

CATHERINE O'BRIEN ED.D

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Passionate, organized, and motivated, leader, educator, and advocate with experience in online curriculum design, professional development training, accreditation processes and school administration. Research areas of interest include advocacy, developing professional pathways for early childhood professionals around the state, workforce compensation, early childhood degree articulation, access to affordable high-quality early childhood education for all children and families, cooperative learning, advocating for play-based and nature-based learning and developing ecological community partnerships.

EDUCATION

EdD Grand Canyon University, Phoenix, AZ 2022

Dissertation: O'Brien, C. (2022). A Narrative of early childhood educator faculty experiences using synchronous cooperative learning amid a pandemic. ProQuest 29390890.

MaEd Ashford University Clinton, IA 2016

Thesis: Developing Instructional Strategies Using Differentiation in the Preschool Classroom
Research emphasis in Early Childhood

BA Ashford University Clinton, IA 2014

Early Childhood Education and Administration
Graduated Summa cum Laude

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Texas A&M University San Antonio September 2023-present

Adjunct Faculty, Early Childhood

- Child/Adolescent Development as it Impact Instruction, an undergraduate course
- Social/Emotional Development, an undergraduate *online* course
- Academic, Creativity, and Play, an undergraduate course
- Professionalism, Leadership and Ethics, an *online* undergraduate course
- Action Research in Early Childhood, and undergraduate research course
- Practicum of Growth and Development an experiential learning course

Texas A&M University San Antonio January 2020 to September 2023

Lecturer, Educator and Leadership Preparation

- Child/Adolescent Development as it Impact Instruction, an undergraduate course
- Social/Emotional Development, an undergraduate *online* course

- Academic, Creativity, and Play, an undergraduate course
- Professionalism, Leadership and Ethics, an *online* undergraduate course
- Infant/Toddler Development, an online undergraduate course
- Cognitive Development, an online undergraduate course
- Practicum for early childhood, an undergraduate course
- Action Research, an undergraduate course
- Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum, an undergraduate course
- Advocacy, a **graduate** course
- Special Problems in Early Childhood: The Reggio Approach

Texas A&M University San Antonio August 2017 to December 2019

Adjunct Faculty, Early Childhood

- Child/Adolescent Development as it Impact Instruction, an undergraduate course
- Social/Emotional Development, an undergraduate *online* course
- Academic, Creativity, and Play, an undergraduate course
- Professionalism, Leadership and Ethics, an *online* undergraduate course

Texas A&M University San Antonio August 2018 to December 2019

Adjunct Faculty, Curriculum and Instruction

- Classroom Management, an undergraduate course
- Teaching and Pedagogy, an undergraduate course

Texas A&M University San Antonio August 2017 to December 2019

Adjunct Faculty, First Year Experience

- Jaguar Tracks I, an undergraduate course
- Jaguar Tracks II, and undergraduate course

San Antonio College August 2016-December 2019

Adjunct Faculty, Early Childhood Studies

- Infant and Toddler Development, and undergraduate course
- Guidance, an undergraduate course
- Infant/Toddler Field Placement Lab, an undergraduate course

RELATED EXPERIENCE

Texas A&M University San Antonio

Director of Campus Childcare

September 2023-present

- Oversee the daily operations of the campus childcare afterschool program Young Jaguars
- Adhere to HHS Minimum Standards for licensed childcare and maintain compliance
- Hire, train, and supervise staff
- Support and supervise field placement students and maintain compliance with HHS Childcare licensing.
- Other duties as assigned

Community Actions Inc.

Adult Education Instructor

May 2018 – August 2020

- Instruct adult education course: Child Development Associate Credential

Country Home Learning Center

Director of Curriculum Development

June 2009 – December 2016

- Created and implemented a family engagement program to support parent partnerships to enhance child development.
- Created, designed and edited 12 months of theme-based curriculum for ages 6 weeks to 13 years aligned to state and accreditation standards.
- Created, designed and implemented research-based professional development as it impacted classroom experiences and curriculum improvements. Created a scope and sequence for curriculum and instruction for classroom teachers teaching children ages infant through early elementary.
- Supervised and mentored 10 Curriculum Coordinators at multiple locations.
- Provided key support for 10 school locations through the AdvancED/SACSCOSOS, TRS, and NAC accreditation processes including program assessment, continuous improvement plans, and created protocols for organizing documentation to increase program effectiveness and wrote yearly reports to maintain high quality status.
- Designed and implemented a professional development program for approximately 900 employees across 10 early learning centers.

Country Home Learning Center

Lead Teacher (Infant-Pre-Kindergarten)

June 2006 – June 2009

- Created lesson plans to meet the state guidelines for Pre-Kindergarten and the individual needs of the children
- Created hands-on activities to ensure skill mastery
- Designed and implemented a "take Home" reading program to enhance the school-home connection
- Effectively communicated daily with parents
- Conducted continuing observations and assessments to improve student learning
- Served as a mentor for a team of preschool teachers.
- Created developmentally appropriate lesson plans for children ages infant through four-years-old.
- Effectively communicated with families about their child's developmental needs

La Petite Academy – San Antonio, TX

Preschool Teacher

October 2005 to June 2006

- Created lesson plans for children ages 3 and 4-years-old
- Cared for children ages 3-4 following the minimum standards for the state of Texas
- Used developmentally appropriate practices while teaching children ages 3-4 language, cognitive, physical and social/emotional skills

Colorful Beginnings Consulting LLC

Owner/President/Consultant

2000-present

- Provide as needed support for licensed childcare centers focused on program improvement, curriculum and instruction, and professional development of staff.
- Provided in-home care for preschool children ages 3-5.

- Created a “Parent’s Day Out” program for infant/toddler and preschool-aged children.

COUNCIL FOR PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

2016-PRESENT

- Professional Development Specialist #P59256279

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Publications

O’Brien, C. (2022). A Narrative of early childhood educator faculty experiences using synchronous cooperative learning amid a pandemic. Proquest 29390890

Garcia-Alvarado, S., Inan, H., Jozwiak, M., **O’Brien, C.** (2022). Everybody is on Play: Familias United Project Bridges for Community Partnership. Chapter proposal Submitted.

O’Brien, C. (2019) A play on words: Using *Show Tune Rewrite* in training session. *Early Years*, vol. 40, no. 3, Fall 2019, pp. 8.

O’Brien, C. (2019) Going Beyond the Standards: Providing Effective Environments for Learning. *Early Years* vol. 40, no. 2, Summer 2019, pp. 9-10.

Grants/Awards

Jozwiak, M. M. (PI), Garcia-Alvarado, S (Co-PI), Janysek, M. (Evaluator), **O’Brien, C.(Co-PI)**, & Watts, G (Co-PI). (2022). Campus childcare as resource enhancing student-parent success: Campus CARES. Department of Education, Office of Post-Secondary Education C-CAMPIS.

\$437,482.66/year: **\$1,750,000 total**, Funded September 2022.

Added Personnel Hatice Inan, Co-PI (10/01/2022) Sarah Flotte, Co-PI (01/01/2023) Maria Acevedo-Aquino, Co-PI (01/01/2023)

Martinez, J., Baden, T., Jozwiak, M., Sheperis, C. J., Garfield, T., **O’Brien, C.**, Garcia-Alvarado, S. (2020). REACH for the STARS: Reaching every available child quality project. Workforce Solutions Alamo. \$9,125,490.00. Not Funded

PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED LECTURES

Research Presentation: Documentation of Innovative Strategies for Early/Middle Childhood Educators: Centering Diverse Children and Families in the Federally Funded, Project-Based, Young Jaguars School Age Program. Inan, H., **O’Brien, C.**, Garcia, S., at the NAECTE Summer Conference. June 2025

Presentation: Braiding Together Complimentary Perspectives. Highscope Annual Conference. Ann Arbor Michigan, April 2025

Research Presentation, *Why Young Jaguars? A phenomenographic study on the*

impact providing campus childcare has on the children, families, and university community, Garcia, S., O'Brien, C., Inan, H., a round-table session, at the NAECTE Fall Conference, Anaheim, CA November 2024

Keynote Presentation, The Image of the Child; The Approach to Play and Learning. Family Services Association, Early Childhood Training Conference. San Antonio, Texas March 2024

Presentation, SHARE: Students Hundred languages Abroad Real-life Experiences. (Poster presentation) at the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators conference, Nashville, Tennessee, November 2023

Presentation, Using Clay, Drama, and Storytelling to Strengthen Family Bonds. Practical Insights from “Building Bonds with Families through Art & Family Culture Stories” Research, (Workshop session) at the Triannual IPA World Conference, Glasgow, Scotland, June 2023

Presentation, A Narrative of EC Educator Faculty Experiences Using Synchronous Cooperative Learning Amid a Pandemic a Round Table Paper Session (45 minutes) at the 2022 National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educator's Conference, Washington DC., November 2022

Poster Presentation, Building Bonds with Families through Art and 5 Family Culture Stories, Garcia-Alvarado, S., Inan, Inan, H.Z., O'Brien, C., a **Poster Session**, at the 2022 National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educator's Conference, Washington DC, November 2022

Presentation, Creating Connections: Using Clay and Drama in the form of Storytelling. O'Brien, C. Garcia-Alvarado, S., Inan, H.Z. IPA-USA Conference, San Antonio, TX, October 2022

Presentation, Advocacy 101: Using Your Voice to Create a Promising Future. TXAEYC Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX, September 2022

Presentation, Higher Education and Articulation, Children and Risk Annual Early Childhood Summit: Supporting Today's Workforce for Tomorrow, May 2022

Presentation, Advocacy Voice with an Equity Lens. At TXAEYC Virtual Summit, February 2022

Presentation, The Growing Child: Foundation of Child Development. Voices for Children Annual conference at TX A&M San Antonio, November 2021

Presentation, Collaboration for challenging times: Young learners, families, and universities, Jozwiak, M., Garcia-Avarado, s., O'Brien, C., at NAECTE Summer Virtual Conference, June 2021

Presentation, Community Partnerships as Advocacy at TXAEYC Master Series, Virtual

mini conference, 2021

Presentation, Advocacy with an Equity Lens at TX A&M Agrilife Virtual Professional Workshop, 2021

Presentation, Let's Get Creative and Play to Learn. Presentation at Texas Association for the Education of Young Children Early Childhood Conference San Antonio, TX 2017, 2018, 2019

Presentation, Making Connections in the Infant/Toddler Classroom. TXAEYC Annual conference. September 2019

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Adjunct Faculty Certification, Alamo Colleges, August 2018

Description: Certification course including 48 hours of professional development, Research, and Instructor Presentation: *Multiple Intelligences and how it impacts instruction in the adult classroom.*

Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Environment

Natural Learning Institute, North Carolina State University

November 2023

Nature-Based Educator Certification

NAAEE/EEPro, Washington, DC.

June 2023

Online Learning Consortium Digital Badging

OLC, June 2021

Quality Matters Online Instructor Certification

Alamo Colleges, December 2018

Quality Matters Peer Reviewer Certification

Texas A&M SA, July 2020

Zero to Three Certified Trainer of Trainers *The Growing Brain*

Zero to Three, July 2021

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Alpha Sigma Lambda Honor Society

Council for Professional Recognition- CDA

Golden Key International Honor Society

IALS International Association of Laboratory Schools Program Member

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International Play Association IPA-USA/World Member

N4C National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers Program Member

NAAEE/NSA North American Association for Environmental Education

NAEYC/TXAEYC/SECA Member

NAREA North American Reggio Emilia Association

OLE Texas-Outdoor Learning Education San Antonio Chapter

TECPDS -Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System

Texas Children in Nature Network

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

International Association of Laboratory Schools

- Committee member- International Connections Committee July 2025-Present

Institute for School and Community Partnerships

- Board of Directors August 2024-present

Early Matters San Antonio

- Committee Co-Chair Professional Pathways January 2022-present

San Antonio Chapter of the TXAEYC (AKA-SAAEYC)

- Committee Chair for Professional Development June 2022-May 2025
- Past-President June 2021-May 2022
- President June 2019-May 2021

Texas Association for the Education of Young Children-TXAEYC

- VP of Advocacy (Board Member-at large) June 2021-June 2023

Early Years Publication, TXAEYC Reviewer

August 2017 – Present

NAECTE Conference Proposal Reviewer

September 2022

NAECTE Journal Reviewer

October 2020-Present

Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System

January 2018-Present

Master Registered Trainer #7314

REFERENCES

Upon Request