exploration and experimentation:** Children are encouraged to try different materials and techniques.

**Joyful:** The focus is on the experience of creating, not the end result.

Instructor: Kimberly Keller

### **From Reaction to Regulation: Using SEL-Driven Practices to Support Every Child (and Adults too)**

This session focuses on creating proactive, relationship-driven classrooms where social-emotional learning shapes the environment, daily routines, and instructional practices. Participants will examine how adult experiences and beliefs influence

responses to behavior and learn strategies to anticipate student needs, design regulation-supportive spaces, and embed SEL throughout the day.

Participants will leave with practical tools that promote safety, connection, and engagement for every learner.

Instructor: Angelica Lopez

## **Understanding Childhood Trauma: ACEs and Resilience**

Many children enter early childhood classrooms carrying experiences of trauma that shape how they see the world—and how they respond to it. Trauma can impact brain development and often shows up as behaviors that feel confusing or disproportionate. Have you ever seen a child have a strong reaction to what seemed like a small request? For a child impacted by trauma, even minor stressors can trigger overwhelming responses.

In this session, educators will explore Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to better understand trauma and its effects on the developing brain. Participants will gain practical insight into why children behave the way they do and, more importantly, how educators can make a meaningful difference. The presentation will focus on developmentally appropriate strategies for teaching coping skills, fostering emotional regulation, and building resilience—empowering educators to support students' growth, safety, and success in the classroom.

Instructor: Kyle Borel

## **Are You Play-Based?**

A play-based curriculum is designed for children to learn through play, but it becomes most effective when teachers intentionally use the tools available in their environment. Classroom centers, outdoor play spaces, and daily schedules are key resources at a teacher's disposal.

In this session, participants will learn how to plan lessons around classroom centers, design a child-friendly daily schedule, and incorporate outdoor environments into activity planning.

Instructor: Jerri Thompson

## **Differences In Young Children**

This session explores developmental differences that may be observed in young children in the early childhood classroom. Participants will expand their awareness of how these differences can influence behavior, learning, and social interactions, and

will gain practical strategies to support each child's growth and development effectively.

Instructor: Rhonda D Richardson

## Comprendiendo el Trauma Infantil: ACEs y Resiliencia

**Spanish:** Muchos niños llegan a nuestras aulas de educación temprana cargando experiencias de trauma que moldean cómo ven el mundo y cómo responden a él. El trauma puede afectar el desarrollo del cerebro y, a menudo, se manifiesta en comportamientos que pueden resultar confusos o desproporcionados. ¿Alguna vez ha visto a un niño tener una gran reacción ante una solicitud que parecía pequeña? Para un niño afectado por el trauma, incluso factores estresantes menores pueden desencadenar respuestas abrumadoras.

En esta sesión, los educadores explorarán las Experiencias Adversas en la Infancia (ACEs, por sus siglas en inglés) para comprender mejor el trauma y sus efectos en el cerebro en desarrollo. Los participantes obtendrán información práctica sobre por qué los niños pueden comportarse de cierta manera y, lo más importante, cómo los educadores pueden marcar una diferencia significativa. Esta presentación se enfocará en estrategias apropiadas para el desarrollo que enseñen habilidades de afrontamiento, fomenten la regulación emocional y fortalezcan la resiliencia, empoderando a los educadores para apoyar el crecimiento, la seguridad y el éxito de sus estudiantes en el aula.

Instructor: Mia Martinez

## The Sound and Shape of Instruction by Crossing the Midline / El sonido y el estilo de instrucción cruzando la línea media

**Spanish:** In this session, we will be immersed in a fun, active workshop exploring ideas and activities that introduce the sounds and structure of language, support crossing the midline, and include other foundational exercises that help the brain develop connections for successful reading and writing.

Instructor: Roxanne Canamar

## Calm, Cool, Collected - Mindfulness and Co-regulation for the Young and You

Participants will learn about mindfulness and how to use it to stay calm in challenging situations. We will explore the science of behavior and co-regulation to understand

what is happening in the body and brain when big feelings arise, and practice techniques to help calm the “storm.”

Instructor: Robin Foerster

## **Understanding Childhood Trauma: ACEs and Resilience**

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In this session, educators will explore Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to better understand trauma and its effects on the developing brain. Participants will gain practical insight into why children behave the way they do and, more importantly, how educators can make a meaningful difference. The presentation will focus on developmentally appropriate strategies for teaching coping skills, fostering emotional regulation, and building resilience—empowering educators to support students’ growth, safety, and success in the classroom.

Instructor: Kyle Borel

## **Round Table Networking for 0 - 18 Months**

Round Table Networking for 0–18 Months is a collaborative session designed for early childhood professionals working with infants and young toddlers. Participants will engage in open discussion, share experiences, and exchange practical strategies related to care, development, and classroom practices for children 0 to 18 months. This interactive round table provides an opportunity to connect with peers, reflect on challenges, and gain new ideas and resources to support high-quality infant and toddler care.

## **Round Table Networking for 18 - 36 Months**

Round Table Networking for 18–36 Months is an interactive session designed for early childhood professionals working with toddlers. Participants will engage in collaborative discussion, share experiences, and exchange practical strategies related to development, behavior, and classroom practices for children 18 to 36 months. This round table format provides a supportive space to connect with peers, reflect on challenges, and gain new ideas and resources to strengthen high-quality toddler care and learning environments.

## **Round Table Networking for 3-Year Olds**

Round Table Networking for 3-Year-Olds is an interactive session designed for early childhood professionals working with three-year-old children. Participants will engage in collaborative discussion, share classroom experiences, and exchange practical strategies related to development, behavior, learning, and classroom routines for this age group. This supportive round table provides an opportunity to connect with peers, reflect on challenges, and gain new ideas and resources to strengthen high-quality preschool environments.

## **Round Table Networking for 4-Year Olds**

This round table session is designed for educators working with 4-year-old children and focuses on the unique developmental needs of pre-kindergarten learners. Participants will collaborate with peers to discuss school readiness, social-emotional growth, classroom expectations, and engaging learning experiences that support independence and problem-solving skills.

Through shared discussion and networking, educators will gain fresh ideas, practical resources, and encouragement to strengthen their teaching practices and create successful, high-quality learning environments for 4-year-olds.

## **Round Table Networking for Administrators**

Round Table Networking for Administrators is an interactive, discussion-based session designed for early childhood program leaders and directors. Participants will collaborate with peers to share experiences, explore common challenges, and exchange effective strategies related to leadership, staffing, operations, and program quality. This round table provides a supportive space to reflect on best practices, gain new insights, and build connections that strengthen leadership and overall program success.

## **Mesa Redonda de Networking para Educadores Hispanohablantes**

La Mesa Redonda de Networking para Educadores Hispanohablantes es una sesión interactiva diseñada para apoyar a profesionales de la educación temprana que prefieren colaborar en español. Los participantes compartirán experiencias, intercambiarán estrategias prácticas para el aula y abordarán temas relacionados con el desarrollo infantil, el comportamiento y las prácticas de enseñanza.

Este espacio colaborativo ofrece la oportunidad de conectarse con colegas, reflexionar sobre desafíos y obtener nuevas ideas y recursos para fortalecer entornos de educación temprana de alta calidad.