

THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
INSTITUTE for EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
RESEARCH • DEMONSTRATION • OUTREACH

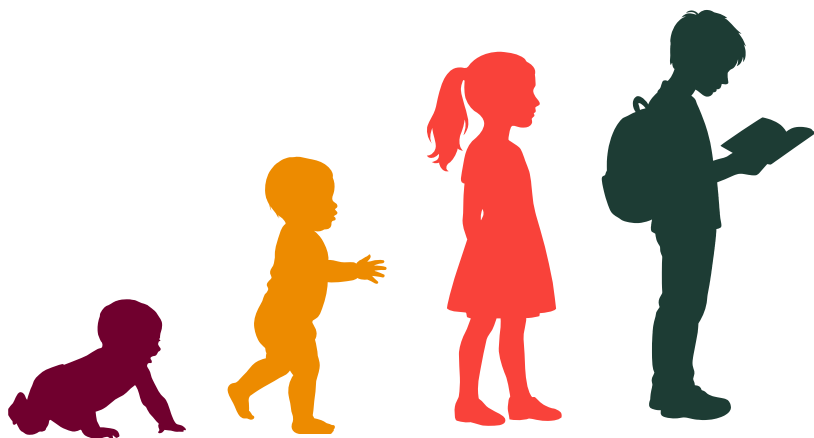
WELCOME TO THE

4th Annual Early Childhood Summit

APRIL 16TH, 17TH, 18TH 2026

Building Blocks for a Strong Start:

EARLY YEARS.EARLY GRADES.ONE CONNECTED STORY.



Dear Summit Attendees,

Welcome to the Fourth Annual Early Childhood Education Summit. On behalf of the University of Montana's Institute for Early Childhood Education, I am honored to welcome you to this year's gathering. Whether you join us as an educator, family partner, community leader, policymaker, or advocate, your presence reflects a shared commitment to Montana's children and families—and to one another.

This year's theme, *Building Blocks for a Strong Start: Early Years. Early Grades. One Connected Story.*, invites us to consider how the experiences we design, the relationships we nurture, and the systems we shape all come together to form the foundation of a child's learning journey.

Each interaction, each environment, and each opportunity we create serves as a building block. When these blocks are aligned—across early childhood and the early grades, across programs and communities—we create something stronger, more coherent, and more enduring. We create continuity. We create connection. We create possibility.

At the heart of this work is the understanding that a child's story does not begin or end within a single classroom, program, or year. It is a connected story—built over time, across relationships and experiences, and shaped by the collective efforts of all of us in this room.

Throughout the Summit, I invite you to engage with curiosity and intention. Share your insights. Learn from one another. Reflect on the role you play in building and strengthening this connected system. Together, we have the opportunity to ensure that every child in Montana experiences a strong, joyful, and supported start—one that carries forward into the years ahead.

Thank you for being here and for the essential role you play in this shared work.



Warmly,

Allison Wilson, PhD
Associate Professor and Director
Institute for Early Childhood Education
Phyllis J. Washington College of Education

DR. JENNIFER ZOSH

KEYNOTE SPEAKER AND PLAYFUL LEARNING WORKSHOP HOST

Jennifer M. Zosh, Ph.D., is a Professor of Human Development and Family Studies at The Pennsylvania State University's Brandywine campus. As the Director of the Brandywine Child Development Lab, she studies how infants and young children learn about the world around them. Her areas of expertise and publication include playful learning, the impact of technology on children, working memory, mathematical cognition, and language acquisition.



She presents regularly at professional meetings including: the Society for Research in Child Development, International Congress on Infant Studies, National Academy of Sciences Children and Screens colloquium, International Mind Brain and Education Society, and others.

A major driving force in her career is dissemination and translation of scientific discoveries to the public via blogging and media appearances. This translational work has appeared on The Conversation, PBS Parents, the Brookings Institution, the Joan Ganz Cooney Center, NPR Radio Times, The Alliance for Early Childhood, and beyond.

She is also involved in the dissemination of developmental research through her involvement with Living Laboratories embedded in children's museums and her roles on advisory boards for organizations (e.g., Ultimate Block Party, Urban ThinkScape, Philadelphia Playful Learning Cities, Learning Landscapes). She also serves as a speaker for ReadyNation's Brain Science Speakers Bureau. She received her Ph.D. in Psychological and Brain Sciences from Johns Hopkins University.

POSTER DISPLAYS

THURSDAY APRIL 16TH

RESEARCH

1. *From Mandate to Implementation: A Qualitative Content Analysis of Early Childhood Coursework in Educational Leadership Preparation Programs; Anna Puryear*
2. *Montana ECE: Spotlight on Infants and Toddlers; Marjorie Vegoren and Shandi Hayes, Early Childhood Services Bureau*
3. *Rebooting Human Intelligence (HI): Designing Birth – 3rd Grade Systems Where Play, Purpose and Leadership Align; Meegan Kriley-Mackay*
4. *The Research is In! Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library Reinforces the Power of Shared Book Reading; First Lady Susan Gianforte, First Lady of Montana*
5. *Preschool Paleontologists: Exploring Museum Content Through Play-Based Science; Dr. Kalli Decker, Kelly Shuey*

DEMONSTRATION

1. *Building Strong Foundations: A District Model for Early Literacy and Development; Dr. Erin Ellis*
2. *Missoula Reads; Angela Knieper, Missoula County Public Schools*
3. *Spotlight on the 2025 Montana Early Learning Standards (MELS); Deanna Mydland, Dr. Allison Wilson, Dr. Christine Lux, Anna Puryear, Terri Barclay, Deb Huestis*
4. *Using the Weather to Create Meaningful Learning for Toddlers; Meghan Higle-Rodriguez*
5. *Virtual Learning Library: UM Institute for Early Childhood Education; Dr. Allison Wilson, Anna Puryear, Eilis O’Herlihy, Amanda Wiseman*

OUTREACH

1. *From Leadership Development to Collective Action: Building the Montana Family Childcare Network Through the Leaders Shaping Leaders Model; BriAnne Moline*
2. *Rooted in Community: A Systems Approach to Strengthening Early Childhood; Ariella Wells, Karen Martinez*
3. *SPARK Montana Information; Alyssa Fusco*
4. *Stronger Together: Building Power for Child Care Advocacy; Grace Decker*
5. *Uplifting Child Care & Public School Partnerships: Community-Based Solutions Designed for Families; Zero to Five Montana and Montana Child Care Business Connect*
6. *Vaccines Work for our Kids: Montana Families for Vaccines; Anna Langdji*

Poster displays celebrate the recent work of UM ECE Institute faculty, student, and community catalysts through research, model demonstration, and community outreach.

ENGAGE WITH OUR STORY WALK!

This year, we invite you to step into a shared story, one that reflects the heart of our Summit theme:

Building Blocks for a Strong Start.

Our featured Story Walk is *What We'll Build* by Oliver Jeffers, a powerful reminder that what we create together through care, imagination, and connection shapes the future for children and families.



What are we building together?

What foundations are we laying for the children and communities we serve?



Let's gather all our tools and blocks... for building, for imagining, for putting together and taking apart... as we design stronger, more connected pathways across the early years and early grades.

2026 AWARD WINNERS

THURSDAY APRIL 16TH

RESEARCH

EXCELLENCE in EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

**DR. ANISA GOFORTH &
DR. JINGJING SUN
THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA**



Project SELA has engaged with a community advisory board, educational leadership, teachers, school counselors, parents, and students in Arlee to co-design a mental health wellness program based on social emotional learning practices paired with the cultural values of the tribes. Through a seven-year process, the project first piloted the curriculum among students in grades 3-6. In 2023, it expanded to include K-2.

MODEL DEMONSTRATION

EXCELLENCE in EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

**BITTERROOT EARLY
LEARNING NETWORK**



Bitterroot Early Learning Network (BELN) has been a wonderful community resource, active participant, and positive example in the Bitterroot Valley. Their entire team is working on becoming the first HOPE-informed organization in the state this year!! Their focus on leading by example with their two ECE programs (Evergreen Kids Corner and Evergreen Saplings) is inspiring.

2026 AWARD WINNERS

THURSDAY APRIL 16TH



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

EXCELLENCE in EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

DAWN BAUER, SUPERIOR SCHOOLS

Dawn received a Zero to Five grant that supported the creation of a new child care facility (Cubs Corner) in partnership with and within the Superior public school, remodeled and licensed within 6 months!

This service has made it accessible and affordable for the school district staff to have quality childcare right on site.

HEALTHY START AWARD

EXCELLENCE in EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

KEVIN ISELY, EMPOWER PLACE

Kevin serves as the EmPower Place Coordinator at The Missoula Food Bank and Community Children's Center, where he designs family-centered programs, collaborates with partners, hosts children's events, and connects caregivers to critical resources. His impact on families is profound. He creates a space where children feel safe, seen, and valued, and where caregivers trust him enough to share deeply personal experiences and access needed support.

Kevin goes above and beyond in every interaction, building strong, meaningful relationships with the children he serves. A trusted adult, mentor, and joyful presence, he listens with intention and honors each child's voice. His passion and empathy leave a lasting imprint on every child, and family he touches.



2026 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

EXCELLENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



MINNETTA ARMSTRONG, DIRECTOR BLACKFEET EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Minnetta has dedicated over 50 years to early childhood education at the Blackfeet Early Childhood Center Head Start in Browning, Montana. A culturally grounded leader, she has also supported future educators and connected tribal and statewide systems through her work. Known for her hands-on approach and commitment to inclusion, her lasting impact on generations of children, families, and educators makes her a truly deserving Lifetime Achievement Award recipient.



KAREN ALLEN, RETIRED MISSOULA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Karen Allen is a lifelong educator and advocate whose work has shaped literacy, learning, and community across Missoula and beyond. Grounded in the belief that literacy is foundational to connection, understanding, and community well-being, she has dedicated her career to expanding opportunities for children and families. Across decades of service, Karen has supported learners, mentored colleagues, and partnered with community organizations—consistently elevating literacy as a force for equity and collective impact. Even in retirement, she remains deeply engaged, contributing to efforts such as Zero to Five Missoula, the Kindergarten Entry Assessment, the Missoula Early Learning Fellows, and the Missoula Reads Coalition. This award honors Karen’s extraordinary legacy and her lasting impact on generations of children, families, and educators.

FRIDAY APRIL 17TH

PJW College of Education ALI Auditorium A

PANEL SESSION

8:30 - 10:20 AM

Joyful Literacy in Action: Research, Partnerships, and Everyday Opportunities



Panel Host
Dr. Kate Brayko, UM Professor of Literacy Education

This panel showcases how joyful literacy is taking shape across Montana—from the research behind shared book reading, to community leadership networks, to innovative partnerships that embed language-rich learning opportunities in everyday spaces.

Spotlight Story: The Research is In! Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Reinforces the Power of Shared Book Reading

Having books in the home and reading to young children is essential for their academic, social, and emotional development, and Dolly Parton's Imagination Library expands this impact by providing free books to children worldwide—including in Montana. First Lady Susan Gianforte will share how efforts are growing the program's reach in the state, along with key insights from groundbreaking international research on shared book reading.



Spotlight Story: The Early Learning Fellows Model Stories from Missoula and Gallatin Counties



Explore the Early Learning Fellows model as a community-driven approach to strengthening early childhood systems through local leadership and collaboration. Hear examples from Missoula and Gallatin Counties and reflect on how to build partnerships, align efforts, and advance shared responsibility in your own community.

Spotlight Story: Project ELLO *Everyday Language and Learning Opportunities*

The ELLO team will highlight the purpose and design of Project ELLO and how partnerships with Parks & Recreation and community health organizations extend language-rich learning into everyday spaces. See examples of how cross-sector partners embed simple prompts, visuals, and playful interactions in parks and community settings to support young children's language and learning.



FRIDAY APRIL 17TH

PJW COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Breakfast and Registration: 8:00 - 8:30 AM

Breakout Sessions: 8:30- 9:20 AM

From Hire to Inspire: Strengthening Professional Learning Systems

Presented by: [Kimberly Minckler](#) | [Room COE 313](#)

Greater than the Sum of its Parts: Cross-Sector Collaboration with the Montana Early Childhood Network

Presented by: [Melissa Winger](#) | [Room COE 215](#)

Let Your Diamond Shine: Play, Purpose, and Possibility in Aligned P-3 Learning

Presented by: [Meegan Kriley-Mackay](#) and [Ray Orcutt](#) | [Room COE ALI B](#)

Sign it! Say it! It's all about Language and Communication!

Presented by: [Lisa Cannon](#) and [Alice Anderson](#) | [Room COE 312](#)

You Can Count on Fractions

Presented by: [Bonnie Spence](#) | [Room COE 314](#)

Breakout Sessions: 8:30- 10:20 AM

Advocacy 101 for Early Learning Leaders

Presented by: [Alex DuBois](#) and [Sarah Froehlke](#) | [Room COE 352](#)

From Access to Belonging:

Designing High-Quality Inclusive Environments for Every Child

Presented by: [Vanessa Nasset](#) | [Room MUS 205](#)

Breakout Sessions: 9:30- 10:20 AM

A Cast of Thousands for the Early Childhood Teacher: Teacher-Facing AI to Support Joyful Learning

Presented by: [Jason Neiffer](#) | [Room COE 313](#)

Building Happy Beginnings: Practical Positive Education in Early Childhood

Presented by: [Sisilia K](#), [Tammy Tolleson Knee](#) | [Room COE 312](#)

Using Slow Reveal to Create Engagement and Build Number Sense

Presented by: [Bonnie Spence](#) | [Room COE 314](#)

The Sandbox Project and MonTECH Tour

Presented by: [Haley Permar](#) | [Room MonTECH](#)

FRIDAY APRIL 17TH

PJW COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

KEYNOTE WORKSHOP

10:35 - 12:25 PM

DR. JENNIFER ZOSH

ROOM | COE ALI A

Leveling Up Learning: Utilizing the Spectrum of Play

Play isn't a break from learning; it is the engine of learning. However, many educators feel stuck between "free play" (which feels chaotic) and "direct instruction" (which feels rigid). This interactive workshop bridges that gap using the Spectrum of Play framework. Participants will begin with a 15-minute deep dive into the research-backed power of playful learning, identifying the five key characteristics that make an activity "playful": joy, meaning, active engagement, iteration, and social interaction. We will also explore the various "stops" along the spectrum of play and discuss their relative strengths.



Community Schools 101: Strengthening the Early Learning Fabric *A Continuum of Support Through Community School Partnerships*

For our youngest learners, success is rooted in the strength of the ecosystem surrounding them. This session introduces the Community School Strategy as a powerful framework to align early childhood providers, families, and K–12 partners around a shared vision—integrating existing resources so every child is healthy, supported, and ready to thrive.

We are honored to welcome Christa Rowland, a national leader with Institute for Educational Leadership, who will guide this session with support from Montana Healthcare Foundation. Christa brings deep experience advancing Community Schools, including her leadership at United Way of Treasure Valley, where she helped expand Idaho's Community School network and co-founded statewide coalitions to strengthen this work.

FEATURED WORKSHOP

10:35 - 12:25 PM

ROOM | COE ALI B



FRIDAY APRIL 17TH

PJW COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

LUNCH | 12:30 - 1:30 PM

12:45 - 1:15 ALI Auditorium A | *Impact Report*

UM Institute for Early Childhood Education

Reflect AND Connect

THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
INSTITUTE for EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The "Reflect and Connect" professional development series offers early childhood education teams a flexible, bite-sized approach to professional growth. Each series includes a brief article, a note-taking and reflection protocol, and a goal-setting component for immediate action planning.



www.ecemontana.org



Read



Select an article to build on your reflections and connections. Consider pairing with a resource from our video library!

As you read through the selected resource use the icons to organize statements that ...

- I agree with
- surprise me
- I have questions

Connect

Connect with your team. Share your notes and identify initial change ideas. What do you need to be successful? Schedule time to reflect on the process.



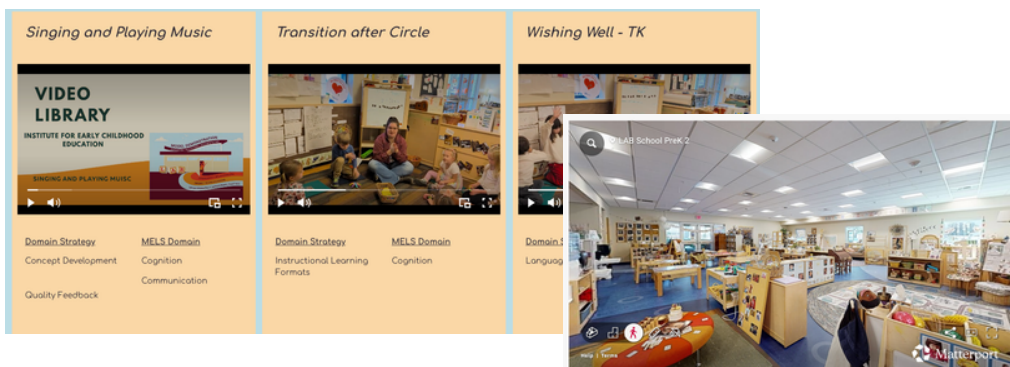
Reflect

Reflect on how the articles relate to your practice and classroom environment.

Learning AND Virtual Library Videos Classrooms

Explore dynamic learning spaces with our Classroom Environment and Virtual Walkthrough Tool. This innovative tool provides a virtual tour of diverse classroom settings, showcasing effective layouts, interactive learning zones, and engaging setups. Ideal for educators, administrators, and training teams; it offers a detailed look at real-world classroom environments and practical insights into optimizing space for effective teaching and learning. Navigate through different scenarios, observe best practices in action, and gather inspiration to create an enriching educational atmosphere in your own space.

Step inside our virtual classrooms, where intentional design supports every learner!



Watch. Reflect. Apply!

Real classroom examples with practical strategies you can use right away. On-demand learning for ongoing growth!

Feature Your Classroom!

Join the Learning Library and share real practices in action and inspire educators statewide.

Multiple Classroom Environments!

Purposefully modeled spaces promote and guide play, learning, and daily routines. Classrooms are open, and accessible with materials that spark curiosity, independence, and exploration.

Sign up to connect with us today, or reach out at info@ecemontana.org

FRIDAY APRIL 17TH

PJW College of Education ALI Auditorium A

PANEL SESSION
1:30 - 3:20 PM

Designing the Future: Workforce and Systems Innovation In Montana's Early Childhood Ecosystem



Panel Host, Alex DuBois
Zero to Five Montana

This panel highlights how Montana is designing the future of its early childhood system through cross-sector partnerships, workforce pathways, and strategic systems-building efforts. Presenters will share lessons from the Bright Futures B-5 initiative, innovative workforce development through the CDA Registered Apprenticeship program, efforts to strengthen infant and early childhood mental health and relational health, and tools that help professionals navigate Montana's early care and education ecosystem. Together, these efforts illustrate how collaboration across agencies, institutions, and communities is shaping a stronger and more connected early childhood system for the future.

Spotlight Story: Bright Futures B-5: Sowing Seeds for the Future

Learn about the statewide systems-building efforts supported through Montana's Bright Futures B-5 Preschool Development Grant and the lasting impact of this work on early childhood programs, services, and partnerships.

Spotlight Story: Montana CDA Registered Apprenticeship

Learn how Montana state agencies and higher education partners collaborated to design and implement a registered apprenticeship pathway leading to a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential for adult learners.

Spotlight Story: Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies *Infant Early Childhood Mental Health and Early Relational Health*

Explore the importance of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) and Early Relational Health (ERH) as foundations for lifelong health, development, and well-being.

Spotlight Story: Better Together: The Montana ECE Ecosystem

Explore Montana's early care and education ecosystem and the many ways professionals contribute to support young children and families across the state.

FRIDAY APRIL 17TH

PJW College of Education ALI Auditorium B

PANEL SESSION

1:30 – 3:20 PM



Panel Host, BriAnne Moline
National Association for
Family Child Care

Strong Families, Thriving Communities: Prevention, Support, and Belonging for Montana's Children

This panel showcases community-driven efforts across Montana that support families before and during times of stress. Participants will learn how statewide prevention initiatives, crisis care models, and inclusive community spaces work together to strengthen families and promote safe, nurturing environments for children.

Spotlight Stories:

*From Prevention to Partnership: Strengthening Families and Protecting Montana's Children
Montana Children's Trust Fund*

*Strengthening Families through Crisis Child Care: Prevention, Support, and Statewide Impact
Toby's House Crisis Nursery*

Participants will explore Montana's statewide approach to strengthening families and preventing child abuse and neglect through community partnerships and practical supports. Learn about the Montana Children's Trust Fund, current initiatives that build protective factors, and crisis care models, including crisis nurseries, that help communities address gaps and support families in times of need.



Spotlight Story:

*Play, Belonging, and Community: Creating Safe Spaces for Children and Families
Missoula Food Bank and EmPower Place Community Center*

Participants will explore how a community-centered play space within a food bank can model belonging and inclusion. Learn strategies for creating welcoming, responsive environments where families connect and how organizations can adapt to meet evolving community needs.



FRIDAY APRIL 17TH

PJW COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

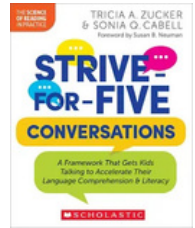
Breakout Sessions: 1:30- 2:20 PM

From Policy to Practice: Building Teacher Preparedness Systems for Inclusive Birth-3rd Grade Education

Presented by: **Nyasha Dzenga** | Room COE 352

Strive for Five: Using Intentional Conversations to Build Early Language and Literacy

Presented by: **Erin Ellis** | Room COE 123



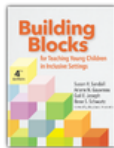
Limited Capacity 30 Attendees Receive Book

Breakout Sessions: 1:30- 3:20 PM

Building Blocks for Teaching Young Children in Inclusive Settings

Presented by: **Julie Ashmun, Danielle Bailey, Julee Hall, Olivia Kersey-Bronc** | Room COE 314

****15 Books Raffled****



Thank you to the University of Washington Haring Center on Inclusion for supporting this session!

Tiny Toy Tales

Presented by: **Kassie Misiewicz** | Room COE 215



Thank you to SPARK! Arts Missoula for sponsoring this session!

University Assisted Community Schools (UAC): Growing Together: Strengthening Early Childhood Systems Through UAC Schools

Presented by: **Christa Rowland, Barbara Frank, Allison Wilson** | Room COE 313

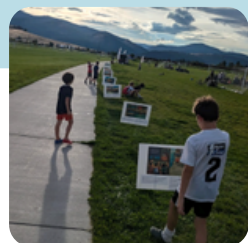


Thank you to the Montana Healthcare Foundation and IEL for your support of this session!

Breakout Session: 2:30- 3:20 PM

Literacy Landscapes: Bringing the Science of Reading Outside to Play

Presented by: **Kate Brayko** | Room COE 123



SATURDAY APRIL 18TH

PJW COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Breakfast and Registration: 7:45 - 8:30 AM

Breakout Sessions: 8:30- 10:20 AM

Leadership Styles to Support Employee Recruitment and Retention

Presented by: Kendra Edlin | Room COE 215

Pathways for the Science of Indigenous Knowledge

Presented by: Mali Matt, Randi Shrider, Dana Lozier, Leigh Ann Courville | Room COE ALI B

Turning Themes into Projects

Presented by: Sara Lev | Room COE 123



Thank you to ECPBL
for supporting this session!

Virtual Learning Library: Utilizing a New Resource from the UM Institute for ECE

Presented by: Allison Wilson, Anna Puryear, Amanda Wiseman, Eilis O'Herlihy | Room COE ALI A

Breakout Sessions: 10:35- 12:20 PM

Pattern, Play, and Purpose: Beadwork as a Gateway to Mathematical Thinking

Presented by: Julie Jeffers | Room COE ALI B



Thank you OPI for your support
of this session!

Introduction to the New 2025 MELs Early Learning Standards (MELs)

Presented by: Deanna Mydland, Allison Wilson, Christine Lux, Deb Huestis,
Terri Barclay, Anna Puryear | Room COE ALI A



DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES

Thank you DPHHS for your support
of this session!

Resource Roundup: Early Learning Resources from the Montana State Library

Presented by: Bobbi deMontigny | Room COE 313

Tiny Toy Tales

Presented by: Kassie Misiewicz
| Room COE 241



Thank you to SPARK! Arts Missoula
for sponsoring this session!

Lunch: 12:30 - 1:30 PM

SATURDAY APRIL 18TH

PJW COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Breakout Sessions: 1:30- 3:20 PM

Embedding Social and Emotional Learning and
Anti-Bias Education Goals in Project Based Learning
Presented by: **Sara Lev** | Room COE 123



Thank you to ECPBL for supporting this session!

Growing Leaders: Becoming Leaders in the Field
Presented by: **Deb Huestis** | Room COE 215

Indian Education for All in the Early Learning Classroom
Presented by: **Julie Jeffers** | Room COE ALI B



Thank you OPI for your support of this session!

Tiny Toy Tales
Presented by: **Kassie Misiewicz** | Room COE 241



Thank you to SPARK! Arts Missoula for sponsoring this session!

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR A STRONG START.

What shall we build, you

and I?



MONTANA EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS

BIG CHANGES, STRONGER STANDARDS

BIRTH - AGE EIGHT



REFINING, ENHANCING, AND EXPANDING MONTANA'S EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS

As part of Montana's CCDF requirements and State Plan priorities, statewide subject matter experts collaborated to complete a comprehensive update of the Montana Early Learning Standards. This work strengthens the state's early childhood ecosystem by ensuring high-quality, developmentally appropriate learning for all young children; aligning expectations with national standards; extending guidance through third grade; elevating key partnerships; and integrating feedback from across Montana's wide range of early learning settings to improve usability and access.

WHAT IS NEW?

AGE BANDS

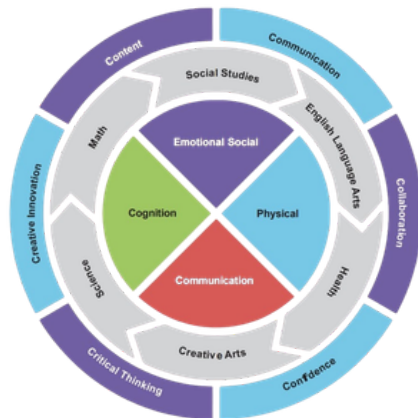
Three overlapping developmental groupings:

- Infants and toddlers (birth to 3, up to 42 months)
- Preschool (ages 3 to 5)
- Kindergarten through grade 3 (ages 5 to 8)

Age bands intentionally overlap to reflect continuous development.

REVISION PROCESS

The revision of the Montana Early Learning Standards marks a major leap forward for Montana's birth-to-grade-3 learning system. Developed through a statewide collaborative effort, the updated standards now extend through 3rd grade and use streamlined age-band organization to make guidance clearer, more accessible, and developmentally aligned. These improvements build a more unified early learning pathway, advancing access to consistent, high-quality experiences for Montana's children.



This work was made possible through support from the Early Childhood and Family Support Division of the Montana DPHHS, the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), and Bright Futures B-5.

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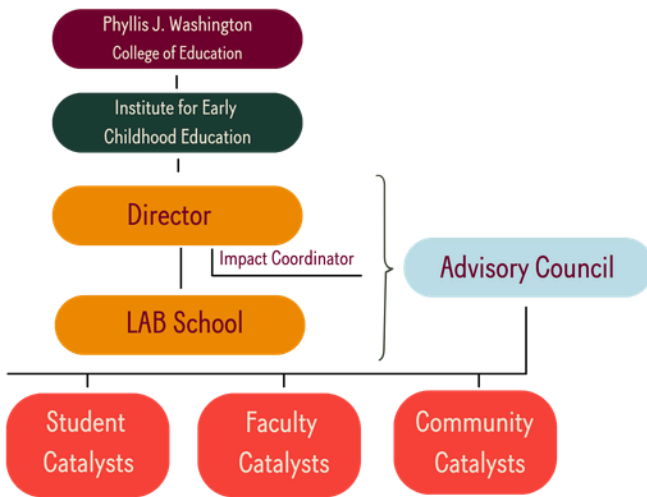


OUR MISSION OF RESEARCH, DEMONSTRATION, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Anchored in the values and core beliefs put forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the goal of advancing a diverse, dynamic, early childhood profession and support for all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children and their families, the University of Montana Institute for Early Childhood Education:

- fosters collaboration among University faculty with a common interest and commitment to research with early childhood populations
- models demonstration of research-based, high-quality practices through the Learning and Belonging (LAB) School and community school partnerships
- promotes research to practice across degree programs, local classrooms, informal learning spaces, and community settings
- engages in productive, collaborative relationships with local, state, and regional stakeholders

THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA INSTITUTE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



Catalysts: Student, Faculty, and Community members who are an extension of the Advisory Council and include diverse, interdisciplinary content experts with overlapping interests in promoting positive outcomes for young children (birth-age eight) and their families through model demonstration, cutting-edge research, and community outreach.

Meet our team!



Dr. Allison Wilson
Director & Associate Professor



Kristin Dahl Horejsi, MEd
Director, LAB School



Anny Brown
Impact Coordinator

Advisory Council Members: Support the overall well-being and strategic direction of the Institute for Early Childhood Education and is a direct link between the goals of the Institute and opportunities for impact. The Advisory Council represents early childhood stakeholders within our community so that the Institute may remain responsive to the priorities and needs of young children and families in Montana and our greater region.



Dr. Christine Lux
Associate Professor, MSU



Grace Decker
Montana Advocates for Children



Karen Allen
Retired MCPS Leadership



Caitlin Jensen
Executive Director
Zero to Five Montana



Barbara Frank
MCPS Director of Academic &
Community Services



Marie Judisch
OPI Senior Manager of
Teaching and Learning



Madi Campbell
ECP Professional Development
Coordinator



Dr. Rob Watson
Executive Director
School Administrators of Montana



Sally Tilleman
Early Education Manager
MT Early Childhood
Services Bureau

THANK YOU TO OUR CONFERENCE SPONSORS AND PARTNERS

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DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC HEALTH &
HUMAN SERVICES



ZEROTOFIVE
MONTANA



THANK YOU TO OUR CONFERENCE VOLUNTEERS AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Deb Huestis, Sarah Froehlke, Jacqueline Kline,
Bethany Froehlich, Siri Smillie, BriAnne Moline,
Jennifer Danielson, Meegan Kriley-Mackay, Erin
Ellis, Deanna Mydland, Terri Barclay, Anna
Puryear, Amanda Wiseman, and Eilís O’Herlihy.



Special thanks to Anny Brown, Impact Coordinator
for the UM Institute for Early Childhood Education,
for her outstanding support and coordination in
helping to bring our 4th Annual Summit to life.

Give her a high five when you see her.

Follow us at

WWW.ECEMONTANA.ORG