

IGNITING CONNECTIONS SYMPOSIUM

PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER 22, 2023



ACTIVITIES

IGNITING
CONNECTIONS

Early Childhood Education

Symposium

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM: **Registration and Light Breakfast**

8:00 AM - 9:30 AM: **Early Childhood Champions Award Ceremony** | Latham AB

- Overview of First Steps and Common Voice
- Early Childhood Champions Award
- NRV Child Care Summit updates

9:45 AM - 11:15 AM: **Mid-morning sessions**

- Infant Teachers | Draper's Meadow

Trauma Informed Care in Early Childhood Education

Andi Golusky & Julie Fox, NRV CARES

Awareness of the effects of early trauma on a child can have a significant impact. We will review basics regarding ACE's and the brain. This will provide child care providers with tools and information to better deal with children who have been and are being exposed to trauma.

- Toddler Teachers | Ellett Valley

Quality Early Care Environments

Debra Riegel, United Way of Southwest Virginia

The session will help participants learn the importance and how to provide high quality, safe, and healthy environments that enhance the development of toddlers. Participants will also identify the eight elements of a quality environment for toddlers.

- Pre-K Teachers | Solitude

Supporting Students, Staff and Families Using Social Emotional Education

Tammie Sarver & Jenni Heartway, Blue Mountain School

Participants will explore and experience the importance of social emotional learning as part of the classroom culture. They will gain hands-on tools for implementing daily mindfulness practices, and both literal and pedagogical tools for successful classroom management and personal growth for all the school community.

- Directors | Drillfield

VQB5 2023-2024 Session for Program Leaders

Kris Meyers, Virginia Department of Education

During this session, an overview of the VQB5 annual measurement and improvement cycle will be provided. Information about the development of the new VQB5 Quality Profiles as well as a summary of state and regional data from Practice Year 2 will be discussed to help program leaders use their data to guide improvement.

11:15 AM - 11:45 AM: **Transition**

Visit exhibitors and wellness stations

11:45 AM - 12:30 PM: **Lunch Break** | Latham AB

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Early Childhood Education

Symposium

12:30 PM - 1:30 PM: **Keynote** | Latham AB

The Power of Music to Foster Love, Joy, and Connection in Your Classroom

Mary Anderson, My Music Starts Here

Daily, teachers face many challenges and stare down at a never ending "To Do List." We need ways to spark joy for ourselves and our students throughout the day, while supporting their learning. In this session, you will understand why using high-quality music in your classroom has a huge impact on children's learning and development, what it looks like, and how to do it. We will make music together and you will learn simple ways to integrate music into your daily routine to foster love, joy, and connection in your classroom.

1:30 PM - 1:45 PM: **Transition**

1:45 PM - 3:15 PM: **Afternoon sessions**

- Infant Teachers | Draper's Meadow

Supporting Language Development

Jes Bookout, Jes B Consulting, LLC

The session will discuss ways to use high quality interactions to help support early language development in the infant classroom. How to incorporate strategies into high quality interactions into everyday routines such as feeding, diapering, playtime, and transitions, will be discussed.

- Toddler Teachers | Ellett Valley

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- Pre-K Teachers | Solitude

Do I Have to Share?

Emily Perkins, NRCA Head Start

Children should have an opportunity to share when they're ready instead of being forced. Forced sharing denies a child the ability to resolve their own social conflicts. This session will explore ways to teach children to share and how to be able to respond when they are not wanting to share what they are playing with.

- Directors | Drillfield

Crisis Averted: How a Community of Learners' Innovation Ensured Sustainability During Staffing Challenges

Karen Gallagher, Alexa Gardner, & Shannon Mury, VT Child Development Center for Learning and Research

During this session we will share our story of staff departures and program impact. We will also share how educators, administrators, families, communities and the children provided support throughout the process to ensure high quality care and joyful learning.

3:15 PM - 3:30 PM: **Certificates and Evaluations**

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



MARY ANDERSON

My Music Starts Here

Mary Anderson is the founder of **My Music Starts Here**, a music program for early childhood classrooms, supporting the brain development and overall health and wellness of children. The My Music Starts Here program builds happy, healthy classroom communities by empowering teachers to fill their toolboxes with high-quality music to share in their everyday routines with their students. In addition to founding My Music Starts Here, Mary is one of the creators and the host of the children's television program, *Songs & Stories*, which can be seen on Virginia Public Media. Mary is committed to sharing music with children, their teachers, and their caregivers and envisions a world where all children, regardless of any life circumstances, have the opportunity to experience the power of music to work through them, supporting them on their journey to reach their highest potential.

SESSION SPEAKERS



ANDI GOLUSKY & JULIE FOX

NRV CARES

Andi Golusky has been the Executive Director of NRV CARES for over four years. She is also the chair of the NRV Resiliency Network, our area's trauma informed community network. Prior, Andi worked at NRVCS for over ten years in children and family mental and behavioral health services. A proud VT graduate, Andi fell in love with the New River Valley and has called it home since 2006. Also a Highlander, she graduated from RU with a MA in Social Work and later attained her License in Clinical Social Work. She is also part time adjunct faculty in the Social Work MA program at RU.

Julie currently works as the Coordinator for the NRV Resiliency Network and Education Program Coordinator for NRV CARES. Julie's love for connecting as a community and working to improve the lives of others began early in life and became her career choice during her undergraduate studies. Julie holds a MSW from the University of South Carolina and has worked with families and non-profit organizations in various capacities for over 15 years.



DEBRA RIEGEL

United Way of
Southwest
Virginia

Debra Riegel is an Infant & Toddler Specialist. She has served as a preschool special education teacher in Maine and worked as the Early Childhood Development Coordinator in Tennessee. Debra received her BA from Plymouth State University in Plymouth, NH, and has loved working with young children since. She is excited and passionate about providing support, training, and coaching to the early childhood professionals in her region, and committed to support programs, classrooms and teachers in providing quality early childcare settings.



EMILY PERKINS

NRCA
Head Start

Emily grew up on a dairy farm in WV and has always had a love for nature, animals and children. She received her bachelor's degree in education from the University of Cincinnati and has dedicated over 20 years to Early Childhood education. She currently serves as site administrator for the NRCA Giles Head Start program. She enjoys guiding children as they explore the world around them, supporting their conversations and being a play partner to them. "The potential possibilities of any child are the most intriguing and stimulating in all creation." ~Ray L. Wilbur



JES BOOKOUT

Jes B Consulting,
LLC

Jes is an early education consultant in the Roanoke Valley. She has served as a preschool teacher in a variety of programs including family day homes, center-based, and Head Start. She is an administrator for the Piedmont Chapter of VAAEYC and the log keeper for VAAEYC. Jessica received her Bachelor's Degree from Portland State University and is currently completing her Master's Degree in Family and Community Services through Oklahoma State University. She is passionate about advocating for children through community engagement with families and work within the field of early childhood education.



KRIS MEYERS

Virginia
Department of
Education

Kris Meyers began working at the Virginia Department of Education in May 2020 as the Associate Director of Quality Measurement and Improvement. She came to the Department from the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, where she served as the Director of Quality for 5 years, being primarily responsible for co-administration of the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System. Prior to working at the state-level, Kris worked on local-level school readiness initiatives in Roanoke, Virginia, and as a K-2 teacher and Reading Specialist in Maryland and Colorado.

SESSION SPEAKERS



**KAREN GALLAGHER,
ALEXA GARDNER, &
SHANNON MURY**

Virginia Tech Child
Development Center for
Learning and Research

Karen is the director of the Virginia Tech Child Development Center for Learning and Research and a senior instructor at Virginia Tech's Human Development and Family Science Department. She has a B.S. with a major in Family & Child Development/Childcare Administration, and a M.A.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction/Special Education, both from Virginia Tech. Karen has worked in early education for over 25 years as a student teacher, classroom teacher, and administrator. She has also served as a mentor for Virginia Quality (now called VQB5) for several years and mentored Early Head Start programs in the NRV. She enjoys networking and working with programs in our area, advocating for young children and their early education providers, as well as elevating the profession.

Alexa is assistant director of the Virginia Tech Child Development Center for Learning and Research and a senior instructor at Virginia Tech's Human Development and Family Science Department. Her B.S. degree is from Virginia Tech with a major in Human Development, as is her M.A.Ed. in Educational Psychology and Curriculum and Instruction. Her professional interests include environment and teacher interaction as related to children's learning and development; teacher intentionality; how intentional use of classroom materials, curriculum design, and appropriate facilitation encourage higher order thinking and concept development. Alexa is committed to supporting young children, families, and the next generation of future educators in pursuit of high-quality learning opportunities in early childhood.

Shannon Mury is a Virginia Tech graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a M.A.Ed. 's Degree in Education Curriculum and Instruction with a focus in ESL and Multicultural Education from the same institution. She has worked as a full time classroom teacher at the CDCLR for over seven years and is now working as the program's mentor teacher. She has experience teaching children from toddler to school age. Prior to her time at the CDCLR she worked as a director for over ten years at a before/after school program in MCPS. Shannon embraces the Reggio Emilia approach as the primary educational philosophy and pedagogy in preschool education. She was awarded the Helen Marks Educator of the Year in 2021 and the 2022 First Steps Early Childhood Champion of the Year.



**TAMMIE SARVER &
JENNIE HEARTWAY**

Blue Mountain School

Tammie Sarver, Director at Blue Mountain School, has been teaching in and out of the classroom for about 30 years. She studied education, psychology and English at Virginia Tech. Tammie is committed to nurturing our youngest citizens' love of learning, nature connection, mindfulness, social emotional strength, and developmentally appropriate activism. When she's not at school you'll usually find Tammie in the woods, the river, volunteering, or cooking with her large family and many pets. Along with her administrative duties, because of her deep commitment to outdoor learning, Tammie continues to teach Forest Kindergarten alongside Jenni.

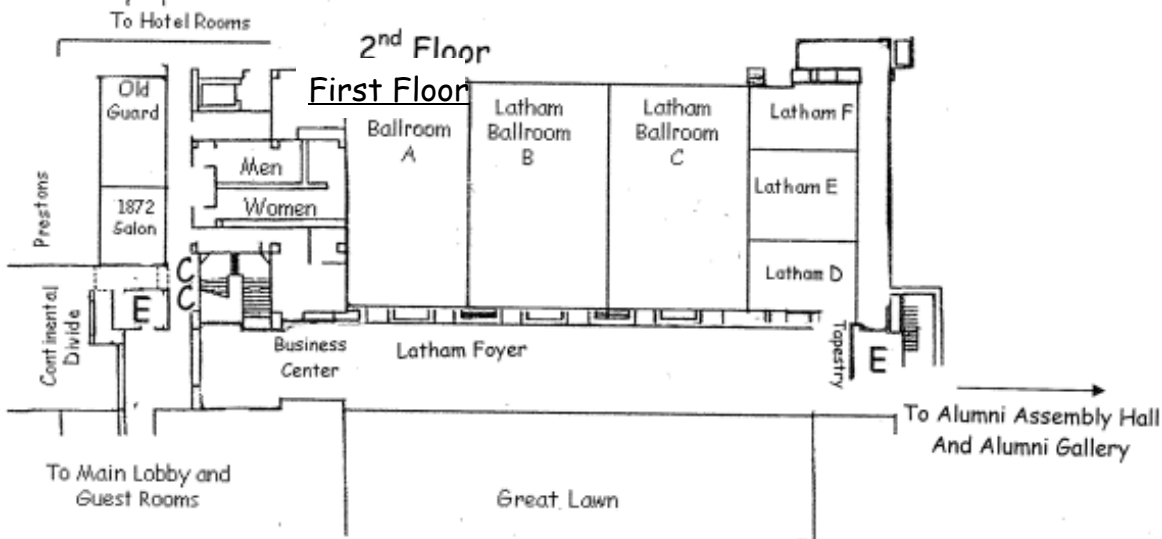
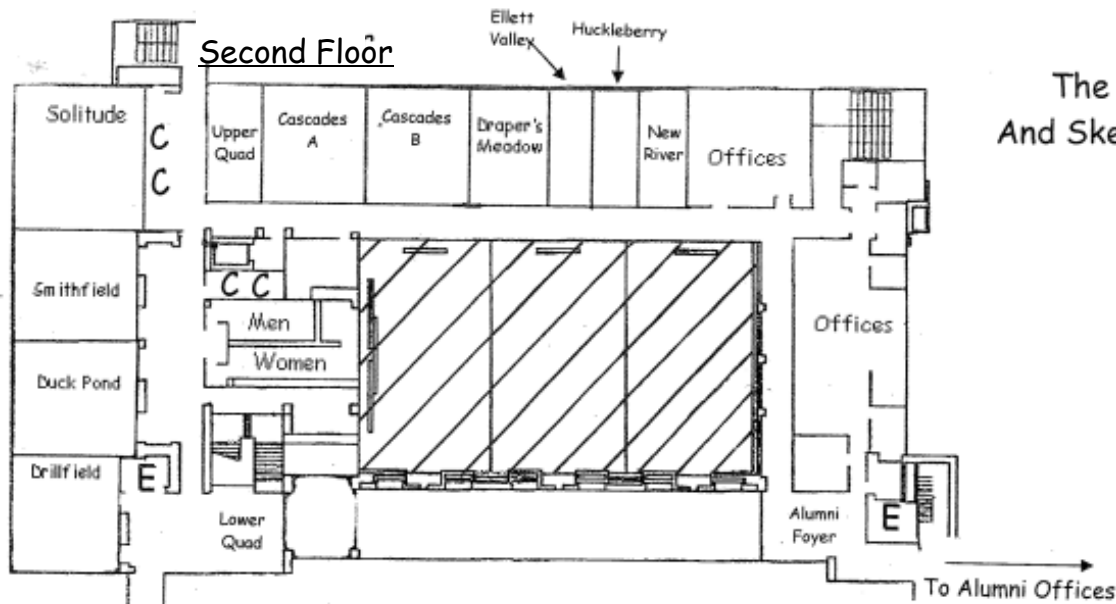
Jenni Heartway, Forest Programming Director at Blue Mountain School, is a licensed Birth through Sixth grade teacher and has an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education with a second major in Psychology from Western Carolina University. Her Masters Degree is in Early Childhood Intervention and Family Support from UNC Chapel Hill. She has taught in a variety of settings: public schools, private schools, internationally and outdoors as a Forest Kindergarten teacher. This is her 23rd year in education. She truly enjoys helping students develop skills in an authentic, meaningful manner, and scaffolding children's play to create learning experiences. When she is not at school you can find her in the woods with her family and dogs.

BREAKOUT ROOMS MAP

SECOND FLOOR

The Inn at Virginia Tech
And Skelton Conference Center

E - Elevator
C - Computer



The Igniting Connections Symposium is
Presented by
Early Childhood Education Initiatives at VT
and
Planned in Partnership with



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
AND FAMILY SCIENCE
CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER FOR
LEARNING & RESEARCH
VIRGINIA TECH.



The
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Virginia Association for the
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- NRV CARES
- Child Care Aware of VA
- United Way of South West VA
- New River Community College
- NRV Chapter of VA Association for Education of Young Children
- CoDeS Lab at Virginia Tech Human Development and Family Science Department