

## MAESA Early Childhood Educators Conference

Friday, November 3, 2023

### “COVID in the Rear View: Where Do We Go from Here”

Hosted by St. Patrick’s Episcopal Day School  
4700 Whitehaven Pkwy., NW  
Washington, DC 20007  
Ms. Jalene Spain Thomas, Head of School

#### Program

8:00 – 8:30 am	Registration and coffee hour
8:30 – 10:10 am	Welcome and Keynote Address
10:15 – 11:45 am	Session One
11:45 – 12:30 pm	Networking Lunch
12:35 – 2:05 pm	Session Two
2:10 – 3:10 pm	Closing Plenary
3:10 – 3:15 pm	Complete Surveys, Pick-up Certificates, and depart.

#### Keynote Address: “COVID in the Rear View: Where Do We Go from Here”

During this session, the participants will take time to pause and reflect on the impact of COVID and its aftermath in the early childhood classrooms. The pandemic brought on deep feelings of uncertainty, fear, and isolation. Since returning to the classrooms, our early learners are letting us know through their behaviors what they need from us. We will be discussing how teachers and staff can be a “secure base and safe haven” for our students to feel safe while learning. Throughout the session, we will also reflect on what it means to be an early childhood educator in a time when social and emotional needs are just as important as academic needs. Participants will leave this session with a deeper understanding of attachment theory and how to implement it in their classrooms to build social and emotionally attuned classrooms.



**Ms. Marianela S. Rodousakis**, LCSW-C is a licensed clinical social worker who serves as Assistant Director for a therapeutic preschool in Maryland. For four years, she served as the classroom social worker providing integrated education and therapeutic care. She considers herself an Early Childhood Champion, advocating for young children and families to gain access to quality education and that they are treated with dignity and respect no matter where they come from. Prior to finding her passion for working in developmental trauma, Ms. Rodousakis was an early childhood teacher in various educational settings. Ms. Rodousakis is also a certified Circle of Security facilitator for both the Parenting and Classroom models, working with parents and coaching preschool through pre-K and K teachers to help improve teacher and child outcomes through the context of attachment. Most recently she completed her training to become a Circle of Security Coach. Ms. Rodousakis earned an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education from

*Community College Baltimore County, a Bachelor's degree in Family Science at the University of Maryland (College Park), then a Masters in Social Work with a concentration in clinical, and specialization in Families and Children, from the University of Maryland, Baltimore.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Professionalism/1.5**

### **Workshop 1**

#### **Creating a Culture of Care and Kindness**

Welcome to the magical world of teaching kindness to our precious preschoolers! In this heartwarming journey, we embark on an adventure that goes beyond ABCs and 123s. Together, we will cultivate a nurturing atmosphere where the superpower of kindness, compassion, and empathy takes center stage. Picture a classroom filled with giggles, hugs, and little acts of love, where every tiny heart blossoms into a force for good. So, fasten your seatbelts, because we're about to embark on a voyage of wonder, where the lessons we teach today will shape the compassionate leaders of tomorrow. Their primary emphasis lies in cultivating a nurturing atmosphere centered around kindness, compassion and empathy. They firmly hold the belief that instilling kindness in young children is akin to imparting foundational skills such as numerical and alphabetical knowledge. Through this opportunity, Kiran and Margy hope to extend their work beyond the premises of their classroom, to the beautiful MAESA community.

*Kiran Philip is an educator of 20 years (in 2 countries), working both as a teacher and as Director for Afterschool and Extended Day at Christ Episcopal School and at Kids Town Learning Center. Over the last 5 years, Kiran has enjoyed being a Preschool Teacher at St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Potomac, MD. Kiran holds an Early Childhood Trainer license through MSDE Office of Childcare in the State of Maryland. She is passionate about teaching young children and, in particular, exploring the intersection of Mind, Brain, Education Science (MBE) and creating a learning environment that builds a sense of community and cultivates empathy in our younger students. She holds a strong philosophy that by prioritizing care and compassion, schools can cultivate a safe and supportive community where everyone feels seen, heard, valued, and supported, ultimately enhancing well-being, learning, and overall school success.*

*Margaret Hemmig has been a preschool teacher at St. Andrew's Episcopal School for 20 years. She loves working with young children and strives to create a supportive and nurturing classroom environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, questions, and feelings. A few years ago, in researching the importance of teaching kindness and empathy to young children she learned that these traits must be developed, nurtured, and practiced over time. She began implementing developmentally appropriate kindness lessons and activities into her curriculum to provide students the opportunity to practice these skills. Kindness and empathy are not just concepts – they are daily practices and the cornerstone of her teaching philosophy.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Curriculum/1.5**

## Workshop 2

### **Building Budding Brains**

Join St. Patrick's School Counselor Julianne Reilly and School Nurse Claire Cliche for an interactive workshop on the brain! We will talk about the brain development of our young students and what happens to them when they are overwhelmed by emotions. We will explore and share ideas for helping young children to regulate and ways we can support development in this area within our classrooms.

*Julianne Reilly is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and has been working with and supporting children and families for over a decade. Julianne currently works at St. Patrick's as a School Counselor and also does private practice work primarily supporting parents. Julianne is trained in SPACE: Supportive Parenting for Anxious Childhood Emotions and she is Positive Discipline Trainer for the Positive Discipline Association.*

*Claire Cliche has been a pediatric nurse for 19 years. She started out at Children's National Medical Center where she was a nurse for 13 years, caring for patients and moving to managing different inpatient units, before changing her focus to school nursing and beginning her career at St. Patrick's. Claire has her BA in Economics Management from Ohio Wesleyan University, her ADN from Marymount University and her BSN from University of Maryland School of Nursing. She is passionate about her work with the wellness of students and how she guides them in her practice at St. Patrick's.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Child Development/1.5**

## Workshop 3

### **The View from My Desk**

This workshop will take a bird's eye view of your classroom community and explore how you connect to each student. This is an engaging, hands-on, interactive and participatory workshop and participants will leave having a better understanding of their classroom relationships. This workshop is appropriate for teachers. Core of Knowledge Categories: child development, professionalism, community.

*Debbie Weinberger has been practicing social work with young children and their families for over 25 years. In addition to independent schools, she has worked in private practice, therapeutic preschool programs, early intervention services, and inpatient behavioral health settings. She has presented at various early childhood conferences in the DC area and is licensed in Maryland and DC. In addition, she provides clinical supervision to early career social workers and has a special interest in building the home-school connection.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Professionalism/1.5**

## **Workshop 4**

### **“Narrativity and Healing:” Godly Play as Pastoral, Reflective Practice in Early Childhood Chapel**

In a post-covid reality, educational and therapeutic practices must encourage profound attentiveness to the needs of teachers and learners. In this respect, whole school communities are encouraged to reflect on their life stories as part of their learning experience. This workshop will explore the use of Godly Play in Early Childhood Chapel, in particular, how worship can become a space both for prayer and exploring broader concerns in the wider school community. Recent research has demonstrated that Godly Play can also be effective in the classroom as an academic religious studies tool, and in therapeutic and meditative practice with adults, too. In many cases, parents and teachers find themselves contemplating their own well-being by listening to stories and the reflections of their young students.

In this session, there will be a short Godly Play story, followed by a time of “wondering” about the story, and then a discussion forum. Participants will have the opportunity to consider how Godly Play might be integrated into Chapel programs, and how storytellers—chaplains, educators, and children alike—can utilize this method beyond the worship space. Participants will be invited to consider how pertinent themes and concerns in a school community might be addressed through the power of creative play.

*Edward Thornley is Associate Rector and Chaplain to St. Patrick’s Episcopal Church and Day School. Originally from the UK, Fr. Ed was ordained in the Church of England after studying theology at Exeter, Cambridge, and Yale. He served in parish ministries, and in school, university, and healthcare chaplaincies in the Dioceses of Norwich and London, as well as Fort Worth, TX, before joining St. Patrick’s in July 2020. Fr. Ed has a passion for serving at the intersection of church and education. He is currently a doctoral candidate and postgraduate researcher in Divinity at the University of Aberdeen, UK, where his academic work encompasses the theology of school chaplaincy and interreligious dialogue.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Community/1.5**

## **Workshop 5**

### **Using LGBTQIA+ and Gender Expansive Books in the Early Grades**

Using an anti-bias and antiracist (ABAR) lens, we will highlight and promote the use of LGBTQIA+ and gender-expansive books for teaching and learning with students in preschool. We will address best practices for using books with N-PK students and families, censorship, and ways to approach challenges. Participants will experience both large and small group discussions, as well as hands-on and self-discovery activities for reflection and growth during the workshop. Participants will have the opportunity to read a variety of picture books. This workshop is great for preschool and lower school teachers.

Mara Rosenberg is a Teacher Librarian who believes that books serve as a pathway for children to understand themselves and the world around them. She was an early elementary educator for 15 years. She has presented at local, regional, and national conferences. Mara holds a B.S. in Early Childhood Education from Colby Sawyer College, and M.Ed. in Literacy Education K-12 from Queens University, and an M.L.I.S. from University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

*Jamila Zahra Felton is an artist, educator, and school librarian with over twenty years of experience educating children, teens, and adults. She graduated from Spelman College and holds an Ed.M. from Harvard University and an M.L.I.S. from The Catholic University of America. Jamila currently serves as a judge for the 2024 Judging Committee for The Walter Dean Myers Awards for Outstanding Children's Literature.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Curriculum/1.5**

## **Workshop 6**

### **Documenting Digitally: Using Seesaw Learning Journal and Brightwheel to Document Student Growth and Development and Communicate with Families**

Experienced early childhood educators have always had a keen eye for observing both big milestones and key small moments in children's development and learning. When educators are able to combine their observational skills with digital tools like Seesaw Learning Journal and Brightwheel, new possibilities emerge. In this workshop, educators from the St. Patrick's Infant and Toddler Center will share how they use these digital tools to reflect, plan future learning opportunities, and communicate with families.

*Jonathan Fichter has been teaching for 19 years, having spent 12 years (and counting) teaching at St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School. He has presented at regional and national conferences on topics related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and technology. He enjoys eating veggie burgers with habanero and ghost-pepper hot sauce. Jonathan has a master's degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Professionalism/1.5**

## **Workshop 7**

### **Meeting the Needs of Boys in Early Childhood Education**

This session will review the current state of boys in education. We will explore why they are where they are and discuss ideas to support and prepare boys in the early childhood education setting and classrooms.

*Paul has been working in Early Childhood Education since 2002 when he began teaching 2nd grade as a Teaching Fellow in the District of Columbia Public School system. Paul has progressively taught younger since his start as a Teaching Fellow, including teaching 3- and 4-year-old children for eight years at the National Child Research Center. He is in his 8th year as the Head of Nursery School at St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School. Paul is passionate about early childhood education and believes in its potential for setting children up for success in and outside the classroom. Paul holds a B.S. in Nautical Science from Maine Maritime Academy, a J.D. from the University of New Hampshire School of Law, an M.S. in School*

*Leadership from the University of Pennsylvania, and an M.A.T. in Elementary Education from American University.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Child Development/1.5**

### **Workshop 8**

#### **Getting Young Children into the Garden**

We will take full advantage of being at St Patrick's and venture into the benefits of being outdoors and learning in the garden. Here, we will explore ways to build excitement around planting, growing, composting, healthy eating, and sustainability with our youngest students.

*Presenter: Sam Mason is in his seventh year at St. Patrick's, and is currently the Assistant Head of Lower School and Director of Sustainability. He worked for six years as a member of the science department and helped form a robust sustainability program. He is passionate about teaching students about climate change and its environmental impacts and thinks that starts with taking them outside and creating a love of our planet early on.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Curriculum/1.5**

### **Workshop 9**

#### **Phonics Activities for Beginners**

Are you looking for ways to reinforce early literacy skills in your kindergarten classroom? Join us to learn about activities and games to use in both large and small groups. There will be a variety of activities introduced for differentiated instruction. Participants will also have the opportunity to share their own resources.

*Lisa Sample is in 6th year of teaching Kindergarten at St. Patrick's and her 10th year of working in independent schools. She has a Bachelor degree in Psychology and Latin American & Iberian Studies from the University of Richmond. She has her Master's in Elementary Education from Lesley University. She loves collaborating with co-workers and brainstorming new ideas to make learning joyful and appropriately challenging for her students.*

*Anita Hockenberry has been working in Independent Schools for 12 years. She has taught Nursery through Kindergarten for 16 years. She is a passionate educator who is dedicated to supporting the diverse learning needs of all students. She has a B.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education and an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from George Mason University.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Curriculum/1.5**

## **Workshop 10**

### **Where to begin on your artist study, practice with an Alma Thomas Lesson**

How does one plan for an artist study? Just where do you begin? Here is an opportunity to learn through doing about ways to highlight the many qualities of an artist's style, life, and techniques. This workshop will provide time to engage in your own Alma Thomas Art Lesson.

*Presenter: Sevgi Wallack holds a Master's in Early Childhood Education from CUNY and has several years of experience teaching preschool. Her career took an artistic turn when she started taking art classes in California and DC. Last year, she embarked on a new adventure, teaching art to K-2 students at St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School. In her free time, Ms. Wallack enjoys drawing and painting, as well as exploring art museums, further enriching her teaching and personal artistic journey.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Curriculum/1.5**

## **Workshop 11**

### **The Early Childhood Atelier: Cultivating growth and relationships through materials**

How does expanding our concepts of an art studio and art materials foster learning and community? Following a brief overview of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education and the role of the Atelier, we will share snapshots and stories from the classroom that illustrate the power of the "100 languages" and the rich potential for learning that occurs in the interactions of children, materials, and community. In the second half of the workshop, we will lead participants in work with simple materials in ways they can apply to their own classrooms and curricula.

*Jessica Boritz is the Atelierista at Grace Episcopal Day School. Jessica works with teachers and students to bring the 100 languages alive in Grace's preschool – Grade 5 program. She has worked as an art educator for over 16 years and has presented on the importance of beauty in schools and education. Jessica holds an M.F.A. in Sculpture from Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and a M.S.Ed. from Johns Hopkins University.*

*Einat Moskof is a Prekindergarten teacher at Grace Episcopal Day School. Einat has taught for 18 years and has a background in art. She received her M.A. in Early Childhood Education from Towson University and her B.A. in Art and Education from Beit Berl College in Israel. Einat has worked closely for many years with Dr. Naama Zoran, a world-renowned expert on the Reggio approach.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Curriculum/1.5**

## **Workshop 12**

### **It takes Teamwork!**

True success in the classroom comes from success at home too. This workshop will explore the importance of partnering with parents/guardians on how to best support a student in order to reach their full potential. Gain insights on communication methods, topics to discuss and data collection. Invest in making the school-family connection work!

*Dani Boarman is the Assistant Head of School and Director of Admissions at St. John's Parish Day School. She graduated from Mt. St. Mary's University with a BS in Psychology. She went on to the University of Baltimore acquiring a MS in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. Dani worked in the corporate world in Organizational Development providing training, professional development and process improvements. Dani transitioned into the education world over 12 years ago. During her time at St. John's, Dani has held positions teaching 3-year-old children and as Early Childhood Coordinator. In addition to regular responsibilities as Assistant Head, Dani leads the organization's professional development program and participates in committee work, such as our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Committee.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Community/1.5**

## **Workshop 13**

### **Morning Meeting Toolbox Builder**

Do you know the importance of Morning Meetings? Love the way it builds your classroom community? Are you running out of ideas or are you stuck on how to make them fun and engaging? Join this fun interactive workshop with ideas for morning meetings such as greeting ideas, share topics, engaging activities, and message starters. This is a great opportunity to build your toolbox!

*Dani Boarman is the Assistant Head of School and Director of Admissions at St. John's Parish Day School. She graduated from Mt. St. Mary's University with a BS in Psychology. She went on to the University of Baltimore acquiring a MS in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. Dani worked in the corporate world in Organizational Development providing training, professional development and process improvements. Dani transitioned into the education world over 12 years ago. During her time at St. John's, Dani has held positions teaching 3-year-old children and as Early Childhood Coordinator. In addition to regular responsibilities as Assistant Head, Dani leads the organization's professional development program and participates in committee work, such as our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity Committee.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Curriculum/1.5**

## **Workshop 14**



## **Round Table Discussion: Effective Strategies for Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and ADHD**

Join expert Kindergarten Teachers to discuss strategies, resources, and best practices when working with students on the spectrum. The more tools that teachers have to support their efforts to build positive relationships with their students, the better we can support our classroom culture.

*Anita Hockenberry has been working in Independent Schools for 12 years. She has taught Nursery through Kindergarten for 16 years. She is a passionate educator who is dedicated to supporting the diverse learning needs of all students. She has a B.S.Ed. in Early Childhood Education and an M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from George Mason University.*

*Amy Thomas-Martinez has taught junior kindergarten, kindergarten and first grade in independent schools for 15 years. She has a love of early childhood education and is inspired by the joy and excitement that her students bring to the classroom. Amy earned an M.Ed. in Educational Psychology and Social Foundations of Education from the University of Virginia. In 2019, Amy completed the process to become a Responsive Classroom Educator and now enjoys coaching and leading others in implementing the Responsive Classroom approach.*

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Special Needs/1.5**

## **Closing Plenary**

### **Teaching A Kid Who Can: Science-Based Strategies for Helping Kids Become More Adaptable and Resilient**

If we have learned anything from living through a global pandemic, it's that today's kids need to be able to adjust and recalibrate and to manage everyday challenges with confidence and composure. But how do we ensure that the next generation can roll with the inevitable punches of daily life? Focusing on the opportunities inherent in young children, Heather will give the science and strategies to support the development of ten essentials that help humans of all ages thrive. We can take the lessons learned from Covid, including living with uncertainty, and use them to support preschoolers' growth into flexible, resilient kids who can navigate a complex world.

### **Heather Tedesco Bio**



*Heather Tedesco, PhD, is a licensed Applied Psychologist and parenting expert with a PhD in Social Psychology. She works exclusively with parents to help them raise kids who can thrive while making parenting less stressful, more effective, and more enjoyable. Her specialty is simplifying the science into strategies parents can use right away and giving parents clarity and confidence in what to do and how to do it. Heather is the go-to parenting resource for many leading medical and mental health practitioners and is a sought-after speaker for schools, community organizations, and businesses. Heather is the co-author along with Catherine*

McCarthy and Jennifer Weaver of the book ***Raising A Kid Who Can: Simple Strategies to Build a Lifetime of Adaptability and Emotional Strength*** that was released in September 2023 by Workman Publishing.  
<https://www.drtesesco.com/>

**DC Core Knowledge Area:**

**MD & VA Core Knowledge Area: Child Development/1**