



**V A H S A 2024**  
**17th ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE**

# 2024 Conference Agenda

October 22-24, 2024 Harrisonburg, Va

## Welcome!

### Dear Early/Head Start Friends:

Welcome to Harrisonburg! We are thrilled to have you join us for the 17th Annual VAHSA Conference. We've worked hard to create an event that not only expands your knowledge but also offers fresh ideas, resources, and networking opportunities.

Our theme is "Building Bridges: Head Start's Two-Generation Approach to Family Empowerment." This theme embodies our commitment to a holistic approach that supports both children and their families. We recognize that it is a particularly hard time right now for Head Start, and there is perhaps some uncertainty in our demanding public-service profession. We hope that you leave here feeling rejuvenated and validated for your incredible hard work.

"Building Bridges" reflects the crucial connections we aim to create between education, health, and social services. By fostering collaboration, we strengthen families and enhance their well-being. Our "Two-Generation Approach" ensures that both children and parents receive the support they need to thrive. Thank you for your daily dedication to empowering Virginia's young children, families, and communities. Your passion and commitment are the cornerstones of ensuring bright futures in our society. We hope you leave this conference with new tools, renewed energy, and a sense of validation for all that you do.

Enjoy the conference, make the most of the opportunities to learn and connect, and know that we are here to support you!

**Dawn Ault**  
Executive Director

## Thank You Partners!

### Platinum Partners



**Anthem HealthKeepers**  
Offered by HealthKeepers, Inc.



Click here to access 2024 Annual Conference website with additional information including presenter bios, handouts from presentations, information on Harrisonburg, and more.

**HeadStartVa.org**



## Tuesday, October 22nd

Please note: Breakfast is on your own.

Time / Room Location	Activity
8:30am- 12pm	<b>Registration OPEN</b>
9:00am- 10am	<b>Keynote: Mills Rodgers <i>Being A Champion For Kids!</i></b> What is a champion educator? Be one who makes a difference in the lives of kids and families!
10:15am- 11:45am	Join Colleagues in Similar Roles for Network Meetings
Appalachian C	<b>Family Services - Network Meeting:</b> topics & agenda provided at the meeting
Appalachian B	<b>Health Services - Network Meeting:</b> topics & agenda provided at the meeting
Appalachian A	<b>Leadership - Network Meeting:</b> VDOE Division of Early Child Care and Education will share an overview of the ECCE options available and include an expanded focus on the updates/changes to The Child Care Subsidy Program. An EC Navigator will be available to help grant recipients needing assistance to become a subsidy vendor.
Allegany C	<b>Education Services - Network Meeting:</b> VDOE Division of Early Child Care and Education will share VQB5 Head Start data compiled from the first full implementation year and preview any updates/changes on the horizon.
11:45am - 12:45pm	<b>Buffet Lunch and Visit Exhibitors</b>
12:45pm - 1:30pm Shenandoah A-C	<b>Speaker: Victor Jones, <i>Head Start to Harvard</i></b> An attorney at the Southern Poverty Law Center, he leads the Louisiana Children’s Rights Practice Group. Victor has built a career around his dedication to fighting for children, a passion he credits to his early education in Head Start.
1:30-2:45pm	<b>Session One Workshops</b>
Appalachian C	<b>Karla Sprouse: <i>Understanding and Creating Staff Engagement Part 1</i></b> Situational Leadership states, “Leadership is not something you do to people; it’s something you do with people.” This session focuses on the roles that leaders play in fostering an environment that supports staff engagement. Join us to explore situational leadership styles that can align with Gallup’s 12 engagement elements to help build stronger connections and enhance employee performance.
Appalachian B	<b>Dr. Smita Mathur: <i>A Play-based Approach to Building Character in Young Children</i></b> This workshop proposes leveraging play to practice character-building skills. Play builds trust, relationships, cooperation, advocacy, rule-following, and responsibility—skills essential for character development. Participants will learn strategies to create a caring and equitable community in their classrooms and schools. They will work together to design and implement play-based learning strategies to build five key components of character development: caring, fairness, respect, personal responsibility, and citizenship. The workshop will consider the developmental, cultural, and linguistic appropriateness of these strategies. By sharing research, discussions, brainstorming, and creating specific strategies, participants will gain immediate and long-term ideas to enhance character-building play in their professional practice.



## Tuesday, October 22nd

4:15pm - 6pm Shenandoah A-C:  
 Happy Hour Networking! DJ with KARAOKE!

Time / Room Location	Activity
1:30-2:45pm	<b>Session One Workshops continued</b>
Appalachian A	<p><b>Dr. Kara Kavanaugh/Dr. Joi Merritt: <i>Supporting Inclusive Teaching in Divisive Times</i></b>            This workshop will highlight evidence to move forward with the important use of equity-focused teaching and provide an advocacy toolkit for participants to use to defend this work. Participants will (a) explore how Virginia attempts to restrict them from using equitable practices in their teaching, (b) learn of evidence to support their use of equity-focused instruction, and (c) acquire advocacy skills to defend this work. Participants will be provided a brief overview of laws around Head Start instruction, dive into evidence with language-specific in support of equity-focused instruction, examine scenarios to understand how to support this work; and leave with an advocacy toolkit to defend this work.</p>
Allegany C	<p><b>Dr. Pam Waddell: <i>Prioritizing Equity to Support Families and Staff</i></b>            At the center of each Office of Head Start priority is an unwavering commitment to equity, inclusion, and belonging. Head Start programs have also always intentionally focused on parent, family, and community engagement (PFCE) and reciprocal partnerships with parents and families. Bringing a lens of equity to PFCE helps us improve child and family outcomes. In this interactive session participants will be able to reflect on the five Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Equity Drivers and discover how they can be used to support staff and our ongoing work with families.</p>
Allegany A+B	<p><b>Mills Rodgers: <i>Inspiring A Mindset To Flourish As A Caregiver &amp; Educator</i></b>            Let's face it, being an educator or caregiver is indeed rewarding, but extremely demanding on a psychological level. In this inspirational presentation, Mills Rodgers takes us through the "why" of what we do. He uses his experiences as an educator and parent to a child with special needs to add context to the importance and impact of all levels of employees when it comes to the kids and families we serve!</p>
3:00-4:15pm	<b>Session Two Workshops</b>
Shenandoah A-C	<p><b>Jane Plum: <i>Clear Communication for Children's Success</i></b>            Take hold of the Conscious Discipline power of Attention to focus on behaviors and actions that you desire for your classroom. Develop your Assertive voice, learn the technique of Name, Verb, Paint Commands, and change the culture of your classroom by communicating with children and adults in ways that model and teach respect. When there are so many new routines to learn, explore the use of visual routines to increase children's compliance with classroom expectations. Assertive communication and visuals are important for all children to succeed, but vital for the success of children with special needs.</p>
Appalachian C	<p><b>Karla Sprouse: <i>Understanding and Creating Staff Engagement Part 2</i></b></p>
Appalachian B	<p><b>Dr. Smita Mathur: <i>Building Motivation &amp; Competency in Underprepared Teachers of Young Children</i></b>            By the end of the workshop, we want our owners/administrators to: Reframe less than qualified staff as an opportunity, not a hindrance. Understand the time and continual support it takes to develop less than qualified staff to qualified staff. Understand how to mentor and coach less than qualified staff to help them feel as a valued part of the team. Have a plan/actions they can utilize immediately to help support the development of less than qualified staff (i.e. know how to translate their knowledge into action)</p>



## Tuesday, October 22nd

Time / Room Location	Activity
Appalachian A	<b>Dr. Kara Kavanaugh/Dr. Joi Merritt: <i>Microaggressions in Early and Elementary Classrooms</i></b> This interactive workshop uses real scenarios and an analysis process for early childhood educators to recognize and interrupt racist, xenophobic, and ableist microaggressions that occur in early and elementary classrooms in Virginia. Participants will be able to a) recognize the types of microaggressions that arise in today’s classrooms, b) understand intent versus impact, and c) respond with tools and strategies to provide a path toward a more just education.
Allegheny C	<b>Rashanda Jenkins: <i>I am Running on Empty! Creating and Sustaining a Culture of Wellness in Head Start Programs</i></b> The Office of Head Start is committed to promoting and prioritizing needed supports for staff. Successfully supporting staff starts with staff wellness. Join us for an engaging and interactive session as we define wellness; discuss the eight dimensions of staff well-being and explore resources and activities, that staff can use in their programs to create and sustain a culture of wellness.
Allegheny A+B	<b>Miranda Whitman: <i>Reflective Planning for Individualized Lessons and Family Engagement</i></b> This session explores effective use of the Circle of Inquiry to improve lesson planning and increase family engagement. We discuss adaptation of curriculum with principles of UDL, including effective support for Dual Language Learners. Participants will understand how to use assessment data to inform instruction and develop weekly lesson plans. We discuss strategies for regularly sharing observations and at-home activities with families, increasing family engagement throughout the reflective planning process.

### GOLD Partners



Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts is a program of Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts.



4:15pm - 6pm Please join us in Shenandoah A-C for Happy Hour/Networking time!

Light refreshments, cash \$ bar,  
 and an opportunity to showcase your talent or sense of fun with Karaoke!  
 On your own for dinner with colleagues and new friends.



## Wednesday, October 23rd

Please note: Breakfast is on your own.

Time / Room Location	Activity
9:00- 10:00am	<p><b>Keynote: Mr. Stu! Carry the Tray: Raising Resilient Kids in Today's Wild World</b>            Prepare to be captivated as Mister Stu, armed with over 13 years of professional mental health expertise, unveils practical strategies and profound insights for nurturing resilient and confident children. Gain invaluable tips on fostering self-respect, respect for others, and integrity in young minds. Mister Stu delves into essential topics, exploring the pivotal role of positive reinforcement in cultivating self-esteem, the significance of resilience in today's challenging world, and how to instill a growth mindset in your children.</p>
10:15-11:30	<p><b>Session One Workshops</b></p>
Shenandoah A-C	<p><b>Mr. Stu: From Chaos to Calm, Effective Strategies for Handling Difficult Behaviors</b>            Join this dynamic workshop and unlock the secrets to transforming disruptions into growth opportunities! Discover practical strategies for fostering a harmonious and productive learning environment through empathetic communication, conflict resolution, and proactive approaches. Gain invaluable tools to effectively de-escalate tantrums, elopement, physical aggression, and other escalated behaviors. Elevate your experience, forge meaningful connections with children, and create an atmosphere where every child feels truly understood and cherished.</p>
Appalachian C	<p><b>Paul Behrman: Self-Regulated Leadership with Emotional Intelligence</b>            Leadership is challenging work. Leading with emotional intelligence provides the firm foundation for relationships, trust, and high-functioning organizational cultures and climates of teamwork, communication and mutual support. How can leaders optimize well-being and utilize executive function to process challenging situations, minimize reaction and stress, and respond constructively with humility, compassion and truth? Using the Emotional Intelligence (EI) model introduced by psychologist Daniel Goleman, this workshop unpacks some of the key elements of EI necessary for great leadership, and how we cultivate and develop these qualities in ourselves and in those around us.</p>
Appalachian B	<p><b>Jocelyn Henry Whitehead: Positive Family Partnerships and Connecting with Early Learners</b>            Forming positive partnerships with families is an integral part of early childhood development and student achievement. Would you like to discuss valuable insights, experiences, and strategies for developing positive relationships with families and learners? Along with your voice and dialogue, connections will be made to curricula, resources, national organizations, and research literature. This session will provide information and ideas for how to take care of students, their families, and you all at the same time. This session will include a conceptual framework, large and small group discussion, resources, and music. Dr. Henry-Whitehead will share her personal story, "From Struggling to Mending".</p>
Appalachian A	<p><b>Dr. Myra Crouch: Promoting Quality Interactions to Enhance Instructional Support in Head Start Classrooms</b>            Meaningful teacher-child interactions define high quality in the development of cognitive, language and social-emotional skills and much more! This session is intended to provide teachers, directors, and education managers with strategies to promote quality interactions to improve instructional support through the implementation of developmentally appropriate curriculum and classroom practices. Join this session to learn more about how to create quality interactions to enhance instructional support in Head Start classrooms.</p>



## Wednesday, October 23rd

Time / Location	Activity
Allegany C	<p><b>Rashanda Jenkins: <i>School Readiness Begins with Health</i></b>            Physical well-being and social and emotional health are essential for supporting children's readiness to be successful in school and life. The Head Start approach to school readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning and schools are ready for children. This interactive session explores the connection between health and school readiness, highlights strategies to support school readiness and supports participants in understanding the vital role Head Start, the parent, and the community play in a child's health.</p>
Allegany A+B	<p><b>Cindy Bohrer: <i>Supporting LGBTQ+ Families: Teachable Moments and Affirming Practices (session repeated 1:00pm- 2:15pm today)</i></b>            We know that all students benefit from a school community climate that affirms their identities and creates a safe space for thriving. Responding effectively to questions and comments about gender and family diversity can be challenging. Welcoming Schools will share resources with participants that offer examples of age-appropriate responses to common questions about LGBTQ+, gender and family topics. We will work together in this session to review and practice responses and practices to engage in teachable moments with children and families.</p>
11:30am - 1pm	<b>LUNCH ON YOUR OWN</b>
1pm - 2:15pm	<b>Session Two Workshops</b>
Appalachian C	<p><b>Paul Behrman: <i>The CULTURE CLUB: Elevating Program Culture, Communication and Teamwork!</i></b>            What is workplace culture? People working in a positive workplace culture are happier, healthier, less stressed, more productive, more engaged in teamwork, more likely to have high morale and job satisfaction, less likely to leave the organization, and more. This session will review how we can develop and maintain workplace climates and environments of joy, teamwork, communication, camaraderie and mutual support. We will discuss the key elements of positive workplace culture, along with structural adjustments and communication practices to enhance employee support and well-being.</p>
Appalachian B	<p><b>Dr. Pam Waddell: <i>Caring Conversations to Support Families experiencing Homelessness</i></b>            We continue to focus on providing supportive services for children and families experiencing homelessness in Head Start communities. In this interactive session, participants will engage in discussions about caring conversations with families and meaningful collaborations with partners to increase opportunities for serving families and children experiencing homelessness.</p>
Appalachian A	<p><b>Heidi Condrey: <i>Being of Service: How Meaningful Jobs Help Children (and You!)</i></b>            In this Conscious Discipline workshop, explore the power of unity and how this relates to an environment of connection. Learn how being of service to others benefits brain development. Explore how to use classroom jobs for each child to foster learning, connection and a culture of caring.</p>
	<b>(continued on next page)</b>





## Wednesday, October 23rd

Time / Location	Activity
Allegany C	<b>Dr. Smita Mathur: <i>Developing Equitable and Just Early Childhood Educational Settings</i></b> This workshop examines how young children learn about racism, and identify ways to create a positive sense of self and a respectful understanding of others, and explores the impact of inequities. Participants will develop strategies to help children and families succeed in early learning programs and create an adaptive action plan for a healthy, equitable work environment.
Allegany A+B	<b>Cindy Bohrer with Human Rights Campaign: <i>Supporting LGBTQ+ Families (repeat session)</i></b>
<b>2:30pm - 4:15pm</b>	<b>Session Three Workshops</b>
Shenandoah A-C	<b>Jennifer Fernandez: <i>Block Play</i></b> One source described blocks as “the tool you can’t teach without.” Join this session on block play to uncover the truth behind that statement. We will discuss the definition of a block, types of blocks, appropriate set-up of the block area, stages of block play, benefits for children and the teacher’s role. Your participation will lead to a deeper understanding of what children are actually learning through block play and how to best support them in that learning.
Appalachian C	<b>Paul Behrman: <i>From Supervisor to SuperVIBER: Best Practices in Supervision</i></b> “People don’t quit their job, they quit their supervisor.” That’s the finding, essentially, of recent research from the Gallup organization. Outstanding employee performance (and retention) requires outstanding supervision. Yes, wages and benefits are important, but so too is the vibe and climate created by the supervisor. This workshop will review the key principles of supervision, including the proper balance of support and accountability, the mindset, values and character of outstanding supervisors, non-attachment to results, and how to handle challenges when the going gets tough.
Appalachian B	<b>Wendy Rodgers and Diana Health: <i>Maximizing Opportunities: Family Services and Full Enrollment</i></b> Key points of the training: A new approach to full enrollment, Integrating family services to promote higher outcomes and increase family engagement, cross training staff to maximize effectiveness.
Appalachian A	<b>Morticia White: <i>The Importance of Family Engagement in Head Start</i></b> In this session, we discuss in detail the importance of family engagement and how to develop relationships with families. This session will provide tips for developing strengths-based strategies, practices for effective family engagement, and how to promote family engagement through ongoing communication with families.
Allegany C	<b>Mandy Lloyd: <i>From Rage to Calm: Managing Emotional Mayhem</i></b> When children demonstrate really big emotions it creates upset all around. Knowing how to best guide and support a child from upset to calm, while managing your own feelings, can be challenging. In this Conscious Discipline session, you will learn helpful strategies for yourself and skills to teach children to manage their emotions.
Allegany A+B:	<b>Lucia Gibson: <i>Play More, Rest Better - Support Positive Rest Time</i></b> This workshop focusses on creating a safe and calm space for toddlers during rest time. It will also identify and discuss routines and activities that support rest, as well as, provide strategies to create meaningful interactions between families, children, and educators to support positive rest time.

**Join us for RAFFLE! 4:15pm - 4:30pm Shenandoah A-C**



**V A H S A 2024**  
**17th ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

# 2024 Conference Agenda

Tuesday, October 22nd, Harrisonburg, Va

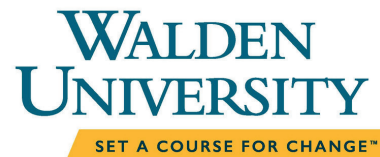
## Thursday, October 24th

Please note: Breakfast is on your own.

Time / Room Location	Activity
9:00am - 11:45am	<b><i>Unlock Your Leadership Potential with Dr. Kimberly Johnson</i></b>
Shenandoah A-C	Join us for a transformative half-day session with Dr. Kimberly Johnson, designed to elevate early childhood professionals' leadership skills. Dr. Johnson will delve into Communication, Conflict Resolution, Creativity, and Innovation, offering practical tools to enhance your role as a coach for families, colleagues, and yourself. This session focuses on fostering collaboration, cohesion, and boosting organizational morale and productivity.

**Conference Concludes before Lunch -- Thank you for Joining Us!**

### Silver Partners



### Bronze Partners

