

**IHSA 2026 Conference Sessions**  
March 17, 2026 – March 19, 2026  
*(Subject to Change – updated 2/3/2026)*  
**\*New content added**

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**A Buzz Through Tazewell-Woodford Head Start Where Everyone Bee-longs (Off Conference Site – Field Trip)**

Track: Teaching & Learning (Birth–5)

Secondary Tags: Inclusive Practices, Learning Environment, Program Culture

Suggested Audience: Education Staff and Teachers; Coaches and Supervisors; Directors and Administrators; Family Service Staff

Our friends at Tazewell-Woodford Head Start are opening their doors to conference attendees for a guided visit. We invite you to take advantage of this opportunity to see and hear about one program’s approach to belonging across classrooms and program spaces.

Presenter(s): TWHS Staff

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**A Positive Approach to Preventing and Addressing Behavioral Concerns: Part 1**

Track: Teaching & Learning (Birth–5)

Secondary Tags: Behavior Guidance; Classroom Environment: Coaching; Prevention Practices

Suggested Audience: Education Staff/Teachers; Coaches/Supervisors; Directors/Administrators; Mental Health Staff

This session is the first in a two-part series focused on strengthening program-wide approaches to preventing behavioral concerns in early childhood classrooms. Part 1 centers on the foundational practices that reduce the likelihood of challenging behaviors before they occur. Participants will explore how classroom environments, daily routines, and strong teacher–child relationships support positive behavior and learning. The session introduces the Classroom Essentials Checklist as a practical tool for implementing proactive, high-quality practices. Program leaders and coaching teams will also examine ways to support educators through environmental and relationship-based strategies that promote consistency and reduce stress. Participants will leave with clear guidance, practical tools, and coaching approaches to support positive, thriving classroom communities.

Presenter: Kela Leshoure

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**A Positive Approach to Preventing and Addressing Behavioral Concerns: Part 2**

Track: Teaching & Learning (Birth–5)

Secondary Tags: Behavior Response; Documentation; Team-Based Problem Solving; Mental Health Supports

Suggested Audience: Education Staff/Teachers; Coaches/Supervisors; Directors/Administrators  
Mental Health Staff; Disabilities Coordinators

Part 2 of this series shifts the focus to responding effectively when behavioral concerns arise in the classroom. Participants will learn how education staff and program teams can identify and

document concerns using clear, objective observations. The session walks through a structured response process that supports early intervention, collaboration, and reflective decision-making. Participants will explore responsive strategies that prioritize safety, emotional regulation, and relationship-building, while also learning how to engage program supports such as mental health consultants, multidisciplinary teams, and family partnerships. Practical tools and resources will be shared to help guide educators from initial concern through individualized support, ensuring consistent and equitable responses to behavioral challenges.

Presenter: Kela Leshoure

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### **Bee-lieve in Family Partnership**

Track: Family & Community Partnerships

Secondary Tags: Family Engagement; Communication

Suggested Audience: Family Service Staff; Teachers; Home Visitors

This interactive session focuses on strengthening relationships with families through trust, communication, and collaboration. Participants will explore practical approaches for engaging families who may feel hesitant, overwhelmed, or disconnected, with a focus on strategies that support children's learning and family engagement.

Presenter(s): Donna Ashley & Lindsey Obergfel

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### **Beyond the Visit: Building Data-Driven Systems for Attendance, Health, Education and Engagement**

Track: Program Leadership, Workforce & Operations

Secondary Tags: Home Visiting, Data & Monitoring, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), Compliance & Systems Planning, Workforce Wellness

Suggested Audience: Home Visiting Supervisors, EHS Program Leaders, Family Service Managers, Program Data/Compliance Staff, ERSEA or Operations Staff

How do we move from managing daily tasks to building sustainable systems that ensure compliance and high-quality services? In this session, I share a roadmap that has driven measurable improvements in our Early Head Start home visiting program. By integrating rigorous data monitoring with family-centered service delivery, our program streamlined documentation, improved program requirement outcomes and supported workforce wellness. Participants will walk away with practical tools—from spreadsheet templates to collaborative communication strategies—designed to bridge the gap between compliance and quality services.

Presenter(s): Ana Pardeshi

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### **\*Beyond the Paperwork: Enrollment as the First Relationship**

Track: Family & Community Partnerships

Secondary Tags: ERSEA; Family Engagement; Enrollment Practices; Workforce & Operations; Relationship Building

Suggested Audience: ERSEA Staff; Enrollment Specialists; Program Managers and Supervisors; Directors and Administrators

Enrollment is often the first meaningful connection families have with a Head Start program. This interactive session reframes enrollment as more than managing paperwork—it is an opportunity to build trust, communicate value, and establish strong relationships from the very beginning. Participants will explore innovative strategies to streamline enrollment processes, reduce administrative burden, and intentionally create space for connection. Attendees will leave with practical tools and ideas to make enrollment more efficient, family-centered, and engaging while positioning enrollment staff as the welcoming first face of the program.

Presenter(s): Stephanie Johnson

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### **Building Bridges: Effective Techniques for Dual-Language Learners**

Track: Teaching & Learning (Birth–5)

Secondary Tags: Dual-Language Learners; Inclusion

Suggested Audience: Education Staff/Teachers; Coaches; Disabilities Coordinators

This session focuses on supporting dual-language learners through intentional, inclusive teaching practices. Participants will explore strategies that honor children’s home languages while supporting language development in classroom settings, connecting culturally responsive practice with day-to-day instruction.

Presenter(s): Glenna Jakush & Julian Lomax

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### **Breaking Cycles: A Trauma-Responsive Parenting Journey: Foundations & Awareness [Session 1 of 2]**

Track: Parents & Caregivers

Secondary Tags: Mental Health; Social Emotional Development; Trauma Informed Care

Suggested Audience: Family Services Staff; Family Advocates, Community Partners

"Breaking Cycles: A Trauma-Responsive Parenting Journey" is an interactive workshop designed to support parents experiencing mental health challenges by providing trauma-informed education and practical skills. Participants begin by learning to define mental health and to understand the connection between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors through interactive, scenario-based exercises. The session addresses common mental health myths that contribute to stigma. In the second session, participants identify different types of trauma and the ways they manifest emotionally and physically, practicing how to reframe self-blaming thoughts into more compassionate perspectives.

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### **Breaking Cycles: A Trauma-Responsive Parenting Journey: Skills Application and Integration [Session 2 of 2]**

Track: Parents & Caregivers

Secondary Tags: Mental Health; Social Emotional Development; Trauma Informed Care

Suggested Audience: Family Services Staff; Family Advocates, Community Partners

Continuing from Session 1, participants begin by learning to define mental health and to understand the connection between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors through interactive, scenario-based exercises. The session addresses common mental health myths that contribute

to stigma. In the second session, participants identify different types of trauma and the ways they manifest emotionally and physically, practicing how to reframe self-blaming thoughts into more compassionate perspectives.

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### **Classroom Management: Creating a Learning Environment That Works**

Track: Teaching & Learning (Birth–5)

Secondary Tags: Behavior Guidance; Learning Environment

Suggested Audience: Education Staff/Teachers; Coaches; Center-Based Leaders

This session focuses on proactive classroom management practices that support engagement, predictability, and positive behavior. Participants will explore how routines, environment design, and adult responses contribute to effective learning spaces.

Presenter: Vincent Rodriguez

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### **Communicating with Your Baby During Pregnancy to Support Bonding & Attachment**

Track: Health, Mental Health & Safety

Secondary Tags: Prenatal Support, Attachment & Bonding, Infant Mental Health

Suggested Audience: Home Visitors, Early Head Start Staff, Family Service Staff, Health & Mental Health Staff

Explore the benefits of bonding during the prenatal period & introducing the strategy of parents intentionally communicating with their baby prenatally. This session offers opportunities for including prenatals & their parents in all aspects of life, beginning during pregnancy. This session will acknowledge the trauma & anxiety that may impact baby's outcomes with their family as a result of interventions & interruptions during pregnancy. Babies who are diagnosed prenatally may receive medical interventions, but may not receive emotional support. This session offers inspiration related to prenatal communication with babies to enhance their opportunities for a healthy & loving life.

Presenter(s): Lynn Barts

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### **Connecting Families Through Coordinated Community Referrals**

Track: Family & Community Partnerships

Secondary Tags: Community Partnerships; Family Support

Suggested Audience: Family Service Staff; ERSEA Staff; Community Partners

Families often encounter barriers when accessing community services. This session explores how coordinated referral systems can reduce gaps, improve follow-through, and strengthen partnerships with community providers supporting families with complex needs.

Presenter: Julie Herzog

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### **Courageous Communication: A Leadership Skill for Difficult Conversations**

Track: Program Leadership, Workforce & Operations

Secondary Tags: Leadership Development; Supervision; Communication  
Suggested Audience: Directors; Managers; Coaches/Supervisors

This session supports leaders navigating challenging conversations with staff, families, or colleagues. Participants will explore practical communication strategies that balance clarity, empathy, and accountability while maintaining trust and professionalism.

Presenter(s): Maria Madrigal and Nicole Taxiltaridis

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**\*Creating Compassionate Classrooms: Overcoming Adversity with Empathy and Consistency**

Track: Teaching and Learning (Birth -5)

Secondary Tags: Classroom Management; Social Emotional Development; Trauma Informed Practice

Suggested Audience: Education Staff and Teachers; Coaches and Supervisors; Early head Start and Head Start Staff

Let's talk about empathy; we often make assumptions as adults in the classroom space that leads us to be reactive instead of responsive to the little people's needs in the classroom. We will dive into practical strategies that help navigate sticky situations which will support better classroom management and more fun in the classroom while the children learn and explore. This will be an opportunity for you to share some of your best practices, as well as learn from myself and our peers within ECE.

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**Family Foundations: Building Strength from Within**

Track: Parent & Family Engagement

Secondary Tags: Strength Based Practice, Family Engagement, Relationship Building

Suggested Audience: Family Service Staff, Home Visitors, EHS Staff, Parents & Caregivers

This session focuses on working with families using a strength-based approach that builds partnerships by recognizing families' strengths, interests, and potential rather than focusing on challenges. It addresses real life concerns families may be facing, including work and life stress, mental health challenges, homelessness, domestic violence, poverty, grief, limited education, unemployment, and single parenthood. The session also explores how trusting and consistent relationships between staff and families, through personalized home visits and connections to community resources, support family well-being and children's readiness for school.

Presenter(s): Felicia Murray

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**Filling Your Oxygen Mask First: Caring for Yourself So You Can Care for Others**

Track: Health & Wellness

Secondary Tags: Mental Health, Stress and Burnout, Caregiver Support, Staff Wellness

Suggested Audience: Family Service Staff, Home Visitors, Parent Educators, Parent Advocates, Teachers, Program Leaders, Parent and Caregivers

The familiar guidance to put on your oxygen mask first applies beyond emergencies and into our work with families. This session reinforces that caring for yourself is not selfish—it is necessary. Participants will explore how adult mental, physical, and emotional well-being affects children and how tending to your own needs supports stronger, healthier family connections.

Presenter(s): Felicia Murray

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**From Early Intervention to Early Childhood: What Families Need to Know for a Smooth Transition** Track: Parents

Secondary Tags: Parent Voice, Lived Experience, System Navigation

Suggested Audience: Parents & Caregivers, Family Advocates, Community Partners

Moving from Early Intervention (EI) to early childhood services is a big milestone for children and families. Families will learn what to expect during the transition process, important timelines, and how roles and services may change. The session emphasizes parent voice, shared decision-making, and practical strategies families can use to feel confident, informed, and supported as they navigate early childhood systems.

Presenter(s): Megan Mutti

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**Goal-Setting to Make Progress Toward Outcomes**

Track: Family & Community Partnerships

Secondary Tags: Family Engagement; ERSEA; CQI

Suggested Audience: Family Service Staff; ERSEA Staff; Home Visitors; Directors

This session strengthens goal-setting practices with families using a six-phase process grounded in family priorities and real-life scenarios. Participants will examine how listening, collaboration, and continuous improvement support meaningful outcomes.

Presenter(s): Tammy Riley

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**Growing Your Well-Being Garden: Exploring Resilience and Reflection with Family Service Professionals**

Track: Program Leadership, Workforce & Operations

Secondary Tags: Staff Wellness; Trauma-Informed Practice; PFCE

Suggested Audience: Family Service Staff; Supervisors/Managers; Directors

Designed for those supporting family services staff, this session explores how trauma and stress affect adult relationships and workplace well-being. Participants connect staff wellness strategies with PFCE practices and leave with practical reflection tools.

Presenter(s): Tammy Riley

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**\*How To Use Child Plus For CACFP Reporting**

Track: Health and Nutrition

Secondary Tags: Workforce & Operations; CACFP; Data and Reporting; Compliance

Suggested Audience: Nutrition and Health Staff; Program Data Staff; Fiscal and Administrative Staff; Program Managers and Supervisors; Directors and Administrators

Learn how to enter CACFP enrollment forms and meals into Child plus data system and how to run reports to meet CACFP requirements. Participants will be able to enter CACFP enrollment forms into Child plus and run Master Lists. Participants will be able to enter child and adult meals into Child plus. Participants will be able to run reports for meals to enter numbers into IWAS for meal reimbursement.

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### **Infant Massage During Pregnancy & the 1st Year of Life**

Track: Health, Mental Health & Safety

Secondary Tags: Attachment & Bonding, Responsive Caregiving, Infant Mental Health

Suggested Audience: Home Visitors, EHS Staff, Infant-Toddler Teachers, Family Service Staff

Babies are born to connect, even during pregnancy. Infant massage can support decreased post-partum depression, increase serve & return opportunities, and support families in making informed birth decisions related to delayed bathing and 1st touch experiences. Infant massage can assist parents & other caregivers in relating with their baby, reading their babies cues, providing relief, and fostering relaxation. Each one is important in supporting mutual enjoyment of the parent child relationship. Come explore the multiple benefits for both baby and caregiver through the magic of loving touch during pregnancy & the first year of life

Presenter(s): Lynn Barts

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### **Living by Design or Living by Default?**

Track: Program Leadership, Workforce & Operations

Secondary Tags: Leadership Reflection; Staff Wellness

Suggested Audience: Directors; Managers; All Staff

This reflective session invites participants to examine how intentional their choices are in work and life. Participants explore values, habits, and priorities that shape decision-making and long-term sustainability in leadership and practice.

Presenter: Jenni Phillips

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### **Look Who's Talking! The Opposite of Awkward Conversations**

Track: Program Leadership, Workforce & Operations

Secondary Tags: Communication; Team Dynamics

Suggested Audience: All Staff; Supervisors; Directors

This session builds confidence and skill in everyday communication. Participants explore why conversations feel awkward and practice strategies for listening, responding, and engaging more effectively with colleagues and families.

Presenter(s): Jill Romza and Cartina Lycko

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### **\*Love Languages**

Track: Teaching & Learning

Secondary Tags: Program Leadership, Workforce & Operations; Relationship Building; Communication Styles; Social Emotional Development

Suggested Audience: Education Staff and Teachers; Family Service Staff; Home Visitors; Coaches and Supervisors; Directors and Administrators; Parents

Hey, GREAT job on that essay! I LOVE the beautiful bracelet you gifted me! We all say “I care” in different ways, and that’s where the Five Love Languages come in. Understanding these languages isn’t about changing who you are, but about learning how to speak love in a way that actually arrives to the recipient. Do you know what your love language is? Come and find out! (Based on Gary Chapman’s The Five Love Languages)

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### **Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMADs) and Perinatal Loss**

Track: Health, Mental Health & Safety

Secondary Tags: Perinatal Mental Health, Trauma Informed Practice, Prenatal Support

Suggested Audience: Home Visitors; EHS Staff; Health and Mental Health Staff; Family Service Staff

This presentation provides an overview of common perinatal mood and anxiety disorders that can occur during pregnancy and the postpartum period, as well as the emotional impact of perinatal loss. Participants will gain insight into risk factors, signs and symptoms, and the importance of early recognition, compassionate support, and access to appropriate resources for individuals and families during the perinatal period.

Presenter(s): Casey Cope and Julie Mouser

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### **Planning the Home-Based Way**

Track: Family & Community Partnerships

Secondary Tags: Home Visiting; Family Engagement; EHS

Suggested Audience: Home Visitors; Family Service Staff; EHS Coordinators

This session walks through the home-based planning process used in home visiting programs. Participants explore collaborative planning with families and the use of everyday materials to support learning in home-based settings.

Presenter: Verlinda Sims

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### **\*Power of Play (Off Conference Site – Field Trip)**

Track: Teaching & Learning (Birth – 5)

Secondary Tags: Play Based Learning, Child Development, Experiential Learning

Suggested Audience: Education Staff and Teachers; Coaches and Supervisors; Directors and Administrators

Come see the power of play! Learn the importance of open-ended play, confidence building, and problem-solving development in children. Meet with the museum director as she walks you through the exhibits and underlying philosophy of the Peoria PlayHouse Children’s Museum.

Making sure every child is supplied with the tools and inspiration they need to be explorers and creators of the world.

Presenter(s): Melissa Sierra (Directors, Peoria Playhouse Children's Museum)

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**\*Prenatal Education for Home Visitors**

Track: Family & Community Partnerships

Secondary Tags: Prenatal Education, Home Visiting, Family Engagement

Suggested Audience: Home Visitors; Family Service Staff; EHS Staff

This presentation focuses on key prenatal education topics to support expectant families during home visits. Participants will review basic prenatal health, early warning signs, and effective strategies for providing education, encouragement, and resource connections to promote healthy pregnancies and positive outcomes.

Presenter(s): Julie Mouser and Casey Cope

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**\*Prenatal Program Structure and Adhering to the Most Recent HS Standards**

Track: Program Leadership, Workforce & Operations

Secondary Tags: Policy and Compliance, Head Start Performance Standards, Prenatal Services

Suggested Audience: Program Directors and Administrators; Home Visiting Supervisors; Health Managers; Compliance and Operations Staff

This session highlights how we deliver high-quality prenatal services via home visiting from a health perspective, outlining the program's structure and how it aligns with the most recent Head Start Program Performance Standards. Topics include health education, risk screening and referral, family engagement, and coordinated care to support healthy pregnancies and positive outcomes.

Presenter(s): Casey Cope and Julie Mouser

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**Reinventing the Wheel: Increasing the Quality and Quantity of STEM in ECE Classrooms**

Track: Teaching & Learning (Birth–5)

Secondary Tags: STEM; Inquiry-Based Learning

Suggested Audience: Education Staff/Teachers; Coaches

This session highlights a preschool STEM study showing how young children engage in inquiry and problem-solving. Participants explore hands-on, developmentally appropriate STEM experiences they can adapt for classrooms.

Presenter: Margo Scholl

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**Reflective Supervision for Growth and Continuous Quality Improvement**

Track: Program Leadership, Workforce & Operations

Secondary Tags: Supervision; CQI; Staff Support

Suggested Audience: Directors; Managers; Coaches/Supervisors

This session explores reflective supervision as a structured approach to staff support, growth, and accountability. Participants examine how reflective practices contribute to continuous quality improvement and stronger teams.

Presenter: Tiernan McIlwaine

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### **Regulate Before You Communicate, Educate, or Facilitate**

Track: Health, Mental Health & Safety

Secondary Tags: Regulation; Co-Regulation; Adult Practice

Suggested Audience: All Staff; Education Staff; Family Service Staff

This session focuses on regulation and co-regulation as foundations for effective communication and teaching. Participants explore how adult awareness and emotional state influence interactions across settings.

Presenter: Tiernan McIlwaine

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### **Social and Emotional Infant–Toddler Behavior Is... Child Development**

Track: Teaching & Learning (Birth–5)

Secondary Tags: Infant/Toddler Development; Social-Emotional Learning; Relationship-Based Care; ELOF

Suggested Audience: Infant/Toddler Teachers; Home Visitors; Coaches; Education Managers; Early Head Start Staff

This session supports early learning leaders and educators in understanding social and emotional behavior in infants and toddlers through a child development lens. Participants will explore typical developmental behavior patterns and learn how to recognize early signs that behaviors may signal developmental or environmental concerns. The session emphasizes sensitive, relationship-based responses that align with developmentally appropriate practice. Participants will also examine how predictable routines, nurturing interactions, and supportive environments promote emotional security and learning for infants and toddlers. Attendees will leave with actionable tools, reflection guides, and communication strategies to help staff strengthen responsive caregiving and support healthy early development.

Presenter: Kela Leshoure

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### **Teacher Triggers: How Our Behavior and Language Impact Children**

Track: Health, Mental Health & Safety

Secondary Tags: Adult Self-Awareness; Behavior Support

Suggested Audience: Education Staff/Teachers; Coaches; Mental Health Staff

This session examines how adult stress, tone, and reactions influence children's behavior. Participants explore common triggers and strategies for responding more intentionally to support positive behavior.

Presenter: Vincent Rodriguez

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### **The Care Is the Curriculum with Infants and Toddlers**

Track: Teaching & Learning (Birth–5)

Secondary Tags: Infant/Toddler; ELOF; Instructional Practice

Suggested Audience: Education Staff/Teachers; Coaches; Home Visitors

This session centers on responsive caregiving as the foundation of learning for infants and toddlers. Participants explore how the ELOF guides developmentally appropriate caregiving and teaching practices.

Presenter: Verlinda Sims

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### **\*The Magic of ABC-123 Behavior Change Plans**

Track: Teaching and Learning (B-5)

Secondary Tags: Disabilities & Inclusion; Data & Assessment; Leadership Development

Suggested Audience: Directors & Administrator; Coaches and Supervisors; Disabilities Coordinator

Are you seeing escalating challenging behaviors in your classroom and/or program and feeling unsure how to create an effective plan to help both the teacher and child? This session focuses on developing and implementing actionable behavior change plans for teachers and leadership teams. Participants will learn the key steps involved in creating these plans and how to seamlessly integrate them into their own programs and classrooms. Through small and large group discussions and activities, participants will explore ABC sequencing and learn how to identify the functions of behavior. By the end of the session, participants will have developed plans to support children with diverse learning and behavioral needs within their programs, along with the knowledge of how to take this system back to their own programs.

Presenter(s): Rebecca Freedman

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### **The Power of Small: MicroSteps for Emotional Safety and Growth**

Track: Health, Mental Health & Safety

Secondary Tags: Social-Emotional Development; Adult Practice

Suggested Audience: Education Staff/Teachers; Family Service Staff; Mental Health Staff

This session highlights how small, intentional actions by adults can create emotional safety and growth. Participants explore realistic micro-steps that support regulation and connection in daily interactions.

Presenter: Mary Wilcox Smith

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### **The Power of Y.O.U.**

Track: Program Leadership, Workforce & Operations

Secondary Tag: Advocacy; Collaboration; Family Engagement and Support

Suggested Audience: : Education Staff and Teachers; Family Service Staff; Home Visitors; Coaches and Supervisors; Directors and Administrators; Parents

Walking, living and becoming the best Y.O.U., the Power of YOU. Learning how to become an effective advocate without breaking the law. Ignite your invisible power of Y.O.U. Shining through adversity to recreate the best version of Y.O.U. Sharing your story and gaining a new strength through adversity!

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### **The Power of Play: Supporting Early Childhood Mental Health Through Intentional Play**

Track: Health, Mental Health & Safety

Secondary Tags: Play Based Learning, Social Emotional Development, Trauma Informed Practice

Suggested Audience: Education Staff and Teachers, Mental Health Staff, Coaches and Supervisors, EHS & HS Staff

This session explores how intentional, developmentally appropriate play supports early childhood mental health and social-emotional development. Participants will learn how play helps children with emotional regulation, attachment, trauma processing, and relationship building, and will review practical play-based strategies that can be used in Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms and mental health supports.

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### **Tiny Hands, Giant Futures: Building Trust, Clarity, and Community in Early Childhood Education**

Track: Program Leadership, Workforce & Operations

Secondary Tags: Leadership Development; Staff Relationships; Family Engagement; Organizational Culture

Suggested Audience: Directors/Administrators; Coaches/Supervisors; Education Staff/Teachers; Family Service Staff

This interactive session spotlights how Kankakee School District 111's Early Childhood Education Program, serving Head Start, Preschool for All, Preschool for All Expansion, and Preventive Initiative families, has transformed its culture through relationship-based leadership, instructional clarity, and deep community collaboration.

Presenter(s): Pamela Powell, Laura Bovina, Blanca Hernandez and Pam Clark

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### **Understanding the Meaning of Implicit Bias**

Track: Program Leadership, Workforce & Operations

Secondary Tags: Equity Awareness; Reflective Practice

Suggested Audience: All Staff; Leaders; Coaches

This session provides an accessible overview of implicit bias, how it develops, and how it influences decisions and interactions. Participants focus on awareness and reflection as foundations for more equitable practice.

Presenter: Glenna Jakush and Vincent Rodriguez

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### **Working Together: Building Strong Partnerships and Solving Concerns with the School System**

Track: Parents

Secondary Tags: Family-School Partnerships, Parent Communication, Problem-Solving

Suggested Audience: Parents & Caregivers, Policy Council Members, Family Advocates

Strong partnerships between families and school programs help children thrive. This parent-focused session explores how families can build positive relationships with teachers, service providers, and school teams. Parents will learn how to communicate concerns early, understand their role in shared problem-solving, and use proactive strategies to prevent misunderstandings or conflict. Real-life examples will help families feel more confident navigating conversations and systems that impact their child's education and supports.

Presenter(s): Megan Mutti

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**Your Bias Is Showing! Bringing Implicit Bias into the Light**

Track: Program Leadership, Workforce & Operations

Secondary Tags: Equity; Self-Reflection

Suggested Audience: All Staff; Leaders; Policy Council Members

This reflective session invites participants to examine personal bias and how it shows up in everyday decisions and systems. Participants consider strategies for more intentional and equitable practice.

Presenter: Jill Romza

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*More to come....*