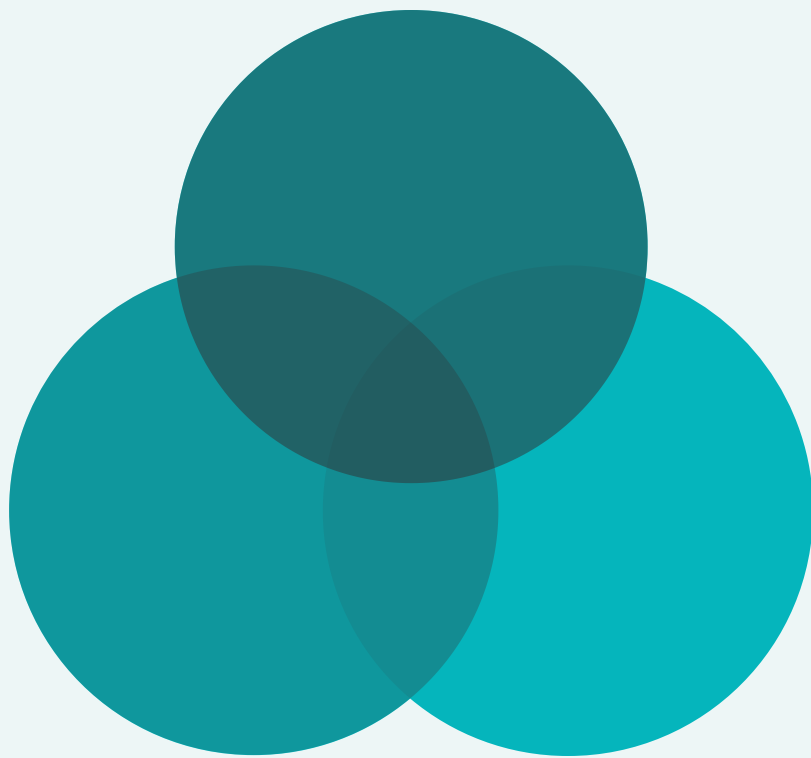




WYOMING EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE



OCTOBER 10-11, 2025

RIVERTON, WYOMING



WYOMING EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE

10-11

OCT, 2025

Breakout Session Tracks

Select breakout sessions based on your area of interest. Below is the color code which corresponds to the tracks: Business, Leadership, Infant/Toddler, Preschool, School-Age, and Other

BUSINESS/LEADERSHIP

MIXED AGE

INFANT

PRESCHOOL

SCHOOL-AGE

OTHER

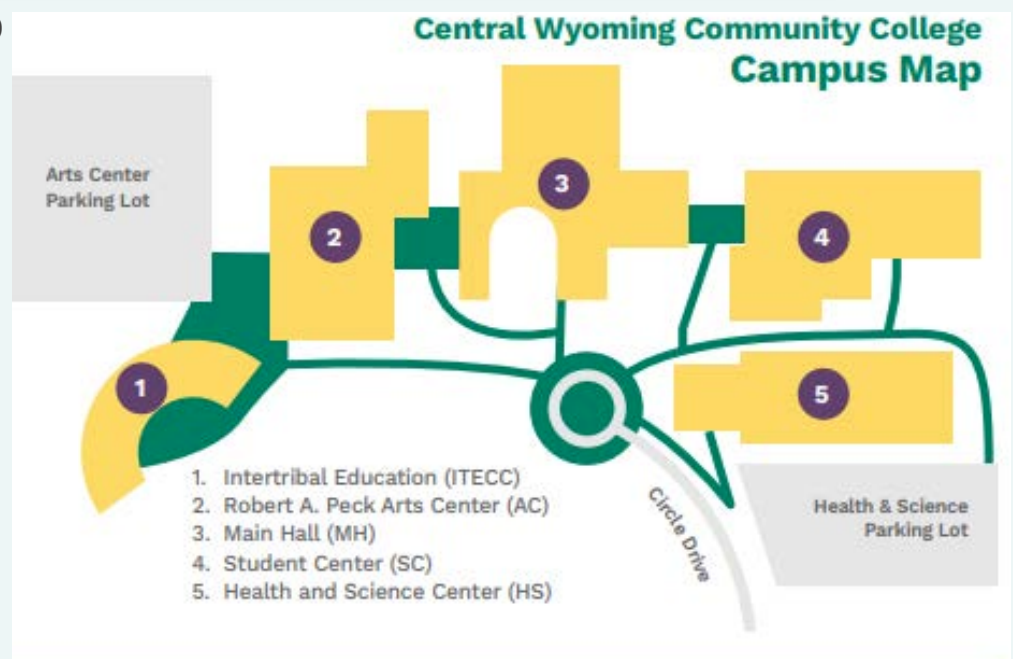
Welcome!

Welcome to the 2025 Wyoming Early Childhood Collaborative Conference. This year, a collaborative group has created an unforgettable conference. We hope you gain new friendships, spend time reflecting, add new tools to your toolbox, and, most importantly, refuel your passion for the work you do!

Conference Partners

This year's conference is a collaboration between multiple organizations. The conference requires dedication and careful planning. Please take a moment during your time here to thank: Wyoming Department of Family Services, Wyoming Department of Health, Wyoming Department of Education, Wyoming Workforce Services, Wyoming Business Council, Wyoming Enrichment Network, and The Align Team

Map





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BUSINESS/LEADERSHIP

MIXED

INFANT/TODDLER

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SCHOOL-AGE

OTHER

Schedule At a Glance

The 2025 Wyoming Early Childhood Collaborative Conference is designed to offer multiple tracks tailored to the diverse needs of early childhood educators. This event brings together professionals to explore current issues, share valuable insights, and exchange knowledge on child development. By fostering collaboration and professional dialogue, the conference supports continued growth and development for those dedicated to the care and education of young children.

PTSB Credit: We are currently working to offer PTSB credit for those with a Wyoming Teaching License. Upon approval, credits will be submitted for attendance.

****Credits will only be offered for two, full-day attendances (partial attendance will not be awarded).** You must submit the required form, provided at the conference, to be eligible. Upon approval from PTSB the conference will be approved for 1 credit.

STARS Credit: STARS credit will be offered for educators attending the conference. A STARS evaluation form, provided at the conference, will be required. A total of 16 credits will be offered.





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10-11

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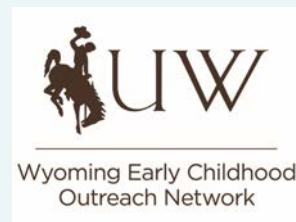
The Play Lab: Come play, learn, and get inspired!

This interactive space is filled with engaging, open-ended materials that invite you to build, create, and explore — just as children do. Come play, learn, and get inspired while seeing firsthand how play sparks learning and development. Visit during breaks to try new ideas and gather fresh inspiration to bring back to your own program.



LOCATION: ARTS CENTER-GALLERY

The Play Lab is sponsored and facilitated by the **Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative**. All of the engaging materials featured in the Play Lab will be given away at the end of the conference. By joining in and playing with us, you'll be entered into a drawing to take some of these wonderful resources home to your own program. Let's explore, connect, and play — you'll leave inspired and might just leave with new materials too!





WYOMING EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE

FRIDAY

10

OCT, 2025



7:15 AM-7:45 AM

Registration/Vendor Exhibits

Join us in the Fine Arts Building at CWC for the 2025 Wyoming Early Childhood Collaborative Conference. Throughout the days, visit this year's vendor and information exhibits.

Room: AC (Arts Center)

10

OCT, 2025



7:45 AM-8:30 AM

From Trauma Aware to Trauma Responsive: Joey Burke

Through the story of Jake, a kindergartener navigating foster care and big emotions, this keynote explores how we can move from simply recognizing trauma to responding in ways that build safety and resilience.

Room: AC (Arts Center)



8:30AM-9:00AM

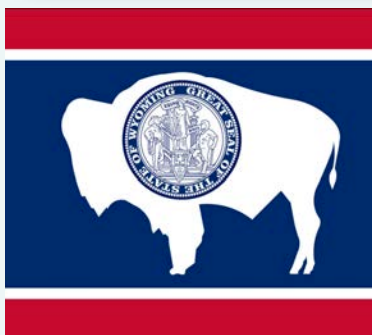
Finish with Impact Concept: Kate Hayes

Discover the origin & purpose of the Finish with Impact concept. Set your mindset for the day ahead by clearing limiting thoughts & preparing to take inspired action & implementing change that matters.

Room: AC (Arts Center)

10

OCT, 2025



9:00 AM - 9:45 AM

"Wyoming" - A Panel Discussion

Join Penny Cannon as she leads a panel group, offering educators an opportunity to hear more about state updates, learn about resources, and find ways to connect to success.

Room: AC (Arts Center)



WYOMING EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE

10
OCT, 2025

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OCT, 2025



9:45AM-10:15 AM

Vendor Exhibits/Break

Join us in the Fine Arts Building at CWC for the 2025 Wyoming Early Childhood Collaborative Conference vendor and information exhibits.

Room: AC (Arts Center)



10:15AM -11:45 PM

Breakout Sessions

Choose breakout sessions which meet your personal professional needs and goals.

CULTIVATING TEAMS THAT THRIVE

Strong organizations do not thrive because everyone fits into a pre-defined mold; they thrive when leaders understand, nurture, & support the unique needs, values, & work styles of individuals as well as how these characteristics co-exist within the same space.

Room: MH179 - Anna Wilcox

REALITIES OF INFANT AND TODDLER CARE

Caring for infants & toddlers is deeply rewarding, but daily realities can feel overwhelming. Openly examine the challenges of group care & the moments that test our patience & resilience. Leave with tools to ease stress, strengthen your practice, & bring greater calm & confidence to your classroom.

Room: ITECC106 - Lauren Carlisle

CREATING & FOSTERING THERAPEUTIC LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Navigating an often-chaotic world? Create peaceful & therapeutic classroom environments by incorporating co-regulating & self-regulating play & interactions. Help promote calming & focus through play & movement activities targeting the vagal nervous system.

Room: ITECC116 - Jessica Jaycox and Teresa Jacobs Castano

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES SUPPORTING LEARNING & THRIVING

PEAR Institute's Clover Model is a tool for understanding learning and growth. We will explore how you can help young people thrive in different developmental stages, support struggles, and celebrate growth through the clover's leaves.

Room: MH181 - Emily Vercoe

RESPONDING WITH RESILIENCE

Hands-on strategies for recognizing and responding to fight, flight, freeze, and fawn behaviors. Together, we'll explore the trauma-aware → trauma-informed → trauma-responsive process across three levels: for caregivers/educators, for children, and for parents/caregivers.

Room: MH171- Joey Burke

ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR USING PYRAMID MODEL RELATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Presenters will explain & demonstrate practices from the Pyramid Model that programs can use to address challenging behaviors. Participants will have an opportunity to see videos of these strategies in action.

Room: ITECC125 - Head Start TA



WYOMING EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE

FRIDAY

10

OCT, 2025



11:45AM-12:45PM

Lunch/Vendor Exhibits

Lunch will be served in the cafeteria: Taco Bar.

Room: Cafeteria

12:00-12:30 Proposed Child Care Licensing Rules Q & A

Grab lunch from the cafeteria and join Nichole Anderson, Support Services Program Manager for Child Care, and Michelle Lala, Licensing and Regional Child Care Licensing Supervisor, for an opportunity to ask questions regarding the proposed licensing rules.

Room: Health Science 100

10

OCT, 2025



12:45 PM- 1:15PM

From Notes to Action: Kate Hayes

Unlock the power in your conference notes and turn insights into momentum. Explore the impact of physical movement and collaborate in group work to complete the “Next Steps” exercise.

Room: AC (Arts Center)

10

OCT, 2025



1:15 PM-2:00PM

Supporting Transitions: Nikki Baldwin

Transitions, such as starting childcare or moving to a new classroom, are pivotal moments in a young child’s life. Explore how transitions affect children’s identity, development, & emotional well-being, often triggering stress and uncertainty, but also opening the door to growth and learning.

Room: AC (Arts Center)

10

OCT, 2025



2:00PM-2:30PM

Vendor Exhibits

Join us in the Fine Arts Building at CWC for the 2025 Wyoming Early Childhood Collaborative Conference vendor and information exhibits.

Room: AC (Arts Center)



WYOMING EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE

10
OCT, 2025

FRIDAY

10
OCT, 2025

“RESEARCH SHOWS THAT YOU BEGIN LEARNING IN THE WOMB AND GO RIGHT ON LEARNING UNTIL THE MOMENT YOU PASS ON. YOUR BRAIN HAS A CAPACITY FOR LEARNING THAT IS VIRTUALLY LIMITLESS, WHICH MAKES EVERY HUMAN A POTENTIAL GENIUS.” — MICHAEL J. GELB



2:45PM-4:15 PM

Breakout Sessions

Choose breakout sessions which meet your personal professional needs and goals.

SMART SYSTEMS: RESILIENT CHILDCARE BUSINESSES

Running a childcare program means running a business. Learn practical strategies for tracking income, expenses, and time, making daily management easier and tax preparation smoother. Participants will leave with tips, resources, and one clear action step to strengthen business practices.

Room: MH179 - Devan, Costa-Cargill, Nicole Choi, & Jennifer Kreiser

RE-DEFINING POWER STRUGGLES

Have you ever found yourself in an argument with a toddler? Challenging behavior in early childhood often arises from or results in power struggles. Focuses on the causality of power struggles, how to identify, assess, and overcome interactions of conflict.

Room: ITECC106 - Martha Nesslinger & James Bedient

USING MUSIC TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF EVERY CHILD

Music is a universal language supporting every child's development, including those with special needs. Discover how music creates inclusive, engaging pathways for learning, growth, and connection.

Room: ITECC116 - Dylan Ashburn and Zane Rutledge

VOICE AND CHOICE: PRE-SCHOOL & ELEMENTARY YEARS

Do you ever notice how children engage differently when their ideas drive activity? Together, we will explore ways to invite youth voice and choice into a learning environment through inquiry & engagement so that each feels valued and heard.

Room: MH181 - Emily Vercoe

UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIORS THAT CHALLENGE US

Understanding Behaviors That Challenge Us- Explore how infants, toddlers, and preschoolers use behavior to communicate their needs, intentions, and emotions, and how adults can effectively respond. Learn and ask questions about strategies and resources to support parents as they understand their children's behavior while supporting their learning.

Room: MH171 - Head Start TA

ECARES - WYOMING'S NEW CHILD CARE EXCHANGE

In this hands-on session, educators will have the opportunity to use the new ECARES system.

Room: MH157 - Carrie Gray (computer lab)

ONCE UPON A DATASET: A WY ECIDS STORY

It seems the news is full of headlines about the child care crisis, yet we also hear stories of local providers closing rooms, unable to find enough clients to continue services - how can both stories be true? Using a new integrated data tool, the WY Early Childhood Integrated Data System (WY ECIDS), we'll explore these dual narratives at the state and local levels.

Room: ITECC105 - Cari Cuffney



WYOMING EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE

FRIDAY

10

OCT, 2025



4:15PM-4:30PM

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Room: AC (Arts Center)

10

OCT, 2025



4:30PM-5:00PM

Implementing Change: Kate Hayes

Reflect, review, and refocus. Explore how to turn insight into action with an end-of-day challenge and open audience reflections to close the day with clarity and intention.

Room: AC (Arts Center)

10

OCT, 2025



5:00PM-5:30PM

Vendor Exhibits

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Room: AC (Arts Center)

10

OCT, 2025

Enjoy your evening of relaxing. We encourage you to have dinner with someone you met at the conference — step outside of your comfort zone!



WYOMING EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE

SATURDAY

11

OCT, 2025



7:00AM-7:45AM

Morning Movement: Nancy Jaure

Walking in the morning with friends offers a wide range of benefits that go beyond just physical health. Lace up and let's go! Meet at the front doors of the Arts Center (this will be an outside walk).

11

OCT, 2025



7:15AM-7:45AM

Registration/Vendor Exhibits

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Room: AC (Arts Center)

11

OCT, 2025



7:45 AM-8:45AM

Love and Resilience: Rachel Giannini

We are all experiential learners, and in a time unlike any other, we've all learned a lot! In this keynote, we reflect on the love, resilience, and little wins that help us through every day!

Room: AC (Arts Center)

11

OCT, 2025



8:45 AM-9:15 AM

Share & Activate: Kate Hayes

Welcome back! Reflect on key takeaways from Day 1 and dive deeper into the Finish with Impact strategy. Set the tone for meaningful action throughout the day.

Room: AC (Arts Center)



WYOMING EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE

11
OCT, 2025

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9:15AM-9:45AM

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Join us in the Fine Arts Building at CWC for the 2025 Wyoming Early Childhood Collaborative Conference vendor and information exhibits.

Room: AC (Arts Center)



9:45-11:15AM

Breakout Sessions

Choose breakout sessions which meet your personal professional needs and goals.



GROWING TOGETHER WITH WYOMING WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER

Join Shaylee Hancock and Alex Smith from the Wyoming Women's Business Center (WWBC) as we share our counseling, support, and financing resources and tools to help your center grow, at your own pace, no matter where you're planted across Wyoming.

Room: MH179 - Shaylee Hancock and Alex Smith

MILESTONES MATTER

Understanding infant and toddler development helps us make better caregiving decisions, spot concerns early, & partner with families for consistent support. This session explores how milestones guide our practice and how ongoing family conversations ensure children get the best start.

Room: ITECC106 - Lauren Carlisle

READING TO LITTLES

Explore the art of asking higher-order thinking questions related to literacy. Through a series of demonstrations, gain knowledge you can apply in the classroom. This workshop focuses on fostering early literacy skills and developing a lifelong love of literacy.

Room: ITECC116 - Rachel Giannini

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH PURPOSEFUL QUESTIONS

Ever noticed how a well-timed question can transform a child's confusion into curiosity, or turn a routine activity into an adventure? We'll craft questions that spark deeper thinking, encourage exploration, & help children become more confident problem-solvers.

Room: MH181 - Emily Vercoe

CLASSROOM CONFETTI

"Confetti" originally referred to small sweets thrown to gathered crowds. Today, we think of paper flying in the air. This session explores how to celebrate small, sweet moments in your classroom, with strategies to foster joy, curiosity, and intentional engagement.

Room: MH171 - Tyler Gonzales

101 SENSORY TABLE IDEAS

In this hands-on session you will be introduced to ideas of how to utilize your sensory bin with all ages! Come join the fun as we get messy and share ideas on what works and what doesn't!

Room: ITECC1175 - Penny Cannon



WYOMING EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE

SATURDAY

11

OCT, 2025



Wyoming Early Childhood
Outreach Network

11:15PM-12:15PM

Remembering Our Why: Amy Encinger

Early care educators & children bring their own stories. Explore reflective practices that help adults recognize what they carry, honor what children carry, & respond with intention. Returning to your “why” can create environments that are steady, responsive, & centered on meaningful learning.

Room: AC Arts Center

11

OCT, 2025



12:15PM-1:15PM

Lunch/Vendor Exhibits

Lunch will be served in the cafeteria: Orange Chicken Buffet.

Room: Cafeteria

12:30-1:00 Proposed Child Care Licensing Rules Q & A

Grab lunch from the cafeteria and join Nichole Anderson, Support Services Program Manager for Child Care, and Michelle Lala, Licensing and Regional Child Care Licensing Supervisor, for an opportunity to ask questions regarding the proposed licensing rules.

Room: Health Science 100

11

OCT, 2025



1:15PM-1:45PM

Fuel & Focus: Kate Hayes

Dive into the first three steps of the Finish with Impact formula in a hands-on working session. Light physical activity will energize and open minds, setting the stage for powerful change in the afternoon.

Room: AC (Arts Center)

11

OCT, 2025

“IT IS WHAT WE KNOW ALREADY THAT
OFTEN PREVENTS US FROM LEARNING.”
CLAUDE BERNARD



WYOMING EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE

11
OCT, 2025

SATURDAY

11
OCT, 2025

1:45PM-2:15PM



Vendor Exhibits/Break

Join us in the Fine Arts Building at CWC for the 2025 Wyoming Early Childhood Collaborative Conference vendor and information exhibits.

Room: AC (Arts Center)

2:15PM-3:45PM



Breakout Sessions

Choose breakout sessions which meet your personal professional needs and goals.

**PLAN, PLAY, AND
PROSPER: A BUSINESS
PLAN IN 90 MINUTES**

Turn your passion into a powerful plan to launch, grow, & enhance your business. Through engaging activities & guided prompts, walk away with a bullet-point business plan in hand, a roadmap to growth & success. Appropriate for new programs, expansion plans, or clarifying vision.

Room: MH179 - Devan Costa-Cargill

**BUILDING VOCABULARY
WITH INFANTS AND
TODDLERS**

Imagine you're thirsty but can't get a drink on your own. Imagine that the person who is there to help you can't understand you. Congratulations, you've now remembered what it's like to be a baby. Learn how to use signs to eliminate frustration, meet a child's needs, and create lasting bonds.

Room: ITECC106 - Rachel Giannini

**ENVIRONMENT AS THE
THIRD TEACHER**

The environment acts as a "third teacher," reflecting what we value, engaging children through materials, & offering opportunities for reflection & dialogue. Explore the fundamentals of design, environments, intelligent materials, & documentation.

Room: ITECC116 - Paige Fisher

**USING MUSIC TO
SUPPORT THE
DEVELOPMENT OF EVERY
CHILD**

Music is a universal language supporting every child's development, including those with special needs. Discover how music creates inclusive, engaging pathways for learning, growth, and connection.

Room: MH181 - Dylan Ashburn and Zane Rutledge

**ECARES - WYOMING'S
NEW CHILD CARE
EXCHANGE**

In this hands-on session, educators will have the opportunity to use the new ECARES system.

Room: MH157 - Carrie Gray (computer lab)

EMPOWERED PROVIDERS

This session supports family child care providers in sustaining their energy, finding their voice to advocate for themselves & their profession, and setting realistic, motivating goals. Through reflection, discussion, & practical tools, participants will leave feeling recharged & equipped to take intentional steps forward in their personal and professional journey.

Room: ITECC175 - Char Norris and Taylor Dory



WYOMING EARLY CHILDHOOD COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE

SATURDAY

11

OCT, 2025



4:15PM-4:30PM

Vendor Exhibits/Break

Join us in the Fine Arts Building at CWC for the 2025 Wyoming Early Childhood Collaborative Conference. Throughout the days, visit this year's vendor and information exhibits.

Room: AC (Arts Center)

11

OCT, 2025



4:30PM-5:00PM

Finish with Impact: Kate Hayes

Reflect on key takeaways and connections. Review steps 1–3 and dive into steps 4 and 5 of the Finish with Impact formula. Leave energized, empowered, and ready to turn potential into lasting impact.

Room: AC (Arts Center)

11

OCT, 2025

11

OCT, 2025

**Thank you for your
dedicated time and
service to the early
childhood profession.**

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

Alex Smith

- Alex Smith has served as the Lending Director and Business Counselor for WWBC for over four years, where she creates and connects small business owners with lending and support solutions that truly fit their unique needs. With years of experience in the financial industry and her own journey as a small business owner and manager, Alex knows firsthand the challenges and opportunities entrepreneurs face. She's passionate about empowering women in business, believing that strong female entrepreneurs are essential to a thriving Wyoming economy. Outside of work, Alex is a proud military spouse, mom of three, and always finding ways to balance family life with her love for helping small business owners succeed.

Amy Encinger

- Amy Encinger, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Wyoming. Her work focuses on how family relationships, teacher-child interactions, and material hardship shape young children's development from infancy through preschool. Her expertise includes research and evaluation of early childhood programs, and she is committed to bridging research, practice, and policy to promote opportunities for all children.

Anna Wilcox

- Hi! I'm Anna Wilcox, founder of Blackburn Co, a consulting practice that helps mission-driven teams get unstuck, spark clarity, and move ideas from the "someday list" to the done pile. With more than two decades in management and organizational leadership, I have led teams through growth, change, and the occasional chaos with equal parts strategy and humor. A certified facilitator in Technology of Participation (ToP) methods, BoardSource governance, and a knack for asking the right questions, she brings a collaborative, high-energy style to every room; known for being engaging, practical, and just a little irreverent (because important work should also feel human). Anna believes the best leaders don't just manage people, they create the conditions for them to thrive. And she's here to make sure those conditions aren't left on the back burner.

Cari Cuffney

- Cari comes to the early childhood space via public health and a desire to go upstream to give children, families, and communities the best chance at thriving. She holds an M.S. in Population Health Sciences and previously served at the Wyoming Department of Health, Wyoming Department of Family Services, and private philanthropy as a health and human services policy analyst before starting her own practice under Off Piste Strategies, LLC in 2024. She currently supports the WY ECIDS project as data strategist and project manager. Cari loves thinking, reading, and talking about policy and data and once kept a spreadsheet tracking egg production in her backyard flock (today it's biweekly weigh-ins to monitor flock health). She also enjoys hiking, skiing, gardening, and hanging out with her husband and a very spoiled flock of backyard chickens.

Carrie Gray

- Carrie, a Child Development Associate and Functional Lead, has over three decades of experience in child care and human services, including serving as a license center director for 10+ years; administering the child care subsidy program; and overseeing licensed exempt providers for the State of Indiana. During this time, she also implemented 6 different technology systems. The expertise in federal policies, WY policies/procedures, and functional knowledge was leveraged in the design and implementation of the ECARES project.

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

Char Norris

- Char Norris has dedicated her career to early childhood education, with a focus on professional development for educators and caregivers. For the past six years, as a Learning Specialist with the Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative, she has collaborated with fellow professionals, bringing her experience as a former elementary educator, early childhood educator, and Education Coordinator for an Early Head Start—Child Care Partnership. Char holds a master's degree in Teaching and Learning with an emphasis in Early Childhood from the University of Montana.

Devan Costa-Cargill

- Devan is an educator, entrepreneur, and consultant with over eighteen years of experience supporting families and early childhood professionals. She began her career in Special Education in 2004 and later founded her own consulting business and play and learn studio, offering enrichment and training to families and educators. Currently the Wyoming Small Business Development Center's Northwest Regional Director, Devan specializes in leadership, team development, and program design. She holds an MBA in Transformational Leadership and is pursuing her doctorate in Strategic Management.

Dylan Ashburn

- Dylan is a native of Casper, Wyoming, and has been involved in music programs since his early childhood. He played in various ensembles and choirs throughout his formative years, taking part in small wind bands, vocal groups, and marching bands, eventually becoming a leader for those groups. Dylan attended the University of Wyoming, graduating in 2017 with a B.S. in Bio-Electrical Engineering. During college he played in the Western Thunder Marching Band, and participated in the UWyo men's choir, UWyo Vocal Jazz group, and the Happy Jacks men's acapella group. He would go on to help found Black Tie Affair, a student-run co-ed acapella organization, where he also served as musical director.

Emily Vercoe

- Emily Vercoe brings over twenty years of infectious curiosity to learning environments, from elementary classrooms to professional development for adults. As a Program Associate with the Wyoming Enrichment Network, Emily champions the power of questions – believing that the best learning happens when learners carry their own cognitive load and get their hands (and clothes) a little dirty in the process of sense-making. She believes that great education happens when curiosity meets community, and movement meets meaning. Emily holds an MS in Science Teaching from Montana State University. She is a Doctoral Candidate in the University of Wyoming's Learning, Design, and Technology program, studying the positive impacts of developmental approaches to STEM teaching and learning.

James Bedient

- James Bedient is a consultant with the Wyoming Early Childhood Behavioral Consultants. James is a Licensed Professional Counselor and holds an M.A. in Education from Chadron State College in Nebraska. He works for Number 34 Counseling in Torrington as well as the Clinic for Mental Health and Wellness in Laramie.

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

Janel Hays

- Janel Hays has been the CACFP Nutrition Consultant for the past 2 years for the State of Wyoming. Prior to working for WDE, she was a Family and Consumer Sciences teacher in the Laramie County School District #1 and was a Youth Development Extension Educator in South Dakota and Nebraska. Janel has worked with children of a variety of ages and has trained adults in the areas of child development and nutrition. WDE Nutrition has a vendor booth, so stop by to ask her or her co-worker, Marianne Kerzman, anything about the CACFP program and see some of the nutrition resources available. We also have the Director of Operations for Wyoming for the DCH Sponsoring Agency, Kids Nutrition Company Inc., Savannah Thornburgh, at the booth.

Jennifer Kreiser

- Jennifer is a Senior Lecturer of Accounting at the University of Wyoming. She has over 20 years of university teaching experience and has taught courses in financial accounting, taxation, intermediate accounting, accounting ethics, and cost/managerial accounting. She is a graduate of the University of Alabama with a Bachelor's degree in Accounting and a Master's degree in Tax Accounting. Ms. Kreiser is a licensed CPA and appreciates getting to use her accounting and tax knowledge to help people in the community through two programs in which she is heavily involved: the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program and the Low Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC).

Jessica Jaycox

- Jessica Jaycox is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and holds a M.S.W. in Social Work from Walla Walla University. She is also currently working towards a Ph.D in Clinical Social Work from the Chicago Institute of Clinical Social Work. Jessica has experience working with Early Head Start as well as an active clientele of counseling children and families.

Joey Burke

- Joey holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Family and Consumer Studies and Early Childhood Development from the University of Wyoming. She is a certified life and trauma coach and a trauma-informed care trainer. Dedicated to working with at-risk youth, she developed a passion for helping children and families navigate the impacts of trauma. She later transitioned into program leadership, designing and implementing resilience-based practices to equip youth with the skills they need to thrive. Most recently, she served as the CEO of the Boys & Girls Club, where she guided organizational growth and promoted trauma-responsive practices across programs. A blend of professional expertise and lived experience, Joey brings both practical tools and heartfelt passion to her trainings.

"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you." — Anne Lamott.

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

**Kate
Debow
Hayes**

- Hi! I'm Kate Debow Hayes. I'm a certified coach, speaker, consultant, author and strategic thinker. My work focuses around three passions: helping individuals build skills that propel them into leadership, expanding the toolkits of current leaders to position them as "next gen" leaders, and developing meaningful connections along the way. It's not enough to simply survive. See how High Ground Coaching and Development can be the catalyst for you or your organization to thrive.

Ready to learn more? Let's go!

**Kristin
Fong**

- Kristin serves the Bighorn Basin as the Wyoming Business Council's Northwest Regional Director. As such she's WBC's primary contact and liaison between the state capitol's decision makers and the rural communities within Big Horn, Hot Springs, Park, and Washakie Counties. A midwestern transplant to Wyoming, you'll find her warmth and optimism make her an adaptable and approachable economic development team member, and her natural curiosity and creativity result in a can-do, pitch-in, and problem-solve approach to projects of all sizes. Kristin also happens to be a wife and a working mom of two tiny dictators who demand and deserve her attention and time. The challenge of working parenthood is a reality that many friends and colleagues juggle. Likewise, many businesses are faced with low workforce availability due to inadequate access to childcare. Having lived the experience first-hand, Kristin was inspired to found and lead the Interagency Working Group on Childcare, a statewide initiative that fosters collaboration between state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community and business leaders. The group leverages data, facilitates access to capital and resources, and uses evidence of impact to make positive change in Wyoming.

**Lauren
Carlisle**

- Lauren Carlisle is the Program Coordinator for the Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative, supporting educators, leaders, and caregivers across the state. With experience from infant care through early elementary, she is passionate about advancing high-quality early childhood experiences. Lauren holds a B.A. in Elementary Education and an M.S. in Early Childhood Inclusive Education. She lives in Laramie with her husband and three children, and enjoys exploring new places, reading, and family adventures.

**Martha
Nesslinger**

- Martha Nesslinger is the Director for the Wyoming Early Childhood Behavioral Consultants and is also part owner of the Clinic for Mental Health and Wellness in Laramie. She received an M.A. in Counselor Education from the University of Wyoming and holds credentials in several states in addition to Wyoming. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor and has been working in the field for over 40 years.

“The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you.” — B.B. King

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

Nicole Choi

- Dr. Nicole Choi is a finance professor at the University of Wyoming. Her research looks at how people and organizations make financial decisions, and her work has been featured in respected finance journals. In the classroom, she's known for breaking down complex ideas into lessons that matter for everyday business owners and future leaders. At UW, Dr. Choi teaches courses on investments, financial markets, and corporate finance. She also serves as Chair of UW's Budget Planning Committee, where she helps guide the university's financial decision-making. When she's not teaching or researching, Nicole enjoys sharing her knowledge with community members and helping others feel more confident about their financial decisions.

Nikki Baldwin

- A commitment to merging theory and practice in early childhood classrooms is what motivates Nikki's work at the University of Wyoming. She believes that opportunities to reflect and collaborate open up unlimited possibilities for growth in early childhood educators and in the children they work with every day. Nikki draws from her 25 years of experience in early childhood education as she teaches early childhood courses at the University of Wyoming and directs the Wyoming Early Childhood Outreach Network. She also leads the Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative.

Paige Fisher

- Paige's appreciation and curiosity about the natural world began in both New Mexico and Vermont. Paige furthered this curiosity through her educational journey at the University of Vermont and discovered a love for teaching about nature through a sense of place during her time spent at Shelburne Farms. As a Peace Corps volunteer, serving for three years in the high Andes of Ecuador, Paige recognized the beauty of experiencing the world through different perspectives and languages. Paige continued her love for ecology and education through the graduate program at Teton Science School. Paige is a passionate educator who strives to inspire curiosity and empathy in children. Paige is a lifelong learner and recently received a graduate certificate in the Reggio Emilia philosophy.

Penny Cannon

- Penny (Hotovec) Cannon has been in the field of early care and education for almost 30 years. Her career has included being a home child care provider, owner and director of a child care center, Ready to Learn Coordinator with WY PBS, a child care licenser and currently the Technical Assistant Coach for child care with DFS. Her passion lies with helping providers and children build better relationships and elevating the profession as a whole.

Rachel Giannini

- Rachel Giannini is a childhood specialist, an early childhood advocate, and a video blog host. She currently splits her time as a public speaker, early childhood commentator, curriculum designer, and the star of Spy School on Hellosaurus. Rachel's writing, expertise, and videos have appeared in Vox, The New York Times, Too Small To Fail, HuffPost, Child Care Exchange, and Chicago Parent. In addition, Rachel holds an MFA in Museum Education from the University of Illinois and serves as a volunteer hospital magician for Open Heart Magic.

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

Shaylee Hancock

- Shaylee Hancock serves as the Executive Director of the Wyoming Women's Business Center, where she leads statewide initiatives to empower women through entrepreneurship, financial education, and business development support. With a strong background in entrepreneurship, small business strategy, and organizational leadership, Shaylee brings a modern, forward-thinking approach to nonprofit management while honoring the organization's deep-rooted mission. A multi-business founder and marketing strategist by trade, Shaylee has built several successful ventures. She lives in Laramie with her husband and two children and is deeply committed to supporting women in building lives and businesses they love on their own terms."

Taylor Dory

- Taylor Dory grew up on a cattle ranch in Savery, Wyoming, where her love of learning and hard work began. She earned a B.A. in Elementary Education from the University of Wyoming and discovered her passion for early childhood. Taylor taught as a lead teacher at UW's Early Care and Education Center before becoming a Learning Specialist with the Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative in 2021. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction. Taylor lives in Laramie with her husband, Justin, and daughter, Kaislee, and enjoys horseback riding, baking sourdough, and spending time with family.

Teresa Jacobs Castano

- Teresa Jacobs Castano is Licensed Clinical Social Worker as well as a Licensed Addictions Therapist. She received her M.S.W. from Arizona State University and is also a co-owner of the Clinic for Mental Health and Wellness in Laramie. Teresa works with children and families to help create healthy and lifelong choices and decisions.

Tyler Gonzalez

- Tyler, a Wyoming native, grew up spending her days on her grandpa's farm and exploring the mountains. She earned a B.A. in Human Development and Family Sciences with a minor in Early Childhood Education from the University of Wyoming and is currently pursuing her Master's degree at UW. As a Learning Specialist, Tyler enjoys celebrating successes and learning alongside educators, inspired by their passion for early childhood. She is especially interested in how the environment and nutrition affect children's development. Tyler lives in Powell with her husband and three boys, and they love outdoor adventures and discovering local treats together.

Zane Rutledge

- Zane Rutledge obtained a Bachelor of Science in Music Therapy from Texas Woman's University. His time at Texas Woman's University encouraged a deep love for music theory and composition, and created a strong foundation for clinical practice rooted in humanistic and experiential approaches. Zane's clinical experience during this time took place with a variety of populations, including special education, memory care, and mental health. At the conclusion of his coursework, Zane accepted a clinical internship at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. There, he worked at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, leading group sessions, and at the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, providing individual music therapy sessions. His time in Pittsburgh helped to create a deeper understanding of the patient experience while introducing more cognitive elements to his approach to treatment. He utilizes a primarily person-centered approach to treatment while incorporating skills and strategies from Dialectical Behavior. Zane is passionate about his work with patients, advocacy for music therapy, and working to reduce barriers to treatment for individuals in the community while helping to support his fellow music therapists.

Conference Schedule



How to use a QR Code on Your Smartphone:

Using an iPhone:

1. **Open the Camera app on your iPhone.**
2. **Point the camera at the QR code, ensuring it is centered in the viewfinder.**
3. **Wait for a notification to pop up at the top of the screen. Tap on this notification to be directed to the link or content associated with the QR code.**
4. **If your camera does not scan the QR code, ensure that the Scan QR Codes feature is enabled in your settings: go to Settings > Camera and toggle on Scan QR Codes.**

Using an Android Device:

Open the Camera app on your Android phone.

Point the camera at the QR code, centering it in the viewfinder.

A notification should appear prompting you to tap it to access the linked content. If it doesn't work, try recentering the camera over the code.

Some Android devices may require a QR code scanning app if the built-in camera does not support this feature. You can download a QR code reader from the Google Play Store if needed.