

Promoting Early Childhood (PEC) Conference 2021

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Keynote Speaker Dana Winters, Ph.D.

Dana Winters, Ph. D., is the faculty and academic director of the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children’s Media at Saint Vincent College, and the co-creator of the Simple Interactions approach to support children, families, and their helpers. She delivers keynote presentations and workshops across states and countries to describe and affirm the essential, relational practices of professionals who serve children, youth, and their families. She has led numerous federal, state, and foundation grants in early childhood education, family engagement, and statewide training and technical assistance. She studies and advances the legacy of Fred Rogers by directing the Center’s partnerships with educators and communities. Dr. Winters received her Ph.D. in administrative and policy studies from the University of Pittsburgh.

Appreciating the Deep and Simple Moments in Early Childhood

It is sometimes difficult to imagine how a single, small, and ordinary moment fits within the complex challenges and rising demands for outcomes of early care and learning, yet such moments are the most essential building blocks of a healthy community. Finding meaningful ways to understand, appreciate, and promote such moments can be encouraging, enriching, and empowering at every level of the child serving system. At the foundation of every child’s healthy development is the power of human connection – and we will explore the power we have to build connections and contribute to the positive development of the children around us.

The Power Of Simple Interactions: Understanding and Promoting Everyday Human Interactions

This is an interactive, video-based, and practice-focused workshop to strengthen human interactions between adults and children. In this session, we will be using the “Simple Interactions” approach to closely examine adult-child interactions in everyday contexts. We will practice appreciative “noticing” and reflective “wondering” to understand the dynamics within even the simplest human interactions. We will discuss how these interactions weave together four basic building blocks of the human relationship – connection, reciprocity, inclusion, and opportunity to grow – to make positive developmental impacts.

- Many interactions happen in the simplicity of the day, simple interactions.
- Think about routines: eating, washing hands, changing diapers
 - Unscripted and spontaneous moments that show authentic interactions
 - Orphanage in China: Fred Rogers Center
 - 25-27 children to two adults

- Developmental need + capacity of adults to provide a matching experience = developmental interaction
 - 12 seconds of Feeding Time. Eye contact, matching body language with shoulder shrug exchanged, smiles (**serve and return** interaction).
 - Building trust, comfort, in a relationship with one another
 - Crossing guard: Have a good day, SMILES, How are you? BRRRR! Where's your coat!? Matched with job of assisting children in crossing the street, the official job description
 - I will be here to meet your basic need of food/safe crossing, but I am also here in relationship
- **How do we build developmental relationship?**
 - Interactions are happening all the time.
 - Focus on more, INTENTIONAL, than the simple task at hand.
 - How do we help others learn from what they are doing (simple interactions)?
 - How do we help others develop simple interactions into a developmental relationship/interaction?
 - **"Deep and simple is far more essential than shallow and complex." Fred Rogers**
- Simple Interactions Tool: Reflection, learning tool, NOT assessment.
- **Help us do intentionally what we already do intuitively.**
- **Help us do more naturally what we have begun to try intentionally.**
- Dimension 1: **Connection**
 - Mismatching connection: Dropoff time where child is sad, teacher does not come in sad, teacher comes in brighter thus mismatching in emotion (affect)
 - Mutually present, in tune Connection: Can be positive, negative (not smiling)
 - Travel across emotion together: Grumpy face. Validating/affirm: it's okay to have a grumpy face, through interaction move toward transition to a more positive attitude.
 - Affirm, validate, bridge to conversation
 - Move to his level and conversation space
 - A lot of regular talk around feeling emotions, child knows what "grumpy face" means and can verbalize that.
 - Reciprocity: Balancing roles of engagement during joint activity
 - Serve and return
 - One-sided control with compliance
 - One-sided control, with resistance or disengagement
- What can we do to provide more opportunities for positive connection. LITTLE TWEAKS!
 - Get on the same level as the person.
- **Inclusion: Inviting and involving the least likely or able to engage.**
 - Identify children who may be excluded for these interactions and include them
 - ability, race, gender... any reason
 - Provide opportunity for inclusion. Creating a world of inclusion and involvement.
 - Excluded, attended to separately, invited and included.
 - How can you provide a way for all children to participate at the same level. Equity not equality!
 - Some need more support, some need less support to participate.
- **Opportunity to Grow: Presenting incremental challenge and matching with appropriate support.**
 - Unrealistic expectations

- Undemanding expectations
- Incremental challenge with scaffolding: training wheels on a bike are great but then you need to eventually remove them (fading but present to help with new challenge or catch them).

The Power of Praise

Angela Kaiser, Director, The University Preschool, Academic Staff UW-River Falls

- Wrinkled Heart Exercise: Read the book and crumple the heart with discussion
 - Negative comment impact vs impact of praise
- Difference in praise
 - Girls are praised more for appearance and neatness.
 - Boys are praised more for work.
- Who is a treasured person relationship in your life?
 - Chances are, this person praised and nurtured you.
- Constructive criticism is helpful, however including “BUT” erases the positive praise
 - “You did that fine, but...”
- “You are intelligent” “I like your dress” versus “You are working so hard!” (effort)
 - Praise for physical or intelligence, children praised for effort will display more enjoyment in what they are doing. Better in taking on challenges.
 - Superficial praise encourages attention seeking outside validation (clothing, negative behavior)
- Social comparisons... leads to lack of INTRINSIC motivation.
 - Becomes a goal to outperform others.
 - Do not want to risk failure. I can’t beat him, so i’m not going to do it!
- Punishment is short lived, praise will carry on
- Ignore the bad, focus on the good
- **Honest praise**, be specific to the child rather than blanketing in reused praises.
 - It is not as special if everyone gets the same praise.
- Behavior chart
 - Leads to public embarrassment (green, yellow, red behavior levels)
 - Cards on display
 - Compares children
 - Labels children as the bad kid
 - Compliance through shame

Keynote: The Key Ingredient: Intentional Interactions

Amanda Morgan, MS, Writer, Speaker, Consultant, and Creator of Not Just Cute

- Key ingredient is the instructional, social, and emotional “**serve-and-return interactions**” that occur daily between teachers and children, as well as among classmates.
 - Key ingredients: **Instructional, social, and emotional aspects**
- **Serve and return**: back and forth exchange between adult and child. Body language & language
 - Cooing, smile, eye contact,

- Not always the adult leading exchange, youth are active participants!
- Brains “SYNC UP” during serve and return
- Word heard impacts school preparedness
 - Words heard can overcome socio economic barriers
 - Conversations matter and impact child’s development
- Technology vs toys for exposing child to words
 - Toys and conversation WIN! Conversation with toys more powerful than interaction with tablet.
 - Language and relationship with parent and RICH language with toys blew away language shared between adult and child on tablet
 - “Tap that, swipe here, try this” technology language could not compare with language shared, back and forth, while playing with toys
- How do you talk when you teach?
 - Direction, Instruction, ❤️DISCUSSION❤️
 - Direction and Instruction is important, but the discussion is the golden part
 - Responding to a child’s initiation is a HUGE factor, more turn-taking and caring and engaging rather than just having conversation
 - CARING. Not just conversation.
- Knowing the needs of a child in general (prescriptive)
- Knowing the needs of the individual child in front of me (responsive)
 - Need to be flexible
 - Care for what child is experiencing in whole life. Rough home life, learning disability, etc.
- Practice until natural to carryout
- Create a warm, safe environment, IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT THE WORDS.
 - Still face experiments.
- OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS
- Model Thinking out loud
 - I wonder why this is...
 - How can I...