

FOCUS

on Children 2025

Early Childhood & Family Studies: 360.752.8353 | www.btc.edu

Bellingham Technical College is an equal opportunity institution. See our full statement: www.btc.edu/eos



AGENDA

We are looking forward to learning with our local early childhood educators at the 41st Annual Focus on Children Conference!

Saturday, February 1, 2025

8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Whatcom Community College,
Syre Center, Bellingham, WA

Registration NOW OPEN

*Register on or before January 17
for discounted early bird pricing!*

**Early Bird:
Register on or before
January 17 to save!**

Limited scholarships available

- **Reflect** on your practices
- **Gain** new resources & strategies
- **Connect** & share information
- **Contemplate** culture, diversity & early childhood education issues
- **Earn** 6 STARS hours or 6 Clock Hours

**Breakfast & lunch
provided!**

Special Thanks to Our Sponsors:



The Opportunity Council is a private, non-profit human service organization that acts as a catalyst for positive change, both in the community and in the lives of the people it serves.



NORTHWEST
INDIAN COLLEGE
Xw'le'mi Elh>Tal>Nexw S'qul

With its main campus located on the Lummi Indian Reservation in Washington State, 20 miles south of the Canadian border, Northwest Indian College is the only accredited tribal college serving the states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

Pacific Northwest Chapter

waeyc

Washington Association for the
Education of Young Children

Pacific Northwest Chapter of WAEYC acts on behalf of the needs and rights of all young children and their families and provides opportunities to improve professional practice in early childhood education.



Bellingham Technical College provides student-centered, high-quality professional technical education for today's needs and tomorrow's opportunities.



Cultivating Calm: Practical Strategies for Enhancing Self-Regulation and Social and Emotional Learning in Early Learning Settings

During this presentation, Dr. Gail Joseph will share research-based, practical strategies to cultivate calm, connection, and resilience in early learning environments. The session will include strategies for enhancing self-regulation and social-emotional learning (SEL) among young children, along with supportive practices for educators. Through interactive discussions and real-world examples, participants will explore ways to foster emotional growth in children, equipping them to manage their emotions, and form positive relationships.

In addition to child-focused strategies, this session emphasizes the importance of reducing stress for educators. Attendees will gain tools for integrating self-care and reflective practices into their routines, helping prevent burnout and foster resilience within themselves and their teams.



Gail E. Joseph

Gail E. Joseph is a professor of early childhood education at the University of Washington and works in the areas of social and emotional learning, inclusion and early childhood mental health. With a strong focus on supporting both young children and educators, Dr. Joseph's work combines research with practical strategies to create positive, nurturing and inclusive learning environments. She directs Cultivate Learning, providing accessible resources and professional development to early childhood educators across the nation.

FOCUS





on Children 2025

Early Childhood & Family Studies: 360.752.8353 | www.btc.edu

Bellingham Technical College is an equal opportunity institution. See our full statement: www.btc.edu/eos

SCHEDULE

Please NOTE:Attendees who attend sessions in the "A" block of morning/early afternoon sessions will have **lunch at 11:30 a.m.**Attendees who attend sessions in the "B" block of morning/early afternoon sessions will have **lunch at 12 p.m.**

| TIME | ACTIVITY/WORKSHOP | PRESENTER(S) |
|-----------------|---|--|
| 8–8:30 a.m. | Check-In & light breakfast | |
| 8:30–8:40 a.m. | Welcome | |
| 8:40–9:40 a.m. |  Keynote Cultivating Calm: Practical Strategies for Enhancing Self-Regulation and Social and Emotional Learning in Early Learning Settings | Gail E. Joseph |
| 9:45–10 a.m. | Break | |
| 10-11:30 a.m. | A1: Morning Workshops | |
| | Teachers Have Feelings Too! | Emmy Fincham, Meilan Jin & Margarita Ruiz Guerrero |
| | Making space for teachers as emotional beings in early childhood classrooms | |
| | Foundation for Success: Cultivating Supportive Early Learning Environments | Jacque Rafferty |
| | Connecting and Engaging Young Children: Using visual supports for student learning | Jessica Wallace & Debbie Haney |
| |  Administración 101 | Aida Rodriguez |
| 12:30-2:30 p.m. | A2: Afternoon Workshops | |
| | Rhythm & Rhyme: Exploring Music in the Classroom | Jen Fowler |
| | Equitable Coaching: Why does it matter? | Jagtar Kaur Minhas |
| | Creating a Caring Classroom Community | Jamie Ashton & Urvasi Graham |
| |  El Arte de Alentar como una herramienta para desmantelar el adultismo y fomentar Justicia Social en la educación | Paulina Cuevas Vega |
| 10a.m.-12 p.m. | B1: Morning Workshops | |
| | Freedom Within Limits | Ian Becker & Jack Eiford |
| | Caring for Infants and Toddlers in Groups | Wendy Jans |
| | Mental Health: Impact on Children's Well-being and Learning | Jagtar Kaur Minhas |
| | The Art of Encouragement as a Tool for Dismantling Adultism in Education | Paulina Cuevas Vega |
| 1-2:30 p.m. | B2: Afternoon Workshops | |
| | Science: The Art of Making Sense of the World | Kim Bogren Owen |
| | The Growing Brain: Social and Emotional Development - Part 1 | Julie Wasilewski |
| | Keeping The Gears Turning! | Kim Walbeck |
| | Since Time Immemorial | Heather Jefferson, Theresa Morrison & Coreen Kurtz |
| 2:45-4:15 p.m. | A3/B3: Afternoon Workshops | |
| | Designing Your Classroom So It Reflects Your Community and the Land | Kim Bogren Owen |
| | The Growing Brain: Social and Emotional Development - Part 2 | Julie Wasilewski |
| | Healthy Children's Fund and Aligning P-3 in Whatcom County | Laurie Saling & Sarah Simpson |
| | Loose Parts Play with Infants and Toddlers | Allie Bishop & Jamie Ashton |
| | Working with Children with Anxiety | Dr. Sara White |
| | The Adult that Plays | Michael Haycock |
| | Eating Well Early | Jennica Rawstron |
| |  Fundamentos para el éxito: Cultivando entornos de apoyo para el aprendizaje temprano | Elsie De La Rosa |
| 4:15-4:30 | Sign-out | |



Traducción Española



Taller en Español

Focus on Children 2025 Workshop Sessions

A1 | Morning Workshops: 10-11:30 a.m.

Teachers Have Feelings Too! Making space for teachers as emotional beings in early childhood classrooms

Emmy Fincham, Meilan Jin & Margarita Ruiz Guerrero

This workshop offers participants the chance to engage in collaborative reflection and a reimagining of the role of emotion in their own work. As teachers, we are expected to understand and support children's emotional development, yet we are most often socialized into the idea that teachers are super-regulated individuals who can (and should!) leave our big feelings outside the classroom. Participants will share classroom experiences and be guided in self and group reflection. Conceptualizations of emotion and practices that make space for teachers' emotions will then be explored through an arts-based activity. Connections to trauma-responsive and healing-centered practices will be discussed. **Core Competencies: Interactions**

Foundation for Success: Cultivating Supportive Early Learning Environments

Jacque Rafferty

The early learning environment is a crucial foundation for children's development and learning. In this session, we will explore how these environments support effective teaching and learning practices. Participants will examine key components that contribute to welcoming and supportive learning spaces. There will be opportunities to reflect on their own environments, and through engaging activities and practical tools, attendees will discover ways to enhance their learning settings for all children. **Core Competencies: Curriculum & Learning Environment**

Connecting and Engaging Young Children: Using visual supports for student learning

Jessica Wallace & Debbie Haney

In this workshop, we will understand how visuals support high engagement for all kids. We will unpack how to create a strong learning environment and intensify visual supports based on student goals. We will demonstrate how to "talk off the visuals" as educators to connect and partner with kids and their families around student learning goals.

Core Competencies: Curriculum & Learning Environment



Administración 101

Aida Rodriguez

Esta capacitación presenta a los participantes la administración del desempeño, el estilo de liderazgo y lo que se debe y no se debe hacer en relación con las medidas disciplinarias. Proporciona orientación sobre cómo la administración es el arte y la ciencia de organizar y dirigir el flujo de trabajo, las operaciones y los empleados dentro de una organización para lograr los objetivos del programa.

Core Competency: Program Planning & Development

A2 | Afternoon Workshops: 12:30-2:30 p.m.

Rhythm & Rhyme: Exploring Music in the Classroom

Jen Fowler

Rhythm & Rhyme: Exploring Music in the Classroom invites preschool educators to discover the joy of music as a powerful teaching tool. In this engaging class, participants will learn new songs and creative strategies to seamlessly incorporate music into daily activities. From playful melodies to interactive experiences, educators will explore how music can spark joy, foster connections, and enhance the classroom environment. Join us to ignite a passion for creating music that brings smiles and enriches the learning experience for young learners, making every day a delightful adventure! **Core Competency: Interactions and Curriculum & Learning Environment**

Equitable Coaching: Why does it matter?

Jagtar Kaur Minhas

This session is geared toward a community learning approach that will honor full participation from the audience and presenters. The session will start with a little intro activity. Learning outcomes will be shared out loud next. Then we will define coaching and elaborate how it relates to early childhood education. Research-based coaching ideas from Head Start, Elena Aguilar's work on transformational coaching and other key figures such as Stephen Karpman's Drama Triangle and Sean O'Conner's Ripple Effect of coaching will be shared and explored together. Learning experiences in this session will take place through a variety of peer learning opportunities, discussions, dialogues, and short videos. This session will promote knowledge about equitable coaching and its critical impact on individuals and communities. The focus will be on connecting the audience with coaching informed practices drawn from credible sources. The idea is to build on coach and "coaches" capacities through meaningful ideas, discussions, and reflections. Attendees will develop equitable coaching action goals that learners can incorporate in their daily practice.

Core Competency: Interactions and Professional Development Leadership

Creating a Caring Classroom Community

Jamie Ashton & Urvashi Graham

To be a member of a caring community means you are a part of something. In this session, we will reflect on the importance of developing and identifying classroom structures that support a caring classroom community for children's physical, emotional, and cognitive development. We will explore thoughtful and intentional implementation of Pyramid Model practices based on consistent, positive, and caring relationships where members of the community are valued. The focus is on creating a community where everyone belongs and all staff, families, and children feel valued and appreciated for their unique experiences, needs, and talents.

Core Competency: Curriculum & Learning Environment



El Arte de Alentar como una herramienta para dismantlar el adultismo y fomentar Justicia Social en la educación

Paulina Cuevas Vega

Este taller interactivo y experiencia al ayudar a los participantes a entender cómo distinguir el aliento de la alabanza. Los participantes tendrán la oportunidad de practicar el proceso de alentar. Juntos reflexionaremos sobre el poder del aliento como herramienta para dismantlar el adultismo y para decolonizar la educación. Ven a explorar las conexiones entre el aliento, la motivación interna y la justicia social en nuestro trabajo con niñxs y jóvenes.

Core Competency: Interactions and Curriculum & Learning Environment

B1 | Morning Workshops: 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Freedom Within Limits

Ian Becker & Jack Eiford

In this workshop we will explore how the concept of freedom within limits can be used to help children develop autonomy and self-regulation. Self-regulation can be challenging, especially when adults provide very narrow confines to what children may do, or when children have so many options that unrestrained choice becomes overwhelming or negative. Offering meaningful choices within concrete limits can help children self-regulate their behavior and learning. We draw upon concepts from Montessori pedagogy, which is renowned for its emphasis on autonomous learning. Attendees will workshop how to apply freedom within limits to an activity in their own child-care setting.

Core Competency: Child Growth & Development and Curriculum & Learning Environment

Caring for Infants and Toddlers in Groups

Wendy Jans

This session will explore some of the most important elements of working with infants and toddlers in group care settings such as attachment and attachment problems, language development, and temperamental traits and styles of children and adults. Early relationships are critically important for infants and toddlers. We will look at these interactions using video and reflective activities. **Core Competency: Interactions and Child Growth & Development**

Mental Health: Impact on Children's Well-being and Learning

Jagtar Kaur Minhas

This session is centered on learning about the impact of mental health on children's learning and wellbeing. This session is filled with interactive activities for participants. We will share research- and evidence-based practices on mental health and child development through this session. The information in this session is drawn from the Center on the Developing Child-Harvard University and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and it will be presented through short videos and interactive scenarios. Participants will be fully engaged throughout this session with a variety of activities and information. They will be encouraged to share their ideas and experiences with the whole group. The participants will be engaged in collaborative learning with each other and their presenters. This session will implement relationship-based professional development techniques throughout.

Core Competency: Child Growth & Development

The Art of Encouragement as a Tool for Dismantling Adulthood in Education

Paulina Cuevas Vega

This interactive and experiential workshop will help participants understand how to distinguish encouragement from praise and will practice giving encouragement as a way to dismantle adulthood and decolonizing education. We will explore the connections between encouragement, internal motivation and social justice when working with young people. **Core Competency: Interactions and Curriculum & Learning Environment**

B2 | Afternoon Workshops: 1-2:30 p.m.

Science: The Art of Making Sense of the World

Kim Bogren Owen

Attendees will explore the many ways to capture children's natural curiosity by incorporating science into everyday activities and every learning centers in the classroom while meeting the requirements of the ERS tools. In either small groups or pairs, attendees will have the time to explore examples of materials that can be made out of recycled items, as well as make their own material to use in their classrooms. **Core Competency: Curriculum & Learning Environment**

The Growing Brain: Social and Emotional Development - Part 1

Julie Wasilewski

This session is part one of The Growing Brain Series by Zero to Three. This session will help us understand how social and emotional development unfolds in the first 5 years and how to support young children. We will look at identifying areas of the brain involved in social and emotional reactions.

Core Competencies: Child Growth & Development

Keeping The Gears Turning!

Kim Walbeck

Within a childcare center or any organization, there are systems within systems. To keep things going smoothly, each system has to work with other systems to create a well-oiled machine. In this workshop participants will leave with a great lesson/activity for their next staff meeting that includes team building, hands-on activities, and systems learning.

Core Competency: Professional Development Leadership

Since Time Immemorial

Heather Jefferson, Theresa Morrison, Coreen Kurtz

In 2013 Whatcom County Library System initiated relationship-building with Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe to understand what "Since Time Immemorial" means from an Indigenous perspective, and the role of storytelling in preserving and passing down history. In this workshop, we will describe the process behind the kits and the insights learned. We will also share the books, stories and resources from the local tribes.

Core Competency: Curriculum & Learning Environment

A3/B3 Afternoon Workshops: 2:15–4:15 p.m.

Designing Your Classroom So It Reflects Your Community and the Land

Kim Bogren Owen

In this workshop, we will examine how you can create a place-based environment. Attendees will learn what place-based education is, how they can implement it in their classrooms and programs and will leave with materials and a plan to implement place-based education. **Core Competency: Curriculum & Learning Environment**

The Growing Brain: Social and Emotional Development - Part 2

Julie Wasilewski

This session is part two of The Growing Brain Series by Zero to Three. During this session, we will understand the role of relationships and attachments in social and emotional development. We will discuss the effects of stress and empathy on the brain. **Core Competency: Interactions**

Healthy Children's Fund and Aligning P-3 in Whatcom County

Laurie Saling & Sarah Simpson

This interactive workshop will be an opportunity for the EL community to learn about how the Healthy Children's Fund will impact work supporting early learning and care. Sarah will be sharing current and future possibilities of funding. Aligning our P-3 (prenatal through grade 3) system across the county is a framework to help our children and families thrive across all our programs. This interactive workshop will bring community-based early learning programs together to envision how we can collaborate with school-based programs for our children's future success as the first five years of life are the most formative! **Core Competency: Family & Community Partnerships**

Loose Parts Play with Infants and Toddlers

Allie Bishop & Jamie Ashton

Children learn about their world through hands-on exploration, and we can support children's engaging discovery with interesting, open-ended materials. Workshop participants will learn about what infants and toddlers are exploring and learning through play; how offering "loose parts" and open-ended materials can support playful learning; and the role of the adult during play. **Core Competency: Curriculum & Learning Environment**

Working with Children with Anxiety

Dr. Sara White

Anxiety disorders are becoming increasingly more prevalent in children and adolescents. This presentation will describe common issues with anxiety at different developmental stages and techniques and strategies that can be helpful in addressing them. Additionally, early warning signs of anxiety and helpful strategies to prevent anxiety from increasing to the level of an anxiety disorder will be discussed. **Core Competency: Child Growth & Development**

The Adult that Plays

Michael Haycock

In this interactive workshop, participants will learn simple, effective strategies for becoming more playful in their interactions with both children and adults. Through a series of engaging games and activities, we will explore the joy of failing, build stronger communication skills, and discover practical tools to embrace a playful mindset in everyday life. Whether you're a teacher, parent, or simply someone looking to reconnect with your playful side, this workshop offers a fun, team-based environment where you'll gain new insights, collaborate with others, and leave feeling more connected and ready to play! **Core Competency: Interactions**

Eating Well Early

Jennica Rawstron

The primary goal of this workshop is to help caregivers learn how to support children to develop a healthy and enjoyable relationship to food and promote long term wellness. Principles of this evidence-based way of feeding children come from Ellyn Satter's work, a leader in the field who has set the gold standard in public health for how to feed children and develop competent eaters. Participants will learn how to feed with more joy and less struggling. They may even reflect on and improve their own relationship with food and healthy eating! Participants will have a chance to discuss and share their own struggles and stories with others, as well as ask questions that apply to their own experiences. **Core Competency: Health, Safety, & Nutrition**



Fundamentos para el éxito: Cultivando entornos de apoyo para el aprendizaje temprano

Elsie De La Rosa

El entorno de aprendizaje es una fundación crucial para el aprendizaje y desarrollo de los niños. En esta session, vamos a explorar como los entornos apoyan enseñanza y practicas de aprendizaje efectivos. Participantes van a examinar componentes cruciales que contribuyen a entornos cogedores y que apoyan el aprendizaje de niños positivamente. Van a tener oportunidades para reflexionar en sus propios entornos y descubrir maneras en mejorando sus entornos para el desarrollo y aprendizaje de todos los niños en su programa.

Core Competency: Program Planning & Development

Special Thanks to Our Sponsors:



The Opportunity Council is a private, non-profit human service organization that acts as a catalyst for positive change, both in the community and in the lives of the people it serves.



NORTHWEST
INDIAN COLLEGE
Xw'le'mi Elh>Tal>Nexw Squl

With its main campus located on the Lummi Indian Reservation in Washington State, 20 miles south of the Canadian border, Northwest Indian College is the only accredited tribal college serving the states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

Pacific Northwest Chapter



Washington Association for the
Education of Young Children

Pacific Northwest Chapter of WAEYC acts on behalf of the needs and rights of all young children and their families and provides opportunities to improve professional practice in early childhood education.



Bellingham Technical College provides student-centered, high-quality professional technical education for today's needs and tomorrow's opportunities.

Questions: **360.752.8444**

Registration: **registration@btc.edu**

For more details, scholarship forms,
and to register visit: **www.btc.edu/focus**



BELLINGHAM TECHNICAL COLLEGE
Early Childhood & Family Studies

FOCUS 2025 Presenter Bios

Jamie Ashton (she/her)

Before joining Child Care Aware of Northwest Washington at Opportunity Council in the Spring of 2014, I spent more than 20 years as a teacher and administrator in early learning programs and schools in Whatcom County, leading one program through NAEYC Accreditation. I am passionate about supporting teachers and administrators to be reflective learners and am committed to furthering the early childhood education field. As a coach and state-approved trainer, I focus much of my work on supporting programs to implement effective social-emotional learning strategies in classrooms.

Ian Becker (he/him)

Dr. Ian Becker received his Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of Virginia. He is currently teaching in a Montessori early childhood mixed-age classroom, where he has been for the past two years, as well as teaching as an adjunct in the Montessori Ed.D. program at the University of Wisconsin at River Falls. Becker has specialized his work and research in Montessori early childhood education, with deep knowledge of this unique educational philosophy and the ways in which it relates to child development.

Allie Bishop (she/her)

I am an early childhood educator who has worked with young children 0-8 for 20 years; I also work with caregivers (parents and teachers) as a trainer and an educator. I have worked with children in all kinds of settings in different parts of the world, and find that play is a universal language, and a universal strategy for learning. I am a parenting educator at Whatcom Community College, a regional childcare trainer with the Opportunity Council, and I dabble in other playful projects.

Kim Bogren Owen (she/her)

Kim Bogren Owen holds a BA in Cultural Anthropology and an MA in Early Childhood Education. She currently works at Northwest Indian College and is a part-time ECE instructor. She brings her knowledge and experience to the training she offers. In her spare time, she enjoys beachcombing, hiking, and spending time with her family.

Paulina Cuevas Vega (ella/she/her)

De nacionalidad Chilena. Recibió su título de Psicóloga en Chile y su M.A. en Psicología Educacional and School Counseling en la Universidad de Minnesota, USA. Paulina es entrenadora líder certificada de Disciplina Positiva, miembro del equipo de Disciplina Positiva Chile, y de la Positive Discipline Association en Estados Unidos. Tiene 20 años de experiencia apoyando a familias, estudiantes y educadores, en colegios locales e internacionales en Chile, USA y China.

Paulina ha estado implementando disciplina positiva en contextos escolares y en la comunidad desde 2011 en Chile, y desde 2013 también en China y Estados Unidos. Hasta la fecha ha certificado a más de 1000 educadores de Disciplina Positiva en la familia, Disciplina Positiva en la sala de clases y Disciplina Positiva en la Primera Infancia. Ella tiene una vasta experiencia profesional en desarrollo infantil y una vasta experiencia personal viviendo en diferentes culturas. Ella habla Inglés, Español y Mandarín. En su vida y en su trabajo, ella se ha apasionado siempre por lograr justicia social a través de apoyar y nutrir comunidades inclusivas que aseguren que toda niña y toda persona desarrolle un sentimiento de pertenencia e importancia que le permita florecer. Después de vivir y expandir Disciplina Positiva en China por cinco años, Paulina se unió como consejera escolar, al distrito de escuelas públicas de Seattle entre 2018 y 2021. Desde la pandemia, ella comenzó a ofrecer talleres de certificación en Disciplina Positiva y clases para familias en formato online. Actualmente nuevamente está viajando periódicamente a Chile a hacer certificaciones en formato presencial. Paulina tiene la certificación de 500 hrs, como facilitadora de yoga inclusivo, accesible e informado de trauma; es practicante de Training from the Back of the Room; y certificada en Embodied Social Justice.

I am Paulina Cuevas Vega, a citizen of the world born in Chile. I am a certified Positive Discipline Lead Trainer. I hold a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in educational psychology from the University of Minnesota. With 20 years of experience as a School Counselor in the United States, Chile, and China, I am passionate about fostering inclusive communities. I am fluent in English, Spanish, and Mandarin. I have also completed a 500-hour RYT certification as a trauma-informed yoga trainer. My current focus is sharing my passion for Neuroscience, Positive Discipline, and yoga through a social justice lens. I currently reside in North Bend, WA where I cultivate both personal and community well-being.

Elsie De La Rosa (ella/she/her)

Yo tengo más de 10 años de experiencia como maestra y cuidadora de niños particularmente con las edades 0-5 años en guardería en casa, centros, y como niñera. Me encanta trabajar con niños y otras proveedoras de cuidado de niños. En mi trabajo como enlace comunitario por dos años, he trabajado en un gran programa en Cultivate Learning, Renovación de imagen significativa, que trabaja uno a uno con educadores y proveedores de aprendizaje temprano. Ofrecemos consejos prácticos, materiales visuales y soluciones poco costosas que generan una transformación en los entornos que promueve oportunidades de aprendizaje, una mayor accesibilidad y la participación de los niños. ¡Espero verlos en la sesión para aprender más sobre cómo mejorar sus entornos!

I have over 10 years of experience in teaching and caring for children particularly with ages 0-5 in home daycares, centers and as a nanny. I greatly enjoy working with children and other early childhood educators. In working as a Community Liaison for the past two years, I have supported a great program at Cultivate Learning, Meaningful Makeover, that works one-on-one with providers throughout the state to improve their environment, provide more materials, and understand how the environment supports their teaching and the children's learning/development. I look forward to sharing more of this information with educators at the conference!

Jack Eiford (he/him)

Jack Eiford received his master's from Loyola University and his Montessori Early Childhood teaching credential from Montessori Northwest. He has taught in a Montessori early childhood mixed-age classroom for five years and is now teaching in a mixed-age lower elementary classroom serving 1st-3rd grade students. Eiford has worked on integrating Montessori tenets with a variety of different topics, such as theater and digital technologies, and in different settings, such as summer camps.

Emmy Fincham (she/her)

Emmy Fincham is an assistant professor of Early Childhood at Western Washington University. She spent over 15 years teaching and researching in infant and toddler classrooms where her work often focused on the social-emotional experiences of both children and teachers as well as the interactions between them. Currently, she teaches courses on infant/toddler curriculum, healing-centered and trauma-responsive practices, child guidance, and variations in development. In her work with teachers and soon-to-be teachers, she often engages in discussions and explorations of teacher emotion and how that fits into our work with young children.

Jen Fowler (she/her)

Jen is a valued member of the Cultivate Learning Community Liaison team, bringing over 24 years of experience in early childhood education. Her diverse background includes roles as a coach, preschool teacher, data collector, and nonprofit administrator, all of which contribute to her extensive expertise in the field. With a master's degree in human development, Jen is deeply passionate about nurturing the growth and development of young learners. A lifelong lover of music, she has been involved in selective choirs since a young age and believes in the transformative power of music in the classroom. Jen understands how music can create connections and foster a loving environment for all children.

Urvashi Graham (she/her)

I earned my master's from Portland State University in ECE where I focused on infant and toddler mental health. When I learned about the opportunity to be an Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant for Child Care Aware of Northwest Washington, I knew I had to apply and that this is where I was being called to. I love working with children, families, and providers, and hope to be a safe and stable support person for those whose work is critical in shaping the mental health and socio-emotional development of young children throughout their entire lifetimes. In addition, I am a state-approved trainer and associate faculty member at Skagit Community College.

Debbie Haney (she/her)

Dr. Debbie Haney is the Assistant Director of Early Childhood Education for Bellingham Public Schools. She is also an instructor for Western Washington University in the Department of Educational Leadership and Inclusive Teaching.

Michael Haycock (he/him)

Michael Haycock holds a master's degree in special education and has been working in early childhood education for over a decade. With extensive experience in fostering young children's development, he currently provides community playgroups throughout Whatcom County for the Whatcom Center for Early Learning. Michael is also the Artistic Director at The Upfront Theater and has been teaching and performing improv comedy for 13 years, bringing a creative, engaging approach to his work with both children and adults.

Wendy Jans, (she/her)

Wendy Jans is a coach consultant, trainer, and instructor at Cultivate Learning in the College of Education at the University of Washington. She is committed to providing support and professional development for early learning coaches. Having been a coach herself, Wendy knows how challenging the work can be. Wendy values the opportunity to offer early learning coaches professional development through the UW Certificate in Practice-Based Coaching. She takes a coach-approach as an instructor in the feedback she provides to students on their work.

Wendy has worked in a variety of early learning settings, primarily Early Head Start and Head Start, as a supervisor, trainer, and consultant. Her work with Early Head Start and Head Start includes coaching and consultation for home visitors, teachers, and supervisors. She also holds a certificate from the International Coaching Federation as a Trauma Informed Coach.

Heather Jefferson (she/her)

Heather Jefferson is a Lummi Nation member and Early Learning Consultant. She started her early childhood career at Head Start over 40 years ago. Her vast knowledge of Lummi culture, people, stories and traditions, and her skill at building relationships make her a valuable consultant for libraries and schools.

Jagtar Kaur Minhas (she/her)

I work at PSESD, Educare Early Learning Center Seattle as an EHS Mentor. I have been rooted in the Early Childhood field for the past 15 years and have experienced different roles of teaching, learning, mentoring, coaching, and caring. My practice is rooted in delivering anti-bias services for diverse children and families. Embracing anti-bias approaches while engaging with diverse staff and interdisciplinary teams is crucial in my professional career. I have recently pursued an M.Ed. Early Childhood Education with a certificate in Adult Education College through EWU. I actively seek opportunities to learn and connect with diverse communities. I believe in lifelong learning and sharing the accumulated knowledge to make an impact on children and communities. I am constantly seeking new ways to feed my insight to make a difference in my practice. Construction of my knowledge is shaped and modified continuously through ongoing search and shared best informed practices. The combination of education and experiences has inspired me to come on board and focus on my central purpose of serving children and families.

Coreen Kurtz (she/her)

Coreen Kurtz is a Lummi Nation member and the Cultural Liaison at the Ferndale Library. She has a degree in Early Childhood Education from the Northwest Indian College and works as a Public Services Assistant/Lummi Cultural Liaison for the Whatcom County Library System.

Meilan Jin (she/her)

Dr. Meilan Jin is an Associate Professor in the Early Childhood Education Program at Western Washington University. She earned her Ph.D. in Child and Family Studies from the University of Tennessee and holds a master's degree in educational psychology from Wayne State University. Her research interests focus on young children's holistic development and the role of play, explored through cross-cultural perspectives. She is also deeply engaged in co-inquiry with teachers to promote professional learning and pedagogical innovation. Dr. Jin has published articles in journals such as Early Childhood Education Journal and Childhood Education, and she has contributed book chapters on topics such as pre-service teachers' online teaching experiences and decolonizing frameworks in teaching evaluations. Currently, Dr. Jin is leading a collaborative project that supports early childhood educators through collaborative inquiry, aiming to enhance teaching practices and foster a deeper understanding of child development in diverse settings.

Theresa Morrison (she/her)

Theresa Morrison is the Children's Service Coordinator at the Whatcom County Library System. She has been connecting young children and families to stories and resources throughout Whatcom County for over 25 years.

Jacque Rafferty (she/her)

Jacque began working in the field of Early Childhood Education in 2016. She has worked with a variety of ages from infants to school-age children and in a variety of different settings. She has a B.A. in Elementary Education and received her M.Ed. in Early Childhood Education in 2022. Serving as a Community Liaison for Early Achievers for almost 10 years has allowed her to build relationships with numerous members of our ECE community. She has been a foster parent and currently has 3 children at home who keep her very busy!

Jennica Rawstron (she/her)

Jennica Rawstron has worked with families for over 10 years covering the transition to parenthood and feeding children. She is a former Registered Midwife who worked in Canada for 7 years and is now working as an instructor in the Early Childhood & Family Studies Department at BTC. She has pursued further education in cry-fuss/feeding issues (Possums Australia) and feeding young children (Ellyn Satter Institute). Jennica is passionate about helping anyone who works with children to support their healthy relationship with food. It is no surprise that Jennica personally takes a huge delight in food and sharing it with others, including her young child!

Aida Rodriguez (ella/she/her)

Soy Aida Rodríguez, una profesional en Educación Infantil (ECE) con más de 20 años de experiencia. Actualmente, soy instructora y mentora en el North Seattle College, donde apoyo a estudiantes de diversas razas, etnias y lenguas en el programa de licenciatura en ECE. Además, trabajo como Gerente del Programa de Servicios Compartidos en The Imagine Institute, donde diseño y ofrezco servicios equitativos a nuestros miembros, colaborando con socios locales y nacionales para crear nuevas oportunidades. Como Formadora Aprobada por el Estado de Washington, me especializo en enfoques anti-bias y anti-racistas en ECE y abogo por la equidad racial en el campo. Fuera de mi trabajo profesional, estoy activamente involucrada en la comunidad, ocupando cargos de liderazgo en varios comités y asociaciones locales que promueven y apoyan la educación infantil.

I'm Aida Rodriguez, an Early Childhood Education (ECE) professional with over 20 years of experience. I currently serve as an instructor and mentor at North Seattle College, where I support racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students in the ECE Bachelor's program. In addition, I am the Shared Services Program Manager at The Imagine Institute, where I design and deliver equitable services to

our members while collaborating with local and national partners to create new opportunities. As a Washington State Approved Trainer, I focus on anti-bias, anti-racist practices in ECE and advocate for racial equity in the field.

Beyond my professional work, I am deeply involved in the community, holding leadership positions in various local committees and associations that promote and support early childhood education.

Margarita Ruiz Guerrero (she/her)

Dr. Margarita Ruiz Guerrero, Assistant Professor, earned her MS in ECE and an EC-6 Bilingual Certification at the University of North Texas. She worked as a preschool teacher at the University of North Texas Child Development Lab and earned her Ph.D. in ECE from New Mexico State University. Her 2019 dissertation is, Nutrition in early childhood: A Black feminist analysis of Head Start. Her interests are in connecting theory to the lived experiences of students, and she engages in innovative projects such as using gardening as the context of integrated learning. She is interested in young children and wellness and began her academic career with a BS in Nutrition in Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico. She also describes her interests as: marginalized feminist perspectives, social justice, multicultural education, critical pedagogies and bilingual education.

Laurie Saling (she/her)

Laurie Saling has worked in early care and education and for over 30 years. She has experience owning, directing and teaching at her childcare center and creating a nature-based early learning program. She also has been an adjunct faculty at WWU, WCC and BTC. She began her career as a first-grade classroom teacher and as an elementary school counselor.

Sarah Simpson (she/her)

Sarah Simpson is the Child and Families Programs supervisor at Whatcom County Health and Community Services. Sarah is deeply connected to her working-class roots and started off her educational career at the local community college where she grew up. She has since earned her bachelor's degree from Portland State University and her master's in public administration from the University of Washington. Her career has been spent planning, implementing and leading programming that supports youth, teens and their families. The focus on such programming is activities that support upstream solutions to promote independence, community service, career and college readiness, early learning and care, mental and behavioral health services, and housing stability. She is deeply proud of the team she supports, the work they accomplish and support in Whatcom County, and the future they are helping to build for all residents of our beautiful community. In her home life, she is the mama to two kids under five and has a wonderful husband who supports her work to the fullest. They are proud to live and work in Whatcom County and work hard to give back to a community that they love living in.

Kim Walbeck (she/her)

Kim Walbeck is the owner and director of The Seedlings Early Learning Center. Prior to her work as a childcare director, she worked for 27 years at the Opportunity Council's Head Start and ECEAP program in various leadership roles.

Jessica Wallace (she/her)

Jessica Wallace, M. Ed., NBCT is an Early Childhood Educator. Her current role is as an Inclusive Practices & Early Childhood Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) for Bellingham Public Schools.

Julie Wasilewski (she/her)

Julie has worked at the Child Care Aware of NW Washington, a program of the Opportunity Council, for the past 18 years and has been an EA Coach, Lead, and currently the Professional Development Manager and Trainer for the NW Region. Julie also is an adjunct ECE instructor at Skagit Valley College and Whatcom Community College. Julie has her master's in early childhood education.

Sara White (she/her)

Dr. Sara White is currently the Clinical Director and Director of Operations at Sendan Center in Bellingham. She completed her master's degree in Applied Behavior Analysis at the University of the Pacific (2000) and doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at Binghamton University (2005). She currently works with clients in British Columbia, Washington, and Alaska providing home and school consultation to children with developmental disabilities and disruptive behavior disorders, as well as office and home-based cognitive behavior therapy for children and adolescents with anxiety, depression and other behavioral health issues. She has presented the results of her research and clinical work at professional conferences such as the Association for Behavior Analysis and the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy, on topics ranging from interventions to improve employee motivation to techniques to improve acquisition rates in children with autism. She has also presented several workshops to parents, school personnel, and health care professionals.

Questions: **360.752.8444**

Registration: **registration@btc.edu**

For more details, scholarship forms, and to register visit: **www.btc.edu/focus**



BELLINGHAM TECHNICAL COLLEGE
Early Childhood & Family Studies