Ramona Richards

Ramona Richards is a teacher educator and facilitator of Firing Number with a professional development program that promotes exploratory, play-based math instruction in K-4 classrooms. She holds her Bachelor's degree in Teaching, a Master's in Early Childhood Education, and a specialization in the development of young children. As an Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Early Childhood Specialist, she works with the Washington Park Early Learning Center to ensure quality care and education for young children. Ramona is a mother of two and actively promotes exploration and play for young children.

Pam Reising

Pam Reising has over 25 years of experience in education. She focuses on Social-Emotional Learning and professional relationships with Policymakers and Professionals on behalf of the community of individuals with exceptional needs. In this role, she represents the families that are too often unseen and unheard. Antoinette has worked with individuals with Special Needs from six months to adult in the Mild to Moderate, Autism, ADHD, Pervasive Developmental Delay, Developmental Delay, Learning Disability, Social Emotional Disturbance, Cerebral Palsy, Cognitive Impairment and more.

KEYNOTE

Carla Bryant

Carla Bryant is the Director of Education Strategy and Ventures at The Kenneth Baim Foundation. Previously, she served as the Foundation’s research associate AND project manager.

Antoinette Taylor

Antoinette Taylor is a Senior Policy Analyst and the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood. As the Director of the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood, she is focused on increasing the number of young mothers and babies, and their families. She has worked in a variety of capacities including as a bilingual teacher, a professional development specialist, a bilingual education supervisor, a director of Early Learners program, and in Family/Community Education. Recently worked with the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood as the Director of the Award for Excellence in Early Literacy. A bilingual social worker, Antoinette has a Master’s in Social Work, a Master’s in Social Work Administration, and a Master’s in Social Work.

Plenary

Pat Chamberlain

Pat Chamberlain works as a consultant with school districts and agencies on issues related to optimizing the education opportunities for young culturally and linguistically diverse children and their families. She has worked in a variety of capacities including as a bilingual teacher, a professional development specialist, a bilingual education supervisor, a director of Early Learners program, and in Family/Community Education. Recently worked with the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood as the Director of the Award for Excellence in Early Literacy.

Lisa Hood

Lisa Hood is a Senior Policy Analyst and Researcher in the Center for the Study of Education Policy (CSEP) at Illinois State University. In this role, Dr. Hood researches and develops policies, practices, and resources to improve the Racist education. Dr. Hood is leading a project that studied and developed a clearinghouse of videos of early childhood education for teachers, educators, and facilitators for the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Michael Lewis: Dual Language Teacher

Lisa Hood is a Senior Policy Analyst and Researcher in the Center for the Study of Education Policy (CSEP) at Illinois State University. In this role, Dr. Hood researches and develops policies, practices, and resources to improve the quality of early education. Dr. Hood is leading a project that studied and developed a clearinghouse of videos of early childhood education for teachers, educators, and facilitators for the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Julie Kallenbach

Julie Kallenbach, Ed.D. currently works for ISBE as an Trainer and Coach for the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood. She spent over 10 years as an Early Childhood Specialist in the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood. She spent 10 years as a Child Development Specialist in the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood.

Dr. Rebecca Swartz

Dr. Rebecca Swartz, an early learning specialist for IEL and the Early Intervention Clearinghouse, is a specialist in human development and family studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Rebecca has been working in a variety of roles in early care and education settings since 1996, beginning as an assistant in a community child care program and filling a variety of roles, including as a child care teacher, having supported social work education and leadership, leading teacher of toddlers and preschoolers, music specialist, director of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's program in Early Childhood.

Jill Tompkins

Jill Tompkins has over 20 years of experience in early childhood education. She holds her Bachelor’s in Child Development and Master’s in Early Childhood Special Education from the University of Illinois. She spent 3 years as a Child Development Specialist in the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood. Jill Tompkins is an Adjunct Professor at Aurora University in Illinois.

Patricia Chamberlain

Patricia Chamberlain is the Director of Education Strategy and Ventures at The Kenneth Baim Foundation. Previously, she served as the Foundation’s research associate and project manager.

Antoinette Taylor

Antoinette Taylor has over 25 years of experience in education. She focuses on Social-Emotional Learning and professional relationships with Policymakers and Professionals on behalf of the community of individuals with exceptional needs. In this role, she represents the families that are too often unseen and unheard. Antoinette has worked with individuals with Special Needs from six months to adult in the Mild to Moderate, Autism, ADHD, Pervasive Developmental Delay, Developmental Delay, Learning Disability, Social Emotional Disturbance, Cerebral Palsy, Cognitive Impairment and more.

Plenary

Pat Chamberlain

Pat Chamberlain works as a consultant with school districts and agencies on issues related to optimizing the education opportunities for young culturally and linguistically diverse children and their families. She has worked in a variety of capacities including as a bilingual teacher, a professional development specialist, a bilingual education supervisor, a director of Early Learners program, and in Family/Community Education. Recently worked with the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood as the Director of the Award for Excellence in Early Literacy.

Lisa Hood

Lisa Hood is a Senior Policy Analyst and Researcher in the Center for the Study of Education Policy (CSEP) at Illinois State University. In this role, Dr. Hood researches and develops policies, practices, and resources to improve the Racist education. Dr. Hood is leading a project that studied and developed a clearinghouse of videos of early childhood education for teachers, educators, and facilitators for the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Michael Lewis: Dual Language Teacher

Michael Lewis is a Senior Policy Analyst and Researcher in the Center for the Study of Education Policy (CSEP) at Illinois State University. In this role, Dr. Hood researches and develops policies, practices, and resources to improve the quality of early education. Dr. Hood is leading a project that studied and developed a clearinghouse of videos of early childhood education for teachers, educators, and facilitators for the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Julie Kallenbach

Julie Kallenbach, Ed.D. currently works for ISBE as an Trainer and Coach for the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood. She spent over 10 years as an Early Childhood Specialist in the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood. She spent 10 years as a Child Development Specialist in the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood.

Dr. Rebecca Swartz

Dr. Rebecca Swartz, an early learning specialist for IEL and the Early Intervention Clearinghouse, is a specialist in human development and family studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Rebecca has been working in a variety of roles in early care and education settings since 1996, beginning as an assistant in a community child care program and filling a variety of roles, including as a child care teacher, having supported social work education and leadership, leading teacher of toddlers and preschoolers, music specialist, director of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's program in Early Childhood.

Jill Tompkins

Jill Tompkins has over 20 years of experience in early childhood education. She holds her Bachelor’s in Child Development and Master’s in Early Childhood Special Education from the University of Illinois. She spent 3 years as a Child Development Specialist in the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood. Jill Tompkins is an Adjunct Professor at Aurora University in Illinois.

Patricia Chamberlain

Patricia Chamberlain is the Director of Education Strategy and Ventures at The Kenneth Baim Foundation. Previously, she served as the Foundation’s research associate and project manager.

Antoinette Taylor

Antoinette Taylor has over 25 years of experience in education. She focuses on Social-Emotional Learning and professional relationships with Policymakers and Professionals on behalf of the community of individuals with exceptional needs. In this role, she represents the families that are too often unseen and unheard. Antoinette has worked with individuals with Special Needs from six months to adult in the Mild to Moderate, Autism, ADHD, Pervasive Developmental Delay, Developmental Delay, Learning Disability, Social Emotional Disturbance, Cerebral Palsy, Cognitive Impairment and more.

Plenary

Pat Chamberlain

Pat Chamberlain works as a consultant with school districts and agencies on issues related to optimizing the education opportunities for young culturally and linguistically diverse children and their families. She has worked in a variety of capacities including as a bilingual teacher, a professional development specialist, a bilingual education supervisor, a director of Early Learners program, and in Family/Community Education. Recently worked with the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood as the Director of the Award for Excellence in Early Literacy.

Lisa Hood

Lisa Hood is a Senior Policy Analyst and Researcher in the Center for the Study of Education Policy (CSEP) at Illinois State University. In this role, Dr. Hood researches and develops policies, practices, and resources to improve the Racist education. Dr. Hood is leading a project that studied and developed a clearinghouse of videos of early childhood education for teachers, educators, and facilitators for the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Michael Lewis: Dual Language Teacher

Michael Lewis is a Senior Policy Analyst and Researcher in the Center for the Study of Education Policy (CSEP) at Illinois State University. In this role, Dr. Hood researches and develops policies, practices, and resources to improve the quality of early education. Dr. Hood is leading a project that studied and developed a clearinghouse of videos of early childhood education for teachers, educators, and facilitators for the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Julie Kallenbach

Julie Kallenbach, Ed.D. currently works for ISBE as an Trainer and Coach for the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood. She spent over 10 years as an Early Childhood Specialist in the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood. She spent 10 years as a Child Development Specialist in the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood.

Dr. Rebecca Swartz

Dr. Rebecca Swartz, an early learning specialist for IEL and the Early Intervention Clearinghouse, is a specialist in human development and family studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Rebecca has been working in a variety of roles in early care and education settings since 1996, beginning as an assistant in a community child care program and filling a variety of roles, including as a child care teacher, having supported social work education and leadership, leading teacher of toddlers and preschoolers, music specialist, director of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's program in Early Childhood.

Jill Tompkins

Jill Tompkins has over 20 years of experience in early childhood education. She holds her Bachelor’s in Child Development and Master’s in Early Childhood Special Education from the University of Illinois. She spent 3 years as a Child Development Specialist in the Illinois Governor’s Office of Early Childhood. Jill Tompkins is an Adjunct Professor at Aurora University in Illinois.

Patricia Chamberlain

Patricia Chamberlain is the Director of Education Strategy and Ventures at The Kenneth Baim Foundation. Previously, she served as the Foundation’s research associate and project manager.
Jill Bradley

Working with Illinois Action for Children (IAFC), in the North Lawndale community, Saret works with a sanctions reduced team focused on regulating student attendance. As a Community Connections Case Manager, she provides an intense case management approach to address and eliminate barriers. Prior to her work with IAFC, Saret graduated from Millikin University with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. Shortly after, she went to work with the Illinois Department of Human Services as a Case Manager.

Merchant

Linda Breen

Linda has a background in Speech, Language Pathology and Audiology. She has worked at all educational levels and served as Special Education Supervisor and Master of Education Services for Instruction and program at the daycare Family Education Center. Linda presently serves as Director of Early Childhood for District 300.

Saret Beraki

Michelle Escapa

Michelle began with the KIDS project as a coach four years ago and is now the Illinois KIDS Program Coordinator. She has 15 years of experience as a Early Childhood teacher. She graduated from Illinois State University with a degree in Early Childhood. Michelle furthered her education within one in Bilingual/Special Education and the other from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in early childhood special education methods, assessment of the young child, early childhood supervision and application of strategies, teaming and collaboration, early childhood special education leadership, collaboration with families, and special education program administration.

Sandy Ginther

Sandy Ginther has been an educational advocate for children and families for over 20 years. She previously worked as a Preschool teacher and Assistant Director, Counselor for the State of Illinois Child Development Center for 12 years. She currently works in three CPARPs. Barzall supports parents in a case management approach knowing that each family provides resources to help children get to school.

Becky Honig

Becky Honig holds a M.S. in Early Childhood Education from California, she came to Chicago to attend the Early Childhood Master of Science in Early Childhood with an emphasis in Infant Studies and Administration. Starting in the classroom, Ms. Honig quickly became a leader in voice on early childhood initiatives and is currently the ECSE Specialist for Illinois Early Learning, the Illinois preschool Lead Restructive Initiative.

Stacie Hoover

Stacie is a Quality Specialist and Trainer for Baby TALK. She has over 20 years of experience working with infants and families in many capacities including serving as a Birth to 3 Coordinator for a PI program in the Westside School District. In addition to 10 years of experience in the early childhood field, Stacie’s experience also includes teaching elementary school in multiple grades, working as a school administrator, teaching at McKendree University, parent education and home visiting. Cumulatively, these experiences have given her insight into creating child rich environment building and working collaboratively on common goals for children.

Sara Coba-Rodriguez

Donna Emmons

Donna “retired” from Washable Area Development Inc. and is now working the staff at the Illinois State Board of Education in the Early Childhood division with Preschool for All and Prevention Initiative grants for 4 years. Currently, she is back working with her first love—Head Start as the Illinois Associate Head Start State Coordinator through the Illinois Head Start Association and Master’s Degree in Administration of Human Services. Donna firmly believes in Head Start’s core values of working alongside families to build a solid foundation for our nation’s youngest and most vulnerable children.

Marianne Pokorny

Peggy Ondra

Peggy Ondra, the Director of Early Learner Initiatives in SD U-46, has spent her career in Early Childhood Education. She has taught first grade and preschool, worked as a Social Worker for Transition State, is currently a Board Member at Family First and has served as a Principal for six years at both an Early Learning Center and an Elementary building which as students move from early childhood programs in Kindergarten.

Kim Nelson

Kim Nelson is the Executive Director of Early Childhood at Buck lodge Public Schools. A graduate of Northern Illinois University and St. Xavier University, she has a bachelor’s degree in Education with endorsements in early childhood, elementary, and special education and a master’s degree in Educational Leadership and Teacher Leadership. During her 30 years in early intervention services for students with exceptionalities, and early childhood, she has been committed to providing enhanced learning and excellence in education through instructional leadership, coaching and collaboration, advocacy, resource development, and professional learning.

Jenny Metcalf

Jenny works as an Early Childhood Consultant at the Illinois State Board of Education. Her responsibilities include working with the community in all programs and serving as the agency contact for the Preschool Development Grant and Excellate Illinois. Previously, Jenny served as a director of early learning for children 6 weeks to 12 years old. In addition, Jenny has experience working in higher education in the area of student affairs.

Brenda Laumann, Ph.D., Project Coordinator, the Illinois Early Learning Project at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Dr. Laumann holds a B.S. in Psychology, Ed.M. in Early Childhood Special Education and Ph.D. in Special Education from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in early childhood special education methods, assessment of the young child, early childhood supervision and application of strategies, teaming and collaboration, early childhood special education leadership, collaboration with families, and special education program administration.

Lori Orr

Lori has worked as a Policy Implementation Director at the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development. Her responsibilities include working on the Preschool Expansion grant to ensure federal compliance, and overseeing policy and planning of statewide efforts. Prior to joining the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development, Lori worked in a leadership role for the Illinois Parenting System and Child and Family Connections of DuPage. In addition, Lori has had previous experience working in community systems development and in child welfare.

Debra Pacchiano is Vice President, Department of Research at the Office of Prevention Fund. She is an applied researcher, consultant, evaluator, and developer of models of professional learning and practice improvement. She is Co-Principal Investigator on the Early Education Essentials to develop, validate, and implement a coaching and support organizational supports in early childhood settings.

Kit Patterson

Kit Patterson, B.A., is a Training Manager in the DuPage Institute. She has over 13 years of experience in early childhood programs to Kindergarten. Working in Quality, Technology, and Community Engagement training, technical development and implementation Family and Community Connections of DuPage.

Kris Pennington

Kris Pennington holds bachelor’s in early childhood education with special education endorsement and master’s in educational administration. She was an early childhood teacher for 16 years in both private and public schools. The past 10 years Kris has served as early childhood coordinator and Principal in McLean County for Heartland.

Peggy Ondra

Peggy Ondra, the Director of Early Learner Initiatives in SD U-46, has spent her career in Early Childhood Education. She has taught first grade and preschool, worked as a Social Worker for Transition State, is currently a Board Member at Family First and has served as a Principal for six years at both an Early Learning Center and an Elementary building which as students move from early childhood programs in Kindergarten.

Marriane Pokorny, Senior Manager of Strategic Engagement, is a Professional Educator, Family and Community Liaison, and Social Change Agent. She has passion and experience working in areas of social justice, education, and gender and race equity; she strongly believes in vulnerability and underserved populations. Her work at the University of Chicago includes relationship cultivation, capacity building and community development. She has the ability to foster conversations that lead to change in communities.