



On behalf of the Department of Early Childhood Education at East Tennessee State University and the ETSU Early Childhood Conference Team, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the ***Growing Together: Nurturing Hearts and Minds in Early Education Conference***. We are thrilled to have you join us for this exciting event where we will explore innovative strategies and best practices in early childhood education.

Our wonderful keynote speaker, **Dr. Travis Wright** is an educator, counselor, scholar, and author of ***Emotionally Responsive Teaching***. His opening keynote session in the Martha Street Culp Auditorium will focus on the possibilities and challenges of educating children with difficult lives. We know you will leave inspired and with new perspectives and strategies!

This conference is a dynamic opportunity for educators, researchers, and professionals in the field to come together and exchange insights on how we can collectively foster holistic development of young children and positively impact learning and development. With sessions led by experts in early childhood education, and networking opportunities, we aim to inspire and empower you to make a meaningful impact in your practice.

I would like to recognize your conference team who have been working throughout the year to prepare for today's event. From the **Department of Early Childhood Education**, Dr. Pamela Evanshen, Dr. Jane Broderick, Dr. Kathryn Sharp, Dr. Ruth Facun-Granadozo, Dr. Narges Sareh, Dr. Amy Malkus, Dr. Julia Atilas, Ms. Angela Shelton, Ms. Kim Cassell, Ms. Patience Mensah-Bonsu Aggrey, and Ms. Nicky Ridley. From the **Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA)**, Ms. Sara Mietzer. From the **Early Childhood STEM Lab**, Dr. Alissa Lange and Ms. Amie Perry. From the **Appalachian Association for Children's Early Education**, Ms. Beth Huber and Ms. Amie Perry. From the **Gilbreath Literacy Council**, Dr. Kathryn Sharp and Ms. Angela Shelton.

Thank you for embarking on this journey of learning and collaboration together. We look forward to a great day!

Be sure to stay for the closing in the Martha Street Culp Auditorium where we will **distribute many door prizes** at 4:15 PM!

Warm regards,

Pamela Evanshen, EdD

Professor and Department Chair

ETSU Department of Early Childhood Education



**8:00-9:00** Registration (1st floor Culp Center)

**9:00-10:00** Keynote Presentation (Martha Street Culp Auditorium – 1st floor)

**10:00-10:15** Break/Transition

**10:15-11:15** Session I (see program for room assignments)

**11:15-11:30** Break/Transition

**11:30-12:30** Session II (see program for room assignments)

**12:30-1:30** Lunch (3rd floor Main Meal Dining)

**1:30-1:45** Transition

**1:45-2:45** Session III (see program for room assignments)

**2:45-3:00** Break/Transition

**3:00-4:00** Session IV (see program for room assignments)

**4:00-4:15** Transition

**4:15-4:30** Closing & Door Prizes (Martha Street Culp Auditorium – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor)

# D.P. CULP STUDENT CENTER

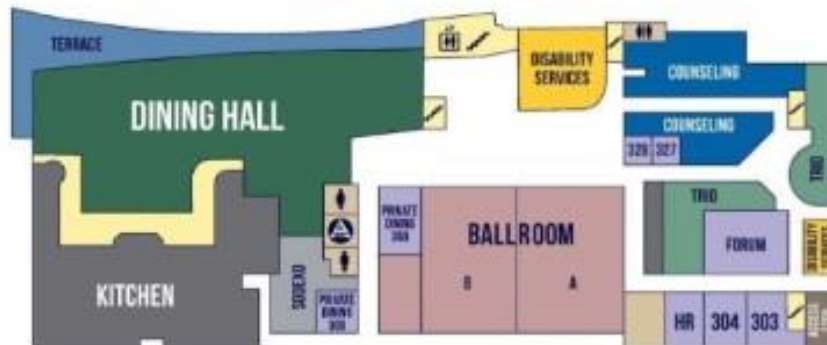
## 1ST FLOOR LL



## 2ND FLOOR ML



## 3RD FLOOR UL



## **Conference Keynote – Dr. Travis Wright – Martha Street Culp Auditorium**

**9:00 am – 10:00 am**

### ***Emotionally Responsive Teaching: Reframing Resilience for Children with Challenging Lives***

For many children, such as those growing in the midst of life's difficulties or other forms of trauma, the demands of the classroom and home may require very different skills and attitudes to succeed. This session will focus on the possibilities and challenges of educating children with difficult lives. Participants will leave inspired and with new perspectives and strategies.

## **Emergent Inquiry Track**

### ***Emergent Inquiry with Infants and Toddlers – Dominique Files, B.S.***

**Room 219**

**10:15 am – 11:15 am**

Educators may struggle with implementing emergent curriculum when the children in the classroom are not yet speaking. This session will outline how educators can look beyond the words of the children to successfully guide the children on their journey of inquiry by providing participants with practical strategies

### ***Documentation Panel Round Table – Jane Broderick, Ed.D. & Cindy McGaha, Ph.D.***

**Room 360**

**11:30 am – 12:30 pm \*Also available for viewing throughout the lunch break\***

In two round-table presentations this session will feature documentation from a variety of Reggio inspired schools. Each participant will choose two round table discussions during these sessions to hear the stories of children's, teachers, and even director's inquiry processes through photos, descriptions, and reflections. Learn how documentation makes the ideas and theories of children, teachers, and directors come to life.

***Venturing Into Nature's Classroom: Connecting the Head, Heart, and Hands in a Forest School – Micky Morton, M.Ed.***

**Room 219**

**1:45 pm – 2:45 pm**

This session will take you through the cycle of inquiry as we observe the children's experience within nature emerge into deep connective learning at Seedkeepers Forest School. Participants will explore a few of the many projects that have taken place over the years that emerged from seasonal interactions with the land and will be guided in a simple activity that allows each to understand how daily connections to nature can lead to a lifelong passion for learning.

***Farm to Table: Food as Care and Pedagogy – Andrea Anderson, Ed.D., Casey Black, B.S., & Cassandra Parrish, B.S.***

**Room 219**

**3:00 pm – 4:00 pm**

This session will share the journey of a Reggio Emilia-inspired program as they implemented a farm-to-table pedagogy as a form of care and curriculum. Presenters will share documentation of the emergent curriculum based on food inquiry, gardening, sustainability, recycling, and food as a means to show love and care as well as how the administrative team sought out community connections and grant funding to support the development of the food program.

### **Infant & Toddler Track**

***The Power of Your Voice: Singing with Infants and Toddlers - Sonya Greear, M.A.***

**Room 311 (Forum Room)**

**10:15 am – 11:15 am**

In this session, we will explore the profound impact of singing with our voices in early childhood classrooms. We will discuss the benefits of singing for language acquisition, emotional regulation, and bonding. Attendees will leave equipped with practical techniques and strategies to integrate singing into their classrooms by harnessing the transformative power of their voices.

***Leveraging Quality Early Language and Literacy Experiences in Fostering Young Children's Social and Emotional Development – Lydia Ifunanya Ugwu, Ann Marie Cornelison, & Ruth Facun-Granadozo, Ph.D.***

**Room 311 (Forum Room)**

**11:30 am – 12:30 pm**

Grounded in child development principles and recent research, the session will explore effective practices for promoting language and emergent literacy skills while nurturing socio-emotional development. Through interactive discussions, small-group reflections, and practical strategies, participants will enhance their ability to create enriching learning environments and foster meaningful interactions with infants and toddlers, ultimately supporting their holistic development.

***Consent and Healthy Relationships with Infants and Toddlers – Amanda Osborne, M.A., IMH-E***

**Room 311 (Forum Room)**

**1:45 pm – 2:45 pm**

This session will explore the need to address healthy relationships beginning in infancy by describing the components of healthy relationships and the concept of consent. We will explore how we can practice consent with infants and toddlers so we begin teaching consent from birth to help children build a strong foundation that will keep them safe as they grow.

***"This child can't self-regulate!" Understanding the sensory integration issues of very young children. – Cassandra Nabalta, M.S., Marketa Raevsky, M.A., & Julia Atilas, Ph.D.***

**Room 311 (Forum Room)**

**3:00 – 4:00 pm**

This session will delve into sensory integration dysfunction (SPD) by exploring its manifestations, prevalence, and impact on children's development. We will discuss strategies for identification, intervention, and effective communication with parents and colleagues, emphasizing the importance of early support for children with SPD to thrive socially and academically.

## **Leadership Track**

*Leading for Emotionally Responsive Teaching – Travis Wright, Ed.D.*

**Room 272 (East TN Room)**

**10:15 am – 11:15 am**

Participants will discuss the conditions, environments, and supports necessary to cultivate and support emotionally responsive teaching. Through the presentation of several case studies, participants will leave with new perspectives and strategies to better support educational and clinical practice.

*Early Childhood Leadership: Nurturing Hearts & Minds as You Lead – Pamela Evanshen, Ed.D. & Patience Mensah-Bonsu Aggrey, M.A.*

**Room 272 (East TN Room)**

**11:30 am – 12:30 pm**

In this session designed for center directors or program leaders, participants will explore effective and ineffective leadership traits and how they impact the relationships we build among employees. Participants will determine their strengths and utilize them as they think about enhancing their understanding of employees, refining relationship-building and mentoring strategies, and engaging in reflective practice to facilitate professional growth.

*Developing Teacher Agency in the Age of External Control – Melody Kay Hobbs, Ed.S.*

**Room 272 (East TN Room)**

**1:45 – 2:45**

This session aims to encourage program and teacher leaders, coaches, and mentors to reconsider their perceptions of teachers by emphasizing the importance of viewing teachers as capable individuals. Participants will explore how leadership practices can either support or hinder teachers' development of decision-making skills. Presenters will highlight the benefits of leadership approaches that prioritize teacher agency which could enhance teacher self-efficacy and positively impact the school culture and children's social-emotional well-being.

*All Are Welcome Here: Leadership that Invites Inclusive Early Childhood Practices – Kerri Munsey, M.Ed.*

**Room 272 (East TN Room)**

**3:00 - 4:00**

Inclusive early childhood education requires effective leadership to make "All Are Welcome Here" a reality. In this session, participants will explore how leaders can implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL) practices to create inclusive and supportive learning environments for all children. By promoting collaboration and communication among educators and families, leaders can help to ensure that every child has access to high-quality early childhood programming. Together we will explore effective leadership strategies and easily implemented classroom practices that can help transform the quality of inclusion in your program.

### **Early STEM Track**

*Where do I start?: Using a learning trajectories approach to cultivate inclusive STEM learning experience – Lim Chi-Ing*

*Co-hosts: Alissa A. Lange, Ph.D., & Amie A. Perry, M.A.*

**Ballroom A**

**10:15 am – 11:15 am**

This session will focus on identifying, using, and applying inclusive STEM practices in early childhood environments. Through reflections on participants' own practices and video demonstrations, participants will learn about ways to be intentional and drawing from children's strengths and interests to support each and every child in STEM learning opportunities. Participants will also leave with free ready to use resources.

*Social and Emotional Aspects of STEM in the Preschool Classroom – Alicia Holley*

**Ballroom A**

**11:30 am – 12:30 pm**

This session will empower educators to integrate STEM learning into preschool classrooms, tapping into children's natural curiosity and creativity. By leveraging everyday items, educators can facilitate engaging activities that promote scientific exploration, engineering challenges, and mathematical concepts while fostering language development and problem-solving skills. Attendees will explore how hands-on experiences and collaborative projects build foundational STEM competencies while also cultivating social-emotional skills, environmental awareness, and a sense of belonging.



***Tinker with Tales: Using Children's Literature to Engage STEM Explorations – Jennifer Bilbrey, Ph.D. & Ruth Copeland, Ed.S.***

**Ballroom A**

**1:45 pm – 2:45 pm**

This session will explore the integration of children's literature into early childhood classrooms to foster STEM engagement among preschoolers. Through hands-on examples, discussions on cross-curricular learning, and exploration of picture books' potential, educators will gain practical insights and inspiration to incorporate STEM activities effectively, ultimately enhancing young learners' critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

***Community Connected Early STEM – Amie A. Perry, M.A. & Alissa A. Lange, Ph.D.***

**Ballroom A**

**3:00 pm – 4:00 pm**

Join us for an interactive session focused on extending what you already do in the classroom into your community! Presenters will share practical strategies for bringing STEM teaching and the community together in a variety of ways. Attendees will spend time brainstorming together, discovering regional resources, and engaging with materials that bring community-engaged STEM to life. All will leave with ideas and resources to support making STEM learning for anyone, anywhere, anytime.

**Early Literacy Track**

***Social Stories as Emotional, Social, and Literacy Tools – Rachel Jamieson, M.S. Ed.***

**Ballroom B**

**10:15 am – 11:15 am**

Have you ever wondered how to help a child process the arrival of a younger sibling? Struggled to effectively support a child's big feelings or big reactions? Wanted to ensure your classroom is prepared for an upcoming field trip? Come learn how to create and use personalized social stories to organize young children's experiences, both in and out of the classroom. This session will be beneficial for anyone who provides care for children.

***Literacy Beyond Borders: Promoting Reading and Comprehension Among ESL Learners – Clara Puni Nyamesem, M.A. & Claudia Baiata***

**Ballroom B**

**11:30 am – 12:30 pm**

This presentation aims to inspire early childhood educators and researchers by offering a multicultural perspective on promoting reading and comprehension among ESL learners. By weaving together the richness of storybooks, the letters of the alphabet, and pictures we can create an inclusive and effective learning environment that nurtures the linguistic and cultural development of young children in preschool and early elementary school.

***Phonological Awareness, Phonemic Awareness, and Phonics. Oh my! – Angela M. Shelton, Ed.S. & Kathryn Sharp, Ed.D.***

**Ballroom B**

**1:45 pm – 2:45 pm**

Much of the work we do in early literacy begins with a solid foundation in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and phonics instruction. However, these terms can often feel overwhelming and confusing. Join this session to discuss how these skills develop and exchange ideas on how to incorporate them into your literacy instruction. Participants will also engage in a "make and take" activity to use right away!

***Using Informational Text to Enhance Learning in the Preschool Classroom – Bolatito Anne Alaofin, M.A., Candi S. Clevinger, Ed.S., & Narges Sareh, Ph.D.***

**Ballroom B**

**3:00 pm – 4:00 pm**

Presenters in this session will discuss strategies to use informational text along with fiction books in developing interdisciplinary lessons and activities in early childhood classroom with a focus on preschool. Presenters and attendees will discuss ways to identify informational books that support children's learning in various content areas as well as strategies to include those books in the classroom.

**Be sure to return to the Martha Street Culp Auditorium on the first floor for closing remarks and to collect your ticket for our door prize drawing. There are lots of prizes to be won including an espresso maker, kitchenware, classroom items, décor/artwork, and many others!**

Scan the QR code with your phone to access the conference app for easy navigation!

