

Apprenticeship Summit 2024



NC Apprenticeships in Early Childhood

**A Statewide Event Supporting Career Pathways
for the Early Childhood Workforce**

*Featuring a Keynote
Panel Led By*



**EARLY CHILDHOOD
WORKFORCE
CONNECTOR**

Asheville-Buncombe Technical College, Asheville, NC

April 15, 2024 | 9:30 am - 2:15 pm



NC Apprenticeships in Early Childhood

APPRENTICESHIP SUMMIT 2024

9:30-10:00 AM

Registration and Continental Breakfast

A-B Tech Conference Center Lobby

10:00-10:50 AM

Welcome and Keynote Panel

Large Conference Room

Welcome

Morgan Ford, Program Director, Building Bright Futures

Ariel Ford, Director, NC Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE)

Keynote: Your Role in Promoting Professionalism in ECE

Marian Grant-Whitlock, Early Childhood Workforce Connector

Kara Lehnhardt, Early Childhood Workforce Connector

Cassandra Brooks, Owner & Operator, Little Believers Academy, Inc.

10:50 –11:05 AM

Break and Transition

- Find your breakout session.

11:05–11:50 AM

Morning Breakout Sessions

11:50 AM – 12:45 PM

Lunch Break

- Enjoy a boxed lunch and network with fellow attendees.
- Please use this time to exchange ideas and build valuable connections.
- Find your next breakout session.

1:00 –1:45 PM

Afternoon Breakout Sessions

1:50– 2:15 PM

Closing Session

Large Conference Room

Dr. Ereka Williams, Vice President – Education, Dogwood Health Trust

MORNING BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Session A

Walking the Talk: Honing Your Everyday ECE Advocacy Skills

Marian Grant-Whitlock, Early Childhood Workforce Connector

Kara Lehnhardt, Early Childhood Workforce Connector

Session B

Focus on What Fascinates: How to Nurture Relationships and Create Meaningful Learning Experiences Using Children's Interests

Tamara Reynolds, Department Chair, Education, A-B Technical Community College

Session C

CCSA – The Mentee/Mentor Relationship – M.A.P.P.

Sharon Little, T.E.A.C.H. Higher Education Liaison Manager, Child Care Services Association

Session D

Apprenticeship 101

Charlie Milling, Apprenticeship Consultant, ApprenticeshipNC

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Session E

Walking the Talk: Honing Your Everyday ECE Advocacy Skills

Marian Grant-Whitlock, Early Childhood Workforce Connector

Kara Lehnhardt, Early Childhood Workforce Connector

Session F

The Benefits of Mindfulness: Supporting Educators

Brittany Crumley, Assistant Professor, Greenville Technical College, Greenville, SC

Session G

Wellness: Building Capacity for Mentor Wellness

Sharon Little, T.E.A.C.H. Higher Education Liaison Manager, Child Care Services Association

Session H

Reflective Supervision: Insights and Growth

Gabriel Guyton, IMH-E®, ConnectEd Circles, Asheville, NC

SUMMIT SPEAKERS

Ariel Ford

Ariel Ford serves as the Director of the Division of Child Development and Early Education for the Department of Health and Human Services. Prior to joining us she worked for the City of Chattanooga, where she served as the Deputy Administrator overseeing Chattanooga's Office of Early Learning. In both positions she has been charged with creating a system that works for children and families.



Before moving to Chattanooga, Ariel worked in Delaware's Department of Education on developing state level systems to improve services and supports for child care programs and educators, and overseeing the Statewide Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant. She has also served as a countywide director for Child Care Resource & Referral, as a center director, and as a two-year-old classroom teacher.

Ariel holds a M.A. in Early Childhood Education from East Tennessee State University, and a B.A in Theater and Literature from the University of North Carolina Asheville.

Ereka R. Williams, Ph.D.

Ereka R. Williams, PhD, is Dogwood Health Trust's Vice President – Education, bringing more than 20 years of teaching, scholarship and leadership to the organization. Her work is grounded in the belief that philanthropy has the power to responsibly address systemic issues with root causes intricately tied to history. She strives to leverage resources and build collaborations that accelerate educational opportunity, especially for those generationally pushed to the margins or underserved.



Prior to Dogwood, Dr. Williams served as Associate Provost for Academic Strategy and Institutional Effectiveness at Winston-Salem State University. Earlier still, as Associate Dean of Education, Quality Assurance and Community Engagement and Associate Dean of Education at Fayetteville State University (FSU), she led curriculum revisions, resource restructuring, created teacher residency models and initiated regional and national partnerships that strengthened quality assurance systems for teacher education programs. Today, Dr. Williams' work ensures philanthropic investments and partnerships that are relevant, responsive, effective, fair, and equitable for the people of Western NC.

Dr. Williams has served as a coach, speaker, researcher, board member and reviewer for rural and urban schools across the Midwest, northeast and southeastern US. Her research, publications and presentations focus on equity, diversity, assessment, accreditation, and leadership. She earned a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from UNC-Greensboro.

KEYNOTE PANEL



The **Early Childhood Workforce Connector (ECWC)** promotes developing, launching, and expanding Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs to support and sustain a diverse, inclusive, well-qualified, and well-compensated early childhood education (ECE) workforce. A strong, inclusive, and robust early childhood ecosystem contributes to the health and well-being of young children and their families, as well as the broader economy. As a U.S. Department of Labor (U.S. DOL)-funded Early Childhood Education RA Industry Intermediary, ECWC provides customized technical assistance, including help with curriculum development, outreach and recruitment, mentor training, accessing available funding, and much more.

ECWC provides these services to early childhood program employers, state and local agencies, community organizations, higher education institutions, sponsors, current early childhood educators, and career seekers – all at no cost.

Marian Grant-Whitlock

Marian Grant-Whitlock serves as the Early Childhood Education Liaison at the Early Childhood Workforce Connector. Her passion for empowering educators and advocating for families and children drives her work in promoting inclusion, literacy, meaningful relationships, and social-emotional development. She truly embodies the essence of an early childhood champion.



With over 23 years of experience, Marian's journey began in high school as a teacher cadet in early childhood education. Her diverse background includes working at child care centers, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&Rs), and military bases, where she has served in roles ranging from floater to teacher and training specialist. She is also an experienced Early Childhood Playground Inspector, ensuring safety and quality standards in outdoor play environments.

KEYNOTE PANEL, Continued

Marian Grant-Whitlock, cont.

With over 23 years of experience, Marian's journey began in high school as a teacher cadet in early childhood education. Her diverse background includes working at child care centers, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&Rs), and military bases, where she has served in roles ranging from floater to teacher and training specialist. She is also an experienced Early Childhood Playground Inspector, ensuring safety and quality standards in outdoor play environments.

Throughout her career, Marian has demonstrated her dedication to early childhood education, excelling as a CDA Professional Development Specialist with a Preschool Endorsement, a Darkness to Light Authorized Facilitator, and earning recognition as an Advanced Level Trainer for the State of Georgia. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Child and Family Development from Benedict College and is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. Marian is also working towards an endorsement in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) and is a proud member of Gamma Phi Delta Sorority, Inc.

Beyond her professional roles, Marian is deeply involved in her community as a Lead Cheerleading Coach and Volunteer at Sherwood Recreational Sports. Her commitment to professional development is evident through her roles as a Professional Learning Facilitator Trainer and Child Development Associate Trainer.

Kara Lehnhardt, MBA

Kara Lehnhardt serves as a subject matter expert for the Early Childhood Workforce Connector. She brings to the Connector expertise in early childhood education professional and leadership development paired with communications and strategic planning know-how. For more than two decades, Ms. Lehnhardt has worked to elevate the leadership skills of early childhood educators and to develop messaging and strategies that promote the value of high-quality early learning.



Like many, Ms. Lehnhardt accidentally landed in the field of early childhood education. It wasn't long, however, before she fell in love with the work--both by absorbing the overwhelming evidence regarding ECE's importance to our society and in encountering countless ECE professionals who poured their whole selves into the lives of children and families. Her passion for the work has not waned.

KEYNOTE PANEL, Continued

Kara Lehnhardt, cont.

Over the course of her career, Ms. Lehnhardt has worked across the field through the Child Care Resource and Referral network, university systems, state-level ECE systems, and now at the federal level. She has been privileged to work with leaders across this work and its sectors including state and federal decision-makers, center administrators, teachers, and immigrant family child care entrepreneurs.

Ms. Lehnhardt is a seasoned organizational strategist, instructional designer, trainer, and leadership coach gifted at moving people from visioning to action to outcomes. While working with the CCR&R, she orchestrated and led professional development for family child care providers, building their business skills while earning their Child Development Associate credentials. In her time at the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, she trained trainers initiating the esteemed Taking Charge of Change leadership development curriculum for center directors and then developed and launched the Aim4Excellence national director credential. She is responsible for the launch of statewide eLearning initiatives with the North Carolina Partnership for Children. On behalf of the BUILD Initiative, she started and led a national community of practice for developers creating eLearning for early childhood educators. And, most recently, Ms. Lehnhardt launched the Learning and Resource Center at TriMetrix, a team of designers and media specialists who generate engaging learning and resources for clients in the early childhood sphere and beyond.

However, the early childhood project Ms. Lehnhardt is most proud of is the raising of her two beautiful girls--Alaina (age 10) and Lydon (age 6). When not working or with her kids, Ms. Lehnhardt volunteers her communications and strategic planning expertise to local nonprofits. She loves staying active and traveling the world with her husband Jason.

She holds a BA in Organizational Communication and an MBA.

KEYNOTE PANEL, Continued

Cassandra Brooks, M.Ed

Mrs. Cassandra Brooks is the owner and operator of Little Believer's Academy Inc. (LBA). Mrs. Brooks started a family childcare home in June 2009 and the business has been growing ever since. She began childcare operations out of the family residence and one year after inception she had to prepare for expansion to meet the demand for the quality care she provided. The growth continued to include two full-time five star, STEM centers dedicated to quality childcare and families that otherwise would not be able to afford it.



Little Believer's Academy has NC pre-K classrooms and provides activities that create opportunities for children to learn in a safe and healthy environment. LBA provides a loving atmosphere that supports the development of self-esteem and self-confidence, and provides good models and tools to be successful in life. These philosophies for doing business have enabled Little Believer's Academy to become the success it is today. Little Believer's Academy – Clayton is located in a low-income area and has worked to create access to mental health counselors and social workers to help families and children work through trauma. Mrs. Brooks along with the help of great families created a PTO committee and they provide events and activities to strengthen families.

Mrs. Brooks is married with four children including a set of twins! She is a member of Upper Room Church of God in Christ and helps in many areas. She currently serves on the advisory committee for Wake County Smart Star and serves on the board for the Partnership for Children of Johnston County. She is also an Inaugural Member Mentor for the NCAEYC. She also currently serves as Vice Chair on the board for the North Carolina Partnership for Children and is a founding member of the Dream Believe Achieve Nonprofit Organization committed to helping children and families. She was awarded Owner of the Year award by the Childcare Success Academy on October 14, 2023.

In the past, Mrs. Brooks served in management at International Business Machines (IBM). She has M.Ed. from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and also holds a B.S. in Business Management from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. On October 2, 2023, her first book "From Silence to Strength" was published and has been listed as the #1 New Release on Amazon in Non-Governmental Organization Policy.

FACILITATORS

Sharon Little, Ed.D.

Sharon Little is the T.E.A.C.H. Higher Education Liaison Manager II at Child Care Services Association and the lead for the Mentoring Apprentices and Pre-Apprentices Program (M.A.P.P.).



She has 38 years in varying degrees of early education and has previously worked as a regulatory consultant, child care director, child care social worker, subsidy policy consultant, private consultant, and trainer in early education.

Tamara E. Reynolds

Tamara Reynolds is the Department Chairperson for the Education Department at A-B Technical Community College. The department houses both the Associate in Applied Science in Early Childhood Education (Birth – Age 5) and the Associate of Arts/Associate of Science in Teacher Preparation (K-12) degrees.



For the last two decades, Tamara has taught a diverse group of learners from pre-k through college. A Morehead-Cain Scholar, she received her B.A. in Child Development and Family Studies and Birth to Kindergarten licensure from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Tamara was then trained to work with students with autism through the TEACCH program at the UNC School of Medicine. Her love of reading and books led her to pursue her M.Ed. in Reading and Pre-K/Primary Education.

Tamara has presented at local, regional, and national conferences for teachers and has provided professional development at numerous public and private schools. She twice presented at the NISOD International Conference on Teaching and Leadership Excellence and was also recognized as a NISOD Excellence Award Recipient. Locally, Tamara has served as a mentor for NC Pre-K teachers in Buncombe and Madison Counties and worked on multiple early childhood projects with Buncombe Partnership for Children and Children First/Communities in Schools. She is a member of the Buncombe NC Pre-K Advisory Committee. Education.

FACILITATORS, Continued

Gabriel Guyton, MA, MEd, IMH-E®

With over 20 years of experience in early childhood education, Gabriel Guyton embarked on her journey as a dedicated teacher at Bank Street's Family Center, where she nurtured children aged 6 months to 5 years. Her commitment to early childhood education led her to become a respected faculty member at Bank Street College of Education, specializing in Infancy.

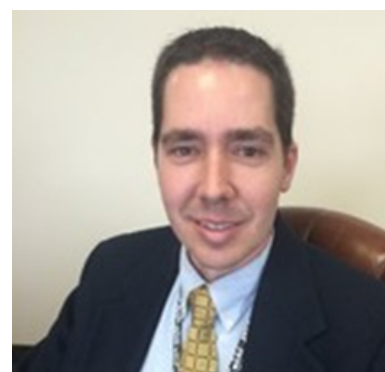


Gabriel holds dual master's degrees in General and Special Education, with a focus on Infant Mental Health and Early Intervention, as well as a master's degree in psychology of counseling. In her role overseeing Verner's Child and Family programs, she spearheaded curriculum development, provided reflective supervision, conducted teacher training, and ensured the delivery of high-quality care while fostering holistic child development. Currently, she channels her expertise through her own consulting business, ConnectEd Circles, where she continues to make a positive impact.

Gabriel's leadership and dedication create nurturing environments where infants and young children thrive. Her passion extends beyond the classroom to advocating for infant mental health and policies supporting the well-being of children and families. This dedication is evident through her educational workshops and collaborations with professionals, forging a supportive community for infants and caregivers alike. Gabriel is endorsed as an Infant Family Reflective Supervisor and comes highly recommended by the North Carolina Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Association (NCIMHA).

Charlie Milling

Charlie Milling is a Regional Apprenticeship Consultant with ApprenticeshipNC, covering the western and northwestern regions of the state. As a state employee of North Carolina, Charlie is honored to serve the business and industry, educational institutions, workforce development agencies, and most of all the residents of North Carolina. He works with business and industry to develop and implement high quality registered apprenticeship programs primarily



FACILITATORS, Continued

Charlie Milling, cont.

in the Western and Northwestern Prosperity Zones as well as state-wide. It is impactful, meaningful work, allowing employers to build a highly skilled and educated workforce. It also provides graduating high school students a viable career option where they can begin their careers right after high school, often getting community college education tuition free as part of their apprenticeship. Charlie works closely with Building Bright Futures and he has been instrumental in kickstarting early childhood education (ECE) apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships in North Carolina.

Charlie has a Master of Science (M.S.) in Environmental Science and Policy from George Mason University and a Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Higher Education/Higher Education Administration from the University of North Texas.

Brittany Crumley, Ph.D.

Brittany Crumley, Ph.D. has been in early childhood for over 19 years. She has a teaching background in the early childhood setting for over seven years, including classrooms in an Infant & Toddler University Lab School, a Pre-K & Kindergarten blended Montessori magnet public school, and a Kindergarten-Third blended Early Elementary classroom in a Montessori private school. Starting in 2012, the presenter began teaching Early Education in the higher education setting. The presenter holds a Birth-Kindergarten Teaching License, a B.S. in Child Development & Psychology, a M.S. in Child Development & Family Relations, and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in Early Childhood. She is also certified and has work experience as an Infant Massage Instructor (CIMI) and Birth Doula (DONA).



Social-emotional curriculum and practices for young children & early educators have been a passion of Brittany's for many years. While in the classroom, the presenter recognized the need for and began utilizing social-emotional techniques with young children. Many of these techniques overlapped and were easily adapted for the benefit of adult learners in the college setting as well. Through her work in higher education, she recognized the need to prepare pre-service early educators for the emotional components of the teaching profession. As a result, she has been implementing mindfulness practices as part of her teaching curriculum for many years.

Her research focus is on mindfulness and teacher emotional well-being. Through research and practice, she has experienced mindfulness for early educators as a way to support teachers' emotional well-being with benefits for the teacher, school, and children (e.g., positive teacher mental/physical measures, teacher retention, and children's emotional and academic measures).

Please take a few minutes to complete our feedback survey.



Thank you to our guest speakers, facilitators, and A-B Tech for helping Building Bright Futures host this event today!



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



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