



Early Childhood Educator
SYMPOSIUM

Spring 2025

Saturday, March 29 | 7:00am. - 4:30pm

Indian Hills Community College
Rural Health Education Center

Please Join Us!

The Early Childhood Educator Symposium invites you to a full day of learning, networking, food, and fun. Have a stress-free day away from it all! Up to seven training credits are available, everyone gets a T-shirt, and a variety of vendors will be on hand to serve as a resource.

A continental breakfast with coffee bar, lunch and afternoon snack will be provided as well as soda and water all day.

Cost	Regular Registration	Student Registration
Early Bird (up to and including Feb 16)	\$30	\$25
Regular (Feb 17- March 9)	\$35	\$25
Late & Walk Ins (March 10 - 24)	\$50	\$50

Cancellations and Refunds:

Cancellations made on or before March 21, 2025, will receive a refund of their registration fee, minus a \$10 processing fee. No refunds are available after March 21.

Transfer of Registration / Substitutions:

If you are unable to attend after registering, you can transfer your registration to another individual at no additional cost, email lori.reeves@indianhills.edu

Registration:

Centers can be invoiced or pay on-line, individuals must pay on-line to register. When registering, please have ready the name, address, DOB, email, phone, full SSN, T-shirt size and sessions selected for each individual being registered.


To register go www.indianhills.edu/educatorsymposium

Continuing Education:

All sessions qualify for DHS credit and participants who stay the entire day will receive 7 credits. Continuing Education will be awarded via I-Power for 100% attendance of sessions. No certificates will be sent.

Location & Directions:

The Symposium will be held in the Rural Health Education Center on the IHCC Ottumwa Campus. For a map or directions, click on the "Campus Locations" link at the bottom of the IHCC webpage: www.indianhills.edu

 **Follow us on Facebook! @ Early Childhood Educator Symposium**
For additional conference information and announcements, follow us on facebook!



Children:

There is no day care provided. Please do not bring children to the Symposium. A room for pumping or breastfeeding will be available.

Food:

People with food allergies should be advised food cross contamination cannot be guaranteed. Individuals with food allergies or specific dietary needs should contact lori.reeves@indianhills.edu.

Photos:

Photos of the symposium and participants will be taken to be used without compensation for publicity and public relations purposes by the entities sponsoring the symposium. You must contact lori.reeves@indianhills.edu if you do not give your permission for your likeness to be used.

Nominations for 2025 Early Childhood Education Champion

Do you know someone who consistently performs above and beyond normal or expected duties; shows leadership and accomplishments in early childhood education; and/or outstanding character and selfless devotion and dedication to early childhood education? Nominate them for the Early Childhood Education Champion Award by going to https://indianhills.formstack.com/forms/early_childhood_education_champion_award. You can also find the link on our Facebook page.

The deadline for nominations is Feb. 15, 2025. Call Lori Reeves at 641-683-5337 for more information.



Symposium Planning Committee:

Joan Garrett, PBIS Master Mentor/Coach, AHFA

Meagan Hugen, Early Learning Director, Mahaska County YMCA

Karen Lauer, Child Care Consultant, Child Care Resource & Referral of Central Iowa, Orchard Place

Barbara J. Lisk, MAT, Associate Professor, Education Program, IHCC

Mary Mikulecky, BSN, RN Child Care Nurse Consultant, American Home Finding Assn

Lori Reeves, Program Director, Continuing Education, IHCC

Cathy Stahl, Coordinator, Continuing Education, IHCC

Presenters:

Melinda Aman has worked with children in some capacity or another since she was 14. She has experience as a nanny, caring for children and adults with special healthcare needs, a teacher and health and safety director for centers, and a state registered QRS level 4 home provider. She has a master's degree in child and adolescent developmental psychology, an early childhood education diploma, and is a certified yoga and mindfulness instructor.

Pam Bettger, educated as a Social Worker, has actively presented current information as well as online trainings. She is affiliated with Prevent Child Abuse Iowa and maintains qualifications to speak to children and adults about sexual abuse prevention/personal safety and parenting programs. She continues to expand her knowledge base and training skills and has been a CCR&R trainer for over 17 years.

Paula Buck is a trainer for CCR&R Region 5. She spent 10 years working as a center provider, 3 years doing technical assistance with home providers, and the last 15 years writing and presenting training to childcare providers. She has a master's degree in early childhood education. Paula lives in Anamosa, IA, with her husband and two teenagers.

Susan Dannen has been a mental health professional since 1994. She specializes in child & family mental health. She is a Clinical Social Worker, Registered Play Therapist, Registered Yoga Teacher, and is a Certified Youth Instructor in Yoga Calm. Currently, Susan is a co-owner & therapist at River Roots Mental Health & Wellness. She also trains for Mindspring Mental Health Alliance & CCR&R.

Melissa Ellis is a CDA Navigator for Iowa AEYC and has been in the Early Childhood field for more than 30 years. She has worked in a variety of positions as her knowledge grew - substitute, floater, assistant teacher, lead teacher, preschool owner, program coordinator, childcare consultant supervisor, center director, and now currently a CDA Navigator. Her hometown is Marion, Iowa, and she serves Southwest and Central Iowa.

Tammy Engebretson is the Director of Quality Initiatives at Iowa AEYC. She manages two teams - 1. A group of classroom consultants who focus on quality in a coalition of childcare centers serving low-income children in the Des Moines metro area. 2. CDA Navigators who work with early childhood providers working toward their CDA. Tammy has 25+ years working as a center director, EHS director, ECE adjunct community college faculty member, and ECE trainer.

Whitney Finke has been the Executive Director for Capitol Park Early Learning Center, a non-profit childcare center in Des Moines, for six years. She has a bachelor's degree in ECE and started training for Region 4 CCR&R in Fall 2023. Whitney has written and presented many training courses, and also trains in PBIS, ASQ, and PALS. She is a previous governing board member for IA AEYC where she served as the vice president and the secretary.

Lisa Hajek works for the Iowa AEYC as the CDA navigator for Eastern Iowa. She supports early childhood educators who want to earn their CDA credential. Lisa has 21 years of experience in early childhood with multiple roles from assistant teacher to director of childcare and director of school age programs. She has a master's degree in education specializing in Early Childhood Education and has worked with all ages from birth to 12 years.

Himar Hernandez was born in Africa and grew up in Spain and Germany before coming to Iowa as an exchange student at the age of 15. He is the State Assistant Director for Community and Economic Development for Iowa State University Extension. Himar is co-author of several research papers and his work in changing demographics in small rural communities has been featured by Good Morning America, The Chronicle of Higher Education, The Wall Street Journal, and NBC Today.

Dawn Johnson is an SWVPP teacher at Kids World in Centerville and a part-time Early Childhood Consultant with Great Prairie AEA. She has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with an Early Childhood Endorsement from Buena Vista University and a master's degree from UNI in Early Childhood Curriculum and Instruction. Dawn is a certified Young Investigators Trainer. She is a teacher and a fan of developmentally appropriate practice, particularly the Project Approach.

Jen Kovach has worked in the field of childcare as a teacher and director for over 20 years. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point in Elementary Education and a master's degree from Walden University in Adult Learning. She is the Owner/Trainer of JLK Training and Consulting. She has been developing and facilitating training courses to meet the needs of childcare teachers and youth workers for more than 12 years.

Laurie Parker has a double major in elementary education/early childhood and a master's in early childhood education with a focus on working with adults. Her career spans almost 30 years, teaching in an early childhood classroom ranging from birth to second grade. She has also been a site supervisor for Early Head Start and is currently at Iowa AEYC, supporting social emotional skills in 3-5 years old classrooms and is an infant/toddler/two's classroom consultant.

Vicki Parker is a retired Early Child Educator with 40+ years' experience with the Area Education System. She has experience in the classroom, as well as being a home intervention teacher, a behavior specialist, a consultant, conference presenter, and professional development trainer. She is passionate about constructivism education, project work, STEAM, open-ended art and play with loose parts and recycled materials.

Lisa Stocksleger has been with the Iowa AEYC since 2016, first as a literacy coach and currently as a childcare center coach. She works in preschool classrooms supporting teachers as part of ECQuIP. Lisa holds a BS in Early Childhood Education from Iowa State University. She has served in a variety of roles in her 29-year career, including long-term Head Start substitute teacher, Parent Educator for Parents as Teachers, Home Child Care Provider, and Literacy Consultant

Regina (Gina) Wells has more than 35 years in the field of Early Childhood and Elementary Education. She has been a preschool teacher, childcare center director, elementary teacher, college advisor, childcare consultant and supervisor, a para-educator, and a full-time substitute. She has a BS and MA in Elementary Education with a minor in Early Childhood Education, where her heart runs deep.

7:00-7:55am	Registration / Continental Breakfast			
7:55-8:00am	Announcements			
8:00-9:00am	KEYNOTE: Finding Your Joy			
9:00-9:20am	AM Break			
9:20-11:20am	Susan Dannen Understanding Grief & Loss in Children	Vicki Parker & Dawn Johnson Power of Giving a Child a Clipboard	Tammy Engebretson Professionalism in Early Childhood Education	Mindy Aman It's Not the Child, But the Environment
11:20-12:00pm	Lunch			
12:00-1:00pm	Susan Dannen Understanding Grief & Loss in Children (Continued)	Whitney Fink Quick Tips for Self-Care for Adults in the Classroom	Lisa Hajek Take the First Step in Your Education with CDA!	Mindy Aman Natural Explorers, Investigators & Discoverers: Let's Ignite Children Through Outdoor Play
1:00-1:10pm	Break			
1:10-2:20pm	Susan Dannen Mindfulness, Meditation & Mindful Yoga Movement in Childcare Settings	Whitney Finks ECE Assessment... it Doesn't Have to be Overwhelming	V. Parker & D. Johnson Mark Making: More Than Just Child's Play	
2:10-2:20pm		Break		
2:20-4:30pm		Whitney Finks Nurturing Authentic Family & Early Childhood Setting Relationships	Lauri Parker & Lisa Stocksleger What is the Key to Classroom Management? Social Emotional Skills	Mindy Aman A Quest for Independence: A Look at Toddlers and Tantrums

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Paula Buck STEAM from the Start	Gina Wells Exploring Ramps & Pathways	Jen Kovach I Can Handle Kids But Not the Parents	Himar Hernandez Cultural Competency & Diversity	Melissa Ellis One More Hat: Supervisor
Lunch				
Paula Buck Look, Listen & Learn: Observation and Documentation	Gina Wells IELS – 3rd Edition Orientation	Jen Kovach What Do I Do with Infants Through Twos?	Pam Bettger Technicool-Keeping Kids Safe on the Internet	Melissa Ellis You Have Chosen a Profession
Break				
Paula Buck Behavior Strategies, It's Not Snake Oil	Gina Wells Sesame Street in Communities: Exploring Emotions & Offering Comfort	Jen Kovach They're Here All Day...	Pam Bettger Nurturing Healthy Sexual Development	Melissa Ellis So, You Love Children, What About Their Parents?

Key Note: Jen Kovach: Finding Your Joy

When was the last time you sat down and thought about what brings Joy to your life? For most of us it has probably been a very long time or maybe we have never done that. Joy is an emotion that is often overshadowed by daily stresses, worry of what others think and judgement and criticism of ourselves. If you could close your eyes for just a moment and picture it...Pure Joy. Where would you be? Who would be with you? What would you be doing? This can seem fleeting and unrealistic, but there are ways to get you closer to joy starting today. Join the conversation on how to rekindle the joy in your life. We will spend time together understanding how to recognize positive emotions and will learn how to use them on a daily basis. Be prepared to laugh, to learn and to love your life!

Session Descriptions

Susan Dannen: Understanding Grief and Loss in Children for Child Care Provider (3 hrs)

We will look at various types of grief and loss as well as the developmental stages of grief. Participants will learn about unresolved grief and ambiguous loss – the loss is “real” but there is no closure – such as adoption, moving and divorce. Learn to recognize signs of traumatic grief in children, discuss how to provide support to children, and how to respond to a grief crisis in your daycare.

Vicki Parker & Dawn Johnson: The Power of Giving a Child a Clipboard: Using Charting in Project Work to Foster Language Development and Literacy Skills (2 hrs)

The participants will understand what charting is and how it creates rich language experiences while implementing the Project Approach. The participants will explore the power of participation and identify key components of a rich charting experience. The participants will identify various language chart methods and examine one method they can take back to their classroom and use.

Tammy Engebretson: Professionalism in Early Childhood Education: Building Strong Foundations for Success (2 hrs)

Professionalism extends far beyond the classroom—it shapes the learning environment, builds trust with families, and sets the tone for the overall culture of the program. In this training session, we will explore the essential components of professional behavior that contribute to success in the early childhood education field. From punctuality and work ethic to communication skills and appropriate attire, this session will provide practical strategies for embodying professionalism in every aspect of your work.

Mindy Aman: It's Not the Child, But the Environment! Behavior Techniques in Early Childhood (2 hrs)

Participants will discuss issues within the childcare environment which may directly influence and provoke negative behaviors in children. We will review ages and stages including typical behavior changes and learn to identify and specify aspects and materials that contribute to positive childcare environments which support the developing child in a positive manner. There will be time for discussion and exploration of positive childcare environments.

Paula Buck: STEAM from the Start (Infant/Toddler Science) 2 hrs

Infants, toddlers, and twos are born for STEAM! With a little encouragement, they're active learners in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math all day long. We'll talk about ways to set up and encourage activities in each of the STEAM areas, the importance of children's process vs. their product for these activities, and the six important STEAM skills that little scientists are using every day.

Gina Wells: Exploration with Ramps & Pathways (2 hrs)

Participants will explore how to use child-safe, appropriate materials and curriculum that can be used with children to create and structure ramps and pathways. Participants will explore the curriculum content for activities focusing on ramps and pathways including function and use of materials, creative exploration, problem solving, collaborative play, and cooperation in play.

Jen Kovach: I Can Handle Kids But Not the Parents (2 hrs)

The ability to work with parents can be a challenge. Learn ways to communicate and relate to your parents, set expectations for them, involve them with their own kids and overall establish a better rapport with them. We will problem-solve common concerns and practice confidently approaching the most difficult parents.

Himar Hernandez: Cultural Competency and Diversity (2 hrs)

In this session we will focus on understanding and applying the basic concept of diversity and cultural competency. You will gain tools you can use to check biases when working with children and families. We will also discuss the importance and benefits of starting the work of diversity and inclusion at the early ages.

Melissa Ellis: One More Hat- Supervisor (2 hrs)

Lead teachers learn how to be effective Supervisors to their Assistants.

Whitney Fink: Quick Tips for Self-Care for Adults in the Classroom (1 hr)

Learn the importance of self-care for yourself, the children we serve, the administrators we work for, and the teachers we work with. We will look at the difference between distress and eustress to better understand why some stress is actually beneficial. We will also understand why, despite common misconceptions, self-care can be one of the least selfish things a person can do. We will explore our own stress levels and how knowing this can make us better educators.

Whitney Finks: ACE Assessment...it Doesn't Have to be Overwhelming (1 hr)

We will practice writing observations in an interactive format, and practice writing experience plans with assessment in mind using intentional planning practices, focusing on both individualized and group plans. Participants will leave with strategies to use in their learning environment to assess children and have a plan for how to track assessments. Participants will also spend time working on how to use assessment data to plan future experiences for children using example data.

Lisa Hajek: Take the First Step in Your Education with CDA! (1 hr)

This session will provide an overview of the process to earn a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential™. Information will be shared about applying for a CDA and the assessment process. You will learn how T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® IOWA can help with a variety of scholarship options for the CDA or another type of college degree in early childhood. We support early childhood professionals across the state and provide a variety of resources.

Vicki Parker & Dawn Johnson: Mark Making: More Than Just Child's Play (1 Hr)

The term “mark making” in the early years describes the improvised marks children make which may include scribbles, dots, lines, shapes, and/or patterns. Mark making goes beyond just drawing or learning to write. In this session, you will learn how children train the small muscles in their hands as they further their cognitive, physical, social, and emotional growth while having fun making marks.

Mindy Aman: Natural Explorers, Investigators & Discoverers: Let's Ignite Children Through Outdoor Play! (2 hrs)

Participants will gain an understanding of the importance of outdoor play for children. Learn ways to create the best outdoor play experiences and environments. and learn how to adapt the many components of an indoor program to an outdoor setting.

Paula Buck: Look, Listen & Learn: Observation and Documentation (2 hrs)

In this training, we'll discuss some ways to observe and document the children in your care without being swamped in paperwork (well...no more than usual, anyway!). We'll also discuss the difference in objective and subjective language in order to practice documenting factual, non-judgmental observations.

Gina Wells: Iowa Early Learning Standards (IELS) - 3rd Edition Orientation (2 hrs)

This training session will provide a detailed overview of the new standards, how to use the standards to plan developmentally appropriate activities and lesson plans, and why the standards are important to impact child development. The Orientation uses actual scenarios to explore the use of the standards.

Jen Kovach: What Do I Do with Infants Through Twos? (2 hrs)

Besides feeding, changing, and rocking them to sleep, what else can you do with these little ones? We will explore ideas in areas of art, reading, dramatic play, music, large motor, and science, for older infants through twos. New, easy, and creative ideas add some fun and creativity into your classrooms.

Pam Bettger: Technicool- Keeping Kids Safe on the Internet (2 hrs)

Participants will develop the knowledge and skills to prevent harm from coming to children who use online "digital" technology. Learn how to intervene, prevent, and protect children from risky online behaviors such as "grooming". There are multiple kinds of digital risks for children today, such as internet pornography, online groomers, and sexting. It is important for caregivers and teachers to have the information and tools to respond.

Melissa Ellis: You Have Chosen a Profession (2 hrs)

The field of Early Childhood is a profession. For the field to be recognized as a profession, it is important that providers understand their responsibility of upholding the ethics of the profession, as well as acting like a professional.

Susan Dannen: Mindfulness, Meditation & Mindful Yoga Movement in Childcare Settings (3 hrs)

This session will look at these techniques and how they can assist children socially, emotionally & behaviorally. We will look at how to teach mindfulness, meditation, breathwork, and mindful movement to different developmental ages and will learn practical ways to implement these skills. You will get a chance to flow through a sample class that incorporates all the principles you have learned. We will end with creating a plan to incorporate these techniques for your childcare kids, your staff, and in your personal life.

Whitney Finks: Nurturing Authentic Family and Early Childhood Setting Relationships (2 hrs)

Participants will learn ways to establish successful partnerships with families. Participants will explore and discuss how to create welcoming experiences for families and ongoing positive relationships.

Lauri Parker and Lisa Stocksleger: What is the Key to Classroom Management? Social Emotional Skills (2 hrs)

Examine effective preschool classroom practices identified by ECERS-3, PBIS and Conscious Discipline. Learn specifics about building a positive classroom community, genuine connections with each child, an effective classroom environment, classroom commitments and expectations, a daily schedule, and routines for the daily schedule. You will learn about classroom management charts, the importance of visuals and how classroom practices support the development of social emotional skills like positive self-concept, self-awareness (understanding your own emotions and self as separate from others), self-regulation (managing emotions and actions), resilience, following directions, relationship skills (interacting with others) and resolving conflict.

Mindy Aman: A Quest for Independence - A Look at Toddlerhood and Tantrums (2 hrs)

Participants will learn about toddler development with an emphasis on social emotional development and the negative behaviors that may develop during the toddler ages. We will explore and learn skills to identify and deal with precursors to challenging behaviors such as tantrums while supporting each child when these difficult behaviors arise.

Paula Buck: Behavior Strategies, It's Not Snake Oil (2 hrs)

We all know there's no magic pill to erase behavior issues in an early childhood classroom (dang!). This training will discuss 17 strategies that can be added to a caregiver's toolbox. Through small group activities, we'll define these strategies and come up with scenarios where they might be most effective.

Gina Wells: Sesame Street in Communities - Exploring Emotions & Offering Comfort (2 hrs)

Discuss positive and negative feelings you see and feel in your childcare program. We will define BIG feelings and learn strategies to help children self-regulate to minimize those big feelings. We will also explore resources at the Sesame Workshop and Challenging Behavior web sites and learn how to best offer comfort to children and families when these BIG feelings arise.

Jen Kovach: They're Here All Day... (2 hrs)

School is out for the summer which means full days for the school-age kids! Are you ready? Learn how to design a summer program specifically for older kids that will keep them busy, provide learning opportunities and most of all, allow them to have fun!

Pam Bettger: Nurturing Healthy Sexual Development (2 hrs)

Participants will be trained with a curriculum appropriate for use with children 3-9 years of age that emphasizes adult responsibility for protection and positive messages about sexuality in an age-appropriate and health-focused approach. Participants will learn to identify normal sexual behaviors of young children and how to respond to children's sexual behaviors and questions. This innovative and research-based program is appealing and fun for children and packaged to make teacher planning quick and easy.

Melissa Ellis: So You Love Children, What About Their Parents? (2 hrs)

Did you know that you signed on to love children and their parents in your childcare setting? This training will help you learn some strategies on how to love and accept parents. Even the hard-to-handle ones.



Register today!

www.indianhills.edu/educatorsymposium



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