



**Pam Reising Rechner**

Pamela Reising Rechner is a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Specialist for the Early CHOICES Project and a Program Support Specialist for The Center. She recently retired from the Illinois State Board of Education in May of 2016. At ISBE, she served as a consultant in early childhood special education and the 619 Coordinator for 26 years. Previously she served as a Resource Specialist for R\*TAS (now STARNET) in Region IV and the Coordinator for the Transition Project. She also worked with Head Start as the Education and Disabilities Coordinator for several years.



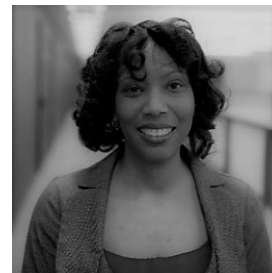
**Ramona Richards**

Ramona Richards is a teacher educator and facilitator of Playing with Numbers, a professional development program that promotes exploratory, play-based math instruction in K-1 grades. Ramona holds a Master's in Teaching from Dominican University, and taught bilingual kindergarten and first grade in Chicago Public Schools for seven years Prior to joining Chicago Children's Museum. Ask her about her Golden Retriever, Sandy Paws.



**Kristina Rogers**

Kristina Rogers is an advocate for vulnerable families and cares deeply about addressing access issues in Chicago. She helped develop the North Lawndale Innovation Zone, an early childhood collaboration, made up of social service agencies, child care providers, home-visitors, government officials, community members, and families. Though the North Lawndale Innovation Zone was only funded for three years through the Race to the Top Early Childhood Block Grant, Kristina continues to sustain the collaboration's momentum. Kristina received her undergraduate from Illinois Wesleyan University.



**Angela Searcy**

Angela Searcy holds a B.A. English, a M.S. degree in early childhood development from Erikson Institute, and a Doctorate in Education. Her research revolves brain-based learning assess by the preschool CLASS assessment and it's correlation to aggressive behaviors in preschool children. Angela is the owner/founder of Simple Solutions Educational Services, adjunct faculty at Erikson Institute and an author for Gryphon House



**Cris Stanek**

Cris Stanek is a licensed clinical social worker who has worked with children and adolescents for over 14 years. She has provided local and statewide trainings to a variety of audiences from large corporations to small businesses. She enjoys sharing her knowledge of early childhood and infant mental health, trauma-informed care and practice, neuroscience of child development, and the not-so-simple task of caring for children day in and day out. She is also a mother of two and imparts her own funny life stories throughout presentations.



**Katherine Staten**

Katherine L. Staten has received her Bachelor's, Consumer Economics and Family Management from SIU-Carbondale and a Master's, Human Service Counseling from National Louis University-Lisle. She has a passion for the development of young mothers and babies, education, and the positive development of a strong family structure. With her interest, she moved forward receiving a certification as a facilitator for Healthy Moms, Happy Babies Curriculum. Katherine also received special Training for Parent Teachers-Core Training, Healthy Families-Core Training, along with Domestic Violence Training.



**Jim Stelter**

Dr. James Stelter has served Bensenville District 2 since 2003. He successfully incorporated community partnership through integrating local non-profits, faith organizations, and the business community to help fill gaps in services. Under his leadership, the district was awarded a National Blue Ribbon Award and joined the Race to the Top (Rt3). Recently, ISBE awarded the district the distinction of being the highest performing Rt3 district in the state. Dr. Stelter holds a Doctorate of Educational Leadership from National-Louis University.



**Rebecca Swartz**

Dr. Rebecca Swartz, an early learning specialist for IEL and the Early Intervention Clearinghouse, completed her doctorate 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 teacher in a community child care program and filling a variety of roles, including early childhood special education teacher, lead teacher of toddlers and preschoolers, music specialist, director of an early childhood program, and cooperative extension specialist.



**Jill Tompkins**

Jill Tompkins has spent over 20 years in the Early Childhood Field. She earned 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 and Service Coordinator in an Early Intervention Program in Central Illinois before becoming an Infant/Toddler Specialist for the Great Lakes Quality Improvement Center for Disabilities. She worked for several years as an independent consultant, assisting new Early Head Start programs with start-up activities, observing children and teachers for various projects, and facilitating teaming exercises.



**Jaclyn Vasquez**

Jaclyn is the Associate Director of the Early Development Instrument at Erikson Institute. She is a former educator of 15 years and former Manager of the Child Parent Centers of Chicago Public Schools. Jaclyn earned a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education with an emphasis in Special education, a Master's degree in Literacy Education and dual Bilingual and ESL endorsements. Jaclyn is currently completing her Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Curriculum & Instruction.

## MEET THE SPEAKERS

### KEYNOTE



**Carla Bryant**

Carla is the Director of Education Strategy and Ventures at The Kenneth Rainin Foundation. With extensive experience, Bryant began leading the foundation's education investments in September 2017. Her work focuses on increasing the number of Oakland children who are ready for kindergarten and reading at grade level by third grade. She directs funding initiatives to help teachers use effective teaching practices, support families with young children, and build early learning leadership and systems in Oakland.

### PLENARY



**Patricia Chamberlain**

Pat Chamberlain works as a consultant with school districts and agencies on issues related to optimizing the educational 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 special education supervisor, a director of Early Learners program, and in Higher Education. Recently working with the Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood as the Director of the Award for Excellence Project for Linguistically and Culturally Responsive practices.



**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 create seamless B-12 education and care systems at the state and local levels. Currently, Dr. Hood is leading a project that studied and developed a clearinghouse of videos of early childhood teachers with supporting resources and artifacts. This website is focused on supporting leaders and teachers who understand developmentally appropriate practice and can connect these practices to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and teacher and leader evaluation and professional growth.



**Julie Kallenbach**

Julie Kallenbach, Ed.D. currently works for ISBE as an Trainer and Coach for the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) along with other independent consulting projects in early childhood. Her work roles have included Director of Early Learning Initiatives in Elgin School District U-46, principal, special education supervisor, diagnostician and teacher. Presentation topics and special interests are play-based learning, authentic assessment, oral language, developmentally appropriate practice and project management to support the development of children and teachers.



**Antoinette Taylor**

Antoinette Taylor has over 25 years of experience in Education. She focuses on Services and Policies by consulting with Policymakers and Professionals on behalf of the community of individuals with exceptional needs including the gifted and talented and mental health. Antoinette has worked with individuals with Special Needs from six months to adult in the Mild to Profound range with Autism, ADHD/ADD, Pervasive Developmental Delay, Developmental Delay, Learning Disability, Social Emotional Disturbance, Cerebral Palsy, Cognitive Impairment and more.



**Tori Torrence-Graham**

Tori is a FAN Master Trainer and Project Manager with the Fussy Baby Network at Erikson Institute. Tori has served as an Adjunct Professor at Aurora University in Aurora, IL in addition to serving as a Program Manager at Teen Parent Connection in Glen Ellyn, IL. Tori has a background in social work and earned a BSW from the University of Iowa in Iowa City, IA and an MSW from Aurora University in Aurora, IL. Recently, Tori studied Infant Mental Health earned an Infant Mental Health Certificate through Erikson Institute in Chicago.

### West Chicago Teachers

#### **Blaine Graham: PK Teacher**

I have been working in West Chicago D33 for five years at the Early Learning Center. My classroom is a blend of at risk and special education students from 3-5. The children in my classroom receive supports to address a range of needs including autism, down syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, developmental delay, and many others. Many of our "at-risk" students are refugees and/or English Language Learners. Some years I can have had over six different languages. I love teaching in a community that models a mini United Nations! I have credentials in early childhood, elementary and special education as well as ESL.

#### **Michelle Lewis: K Dual Language Teacher**

Dual Language has been my life since the moment I started teaching ten years ago in D33. It is all I know and it is in my bones! My first three years were spent happily teaching second grade, where I learned not only how to be a teacher but also how to scaffold the wide range of talents and language skills that we see in early learning. Now I am in my dream zone: Kindergarten! I've been in a two way Dual Kindergarten for seven years and haven't had a year where I didn't learn something that expands my knowledge of Developmentally Appropriate learning, always with exciting results. I have a Masters in elementary ed. My BA is in Spanish with a minor in French and German.

#### **Stephanie Drake: Principal Dual Language Elementary School**

2017-2018 marked my 27th year in West Chicago School District 33. I have worked in 5 schools and taught grades K-6. I have experience in multi grade level classrooms, inclusion classrooms, TBE classrooms and Dual Language classrooms. I spent my last 12 years in the classroom teaching kindergarten. For the past 3 years I have been principal at Gary Elementary School. I have published a book titled "Haciendo Palabras" and presented multiple times at the Statewide Bilingual Conference. In 2005, I received my National Board Certification in Early Childhood Generalist, and renewed that certification in 2015.



## BREAKOUT



**Jill Bradley**

Currently the Parent Engagement and Training Manager for Illinois Action for Children, in the Community Systems Development Department. She helps to develop and implement Family and Community Engagement training, technical assistance and program support for staff and parent groups in child care centers and public school districts and licensed and licensed exempt homes, for targeted groups of parents, providers as deepening and expanding neighborhood partnerships.



**Saret Beraki**

Working with Illinois Action for Children (IAFC), in the North Lawndale community, Saret works with a strong-willed 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 on to work with the Illinois Department of Human Services as a Case Manager.



**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, Director of Education Services for Instruction and principal at deLacey Family Education Center. Linda presently serves as Director of Early Childhood for District 300.



**Sarai Coba-Rodriguez**

Dr. Coba-Rodriguez uses a family-resilience framework to explore how ethnic-racial families promote children's successful transition to kindergarten. To enhance child competencies upon kindergarten entry, she considers how to enrich the home-school partnership. Dr. Coba-Rodriguez's qualitative research offers a first-person perspective that values participant voices, recognizes cultural variation, and documents heterogeneity.



**Donna Emmons**

Donna "retired" from Wabash Area Development Inc. and moved to work 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 Collaboration Director through the Illinois Head Start Association and the Illinois Department of Human Services. Donna firmly believes in Head Start's core values of working alongside families while providing a solid foundation for our nation's youngest and most vulnerable children.



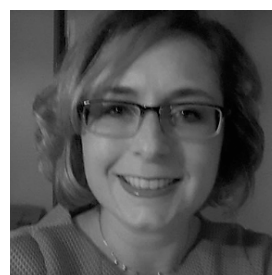
**Michelle Escapa**

Michelle began with the KIDS project as a coach four years ago and is now the Illinois KIDS Professional Learning Coordinator. She has 15 years of experience as an Early Childhood teacher. She graduated from Illinois State University with a degree in Early Childhood. Michelle furthered her education with two Masters Degrees; one in Bilingual/Bicultural Education and the other in Educational Leadership from Western Illinois University.



**Sandy Ginther**

Thirty-three years ago when Sandy's daughter was born with Down syndrome, she became active in endeavors related to disability, inclusive practices, children, and education. She has been employed with the state's Project CHOICES, directed an countywide Early Intervention Program, served as an Early Intervention Statewide Trainer, been an Early Childhood and Family Resource Specialist, and is currently an LRE Specialist for Early CHOICES, the Illinois preschool Least Restrictive Environment initiative.



**Becky Honig**

Becky Rube Honig, M.S. is an ECE Consultant and Trainer. Originally from California, she came to Chicago to attend the Erikson Institute to obtain her Master's Degree in Child Development with an emphasis in Infant Studies and Administration. Starting in the classroom, Ms. Honig quickly became a Supervisor/Manager/Leader in various roles before transitioning into consulting and training. She is currently CLASS Preschool certified, and contracts with Teaching Strategies to train on Creative Curriculum and GOLD; and with Simple Solutions to conduct Mental Health & CLASS observations.



**Stacie Hoover**

Stacie is a Quality Specialist and Trainer for Baby TALK. She has over 20 years of experience working with children and families in many capacities including serving as a Birth to 3 Program Coordinator for a PI program in the Wesclin 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 college at McKendree University, parent education and home visiting. Cumulatively, these experiences have given her insight on relationship building and working collaboratively on common goals for children.



**Erin Jackle**

Erin Jackle has been an early childhood educator for 14 years. She has worked at Head Start, as an early childhood special education teacher, as a coach, and most recently as the Kindergarten Transition Facilitator for School District U-46. In her role as Kindergarten Transition Facilitator, Erin supports students, families, and teachers across 40 elementary schools as students move from early childhood programs to Kindergarten.



**Rarzail Jones**

Rarzail Jones has been an educational advocate for children and families for over 20 years. She previously worked as a Preschool teacher and assistant director for the State of Illinois Child Development Center for 12 years. She currently works in three CPS North Lawndale schools helping to reduce chronic absenteeism from Preschool to 3rd grade. Rarzail supports parents in a case management approach knocking down barriers and providing resources to help children get to school.



**Bernie Laumann**

Bernadette 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 a 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 curriculum and intervention strategies, teaming and collaboration, early childhood special education leadership, collaboration with families, and special education program administration.



**Jenny Metcalf**

Jenny works as an Early Childhood Consultant at the Illinois State Board of Education. Her responsibilities include working with the Preschool for All program and serving as the agency contact for the Preschool Development Grant and ExceleRate Illinois. Prior to joining the Illinois State Board of Education, Jenny served as a director of a child care center serving children 6 weeks to 12 years old. In addition, Jenny has experience working in higher education in the area of student affairs.



**Kim Nelson**

Kimberly Nelson is the Executive Director of Early Childhood for Rockford Public Schools. A graduate of Northern Illinois University and St. Xavier University, she has a bachelor's degree in Education with endorsements/approvals in early childhood, elementary, and special education and master's degrees in Educational Leadership and Education and Teacher Leadership. During her 30+ years in early intervention, special education, and early childhood, she has been committed to providing access and excellence and in education through instructional leadership, community collaborations, advocacy, resource development, and professional learning.



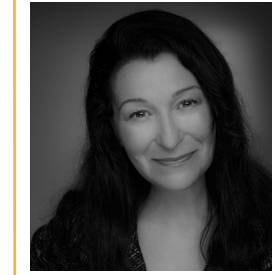
**Peggy Ondera**

Peggy Ondera, 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 parent educator for families of children birth- 3 years old, and has been an Early Reading First and instructional coach. In addition, she served as a principal for six years at both an Early Learning Center and an elementary building which housed preschool and full-day kindergarten programs. Her most recent projects include the PFA expansion grant, and universal play-based full day kindergarten for all students in U-46.



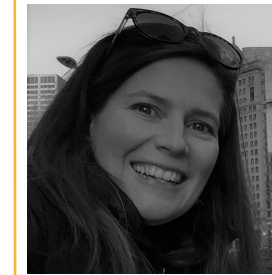
**Lori Orr**

Lori works 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 state wide efforts. Prior to joining the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, Lori worked in a leadership role in the Early Intervention System at Child and Family Connections of DuPage. In addition, Lori has previous experience working in community systems development and in child welfare.



**Debra Pacchiano**

Debra Pacchiano is Vice President, Translational Research at the Ounce of Prevention Fund. She is an applied researcher who conceptualizes, implements, evaluates, and scales models of professional learning and practice improvement. She is Co-Principal Investigator on the Early Education Essentials to develop, validate, and initial implement surveys to measure organizational supports in early childhood settings. Debra holds a Ph.D. from Indiana University in Educational Psychology.



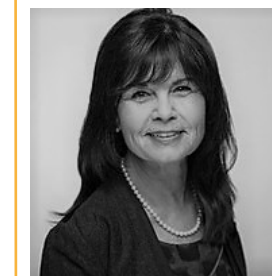
**Kit Patterson**

Kit Patterson, B.A., is a Training Manager in the Ounce Institute. She has over 15 years of experience in early childhood programs, including work as a home visitor, group facilitator and program supervisor. She is a certified Healthy Families America trainer and a member of the HFA Accreditation Panel. Kit is fluent in Spanish and has extensive experience addressing the needs of Spanish-speaking families. Other areas of interest include quality improvement, social-emotional development and reflective practice.



**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 8 years Kris has served as early childhood coordinator and Principal in McLean County Unit 5. Experience includes IL Early Learning MTSS Steering Committee, Child Parent Centers, Birth-3rd Grade Alignment/Preschool Expansion Model, Community Schools Model, Danielson Framework for Evaluation in Early Childhood development, and IL P-20 Council and IL Early Learning Council Kindergarten Transition Advisory Committee.



**Marianne Pokorny**

Marianne Pokorny, Senior Manager of Strategic Engagement, is a Professional Educator, Licensed Counselor, and Social Change Agent. She has passion and experience working in the areas of social justice, education, and gender and race equity; she strives to give a voice to vulnerable and underserved populations. Her work at the YWCA Metropolitan Chicago includes relationship cultivation, capacity building and community systems development. She has the ability to foster conversations that lead to change in communities.