



FRANK PORTER GRAHAM
CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



25
YEARS

25th International Early Childhood Inclusion Institute

Honoring Our 25 Year History—Reflecting, Celebrating, and Advancing

May 13–15, 2025

William & Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

2025 International Early Childhood Inclusion Institute

B Break
K Keynote
P Plenary
N Preconference
R Reflection

MAY 13 • TUESDAY

8:00am – 9:00am	B (In-Person) Check in for Pre-Conference Workshops and Breakfast	Atrium
9:00am – 12:00pm	N (Hybrid) Demystifying Assistive Technology: Practical Tips for Early Childhood Professionals <i>Speakers: Ann Sam, Jessica Amsbary, Hsiu-wen Yang</i> Redbud A, Virtual on Zoom This hands-on and interactive session will explore myths and facts related to the use of assistive technology (AT) in early childhood environments to help participants plan for and use AT as part of children's everyday routines and activities. We will include specific examples of AT that attendees can explore, make/fabricate, and try out during the session, and engage in interactive activities to learn, practice, and plan for using AT to foster belonging and inclusion for children with disabilities. After the session participants will be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe assistive technology and its benefits for young children. 2. Explain specific ways that they will be able to embed assistive technology into their own early childhood/early intervention work settings. 3. Leave with a set of resources and create an action plan to embed assistive technology to fully include children with disabilities across early childhood environments. 	
9:00am – 12:00pm	N (In-Person) 619 Coordinators' Meeting <i>Speakers: Ruth E. Gallucci, Debbie Cate</i>	Windflower
9:00am – 12:00pm	N (In-Person) Advancing Inclusive Practices to Promote Social-Emotional and Behavioral Development <i>Speakers: Megan Vinh, Courtney O'Grady</i> In this session, we will discuss how there is need for continued support for early childhood educators so that as we work to eliminate practices such as suspension and expulsion, we provide early childhood educators with a toolkit of inclusive, proactive, and preventative strategies they can use in its place to promote social emotional competence. We will also address how exclusionary discipline disproportionately impacts young children of color and young children with disabilities. We will provide strategies to facilitate the meaningful inclusion of all young children. This includes strategies on how to seek additional support for children with disabilities who may have behavior viewed as challenging.	Azalea
9:00am – 12:00pm	N (In-Person) Fostering Communication and Literacy Skills for Children with Complex Support Needs in Inclusive Settings <i>Speakers: Lisa Thompson</i> Children with complex support needs require an extensive array of supports to access their environment, interact with others, participate in instruction, learn, and communicate autonomously. When these supports are not present, they have reduced access to language, communication, and literacy interactions compared to their peers with and without disabilities. This session will describe specific supports such as augmentative and alternative communication and accessible literacy lessons that address these needs and result in increased access, participation, and learning success.	Redbud B
9:00am – 12:00pm	N (In-Person) Preparing Inclusion Advocates and Leaders: Tools and Strategies for Faculty and PD Providers <i>Speakers: Camille Catlett, Kelli Odden, Sharon Little, Samtra Devard</i> This session will focus on ways in which to build the capacity for early childhood educators to recognize, create, implement, evaluate, and advocate for high-quality inclusive learning and development opportunities for young children. Tools and strategies that help promote emphasis on the full participation of each and every child and their family will be highlighted. Presenters will share examples of how to bring an inclusive lens to any course or professional development offering. Focused tabletop discussions will provide opportunities for participants to	Bellflower

follow their interests and learning priorities.

9:00am – 12:00pm	N (Virtual) Making Inclusion Work: Use of and Resources for Planning and Implementation of Early Care and Education Environment (ECEE) Indicators of High Quality Inclusion Virtual on Zoom <i>Speakers: Alissa Rausch, Ben Riepe</i> Through the use of the ECEE Indicators, this workshop will share strategies and practices providers can use to support inclusion and belonging in their setting. The ECEE Strengths and Needs Assessment will be shared to support the development of an action plan that immediately recognizes what providers are doing to support inclusion and belonging and aids the provider in planning next steps to enhance inclusive practices. Participants will explore how practices can be embedded into the context of daily early childhood routines. The session will include opportunities to review videos and discuss implementation of the ECEE indicators in small groups and individually. A resource site for supporting learning about the ECEE will also be shared with participants.
10:00am – 10:30am	B (In-Person) Morning Break and Snacks for Pre-Conference Participants Atrium
12:00pm – 1:00pm	B (In-Person) Lunch Trillium
1:00pm – 2:15pm	K (Hybrid) Welcome and Keynote Address Grumman, Virtual on Zoom <i>Moderators: Paula Grubbs, Chih-Ing Lim, Brian Boyd, Pam Winton</i> <i>Speakers: Jordyn Zimmerman</i> Opening and welcome: Dr. Brian Boyd, Director of FPG Child Development Institute, Drs. Paula Grubbs and Chih-Ing Lim, Co-Chairs of the Early Childhood Inclusion Institute, and Dr. Pam Winton, Co-Founder of the Early Childhood Inclusion Institute and Former Senior Scientist at FPG will provide the opening remarks for this year's institute. Keynote Address by Jordyn Zimmerman: Through storytelling and visuals, the keynote will discuss Jordyn Zimmerman's lived experience as a nonspeaking autistic learner, educator and advocate. They will discuss how beliefs contribute to low expectations, challenges with accessing effective communication, supporting others in community, and the necessity of accessible technology. Time will be allotted for whole group questions. Note that the keynote will only be available "live" for in-person and virtual participants. Recording is not permitted. Your Inclusion Journey: https://padlet.com/schedulecta/where-are-you-on-your-inclusion-journey-2h5lka7lfnr28jtk
2:15pm – 2:45pm	B (In-Person) Afternoon break and snacks Atrium
2:45pm – 4:15pm	P (Hybrid) Implementing and Sustaining Inclusive Practices in Early Childhood Environments Grumman, Virtual on Zoom <i>Speakers: Patricia Snyder, Hsiu-wen Yang, Sarah Buesching, Katherine Hutchens, Lindsay N. Giroux</i> What does inclusion <i>really</i> look like in early childhood settings? Join a powerful panel of family members and early childhood educator leaders as they explore the challenges and opportunities of implementing inclusive practices. Grounded in research and real-world experience, this session offers strategies to strengthen relationships, build staff capacity, and promote a culture of belonging for all children and families. Your Inclusion Journey: https://padlet.com/schedulecta/where-are-you-on-your-inclusion-journey-2h5lka7lfnr28jtk
2:45pm – 4:15pm	P (Hybrid) Implementing and Sustaining Promising State Level Practices Dogwood, Virtual on Zoom <i>Moderators: Pam Winton</i> <i>Speakers: Julia Martin Eile, Dr. Heather Googe, Ann Kremer, Mackenzie Weintraub, Cindy Abzun</i> Across the country, state leaders are working to implement and sustain high-quality, inclusive practices for young children with disabilities and their families. In this session you will first hear updates from the Office of Special Education Programs, US Department of Education, then join state leaders for a rich discussion on building and sustaining inclusive early childhood systems that can ensure positive outcomes for young children with

disabilities and their families. Hear from South Carolina, Illinois, and Oregon about their journeys, lessons learned, and strategies for addressing challenges through cross-sector collaboration, family partnerships, and community leadership.

This session is designed for state and local leaders, TA providers, family advocates, and anyone working to advance equity and inclusion in early childhood systems.

4:30pm – 5:15pm	R	(In-Person) Reflection Session: Families	Azalea
4:30pm – 5:15pm	R	(In-Person) Reflection Session: Higher Education Faculty/Professional Development Providers <i>Moderators: Camille Catlett</i>	Bellflower
4:30pm – 5:15pm	R	(In-Person) Reflection Session: National, State, and Local Administrators	Windflower
4:30pm – 5:15pm	R	(In-Person) Reflection Session: Teachers and Providers – Special Education, Early Childhood Education, Childcare, Head Start, Pre-K, Etc.	Redbud A
4:30pm – 5:15pm	R	(Virtual) Reflection Session: Zoom Participants	Virtual on Zoom

MAY 14 • WEDNESDAY

7:30am – 8:30am **B (In-Person) Check in and Breakfast** Atrium

8:30am – 10:00am **C (Hybrid) Making Adaptations to Support Access and Meaningful Participation Within Everyday Routines and Activities for All Children** Dogwood, Virtual on Zoom

Speakers: Megan Vinh, Allison Jones

All children have the right to meaningful participation in early care and education environments. Yet, children with disabilities are often excluded from routines and activities within these environments. This session will support practitioners in understanding how to use adaptations to promote participation and belonging within classrooms. This session will also explore several online resources that are available at no-cost to support adults in providing access and meaningful participation for each child.

8:30am – 10:00am **C (Hybrid) Understanding and Supporting Preschoolers' Social Development** Redbud A, Virtual on Zoom

Speakers: Ann Sam, Stephanie Reszka

In this interactive session, participants will learn about the Teacher Impression Scale (TIS), a 14 item impression scale completed following a 5-minute center-time observation. The TIS is a practical tool that teachers can use to assess preschool children's strengths, identify children who may experience challenges with peer social competence skills, and assess progress of children for whom programs have been developed to support peer social competence. Presenters will provide information for how teachers can use the TIS in their settings. Videos will be used for examples for teachers to practice coding the TIS. Discussions will focus on how teachers can use this measure in their own settings.

8:30am – 10:00am **C (In-Person) Assessing and Monitoring Communication in Young Autistic Children Using the Early Communication Indicator for Autism (ECI-A)** Windflower

Speakers: Jessica Steinbrenner, Aishah Almathkour

The Early Communication Indicator for Autism (ECI-A), an adaptation of the original ECI, is a naturalistic, play-based measure designed to assess and monitor communication trajectories in autistic children aged 12–60 months. The presentation will include an overview of administration and scoring of the ECI-A, as well as ideas for using the ECI-A in practice and data from a recent study. It will include interactive components, such as examples from real parent-child interaction videos and opportunities for participant engagement and discussion. Attendees will gain knowledge about the ECI-A's capacity to capture communication behaviors (e.g., gestures, vocalizations, speech, directed communication, joint attention) and track child progress, along with information about available ECI-A training opportunities.

8:30am – 10:00am **C (In-Person) Building Tier-3 Supports for Child Care: One State's Journey** Azalea

Speakers: Dr. Heather Googe, Stephanie McAvoy

Dr. Walter Gilliam has stated that "Suspensions and expulsion are adult decisions and adult reactions to children's behavior in those settings." Join us to learn about our Behavior Support Network, rooted within the Pyramid Model's evidence-based framework. From conception to implementation, presenters will describe how a behavior support network came to be a viable support for child care teachers. A

description of how the PTR-YC model was adapted for use in child care will be discussed and; implementation successes and challenges will be shared. Join us on one state's journey to implement behavior supports in child care.

8:30am – 10:00am	<p>C (In-Person) From "Challenging" to Connected: How Belonging Impacts Children's Behavior</p> <p><i>Speakers: Jackie Joseph, Sally Hansen</i></p> <p>Redbud B</p> <p>Ever wonder why some environments bring out the best in children? This session invites providers to reframe challenging behaviors as expected and meaningful expressions of a child's experiences. Participants will explore how belonging shapes children's development and consider practical ways to create environments where every child feels connected and valued. Presenters will offer strategies for co-creating connection and inclusion and for turning challenging moments into opportunities for further understanding and supporting young children.</p>
8:30am – 10:00am	<p>C (In-Person) Harnessing the Power of Family's Lived Experiences and Stories: Examples, Resources, and Practices</p> <p><i>Speakers: Camille Catlett, Kelli Odden, Samtra Devard</i></p> <p>Bellflower</p> <p>This session will offer a unique opportunity to hear from individuals who can speak as both family members and professionals about what they experienced, what they learned, and what they want to share with families and professionals. Join us to hear their advice on the most effective practices for supporting family engagement, then dive into conversations about how to build reciprocal relationships in higher education, state professional development, and local program efforts.</p>
8:30am – 10:00am	<p>C (In-Person) Use of Data to Inform and Increase Inclusive Opportunities for Young Children with Disabilities</p> <p><i>Speakers: Ruth E. Gallucci, Debbie Cate</i></p> <p>Sunflower</p> <p>State education agencies play a critical role in supporting school districts to collect and utilize data effectively, enabling them to plan, evaluate, and enhance programs designed to support young children with disabilities in accessing, participating, and achieving high expectations within inclusive early childhood settings. This session will explore the data that states are mandated to collect as part of the Annual Performance Report (APR), specifically focusing on the types of programs attended by preschool-aged children with disabilities and the environments in which they receive special education and related services. Participants will also gain insights into additional key data that districts can leverage to ensure inclusive opportunities for every child, evaluate the quality of early childhood programs, and assess outcomes for both children and families. Finally, this session will emphasize the importance of regular data review and analysis to promote accountability, strategic planning, and continuous program improvement. Through a combination of presentations and interactive discussions, attendees will examine national, state, and local data trends and their practical application in expanding inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities. Participants will also have the opportunity to share experiences and strategies, fostering mutual learning and collaboration.</p>
9:30am – 10:30am	<p>M (In-Person) Meet and Greet: A Conversation with the Inclusive Classroom Profile Author Elena Soukakou</p> <p><i>Speakers: Elena Soukakou</i></p> <p>Willow Lounge</p> <p>If you are curious or have questions about the Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP) as a tool to measure or provide professional development on the use of inclusive practices in classrooms, come have a chat with Elena Soukakou, author of the Inclusive Classroom Profile.</p>
10:00am – 10:30am	<p>B (In-Person) Morning Break and Snacks</p> <p>Atrium</p>
10:30am – 12:00pm	<p>C (Hybrid) Empowering Your Child to Fly: Working Together to Foster Early Childhood Inclusion</p> <p><i>Speakers: Latisha R. Stuckey, Jani Kozlowski</i></p> <p>Sunflower, Virtual on Zoom</p> <p>As early childhood professionals and parents of children with a disability, Jani and Latisha have spent a lot of time thinking and wondering about relationships between parents and members of the early childhood field. These are powerful partnerships! How we can learn together using these unique perspectives? What are the most important components in the family-educator relationship? What makes for a successful partnership? Those questions and more will be explored in a session meant for families, educators and all early childhood</p>

"inclusionists." Join us to share stories, discuss the evidence, and basically just try to figure it out together.

10:30am –
12:00pm

C (Hybrid) Get Up & Move: Using Play & Movement to Promote Inclusion, Wellness, & Exploration in Early Childhood

Dogwood, Virtual on Zoom

Speakers: Amanda Kloo

Active learning is essential for social emotional development, health, wellness, and learning growth. Get Up and Move (GUM) activities help to engage children with diverse abilities socially, academically, and physically. This session centers on the importance of integrating active play, kinesthetic instruction, and physical movement into inclusive early childhood experiences. Participants will engage in “GUM” warm-ups, games, and simulations designed to get bodies moving, brains thinking, and smiles beaming. Participants will also explore and discuss high-leverage strategies to actively include children with a wide range of strengths and needs. And participants will leave with ready-to-implement ideas to meet the needs of all children through meaningful play.

10:30am –
12:00pm

C (Hybrid) Voices of Inclusion: Beneficiary and Parent Perspectives from Sinfonía por el Perú

Speakers: Petra Kern, Luis Alberto Castillo, Anel Romina Vasquez Cieza

Redbud A, Virtual on Zoom

This session brings to life the perspectives of young musicians with differing abilities and their families participating in Sinfonía por el Perú, a nationally recognized social music program. By centering beneficiary and parent voices, this presentation highlights real experiences, expectations, and the essential role of family engagement in fostering truly inclusive music education.

Key Takeaways:

- **Youth Voices in Inclusion:** Insights from interviews with young musicians with various abilities on their perceptions and expectations toward inclusion.
- **The Power of Family Engagement:** Introduction of the Parent Package, a practical resource designed to empower families as active partners in their child's musical and social development.
- **Building Supportive, Inclusive Environments:** Practical strategies for educators, administrators, and community leaders to strengthen inclusion within music programs, ensuring meaningful and sustainable participation for all.

This presentation will offer both pilot-tested insights and practical approaches, equipping participants with ideas to foster a culture of inclusion in their communities.

10:30am –
12:00pm

C (In-Person) Addressing Exclusionary Discipline: Developing a Child Guidance Policy in Your Program that Supports Inclusion

Windflower

Speakers: Anna Winneker, Amanda Tamagni

This session on developing and implementing child guidance policies will equip participants with the knowledge and tools to create and refine child guidance policies that address challenging behaviors, support early childhood development, and ensure that all children have the opportunity to thrive in inclusive environments. We will introduce and explore the Teaching and Guidance Essential Policies Checklist (TAGPEC) to help early childhood administrators, TA providers, program coaches, and practitioners design and implement system-level policies to support and promote children's social-emotional development, prevent challenging behaviors, and to support families and staff.

10:30am –
12:00pm

C (In-Person) Calm and Connected: Embracing Co-Regulation in Early Childhood Settings

Azalea

Speakers: Sarah Sexton

Co-regulation in early childhood is more than deep breathing and counting to ten. Adults can co-regulate with children throughout the day, during both challenging and low-stakes interactions with young children. Learn about the co-regulation/self regulation continuum and how to develop a habit of promoting emotional intelligence and social-emotional development throughout the day and across activities.

10:30am – 12:00pm	<p>C (In-Person) Stay-Play-Talk: A Peer-Mediated Intervention for Autistic Children with Limited or No Spoken Language Redbud B</p> <p><i>Speakers: Janet Weaver, MA, Sarah Greer, MS, CCC-SLP, IBCLC</i></p> <p>“Stay-Play-Talk” is a peer-mediated intervention that has been shown to have beneficial impacts on social communication skills for autistic children. This session will review strategies from Stay-Play-Talk to help peers be responsive play and communication partners. We will describe clinical applications for its use with autistic children with limited or no spoken language who are learning to use a speech-generating device to augment speech. The presentation will include video examples and practical tips for implementing peer-mediated interventions in real-world settings.</p>
10:30am – 12:00pm	<p>C (In-Person) Tools for Preparing Adult Learners to Individualize to Support Each and Every Child Bellflower</p> <p><i>Speakers: Camille Catlett, Kelli Odden, Sharon Little</i></p> <p>This session will focus on options for designing effective coursework and professional development that supports participants to learn, try out, and apply practices for supporting each and every learner. Techniques for addressing adaptations and evidence-based teaching practices will be offered, including ways in which to use place-based personas to support outcomes that reflect attention to early childhood inclusion.</p>
12:00pm – 1:00pm	<p>B (In-Person) Lunch Trillium</p>
1:00pm – 2:30pm	<p>C (Hybrid) Reflecting, Celebrating, and Advancing Family Partnerships Dogwood, Virtual on Zoom</p> <p><i>Moderators: Harriet Able</i></p> <p><i>Speakers: Latisha R. Stuckey, Sarah Pedonti, Marquis Clark, Gregory Facey</i></p> <p>This interactive session will provide an opportunity for families and practitioners to discuss ideas, tools, and strategies supporting the inclusion of young children across settings. Family leaders will share their stories about family partnership and leadership initiatives that supported them in learning about early intervention and early childhood special education programs, advocating for high quality inclusion practices, and providing leadership and support for other families across systems.</p>
1:00pm – 2:30pm	<p>C (Hybrid) The Global Promotion of My Abilities First project and Taiwanese development and strategies to facilitate application of My Abilities ID Cards Redbud A, Virtual on Zoom</p> <p><i>Speakers: Dr. Verónica Schiariti, Hua-Fang Liao, Pei-Jung Wang</i></p> <p>The My Abilities First (MAF) project, initiated in 2016, emphasizes empowering children and their families through self-expression and the use of positive language in children's services. In 2020, Taiwan joined this global MAF project by introducing My Abilities ID Cards (ABID) for children under 12 years old with special needs and placing these ABIDs on the first page of children's individual profiles to encourage practitioners to focus on children's strengths rather than their weaknesses. Additionally, Taiwan has expanded this transformative approach by incorporating ABID into physiotherapy education, highlighting the importance of a strength-based approach for children with special needs. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in a discussion about challenges and solutions as well as lessons learned across differing contexts.</p> <p>There are three subtitles to introduce the global promotion of My Abilities First project and Taiwanese development and strategies to facilitate application of My Abilities ID Cards. Three subtitles are: 1. Schiariti Veronica- My Abilities First: Global Promotion of Children's Right to Self-Expression. 2. Liao HF- Promoting My Abilities First: Launching My Abilities ID Card Demonstration Sites in Taiwan 3.Wang PJ- Facilitating Positive Language in HealthcareEducation in Taiwan: My Abilities ID Cards</p>
1:00pm – 2:30pm	<p>C (Hybrid) “All About Me” As a Strategy for Self-Advocacy Sunflower, Virtual on Zoom</p> <p><i>Speakers: Amanda Kloo</i></p> <p>Self-advocacy is crucial for individuals with disabilities- especially kids! Self-advocacy is also challenging for individuals with disabilities- especially kids! It is a taught, learned, and practiced skill. Revamping the familiar “All About Me” activity is a fantastic way to equip children of all ages, stages, and abilities to make informed,</p>

authentic, empowered decisions about school, life, and play. During this session, we will engage together in hands-on, minds-on, hearts-on "All About Me" activities. Participants will leave with practical and meaningful ideas for strategy implementation.

1:00pm – 2:30pm	<p>C (In-Person) Beyond Play: Parent Perspectives of Using Their Family's Everyday Routines to Support Their Young Children With Autism</p> <p><i>Speakers: Rebekah Norris, Kris Everhart</i></p> <p>This session features parents of young children with autism who share their perspectives on receiving early intervention support designed to enhance their ability to foster their children's participation in everyday routines. Activities such as toothbrushing, dressing, going to the park, and mealtimes are often impacted when young children experience differences in social and communication development. Parents in this session will share their experiences and impressions of how helpful it is when early intervention supports focus on bolstering their children's learning outside of play routines.</p>	Azalea
1:00pm – 2:30pm	<p>C (In-Person) Dollars and Sense: State and Local Considerations for Leveraging Funds to Support Inclusive Settings</p> <p><i>Speakers: Debbie Cate</i></p> <p>Making individualized Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) placement decisions by first considering a regular early childhood program is a requirement under IDEA. Join the conversation to explore key data, factors, and leveraging points of your state, district and local community to identify: where children are who are key partners; which policies influence your actions, how funding sources may be used, and a commitment to action to support and expand inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities. Tools and resources will be shared.</p>	Windflower
1:00pm – 2:30pm	<p>C (In-Person) Integrating AI into Higher Education and Learning Management Systems (LMS)</p> <p><i>Speakers: Dorentina Dedushaj</i></p> <p>This session explores the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education by focusing on the integration of AI into Learning Management Systems (LMS) and higher education settings to ensure that all learners can access and participate fully. Participants will learn how AI can create personalized, inclusive learning experiences that address the unique needs of each and every learner, including multilingual learners and students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Attendees will leave with practical strategies to implement these AI tools responsibly, ensuring they are both inclusive and effective.</p>	Bellflower
1:00pm – 2:30pm	<p>C (In-Person) Maximizing Opportunities for Learning and Development of All Young Children: A Universal Design for Learning Approach</p> <p><i>Speakers: Bweikia Foster Steen</i></p> <p>This interactive session will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review the research related to the role of access, participation, and belonging within the early childhood school and classroom2. Hear from families and learn about their experiences navigating and partnering with their child's school and early educators3. Reflect upon the 3 Universal Design for Learning Principles (UDL) and apply the UDL principles to provide high-quality teaching and learning environments that support children's development and allow all children to meet high expectations	Redbud B
2:00pm – 3:00pm	<p>M (In-Person) Meet and Greet: A Conversation with the Autism Program Environment Rating Scale (APERS) Co-Author Ann Sam</p> <p><i>Speakers: Ann Sam</i></p>	Willow Lounge

If you are curious or have questions about the Autism Program Environment Rating Scale (APERS) as a tool to measure the quality of educational programs for children with autism., come have a chat with Ann Sam, one of the co-authors of the APERS.

2:30pm – 3:00pm	B	(In-Person) Afternoon Break and Snacks	Atrium
3:00pm – 4:30pm	C	(Hybrid) Changing the Narrative: Navigating Grief in Early Childhood Families with Children with Exceptionalities <i>Speakers: Marilyn Barge, DSW, LSW, Marilyn Pendelton, EdD, RN, LNC, CSN</i> This session will explore the unique challenges that early childhood families, with children from birth to five, face when navigating grief, especially in the context of raising children with exceptionalities. We will address the emotional and practical complexities of grief and caregiving, incorporating the mental health needs of both infants and young children. Participants will gain valuable insights into fostering resilience and understanding and providing effective support for families while navigating grief through the lens of early childhood development and mental health.	Sunflower, Virtual on Zoom
3:00pm – 4:30pm	C	(Hybrid) Nothing About Us Without Us: A Conversation with Individuals with Disabilities <i>Moderators: Paula Grubbs</i> <i>Speakers: Hannah Spitzer, Kenneth Kelty</i> In this session, adults with disabilities discuss their journey from the early years into adulthood. While systems and services have improved incrementally over time, there are still barriers to full inclusion and belonging in society. The panelists will share their stories about challenges, supports, as well as key considerations of what practitioners, families, and communities could do within their spheres of influence to support children to reach their full potential and truly belong wherever they go.	Redbud A, Virtual on Zoom
3:00pm – 4:30pm	C	(Hybrid) We Are Not Hard to Reach: Engaging Black Fathers of Children with Disabilities <i>Speakers: Brandy D. James, Marquis Clark, Gregory Facey</i> This presentation aims to develop a better understanding of the lived experiences of Black fathers of children with disabilities. The diagnosis of disability in a child presents a challenge for many parents and families (Huang, Kellett & St Jon 2010). For most parents learning about their children's disability, shock becomes the first response to dealing with the diagnosis (Hemming & Akurst 2009; Yaacob et al. 2021). Fathers are regarded as "hard to reach" by educators and practitioners within social services. In this session audience members will hear about lived experiences of the Black Father Crew, fathers of children with disabilities from across the United States.	Dogwood, Virtual on Zoom
3:00pm – 4:30pm	C	(In-Person) Assessment Practices that Integrate Cultural and Linguistic Factors for Bilingual Children <i>Speakers: Kimberly C. Jenkins</i> This presentation centers on cultural and linguistic factors for assessing bilingual children. Fundamental components and strategies for framing an assessment that integrates these aspects will be discussed. Specific focus will be given to guiding principles for assessing language and communication skills. Key considerations relevant to working with families of children from bilingual backgrounds will be addressed as well.	Azalea
3:00pm – 4:30pm	C	(In-Person) Breaking Down Silos: Preparing the Early Childhood Workforce through a CDA Apprenticeship Program focused on Inclusion <i>Speakers: Amanda Schwartz, Christy Tirrell-Corbin, Beth Boyle</i> Evidence suggests all children prosper in high-quality, inclusive environments, but especially children with disabilities. However, many early educators haven't been afforded the opportunity to learn evidence-based strategies that put children with disabilities on a path to reaching their full potential. This knowledge enhances	Bellflower

children's future academic and social outcomes, while simultaneously reducing the risk of teacher burnout. Learn about the University of Maryland's (UMD) Early EdCorp, a Registered Apprenticeship program focused on preparing assistant teachers/paraeducators to leverage inclusive practices while earning their Child Development Associated (CDA) credential. Explore ways to partner with UMD's Early EdCorp to promote inclusion in your community.

3:00pm – 4:30pm

C (In-Person) Navigating Preschool Itinerant Services: Best Practices for Success

Redbud B

Speakers: Ann Kremer, Ruth E. Gallucci

Dive deep into the world of itinerant services and uncover strategies that have positively impacted the lives of young children and families across states and school districts. In this session, we'll explore system-level considerations and innovative implementation approaches designed to enhance your programs. We will share guidance for embedding instruction, collaborative planning, IEP placement decisions, logistics, and professional development. Participants will have the chance to review the Illinois Itinerant Guidance, reflect on the content, and engage in discussions on how itinerant services can be brought to life in your programs.

3:00pm – 4:30pm

C (In-Person) Positive Social Engagement in Early Childhood Classrooms: What Does it Look Like?

Windflower

Speakers: Dr. Amy Grattan, Elena Soukakou

This session aims at presenting current evidence of everyday practices for nurturing peer interactions and supporting positive social engagement in early childhood classrooms. Participants will review recommended practices, watch video clips of classroom implementation, and discuss ways inclusive practices can be individualized to support the diverse learning profiles of children.

4:45pm – 6:30pm

M (In-Person) Meet and Greet: Family Networking

Willow Lounge

Speakers: Hsiu-wen Yang, Paula Grubbs, Chih-Ing Lim

Come meet other families who are at the institute! Drop by for a chat, exchange ideas, catch up with old friends, or meet new friends.

MAY 15 • THURSDAY

7:30am – 8:30am	B (In-Person) Check in and Breakfast	Atrium
8:30am – 10:00am	C (Hybrid) Enhancing Early STEM Learning for ALL: Strategies and Resources <i>Speakers: Hsiu-wen Yang, Megan Vinh, Chih-Ing Lim</i>	Sunflower, Virtual on Zoom
	<p>Join us for an interactive session to experience the joy of early STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) in early childhood environments. Participants will engage in active STEM learning experiences and explore strategies in engaging young children with and without disabilities across environments. We will spend time discussing the importance of a child-centered and asset-based approach to early STEM learning for ALL young children and develop ideas to include STEM learning opportunities across routines and activities. Participants will leave the session with an individual action plan and free, open-access resources for supporting early STEM learning for all in their respective settings.</p>	
8:30am – 10:00am	C (Hybrid) Strategy Development With Caregivers as the Key to Collaborative Inclusion <i>Speakers: Cami Stevenson, Robin McWilliam</i>	Redbud A, Virtual on Zoom
	<p>For inclusion to work, early intervention/early childhood special education specialists need to work collaboratively with caregivers (parents, teachers, etc.) to find strategies to help children function in their everyday routines. Collaborative consultation, sometimes known as coaching, requires the specialist's obtaining context before suggesting a strategy. This process stands in contrast to an expert approach, where the specialist makes recommendations with inadequate context.</p>	
8:30am – 10:00am	C (Hybrid) Supporting Autistic Toddlers with Interfering Behaviors in Early Intervention <i>Speakers: Ann Sam, Jessica Amsbary</i>	Dogwood, Virtual on Zoom
	<p>This session will focus on addressing interfering behaviors as part of early intervention services. We will describe the development process of freely available online modules to support EI providers to use a caregiver coaching model as part of their service to empower caregivers to use evidence-based practices (EBPs) in daily routines and activities. The module focused on addressing toddler's interfering behaviors will be described with video examples and case studies so that participants can explore how to use the module and its resources as part of their practice. The module format (including planning, using, and monitoring progress) will be outlined and user data related to EBP knowledge and module usefulness will be presented. Finally, participants will develop an action plan to apply what they learned in their own work.</p>	
8:30am – 10:00am	C (In-Person) Empowering Advocacy for Families and Students with Disabilities Through the use of Advanced Technologies <i>Speakers: Joe La Belle</i>	Windflower
	<p>In an era of rapid technological advancement, families and students with disabilities have unprecedented opportunities to enhance advocacy through various advanced technologies. This presentation will delve into how tools like artificial intelligence (AI) and digital communication platforms can empower families to better navigate educational systems and access essential resources. We will explore practical applications, from AI-driven learning aids and assistive technologies to online communities and advocacy tools that streamline communication with educators and professionals.</p>	
8:30am – 10:00am	C (In-Person) Incorporating Universal Design 3.0 in Coursework and Professional Development <i>Speakers: Camille Catlett, Kelli Odden</i>	Bellflower
	<p>2024 revealed the long-awaited updates to the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guidelines, with greater attention to issues early childhood inclusion. This session will start by sharing options for faculty and PD providers to discover, practice, and apply those guidelines in their learning opportunities and assignments. Then it will share examples of ways to help students and learners to learn about and apply UDL principles in their work</p>	

8:30am – 10:00am	<p>C (In-Person) Tiered Coaching to Support Special Education Itinerant Practices in Early Childhood</p> <p><i>Speakers: Melissa Griffin, Tanya Hutchinson ECSE MA, Dr. Kate Ascetta</i></p> <p>Redbud B</p> <p>This session focuses on a tiered coaching model designed to meet the specific needs of early childhood special education (ECSE) itinerant practitioners who service young children with disabilities in general education classrooms, including community programs. Attendees of this session will gain access to the nuts and bolts of a state-wide itinerant training, the Special Education Itinerant Teacher (SEIT) Academy. The SEIT Academy is designed to promote and support the implementation of a special education itinerant model within early childhood programs as part of the continuum of services for preschool children with disabilities. Come learn about the benefits of tiered coaching that increases the effectiveness of professional development and supports itinerant practitioners in establishing and/or enhancing the implementation of itinerant services within their school districts.</p>
10:00am – 10:15am	<p>B (In-Person) Morning Break and Snacks</p> <p>Atrium</p>
10:15am – 11:45am	<p>C (Hybrid) Membership and Belonging: Thinking Differently About Disability</p> <p><i>Speakers: Jackie Joseph, Megan Vinh, Jani Kozlowski</i></p> <p>Sunflower, Virtual on Zoom</p> <p>Research has shown that the primary challenge to supporting children with disabilities in regular early childhood settings like child care and Head Start rests within our own attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, in order to find innovative approaches to challenges, we should start by reflecting on our own mindset. How did we come to our understanding of the notion of disability in the first place? Are these beliefs getting in the way of our approaches toward children, families and colleagues? Let's explore it together! Join us to consider alternatives to the common definition of disability and how this alternative way of thinking can impact programs and practices. Together we will reflect on our attitudes and beliefs about disability, learn through storytelling and reflection, and consider an approach for supporting children with disabilities to foster change and create solutions. Together we can expand our thinking and find solutions!</p>
10:15am – 11:45am	<p>C (Hybrid) Native American Alaska Native Language and Culture Impact on Children's Behavior</p> <p><i>Speakers: Micker (Mike) Richardson</i></p> <p>Redbud A, Virtual on Zoom</p> <p>In my work with tribes one of the things that has stood out has been that every full tribal language immersion school or classroom has almost no behavior issues. We will look at some of the commonalities of why this may be happening when another school or classroom from the same community may show different results. This includes schools in the Southwest, Northern Woodland areas, Northwest, Alaska and Hawaii, all of them seem to have this in common. We will talk about how language and culture can influence behavior and what is so unique in these settings, such as tribal languages being verb driven instead of noun driven as English is. How sign language impacts behavior. I have looked at the methodologies over the years used in these learning environments and we will have a open discussion on what I have learned, along with the natural process of inclusion being built into the language and culture.</p>
10:15am – 11:45am	<p>C (Hybrid) Supporting One Another through Connection and Community: Finding Belonging and Support Within Professional Organizations</p> <p><i>Speakers: Peggy Kemp, Ruth E. Gallucci, Susan Friedman, Mandy Sorge</i></p> <p>Dogwood, Virtual on Zoom</p> <p>Professional organizations can serve as a support for practitioners and administrators in their work within early childhood teams serving children with disabilities and their families. Join us for an interactive discussion as we explore what associations do and could do to support professionals and bring a sense of belonging for each and every professional. We will discuss services, resources, materials that have been helpful to the field and those that might be especially relevant during this time of an ever evolving landscape of general and special education policies and practices. It is a time when both connections and community are essential.</p>
10:15am – 11:45am	<p>C (In-Person) Integrating Inclusive STEM Learning in Early Childhood Educators' Coursework and Professional Development</p> <p><i>Speakers: Sarah Pedonti, Donna Harris, Jessica Amsbary</i></p> <p>Bellflower</p> <p>Interested in how to incorporate emphasis on inclusive STEM learning in courses</p>

you already teach? Or workshops you already offer? This session will highlight specific strategies for weaving STEM learning and currently required content together. Discover what emphasis on STEM might look like in a course/presentation on language and literacy, family-centered practices, child development, early childhood curriculum, and more.

10:15am –
11:45am

C (In-Person) Leveraging Primary Care to Promote Universal Screening and Early Connections for Young Children Windflower

Speakers: Melissa Baron, Ph.D., Natalie Tackitt, MED, MSA

Frequent, universal screenings in pediatric primary care are critical for identifying whether children are meeting key developmental milestones. Early and consistent screenings play a vital role in detecting potential developmental delays, behavioral concerns, and social-emotional challenges—issues that, if left unaddressed, can significantly impact a child's long-term health and well-being. Beyond flagging potential concerns, these screenings reveal referral needs, ensuring families gain access to essential services and interventions. HealthySteps (HS) is an evidence-based program that strengthens pediatric care by embedding an early childhood specialist and behavioral health promotion/prevention expert into the primary care team, specifically serving families with children from birth to age three. HS Specialists collaborate with the primary care team and caregivers to promote healthy child development. In addition to providing positive parenting guidance, they support early identification and care coordination and systems navigation—ensuring families receive timely, effective connections to critical resources. This session will offer an in-depth overview of the HealthySteps approach, highlighting best practices for linking families to services, and strategies for equipping families to navigate the complexities of accessing care. Participants will be encouraged to engage throughout the session by asking questions and sharing their experiences

10:15am –
11:45am

C (In-Person) Literacy Beginnings: Including Children with Extensive Support Needs in Emergent Literacy Learning Redbud B

Speakers: Suzanne Feinstein, Hsiao-Ting Su

Emergent literacy is the foundation for later reading and writing development for all children. Emergent literacy activities help children develop understandings of the forms and functions of print, while developing essential language and communication skills. Children with extensive support needs often face barriers to participating in emergent literacy activities. Their combined language, communication, physical, sensory, and cognitive needs often result in limited learning opportunities. Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is one essential support for children with extensive support needs. In this session, we will describe ways to incorporate AAC into comprehensive approaches to emergent literacy and provide hands-on practice using AAC during shared reading and using alternative pencils for writing.

11:45am –
12:55pm

B (In-Person) Lunch and Reflection Trillium
