



CONNECTICUT EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

# EARLY CAREER EDUCATOR CONFERENCE

*Together We Rise*  
Strong Union, Strong Educators



March 21, 2026  
Mystic Marriott Hotel & Spa

# AGENDA

## SATURDAY, MARCH 21

**Mystic Marriott Hotel & Spa · Groton, CT**

All workshops are offered twice (once during each session).

**8:30 a.m.      Registration and continental breakfast**

**9:00 a.m.      Welcome by CEA President Kate Dias  
Keynote Speaker**

**10:00 a.m.      Transition to Session I**

**10:15 a.m.      Session I**

**11:45 a.m.      Break**

**12:00 p.m.      Session II**

**1:30 p.m.      Lunch**

- Register at [cea.org/early-career-conference](http://cea.org/early-career-conference).
- Download the Cvent Event app to your phone to get ready for the conference. This app contains a detailed schedule, sessions, information about presenters, session room assignments, and so much more.
- The conference is designed for educators in their first seven years of teaching, but any CEA member currently employed by a school district may attend. Lunch is included.
- In case of inclement weather, check for updates at [cea.org](http://cea.org) or call 860-525-5641 for the status of this conference.
- If you have questions, contact Angela Spinnato at [angelas@cea.org](mailto:angelas@cea.org) or Lisa Bickford at [lisaab@cea.org](mailto:lisaab@cea.org).

**Register for CEA's  
Early Career Educator  
Conference here!**



# SESSIONS

## Behavior and Classroom Management

This seminar will examine different types of behaviors in the classroom, possible reasons behind them, and ways to address them. We will look at transition anxiety, lack of engagement, peer influence, and unclear expectations, as well as management techniques including Tier 1, 2, and 3 recommended strategies, targeted interventions, and intensive supports. Discussion of optional tools and support strategies will also be explored. **Middle, High**

## Building Routines and Relationships Within the First Six Weeks

The first six weeks of school set the tone for the entire year, and new teachers have the power to make those weeks joyful, structured, and deeply connected. This interactive session will guide participants through practical strategies for establishing classroom routines, modeling expectations, and building community using Responsive Classroom principles, PBIS frameworks, and restorative approaches.

Participants will learn how to be proactive rather than reactive in their management, embed social-emotional learning into academic spaces, and create a classroom climate where students feel safe, respected, and ready to learn.

Leave this session with concrete tools, sample routines, community-building activities, and interactive modeling techniques that can transform your first weeks (and every week after) into a foundation for engagement, belonging, and success. **Elementary**



## Chalk & Order: The Legal ABCs for Educators

This presentation examines the rights and responsibilities of educators regarding a variety of legal issues, including DCF and state mandatory reporting laws, DCF investigations, Teacher Dismissal Law, Hold Harmless Law, Weingarten Law, FOIA and personnel files, and other related matters.

**Elementary, Middle, High**



## Coffee, Calm, and Classroom Confidence: Real-Talk

### Strategies for Early Career Educators

Teaching in the early years can be a joyful, overwhelming, energizing, and exhausting whirlwind—all before lunch. In this relaxed, coffee-talk style session, the presenters will create a welcoming atmosphere where early career educators can learn practical strategies, ask candid questions, and build community over coffee, tea, or hot chocolate.

This session blends three core pillars that new teachers consistently identify as their biggest growth areas: work-life load management, student behavior strategies, and professional balance. Participants will leave with immediately usable tools, a clearer sense of their professional identity, and a supportive network of peers. **Middle, High**



## Decreasing Stress and Increasing Tranquility

The beginning of a teacher's career can be the most stressful, but learning management strategies for emotional regulation for yourself and your students can help you to stay grounded, calm, and ready to tackle the challenges that both

# SESSIONS CONTINUED

life and teaching present. Come to this session to practice mindful movement and learn how to teach your students short, guided meditations, stretches, and movement activities. You will feel your stress reduced and leave with tangible practices to use with your students and on your own. Participants would benefit from dressing in comfortable clothes for this session. **Elementary, Middle, High**

## **Designing Classrooms That Inspire: Student-Centered Spaces and Learning**

Learn how classroom design, purposeful student discourse, and student-led learning can elevate engagement. This interactive workshop will help you reimagine your physical space, design discussion structures, and use project-based learning to empower students to think, collaborate, and lead with purpose. **Middle, High**

## **Exploring and Experimenting with AI**

Artificial intelligence is here. Are you ready to harness its potential? This workshop is designed for teachers looking to understand the foundations of AI, explore impact on pedagogy and student learning, and experiment with AI tools to leave with confidence in navigating this new frontier. **Middle, High**

## **Love, Limits, and Learning: Teaching Kids How to 'Do School' Through Play, Purpose, and High Expectations**

Learning how to 'do school' is one of the most important lessons in the early grades. In this interactive session, two veteran early elementary teachers will share how they use the Warm Demander approach, balancing care and connection with high expectations to build strong, independent learners from the start.

Grounded in PBIS, restorative practices, and play-based pedagogy, this session will show how intentional routines, structured independence, and joyful engagement help children thrive academically and socially. Participants will explore how early learners develop responsibility, collaboration, and confidence through carefully modeled routines, responsive teaching, and flexible grouping.

The presenters will also highlight the essential role early career teachers play in shaping grade-level teams: contributing fresh perspectives, supporting shared expectations, and collaborating to ensure every child—and every adult—belongs and succeeds.

Participants will:

- Understand the Warm Demander approach and its application in early childhood and primary grades.
- Learn how to teach independence and responsibility through play-based, structured routines.
- Explore how PBIS and restorative practices can align to build consistent, caring expectations.
- Examine strategies for flexible grouping and grade-level collaboration that foster student growth.
- Identify ways early-career educators can be active contributors to team culture and collective efficacy.

**Elementary**



# SESSIONS CONTINUED

## Managing Your Professional Salary: A Teacher's Guide to Financial Empowerment

Maximize your teacher salary from day one. Taught by an experienced educator, union leader, and financial professional, this course provides a bottom-up, practical guide for new and established teachers to navigate their compensation and plan for a secure future.

We will demystify your paycheck—covering taxes, deductions, and net pay—and provide crucial insights into the Teachers' Retirement Board (TRB), including the little-known opportunity to buy back prior service (like military time) that can save you tens of thousands of dollars. Discover the immense power of compounding and explore key savings and growth avenues, such as:

- High-Yield Savings Accounts and CDs
- IRAs (Traditional and Roth)
- 403b's and 457's
- Health Savings Accounts (HSA)

Walk away with actionable strategies to make fiscally sound choices, ensuring even a small amount set aside early can lead to an earlier or more comfortable retirement. The session will conclude with a dedicated Q&A. *Elementary, Middle, High*



## The Power of Play in the Early Childhood Classroom

Appropriate for all early childhood educators, this workshop will model how play can be planned purposefully to address student needs and also curricular expectations. Adult learners will learn about various materials and learning experiences that elicit play opportunities for students in the classroom. Learners will also have an opportunity to create their own learning plans for various investigations. *Elementary*



## The Real Lessons: A Writing Journey

Writing is one of the most challenging tasks we ask students to do! How do we build students' enthusiasm, and our own, as well as encourage student voice? How do we get their pencils moving? This session will guide you on the journey to building storytelling connections and cultivating a classroom writing community. You will come away with tips for motivating student authors to write meaningful stories and texts that help shape their identity long after being in your classroom. *Elementary*

