

miaeyc

Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children

An Affiliate of **naeyc** **100** years of EXCELLENCE

Annual Early Childhood Conference



Sonia Manzano
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

March 5-7, 2026

Amway Grand Plaza Hotel & DeVos Place

Grand Rapids, Michigan

This year's theme, Your Journey, Your Growth, Our Profession, invites you to thoughtfully connect both the personal growth of educators and the ongoing advancement of the early childhood education field. Using the NAEYC Professional Standards and Competencies can help frame our field in ways that reflect our shared values and support the journey of professionalization. Together, we can highlight how individual learning contributes to a stronger, more connected profession.



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A message from Governing Board President Cheryl Priest

Welcome to the 2026 Michigan AEYC Annual Early Childhood Conference! Once again, this premier event brings together thousands of early childhood professionals, and I'm thrilled you're here to share this time with us. With a rich tapestry of informative sessions, energizing events, and meaningful networking opportunities ahead, we extend a warm welcome to all—both familiar faces and first-time attendees.

Together, we'll explore new ideas, deepen our practice, and strengthen the connections that move our field forward. Here's to a memorable conference filled with inspiration, collaboration, and the collective joy of learning and growing together.

Conference App

Download the Michigan AEYC (miaeyc) app in the Apple Store or Google Play. Manage session selections, receive training credit, download resources, engage with attendees and exhibitors, interactive maps, and more.

For Android and Apple users, search for MIAEYC in the App Store/ Google Play. Use the email your conference registration is tied to to login. Unique registration email is required. The App Help Desk is located near badge pick-up.



You can also access the app from your web browser. Just visit the following URL to get the app on your smartphone, tablet, or PC:
<http://app.resultsathand.com/miaeyc>



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2026 Annual Early Childhood Conference Training Credit

To receive training credit for in-person sessions attended, you must be pre-registered for each individual session. To pre-register for your desired sessions in the app, click on the Agenda, click on the session you want to attend, and click 'Reserve Seat.' If the session is full, you will not be permitted to reserve a seat, receive training credit, or enter the room.

You may switch your reserved sessions using the app as needed. Keep in mind, you can only receive training credit for sessions you have reserved in the app. At the conclusion of each session, the presenter will provide you with a Check Out code. Enter the code in the session on the app to receive training credit.

To receive MiRegistry training credit, you must have included your MiRegistry ID Number during registration. To receive SCHECHs for those eligible, you must have included your PIC Number during registration.

Training sessions completed may take up to 30 days to appear in your MiRegistry Learning Record. SCHECHs may take up to 30 days to appear on your MOECS account regardless of session format.

A Michigan AEYC representative will be available in the Amway Center Concourse for conference app and training credit assistance.





2026 Annual Early Childhood Conference

Schedule-At-A-Glance

Wednesday

- 9:00am - 4:00pm
IHE Summit- invite only
- 5:00pm - 6:00pm
ACCESS Meet-up - invite only
- 5:00pm - 8:00pm
Registration
- 5:00pm - 8:00pm
Welcome Reception

Thursday

- 7:00am - 4:00pm
Registration
- 8:45am - 10:00am
Sessions
- 10:00am - 10:30am
Break & Exhibits
- 10:30am - 12:00pm 
Welcome General Session
- 12:00pm - 1:30pm
Exhibits & Lunch Break
- 1:30pm - 2:45pm
Sessions
- 3:15pm - 4:30pm
Sessions
- 6:00pm - 6:45pm
Annual Membership Meeting
- 7:00pm - 9:00pm 
Gala

Friday

- 7:00am - 2:00pm
Registration
- 7:45am - 9:00am
Sessions
- 9:30am - 10:45am
Sessions
- 11:00am - 12:15pm
Keynote
- 12:15pm - 1:15pm
Keynote Book Signing
- 12:15pm - 1:15pm
Poster Session
- 12:15pm - 1:30pm
Lunch & Exhibits
- 1:30pm - 2:45pm
Sessions
- 3:15pm - 4:30pm
Sessions
- Night on the Town

Saturday

- 7:00am - 10:30am
Registration
 - 8:00am - 11:00am
Focus Sessions
 - 8:00am - 12:00pm 
Zumbini Training
 - 8:00am - 3:30pm 
Literacy Day of Learning
 - 12:30pm - 3:30pm
Focus Sessions
-
-  Requires pre-registration or additional add-on fee during conference registration. Zumbini Training is a PRE-REGISTERED EVENT on Saturday and is FREE for members and \$35 for non-members.

 Betty Garlick Lifetime Achievement and Student Leadership Awards will be presented on Thursday, March 5, 2026, during the Welcome General Session.



2026 Annual Early Childhood Conference



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Michigan Association for the
Education of Young Children

Mission Statement

The mission of the Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children is to promote high-quality early learning for all children, birth through age 8, by connecting practice, policy, and research. We advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on behalf of young children.

Governing Board

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- Cheryl Priest

President-Elect

- Jennifer Wixson

Vice President

- Lyndsay Carey

Treasurer

- Paul Notaro

Secretary

- Melissa Thiebaut Marinelli

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- Courtney Kalkman

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- Kirsten Charnesky

Awards Committee - Chair

- Jennifer Griffith

Nominating Committee - Chair

- Heather Lucas

Members-at-Large

- Christian Boyer
- Alison Burns
- Trisha Dart
- Karen Ong
- LaTonya Redfearn
- Rosemarie Rideout
- Kari Shepherd
- Erin Wilks

Michigan AEYC provides a forum where individuals can gather and discuss issues vital to those who work on behalf of young children and their families. Although Michigan AEYC encourages the exchange of diverse opinions, the ideas presented do not necessarily reflect any of Michigan AEYC's official positions. Michigan AEYC assumes no responsibility for any statement of fact or opinion presented at this conference, nor does acceptance of advertising or exhibits imply endorsement of any products or services by Michigan AEYC.

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Thank You to Our Partners and Sponsors!

Thank you for being a champion for young learners. Your partnership with Michigan AEYC strengthens our advocacy efforts for early childhood professionals and advances our shared commitment to ensuring every child has access to high-quality early childhood education.

Because of your support, we are able to provide meaningful professional development, amplify educator voices, and build stronger early learning communities across Michigan. We are truly grateful for your investment in children, families, and the future of our profession.

Visionary Year-Round Partner



Mission Driver Year-Round Partners



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Conference Sponsor



Conference Exhibitors

- ALS Retail LLC
- BenJammin Educational Music
- Brookes Publishing
- Central Michigan University
- Clinton County RESA, Office of Innovative Projects, Early On
- Curious Minds Club
- Delta Dental
- Demco
- Dew-El Coporation
- Discovery Toys Learning Products
- Discount School Supply
- Earthbound Inc.
- Early Childhood Investment Corporation
- Early Childhood Investment Corporation - GSQ
- ECE Subhub
- First Children's Finance
- First Response Health & Safety Training
- Great Lakes Recreation Company
- Greatness Groows
- Grow By 1
- HighScope Educational Research Foundation
- iTeach Ventures LLC
- Kaplan Early Learning Company
- Karmalit Candles
- Lakeshore Learning
- Lavender Links
- Maddie & Rose Co-Permanent Jewelry
- MAX Creative Media
- McCormick Institute for Early Childhood at National Louis University
- MDHHS Infant Safe Sleep Program
- MDHHS Oral Health Program
- MellyPop! Productions Puppet Theatre
- Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA)
- Michigan Department of Education Resource for Deaf/Hard of Hearing LEAD-K
- Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential
- Michigan Division for Early Childhood (MiDEC)
- Michigan Educator Workforce Initiative
- Michigan Model for Health
- Michigan WIC
- MiRegistry
- MiRegistry - Career Exploration Tool
- Midstates Recreation
- MSU Federal Credit Union
- Mosby's Popcorn
- National Heritage Academies
- Naturehood
- Northern Michigan University
- Nurture Benefits
- Oakland University
- Reflection Sciences
- REMC Association of Michigan
- Riverside Insights
- Special Education Mediation Services
- Special Olympics of Michigan
- Starr Commonwealth
- Storehouse of Community Resources
- Teachstone
- VanPeete
- Virco Inc
- Walden University
- Western Michigan University
- Whimsicality
- Zumbini

Registration & Badge Pick-Up

Online conference registration closed on February 18th. Registration after that date must be done onsite during the registration times listed in the schedule at-a-glance. Onsite registration is located in Center Concourse, Concourse Level, Amway.

Badge pick-up for pre-registered attendees is located in Center Concourse, Concourse Level, Amway. You must wear your name badge for admission to all sessions, exhibits, and conference functions.

Things to Do The Grand Rapids Downtown Area Shuttle (DASH) offers downtown visitors a great way to get around. DASH buses pass every stop every 15 minutes.

Downtown Conference Attendee Exclusives Experience Grand Rapids has arranged discounts at a number of local restaurants, attractions, and other businesses to help you truly experience the city while you are here. Redeem your discounts by presenting the digital coupon on your phone. Visit www.experiencegr.com/exclusives for a full listing of discounts or use the QR code.



Parking



- Amway Hotel - Self-Parking \$41.00 per day, and Valet Parking \$45.00 per day. Rates subject to change. Conference overnight guests receive a discount on self-parking.
- Marriott Courtyard - \$29 self-parking. Rates subject to change. Conference overnight guests receive a discount on self-parking.
- View a map with additional downtown parking options using the QR code above.

Dining Options



Food service is not included in registration. A select number of sessions include breakfast or lunch service and require pre-registration and an additional fee paid during conference registration to attend.

Complimentary coffee/hot beverage service will be available each morning in Center Concourse/Amway.

Meal service is not included unless an add-on breakfast, lunch, or special evening session was purchased during registration. Concessions for meal purchase are available during the lunch period in the Exhibit Hall. Additionally, the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel offers several dining options, and there are numerous options within walking distance. Access a map of dining options in and around the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel below.



Become a member of YOUR professional organization!

Join a network of over 3,400 statewide and 60,000 national and international peers. NAEYC and Michigan AEYC welcome YOUR voice in our mission to improve the quality and accessibility of early childhood education programs and services to enhance the development of children and families.



SUMMIT INVITE ONLY

Wednesday, March 4, 2026
9:00 am - 4:00 pm

ACCESS Meet-Up

Wednesday, March 4, 2026
5:00 pm - 6:00 pm ACCESS Meet-Up (Invite Only)



2026 Annual Early Childhood Conference

Wednesday, March 4, 2026
5:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Registration & Welcome Reception

SAVE-THE-DATE



Week of the Young Child[®]

2026 miaeyc Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children April 11-17

Join us at the Week of the Young Child™ (WOYC) table in the Amway Concourse to gear up for this year's festivities! Whether you are looking for fresh ways to engage families or new classroom traditions, we have the resources you need to make the week unforgettable. While you're there, help us "Grow Our Idea Garden."

This interactive display is fueled by your creativity—stop by to "plant a flower" by sharing your favorite activity ideas for Music Monday, Tasty Tuesday, Work Together Wednesday, Artsy Thursday, or Family Friday. Table hours: Wednesday 5 pm -8 pm, Thursday 9:30 am - 3:30 pm, Friday 9:00 am - 3:30pm, Saturday 11 am - 1 pm.



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Michigan Association for the
Education of Young Children

Annual Early Childhood Conference Sessions

Thursday, March 5, 2026
8:45 am - 10 am

Family Engagement

- Resources and Strategies for Early Childhood Educators Serving Immigrant Families Amidst Evolving Political Contexts
- STEM at Home and Beyond: Engaging Families and Educators Together

Infant And Toddler Care

- Promoting Inclusive Care Practices for Infants and Toddlers
- Sensory Play! Why It Matters (Also Preschool, School-Aged Children)
- The Power of Everyday Moments: Enhancing Quality Interactions with Toddlers

Leadership

- Building And Keeping a Dream Team: Recruitment, Onboarding, and Retention Strategies for Early Childhood Leaders
- Coaching For Change: Guiding Educators Through the CLASS 2nd Edition Transition

Preschool

- Building Language-Rich Classrooms in Preschool
- Our Youngest Citizens: Supporting Early Active Community Involvement in Preschoolers
- Unintended Consequences: Reflecting on Commonly Accepted Practices and Considering the Negative Implications (Also School-Age)

Professionalism

- Brains Like Ours: Thriving As a Neurodivergent Teacher in Early Childhood
- From Overwhelm to Ease: Stress Management for the Child Care Provider
- Heart Work and the Tired Heart: Passion, Fatigue, And Renewal In ECE

School-Aged Children

- If It Walks Like a Duck and Says "I'm Bored," It's A School-Ager. How To Keep School-Agers Interested

Social Emotional

- Breaking Up with Praise: Using Encouragement to Support Children's Developing Sense of Self
- "Yes You Can! With Support" - Encouraging Autonomy Without Losing Structure

**Thursday, March 5 -
Friday, March 6, 2026**

Don't forget to visit the NEST!

**The Michigan AEYC NEST a
space to pause, connect,
and be renewed.**



The Michigan AEYC Nest is your cozy corner to pause, connect, and recharge. Starting each day at noon, we've got gentle, feel-good activities waiting for you. Come as you are, stay as long as you like, and leave feeling a little lighter. Join us at The Nest to Nurture, Educate, Support, and Thrive.

The NEST is a welcoming space in the Exhibit Hall C.

- Nurture: Relax and recharge with massage chairs (Thursday 10 am–5 pm; Friday 10 am–2 pm, sign-up required), calming coloring activities, and a wooden mandala magnet craft (Thursday starting at 12 pm; first 300 members).
- Educate: Friday, March 6, 2026, engage in reflective journal writing for well-being (journals for the first 300 members), and create a personal affirmation bird anytime.
- Support: Build relationships through affirmations and conversation, meet members of the Michigan AEYC Governing Board on Friday during lunch.
- Thrive: Honoring your impact and looking forward. Celebrate the meaningful work you do every day and take steps toward the future. Share Your Story: Reflect, write, and honor your journey as an early childhood professional. Affirmation Cards: Take a reminder of your impact with you. Advocacy Opportunities: Learn how you can raise your voice for children, families, and the profession



**Pause, Play, Restore.
Sensory Break Space.**

The Sensory Break Space, hosted by SenseSational Learning Group and thoughtfully curated by Dr. Sheila Hartley, EdD, BCBA, invites you to rediscover the joy and necessity of play. Overlooking the Grand River, this neurodiversity-affirming oasis offers a gentle reminder: adults have sensory needs too. Drop in anytime throughout the conference (**open until 4:45 PM Thursday and Friday - Secchia Hallway**) to ground yourself through intentional, sensory-rich experiences. Whether you're a sensory seeker or avoider, you'll find something that speaks to you, kinetic sand, building blocks, adult coloring books, fidget toys, meditation spaces, balance boards, yoga mats, and more.

Settle into open areas with pillows and rugs, or retreat to the cozy tent for those who find comfort in enclosed spaces. Early childhood education is incredibly rewarding, yet undeniably stressful. We pour so much into our young learners, but we must also fill our own cups. This space honors the small moments of joy we can find each day and demonstrates practical, accessible tools you can incorporate in your classroom or home. Come as you are. Play, rest, regulate, and restore. You deserve it.

Panelists

Innovating Pathways in Early Childhood Education: Practices that Move the Field Forward



Dr. Calvin Moore, Jr



Moderated by Dr. Calvin Moore, Jr., this high-level panel brings together national and state leaders to explore the evolving landscape of the early childhood workforce. Building on the insights from the national dialogue, our panelists will discuss innovative educator pathways, the integration of professional standards, and the strategic partnerships successfully shaping a sustainable future for the field.

Thursday, March 5th

- Keynote 10:30 am - 12:00 pm
- Welcome & Awards 10 am -10:30 am
- Location: DeVos Place, Steelcase Ballrooms A/B

Dr. Calvin E. Moore, Jr., Chief Executive Officer, Council for Professional Recognition. Dr. Calvin E. Moore, Jr. is a visionary leader and the Chief Executive Officer of the Council for Professional Recognition, the organization that administers the Child Development Associate® (CDA) credential—the most widely recognized credential in early childhood education. With a career that began as a Head Start student and progressed to his role as the first CEO of the Council to hold a CDA, Dr. Moore brings an unparalleled "full-circle" perspective to the field. He is a nationally recognized expert on workforce professionalization, equity, and the creation of seamless career pathways. An accomplished author and advocate, Dr. Moore's leadership focuses on elevating the early childhood profession by ensuring that professional standards lead to both educator mastery and sustainable career advancement.

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Alicia Guevara

Alicia Guevara, Chief Executive Officer, Early Childhood Investment Corporation (EIC)

Alicia Guevara leads EIC's mission to build a comprehensive, equitable early childhood system in Michigan. She is at the forefront of innovation in early childhood apprenticeships, developing frameworks that utilize the CDA credential as a central milestone in a supported career journey. Her work centers on systemic solutions to workforce challenges, ensuring that state investments—including the Great Start to Quality system—create clear, accessible rungs for educators to advance their professional mastery and compensation.



Alissa Mwenelupembe

Alissa Mwenelupembe, Managing Director, Early Learning Systems, NAEYC

Alissa Mwenelupembe leads NAEYC's strategic efforts to build high-quality early learning systems, focusing on the intersection of professional standards, accreditation, and workforce support. With extensive experience in both classroom leadership and national policy, she is a leading voice in the "Power to the Profession" movement and the implementation of the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators.



Erica Willard

Erica Willard, Executive Director, Michigan AEYC

Erica Willard is a veteran advocate for Michigan's early childhood workforce and a state-level expert on educator career pathways. As Executive Director of Michigan AEYC, she oversees the TEACH Early Childhood® Michigan scholarship program, which currently supports over 1,550 active scholars across the state. Erica is a champion for the CDA credential as a vital foundational building block for educators, and she is currently leading the development of the new statewide Mentor Teacher Credential to formalize leadership roles within the profession.

Thursday, March 5, 2026
1:30 pm - 2:45 pm

Family Engagement

- Strengthening Learning at Home: Helping Families Turn Everyday Moments into Learning

Infant And Toddler Care

- Play With Purpose: Where Intentional Teaching Ignites Powerful Learning (Also Preschool)
- Together from the Start: Partnering to Support Meaningful Inclusion

Leadership

- “Don’t Slow Your Role” – How Education Coaches Can Support Early Childhood Teachers in Their Teaching Journey
- The Strength and Protection in Quality Improvement

Preschool

- Bridging The Gap In PK-3 Curriculum and Instruction (Also School-Aged Children)
- Sets And Sorting: Developing Number Sense with Preschool Children
- Visible Learning in Early Childhood

Professionalism

- Doctorate In Early Childhood Education? You Can Do It, too!
- Fireside Chat with MiLEAP Directors
- Recharge And Refresh: Nurturing Yourself While Nurturing Others
- Supporting Lesson Planning in the ECC Classroom
- The Tiny Human Toolkit: Understanding and Responding to Challenging Behaviors in the Early Childhood Classroom

Social Emotional

- 101 Ways to Calm Kids Down
- The Language of Love and Belonging: Recognizing Children’s Individual Needs for Connection

Thursday, March 5, 2026
3:15 pm-4:30 pm

Family Engagement

- Building Positive Relationships with Parents

Infant And Toddler Care

- Little Hands, Big Steps: Building Self-Help Skills Through Daily Routines
- Early Intervention in Action: How Early On, Build Up, And Help Me Grow Transform Children’s Lives (Also Preschool)
- Nature-Based Learning (Also Preschool)

Thursday, March 5, 2026
3:15 pm - 4:30 pm (continued)

Leadership

- Making CACFP Work: Provider Voices Leading Policy Solutions
- Policies and Practices for Home Based Child Care Providers
- The Resistance-Proof Coach: How to Guide, Counsel, and Correct Without the Stress

Preschool

- Connecting The E and M In STEM: Supporting Early Mathematics Through Engineering Design
- Literacy And Beyond the Books
- Strong Beginnings: New Developments and Program Variations in State Funded Preschool for Three-Year-Old Children

Professionalism

- An Overview of NAEYC’s Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation System
- Professionalism In Early Childhood Education: Bringing Standard 6 To Life
- Using Open Communication and Problem-Solving Strategies to Support Teacher Collaboration

School-Aged Children

- STEAM-Based Activities for Young Ecologists

Solution Rooms



Thursday, March 5, 2026
3:15 pm - 4:30 pm

Join colleagues for conversation and problem solving. Solution Rooms provide a space for you to learn from one another in an open format.

- Higher Education
- Licensing
- Administrators
- Infant Toddler Care
- Preschool
- Workforce Support/Coaching
- GSRP
- GSRP Administrators
- Home Based Care

Annual Membership Meeting

Thursday, March 5, 2026
6:00 pm – 6:45 pm in Ford



Gala



A Night Under the Canopy
Thursday, March 5, 2026
7:00 pm - 9:00pm

Requires pre-registration or additional add-on fee during conference registration.



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Annual Early Childhood Conference Sessions

Friday, March 6, 2026
7:45 am - 9:00 am

Family Engagement

- Part 1: Initial Conversations with Parents about Autism
- Setting the Tone: Practical Strategies for Trauma Informed Classrooms

Infant And Toddler Care

- Nurturing Development: The Power of Authentic Assessment in Early Childhood (Also Preschool)
- Tiny Hands, Big Clicks: Introducing Technology Thinking in Infant-Toddler Classrooms

Leadership

- Explore the Leader in You: The Head-Heart-Hands Approach

Preschool

- Nurturing Curiosity: Building Inquiry-Based Learning in Early Childhood Classrooms
- Sensational Science - Igniting Curiosity Through Hands-On Discovery
- Unwrapping Read Alouds

Professionalism

- Cultivating Collaborative Classrooms: Building the Dream Team
- How to Do Self-Care in a Selfless Profession: Practical Ways to Minimize the Impact of Burnout
- MiRegistry: What's in the Mix For 2026?
- Rooted in Support: Growing Your Career with Michigan AEYC

Social Emotional

- Building Mentally Healthy Classrooms: Emotionally Responsive Practice, Reflection, and Collaboration
- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation for Early Care and Education
- Trauma Informed Practice for Young Learners: Teaching Strongly Yet Gently

Friday, March 6, 2026
9:30 am - 10:45 am

Family Engagement

- Part 2: How To Support Families After an Autism Diagnosis
- The Father Factor: Reimagining the Role of Fathers in Family Engagement

Infant And Toddler Care

- Ride and Read: Free Resources to Strengthen Language and Literacy in Families, Schools, and Communities - An Update (Also Preschool)
- Supporting Inclusion: Identification, Referral, and Strategies in the Classroom (Also Preschool)

Leadership

- Leading with Heart: Transformational Leadership in Early Education
- Licensing Violations: How to Fix Them and What Are Your Next Steps
- Quality Staffing for Your Child Care Business

Preschool

- For the Love of Science
- Large Motor Movements for Small Spaces
- Young Children's Connectedness to Nature: Findings of a Systematic Review (Also Infant/Toddler, School-Age)

Professionalism

- Exploring Careers in Early Childhood Education
- Adult Resilience and Resilient Leadership: Learn Your Strengths and Ways to Grow (Also Leadership)

School-Age

- Would You Enroll Your Own Child? Reflecting on Quality in School-Age Programs

Social Emotional

- Early Development and Attachment
- Gates and Guardrails: Empowering Children and Getting Out of the Way

2026 Annual Early Childhood Poster Sessions

Friday, March 6, 2026
12:15 pm - 1:15 pm



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- The Impact of Play on Kindergarten Children's Social Emotional and Strengthening Early Intervention Personnel Preparation: Tools and Resources from the Early On Center for Higher Education
- Self-Reflection and Validation of Professional Development Quality Indicators in Michigan's QRIS, Great Start to Quality
- Smiles That Last: Building Community Partnerships in Preschool
- Enhancing Early Literacy Development Through Dialogic Reading in the Preschool Classroom: A Systematic Literature Review.
- Teacher's Emotion Talk to Promote Toddler's Emotion Understanding
- Early Childhood Workforce Comparison Project: The Case of University-Affiliated Centers in Southeast Michigan
- The Importance of Reading to Children From Birth
- Resilience to Reduce Turnover.
- Reports From a Community-Based Service-Learning Project in Higher Education
- Exploring Saudi Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Storytime on Children's Emotion Regulation
- Teachers Embracing AI to Facilitate Literacy Development in Early Childhood.
- Bridging Language and Numeracy: A Systematic Review on the Integrated Use of Technology and Manipulatives in Early Math Instruction for English Language Learners in Kindergarten and First Grade
- Integrating early literacy into children's everyday experiences
- Lessons Learned: Early Childhood Speech and Language Pathologists Share Their Insights
- Using the Community to your Advantage-A Summer Camp Experience
- The Joy of Noticing: Creating Child-Inspired Learning Moments in a Preschool Laboratory School
- Too Strong to Be Seen: Anxiety in Young Black Girls in Early Childhood and the Role of Culturally Responsive Screening
- Collaborating with Families
- Building Belonging in Higher Education: How Faculty Foster Trust, Connection, and Community in a College of Education and Human Services
- Play is Brain Work.
- OUIECE: OU-Pontiac Initiative Early Childhood Education
- Project Work 101: Starting your journey towards empowering and enriching educational experiences
- Safety as the Foundation: How Secure Relationships Shape Early Learning
- Childhood Adversity, Adult Attachment, and Career Choices among Pre-service Teachers: Evidence from the CUPID Multi-University Dataset
- Expanding the Whole Teacher Framework: A scoping review on the role of teacher characteristics in the efficacy of teacher training



Keynote Speaker

Friday, March 6, 2026

Keynote
11:00 am - 12:15 pm
Steelcase Ballroom A/B

Keynote Book Signing
12:15 pm - 1:15 pm
Exhibit Hall C

When you think of Sonia Manzano, you immediately think of children and television. Her most recent accomplishment was creating a children's program, *Alma's Way*, for PBS KIDS. It has won two Imagen Awards for Best Youth Programming, a 2022 Emmy nomination for Outstanding Writing for a Preschool Animated Program and a 2023 NAACP nomination for an Image Award.

But what Ms. Manzano is best known for is performing the role of "Maria" on Sesame Street for 44 seasons, where her work affected the lives of millions of parents and children and garnered her two Emmy Award nominations in addition to the National Academy of Arts and Science's Lifetime Achievement Daytime Emmy in 2016. As a writer for the show, she took home 15 Emmys. Also - Manzano recently received the 2022 Beacon Award from PBS.

She is also the author of four picture books and three Young Adult novels. Her most recent Scholastic novel, *Coming Up Cuban*, set in 1959, follows the lives of four children who represent different intersections of race and class during the Cuban Revolution.



Available on Friday, March 6, 2026, during the Keynote. Get your *Alma's Great Idea* book signed by the author, Sonia Manzano at the Keynote Book Signing in Exhibit Hall C.



2026 Annual Early Childhood Conference Sessions

Friday, March 6, 2026
1:30 pm - 2:45 pm

Family Engagement

- Engaging Children and Families Through Multilingual Language Opportunities (Even if You Only Speak English)
- Rooted in Respect: Honoring, Valuing, and Building Equitable Relationships for Success

Infant And Toddler Care

- Anti-Bias Education for Infants and Toddlers
- Supporting Toddler Executive Function with Planning and Recall

Leadership

- Leadership and Men in Early Childhood

Preschool

- Am I Being Ableist? Supporting Neurodivergence in the Early Childhood Classroom
- Beyond ABCs and 123s: The Real Kindergarten Readiness Skills
- Scaffolding Children’s Learning During Small Group Times

Professionalism

- Everyday Advocacy: How Early Educators Can Shape Michigan’s Early Childhood Policies
- Making Connection: How to Be a Leader in the Classroom and Beyond
- Telling Our Story: Building Public Understanding and Support for Early Childhood Education
- Voices of Tomorrow’s Early Childhood Professionals: What Future Educators Want You to Know

Social Emotional

- From Feelings to Foundations: Teaching Emotional Intelligence with Inside Out
- Seeing Families Clearly: Insights from Year One of the Investment in Families Initiative (Also Family Engagement)
- The Effects of Trauma in ECD

Friday, March 6, 2026
3:15 pm - 4:30 pm

Family Engagement

- Busting Barriers to Family Partnerships
- Promoting Early Literacy in Latino Families: Building Bridges Through Culture, Language, and Relationships

Infant And Toddler Care

- Eyes in the Back of My Head: Active Supervision in the Early Childhood Classroom
- Responsive Limit Setting in the Infant and Toddler Classroom

Leadership

- On Board Power
- Who Coaches the Coach?

Preschool

- Creating Inclusive Learning Spaces: Practical Strategies for Neurodivergent-Friendly Classrooms
- Putting the FUN in Fine Motor!
- The Importance of Adventure

Professionalism

- Celebrating Teacher Assistants
- Ethics in Practice: Understanding the Newly Updated NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct
- Tech-Empowered Professionalism: Elevating ECE Practice with REMC Learning

School-Age

- Quality Interactions in Action: How to Promote Meaningful Engagements with School-Aged Children

Social Emotional

- Beyond the Behavior: Guiding Children Through Connection, Not Control
- From Dysregulation to Resilience: Leading Teams to Model and Build Self-Regulation

Friday, March 6, 2026

Hosted by the Grand Rapids Women’s Expo **BLINGO AFTER DARK**



- Access to the BLINGO After Dark event on Friday at 6:30 PM, hosted by a local celebrity
- BLINGO game card for thousands of dollars in prizes
- Exclusive VIP raffle entry (only available to BLINGO After Dark purchasers – these are the largest prizes of the weekend, totaling over \$8,000 in giveaways)
- Reusable tote bag
- A \$10 donation to our official charity partner, Food Hugs
- A Bounce Back Ticket – attendees can return to the Expo on Saturday or Sunday at no additional cost

Code:
MIAEYC -
30% OFF
Entire Order

Michigan AEYC Annual Early Childhood Conference attendees receive 30% off Blingo After Dark!

2026 Annual Early Childhood Conference Focus Sessions



miaeyc

Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children

Saturday, March 7, 2026
8:00 am - 11:00 am

Infant Toddler

- Using ACE Assessments with Infants and Toddlers

Preschool

- Empowering Growth: Inquiry-Based Coaching for Early Childhood and Pre-K Educators
- Is Nature Connectedness Right for Me?
- Who Says I'm Not the Boss? The Basics of Shared Control

Professionalism

- Empowering Educators Through Apprenticeship and Mentorship
- Ethics in Action: Implementing the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct in Your Program

Social Emotional

- Early Childhood + Culture: Effects on Outcomes
- The Role of Attachment and Regulation in Trauma-Informed Classroom Management
- Trauma-Informed Classroom Management: A Practical Application of Compassion with Boundaries

zumbini 

Requires pre-registration or additional add-on fee during conference registration.

Saturday, March 7, 2026
8:00 am - 12:00 pm

Created by Zumba and BabyFirst, Zumbini is a fun, unique, and effective ECE program designed to promote cognitive, social, emotional, and motor skill development for children ages 0 - 5 through music and movement. Appropriate with and without caregivers present for each child, the Zumbini program is made up of singing, dancing, and instrument play for non-stop learning, bonding, and fun. Michigan AEYC has partnered with Zumbini to bring this live instructor training event so that you can bring this program to your community or early learning program.

Saturday, March 7, 2026
12:30 pm - 3:30 pm

Infant Toddler

- Together We Grow: Supporting Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities in Child Care

Leadership

- HR Essentials for Early Childhood Leaders: Protecting Your People, Your Program, and Your Organization

Preschool

- Purposeful Play: Aligning Emergent Curriculum with Early Learning Standards
- Scaffolding Children's Learning at Small Group Time
- Storytelling is Our Superpower: Using Felts, Puppets, and Curriculum-Rich Literature!

Professionalism

- Become a Childhood Crusader!: Mobilizing Advocacy, Partnerships, and Play to Build Thriving Communities
- Integrating Faith into Quality Early Childhood Education

Social Emotional

- Creating Neurodivergent-Friendly Classrooms - Beyond the Basics
- Emotion Regulation + Modeling Mindfulness for Young Children

Literacy Day of Learning



Saturday, March 7, 2026
8:00 am - 3:30 pm
Preschool (Also Infant Toddler, School-Age)

Join us for a Literacy Day of Learning designed for child care providers who want to strengthen early literacy instruction across birth to age 5.

During this interactive training, participants will be introduced to the Essential Instructional Practices in Language and Emergent Literacy: Birth to Age 3 and the Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Prekindergarten, exploring how these evidence-based practices support young children's language and literacy development. This session will support providers in building confidence and consistency in early literacy practices.

Providers will gain practical, classroom-ready strategies they can immediately implement with the children in their care, with a focus on developmentally appropriate instruction, responsive interactions, and intentional learning environments. This session will support providers in building confidence and consistency in early literacy practices.

This Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) Literacy Essentials training is provided in partnership with the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP), made possible by the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Initiative (PDG B-5), Grant Number 90TP0138. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

Requires pre-registration or additional add-on fee during conference registration.

2026 COLLECTOR'S PIN

Get Your Conference Lapel Pin Today!

Collect a New Pin Each Conference Year: An ECE Tradition That Grows with You! Get yours at the Member Desk.

\$3.00 EACH

Limited change will be available for cash purchases.



Missed last year's lapel pin, it's not too late.. get your for just \$1, while supplies last.

Join a NAEYC Centennial Event in 2026!

For 100 years, NAEYC has been the leading voice driving high-quality early childhood education—elevating the profession, advancing children's outcomes, and building a community of passionate advocates. Celebrate Centennial - Contribute to the Year Of Reflections!



SCAN HERE

Sharing Your Story: Each month features a different theme with reflection prompts to spark your thinking. You can participate once or many times throughout the year—wherever a theme resonates, add your voice. Whether you've been in early childhood education for four decades or four years, your reflection belongs in this celebration



SCAN HERE

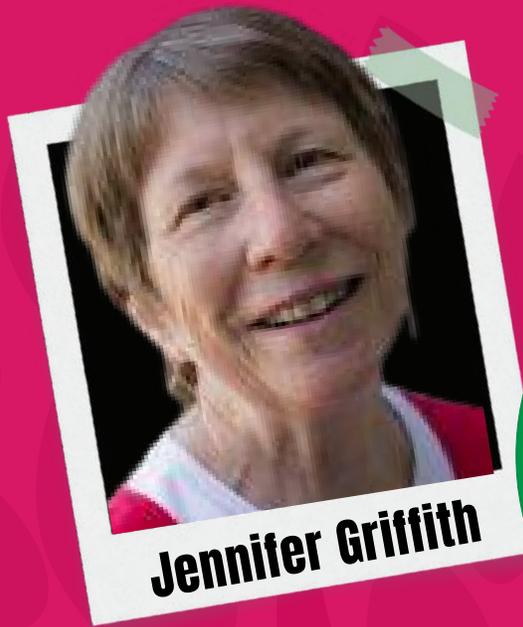
Centennial Resources: Explore tools, stories, and shareable materials that bring NAEYC's centennial to life and help you celebrate 100 years of progress for young children and educators.



Donate to Support Early Childhood Education: As we celebrate our 100th year, your support of NAEYC's mission will be put to good use and is always greatly appreciated.



SCAN HERE



Betty Garlick Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient



Congratulations to all Michigan AEYC Award Winners.

Michigan AEYC scholarships and awards are designed to support and recognize individuals pursuing education and professional growth in early childhood education and child development. They include financial aid programs that help cover tuition, credential fees, books, and other educational costs as well as recognition awards that foster leadership and commitment within the field.

These initiatives aim to reduce financial barriers, encourage academic and professional excellence, and cultivate future leaders committed to quality early learning in Michigan.

Debbie Antone Memorial Fund

- **Kaci Wiebenga**

Jacquelyn H. Miller Endowment

- **Peace Academy at WHRC**

Student Leadership Scholarship Award

- **Reagan Saint Pierre**

Jennifer Griffith is a distinguished leader whose career and volunteerism have shaped the landscape of early childhood education in Michigan. From her professional career at Kent Regional 4C, her tenure as President of Michigan AEYC, Affiliate Representative with NAEYC, and serving on and leading a variety of Governing Board committees, Jen's work reflects a broad and meaningful dedication to children, families and a lifetime of learning- through education, advocacy, leadership, and service that extends well beyond any single role. In addition to her many years of volunteer service with Michigan AEYC, Jen serves as the current Board Secretary at the Holland Museum, as well as a docent and 'hands-on' educator in Spark!Lab Smithsonian.

Whether she is braving the cold for a community parade, volunteering at the annual conference or mentoring the next generation of early childhood professionals, Jen is defined by her legendary reliability. She is the volunteer every organization dreams of: the first to raise her hand and the one you can always count on, and does it all with generosity, reliability and joy. Jen's sustained commitment has enriched the lives of countless Michigan children and families. Please join us in honoring Jennifer Griffith for her extraordinary heart and her enduring legacy of service.

Michigan AEYC will present Jennifer Griffith with the Betty Garlick Lifetime Achievement Award at the Welcome General Session on Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 10:30 am.



2026 Annual Early Childhood Conference

Michigan AEYC Event Code of Conduct

Michigan AEYC is committed to providing a professional, collegial, supporting, respectful, friendly, safe, and welcoming environment for all participants and Michigan AEYC staff regardless of a person's race, color, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship status, age, religion, disability status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, genetic information, physical appearance or other characteristic and any other legally protected classes.

All participants, including, but not limited to, attendees, speakers, volunteers, exhibitors, sponsors, staff, service providers, and others are expected to comply with this Event Code of Conduct. Michigan AEYC expects participants and speakers to uphold the professional and educational purposes of NAEYC and its events by respecting the rights, privacy, safety, and dignity of everyone.

Expected Behavior

- All participants are treated with respect and consideration, valuing a diversity of views and opinions.
- Strive for inclusive, transparent, and open communication.
- Be considerate, respectful, and collaborative in speaking and listening.
- Do not appropriate knowledge shared during this meeting or future collaborations.
- Acknowledge the contribution of others.
- Respect the rules and policies of the event.
- Participants will not bring any children under the age of 18 into the event including exhibit and session areas.



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Phone: 517.351.4183



Unacceptable Behavior

Unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated during any portion of a meeting or event. Unacceptable behavior includes but is not limited to:

- Intimidating, harassing, abusive, discriminatory, derogatory, or demeaning speech or actions.
- Individual attacks on others.
- Harmful or prejudicial verbal or written comments or visual images related to gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability, or other personal characteristics, including those protected by law.
- Real or implied threat of professional or financial damage or harm.
- Inappropriate or repeated disruption of meetings or events.
- Deliberate intimidation of others.
- Photographing, video, or audio recording of slides, oral or poster presentations without presenter/author's permission.
- Presentations, postings, and messages should not contain promotional materials, special offers, job offers, product announcements, or solicitation for services. Michigan AEYC reserves the right to remove such messages and potentially ban sources of those solicitations.

Reporting Harassment: Report harassment and disruptive behaviors to Michigan AEYC at miaeyc@miaeyc.org.

Violation of this Policy, as determined by Michigan AEYC in its sole discretion, is grounds for any action that Michigan AEYC deems appropriate, including but not limited to warning the offender, denying the offender access to a Michigan AEYC event and restrictions from future Michigan AEYC meetings and events. Michigan AEYC reserves the right to take whatever action it, in its sole discretion, deems appropriate, with respect to the investigation of any matters related to this Policy.