BREAKOUT SESSION #1

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15

11:00 AM-12:30 PM

WOFO GLOBAL CAFÉ

Free Play Fuels Lifelong Curiosity and Creativity – A KEY for today's children's futures!

Come join members of the Working Group on Play to dig into the critical need to protect, defend and champion young children's need and right to play every day. Share your successes and challenges as Play Defenders and learn about the new International Playing with Sticks Day!

Margaret Akinware, Nigeria; Barbara Easton, Scotland/United States; Ali McClure, England; Jodie Riek, United States/Australia

#12 GRAND BALLROOM DEI

Colonialism! Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow – Why it Matters Now for Young Children

This interactive session will examine how the legacy and evolving colonialism continues to shape the lives and developmental outcomes of young children across diverse global contexts. Drawing on lived experiences from South Africa, Haiti, and the United States, including the experiences of participants, presenters will explore how systemic racism and historically rooted inequities influence children's identity formation, sense of belonging, self-esteem, and educational opportunities.

Understanding these dynamics is critical for early childhood leaders and practitioners committed to equity. When professionals recognise and engage in reflective dialogues, they are better positioned to create inclusive ECD environments that affirm children. Participants will be challenged to advance strategies toward a collective call to social justice and equity in early childhood development.

Patsy Pillay, South Africa; Duane Dennis, United States; Caroline Hudicourt, Haiti

#8 ACCORD NETWORK CLIMATE

Rising Waters, Rising Voices: Community Resilience

Lessons from Young Children's Climate Support Work in Nepal and Bangladesh

This 90 minute interactive workshop brings together panelists from Nepal, Bangladesh, and the United States to explore the human impact of climate driven water crises—flooding, erosion, displacement—and the growing emotional toll of climate anxiety on children, families, and communities. Through two short documentary videos, participants will gain firsthand insight into the lived realities of those most affected, and the lessons learned in Nepal. A facilitated small group breakout session will invite attendees to analyze real challenges faced in Bangladesh and co create practical, community centered strategies for resilience and support. The session is designed not only to share expertise from the panelists but also to draw on the collective wisdom of participants, recognizing that many in the room bring valuable experience, best practices, and innovative ideas that can strengthen global responses to this urgent crisis.

Manjusree Mitra, Bangladesh; Bishnu Bhatta, Nepal; Rabeya Begum, Bangladesh; Vincent D. LaFontan, United States

#17 SENTRAL BALLROOM A RIGHTS

Reimagining "Good" Childhoods: Culture, Capability and Children's Right to Be Heard

This session brings together three interconnected perspectives that challenge taken-for-granted assumptions about childhood. Drawing on research from Norwegian kindergartens, we explore how cultural ideals of independence, robustness and "proper" parenting shape expectations of children and families, and how these norms can create unequal opportunities for immigrant parents to belong and participate.

Extending this discussion, we examine young children's capability and potential as thinkers. We highlight practical strategies for creating inquiry-based learning environments that honour children's ideas and position them as capable contributors to knowledge.

Finally, we explore children's right to express their views through the lens of slow pedagogy. In an increasingly busy world, educators hold responsibility for creating temporal environments that allow children time to think, process and articulate their ideas. Such approaches not only uphold children's rights but also strengthen wellbeing, inclusion and meaningful participation.

Together, these presentations invite participants to rethink childhood, culture and pedagogy through a children's rights lens that centres belonging, capability and voice.

Jennifer Ribarovski, Australia; Sesilie Smørholm, Norway; Trine Højsgaard, Norway; Manju Nair, Singapore

#20 SENTRAL BALLROOM B POLICY/ADVOCACY

Multisectoral Collaboration for Early Childhood Development

This panel examines key challenges in early childhood development, including fragmented coordination, underfunding, and persistent gaps between policy and practice. Presenters will share collaborative, multisectoral approaches that bridge these divides and offer consolidated solutions to strengthen and sustain the sector.

Sandra Bruwer, South Africa; Lesley Wood, South Africa; Marceline Kahlari, Zimbabwe

#1 INNOVATION SUITE A GLs

Global Leaders Reflect on Strengthening Systems

Members of the current cohort of Global Leaders reflect on the question, "What need in early childhood development am I called to address in my community as a Global Leader?" In this panel, Global Leaders will share about the need for strengthening systems in their home contexts.

Clarice Imperial, Brazil; Jossamo Alfredo, Mozambique; Sakunthala Ranasinghe, Sri Lanka; Sonam Choden, Bhutan; Ancilla Irwan, Indonesia; Md Shahriar Shafiq, Bangladesh

#22 GRAND SUITE 1&2 FAMILIES

Stronger Together: Supporting Parents & Engaging Families

This panel highlights the vital role of family engagement in early childhood development, student parent wellness, and home-based learning; sharing strategies, partnerships, and real stories that strengthen children, families, and communities.

Jitinder Walia, United States; Lorraine Mondesir, United States; Sonya Evariste, United States; Victoria Basilio, Philippines

#45 GRAND SUITE 3 CURRICULUM

Whole-Child Movement: Inclusive Curriculum Approaches for Gross Motor Development

This interactive workshop explores research-informed approaches to early childhood curriculum design, with a focus on gross motor development for children ages 6 months to 9 years. Led by educators and program leaders from diverse cultural contexts, presenters will share curriculum models from preschool, swim, and soccer enrichment programs around the globe. Participants will explore how developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, play-based movement experiences support learning across the early years. Through activity demonstrations, small-group discussion, and real-world examples, attendees will leave with practical strategies and resources to apply in early learning settings.

Benita Taylor, South Africa; Marinda Neethling, South Africa; Helen Hughes, United Kingdom; Laura Mellor-Bachman, United States

BREAKOUT SESSION #2

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15

2:00 PM-3:30 PM

WOFO GLOBAL CAFÉ

Climate Change and Young Children: From Vulnerable to Vocal

Children see, hear, and sense the serious environmental issues in the world. Let's share the approaches we take to hear, amplify and act upon the voices of children, to provide opportunities to understand children's concerns and to facilitate action that generate a sense of agency and hope for the future.

Cheryl Hadland, United Kingdom; Kumara Ward, United Kingdom; Carolyn Marie Choo, Malaysia; Sheila Williams-Ridge, United States; Margaret Akinware, Nigeria

#19 GRAND BALLROOM POLICY/ADVOCACY

Advocacy and Policy for a More Just and Peaceful Early Childhood World

The panel moves from policy development & working with government to supporting and training for education, health and social services professionals, and on to support and education for families and community leaders.

Avante Educação e Mobilização Social is focusing on supporting young children's needs and rights through integrated public policies addressing early childhood comprehensively to ensure full development, care for the vulnerable, guarantee provision, protection, and participation rights for all children.

Approved policies and implementations focus on supporting young children's needs and rights, through meaningful pathways, key challenges, and concrete results through programs and service.
The Council for Professional Recognition issues (CDA) credentials worldwide. Together with national & state partners, they advocate for fair and just policies on behalf of early educators.

Educators for Peaceful Classrooms and Communities (EPCC) with community and educational partners advocate for just, peaceful early childhood policies & provide educator & family trainings in advocacy related to communication skills, anti-bias, conflict resolution, trauma-informed care, self-care, & building community partnerships.

Maria Thereza Marcilio, Brazil; Ana Luiza Buratto, Brazil; Deborah Kotek Selistre, Brazil; Elisa Shepherd, United States; Auxilia Williams, United States; Wilma Gold, United States

#18 ACCORD NETWORK LEADERSHIP/JOYFUL ORGS

Joyful Organizations in Action

Joy is a leadership practice! Experience six elements of a joyful organization through interaction and shared global stories. Leave with actions you can bring into your own organization, team, spaces, & mission.

Mariëlla Carr, Canada; Karen Foster-Jorgensen, Canada; Nidene Johnson, Canada; Patrick Makokoro, Canada

#23 SENTRAL BALLROOM A FAMILIES

Where Learning Lives: Homes, Hearts, and Generations Building Early Childhood Together

Early childhood education is moving beyond classrooms and into the heart of family and community life. In Uganda LABE provides home based early childhood education using local resources and shared caregiving to expand access sustainably. Nepal explores intergenerational programs, elders, parents, and children exchange stories, skills, and cultural knowledge, grounding education in lived experience. In Indonesia, character, compassion, and integrity shape each child's growth alongside academics. In Canada, 24-hour care honours families' varied schedules, creating flexible, relationship-based spaces that feel like home at any hour. Together, these approaches reimagine family engagement as partnership rather than participation. When learning reflects culture, time, and community realities, it becomes meaningful, inclusive, and lasting. Education thrives not in buildings alone, but wherever families gather, share responsibility, and nurture children together.

Stellah Keihangwe Tumwebaze, Uganda; Mukunda Kshetree, Nepal; Iing Felicia Joe, Indonesia; Kyla Penner, Canada; Sherry Duncan, Canada

#37 SENTRAL BALLROOM B PLAY

Yes! Play Foundations Are Required For Tomorrow's AI Workplace!

This high-impact panel brings us together to reframe the critical importance of prioritizing play and brain development in the early years as KEY REQUIREMENTS for 2035 workforce projections. Explore these projections for today's Generation Alpha children and their future work environments. See how Malaysia is laying foundations by embracing play experiences through cultural games and traditions. Explore how we will need new language and renewed courage to defend play in systems that increasingly value speed, data, and compliance over joy, connection, and deep learning.

Build your strategies to speak about how play builds lifelong foundations to think, connect, and imagine - when technology and standardization threaten to erase what makes childhood human. Advocate for PLAY!

Barbara Easton, Scotland; Mazlina Che Mustafa, Malaysia; Angela Bayer-Persico, United States

#49 GRAND SUITE 1&2 INCLUSION

Inclusion in Action: Global Stories, Practical Strategies

Explore how stories from educators around the world shaped practical guidelines to enhance inclusion for children with special needs in early learning and childcare settings. Hear real examples, inspiring lessons, and actionable strategies you can apply to create inclusive programs where every child belongs.

Roberta J. Goldberg, United States; Gerrie Stolz, Canada; Anne Subashini Sivanathan, Malaysia

#25 GRAND SUITE 3 DEI

Honoring Rights and Relationships: Creating Culturally Responsive Environments for Children and Their Families

Presenters will share insights from working with Roma and Indigenous families, illustrating how culturally responsive approaches and community-led initiatives can remove barriers, build trust and unlock the potential of every child. Lived experiences will be shared from teaching in a community preschool in Victoria, Australia, and Roma families in Europe within services and communities.

Content will:

• Explore the long-term developmental impact of trauma/instability/exclusion, and demonstrate how holistic support can transform life chances/promote resilience/foster inclusion/dignity/hope

• Focus on the urgent situation of children affected by conflict/violence/forced migration, drawing attention to Roma children living in extreme poverty in segregated settlements across Europe

• Draw the audience's attention to The Indigenous Early Care and Education Understandings and Perspectives document, rooted in community voice and informed by Elders/knowledge keepers/educators/families.

Petr Torak, United Kingdom; Karen Anderson, Australia

BREAKOUT SESSION #3

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15

4:15 PM-5:45 PM

WOFO GLOBAL CAFÉ

Honoring Children's Rights: Innovation in Action

Let's talk about how we can all be catalysts for change to create a better future for generations to come, as part of a global action for impact movement. Be inspired by stories from the Working Group on Children's Rights to overcome obstacles and turn visions of children's rights into reality and share your own story.

Meenakshi Dahal, Nepal; Pat Furman, Canada; Karen Graham, Wales; Ana Oliva Marcilio de Souza, Brazil; Anne Subashini Sivanathan, Malaysia

#53 GRAND BALLROOM LEADERSHIP

Leading with Vision and Integrity: Transforming Early Childhood Education for a Sustainable Future

Early childhood leaders shape organizational climate, workforce stability, family partnerships, and children's learning experiences. Yet leaders face mounting pressures, including staffing shortages, ethical dilemmas, and demands for sustainability and equity.

This panel explores how leadership can create environments that support both educator well-being and high-quality learning. Presenters will highlight strategies for workforce recruitment and retention, adult wellness, ethical decision-making, and inclusive family engagement. Drawing on research and evaluation findings from leadership development initiatives, panelists will share evidence-based approaches to preparing and sustaining new administrators. Together, the session positions leadership as a transformative force for resilient, ethical, and sustainable early childhood systems.

Clover Spears, United States; Xiaoli Wen, United States; Leslie Layman, United States; Alice Sharp, Scotland; June O'Sullivan, United Kingdom; Jesslynn Rajes, Malaysia

#14 ACCORD NETWORK ECWI

Navigating Through Obstacles That Block Your Journey

Sharing stories across generations, we create connections, build understanding, strengthen well-being, and open possibilities for new ideas. Educators and advocates of diverse ages and experiences need each other. Stories build bridges.

Ebru Aktan, Turkey; Larissa Sousa, Mozambique; Caroline Hudicourt, Haiti; Holly Elissa Bruno, United States; Jerry Parr, United States; Roger Neugebauer, United States; Bonnie Neugebauer, United States

#48 SENTRAL BALLROOM A INCLUSION

Behavior Is Communication: Two Evidence-Informed Approaches for Challenging Behavior

When behaviour escalates, educators need a shared lens and practical plan. Kaye McKean (New Zealand) from Kakapo Creek shares evidence-based, attachment and neuroscience-informed practice to restore teachability through connection and co-regulation. You'll learn what to do for high alarm, separation distress, aggression, and big emotions - while protecting play and dignity. Donna Fowler (United States) from Teaching Strategies drawing on a study from a Malaysia pilot of GOLD® will show how culturally responsive observation and assessment turns everyday moments into clear profiles and next steps. We'll unpack a case study to show how the approaches shift outcomes. You'll leave with practical strategies for immediate support and next-step planning.

Kaye McKeon, New Zealand; Donna Fowler, United States

#21 SENTRAL BALLROOM B POLICY/ADVOCACY

Changing the Ecosystem of Childcare: Policy and Advocacy Strategies in Three Countries

The first presenters will describe a study that investigates the growing demand for quality child care services in Bangladesh as care increasingly shifts from family-based arrangements to institutional centers, driven by women's workforce participation and rising awareness of children's socio-emotional well-being. The study analyzes regulatory enforcement, workforce training, resources, and socio-cultural resistance. It highlights implications for strengthening the child care system, expanding access to quality services, and promoting public-private partnerships.

The second presenter draws from his experience as a practitioner and advocate from Nepal, illustrating how grassroots efforts have fostered systemic improvements in ECD policy and resource distribution. Using the Seeds of Change initiative in Nepal, as a case study, he will demonstrate how locally managed Child Development Funds (CDFs) have enhanced ECD classrooms by incorporating community engagement and local dialects into education. The session will examine the Child Development Fund (CDF) model—a community-run, school-based financial system created to provide sustainable support to ECD programs with limited dependence on external funding. Participants will gain insights into effective strategies for implementation, community mobilization, and partnership between local communities and municipal authorities. The discussion will highlight the importance of stepping beyond traditional boundaries to co-develop solutions that are both contextually relevant and systemically impactful.

The third presenter will explore community-based early childhood development (ECD) initiatives, emphasising the role of multisectoral collaboration in expanding access to inclusive and responsive services. It also highlights challenges in shifting community perceptions around early intervention and play, and discusses sustainability considerations for grassroots ECD efforts, particularly on the management of toy libraries, with a focus on community ownership and long-term capacity building.

Md. Ahsan Habib, Bangladesh; Dinesh Raj Sapkota, Nepal; Nur Afifah Abd Fatah, Malaysia; Raihan Mohamed, Malaysia; Shilpi Rana Saha, Bangladesh

#26 INNOVATION SUITE A NATURE

From Early Childhood to Higher Ed: A Robust Approach to Environmental Education

This panel presents a robust framework for fostering environmental education in early childhood settings, from classroom implementation to undergraduate teacher preparation. The session explores the development of essential life skills as children are engaged in purposeful nature-based learning that sparks expert thinking—systems, analytical, and critical thinking. Our panel will also discuss how to integrate inquiry-based learning and eco curriculum in indoor and outdoor eco-environment setup. Lastly, to ensure educators are well equipped, we will share a successful model for addressing nature-based learning in an undergraduate early childhood education degree program. The framework pays attention to the well-being of children, rich content learning afforded by engagements in natural environments, creating access to natural places, to name a few. This panel's discussion provides critical considerations for the professional development of current and future early childhood educators and leaders.

Antarina SF Amir, Indonesia; Yash Baghwanji, United States; Nurul Nadiah Sahimi, Malaysia

#27 GRAND SUITE 1&2 DESIGN

Learning Outside the Lines: Natural Spaces and Practices That Inspire Inclusive Learning

Inclusive early learning begins with environments and practices intentionally designed to support every child. This session explores how thoughtfully designed natural spaces—both outdoors and indoors—can expand access, engagement, and belonging for young learners, including children with autism and other neurodivergent profiles. Participants will discover how nature-rich environments support sensory regulation, communication, creativity, and diverse learning styles. We will also examine how nature provides a powerful foundation for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) through hands-on, inquiry-based experiences that encourage problem-solving, experimentation, and collaboration. In addition, we will highlight the positive impact natural environments can have on educator well-being and teaching practices. Attendees will leave with practical strategies for designing inclusive, nature-inspired learning environments and experiences for all children.

Tonio Altieri-D'Alo, United States; Daniel Burton, Australia; Gillian McAuliffe, Australia; Masarrat Tavawalla, India; Samantha Yan Yee Lau, Malaysia

#33 GRAND SUITE 3 CLIMATE

Cultivating Sustainable Futures through Humanistic Early Childhood Education

In a climate-changing world, empowering young children begins with reimagining sustainability as both action and identity. This session explores how Early Childhood Care and Education can integrate environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and humanistic values through evidence-based programming. Drawing on field projects in rural communities—including nutrition gardens to strengthen food security, solar-powered water systems ensuring safe water access, climate-responsive learning infrastructure, and community capacity building—this presentation demonstrates practical strategies that improve children's wellbeing amid climate challenges. Participants will discover how the 4Rs (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) can become moral learning experiences that nurture empathy, resilience, and responsibility. Join us to explore how holistic, community-driven ECE models can empower children not only to adapt to climate change, but to shape a more sustainable future.

Soonita Kistamah, Mauritius; Amanda Tan Saw Hong, Malaysia; Garikai Makokoro, Zimbabwe; Khariza Abd Khalid, Malaysia

BREAKOUT SESSION #4

THURSDAY, APRIL 16
11:00 AM-12:30 PM

WOFO GLOBAL CAFÉ

Lifelong Belonging — World Forum Style

Join us in WoFo Global Café to brainstorm possibilities for the Early Childhood Wisdom Initiative to create cross generational connections through storytelling.

Early Childhood Wisdom Initiative Members and Allies

#39 – GRAND BALLROOM PLAY

Coming Back to Play

Let's play now with curiosity, integrity, and a pursuit of deeper understanding, reflection, and connection.

Diana Suskind, United States; Ali McClure, United Kingdom; Jery Yeoh, Malaysia; Kenneth Sherman, United States

#30 ACCORD NETWORK MEN

Greening the Gender Desert: Why We Need More Men in the Worldwide ECEC Workforce

Some children will not encounter a male educator until high school. Why is this a concern? Why might this impact negatively on their life trajectories? Why are there so few men working in ECEC across the World and what might be done to address this? Join our session to hear the views of experienced colleagues from across the World. Come ready to participate in discussion and sharing as we explore this important topic together.

Jonathan Yong Han Lau, Malaysia; Martyn Mills-Bayne, Australia; Kenny Spence, Scotland; David Wright, England; Loyan Beausoleil, United States

#15 SENTRAL BALLROOM A RIGHTS

Children's Rights in Daily Life, Part One: Navigating Challenges, Values, and Tensions

Join us to examine the foundations of children's rights, from key theoretical ideas to their application in everyday practice. We'll explore challenges that arise when our values, assumptions, and beliefs are tested in our work with children and families. We will reflect on what it means to remain committed to children's rights, even when this creates tension or discomfort. We'll highlight connections between adult's and children's rights within community-based approaches. Real-life examples will make these ideas visible and meaningful. This is the first of two consecutive sessions immersing participants in various perspectives and pathways to becoming active advocates for children globally. We warmly welcome anyone interested in children's rights to join us.

Karen Graham, Wales; Pat Furman, Canada: Meenakshi Dahal, Nepal

#50 SENTRAL BALLROOM B LEADERSHIP

Rooted in Relationship: Strengthening the Foundation of Early Childhood Leadership

Strong leadership in early childhood settings doesn't happen by chance—it develops through intentional relationships, ongoing reflection, and resilience. In this session, participants will explore leadership development through the metaphor of a tree—its roots, trunk, branches, leaves, and canopy—to reflect on what sustains thriving leaders and teams.

We will examine the core elements of relationship-centered leadership: self-awareness; communication and trust; meaningful connection; resilience and flexibility; and mentorship and advocacy. As the session unfolds, a visual tree will be built slide by slide, culminating in a "Tree of HOPE" that symbolizes collective growth, shared purpose, and the strength of a connected leadership community.

Mary-Louise Clifford, Australia; Monica Duncan, United States; Kellee Nelson, United States; Priscilla Weigel, United States; Laura Wilhelm, United States

#2 INNOVATION SUITE A GLs

Global Leaders Reflect on Needs of Young Learners

Members of the current cohort of Global Leaders reflect the question "What need in early childhood development am I called to address in my community as a Global Leader?" In this panel, Global Leaders will reflect on how they can bring best practices for development and learning to young children in their contexts.

Danielle Ochieng, Kenya; Kuri Chisim, Bangladesh; Theresia Method, Tanzania; Titus Ting, Singapore; Rangika Manamperi, Sri Lanka

#35 GRAND SUITE 1&2 TECH/AI

Child-Centered AI in ECCE: Tools, Playful Innovation, and Relational Practice

As artificial intelligence enters early childhood spaces, how can educators embrace innovation while remaining grounded in child-centered values? This session explores practical and principled approaches to AI in Early Childhood Care and Education. Presenters introduce the Ark of Knowledge, a collaborative AI-powered digital library supporting equitable access to trusted ECCE resources. We share early research on playful AI tools, including a social robot and an AI-supported story-making app that scaffold communication, creativity, and inclusive participation without replacing human relationships. Finally, we situate AI readiness within embodied, relational, and culturally rooted practices, highlighting African perspectives that foreground identity, community, and distinctly human capacities. Together, these presentations offer ethical frameworks and practical strategies for navigating AI with purpose and care.

Jen Poulton, United Kingdom; Tadiwanashe Udzembwe, Zimbabwe; Pedro Olivares, Mexico; Nicolas Galindo, Mexico

#7 GRAND SUITE 3 CLIMATE

Young Children's Voices on Climate Change: Research from Local Regional and Global Perspectives

This session brings together emerging research with young children and families about the impacts of climate change from community perspectives with Laila Jabeen from Pakistan, regional perspectives with Neelima Chopra, representing ARNEC in the Asia-Pacific region, and global perspectives with Kumara Ward from the University of Dundee. Their findings are drawn from participants in more than 16 countries and examine climate-related disruptions to young children's physical wellbeing, social and emotional learning, and mental health, as well as the experiences of parents in climate-affected communities. Participants will be invited to reflect on and share their own climate change related pedagogies/experiences and actions, and collaborate with us in the development of advocacy statements to support young children's voices and their agency in our climate changed world.

Neelima Chopra, India; Laila Jabeen, Pakistan; Kumara Ward, United Kingdom

BREAKOUT SESSION #5

THURSDAY, APRIL 16

2:00 PM-3:30 PM

WOFO GLOBAL CAFÉ

Technology in Early Care and Education

Join us at the 2026 World Forum Global Café for an engaging conversation about technology in early care and education. Explore an innovative application we've been developing and take the opportunity to interact with technology, ask questions, and share ideas with fellow attendees.

Jen Poulton, United Kingdom; Pedro Olivares, Mexico; Nicolas Galindo, Mexico; Khet Khumar, Pakistan

#36 – GRAND BALLROOM PLAY

Play, Wellbeing and Change

With children's and adults' well-being in mind, we highlight three approaches to change across different cultural contexts, fostering a dynamic approach to Early Childhood teaching. We argue that 'Play for Play's Sake' is essential to human wellbeing and healthy brain development. Creative teaching and research-informed practices, including action research and classroom experiences, illustrate how we support adult readiness for innovation to meet the changing needs of children and families in our communities in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the Philippines. Join us to share ideas and discuss how our ideas resonate in your community of practice.

Caroline Wright, United Kingdom; Michelle Demirtas, United Kingdom; Gabby Roa-Limjoco, Philippines; Fotini Valsilopoulos, Australia

#9 ACCORD NETWORK CLIMATE

Hands-On sustainability!

Join us for a practical, hands-on session with thought-provoking activities to use with your class, focusing on how your children, colleagues and classroom can be engaged in entrepreneurial, sustainable activities. A fun, engaging session that will inspire you to take your classroom to the next level.

Cheryl Hadland, United Kingdom; Julie Hay, South Africa; Bilkish Vawda, South Africa

#16 SENTRAL BALLROOM A RIGHTS

Children's Rights in Daily Life, Part Two: Rights in Action

Let's focus on bringing rights into action and advocating for children who are not experiencing their rights to provision, protection or participation. Explore ways to encourage others to advocate for children. Gain insight into establishing rights-based projects in your own community or country, and learn how your project can become part of the Global Action for Impact Network (GAIN) and World Forum community. We encourage everyone to get involved in this supportive network for rights-promoting initiatives. We can all make a difference both during and between our World Forum events. Join us and build global momentum to make a significant impact on children's lives, one rights-promoting project at a time.

Ana Oliva Marcilio de Souza, Brazil; Karen Graham, Wales

#13 SENTRAL BALLROOM B DEI

Seen. Heard. Included. Designing Spaces Where Everyone Belongs

In early childhood education, belonging is not optional, it is foundational. This workshop explores how educators can intentionally create environments where every child feels seen for who they are, heard in their voice and experiences, and included in meaningful ways. Participants will examine culturally responsive practices, inclusive classroom design, social-emotional, child-led engagement, and strategies that honor diverse identities, abilities, and family backgrounds. Through reflection and practical tools, educators will leave with concrete ways to cultivate dignity, connection, and joyful participation in their learning spaces.

Danielle DeSano-Smith, United States; Tatenda Blessing Muchiriri, Zimbabwe; Makomborero Carl Muropa, Zimbabwe; Shilpa Lazarus, Malaysia

#42 INNOVATION SUITE A CURRICULUM

Playful Pathways to Creative Thinking

Discover how intentional play transforms learning. This dynamic training explores how open-ended exploration and structured games build creativity, language, self-regulation, and problem-solving in the early years. Learn how to make assessment more organic and observation-based—where growth is visible, authentic, and stress-free Play becomes both the pathway and the proof of learning.

Javier Casio, United States; Luz Casio, United States; Karina Rojas, United States; Shilpa Solanki, India

#4 GRAND SUITE 1&2 CONFLICT/TRAUMA

Invisible No More: Families and Relationships at the forefront for Young Carers and Refugees

Invisible No More: Families and Relationships on the Frontline for Young Carers and Refugees brings together expert voices from the UK and Australia to spotlight children whose needs are often hidden. UK practitioners will share insights into the lived experiences and long-term impacts on young carers, highlighting why early identification and family-centred support are critical. Then, drawing on Australian practice and policy contexts, we will explore how early learning services can become trusted frontline support networks for refugee and non-citizen children facing systemic barriers to care. Through interactive activities, real-world scenarios and practical tools, participants will build confidence to recognise hidden vulnerability, strengthen relationships with families, and take early, meaningful action. Expect an engaging, energising session with clear takeaways for practice.

Jo Cooper, United Kingdom; Natalie Adamson, United Kingdom; Karthika Viknarasah, Australia

#52 GRAND SUITE 3 LEADERSHIP

Leadership Journeys: Life Stories of Leadership Pathways

This interactive session explores how early childhood leaders grow through lived experience, continuous improvement, and practitioner voice. Panelists share global insights on leadership trajectories, life histories, and mentorship. Participants engage in reflective activities using CQI and strength-based tools to identify growth areas and leave with actionable steps for leadership development.

Alecia D Jackson, United States; Graeme Severinsen, New Zealand; Andrea Lown, United States; Dora Sanders, United States

BREAKOUT SESSION #6

THURSDAY, APRIL 16

4:15 PM-5:45 PM

WOFO GLOBAL CAFÉ

Joyful Organizations in Action

Six elements, one joyful space. Short stories and fast activities help you reflect, connect across cultures, and choose 1 next step - including how sustainable finances strengthen every other element.

Karen Foster-Jorgensen, Canada; Patrick Makokoro, Canada; Nidene Johnson, Canada; Mariëlla Carr, Canada

#10 GRAND BALLROOM DEI

Belonging Isn't Extra: Culture, Family, and Neurodiversity in the Classroom

Join us and learn practical ways that you can engage your families, harvest the wealth of culture, and the beauty of neurodiversity in your environment today. We will bring perspectives and experiences from Cote d'Ivoire, Nepal, USA, and Montessori philosophy, with diverse families, schools, and organizations. Belonging is not a "bonus" we offer when there is time. It is the foundation of learning. And yet, in many schools, belonging is still treated as optional—especially for children whose culture, language, behavior, or nervous system does not match the expectations of the classroom and society. When we center culture and family in education, we do more than build community. We build understanding. Families hold essential knowledge about their child: what helps them regulate, what overwhelms them, what motivates them, and what safety looks like in their home and identity. For neurodivergent children, this partnership is not a nice idea; it is necessary. A culturally and developmentally responsive classroom does not ask children to earn acceptance by acting "typical." It adapts, it listens, and it prepares the adult and the environment. Inclusion is not a program. It is a daily practice of respect.

Maria Chaffin, Venezuela/United States; Shanta Dixit, Nepal; Evelyn Keomian-Wood, Cote d'Ivoire/United States; John Nimmo, Australia/United States

#5 ACCORD NETWORK CLIMATE

Pedagogy for a Climate Changing World

Educators of young children find it difficult to imagine the future in which these children must function in the increasingly severe context of climate change, increasing poverty, and more frequent displacement and conflict. It is therefore essential that the curriculum and pedagogy used by early childhood educators serve to transmit the knowledge, skills, and values required now and in the future to help mitigate, and adapt to, the impacts of climate change. Good examples of curriculum and pedagogy will be featured to help young children face the challenges of climate change.

Sheldon Shaeffer, Thailand; Erwin Mahendra Eka Saputra, Indonesia; Citra Cininta, Indonesia; Larissa Sousa, Mozambique

#24 SENTRAL BALLROOM A SEL

Healing, Protection, and Possibility: Building Trauma-Responsive and Empowering Early Childhood Systems

This breakout session brings together global perspectives on strengthening early care and education through trauma-responsive, rights-based, and equity-focused approaches. Presenters will explore how to support adults in ECE to find meaning and resilience through trauma while recognizing neurodivergence and creativity as strengths.

Holly Elissa Bruno, United States; Shaima Namavar, Kuwait; Sarah Nadiv, United States

#38 SENTRAL BALLROOM B PLAY

Joyful Learning - Through Meaningful Play

Please join us to explore joyful learning and conceptual development through meaningful, physical, nature-based play.

Play is a natural and powerful medium through which children construct knowledge and develop essential life skills.

Through direct experiences, active participation, inquiry, and reflection, children internalise concepts in stress-free, cooperative, and communicative environments.

Drawing from our nature- and play-based kindergarten program, we will share how thoughtfully designed outdoor and physical play experiences foster cognitive growth, social competence, emotional resilience, creativity, and problem-solving abilities.

We also invite dialogue on integrating nature-based and play-based learning into early childhood education to promote holistic and lifelong development for all children.

Swati Kishor Kela, India; Cornelia G McKeehan, United States; Bryan W. O'Callahan, United States; Norfazilah Ameer Sultan, Malaysia

#28 INNOVATION SUITE A DESIGN

The Power of Calm: Supporting Children's Regulation Through Environmental Design and Adult Presence

This session explores how adults can create the emotional and physical conditions children need to feel safe enough to regulate their feelings, behaviors, and social interactions. We will examine the internal processes children rely on, the adult behaviors that support them, and environmental features that either strengthen or disrupt emotional stability. Participants will gain practical, immediately usable strategies for anchoring children's emotions within their surroundings. These include using sensory cues, predictable routines, visual supports, and calm physical spaces to help children feel grounded and secure, especially during moments of stress or dysregulation. By connecting theory with practical examples, this session provides a foundation for understanding how adult presence, psychological containment, and intentional environmental design work together to build children's capacity for self-regulation.

Tupou Draunidalo, Fiji; Heidi Hill, United Kingdom; Kathryn Murray, Australia; Analesi Tuicaumia Fiji; Temesia Tuicaumia, Fiji

#41 GRAND SUITE 1&2 WELLNESS

Thriving Adults, Thriving Children

We can't build thriving early childhood communities while neglecting the adults within them. Join us in this interactive session as we explore how to support adults to have full 'Cups' from which to pour, while building a culture and a system for wellbeing. Adults thrive within space to be their authentic selves and use their story to make the sector stronger for those who come after them. Reflect with us on how your organizational structure might be serving or undermining your efforts to live your values. You will leave with a shared language for noticing unmet needs and frameworks that strengthen the culture and structure of your early childhood community. Let's figure out together how to thrive in ECE.

Meenakshi Dahal, Nepal; Jenn Slack, United States; Sandi Phoenix, Australia; Chris Phoenix, Australia

#56 GRAND SUITE 3 DEI

Community Driven Language Preservation for Young Children in Mongolia and New Mexico, United States

Highlighting case studies from Mongolia and New Mexico, USA to support early childhood community driven language preservation. Presenters will share case studies that emphasize the role of community partnerships in revitalizing and reclaiming languages. The work highlights both challenges and successes, strategies and partnerships that have strengthened nearly lost languages and reinforced cultural identity among young learners.

Jennifer Duran-Sallee, United States; Victoria Tafoya, United States; Javzandulam Batsaikhan, Mongolia

BREAKOUT SESSION #7

FRIDAY, APRIL 17

8:30 AM-10:00 AM

WOFO GLOBAL CAFÉ

Race and Racisms Worldwide: How do these issues show up in your Region and Country?

This Global Café conversation invites YOU to reflect on how race, racisms, colonial histories, diversity, and power influence early childhood care and education across different countries. Through open, respectful dialogue and shared experiences, we will explore what is happening in our own contexts and why equity and inclusion matter for young children and their futures. Join colleagues from around the world to exchange perspectives and consider pathways toward a more equitable world for children.

Members of the Working Group on Race, Racism, Equity and Diversity (RRED)

#32 GRAND BALLROOM INFANTS/TODDLERS

Small Steps, Big Impact: Equity in Pedagogical and Pediatric Care for Infants and Toddlers

Every infant and toddler has a story. This session centers on the voices of infants, toddlers, and their families, alongside dedicated professionals. We will explore what we have noticed in the world of infants and toddlers as we navigate pediatric and pedagogical landscapes. Participants will engage with strategies designed to champion the holistic well-being of children during their most formative years. Together, we will redefine what it means to provide equitable, responsive care that honors every child's uniqueness.

Pyae Phyo Aung, Myanmar; Elsa Chahin, United States; Therese Wiart Jenkinson, Canada

#31 ACCORD NETWORK MEN

The Silent Revolution: How Engaging Men is Transforming Early Childhood Education

Men's participation in early childhood education (ECE) represents a quiet but powerful shift—one that deserves active encouragement and support in both personal and professional spheres. When men are meaningfully involved, young children gain access to a broader range of nurturing styles, learning approaches, and models of empathy. This diversity helps them see multiple, authentic expressions of masculinity and femininity, giving them the foundation to build more inclusive, equitable, and emotionally rich relationships as they grow. In this way, engaging men in ECE becomes a transformative force, reshaping the learning environment and expanding what children imagine possible.

Cliff Yan, China; Ikanshi Khanna, India

#34 SENTRAL BALLROOM A TECH/AI

AI Literacy in ECE: Ethical GenAI in ECE Supporting Children's Agency, Wellbeing, and Teacher Competence

This session explores ethical uses of generative AI in early childhood education, with a focus on children's agency, wellbeing, privacy, and equity. It examines how AI literacy can be understood in ways that align with early childhood values and responsibilities to young learners and their whānau. The presentation considers the competencies teachers need to engage critically and confidently with AI, and the implications for initial teacher education (ITE). Practical strategies are shared to support teacher educators and student teachers to make informed, ethical decisions about AI use in early learning contexts.

Yolanda Carlos, United States; Rosina Merry, New Zealand; Nikki Parsons, New Zealand

#6 SENTRAL BALLROOM B CLIMATE

From the Indus to the Niger: A Cross-Continental Tale of ECD and Climate Resilience

How does climate change transform the daily reality of a young child? Early Childhood Development (ECD) through the lived experiences of Pakistan, Malaysia, Nigeria, and South Africa. This session moves beyond global statistics to reveal the local face of environmental shifts from the intense heatwaves and smog affecting schools in Pakistan to the flooding and food security challenges impacting families across Africa and Southeast Asia.

Our co-presenters share stories of how these regional crises directly disrupt health, nutrition, and early learning. We will discuss the specific risks faced by each country while highlighting the resilient, community-led strategies emerging to protect the next generation. Participants will walk away with a deep, cross-continental understanding of how to advocate for child-centred climate policies.

Khet Kumar, Pakistan; Adrian Cerezo, Philippines; Margaret Akinware, South Africa; Mmatsetshuweu (Ruby) Motaung, Nigeria; Syaza Soraya binti Sauli, Malaysia

#3 GRAND SUITE 1&2 GLs

Global Leaders Reflect on Meeting Needs in Their Communities

Members of the current cohort of Global Leaders reflect the question "What need in early childhood development am I called to address in my community as a Global Leader?" In this panel, Global Leaders will share about how they are working to meet needs of specific groups of young children in their context.

Sandy Lara Pereira dos Anjos, Brazil; Thinley Wangmo, Bhutan; Sk Md Faisal Hossain, Bangladesh; Joylet Genda, Malawi; Mutegeki Moses, Kenya

#40 GRAND SUITE 3 PLAY

UNLOCKING THE MAGIC OF PLAY

This panel explores the transformative power of play as a vital driver of children's learning, creativity, and social development. It will examine how play can be shaped by the unique topography and resources of each country, highlighting ways environments can meaningfully enhance play experiences. The discussion will also consider how surrounding environments can become valuable resources that stimulate inclusive, engaging spaces where all children can thrive.

Harsha G Ramaiya, India; Aswathi Das J, India; Hayley Peacock, United Kingdom

BREAKOUT SESSION #8

FRIDAY, APRIL 17

10:15 AM-11:45 AM

WOFO GLOBAL CAFÉ

Let's Reflect and Connect

Join us in the Café for a chance to reflect and share your questions, insights, and plans that have surfaced or solidified during our week together. This is an open-ended opportunity to connect on the topics and issues that are most important to YOU!

#29 GRAND BALLROOM NATURE

Rooted in Nature: How Children Learn, Grow, and Belong

Come join us in a conversation rooted in soil, rhythm, and the quiet wisdom of the natural world. We will explore how children grow when their learning follows the landscapes of their interests, cultures, and senses and reflect on research that shows how our connections to nature nurtures empathy, calm, and curiosity. Discover how simple daily rhythms—movement and stillness, nourishment and rest—become pathways to belonging and self-fulfillment. Through stories, examples, and shared insights, step into this invitation to imagine learning that breathes with the rhythms of nature and of the children we serve to inspire educators to open more doors to the outdoors, honor children's identities, and create gentle, flexible routines that help every child flourish.

Sandra Duncan, United States; Karen Flynn, Scotland; Megan Gessler, United States; Joellen Lewsader, United States; Ricardo Ramos, United States; Sheila Williams-Ridge, United States; Jennifer Yarbrough, United States

#44 ACCORD NETWORK CURRICULUM

The Stories We Tell, The Worlds We Create

The stories we tell, the worlds we create, invite you into an interactive storytelling experience where drama, oracy, and light and shadow play come together to enrich early years development. The session opens with an immersive children's story, placing participants inside a lived learning experience that mirrors the rich, embodied discovery we aim to create for young children. Through drama, spoken language, simple materials, and light and shadow, participants experience how engagement, meaning-making, and learning emerge through play.

As the experience unfolds, we surface the learning embedded within these encounters, highlighting three complementary areas of focus. Oracy develops confident communicators through storytelling, rhyme, rhythm, repetition, and playful language. Drama and role-play cultivate social-emotional skills, imaginative thinking, and problem-solving. Light, colour, and shadow spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and support shared meaning-making.

Together, these approaches demonstrate how experiential storytelling, play, and dramatic exploration foster connection, support learning, and build foundational skills for life.

Molly Bird, Singapore; Jennifer Kesselring, United States; Ronnelle Sanders, Australia; Deb Wilson, Australia

#51 SENTRAL BALLROOM A LEADERSHIP

Stronger Educators, Stronger Futures: Approaches to Sustainable Workforce Development

High-quality early childhood education depends on a knowledgeable, supported, and empowered workforce. Yet, educators face systemic barriers including limited career pathways, low compensation, and fragmented professional development structures. This session brings together innovative strategies that demonstrate how comprehensive workforce investment can drive measurable and sustainable change. Participants will learn strategies and models to strengthen the early childhood workforce and how culturally responsive and values-driven leadership practices can foster educator well-being, strengthen professional identity, and improve workforce retention.

Karen Yarbrough, United States; Monica Duncan, United States

#11 SENTRAL BALLROOM B DEI

The Village Is Already Teaching: Reimagining Early Childhood Education Through Place, Climate, and Community

Across the world, educators work within distinct cultural, ecological, and social landscapes. Yet global frameworks can overlook the powerful role of local context in shaping children's learning and identity. This presentation asks: what if the village is not simply a setting for curriculum, but a living part of it?

Through three perspectives, we explore how place, climate, and community act as co-teachers. Rather than opposing global collaboration, we propose that our diverse contexts are our shared strength. When we honour climate, culture, language, and community memory, we deepen belonging and identity. Participants will reflect on their own settings and ask: What is your village already teaching?

Melanie Borski-Howard, United States; Rob Fox, United Kingdom; Pat Furman, Canada

#46 GRAND SUITE 1&2 SEL

Holding Steady Together: The Three C's of Co-Regulation for Children's Emotional Well-Being

We'll open with a fast-paced "lightning round" to spark ideas: Diane Goyette will introduce her Three C's of Co-Regulation—connection, calming, and compassion—as foundations for children's emotional well-being. Gabrielle Holt will explore how respectful relationships build lifelong social-emotional strength. Mya Sharma will guide us in calming practices adaptable for toddlers across settings. Diane will close the round by clarifying what compassion during upset is—and isn't. Then we'll slow down and move into the heart of the session—an hour of small-group conversation and whole-group sharing. Expect meaningful dialogue and practical ideas to bring back to your community.

Diane Goyette, United States; Gabrielle Holt, United States; Mya Sharma, United Kingdom

#47 GRAND SUITE 3 INCLUSION

Multi-Cultural Inclusive Early Care and Education

Panelists highlight practical and family-centered approaches to supporting infants and young children with special needs. Using real cases and lived experiences, the session explores early intervention, public–private collaboration, and advocacy efforts. Presenters will also discuss multicultural perspectives, systems building, and the barriers communities face in ensuring inclusive early learning for all children.

Mahanom Basri, Malaysia; Afia Konadu Kyei, Canada; Vikate Phannalath, Laos