



Celebrating our Newest Exchange Leaders

by Pam Boulton

Since 2014, *Exchange* has been identifying and inviting early childhood leaders to join the Exchange Leadership Initiative. Those who accept the invitation apply and share with us their vision, how they lead, and their determination.

Exchange Leaders understand early care and education principles and practices, address diversity and equity, and are engaged in life-long learning. They are grounded in their own work and are using their strengths and advocacy skills to make a difference for children, families, and their communities.

Exchange Leaders play many roles, from the leader with a group of children in an early care and education or school-age program, to directors and administrators, to working in colleges and universities or working in support of other professional programs. Some have become leaders on their own through tenacity. Others have been nurtured along, and some have been pushed into the forefront. Our newest Exchange Leaders share both passion and commitment to our field of early care and education.



Pam Boulton, Ed.D., serves as the coordinator for the Exchange Leadership Initiative for *Exchange* magazine and is an instructor for the Center for Early Childhood Professional Development and Leadership in the UW-Milwaukee School of Continuing Education. She focuses on leadership development in the early childhood field.



Christina Alton

Cypress, Texas
Lead consultant/trainer,
Collaborative for Children

I am committed to always being an advocate for our youngest citizens. In my work I strive to empower early childhood professionals to increase their knowledge and appropriate practice when working with young children. Throughout my life, I want to be seen as a person who inspires joy and wonder by providing interactive and thought-provoking experiences for adults and children. I want to be known as a person who lives a life with honesty, integrity and unconditional love.



Katherine Bangert

Story City, Iowa
Lecturer, Iowa State
University

It is my mission to inspire others with my actions, to never forget the power of my voice, and to think with integrity in all situations. Knowing that with positive persistence, I have the foundation I need to help create productive, collaborative environments to foster success.


Kathleen Beaudoin

Tecumseh, Michigan
Great Start Readiness Program lead teacher, Monroe County Intermediate School District

As an early childhood educator, it is a privilege and an obligation to nurture both young children and their families, helping all to grow in a better understanding of self and abilities. I am a strong believer in providing a play-based learning opportunity, which includes developmentally appropriate best practice through a variety of activities such as literacy, math, discovery, social-emotional growth and the arts. A point of pride is helping the world become a better place by helping young minds grow and learn in kindness.


Lydia Bowers

Cincinnati, Ohio
Trainer, consultant and author, Lydia Bowers Consulting

I teach new ways of understanding empathy and consent for families and educators of young children in order to positively impact the rates of assault and abuse as children grow. In the face of difficult conversations, I make others feel heard while pushing them to think from different perspectives. I am inspired by those who are firm in what they stand for, and I seek to empower others in the same way.


Casey Camberos-Tharp

Bellflower, California
Preschool lead, Los Alamitos Unified School District

I have a passion for early childhood education. Inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach, I have a vision of assisting teachers, families and communities to see a child as a competent member of our society. I take pride in my ability to speak about the knowledge I have gained from my past experiences working with children. I see the need for change in the ECE field and that is why I have pursued my dream of becoming a men-

tor with the California Early Childhood Mentor Program. When the curriculum is negotiated among the teachers and children, the eagerness to learn flourishes. Only then can we, as a society, flourish.


Elizabeth Charland-Tait

Northampton, Massachusetts
Early childhood education coach and trainer, Preschool Enrichment Team

I believe that my mission and vision begins with service. All we do in this field comes from the heart. This is a caring profession grounded in principles of intention, love, and community. I believe our work in this field is vital. If this is at the heart of what I believe, then I must take the utmost care of the professionals in this field. Who cares for their hearts? Their intentions? Their compassion and longing for all children and families to thrive now and in their futures? The work is everything. Together, we map out a plan for the future. Early childhood is about community, collective strength, and a commitment to a better tomorrow.


Geania Dickey

Malvern, Arkansas
Principal, dot2dot consulting, LLC

I appreciate and build on strengths. I support individuals, organizations, and movements in the identification of their assets and the development and maximization of their resources.


Louise Durant

Tucson, Arizona
Coach, Quality First

My mission in the field of early childhood is to work at the local, state and, eventually, national levels, to help ensure that every child has access to high-quality education in their early years. I believe that the impact of quality care and education is strongest when delivered as early as possible. I strongly believe that through ongoing education, participating



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in communities of practice, taking opportunities to write and present, and advocating for ECE with policymakers is the way leaders will make a difference in the lives of children.


Rick Fiene

Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania
Research psychologist,
Research Institute for Key Indicators, LLC

I started my professional career nearly 50 years ago, delving into early care and education licensing systems, looking for the key elements of program quality at a public policy level. This search led me very early in my career to developing an early childhood program quality improvement and indicator model consisting of identifying key indicators and risk assessment regulations that contributed to making sure young children were in programs that promoted their health, safety and well-being. Over the years, as more and more states developed key indicator and risk assessment

tools, this led to differential monitoring, which is a more targeted, cost effective and efficient approach to monitoring early care and education programs.



Molly Gerrish

River Falls, Wisconsin
Professor and early childhood academic program director, early childhood education, University of Wisconsin-River Falls

My mission is to connect children, families, and early childhood professionals with the best possible opportunities to explore, engage, and care about the people, places, and things around them. I am committed to helping prepare early childhood educators to be mindful, creative, lifelong learners and passionate advocates. I also believe in the importance of increasing awareness of early childhood development while celebrating diversity, perseverance and inviting constant curiosity. I am a passionate visionary and strive for continuous knowledge in cutting edge practices, culturally and individually relevant pedagogies, and strong relationships. My power is in my passion.



Wilma Gold

Watsonville, California
Trainer/planning and development committee, Educators for Peaceful Classrooms and Communities

My mission is to use my experience and knowledge as an educator to inspire and empower teachers, families and children to create a world where each person is safe, secure and valued for their potential as members of their family, community, nation and the world. I am guided by my values of inclusion, respect, collaboration, diversity and the belief that everyone is capable of learning and change.



Kimberly Gorka

Holmen, Wisconsin
Administrator, Children's Palace Preschool and Child-care Inc.

It is my vision to provide an environment that creates a sense of community and belonging to the families in our care and our

community as a whole. The programming provides a nurturing and supportive environment that encourages personal growth, developmentally appropriate experiences and stimulation. Children's Palace strives to provide exceptional care at an affordable cost. We will continue to build collaborative relationships with our families, schools, partners and the communities we serve, in order to encourage social-emotional awareness, self sufficiency, independence, resiliency, confidence and a sense of achievement to the whole child.



Shannon Hendricks

Glen Heights, Texas
Director of children's programs, Bryan's House

I believe that all children have special needs and that all children are gifted. It is our job as educators to meet their unique needs and help them discover their talents.



Shirley Hopkinson

Washington, District of Columbia
Technical assistant, Kids Comprehensive Services

My goals are to consistently frame and support sustainable early learning behaviors; to commit my practice to the knowledge and belief that quality early educational experiences, as well as closing the resource-opportunity gap, determined by children's zip codes, are the foundation for children's success; to commit to modeling lifelong learning; to encourage and support a culture of village-like parental engagement in their children's early education experiences; and to continue my practice of 40 years of giving back beyond my borders, to the sustained development of early educators.



Tamar Jacobson

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Professor, Rider University

My work is helping teachers make connections between how we feel and what we do. Compassionate relationships are crucial for children's emotional development. Whatever I set out to do, concern for children's emotional wellbeing is my focus. I believe that: "As teachers, children give us work, passion and inspiration. They will love us with all their might if we pay at-

tention to them with an open heart. If we watch them closely, we can learn about emotions, spontaneity, joy for life, curiosity, and ourselves – for we relive our own childhoods over and over again – each time redeeming our own selves through their forever first-time discoveries and expressions of amazement." (Jacobson, 2018. Redleaf Press. Everyone Needs Attention)



Caroline Jens

Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
Founder, Child Care Biz Help

Everything I do in word and deed is for the purpose of making others feel

better about themselves, so they can carry that newfound confidence and impact those they encounter. Above all, I desire to create a contagious way to live life positively yet strong enough to make it through storms that will most definitely cross our path. I lead my company with the values: Do or Do Not, There is no Try; You're Family Not Customers; Always Custom, Always Personable; Rockstar Responsiveness; Foundation of Faith; Consistently Raising the Bar. I am living and working with purpose greater than myself.



Judith Massarano

Berkeley, California
Jewish enrichment specialist, Congregation Netivot Shalom Preschool

I came to preschool from a career in day school, realizing that play-based, emergent learning is the most organic way for children to thrive. My mission is to enrich the setting through vibrant programming and superior

"There is no investment you can make which will pay you so well as the effort to scatter sunshine and good cheer through your establishment."

Orison Swett Marden

staff and parent education. Providing enhanced programming and mentoring staff as I continue learning from other teachers, I am committed to my own continuing curiosity about what can continue to strengthen us. Having created an intentional curriculum that can be used in the field of Jewish preschool education at large, my mission to excite our youngest, most holy souls to love and embrace a joyful Judaism is flourishing!



Teresa McKay

Jeffers, Indiana
Owner, Hands On Learning
ECE

My mission is to continue to develop, support, and strengthen the field of early childhood education through high-quality training and education. As a trainer, consultant, and adjunct faculty, I strive to provide the most current information and research to all the participants in my classes, as well as supporting best practices for everyone, including families. I am a lifelong learner who is passionate about educating our youngest resources.



Susan Meriwether

Houston, Texas
Pre-primary lead teacher, St.
Francis Episcopal School

Moments matter! It matters how teachers and parents talk and respond to children's behavior; that adults find delight in greeting every child who enters the classroom; that parents and teachers know and realize that the only person's behavior and responses we can change are our own. It matters that children have the opportunity to learn through play and discover the magnificence of the world around them, indoors and outdoors. It also matters to me that I go into the community, addressing parent groups and early childhood teachers and advocating for the many things I believe matter. I teach, inspire, motivate, and encourage others to open their hearts and minds and view their children as capable, competent, and creative.



Dianne Nielsen

Rockport, Texas
President and founding
board member, Children's
Coalition of Aransas County;
Children's Ministries Director
of First Baptist Church Rock-

port; owner of Nielsen Training Services, Inc.

My personal mission is to make the world a better place for children. I am committed to growing and remaining current in my own knowledge and understanding of child development principles; studying and learning from research; advocating for best practices in caring for and teaching young children; sharing my knowledge and my passion with parents and other family members, child care professionals and other early childhood educators; and working tirelessly and passionately and using every opportunity to serve as a leader in my community in order to achieve these goals.



Brenda Peak

Abilene, Texas
Program director, Day Nurs-
ery of Abilene

My mission is to use my expertise and talents to assure a safe, quality environment for children to learn and grow in; to lead our team to success by building strong respectful relationships with staff and parents we serve; and to inspire each staff to reach their potential in the field of early child development to reach their own level of excellence.



Holly Reardon

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Executive director of learn-
ing, International Commu-
nity School of Addis Ababa

I believe that schools should be a hub for exploring and experimenting with new ideas and fresh perspectives. Schools, like our world, are a mosaic of diversity. We know that when we bring people together with different backgrounds and different strengths, new and creative ideas are able to flourish, and development is assured. Our job as leaders is to remove the barriers to learning that are the design principles for traditional schools and to create space and opportunities for autonomy, mastery, and purpose. I am committed to working in international education as I believe that this supports students in intercultural understanding, tolerance and open-mindedness—attributes, values and skills that are required in an increasingly connected world.



Roseann Rinear

Jamul, California
CEO/director, Oak Tree
Academy

I believe it is my obligation, honor and privilege to mentor, encourage and inspire parents and teachers to understand the importance of early childhood education. As an effective early childhood educator first and foremost, I passionately believe that all of us help shape the future of young children! It is paramount that parents and teachers understand each child is unique and a precious gift. My life's work as a professor is to impart knowledge with passion to early childhood educators to ensure teachers understand culture, second language learners and inclusion to create a welcoming and nurturing learning environment for both children and their families.

"Always
be a first-rate
version of yourself
and not a second-rate version
of someone else."

Judy Garland


Mari Riojas-Cortez

San Antonio, Texas
Professor, University of Texas
at San Antonio

As I was preparing for my first teaching job I did not know exactly what to expect. My first encounter with my students was at their homes with required home visits. Many of the families were from immigrant backgrounds or second- and third-generation Mexican Americans. From those visits, I knew that my calling was in early childhood. My purpose since then has been to contribute to the field of early childhood by being a leader and mentor to many pre-service and in-service teachers at my university and out in the field. I contribute to research and professional service that assists in ensuring that young children and their families, particularly those of Latino background, are given the best and most appropriate educational opportunities based on a social justice framework.


Carmen Rivers

Waukesha, Wisconsin
Senior lecturer and ECCE program coordinator, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

My heart is in early care and education and supporting the people who work with our youngest children. My personal mission is to make it possible for early childhood educators to earn bachelor's degrees, so they can provide truly high-quality early care and education, build supportive and trusting relationships with families, and do the advocacy work needed so that someday they might earn the pay and the status they deserve for all they are doing for children, families, their communities and the nation as a whole.


Clare Sanford

Plymouth, Minnesota
Director, government and community relations, New Horizon Academy

I am an accidental early childhood advocate. The conditions I encountered starting out with Teach for America horrified me, and I yearned for insight into the forces affecting the children I served. Perry Preschool hit me like a ton of bricks, followed by Abecedarian. Early childhood neuroscience and new

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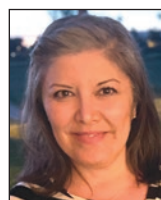
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voices from economics were gaining traction in academic discourse. It was a magical trifecta, and with certainty it hit me: THIS will be my life's work. I am grounded in the experiences of the fantastic children I taught many years ago, and the hurdles they faced in the quest for life (quite literally), liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We must and will do better. Sorry early childhood, you're stuck with me.


Shalla Sayed

Seattle, Washington
Educator, Hilltop Children's Center

Early childhood education is my life's work because I believe collaborative, joyful relationships built on trust and respect early in a child's life can lay a strong foundation for how they will view learning and themselves as learners. When we see them as capable, competent and strong, trust them as co-constructors of their own learning, and appreciate them for who they are rather than who they can one day become, they flourish. I have made it my mission to live these values in my own classroom and to support other educators in bringing these values to life in their classrooms. I work to support and help shape

education policies which make it possible for all children to thrive in their learning environments.


Cecilia Scott-Croff

Hartsdale, New York
Executive director and adjunct faculty, Borough of Manhattan Community College

My personal mission statement embodies a commitment to excellence through service, mentorship, training, education and coaching. Growth and development is a mindset I am committed to. I am committed to improving my skills as well as my service to children, families and teaching teams. My goal is to be reflective in my practices, to have honest conversations with myself and others, and maintain a presence in my interactions, experiences, and exchanges with children and families. I also believe I must protect and value the relationships I cultivate. Marian Wright Elderman once stated, "Service is the rent we pay for being. It is the very purpose of life, and not something you do in your spare time."

**Jennifer Slack**

Charlottesville, Virginia
Founder and leader,
Our Neighborhood Child
Development Center

My mission is to make learning the purpose of schooling. I hope to transform the way we work with children, to awaken caregivers to power—with relationships with children—and to raise the consciousness of parents.

**Karrie Snider**

Liberty, Missouri
Assistant professor of early
childhood education,
University of Central
Missouri

As a teacher at heart, I strive to see the world from the child's eyes. As director/administrator, I value the unity of family-teacher-program-stakeholder for creating optimal early learning environments. As researcher, I work to inspire practitioners with inquiry, innovation and relevant information. As teacher educator, my primary mission is to engage, build and strengthen adults' capacities for implementing child-centered, authentic and engaging teaching and learning approaches. As a leader, I want to inspire adults to think critically and intellectually about educational practices, young children's capacities, and to see our children as the powerfully capable thinkers and learners they are. Using effective leadership and communication skills, I accomplish goals by creating strategic collaborative partnerships, which harness strengths and maximize impact.

**Cindy Stephens**

Valencia, California
Faculty/departament chair,
College of the Canyons

I believe that my role as an early childhood professional is to advocate for the needs and rights of children and families. I believe that we have a collective responsibility in our society to promote the well-being of all children. This requires my diligence in creating adult learning spaces/environments that promote opportunities for shared dialogue, exchange of ideas and for building the capacity in our adult learners to

see themselves as advocates. This work is always at the forefront when I speak with students, legislators, administrators, researchers and other like-minded professionals. I am grateful to be at a point in my career where I can see opportunities to make a significant difference.

**Syretha Storey**

Laurel, Maryland
Owner/trainer, The Child
Care Company

I have been a classroom teacher, trainer, and post-secondary level teacher. I have also supported family childhood care programs and more. What I have come to know through all of these experiences is that program directors are the real fulcrum of quality in our field and that they are often overlooked. I believe that quality early childhood programs have directors who can effectively manage, lead, coach, mentor and have a deep and growing pedagogical knowledge that is essential for our ever-evolving field. I work to provide targeted director training, coaching, mentoring and other director supports. When directors are valued, nurtured and respected as individuals, they can build and sustain nurturing relationships with their employees, parents, and children.

**Cigdem Unal**

Madison, Wisconsin
Director of UW-Madison
Office of Child Care and Family
Resources, University of
Wisconsin Madison

I believe that education is power. When families and children thrive, our communities thrive! As a lifelong early childhood professional, I have created welcoming environments for children, families and educators where they can feel safe and valued and where they can experience a sense of belonging. I have been supporting student families since the beginning of my career in higher education. While student parents pursue degree completion with the hope of improved quality of life for their families, children are also building a strong foundation to be successful through enrollment in high quality early childhood programs. I think that this multi-generational approach is impactful and yields the brightest outcomes for both parents and children.

**Angel Walters**

Los Angeles, California
Director of quality services,
Child360

I have witnessed firsthand the positive effects of meaningful, high-quality early learning experiences for young children during their first years of life. Access to these experiences are a fundamental right—for all children—and are critical to their overall health, happiness and future success. I am dedicated to empowering the underrepresented, advocating for the underserved and serving as a voice for the marginalized. I believe in building systems that combat education and social justice inequities, as the opportunity to thrive is not a luxury but an intrinsic right. I'm grateful my work has followed a strategic path of supporting and empowering local families, their children, and society as a whole.

**Bebe Walton**

North Little Rock, Arkansas
Project program specialist,
AState Childhood Services

Working for children, I strive to educate those in whom we have entrusted their care about quality best practices, so that children thrive. I bring to early childhood educators the latest and soundest information concerning early childhood development so that they can make sound decisions about program operations and the impact their practices have on children as individuals and society as a whole.

*"Listen to
understand,
not to reply."*

Natalia Butenko