

Issue Date: February 5, 2024

2024 Kindergarten Conference Schedule and Workshop Descriptions

Schedule for the Day

- 8:00 - 8:45 Registration Opens
- 8:45 - 9:00 Welcome!
- 9:00 - 10:30 Morning Keynote
- 10:30 - 10:45 Break/Vendors
- 10:45 - 12:15 Morning Workshops
- 12:15 - 1:00 Lunch
- 1:00 - 1:45 Lunchtime Keynote
- 1:45 - 2:00 Break/Vendors
- 2:00 - 3:30 Afternoon Workshop

Morning Workshops

Building Bridges: Exploring Diversity, Anti-Bias, and Inclusion through Children's Literature

Jackie Sprague, Consultant/Coach for Pyramid 802 Plus

This workshop creates an opportunity for professional dialogue focused on equity and inclusion guided by the main themes and concepts presented in children's literature. An overview of diversity and anti-bias will give the participants a glimpse into our own biases. Attendees will have the opportunity to read and reflect on selected children's books and to engage in meaningful conversation exploring the ways in which children's books can be used as tools for promoting equity and inclusion in our classrooms and communities. "Homework" will include choosing two books to read to children and reflecting on children's reactions, questions, and your follow-through.

Building STEM Identity in Early Learners

Elizabeth Nuckols, ECHO Senior Programs Manager

Heather Duhamel, Manager of Education Engagement at Vermont Public

Children are joyful makers and builders and offering up engineering challenges builds creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills in your budding engineers. In this workshop, ECHO and Vermont Public educators team up to share lessons learned from facilitating STEM



activities and great resources to support your work in the classroom. We will demonstrate how guiding students with the Engineering Design Process offers a structured workflow that not only shapes their approach to tasks but also nurtures the growth of a positive STEM identity. We are especially excited to share resources to inspire learning through the upcoming celestial event—the April 8th Total Solar Eclipse here in Vermont!

Engineering Trash Collectors (Kindergarten)

Christine Cunningham, STEM Learning, Boston Museum of Science

Hannah Cunningham, High School Senior, Rice Memorial High School

In this session, educators will engage in an engineering unit for kindergarteners, Designing Trash Collectors. Participants will consider what they know about animal habitats and ecosystems, humans' impact on the environment, and recycling and environmental stewardship as they design a trash collector to save a duck from a polluted pond. After experiencing the challenge as a learner, participants will reflect as educators on the lessons, structures, and pedagogical strategies that can nurture all young learners' engineering abilities.

Makers, Creators, and Inventors!

Carrie Becker, Early Childhood Consultant

Are you looking for ways to inspire creativity and imagination? How can you facilitate opportunities for your students to make, create, and invent? From choosing materials to creating a makers' culture, this workshop is your guide to creating a maker space that inspires the next big invention!

Meaningful Math Outdoors

April Zajko, Consultant

Colleen Christman, Director, Wonder Roots

Kristen Langlais, Education Director, Field, Farm, and Forest

Embark on a journey of mathematical discovery with "Meaningful Math Outdoors," an interactive workshop tailored to ignite a love for hands-on math in kindergarten and preschool-aged children through outdoor explorations. This engaging session is designed to empower educators with playful and nature-inspired approaches to teaching math. Your workshop facilitators are seasoned Vermont-based nature-inspired educators who have worked with hundreds of children over the last two decades. Through storytelling, small group work, and facilitated conversations you will leave ready to revamp how you offer playful mathematical explorations outdoors.

Understanding and Embedding Universal Design for Learning in Your Planning and Practices

Cathy Siggins, Early Childhood Consultant and Special Educator

In this workshop, we will explore Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and discuss how using the UDL framework can help educators be more effective in planning, implementing, and assessing curriculum that is inclusive of all children (without working harder!). Participants will have opportunities to practice how to apply UDL to STEM-related learning experiences and leave with practical ideas and tools for using this framework in their teaching.

Afternoon Workshops

Active Kids – Active Brains Ready to Learn!

Robyn Newton, K-6 Physical Education Teacher, 2023 VT Teacher of the Year
Beth Bearor, Assistant Principal, Vergennes Union Elementary School

Brain research supports the link between movement and learning. Our youngest students benefit from performing basic fundamental movement patterns as a vital part of the learning process. This workshop will help you learn ways to teach your academic content through movement. Learn how to teach literacy, writing, math, and problem-solving skills in an active setting. Come ready to move and try these activities as well as share ways you already incorporate movement into your academics. Active kids, equal active brains ready to learn!

All about  : Innovation for Inclusion in Early Education

Katie McCarthy, Early Childhood Special Education Coordinator, Vermont Agency of Education

Efforts to promote STEAM learning in young children have been proven to have significant impacts on important future learning in the areas of science, technology, engineering, art, and math. In this interactive session, participants will learn about one of the newer Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Centers - The STEM Innovation for Inclusion in Early Education (STEMI2E2) Center. Together, we will explore the science-based evidence behind STEAM and inclusion, connections to the Vermont Early Learning Standards, where art fits in, and the myriad of STEAM resources that can be incorporated into early learning for the inclusion of each and every Vermont child.

Note: Though [STEMI2E2](#) is a 0-5 center, materials are adaptable with some ranging to age 8.

Exploring Wonders: Incorporating Science into Literacy Experiences for Young Children

Lisa Bresler, Arts Specialist, Vermont Agency of Education

Kathryn Rossman, Science Specialist, Vermont Agency of Education

This workshop will exemplify how early educators can integrate science, literacy, and art to create a dynamic learning experience that will spark the natural inquisitiveness of early learners. The workshop will provide insights and actionable strategies to create cross-curricular learning opportunities that infuse scientific inquiry, vocabulary, and content with literacy skills that make the integration of science content into literacy lessons both effective and enjoyable!

Phonemes to Phonics: Foundational Fun for Everyone! (Kindergarten)

Kathleen Flinn, Kindergarten Teacher, Williamstown Elementary School

Sand, magnetic letters, bumpy boards, heart gems, “I have Who has” games. . . What do all of these things have to do with literacy? They are but some of the tools I use to support my early readers as they build their foundational skills in phonemic awareness and phonics. Just like many of you, I am tasked with building a structured literacy program that includes phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and writing. Just like many of you, I know that the developmental needs of my young learners require me to make my learning opportunities hands-on, engaging, and meaningful. Join me as I share how I structure my day to do just that while creating a classroom of learners who love to read! You will walk away with ideas and tools that young children will love as well as ways to differentiate your instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

Play More! Hand in Hand Tools for Early Childhood Educators

Angela Sillars, Assistant Professor, Vermont State University

In this session we will introduce and try out the emotionally-responsive, play-based, Hand in Hand connection tools of Special Time and Playlistening. Special Time uses short, child-led, one-on-one time with a teacher, and Playlistening gets the laughter going in a group. These tools strengthen child-teacher relationships, build children’s confidence, and contribute to helping children heal from adverse experiences. After a brief introduction to our theoretical framework, we will practice these tools together using simple materials and having fun!

Wee Engineer – Your Kids Can!

Tracy Truzansky, Painted Turtle Consulting

Imagine a class of young children in a dynamic discussion as they explore the properties of sponges vs. metal rings to design a wrecking ball. Or testing buttons vs. paper clips for creating a noisemaker at a surprise party? *Wee Engineer* is the Museum of Science, Boston's nationally recognized engineering education program designed specifically for early learners. Hands-on learning for participants is provided as you "unpack" engineering challenges and the Wee Engineer experience. Meet Rosie the puppet who always has a problem for engineers to solve. Learn the Engineering Song and you'll feel ready to guide your children as they Explore, Create, and Improve the world around them.