

# Potomac Association of Cooperative Teachers Inc.



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September 2021

Fall Newsletter

[www.PACTteachers.org](http://www.PACTteachers.org)

## Letter from the President

PACT members,

I'm struggling to find the right tone for this year's newsletter opening. On one hand, many of our programs are starting a new school year, and there is always a sense of joy that accompanies seeing our students fill the spaces that we have so meticulously prepared. A delight in hearing the sounds of children doing what they are supposed to be doing, playing with each other amongst the multitude of sensory experiences and materials that their teachers have curated for them.

On the other hand, 2020-21 was a devastating year in many ways for the early childhood education community and many programs have yet to recover. So many face a new year with a cart full of the same challenges as last year; under enrollment, challenging covid protocols, beyond anxious parents and even the politicization of health care decisions.

Perhaps the tone I'm seeking is one of admiration. Admiration for the countless hours that teachers have spent searching for ways to connect with children under the most challenging of circumstances. Admiration for the way directors and administrators have crunched every number and sought every possible way to keep the doors open. Admiration for the way the entire early childhood community has done what they see as their greatest responsibility; to carry themselves with the utmost "we will do our best to meet the needs of our children and community" attitudes. I'm in awe of how you all have fought through extreme circumstances. And I'm profoundly grateful that you have found your way back to PACT. Because for teachers, continuing to develop yourself as an early childhood educator is a responsibility that you prioritize and embrace.

While we would love to once again be meeting and taking workshops together in person, we are thrilled that we have once again found two fantastic presenters who will help you meet your development needs through a virtual platform. Gabriele Nicolet and Rena Dubensky have prepared two amazing and timely workshops that we are confident will help you navigate not only this year, but future years as well. Thank you for your continued commitment to your field and participation with PACT!

Regards,

(James) Scott Mitchell

President PACT Board

## Professional Developmental Days: Wednesday, October 20 & Thursday, October 28

PACT is pleased to offer two virtual workshops this Fall 2021: *"Expanding Language Skills in Young Children"* by Gabriele Nicolet and *"Prioritizing Outdoor Play"* by Rena Dubensky. We have added scheduling options for your convenience; sessions will be held **Wednesday, October 20<sup>th</sup> from 3-5 PM and 7-9 PM, and Thursday, October 28<sup>th</sup> from 3-5 PM and 7-9 PM**. You may choose to attend both of the 3-5 PM sessions, both of the 7-9 PM sessions, or both sessions on a single date! See below for more details about the workshops content and presenters.

### Workshops Content Descriptions

#### *\*Prioritizing Outdoor play by Rena Debensky*

**Wednesday, October 20-3pm to 5pm & Thursday, October 28-7pm to 9pm**

The workshop will focus on recognizing the benefits and challenges of outdoor play. Discussions will center on strategies for taking learning outside Identify outdoor play activities

#### *\* Expanding Language Skills in young children: by Gabriele Nicolet*

**Wednesday, October 20-7pm to 9pm & Thursday, October 28-3pm to 5pm**

In this workshop, participants will explore the ways in which educators can encourage language development in young children.

Participants will be able to:

1. Identify where to find information on developmental milestones
2. Identify at least one strategy to use in the classroom with students
3. Describe a scenario in which they may refer a child for further testing/ information gathering

### Presenters' Biography

**Rena Dubensky** holds a M.Ed from the University of Maryland in Curriculum and Instruction and has worked in the field of Early childhood Education for 19 years. Rena enjoys partnering with and learning from Early Childhood Educators in her role as Quality Enhancement Specialist with Montgomery County Child Care Resource and Referral Center, [MCCCRRC](#). She was previously a Quality Assurance Specialist with Maryland Excels, director of an early childhood center in Potomac MD and classroom teacher. She is particularly interested in nature, science, and outdoor education in early childhood and incorporating natural materials into early childhood pedagogy.

**Gabriele Nicolet**, MA, CCC-SLP is a child development specialist and a speech language pathologist. She is the owner of [SpeechKids](#), a private practice serving young children with speech and language needs in DC, MD and VA. She is also the co-founder of Raising Orchid Kids, an online education and support community for parents of neurodiverse children. Gabriele is passionate about helping children reach their full potential and about helping parents and educators reduce frustration. The mother of two teenagers, Gabriele, has 20 years' experience serving families both with and without speech and language difficulties. She speaks regularly with parents and educators on topics including social emotional development, speech and language development, setting kids up for behavioral success, and strategies for managing difficult behaviors. Follow Gabriele on [Facebook](#).

## Credit Hours and Core of Knowledge Area

Members who attend the full two-hour session of either workshop this Fall 2021 will receive 2 Core of Knowledge credit hours in Curriculum.

## Registration

Registration and payment can be completed [HERE](#). Please sign up individually to ensure your email is recorded. Registration should be submitted by Friday, October 15. By completing the Fall PDD registration, you are also receiving a year membership to PACT and will have access to our Spring Professional Developmental Days.

## Access to the Zoom Link for Fall Professional Development Days

A Zoom link will be e-mailed to registered members 24 hours prior to each session. Please click the link to your session at least 15 minutes early to check audio/video, sign in, and hear announcements from PACT. To earn a certificate for attendance, you must join the session by the start time, sign your name in the chat box, and follow the links to the assessment and feedback forms provided at the end of the presentation. Once signed in, participants' names will appear in the chat box. Registrants may be required to sign-in periodically to demonstrate their continuous participation. If a member leaves the session for a brief break, they will need to sign in again.

## Assessments and Evaluations

Members will be asked to complete a content assessment and presenter evaluation of the virtual course via a Google form. A link to the survey will be provided in the Zoom chat room at the conclusion of the course. The link will also be e-mailed to participants following the PDD and should be completed within 24 hours. *\*\*Requirements by MSDE also stipulate members from MD must pass the assessment with a score of 70% or higher.*

## Certificates

In accordance with MSDE regulations, participants MUST attend the full two-hour virtual presentation and complete a content assessment along with a presenter evaluation before receiving their certificate. Further details about completing the assessment will be covered at the pre-PDD business meeting. Personalized certificates will be available at the conclusion of each Professional Development Day.

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## Membership (New or Renewing)

Join PACT (or renew your membership!) by completing the online form [HERE](#). Current members are eligible to attend one or both of the virtual Professional Development Days in the Fall of 2021 and the Spring of 2022. The membership fee for the 2021-2022 school year is \$50.

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## Award for Devoted Service in Early Childhood Education

Due to the disruptions caused by COVID-19, the award for devoted service in Early Childhood Education was deferred for the 2020-21 school year. The Board is re-instating the award for the 2021-22 school year. Members are encouraged to keep candidates in mind! Please submit a [Service Award Nomination form](#) by Tuesday, March 1, 2022.

## Hall of Fame

The PACT Board established a PACT Hall of Fame in 2016 to recognize members who have given exemplary service in the field of Early Childhood Education. Following are the members who have been inducted to date:

**Janise Allyn-Smith** - *Teacher/Director, Silver Spring N.S., PACT Board member (2017)*

**Jennifer DeBernardis** - *Teacher, Silver Spring N.S., PACT Board member (2018)*

**Annette Fitzpatrick** - *Director (retired), CCUMC Preschool, PACT Board member (2018)*

**Edie Mossberg** - *Director, Glenbrook N.S., Board member, ECE Consultant (2019)*

**Bernadine Occhiuzzo** - *Director/Teacher, Cedar Lane N.S. (2019)*

**Nancy Renner** - *Director, Fort Hunt Preschool (2020)*

**Helene Segal-Turner** - *Director, Kensington N.S., PACT Board member (2018)*

**Cindy Walsh** - *Director (retired) CCPC Weekday N.S., PACT Board member (2018)*

**Fran Warthen** - *Director, Suburban N.S. (2018)*

**Angie Zeidenberg** - *Teacher, Bannockburn N.S. (2019)*

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## Join the PACT Board!

The PACT Board is run by dedicated volunteer early childhood educators. There are still some open positions, so we need members to step forward! Please check the list below and contact Scott Mitchell if you are interested in joining our team. Information about Board positions can be found in PACT's By-Laws on the website [www.PACTteachers.org](http://www.PACTteachers.org).

### [The 2021-22 Board Members](#)

#### President

[James Scott Mitchell](#) Silver Spring Nursery School, MD

#### V.P. Programming

[Bernadine Occhiuzzo](#) Cedar Lane Nursery School, MD

[Doreen Bunten](#) Cedar Lane Nursery School, MD

#### V.P. Membership

[Ellen Griffin](#) Cedar Lane Nursery School, MD

#### Secretary

[Melissa Jordan](#) Rockville Presbyterian Cooperative Nursery School, MD

#### Treasurer

[Janise Allyn-Smith](#) Silver Spring Nursery School, MD

#### Logistics & Hospitality

VA - **OPEN**

MD - [Rana Oriolo](#) Learning Center for Young Children, MD

#### Professional Development Day Administration

[Jessie Auten](#) Providence Nursery School, VA

Exhibits/Resource Table - **OPEN**

#### Assessments and Evaluations

[Emily Ederer](#) Silver Spring Day School, MD

#### Legislative Contact

MD - [Bernadine Occhiuzzo](#)

DC - **OPEN**

VA - [Nancy Renner](#) Fort Hunt Preschool, VA

## Listserv

[Rana Oriolo](#) Learning Center for Young Children, MD

**Web Master & Newsletter Editor**

[Meredith Savage-Myers](#) Ashton Christian Preschool, MD

## Past Co-Presidents

[Bernadine Occhiuzzo](#) Cedar Lane N.S., MD

[Ellen Griffin](#) Cedar Lane N.S., MD

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## DVD Collection

PACT maintains a collection of educational DVDs that current PACT members may borrow free of charge. Schools that have at least one PACT member on staff may borrow DVDs for training purposes. The borrower must pay postage costs both ways or pick up and return in person. See loan form and instructions on the PACT [website](#).

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## Job Postings

Looking for a new teaching position in the Washington, DC area? PACT posts job openings on the website - so check it out [HERE](#). Directors wishing to post job openings should e-mail details to [VPMembershipPACT@gmail.com](mailto:VPMembershipPACT@gmail.com).

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## Listserv

**PACT members' listserv:** Take a moment to join the PACT members' listserv to stay up-to date on PACT information. The listserv is open to current PACT members.

To join, send an e-mail to [4pact-members@googlegroups.com](mailto:4pact-members@googlegroups.com).

**Directors' listserv:** Share resources, ideas, and training opportunities by joining the PACT Directors listserv. PACT membership is not required. To join, send a message to

[pactdirectors@googlegroups.com](mailto:pactdirectors@googlegroups.com).

Looking forward to a great school year!

