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**Step Up to Quality Approved Trainings**

***Beyond Ethnic Tourism: Cultural Proficiency and Children's Picture Books***  
**(2.5 hrs)**

"Diversity" is not just a buzz word: it refers to the variety of ethnic, cultural, and lifestyle backgrounds and life experiences that all children bring with them into the early childhood setting. In order to sufficiently recognize and respect the different backgrounds of children in your care, it is crucial to have an understanding of the cultural influences and messages that are part of the materials you bring into the classroom. This training will provide an introduction to the theory of cultural proficiency, and demonstrate how to use it to ensure that the picture books you use with children move beyond a simple "tourist" approach to diversity, enhancing the early learning experience for all children and their families.

***Teacher? Caregiver? Educarer?: Defining Your Professional Identity***  
**(2.5 hrs)**

There are many words that describe what we do in the profession of early childhood education. Who gets to decide what words define you? If you are paid to teach and/or care for young children, then you are an early childhood professional in fact, and should also be a professional in attitude. This training will help you to define yourself as a professional in the field of early childhood education and care, and will help you begin to create a personal assessment of your professional accomplishments and goals.

***The Cow Said What?: Using Simple Performance Techniques to Enhance Read Aloud***  
**(2.5 hrs)**

The value of reading aloud to children every day is well documented, and it is expected that every teacher and caregiver will read to the children in their care. We assume that all adults who can read are capable of reading aloud to children, but not everyone does so easily. You don't need to be an award-winning actor in order to utilize some basic performance techniques that will grab and hold the attention of children of all ages. This workshop will introduce participants to those techniques, and offer a supportive space to try them out and add them to your professional toolbox.

## ***Sugar and Snails and Everyday Tales: Dramatic Play and Gender Development*** **(2.5 hrs)**

Dramatic play can have a significant impact on a child's developing sense of a gendered self. This training will begin with an introduction to the history of dramatic play, focusing on how gender roles and stereotypes developed and function in this context, and incorporate the identification of materials and activities to promote healthy gender development. The aim is to provide the children in our care with developmentally appropriate support for discovering and expressing who they are and how they fit in a world of gendered expectations.

## ***Embracing the Dragon: The Pitfalls and Potential of Learning Technologies*** **(2.5 hrs)**

The children of the 21st century are born into a technological world. They will be interacting with increasingly sophisticated technology as a normal and natural part of their everyday lives, and teachers and administrators will be expected to be familiar with its pitfalls and embrace its potential. In this session, we will explore the benefits as well as the drawbacks of using technology in early childhood classrooms, and will consider the impact of technology on staff and administration.

## ***Art Time is Every Time: Integrating Art Throughout the Curriculum*** **(2.5 hrs)**

Most people who work with young children generally agree that art experiences are a critical component of a quality early childhood program due to their value in facilitating creative, cognitive, and fine motor growth, and that they should be available to children daily. This workshop will develop that idea further, to explore the rich integration of art materials, techniques, and projects throughout the curriculum, and will assist and encourage participants to devise ways to integrate meaningful art experiences in all aspects of their programs.

## ***Playing to Learn, Learning Through Play*** **(2.5 hrs)**

One of the major discussions currently taking place regarding pre-K learning environments is about learning and play in the curriculum. Many educators and caregivers are concerned about the loss of free play time in early childhood settings, while others worry that too much play and not enough instructional time will not prepare children adequately for kindergarten. This workshop will consider the individual components of these concerns, introduce current theory and research about play and learning, and help participants generate ideas for determining the amount and purpose of play and learning in your own practice.

### ***Constructive Kids: Motor Skills, Creative Thinking, And Mechanical Aptitude*** **(2.5 hrs)**

Mechanical aptitude, or the ability to perceive, understand, and manipulate the function of mechanical processes and equipment, has undergone a dramatic change over the last fifty years. Digital technologies, combined with the loss of manufacturing jobs, have moved many children farther away from mechanical processes. What are the implications of this loss for children as they grow to adulthood, what are the responsibilities of early childhood teachers and caregivers to support and encourage the development of mechanical aptitude, what is the connection between mechanical aptitude and motor skills, and how does mechanical aptitude encourage creativity and higher order thinking? This workshop will address these questions, as well as engage participants in a consideration of materials and activities that foster or inhibit engagement with mechanical processes.

### ***Jill-of-All-Trades: Professional Identity and the Challenges and Rewards of Early Childhood Administration*** **(2 hrs)**

The job description for administrators of early childhood programs, whether “day care” or “preschool,” has changed significantly over the last 30 years. The licensing requirements are more complicated, staffing issues are more challenging, and financial pressures are more stressful. Administrators are increasingly hard pressed to stay in touch with new developments in the field, to manage staff efficiently and effectively, to communicate meaningfully with families, and to still find time to spend with the children who drew us to the field in the first place. All of these changes and challenges have impacted the ways in which administrators define themselves as professionals. This workshop will provide some historical background to help explain why the field has changed the way it has, and will address how administrators can nurture a professional identity that negotiates the demands of early childhood care and education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### ***Drum Roll Please: Music in the Early Childhood Classroom*** **(2.5 hrs)**

Music, nursery rhymes, and finger plays have always been staples of early childhood classrooms. Over the years, music in the early childhood classroom has ventured far beyond the simple tunes and finger plays of “Itsy Bitsy Spider” and “The Wheels on the Bus.” This workshop will consider the importance of music for young children (including the rich legacy of the “old standards”), discuss the three main ways to integrate music into the classroom, and offer suggestions for resources to enhance the musical experience, develop an appreciation for music in a variety of forms, and foster cognitive abilities, social interaction, and musical competence.

***Reading Me and We: Picture Books that Support Social-Emotional Development and Democratic Life Skills***  
**(2.5 hrs)**

Dan Gartrell's inspiring book *Education for a Civil Society: How Guidance Teaches Young Children Democratic Life Skills*, describes the five essential "Democratic Life Skills" that will help children develop as responsible and respectful individuals and engaged members of a community of learners. In this presentation, we will focus on ways in which the thoughtful use of picture books can enhance the development of these skills on an individual level and inspire activities that contribute to a dynamic, responsive, and sociable classroom environment.

***Beyond the Table: Integrating Sensory Activities Throughout the Environment***  
**(2.5 hrs)**

When we think of "sensory play," we often conceive of activities in the "sensory area," or "sensory table," which has become a staple of early childhood programs. In this workshop, we will explore ways of getting those sensory activities "off the table," by extending them throughout the classroom. We will consider the importance of sensory interactions in developmental terms, the challenges that some children experience with sensory processing and integration, and strategies for engaging all children in meaningful, creative, and developmentally appropriate sensory play and learning.