

Early Childhood ALLY

www.EarlyChildhoodAlly.org -- Insta: @EarlyChildhoodAlly -- EarlyChildhoodAlly@gmail.com

5 THINGS I AM LOVING

JaneAnn Benson Library Not sure if you can see the nameplate so I am going to take a moment to rejoice in the naming of the library at the Early Childhood Learning Laboratory. Although this happened quietly in the last 6 months it's been a dream in my heart over the past 4 years. It was exciting to help in the selection of ordering several hundred new books to add to the collection. What are you wishing for?

London As I always say.....PLAN the trip. Just start planning and saving for the small or big adventure. I have found that having something on my calendar to look forward to is helpful. The anticipation is an added bonus.

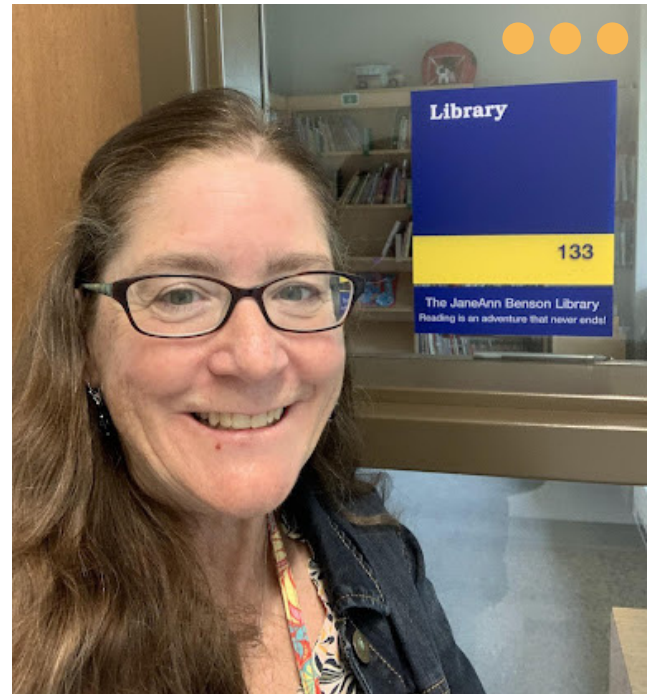
Book Club I am sure it might be a surprise to many of you that I have never been part of a formal book club. I have been engaged in book reading with a group around a specific topic for work however have never found the time or community to join a formal book club. This changed in late summer when the woman in my family (10 of us) decided to embark on a book club to keep us connected. It was such a reminder that it's fun to read and share with others.

Cocoa Ceremony When have you tried something new? I participated in my first CoCoas Ceremony last week with my Northern Sisterhood Yoga group. It was an excellent way to usher in the fall season.

Embroidery Trying to add small creative projects to my downtime. I have found that when I am more creative I am more relaxed. So, I have been incorporating small 30 minute blocks of time to engage in something creative. I have found embroidering small projects to be fun and rewarding. What do you do that is creative?

WHAT'S ON THE GRAM:

- Appreciation and Motivation
- Math and Science
- More Stories





HUMOR IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

On Instagram each week I have been focusing my stories on a specific topic. One topic that absolutely has been fascinating to me is around Humor in Early Childhood. This was a wondering of mine after visiting different classrooms and observing how differently they responded to humor. The first classroom was enthusiastic when children were funny and joined in on their silly humor. The staff also displayed humor with one another, laughing often. In contrast, in the second classroom the staff largely ignored children's attempts at humor. One teacher smiled but did not encourage or engage in any of the interactions.

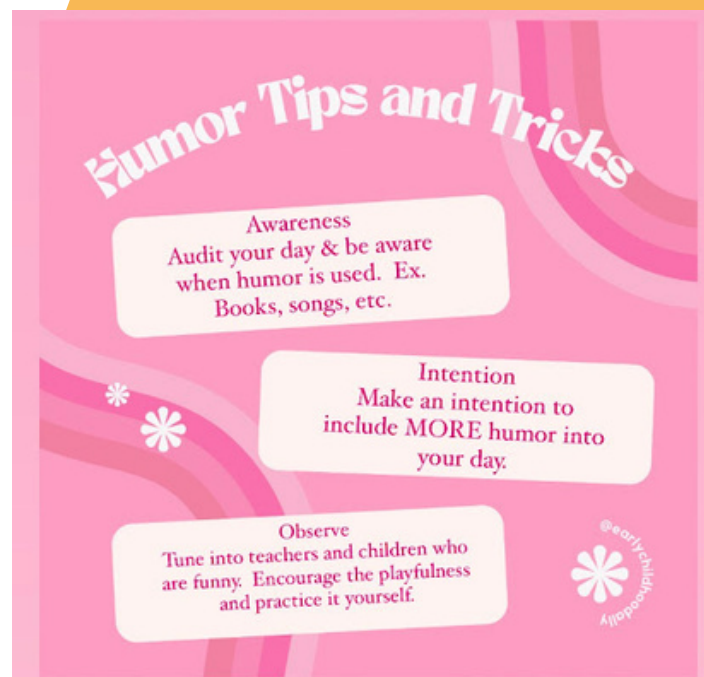
It made me reflect personally and then follow up with the staff around their thoughts on humor. I began a quest to look at the research and best practices and found there was very little. What I did find was very minimal.

Interesting Findings:

- 😊 Humor increases a sense of belonging.
- 😊 Teachers' stress decreases when they experience/engage with humor/laughter.
- 😊 Teachers report being concerned they will lose control if children are being silly/funny.
- 😊 As curriculum has moved away from PLAY based programming natural opportunities have decreased for humor.
- 😊 Humor is communication - think about babies and silly faces/voices.
- 😊 Educators reported rarely talking with families about humor.

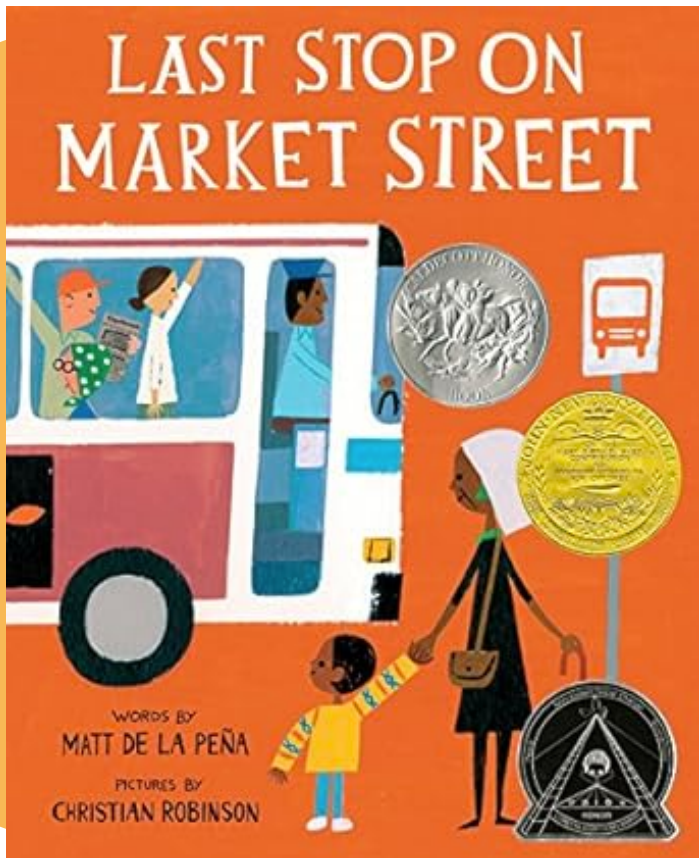
Humor and laughter are important social skills and can assist children as a stress reliever when challenges present themselves. Yet, we don't include humor much if any in coursework or professional development.

What would you add to the list of tips and tricks?



SEPTEMBER BOOK HIGHLIGHTS

I have been gathering book highlights from new books that have been added to the Children's Library at GRCC's Early Childhood Learning Laboratory. I will share them each month for those of you who might be interested in checking them out.



"Last Stop On Market Street"

There are so many themes explored in this award winning oldie but goodie book for preschoolers. The idea of helping others and how it positively impacts us is intertwined in this book.

I love the connection between a grandson and grandma as they navigate their bus ride across town to Market Street.

The use of riding a bus instead of a car is explored through C.J.'s eyes. The illustrations are engaging without distracting away from the story.

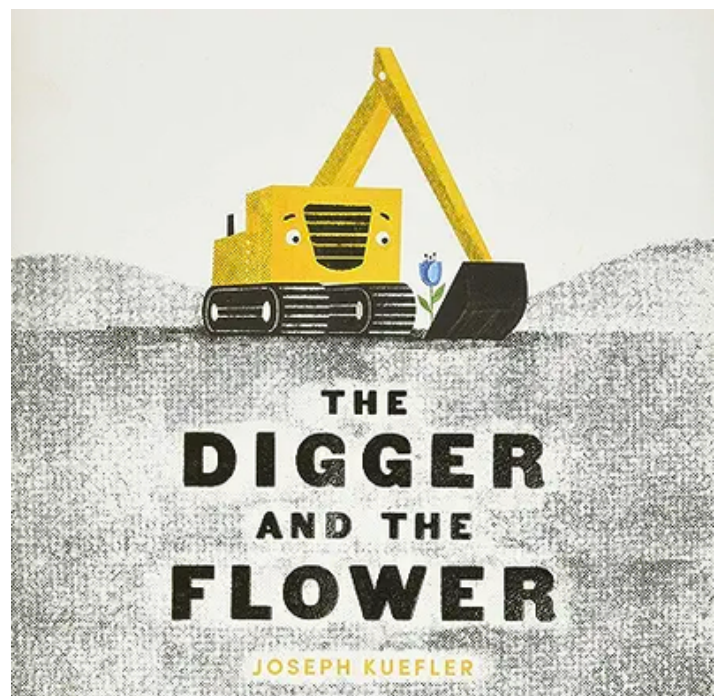
The overarching theme around the topic of inequality is introduced in a powerful yet conversational manner.

"The Digger and the Flower"

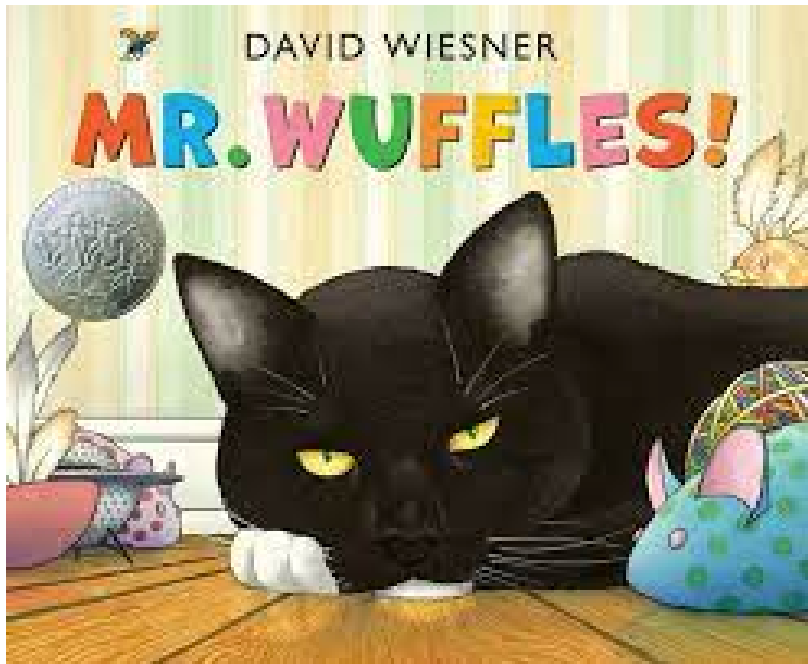
This was a new book to me. I discovered it when I was researching books to select for the ECLL library. It was on several booklists and I found it surprisingly engaging. The bulldozer (Digger) is the star of the book. Digger is happy with his life as a truck until he discovers a solitary blue blossom that he wants to save. Not everything goes as planned.

Although the text is simple the tale of conservation and gardening are explored along with empathy.

I feel like it could have used another page or two although that may be the "adult" in me.



SEPTEMBER BOOK HIGHLIGHTS CONT.



Mr. Wuffles 🐱👽

Mr. Wuffles aka the cat features a highly imaginative and curious tale. Mr. Wuffles is not interested in any of the toys that have been bought for him. He discovers a spaceship of aliens in the house and the adventure begins.

Although this book has few words the illustrations lend itself to storytelling over and over. It has a graphic novel/comic book layout interspersed throughout more traditional pages.

Story Stretcher:

- 👽 Make a spaceship with blocks/boxes.
- 👽 Make a list of children's favorite toys.

I would recommend it for older preschoolers.

Where Are You From?

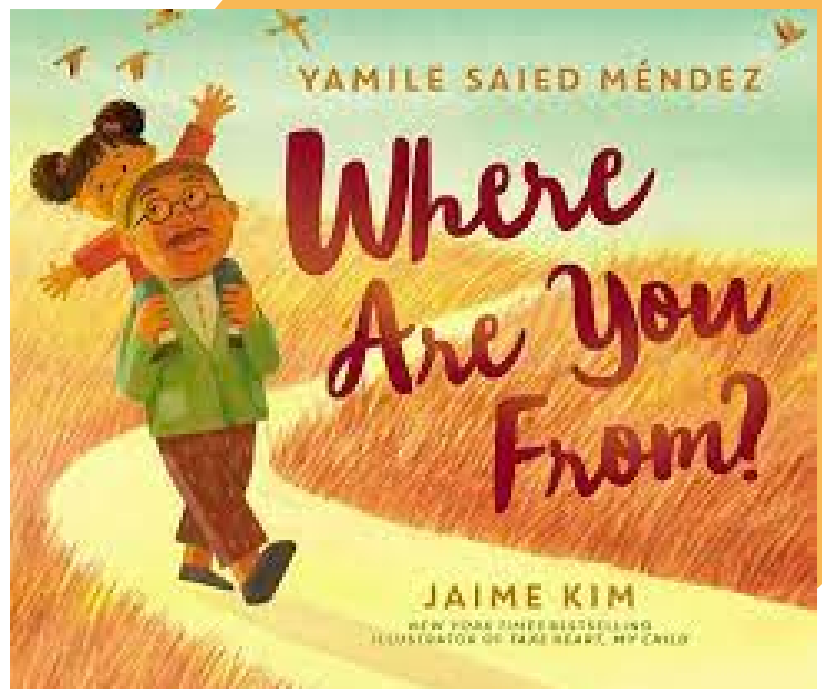
When a young Latina girl is asked repeatedly where she's (really) from and her answer doesn't seem to be right she turns to her Abuelo (grandpa) for an answer. The response is a powerful one of acceptance, identity and belonging. The text is lyrical and illustrations include warm watercolors and ink artwork.

The book has several themes including micro aggressions, belonging and self-acceptance.

Story Extensions:

- 💜 What do we call our grandparents.
- 💜 Explore how she is feelings based on her expressions.

I would recommend it for preschoolers.



DO YOU HAVE A SPOTTER?



When weightlifters lift a heavy weight they have a spotter. The spotter makes sure that you have support while staying safe. I like to think that each of us has a spotter especially when we are trying new and challenging things. Who is your spotter?

If you don't have a spotter who might you be vulnerable enough to ask? When you are in the gym you wouldn't attempt lifting without a spotter. I challenge you to find a spotter.

BUILD GREEN SPACES TO BUILD IMMUNITY IN CHILDREN



Accept the children the way we accept trees—with gratitude, because they are a blessing—but do not have expectations or desires. You don't expect trees to change, you love them as they are.

—Isabel Allende, Chilean–American Writer, Teacher, Journalist

In a first-of-its-kind effort to explore a causal relationship between green spaces and immunity, a [2020 Finnish study](#) found a significant difference in the microbiomes of children who played in green spaces and those who played in spaces dominated by concrete, tile and gravel. A healthy microbiome—marked by the diversity of microbes that live in the digestive tract—has a direct, positive impact on our immune systems, including fostering T-cell growth, part of our adaptive immune response.

"When daycare workers rolled out a lawn, planted forest undergrowth (such as dwarf heather and blueberries), and allowed children to care for crops in planter boxes, the diversity of microbes in the guts and on the skin of the young kids appeared healthier in a very short space of time," noted the researchers. In fact, it took just 28 days for their microbiomes to 'catch up' to those of children who already had daily access to green spaces or forests.



BUILD GREEN SPACES TO BUILD IMMUNITY IN CHILDREN CONT.

"The results of this study support the biodiversity hypothesis and the concept that low biodiversity in the modern living environment may lead to an uneducated immune system and consequently increase the prevalence of immune-mediated diseases," the authors explained.

While the study was too small to be conclusive, it has planted the seeds for future research, adding to a long list of physical and mental health benefits of playing, learning and growing in nature-rich environments.

This article is reprinted from Exchange EveryDay.

SPOTLIGHT ON EXCELLENCE - MILESTONES

I love to highlight best practice in our field. At the Milestones Professional Development day they included a Learning Fair component. Each of their Teachers of the Year nominees had a table to highlight content.

The topic areas: Diversity, Sensory, Process Art, Transitions, and Kaymbu Tips. What an excellent way to lift up best practices happening in their programs.

When we see Teachers As Leaders it conveys a critical message to our staff.



FREE TO PLAY SUMMIT

Are you signed up for the FREE Play Summit that will be from October 21-23? If not, I highly encourage you to engage. I have done the free option since the conference began. You have 24 hours to view the content and I typically select one I want to tune into each of the days.

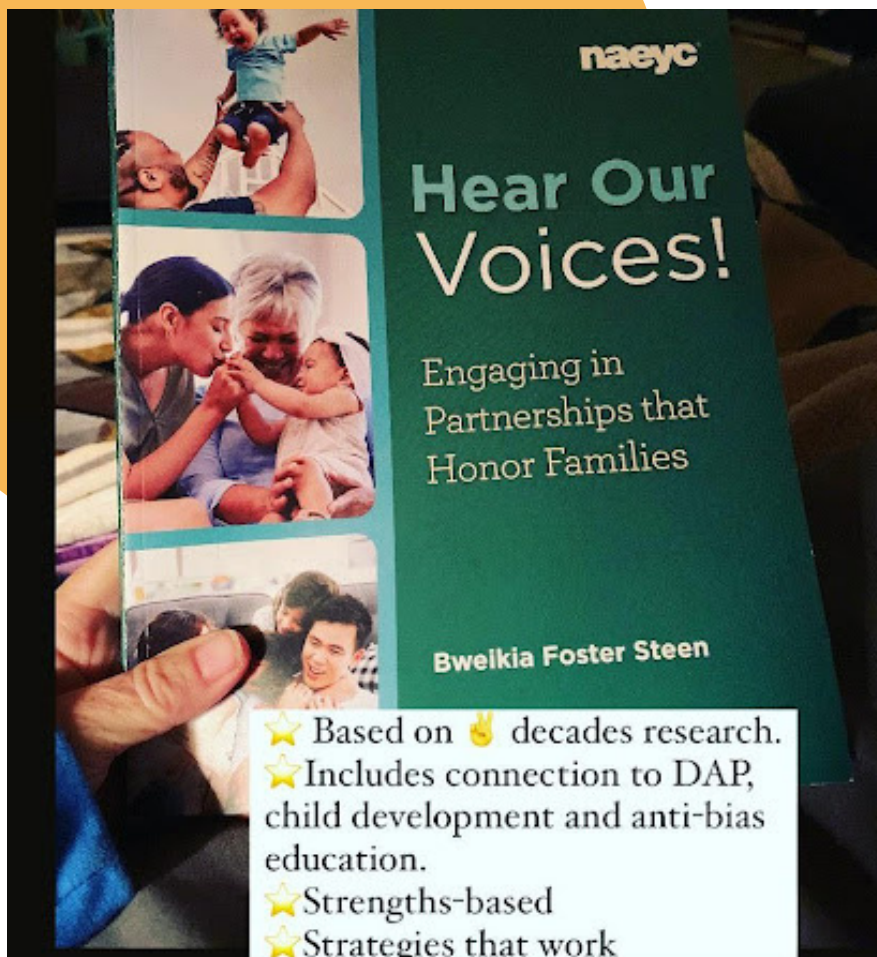
Here is the website link to sign up: <https://freetoplaysummit.com/>

THE CIRCLE ACTIVITY

The CIRCLE Activity Collection: Family translates child development research into practice by providing a variety of hands-on activities that families can do at home. This collection is organized around seven learning domains: Language & Communication, Reading & Writing, Math, Science, Social & Emotional, Physical Development, and Art & Sensory. Visit the website here: cliengagementfamily.org



NAEYC NEW BOOK ALERT



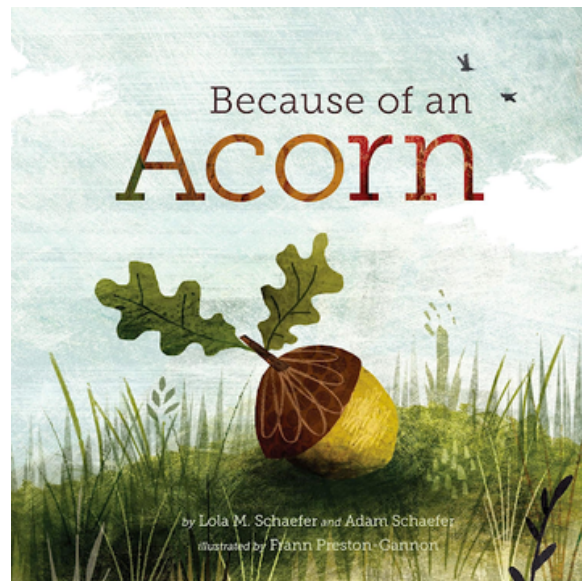
Paired with this new book was a Young Children feature on families. A few items I felt worthy of passing along.

Family Observation Forms Working in partnership with families to include their observations of children's development outside of the school setting. Conferences are often led by the teacher and the focus on including a family observation component increases a partnership. Families would not need to fill out the form alternatively they could be asked open ended questions, etc. to gain this knowledge.

Family Activity Experiences Intentionally share family activity experiences. The resource they shared is a new one to me and comes in English and Spanish.

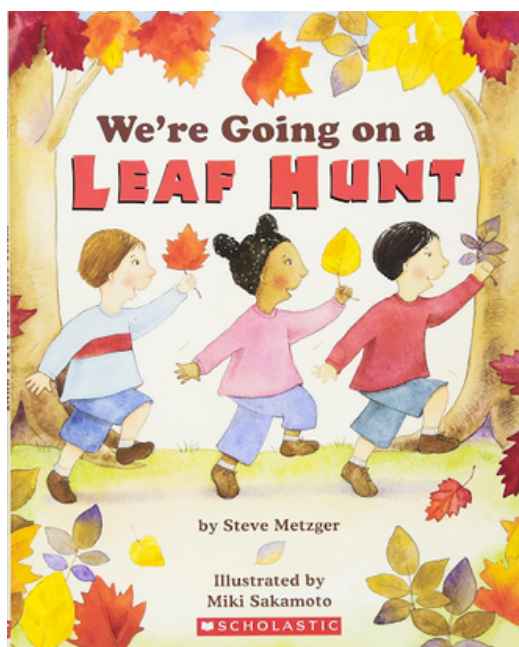
10 THINGS TO DO WITH ACORNS

- Crush them
- Sink and Float activity
- Throw them at target/bucket
- Paint them
- Put them in a box with a little paint and roll them around
- One to one correspondence with a muffin tin or egg carton
- Use in sensory table with bowls, big spoons and containers
- Identify the different types
- Sort by size and type
- Collect them on a walk



10 THINGS TO DO WITH LEAFS

- Collect them on a walk – could also level this up with a guide for what specifically you are looking for. Could be by type of some other thing such as crunch, yellow, etc.
- Paint them
- Glue them on paper/cardboard
- Identify the different types of leaves.
- Add magnifying glasses to investigate the different characteristics.
- Vocabulary for different elements of leaves – stem, veins, etc.
- Jump in the leaves – ask families to bring in if you don't have access.
- Crunch up the leaves and use as confetti.
- Sing a leaf song as you collect/play with leaves.
- Dance/move like the leaves – add scarves or even a parachute.



10 THINGS TO DO WITH STICKS

- Make a leaf kabob.
- Write with the stick in the dirt/sand.
- Collect different sizes of sticks....compare/contrast.
- Paint sticks and use in block/other areas.
- Add sticks to the end of paint brushes for a different experience.
- Wrap yarn around the sticks.
- Make a stick maze – especially when children can help.
- Use it as a non-traditional method of measuring.
- Use for dramatic play – camping theme, etc.
- Pair with books such as “A Stick is an Excellent Thing” and “What to Do with a Stick”.





ARE YOU NEW HERE? WE ARE SO GLAD YOU HAVE JOINED US!

Welcome to Early Childhood Ally!!



A little bit about me, I am the founder of Early Childhood Ally (ECA) and have been in the field for 40 years as a teacher, coach, mentor and director. I started the Early Childhood Ally Instagram page just over two years ago with the support of my family and friends, especially my daughter Jazzy.

My partner Herm and I live primarily in our cottage in the Manistee National Forest after 30 years of living in Midtown Grand Rapids. I have two daughters Britany who works and lives in East Lansing with her partner Nick. Jazzy lives and works in Grand Rapids. I do travel into Grand Rapids often for work and to see my grandchildren Rosalie and Alex with my bonus daughter Ashleigh.

I spent over 20 years at Grand Rapids Community College leading and directing the Early Childhood Learning Laboratory, an accredited, star rated program in the heart of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Over the past year I transitioned to semi-retirement and am loving working as the Lead Coach for our Play and Learn grant. If you are interested in following along with that work you can check it out on Instagram through Play and Learn GRCC. I coach and mentor a handful of Directors which is incredibly rewarding.

As a long time advocate of all issues impacting the field of early childhood I have more time to devote to my passion. If you are interested in specific content don't be shy and reach out and let me know. I am always eager to hear what you all need.

