



# PDO PATHWAYS

Quarterly News and Views to Advance Professional Pathways  
in Early Childhood Education Across Pennsylvania

[eceptdo.org](http://eceptdo.org)

Winter 2023

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*Thanks for your input—it matters!*

## PDO Stakeholders Confirm Supportive Partnerships

**AS WE BUILD PARTNERSHIPS FOR PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS**, the Early Childhood Education Professional Development Organization (ECEPDO) at PASSHE recently earned its own report card as a result of surveys and virtual stakeholder engagement meetings. Taking a two-pronged engagement approach across the PDO’s four regions (Northwest, Southwest, Central, and Northeast), a series of surveys and virtual discussion sessions were conducted among regional stakeholders and an overarching PDO Advisory Board.

*“Partnerships are key to the PDO’s student-focused success formula. Our partners help us put the puzzle pieces together to support and elevate professionalism in the early childhood education field.”*

— ECEPDO@PASSHE Director Liz Knouse



Survey and discussion participants included: students; early childhood education program/center directors; PDO-funded higher education and community-based educational partners; staff from the PA Department of Education and Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs); school districts and career/technical institutions; workforce development boards; and nonprofit groups that support the development of young children. Survey responses (combined 63.5% response rate across all regions and the Advisory Board) and nearly 80 virtual session participants across the 62 ECEPDO@PASSHE counties affirmed the value of many PDO supports, such as bilingual curricula.

“This input will be invaluable as we develop the upcoming round of Request for Funding Proposals for the next PDO-funded program year, beginning July 1, 2023,” said PDO Director Liz Knouse. “We will deliberately look to support programs that advance diversity and inclusion as we continue to build a culture of belonging—for both PDO-funded students, the children they teach, as well as their families.”

Shortages in early childhood educators, both in Pennsylvania and nationwide, have resulted in longer hours and heavier workloads. PDO supports, such as virtual Zoom classes and motivational meetings, readily accessible instructors, flexible class schedules, and success coaching were identified among supports students most valued.

“The work-home-school balance can be hard to manage,” said one session participant. “Knowing my instructor is ready to work with me and support me has made all the difference. This is a worthwhile opportunity,” she added.

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## Pre-Apprenticeship, Concurrent Enrollment Get Underway in NW Region

### HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE NW REGION ARE ABOUT TO SOAR TO NEW OPPORTUNITIES!

To help build a pipeline of credentialed early childhood educators, the ECEPDO@PASSHE is partnering with Early Connections and the Corry Area High School in Erie County to offer students in grades 10-12 with a pre-apprenticeship opportunity. The PA Department of Labor and Industry designated Early Connections as the regional sponsor for Early Childhood Registered Pre-Apprenticeships. Participating students are often those who attend career and technical center high schools,

where concurrent enrollment coursework dovetails their on-the-job training. In the NW PDO Region, concurrent enrollment is expected to also include Erie High School,

McDowell High School, and others in neighboring Warren County. Braided funding is expected to result in as many as 10 student participants from each of these high schools.

Watch for updates as early childhood education pre-apprentices soar in the PDO Northwest Region!



L-R: Michelle Harkins and Kim Beers (Early Connections); Bill West (Corry Area HS); Jana Sampsell (C&T/Corry Area HS); Sheri Yetzer (Corry Area SD); Julie Price (NWPA JobConnect); Sue Bogert (Corry Area HS); Julie McCray (Corry C&T Center); Robin Howell (NW Region PASSHE PDO/PennWest Edinboro); Teresa Pearce (Corry Area Primary School).

## Mindful Resolutions for a New Year, New Beginnings

### THE NEW YEAR IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO HIT THE RESET BUTTON ON OUR GOALS.

However, it is important to make mindful resolutions to boost our chances of staying on track. Here are some tips to make mindful ones!

#### 1. Take time to reflect.

We cannot meet goals we do not truly understand or believe in. To understand what an achievable goal is, we need to look into our past. Reflect on last year (2022) and identify where things went well and where things could have gone better. Then, identify what things you could control. What would you do again or change?

#### 2. Find a quiet planning place.

Mindful resolutions come from stillness and ease of mind, which are usually achieved in a quiet space. Create (and revisit) your resolutions in a quiet, distraction-free zone. That's often easier said than done. Try to carve out 15 minutes and consider it a gift to yourself.

#### 3. Stay realistic.

Resolve to do something that you could realistically accomplish and take pleasure in achieving it, no matter how small it seems! This can build momentum to help you reach bigger goals.

#### 4. Create (and stick to) routines.

People who create routines tend to create tangible actions to somewhat intangible goals. This makes them more achievable. Routines associated with small, do-able goals with a timeline are helpful. Schedule your time!

#### 5. Prepare for relapses.

Prepare to have your resolutions challenged—both from inside you and from outside sources and demands. This may require you to revisit your resolutions and reprioritize them or change “completion” timelines. That is AOK! Celebrate your “wins” and recalibrate what is left to achieve! Make 2023 your year for new beginnings!

*School, work, and home demands can often feel overwhelming. Prioritize items on your to-do list and schedule them to increase the likelihood of completing them. Share challenges with your PD Coordinator to stay motivated and on track. Always take time to celebrate your achievements, no matter how small they may seem.*



Thanks to Marnie Aylesworth D. Ed., Executive Director & Chief Mindfulness Officer at The Pennsylvania Key for her contribution to these tips. Visit [mindful.org](http://mindful.org) for more tips and guidance.



## Celebrating Student Achievements!

**CONGRATULATIONS** to these ECEPDO@PASSHE-funded students who completed their Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential or graduated with a degree between October 1—December 31, 2022 from the PDO educational partners listed at right. (Others with a completion date before that were just recently reported.)

We want to celebrate all PDO-funded students who have completed their CDA or a degree in early childhood education and would like your express permission to list your name in future newsletters. **Please offer your permission to be listed in future issues of  *PDO Pathways*  by emailing your PD Coordinator. Once they have verified your CDA or degree completion, you will be listed in an upcoming issue. Thank you!**



### Request Family Voices for Inclusion in Early Childhood Education Courses

The ECEPDO@PASSHE has partnered with Early Intervention Technical Assistance and OCDEL to bring PDO educational partners with an amazing opportunity! A new cohort of 18 diverse Pennsylvania families have been trained and are eager to share their stories and perspectives with early childhood students at PDO institutions! Participating families can offer guest presentations, interviews, videos, and vignettes. Faculty can request families quickly and easily at [this link](#).



Research shows that early childhood teachers benefit from hearing family perspectives on early care. This is an opportunity to support the development of strong and effective family and professional partnerships. The inclusion of diverse family voices into coursework can be a personal way to take theory to practice!

For more information, contact Mary Mikus at [mmikus@pattankop.net](mailto:mmikus@pattankop.net) or Toni Miguel at [tmiguel@pattankop.net](mailto:tmiguel@pattankop.net).

#### East Stroudsburg University

Keena Harris-McMillan—Bachelor’s degree (December 2022)

#### Lock Haven University

Jennifer Benner—CDA (December 2022)

#### PennWest Clarion

Lori Sisler—Associate’s degree (December 2022)

Alyssa Spencer—Associate’s degree (December 2022)

#### PennWest Edinboro University

Caitlin Cavill—CDA (October 2022)

Kendra Christiansen—CDA (October 2022)

Chrystal Kreider—CDA (November 2022)

Jessica Powell—CDA (October 2022)

#### Shippensburg University

Heather Hinzman—CDA (November 2022)

Heidi Miller—CDA (November 2022)

#### Carlow University

Victoria Blatz—CDA (October 2022)

Shelby Greece—Bachelor’s degree (December 2022)

Victoria Hoburg—CDA (November 2022)

Erica Niznik—Bachelor’s degree (December 2022)

Chelsea Pons—Bachelor’s degree (December 2022)

#### Harrisburg Area Community College

Emalee Beers—CDA (November 2022)

#### Keystone College

Lexis Kochmer—Bachelor’s degree (December 2022)

#### Lehigh Carbon Community College

Madison Leibensperger—Associate’s degree (December 2022)

Rachel Yany—Associate’s degree (December 2022)

#### Northampton Community College

Tanya Crutchfield—Associate’s degree (December 2022)

Mya Hineman—CDA (August 2021)

Holly Jo Wood—Associate’s degree (December 2022)

Martina Zimmer—CDA (October 2022)

#### NWIR

Chelsea Febinger—CDA (November 2022)

Kylie Smith—CDA (December 2022)

#### Trying Together

Nicole Bialowas—CDA (December 2022)

Summer Stewart—CDA (December 2022)

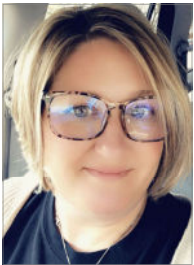
Alyson Sylanski—CDA (December 2022)

Your first and ongoing connection to PDO support!

## Meet Your PD Coordinators!

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PD) COORDINATORS** are “front-line” navigators, advisors, and motivators for PDO-funded students! Across the ECEPDO@PASSHE, there are nine (9) PD Coordinators serving in the PDO’s 62-county geographic footprint. Once an early childhood educator applies to the PDO for funding, the PD Coordinator is their initial point of contact that follows them through their academic journey. Find the PD Coordinator by each ECEPDO@PASSHE county at [ecepdo.org/contact-us](http://ecepdo.org/contact-us).

### NORTHWEST REGION



**Kiley Fair** has dedicated much of her adult life to early childhood education. With a Bachelor’s degree from Westminster College and several certifications in Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Kiley was an owner, lead teacher, and director of her own ECE program! In addition to serving as a PD Coordinator in the PDO’s Northwest Region, Kiley is also a busy mother of five children. “It gives me great pleasure to give back to the field that I love! My hope for the students I work with is to help them take advantage of this incredible opportunity to earn a credential or degree at little-to-no cost! Being a role model to our youngest children is such an important role, and I am grateful to each PDO student with whom I work,” Kiley adds. In addition to her role as a PD Coordinator, Kiley is also the PDO’s Pediatric First Aid and CPR Coordinator. Connect with her and other students on the [PDO NW Region’s Facebook group](#).

**Lisa Ruffner** has spent 17 years in the early childhood field, working to improve the quality of facilities for young children in care. “I began my career researching the quality of child care in two rural counties in Pennsylvania. This led me to meet and learn from many child care providers. We worked together to improve the health and safety of their facilities,” she says. Always focused on quality improvement and empowering early childhood educators to build their own professional profiles with PDO-funded coursework, Lisa encourages all students to take one day at a time, celebrating each success along the way.

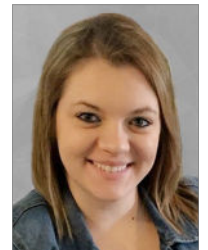


### SOUTHWEST REGION



**Lindsey Vicoria** was first attracted to early childhood education as a young person, as her mother was a family child care provider and set an example and desire Lindsey wanted to follow. Lindsey loves connecting with students and seeing them succeed as they accomplish their goals. In her free time, she enjoys all that Pittsburgh has to offer, including museums, restaurants, and parks. Lindsey is a strong believer in the power of communication and how it can benefit students. “Communicate with your professors and PD Coordinator, especially if you are feeling confused or overwhelmed. We have so many supports. No matter what the issue is, there is a team of people ready to help you. It can be awkward to ask for help, but that is what we are all here for,” Lindsey says. Connect with her and others on the PDO [SW Region’s Facebook group](#).

**Amber Barkman** has wanted to be a teacher as long as she can remember. “I knew there wasn’t any other field for me,” she explains. As a PD Coordinator and CDA Completion Coach for the PDO’s SW Region, Amber enjoys helping to advance the professionalism of early childhood education. Students with whom she works appreciate her enthusiasm. “I am so grateful for the experience I had with the PDO and especially, Amber. She was so helpful and always made sure we were comfortable and had everything we needed for a successful school year. I earned my CDA with PDO funding,” says student Abigail Kuzyck.



In her free time, Amber enjoys spending time with her family. “We host Zoom meetings and have regional Facebook groups to keep you in the loop. We keep our phones and emails on during business hours, are quick to respond, and have many connections across the ECE field to help you. It’s OK to ask for help! Stay in contact with your PD Coordinator and your professor. We can help you reach the finish line!” she adds.

*Continued from p. 3*

## Meet Your PD Coordinators!

### CENTRAL REGION



**Rueben Ransom** transformed from a PDO intern to a PD Coordinator about two years ago and has been helping PDO-funded students in the Central Region reach their career goals ever since. A Penn State graduate with early learning experience in the Harrisburg area, including as a camp counselor for the YMCA, he has a grounded understanding of and appreciation for different personalities and learning styles. While he enjoys movies, music, and video gaming in his free time, Rueben especially enjoys “helping people reach their goals through PDO-funded coursework,” he says. “When a student obtains the credential or degree they dreamed of, it puts a smile on my face!” Rueben encourages students to keep the big picture in mind when they struggle. “We are here to support you along your pathway. Join us on a monthly Zoom meeting for motivational tips on how to succeed,” he emphasizes.

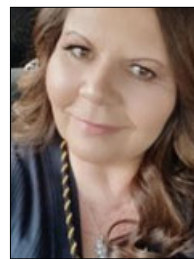
**Karen Zakin** has a long history in early childhood education, having worked as a center director for 20 years! A PD Coordinator since June 2021, Karen especially enjoys seeing PDO-funded students build their confidence as they complete each step of their educational journey. In her free time, Karen enjoys reading, crafts, and hanging out with her dog, Sophie. She encourages students to set aside time each day to tackle assignments so they stay on track. “Don’t be afraid to reach out if you need help! Be proud of every step you take!” she says. She encourages students to join the [Central Region Facebook group](#).



**Lane Coyle-Colburn** has worked for the PDO since May 2021. Today, she serves as both a PD Coordinator and a Regional Manager. Helping educators reach their goals is among the favorite things she enjoys about her job. In her free time, Lane enjoys family activities, running, sewing, crocheting, and baking. “Being an early childhood teacher means being granted the privilege of teaching children the skills that help to serve as the foundation for other things they learn in life. I love that!” she exclaims.

### NORTHEAST REGION

**Cathy Moss** is a fairly new addition to the PD Coordinator family, but has a passion for early childhood education. “I always loved being with the children in my family, and wanted to learn more about what made them ‘tick’ and how I could deal with their behaviors,” she says. In her free time, Cathy enjoys nature photography, karaoke, arts and crafts, teaching Sunday School, and family time. “I motivate students by sharing my story with them, and encourage them with support and understanding. I look forward to working with students as they keep pushing forward!” she adds.



**Anabela (Bela) Araujo** has come “full circle” with the PDO, as she was the first PDO-funded student to earn a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education and now works as a PD Coordinator in the Northeast Region! Bela’s passion for this field began when she was a young teen who babysat her siblings. After completing an Associate’s degree from Northampton County Community College, Bela pursued a Bachelor’s degree at East Stroudsburg University with PDO funding. Formerly an owner and director of an early child care center, she realized the value of higher education to foster her work as a teacher, team leader, mentor, and parent. Bela encourages students to reach out regularly for help and support. “Go for a walk, eat a healthy meal, or call a friend to share news about your exciting journey through the PDO,” she encourages.

*Find the PD Coordinator in your county at the [ecepdo.org](http://ecepdo.org) “Contact” page. It will look like the image below.*

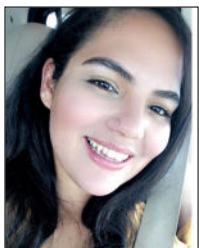




## Hispanos Juntos en Pro de la Niñez Temprana

### TUVIMOS LA OPORTUNIDAD DE TENER EN EL PODCAST

como invitados a cinco maestros preescolares hispanos y como moderadora, a una profesora hispana que enseña el CDA en español. La conversación, como siempre que los hispanos se reúnen, se convirtió en una muy amena y alegre. Se discutieron temas de cultura, del sistema educativo, las familias y del desarrollo profesional accesible a maestros de habla hispana. La moderadora, la Dra. Marisel Torres-Crespo, comenzó dándoles la bienvenida a los invitados y les pidió que se presentaran. Krystal Jiménez y Stephanie Alvarado trabajan juntas en el centro Follow Me Christian Child Care Center, Karolyn Santiago Rivera y Juan Carlos Rodríguez trabajan juntos en Pininos Art and Learning Academy. Y, por último, Enibeth Ocasio trabaja en Community Action Partnership.



*Krystal Jimenez*

Al comenzar la conversación, varios temas que salieron a relucir fueron la importancia de sembrar esa semillita de aprendizaje en los niños, tratar de enseñar en la manera en que el niño aprende, ser esa luz que brilla en la vida de ese niño y constantemente proveer una imagen positiva y llena de amor en la sala de clase. ¡Hacerlos sentir seguros es lo más importante!

Nuestro idioma representa nuestra cultura y nuestra identidad. Jamás debemos sentirnos menos porque ese es nuestro idioma primario. Por el contrario, podemos llegar a la vida de más familias porque somos bilingües y tenemos la oportunidad de exponer a los pequeñines a un segundo idioma que es sumamente



*Enibeth Ocasio*

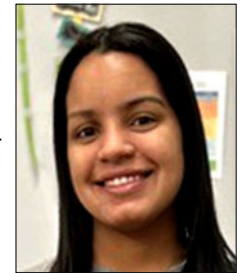


*Juan Carlos Rodriguez*

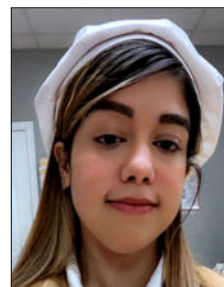
*Dr. Marisel Torres-Crespo*



importante hoy en día. Algo en que los participantes coincidieron efusivamente fue que el incorporar nuestras tradiciones hispanas en nuestro día a día en los centros de edad temprana, nos une como cultura y nos sentimos bien porque tenemos espacio para colaborar en temas que impactan nuestra realidad. Por ejemplo, Juan Carlos, nos describió como, en el Día de La Raza, planifican actividades que no tan solo representan sino celebran todas las diferentes culturas de manera auténtica y no estereotipada. Krystal, que es de Puerto Rico, nos contó que en su sala de clase se incorpora la música de salsa para ponerlos a bailar e incluir movimiento en su planificación diaria. Todos sabemos que el movimiento físico en la edad temprana ayuda a estimular el crecimiento del cerebro. ¡Qué mejor que combinar música, cultura y movimiento!



*Stephanie Alvarado*



*Karolyn Rivera*

Algo que les ha brindado mucha alegría a estos maestros es la oportunidad de poder tomar el CDA en español. Enibeth mencionaba que “esta es la mejor experiencia que ha tenido”. El apoyo recibido por su administración y sus compañeros de clase la llena mucha emoción y Stephanie, describió la oportunidad de tomar el curso en español “como una bendición”.

*Para conocer un poco mas sobre este tema, puedes escuchar a cinco maestros hispanos dialogando sobre el impacto de tener maestros hispanos en los primeros años de vida.*

