



JUNE 2-3, 2024

Early Childhood Conference

Rise Up...And Play!

Based on Exodus 32:6

Concordia University, Nebraska, is proud to host another annual conference for those engaged in early childhood education. Educators, administrators, and others who work with young children, birth through age 8, will benefit from participating in this event.

SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2024

Registration 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM

(Registration will be available anytime during this timeframe. If you are able, check-in early and enjoy a leisure stroll around campus, network with others, or visit the Scholastic Book Fair.)

Session A 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

A1) Rachel Bausch – Early Childhood Director, St. John Lutheran, Ellisville, Missouri

CREATING CLASSROOMS OF WONDER:

Is your classroom designed to be both functional and beautiful? Let's delve into the classroom environment and find simple and budget-friendly ways to create functionally relevant spaces that are aesthetically pleasing. We will explore design elements, furnishings, purposeful materials and much more!

A2) Katelyn Cody – Adjunct Faculty, Concordia University, Nebraska

MUSIC FOR EACH MOMENT: CONFIDENTLY EMBRACE MUSICAL OPPORTUNITIES TO FOSTER WHOLE-BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND DELIGHT

Research is clear that musical experiences impact emotions, build connections, and enhance brain activity from infancy to old age. Equip yourself with a toolbox of resources and strategies to easily supplement everyday routines with rhyme, rhythm, melody, and movement.

A3) Dr. Amy Stradtman – Associate Professor, Concordia University, Nebraska

TURNING PAGES, TURNING MINDS: EXPLORING PRINT AWARENESS AND EARLY LITERACY WITH BIG BOOKS

Delve into the multifaceted landscape of print awareness and early literacy with a focus on big books. Attendees will gain insights into effective instructional techniques aimed at promoting literacy proficiency and nurturing a generation of avid readers.

A4) Hayley Jackson – Extension Educator, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS 101

How do we support the children in our programs with challenging behaviors, while also maintaining our sanity? This session will dive into reframing the way we view challenging behaviors and provide strategies for providers to use that support children's social and emotional development while also reducing the likelihood the challenging behaviors continue.

Session B

3:45 PM – 4:45 PM

B1) Amy Schutz – Early Childhood Administrator, Beautiful Savior Lutheran, Olathe, Kansas

HIDE IT UNDER A BUSH, NO! I'M GONNA LET HIM SHINE!

As Christian educators and directors, we have the distinct privilege and opportunity to shine the light of Jesus in all that we say and do. What does that look like with your staff? How can others see that light in your school? How do teachers shine Jesus brightly in their classrooms? We'll explore practical ways to be HIS light-shiners for our children and families in our schools.

B2) Katelyn Cody – Adjunct Faculty, Concordia University, Nebraska

THE MUSICAL MINDSET: HOW SINGING AND MOVEMENT CAN TRANSFORM YOUR PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM

Looking to improve cooperation, support emotional regulation, and build powerful early literacy skills in your preschool classroom? Learn how to incorporate research-driven musical experiences for your students both in and out of circle time. You will inspire joy as you build off their natural love for singing and movement.

B3) Hayley Jackson – Extension Educator, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

INTENTIONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Setting up your space to support children and reduce challenging behaviors. This session will focus on ways our classroom environment influence behavior in young children. Participants will reflect on their own classroom environments and learn about some simple changes they could make to increase engagement amongst children and reduce challenging behaviors.

B4) Dr. Drew Gerdes – Assistant Professor, Concordia University, Nebraska

THREE PILLARS OF SUCCESS

Join us as we learn more about three pillars of student success that begin in the early years and continue into adulthood: self-regulation, executive function skills, and social-emotional learning. Research continues to show that children who are strong in these areas will find better success in their future learning. Learn strategies that can be implemented in your classroom right away, as well as shared with families.

Socialization & Appetizers 4:45 PM – 5:15 PM

Join other conference participants in a time to connect and relax!

Keynote Dinner Speaker 5:15 PM – 7:00 PM

Rachel Bausch, Early Childhood Director at St. John Lutheran School, Ellisville, MO

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Let's open our hearts and minds to the unexpected – it is in these moments that faith growth and true beauty are unveiled!

MONDAY, JUNE 3, 2024

Registration Continues 7:45 AM – 8:30 AM

Coffee and Pastries 7:45 AM – 8:30 AM

Welcome & Morning Keynote 8:45 AM – 10:30 AM

Jim Gill

MUSIC PLAY IS LEARNING PLAY!

In this energizing keynote address Jim Gill will share examples of his work – both books and songs – that early childhood educators can bring back to their classrooms and put to use! There are musical games suitable both for circle time in pre-K and K classrooms and for short “brain breaks” for the early grades.

Most importantly, Jim will discuss how his unique creations in music play inspire young chil-

dren not only to move, but to regulate their movements....not only to sing, but to make connections between the words they sing and the printed word and the world of numbers.

Early childhood educators will leave the session inspired to share a new repertoire of songs and playful literacy activities with the young children that they work with and care for.

Session C

10:45 AM – 11:45 AM

C1) Dr. Kim Marxhausen

FOLLOWING THE BRAIN: CREATING EXPERT LEARNERS

As Early Childhood professionals, we focus on what children need for today and look to the future to provide young ones with a solid learning foundation. Let's look at research about people who developed unique expertise and trace it back to what Early Childhood educational experiences provide. Are experts born with exceptional skills, or are they blessed with essential learning opportunities? What is the formula for becoming an expert learner?

C2) Rachel Bausch – Early Childhood Director, St. John Lutheran, Ellisville, Missouri

CREATING CLASSROOMS OF WONDER

Is your classroom designed to be both functional and beautiful? Let's delve into the classroom environment and find simple and budget-friendly ways to create functionally relevant spaces that are aesthetically pleasing. We will explore design elements, furnishings, purposeful materials and much more!

C3) Jessica Mitchell-McCollough - Director of Education, Nebraska Public Media

READY TO LEARN: INNOVATIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS

Early math, science, and functional literacy skills can unlock powerful opportunities for children. Nebraska Public Media Family Math and Ready to Learn multimedia resources bring the whole family together to build a positive culture, knowledge and confidence through fun, hands-on learning experiences as part of everyday activities. This presentation will help educators to plan and partner with parents and caregivers to support development of math, science and functional literacy skills in children ages 2-8.

C4) Jack Hilgert – Conservation Education Coordinator, Nebraska Forest Service

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IS (NOT) JUST FOR THE BIRDS!

Just as we investigate information and learning provided by the Nebraska Forest Service. Project Learning Tree provides educators with amazing free resources, both online and print. Join us and take advantage of learning that helps children more about the wonderful world around them!

C5) Ingrid Chavarria – Extension Educator, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

MINDFULNESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS

In this session, we will explore the definition of mindfulness and how you can incorporate mindful practices in your early childhood setting. You will learn strategies that will help you self-regulate when difficult or challenging situations arise in the classroom. As well, we will talk about appropriate self-regulating strategies the children in your care may use when big feelings arise.

C6) Emily Manning – Assistant Extension Educator, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

HARMONIZING FUTURES: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

This session will explore how artificial intelligence tools can be used in early childhood settings to incorporate music into the learning environment. Come discover how AI technologies can enhance engagement, foster creativity, and personalize learning experiences for young children.

Lunch Noon – 1:00 PM

If you have pre-paid for a Conference Box Lunch, it is available for pick-up inside the Janzow Campus Center. Find a comfortable space around campus, some friends and colleagues, and enjoy the fellowship!

If you plan to eat off campus, downtown Seward is just a few blocks away and offers a variety of options.

During Lunch, please join in a unique Service Project to XXXXX, all located in the Cattle Conference Room in the Janzow Campus Center.

Afternoon Keynote 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM

Jim Gill

A JOYOUS WAY TO LEARN!

This session is a great follow-up to Jim's morning keynote. The session is filled with the joyous musical inspiration you'll need to keep energized!

Jim will share additional musical games and explain, in greater detail, the purpose behind his play. His active music play provides a context for children to develop abilities, such as self-regulation, essential to school success. Jim's clever word play and rhymes in the context of active movement games also provide broad opportunities for literacy development.

You'll bring some inspiration, useful in the morning and afternoon, back to your work with young children!

Session D 2:45 PM – 3:45 PM

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D2) Amy Schutz – Early Childhood Administrator, Beautiful Savior Lutheran, Olathe, Kansas

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D3) Jack Hilgert - Conservation Education Coordinator, Nebraska Forest Service

SPLASH INTO SUMMER FUN WITH PROJECT WET!

Join us as we take a splash into summer fun and learning with Project WET, an educational project sponsored by the Nebraska Forest Service. Come for engaging ideas that you can incorporate into your classroom right away. Participants will receive free resources, both online and in print, to enhance your classroom curriculum.

D4) Ingrid Chavarria – Extension Educator, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES

In this session, we will talk about the importance of building positive relationships with the families of the children in your care. You will learn strategies to communicate effectively with families and how to welcome their culture, traditions, and skills in the classroom.

D5) Emily Manning - Assistant Extension Educator, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

SMOOTH SAILING: EXPLORING THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSITIONS AND ROUTINES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

In this session, we will explore how thoughtfully planned transitions and routines contribute to a positive and enriching learning environment for young children. Discover how transitions and routines impact on social-emotional development and decrease challenging behaviors, reflect on current practices, and learn practical strategies for implementation.

D6) Dr. Amy Stradtman, Associate Professor, Concordia University, Nebraska

BEYOND THE PAGES: TEACHING INFERENCE WITH PICTURE BOOKS

Elevate your teaching practice with strategies for incorporating picture books into inference instruction. This session provides educators with ideas for hands-on deepening their understanding of how visual literacy can enhance comprehension and critical thinking skills in young learners.

Thank you to Nebraska's Southeast Early Learning Connection for their funding assistance for our Keynote Speaker, Jim Gill.

Participants in the Full Conference will receive a certificate of attendance noting completion of 9 clock hours of professional development.

QUESTIONS? NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Contact:

Dr. Drew Gerdes, Conference Chairperson

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