

Play to Learn Summit - Quality ECE : Back to Basics

Saturday, April 11, 2026

Session Information

Session	Time	Session Title	Trainer(s)
Keynote	8:00-9:00	<i>Beyond the Read Aloud: Picture Books for Affirming Learning</i> Dr. Toni Sturdivant will share research and insights from her book "I Like Myself: Fostering Positive Racial Identity in Young Black Children". The session will guide early educators on selecting high-quality, affirming picture books to plan joyful, play-based learning experiences.	Toni Sturdivant
1-A	9:15-10:15	<i>From Chaos to Clarity: Strengthening Communication and Conflict Resolution in Early Childhood Teams (with MO-SECA Support)</i> Strong communication is the heartbeat of a healthy early childhood program-and yet, navigating conflict, miscommunication, and tough conversations is one of the biggest challenges administrators face. This session equips leaders with practical, compassionate, and developmentally informed strategies to strengthen communication and resolve conflict between adults.	Melissa Roach Katie Diemler
1-B	9:15-10:15	<i>Thinking Routines for Little Thinkers</i> Harvard Project Zero Thinking Routines help make young children's thinking visible. Participants will explore developmentally appropriate routines and learn how to embed them into daily play, conversations, and learning experiences. Through hands-on experiences and discussions, participants will leave with practical strategies and language supports they can use immediately to strengthen children's observation skills, curiosity, reasoning, and reflection.	Sandy Seipel

2-A	10:30-11:30	<p><i>Effective Strategies for Facilitating Staff PD Goal-Setting with MOPD</i></p> <p>This session provides leaders, supervisors, and coaches with practical strategies for facilitating meaningful Professional Development (PD) goal-setting conversations with staff using the MOPD system. Participants will learn how to guide educators in identifying strengths, recognizing growth areas, and setting actionable goals aligned with Missouri's Early Learning Standards (MELS). The session also highlights best practices for using MOPD PD features like the Individualized Needs Assessment and the Professional Development Plan to assess content knowledge of MELS, set actionable goals, document progress, and support ongoing professional growth. Through discussion, examples, and hands-on exploration, attendees will leave ready to confidently lead PD goal setting with their teams.</p>	<p>Joanna Pohl Alicia Joyce</p>
2-B	10:30-11:30	<p><i>Risky Play</i></p> <p>This training introduces early childhood professionals to the concept of healthy, developmentally appropriate risky play and why it matters for children's growth. Participants explore the seven categories of risky play, the developmental benefits tied to each, and how to recognize the difference between acceptable risk and true hazards. The session focuses on practical supervision strategies, environmental readiness, communication with families, and confident facilitation that supports safety and autonomy.</p>	<p>Nicci Rexroat Samantha Lacefield</p>
3-A	12:15-1:15	<p><i>From Playdough to Plato: Coaching and Training with the Science of Learning in Early Childhood</i></p> <p>How do adults learn best-and how can early childhood coaches and trainers use this knowledge to make professional learning truly stick? This interactive session bridges the Science of Learning with the realities of coaching and training educators who work with our youngest learners, from birth through pre-K. Participants will explore how principles like retrieval practice, cognitive load theory, and transfer of learning can strengthen professional development design and coaching conversations.</p>	<p>Carla N Williams</p>

3-B	12:15-1:15	<p><i>The Power of Play in Early Learning: Helping Families Make Sense of Play-based Curriculum</i></p> <p>This session helps facilitate an understanding of how play drives learning and development in early childhood across diverse educational settings like family child care and public pre-k. Through examples, hands-on activities, and simple explanations, early learning participants will explore the key components of play-based curriculum and discover how skills in language, math, problem-solving, and social-emotional development emerge through everyday play experiences.</p>	Joanna Pohl Alicia Joyce
4-A	1:30-2:30	<p><i>How Administrators Build Systems That Protect and Promote Play-Based Learning</i></p> <p>Administrators play a critical role in ensuring that play remains at the heart of quality early childhood education-even when real-world challenges make it difficult. This session explores how leaders can create systems, realistic expectations, and professional development structures that protect developmentally appropriate practice. Through the lens of Continuous Quality Improvement with MO-SECA, and the Whole Leadership Framework, we'll examine strategies for aligning with a national tool for best practice.</p>	Katie Diemler Melissa Roach
4-B	1:30-2:30	<p><i>Managing Challenging Behavior: Where to Begin?</i></p> <p>Managing children's challenging behavior is exhausting for classroom teachers. This session will provide tools for examining the behavior, as well as suggestions for possible solutions that might make teaching a bit more rewarding and less stressful.</p>	Lisa Mack Thompson
5-A	2:45-3:45	<p><i>MO-SECA in Action: Leading Continuous Quality Improvement for Your Program</i></p> <p>Quality improvement doesn't happen in one big leap - it happens through intentional, ongoing, and well-supported steps. MO-SECA provides Missouri early childhood leaders with a clear framework to strengthen program quality, guide staff growth, and ensure children experience consistently high- quality learning every day. Administrators struggle with how to create manageable ways to increase quality amid real-world challenges like staffing shortages, turnover, limited planning time, and uneven implementation across classrooms.</p>	Katie Diemler Melissa Roach
5-B	2:45-3:45	<p><i>Movement Matters: Building Balance, Crossing Midline, and Coordination in 3- 5 Year Olds</i></p> <p>This session introduces the developmental importance of balance, crossing the midline, and coordination in early childhood. Participants engage in movement-based modeling, team discussions, and classroom planning to support children's gross motor development through intentional play.</p>	Sandy Seipel