

# creating <sup>★</sup>the *future*

Saturday, April 25th | South Piedmont Community College



Earn  
**5 hours**  
of DCDEE  
training  
credit!

PRESENTED BY



IN COLLABORATION WITH



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**  
Division of Child Development  
and Early Education



United Way  
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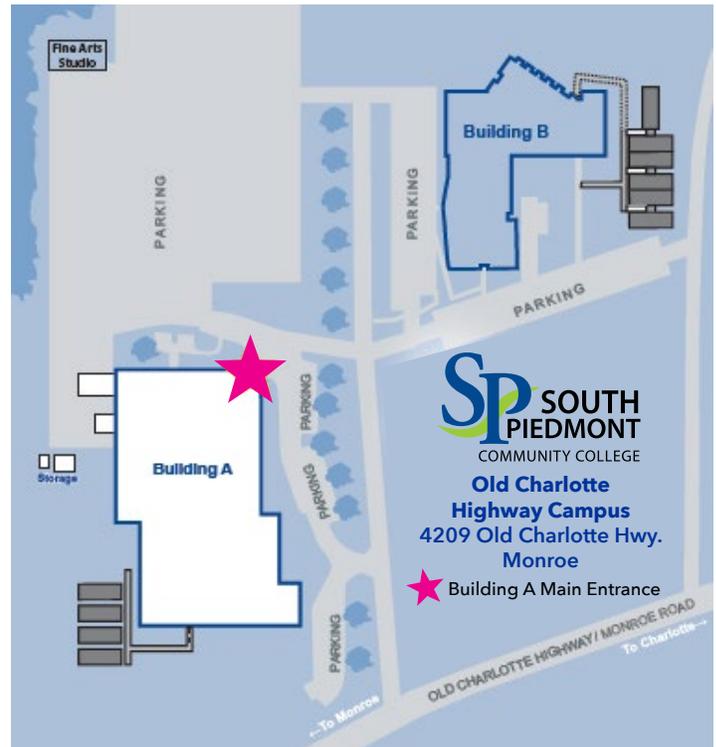
a partner in the  
smart start network



# SCHEDULE

SATURDAY, APRIL 25TH

<b>7:15-8 am</b>	Registration/ Light Breakfast
<b>8-8:15 am</b>	Opening Remarks
<b>8:30-10:30 am</b>	Session 1
<b>10:30-11:15 am</b>	Brunch & Vendor Opportunity
<b>11:15 am-12:15 pm</b>	Keynote Address
<b>12:30-2:30 pm</b>	Session 2
<b>2:30-2:45 pm</b>	Closing Remarks & Door Prizes



## REGISTRATION

To register for the conference, scan the QR code or go to [www.ccrinc.org](http://www.ccrinc.org). Once there, select Early Educators, then Creating the Future Conference. See page 6 for step-by-step instructions.

**FINAL REGISTRATION DEADLINE: March 28**

**Priority for workshops will be given on a first-come, first-served basis.**

**5 hours** of DCDEE training credit awarded upon completion of all sessions and keynote.

## PAYMENT

### Early Bird registration (by March 13)

Discounted: \$40 per person  
Regular: \$50 per person

### Final registration (by March 28)

Discounted: \$50 per person  
Regular: \$60 per person

### Discounted rates for the following:

- Facilities sending 15+ staff to conference
- Full-time students at SPCC/CPCC/4-year university
- Union Co. Child Care Assoc. members/staff
- Union Co. Family Child Care Assoc. members/staff

## QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

### Registration

David Mason, Child Care Resources Inc.  
704.376.6697 ext. 136  
[dmason@childcareresourcesinc.org](mailto:dmason@childcareresourcesinc.org)

### Workshops/Presenters

Jennifer Kappas, Child Care Resources Inc.  
704.376.6697 ext. 370  
[jkappas@childcareresourcesinc.org](mailto:jkappas@childcareresourcesinc.org)

*creative,  
curious,  
& engaged*

## How Intentional Teachers Cultivate a **Love of Learning**

Watching a truly intentional early childhood educator in action is a transformative experience. You see it in the way children engage – how they lean in, ask questions, and light up with curiosity.

Intentional teaching is not about doing more – it's about teaching with purpose. Through thoughtful choices, meaningful interactions, and a deep belief in children's potential, educators create the conditions where creativity, curiosity, and engagement can flourish.

Intentional teachers have incredible influence. Through everyday moments and purposeful decisions, they shape confident learners who approach the world with wonder, resilience, and joy.

During this keynote, participants will explore practical, meaningful strategies for fostering a true love of learning, including:

- Creating conditions for learning
- Reading with a purpose
- Leveraging natural curiosity
- Supporting exploration and discovery
- Fostering an intrinsic joy of learning

Join us as we explore how intentional teaching can renew your passion and strengthen your impact. Together, we will reflect, learn, and celebrate the small, intentional moments that make a lasting difference for young children.

### Meet the Speaker

**Dr. Amanda Vestal** is the founding director of the newly endowed Center



for Excellence in Early Childhood Education and an assistant professor in the School of Education at Catawba College. She earned her PhD in Special Education and Child Development from UNC Charlotte and holds a Master of Arts in Teaching (Birth-Kindergarten) and a bachelor's degree in psychology from Salem College.

Dr. Vestal brings extensive experience across early childhood education and early childhood special education, including leadership within North Carolina's state-funded pre-K system, coaching and mentoring pre-service and in-service educators, and contributing to statewide professional development and systems building. Her work centers on personnel preparation, teacher identity development, and the professional growth of early childhood educators.

# SESSION 1 (8:30-10:30 am) Must Select ONE

## WORKSHOP A1

### [Navigating the Waters: Higher Education Pathways for ECE Professionals](#)

*Dr. Sharon Little, Higher Education Liaison, Early Years NC*

This training supports the early childhood workforce in making informed decisions in higher education. Topics include the what, why, and how of higher education, and current education pathways for all early childhood professionals. Participants will design plans for a debt-free education using TEACH Early Childhood North Carolina and will learn about additional supports for the early education workforce.

ALL

## WORKSHOP A2

### [Before the Alarm Bells Ring: EC Process and Red Flags](#)

*Stephenie Huggins and Jessica Conklin, Pre-K Program Specialists, Union County Public Schools – EC Department*

This session equips early childhood educators with essential strategies for working effectively with children with special needs. Participants will learn how to recognize common developmental and behavioral red flags in the classroom; respond to challenging behaviors with supportive, inclusive practices; and foster positive learning environments for all children. The session also emphasizes effective, respectful communication with families, offering tools for partnering with parents to support children's growth and success. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies they can immediately apply in their classrooms.

## WORKSHOP A3

### [From Chaos to Connection: Getting Started with the Pyramid Model](#)

*Mary Highsmith, Pyramid Model Coordinator, Union County Public Schools*  
This session is a must-see for participants

who are new to the Pyramid Model. The presenter will provide an overview of the Pyramid Model and guide participants through the framework on which the model is based. Key practices from each tier of the Pyramid Model will be highlighted, along with resources that support young children's social-emotional competence and help prevent challenging behavior. Participants will engage in discussion, hands-on activities, and self-reflection as they explore the Pyramid Model and learn about the many free, practical resources available to support their work with children.

## WORKSHOP A4

### [Cooperative Play in School-Age Programs](#)

*Catey Brown, Child Development Specialist, Child Care Resources Inc.*

Let's explore the importance of cooperative play in school-age programs and how it supports children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. Participants will learn how structured and unstructured cooperative activities encourage teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and positive peer relationships. The session will highlight practical strategies for facilitating inclusive play, managing group dynamics, and creating an environment where children learn to work together, respect differences, and build confidence. Attendees will leave with ready-to-use ideas and activities that promote collaboration while keeping play fun, engaging, and developmentally appropriate.

## WORKSHOP A5

### [Introduction to the Activities Subscale of the ECERS-3](#)

*Megan Porter, State Anchor, North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project (NCRLAP)*  
This training will provide information about the Activities subscale in the Third Edition

of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (ECERS-3). It will include basic terms and definitions as well as detailed information about specific items and indicators. We'll also review examples of different ways programs can earn credit for various indicators.

## WORKSHOP A6

### [The Wonder Way: Designing a Leadership Culture that Lasts](#)

*Raeann Newsom (School-Age, Office, and Media Administrator), Jordan Carone (Director of Education and Professional Development), Adrian Roberts (Family and Facility Director), Alexa Jackson (Operations and HR Director), Dr. Taylor Spencer (Founder and CEO), Wonder Academy*

Leading a preschool team requires more than management – it calls for heart, vision, and a deep understanding of the people you serve and lead. In this session, we'll explore The Wonder Way, a leadership approach rooted in curiosity, connection, and lasting impact. Discover how to build a positive, purpose-driven culture that nurtures both children and adults. Learn practical tools to support your team's growth, strengthen relationships, and create a joyful, resilient work environment where educators feel seen, valued, and empowered to thrive.

## WORKSHOP A7

### [Reigning in the Brain: Strategies to Address Unwanted Behaviors in the Classroom](#)

*Miranda Lord, Inclusion Specialist, and Cindy Owen, Program Quality Specialist, Alliance for Children*

This training will provide participants with practical strategies for effectively communicating to children when they demonstrate unwanted behaviors. We'll also cover the importance of outdoor and physical play and how it helps children to regulate their behaviors.

# SESSION 2 (12:30-2:30 pm) **Must Select ONE**

## **WORKSHOP B1**

### **Use Your Words: How Our Words Impact Children**

*Jessica Lane, Healthy Social Behaviors Coach, Child Care Resources Inc.*

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" – this phrase has been spreading a false sentiment for years. Research has shown that the words we use in the classroom as early childhood professionals actually have lasting effects on a child's cognitive and social-emotional development. We often find ourselves reminding students to "use their words" or "we only use kind words," but are we being mindful of the words we are using? This training focuses on reflecting, informing, and providing strategies that help teachers use intentional language and tones that promote the healthy development of the students in their care. **ALL**

## **WORKSHOP B2**

### **The Power of Conversations in Pre-K**

*Beth Hudson, District Pre-K Administrator, and Lori Spruiell, Title 1 Specialist, Union County Public Schools*

Explore and understand how meaningful conversations support young children's language, literacy, and social-emotional development. This training highlights the critical role of oral language in Pre-K classrooms. **PRESCHOOL**

## **WORKSHOP B3**

### **Building Incredible Relationships**

*Vianey Graham, SWCDC Eastern Territory School-Age Consultant, Southwestern Child Development Commission*

What would it take to make every day better with your school-age children? Would it be

smiles, positive interactions, a culture of kindness and strong relationships? Those would be a great start. In this learning event, we will work together to build knowledge and skills through fun and interactive activities. This will improve your day-to-day life with school-age children and foster building incredible relationships.

**SCHOOL-AGE**

## **WORKSHOP B4**

### **Introduction to the ITERS-3**

*Megan Porter, State Anchor, North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project (NCRLAP)*

This training will provide information about the differences between the ITERS-R and the ITERS-3. It will include basic terms and definitions, as well as detailed information about specific items and indicators. We'll also review examples of different ways programs can earn credit for various indicators. **INFANT/TODDLER**

## **WORKSHOP B5**

### **The Posture of Leadership: Unleashing Your Leadership Power**

*Mellonia Hemphill, CEO, Transformational Professional Services*

The posture of a leader determines how far that leader will climb. If you don't know your posture or your stance, you will not know your potential, your purpose, or your position. You must have a direction and an ending point. Your power will help you drive your business and position you for growth, increase, and abundance. Just like any business, it is the people, the leaders who have unleashed their power, drive revenue, increase the enrollment, and build the employment base. Through this training, you will learn strategies and tips regarding

how to unleash your leadership power and recognize your posture of leadership. Greatness is within – let's unleash it!

**ADMINISTRATION**

## **WORKSHOP B6**

### **Better Together: Practical Co-Teaching Strategies for Preschool Classrooms**

*Jordan Carone, Director of Education, Wonder Academy*

Co-teaching can be powerful when it is intentional, organized, and collaborative. This hands-on training supports preschool teachers in building strong co-teaching partnerships through clear communication, shared responsibilities, and cohesive teamwork. Participants will explore practical strategies for dividing tasks, problem-solving together, and creating consistency in the classroom. Teachers will leave with a customizable, make-and-take co-teaching checklist they can immediately use to strengthen collaboration and support student success. **ALL**

## **WORKSHOP B7**

### **Beyond the Page: Building Early Literacy in the Preschool Classroom**

*Liza Stahnke MS CCC-SLP, Director of Speech-Language Operations, Charlotte Speech and Hearing Center*

Foundations in early literacy start before a page is ever turned. Explore topics such as language comprehension, phonological awareness, expressive vocabulary, and concepts of print. The training will include opportunities for discussion, hands-on practice, and strategies that you can implement in your classroom on Monday!

**PRESCHOOL**

**Please note: You must choose only ONE morning session and ONE afternoon session.**

**5 hours** of DCDEE training credit awarded upon completion of all sessions and keynote.

★ **Early Bird Deadline:** March 13 ★ **Final Deadline:** March 28 ★

## HOW TO REGISTER ONLINE

1. Go to [www.ccrinc.org](http://www.ccrinc.org).
2. Hover over **Early Educators** to display the dropdown menu.
3. Click on **Creating the Future Conference**.
4. Click on the appropriate **button**, depending on your status.
5. Click on the **titles** of the workshops you'd like to register for.

**Note:** You must choose one workshop from the morning session (Session I) and one workshop from the afternoon session (Session II) to complete your registration.



6. Clicking on the titles will redirect you to a new website. **Fill out the forms** and follow the instructions to pay for your courses and complete your registration.
7. If you are registering additional people, complete the above steps for **each person**.

If you have any issues registering for the workshops, please contact **David Mason** at [dmason@childcareresourcesinc.org](mailto:dmason@childcareresourcesinc.org).



# creating the future



★ Check out some scenes from last year's conference! ★



# creating the future

Presented by  
Child Care Resources Inc.  
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Charlotte, NC 28217  
[www.ccrinc.org](http://www.ccrinc.org)

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**REGISTER ONLINE NOW AT [WWW.CCRINC.ORG](http://WWW.CCRINC.ORG)**

Early Bird: March 13; Final: March 28

