



Childhood Conversations Together We Will...

*2023 Annual Conference
Community Healing through Connections*

Keynote

Nelba Márquez-Greene, Founder, The Ana Grace Project

Saturday, April 22, 2023

8:15 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Hartford Marriott Downtown

200 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT 06103



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SCHEDULE AT-A-GLANCE

Saturday, April 22, 2023

8:15 – 9:00 a.m. - Registration/Breakfast/Exhibitors

9:00 – 10:00 a.m. - Welcome & Keynote

Nelba Márquez-Greene, Founder, The Ana Grace Project

10:15 - 11:45 a.m. – Session I

1. Music, Movement, & Literacy in Early Education
2. Childcare Incubator Project
3. Social Emotional Learning 101
4. Strengths-Based Practice (SBP)
5. Parent Voice Leading: Co-Creating a State Parent Cabinet

11:45 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. – Lunch/ Networking/ Exhibitors

12:45 - 2:15 p.m. – Session II

1. What is a Village Support Group and Why is it so Important!
2. Building Early Childhood Connections: Parent by Parent
3. Focusing on the Strengths of Others for Success
4. Building a Positive Mindset from a Social-Emotional Perspective
5. The Pyramid Model

2:30 - 4:00 p.m. – Session III

1. Building Strong Connections Through Social Emotional Learning Effective Tools to Foster Home-School Partnerships and School Belonging
2. Arise and Shine, We Have Work to Do
3. To The Moon and Back – Supporting children with special needs in the home, in the classroom, and beyond.
4. Creating a Professional Development Plan for Yourself & Your Staff
5. Music and the Indomitable Human Spirit



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KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Nelba holds a Bachelor of Music from the Hartt School and a Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy from St. Joseph College. Nelba taught and supervised at the Family Therapy program at the University of Winnipeg's Aurora Family Therapy Centre and later worked as the Coordinator for Klingberg Family Therapy Center's outpatient child and adolescent psychiatric clinic. She also served as adjunct faculty at Central Connecticut State University.

Nelba founded the CTAMFT (Connecticut Association for Marriage and Family Therapy) Diversity Committee and served on the CTAMFT Board of Directors. For her advocacy, she received the 2004 Minority Fellowship Award by the AAMFT, the 2004 Distinguished Professional Service Award, and the 2013 Service to Families Award by the CTAMFT.

In 2018, she was profiled as one of "100 Women of Color" and a YWCA (CT) Women's Leadership Award recipient. She was featured in People Magazine's October 2019 issue as one of Ten Women Changing the World and recognized by Chelsea Clinton and Hillary Clinton in their Book of Gutsy Women.

Nelba has testified and advocated at the state and federal levels on many different mental health initiatives, hosted TEDx talks, and is a nationally sought after speaker. In the many years that have followed, stints in advocacy, public policy, community care, etc. have affirmed her core belief that in order to change the world we must take care of people. First- that grief, trauma and loss must be allowed in the room. Second- that tools, language, skills, resources and acceptance should be available to live a full, grieving life.

SESSION I WORKSHOPS

1. **Music, Movement, & Literacy in Early Education**

- Al deCant's interactive workshop is fast paced and filled with tons of music, stories, and strategies that teachers, librarians and parents can immediately use with their children. No musical expertise necessary! Teachers will learn how to use music, movement, and props to aid in early literacy, teaching, and classroom management. The workshop will explore the elements that have made books like *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and *Pete the Cat* so popular with teachers and children.

Participants will leave with access to songs and activities designed to teach across the curriculum.

Presenter: Al deCant The Singing Principal, Half Moon Music/ Music for Little Superstars

Experience: Entry, Developing & Proficient

Audience: Parents, Parenting Educators, Early Childhood Administrators, Early Intervention Provider (Part C, Birth to Three), Preschool Special Education Provider, Early Childhood

Teachers/Caregivers, After-school Professionals

Topic Strand: Social Emotional Learning, Family Engagement, Community Collaborations, Grade Level Reading (Summer Learning, Chronic Absenteeism, School Readiness), Play-Based Learning and/or Multiple Modalities, Music & Movement to promote literacy, numeracy and cooperation.

2. **Childcare Incubator Project** - Talking about a new innovative model, Childcare Incubator Project, that has been piloted in different communities to support childcare and address the childcare shortage.

Presenter: Tracey Madden-Hennesey & Nicole Villanueva, YWCA of New Britain

Experience: All

Audience: Early Childhood Administrators

Topic Strand: Community Collaborations

3. **Social Emotional Learning 101** - Social Emotional Learning 101 will help participants gain insights and skills about emotional intelligence and core SEL concepts. The workshop will also reveal how emotional intelligence can be developed and cultivated through social awareness and personal awareness.

Presenter: Tiana Brown, Norwalk Housing Authority

Experience: Developing & Proficient

Audience: Parents, Parenting Educators, Early Childhood Administrators, Early Childhood

Teachers/Caregivers, Elementary teachers grade K-3, After-school Professionals

Topic Strand: Social Emotional Learning

4. **Strengths-Based Practice (SBP)** - Strengths-based practice (SBP) is a paradigm shift that calls for a greater attention on the families potential versus focusing on the problems. This session will focus on SBP origin and current research to provoke dialogue on the topic with the hopes to reflect on programming approaches to elicit parents and environmental strengths and challenges. SBP does not ignore the challenges families may face but "If we ask people to look for deficits, they will usually find them, and their view of the situation will be colored by this. If we ask people to look for successes, they will usually find them, and their view of the situation will be colored by this." (Kral, 1989). Participants will also be the first to hear highlights from the Early Childhood Home Visitors perceptions on SBP and engage families.

Presenter: Dr. Luz M. Rivera, CT Office of Early Childhood

Experience: Entry, Developing & Proficient

Audience: Early Childhood Administrators, Early Intervention Provider (Part C, Birth to Three), Preschool Special Education Provider, Early Childhood Teachers/Caregivers, Mental Health Providers

Topic Strand: Family Engagement

5. **Parent Voice Leading: Co-Creating a State Parent Cabinet** - Members of the CT Office of Early Childhood (OEC), Parent Cabinet members and Design team parent leaders will describe the journey of co-creating the first ever OEC Parent Cabinet, the current work of the Cabinet, and how connections and relationships are critical to this work. The workshop will be interactive and will lead participants through a process of how to use specific strategies to partner with and honor the role of parent voice at decision-making tables. Participants will leave with tools and strategies that can be applied within state agencies or programs.

Presenter: Elena Trueworthy & Chenae Russell, CT Office of Early Childhood Parent Cabinet

Experience: Developing & Proficient, Advanced

Audience: Parents, Parenting Educators, Early Childhood Administrators, Early Intervention Provider (Part C, Birth to Three), Preschool Special Education Provider, Early Childhood Teachers/Caregivers, Elementary teachers grade K-3, Mental Health Providers, After-school Professionals

Topic Strand: Family Engagement, Community Collaborations, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

SESSION II WORKSHOPS

1. **What is a Village Support Group and Why is it so Important!**

- This workshop will focus on the organic need of human connection and how a Village Group can support that need. Learn the impact that a Village Group has on individuals, families, and communities. Through demonstrations, ideas, and resources, we will give guidance on how to form and conduct your own Village Group. We will discuss how to set the stage for acceptance, support, and safety by using reflective approaches that enhance self awareness and communication.

Presenter: Joy Lenares & Ashley LaParre, Collaborative for Colchester's Children

Experience: Developing & Proficient, Advanced

Audience: Parenting Educators, Early Childhood Administrators, Early Intervention Provider (Part C, Birth to Three), Preschool Special Education Provider, Early Childhood Teachers/Caregivers, Elementary teachers grade K-3, Mental Health Providers, After-school Professionals

Topic Strand: Social Emotional Learning, Family Engagement, Community Collaborations, Support and Considerations for Children with Special Needs or Disabilities (B-3), Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Community and Healing (grief and acceptance), LGBTQ+ Support and Inclusion

2. **Building Early Childhood Connections:**

Parent by Parent - This workshop is about valuing the lived experience of parents and caregivers to: create community, build early childhood connections, develop supportive relationships with other parents with young children, and improve knowledge about the developmental domains of children five years and younger. Historically, parents and caregivers have learned about early childhood resources from neighbors, friends and family. How do we lift up and value the lived experiences of everyday community members including parents? How do we support and respect community members who want to support other parents to create needed community systems change? In this workshop, we will share the work of a couple Early Childhood Community Advocates who are building early childhood connections parent by parent in Norwalk.

Presenter: MJ Chironna, Norwalk ACTS

Experience: All

Audience: Parents, Parenting Educators, Early Childhood Administrators, Early Intervention

Provider (Part C, Birth to Three), Preschool Special Education Provider, Early Childhood Teachers/Caregivers, Mental Health Providers

Topic Strand: Social Emotional Learning, Family Engagement, Community Collaborations, Support and Considerations for Children with Special Needs or Disabilities (B-3), Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

3. **Focusing on the Strengths of Others for Success**

- We live in a society in which we are always trying to improve and acquire new skills; basically to get better, or "fix" someone. This workshop focuses on a different approach, that of what is already working well and is inherently a person's strengths. When we focus on a person's strengths, we can learn to have a more positive approach to supporting others, communicate more effectively and focus on the positive.

Presenter: Tracy Cheney, Three Cheers Consulting with TLC

Experience: Developing & Proficient

Audience: Parents, Parenting Educators, Early Childhood Administrators, Early Intervention Provider (Part C, Birth to Three), Preschool Special Education Provider, Early Childhood Teachers/Caregivers, Elementary teachers grade K-3, Mental Health Providers, After-school Professionals

Topic Strand: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Leadership and support

4. **Building a Positive Mindset from a Social-Emotional Perspective**

- In this workshop, participants will learn ways to build a positive mindset. This also includes skills to improve self-talk and how to use social emotional learning skills to improve self-esteem and self-worth.

Presenter: Dr. Noel Casiano, Casiano Clinical Services, LLC

Experience: All

Audience: Parents, Parenting Educators, Early Childhood Administrators, Preschool Special Education Provider, Early Childhood Teachers/Caregivers, Elementary teachers grade K-3, Mental Health Providers, After-school Professionals

Topic Strand: Social Emotional Learning, Family Engagement, Community Collaborations, Trauma/Mental Health, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Community and Healing (grief and acceptance)

5. **The Pyramid Model**

- The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children is a positive behavioral intervention and support framework. Early childhood practitioners, caregivers, and families can use the

model to promote young children's social and emotional development and prevent and address challenging behavior.

In this training we will review the pyramid model, foundations for success and how you can continue the work in your programs.

Presenter: Maegan Adams, CT Pyramid Partnership

Experience: Entry

Audience: Parents, Parenting Educators, Early Childhood Administrators, Early Intervention Provider (Part C, Birth to Three), Preschool Special Education Provider, Early Childhood Teachers/Caregivers

Topic Strand: Social Emotional Learning

SESSION II WORKSHOPS

1. ***Building Strong Connections Through Social Emotional Learning Effective Tools to Foster Home-School Partnerships and School Belonging***

- The focus of our presentation is to equip teachers and caregivers with effective tools to foster and enhance students' connection with their school, their family and their community. After the COVID-19 pandemic we see students (and adults) becoming increasingly more disconnected. The lack of human connection is at the center of an international mental health crisis. It is absolutely imperative that we find and implement effective strategies to strengthen students' connection with their schools, communities and families.

Participants joining our presentation will be able to learn and practice efficient strategies that will foster students' resilience, connection and promote a growth mindset. We will share resources and tools that could be used at home and in the classroom to promote a positive climate and sense of belonging.

Presenter Dr. Stacey Heiligenthaler & Dr. Alina Agiurgioaei Boie and Dr. Fabian Agiurgioaei Boie, Greenwich Public Schools

Experience: All

Audience: Parents, Parenting Educators, Early Childhood Administrators, Preschool Special Education Provider, Early Childhood Teachers/Caregivers, Elementary teachers grade K-3, Mental Health Providers, After-school Professionals

Topic Strand: Social Emotional Learning, Family Engagement

2. ***Arise and Shine, We Have Work to Do*** - The colorless, odorless, tasteless, silent cloud of the pandemic and the accompanying stressors are slowly lifting. It's time to re-discover ourselves and

each other and connect. Using a multi-sensual approach, with research, music, photos, and videos, we'll have a lively interactive conversation. We will look back at our early childhood and learn the importance of bringing those experiences forward to weave them into our work with a fresh sense of enthusiasm and joy. The principles of adult learning will be used, and different teaching modalities will be employed to meet different learning styles.

Presenter: Doug Edwards, Real Dads Forever

Experience: All

Audience: Parents, Parenting Educators, Early Childhood Administrators, Early Intervention Provider (Part C, Birth to Three), Preschool Special Education Provider, Early Childhood Teachers/Caregivers, Elementary teachers grade K-3, Mental Health Providers, After-school Professionals

Topic Strand: Social Emotional Learning, Family Engagement, Community Collaborations, Trauma/Mental Health, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Community and Healing (grief and acceptance)

3. ***To The Moon and Back - Supporting children with special needs in the home, in the classroom, and beyond***

- All children require support to become healthy well-adjusted adults. Children with special needs, however, can have exceptional challenges in achieving this goal. During this workshop Ronda Thorington, LPC will use her clinical knowledge in conjunction with her own lived experience as a mom to a child with specialized medical needs to identify some of the unique social-emotional considerations for these children and some concrete strategies that their caring adults can use to support them.

Presenter: Ronda C Thorington, MA, LPC

Experience: All

Audience: Parents, Parenting Educators, Early Childhood Administrators, Early Intervention Provider (Part C, Birth to Three), Preschool Special Education Provider, Early Childhood Teachers/Caregivers, Elementary teachers grade K-3, Mental Health Providers, After-school Professionals

Topic Strand: Social Emotional Learning, Family Engagement, Support and Considerations for Children with Special Needs or Disabilities (B-3), Trauma/Mental Health, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Community and Healing (grief and acceptance)

4. ***Creating a Professional Development Plan for Yourself & Your Staff*** - In this workshop, we will explore how to help staff that we supervise

develop skills in the areas of goal setting, skill development, and self-awareness as related to their professional development and in their work with youth. The importance of having a well-trained staff will be delved into and participants will develop their own professional development plan, while gaining skills in guiding their staff through a similar process.

Presenter: Patricia Pugliese, NJSACC, (New Jersey School-Age Child Care Coalition)

Experience: All

Audience: Early Childhood Administrators, Early Intervention Provider (Part C, Birth to Three), Preschool Special Education Provider, Early Childhood Teachers/Caregivers, Mental Health Providers, After-school Professionals

Topic Strand: Supervision and administration

5. ***Music and the Indomitable Human Spirit*** -

The Blues and Beyond details how music and history go hand in hand. We will perform music and discuss

the history of our country from the 1600's to the present day.

Participants will learn rhythms from West-Africa, engage in lively discussion, and leave with a lesson plan on the topics that were discussed.

Presenter: Eric Finland & Adam Taylor and Noe Socha, The Blues and Beyond

Experience: All

Audience: Parents, Parenting Educators, Early Childhood Administrators, Early Intervention Provider (Part C, Birth to Three), Preschool Special Education Provider, Early Childhood Teachers/Caregivers, Elementary teachers grade K-3, Mental Health Providers, After-school Professionals

Topic Strand: Social Emotional Learning, Family Engagement, Community Collaborations, Support and Considerations



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