



SHERMAN CENTER

for Early Learning
in Urban Communities

Director's Message

As we approach the end of this historic year, it is important to reflect on what we have learned and accomplished. The fall 2020 issue of the Sherman Center newsletter provides a timely opportunity to do so. In this issue, Melissa Bailey, program coordinator, describes Sherman Center partnership activities that were conducted virtually this fall, in particular the Teacher Summer Institute (TSI) and Families, Libraries, and Early Literacy Project. Our featured article highlights key takeaways from this summer's virtual TSI, attended by over 40 early childhood educators at the Sherman Center's five [partner schools](#). The article is authored by Dr. Patricia Jennings, who facilitated the TSI's professional development (and December follow-up) on promoting the socioemotional development of young children through trauma sensitive practices. Next, Louise Corwin, Visiting Executive in Residence at the Sherman Center, shares updates from the [Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program](#) (MECLP). She describes MECLP's second cohort of fellows and its first Leadership Institute. This issue also introduces readers to two outstanding researchers who joined the Sherman Center this fall: Drs. Karrie Godwin and Shana Rochester. Finally, in the spirit of the year and season, we share a video excerpt of Sandra Evers Manly (Keynote Speaker for the 2020 TSI Kickoff) reading from and discussing her inspiring children's book, *Raised Up by Mrs. Manly and Her L's*. The book was added to the Sherman Center [Diverse Books Collection](#) in 2019. We hope you enjoy the newsletter and wish you a healthy and prosperous 2021!

Mavis G. Sanders

Dr. Mavis G. Sanders is professor of education and inaugural director of the Sherman Center for Early Learning in Urban Communities at UMBC

Sherman Center Update

by Melissa Bailey, Program Coordinator

Since March, the Sherman Center has adapted its activities to online platforms in response to COVID-19 restrictions. We launched our very first virtual Teacher Summer Institute (TSI) July 26-29; 42 early childhood teachers at our five partner schools as well as UMBC faculty, staff, and guests attended the four-day event focused on promoting young children's socioemotional development. Sandra Evers-Manly kicked-off the TSI with a reading and discussion of her children's book, *Raised Up by Mrs. Manly and Her L's*, sharing how to promote young children's socioemotional development through diverse books. Next, Dr. Patricia Jennings, author of several books on childhood trauma and mindfulness practices in education, conducted a two-day professional development based on her book, [The Trauma-Sensitive Classroom: Building Resilience with Compassionate Teaching](#). On the final day of the TSI, ECE teachers developed action plans for promoting children's socioemotional development during the new school year; they also selected materials to facilitate virtual instruction. These materials were purchased by the Sherman Center and distributed to students and families by the teachers. On December 2, Dr. Jennings conducted a virtual TSI follow-up session; 30 early childhood teachers gathered to discuss trauma sensitive

classroom practices and self-care.

We also continued our work with the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Judy Centers at Lakeland and Curtis Bay Elementary/Middle Schools, and the families of children birth to three years old through the Families, Libraries, and Early Literacy Project (ELP). Based on family feedback, our "socially distanced" event in June focused on toilet training. The Sherman Center provided diapers, training pants, and books celebrating potty training (i.e., *Potty/Bacinica & Big Girl/Big Boy*); the Enoch Pratt Free Library provided materials on summer reading; and the Judy Centers at Lakeland and Curtis Bay distributed the items to families. Our fall ELP theme was "Literacy and Kindergarten Readiness Outdoors." In preparation for the virtual workshop, the Sherman Center purchased 30 Galaxy tablets for the Lakeland and Curtis Bay Judy Centers to distribute to families as needed. We also provided families with outdoor discovery kits, activity ideas, and COVID-19 safety kits. Using ZOOM, we met with the families for a read aloud (conducted by the childhood librarian at the Brooklyn Branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library), to share library resources, and to discuss strategies to promote early learning outdoors. Many of our activities will have to remain virtual during the first quarter of 2021 - we will be sure to keep you updated!

Featured Article: Compassion for Self and Others: The Key to Creating Trauma Sensitive Early Childhood Classrooms

by Dr. Patricia Jennings, Professor of Education, University of Virginia

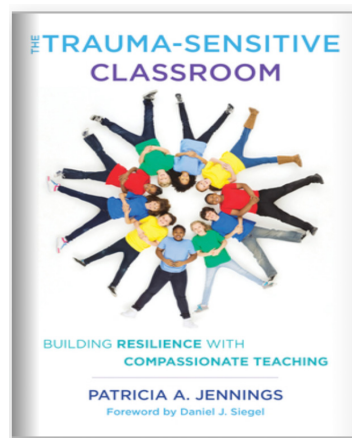
Today trauma-sensitive approaches in schools are more important than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic has put unbelievable stress on all of us and has contributed to serious trauma for many of us. When we are faced with trauma and adversity, our body and nervous system adapts by engaging the fight, flight or freeze survival response. While this response results in behaviors that are adaptive in dealing with the trauma, they can interfere with learning.

Children adapt to trauma in various ways. Some may become hypervigilant. While this

may protect them from threats at home, it can make it difficult for them to focus attention on learning activities. Some may develop a hostile attribution bias where they tend to imagine that others' behavior is threatening when it isn't, resulting in inappropriate aggressive reactivity. They also may respond by disassociating, spacing out. These children are easy to overlook because they do not pose behavioral challenges, but they also miss out because they are not engaged in learning or socialization. In all these cases, children need support to feel safe at school so they can learn appropriate ways to respond to situations in the school environment.

"Mindful awareness practices can help us build the resilience we need to support our students."

Teachers can provide this support by helping students build supportive relationships, creating safe and caring learning environments, and building upon strengths by supporting self-regulation. Trauma-sensitive approaches include an understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion and teachers need to employ culturally-sensitive practices and recognize the impact of transgenerational trauma among historically oppressed groups.





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Research Notes:

The Sherman Center Welcomes New Research Faculty

The Sherman Center for Early Learning in Urban Communities is pleased to welcome [two new faculty members](#), Dr. Karrie Godwin (PhD, Carnegie Mellon University, 2015) and Dr. Shana Rochester (PhD, University of Michigan, 2018) to UMBC.

[Dr. Godwin](#) holds a joint appointment as research faculty with the Sherman Center and assistant professor with the psychology department. Her research projects examine individual differences in the development of attention regulation and executive function, and how instructional environments and materials can be optimized to promote young children's learning. Dr. Godwin will work with early childhood educators to apply key findings from these projects through her joint appointment with the Sherman Center.

Newly appointed as a research associate with the Sherman Center, [Dr. Rochester](#) explores children's academic and social development in the context of early childhood classrooms, family-based educational programs, and informal learning spaces, focusing specifically on racially and ethnically minoritized populations. In her position as research associate, Dr. Rochester will conduct community- and classroom-based studies and provide professional development for Sherman Center partners and stakeholders.

Visit our [website](#) to learn more about their innovative research in early childhood education.

Teachers working with trauma-exposed children can find themselves exhausted, not only because of the need to provide this support, but also because of vicarious trauma. When we learn about the trauma and hardship our students are facing, it can be incredibly painful and can threaten our own sense of well-being. Because of this, teacher self-care is especially important under these circumstances. Self-care involves activities that support your well-being and optimal development so you can bring your best to your students. Self-care is a way of life, a routine of good habits that you do every day. Self-care involves bringing attention to your needs and intentionally nurturing yourself by fulfilling them. It is ordinary activities that are rooted in our core values and deepest longings as human beings. When we recognize and understand our needs, our relationship with ourselves and others can deepen which can help us take actions that meet everyone's needs.

Self-care involves three basic steps:

1. Recognizing what you need at any given moment

2. Prioritizing your needs
3. Addressing the needs.

Mindful awareness practices can help us build the resilience we need to support our students. They can also contribute to building a self-care practice. Mindful awareness involves intentionally directing one's attention to inner or outer sensations as one cultivates an attitude of curiosity and acceptance. We can practice mindfulness formally or informally. Formal practices involve focusing attention on inner sensations such as the breath or parts of the body. During informal practice we bring mindful awareness to our everyday activities, noticing the sensations around us as we perform them. When you intentionally bring mindful awareness to your self-care activities and routines, you enliven and refine them. You notice small details about how you might enhance their effectiveness and how you might combine self-care rituals to save time. Compassion involves recognizing the suffering of oneself or others and cultivating the motivation to help and care.

The Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program (MECLP) Update

by Louise Corwin, Sherman Center Visiting Executive in Residence

During the summer of 2020, 31 outstanding early childhood professionals from across Maryland competed for 14 slots to become fellows in MECLP's second cohort. The new fellows are eager to develop and enhance their leadership skills to effect better outcomes for Maryland's youngest learners. The new fellows participated in a lively virtual Orientation in October that introduced them to their colleagues and the Leading for Change in Early Childhood Education course, and provided them with the texts and curriculum binder to guide their yearlong effort.

Following the morning Orientation, MECLP hosted its first Leadership Institute—*Early Childhood 2020: What Just Happened? What Happens Next?*—keynoted by Dr. Joan Lombardi, Director of Early Opportunities LLC and a seasoned early childhood pioneer,

and a policy advisor to national and international organizations and foundations. Dr. Lombardi's remarks focused on the leadership opportunities presented by COVID-19 and the importance of motivating a younger generation of leaders. Dr. Lombardi's energizing conversation was followed by a panel that featured Steven Hicks, Assistant State Superintendent of the Division of Early Childhood, MSDE; Dr. Sonia Pruneda-Hernandez, Chair of Early Childhood Education Programs at Montgomery College; and Tracy Jost, Owner of Kid's Campus Early Learning Center in Calvert County and Policy Advisor with NIEER. The panel members highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on early childhood in Maryland and the importance of leader advocacy.

For more information, please visit <https://meclp.umbc.edu> or email Louise Corwin (lcorwin@umbc.edu), Visiting Executive in Residence, or Dominique Tidwell (domtid1@umbc.edu), Graduate Assistant.

Research to Practice

Sandra Evers-Manly is Vice President of Global Corporate Responsibility for Northrop Grumman and President of the Northrop Grumman Foundation. She is also author of the children's book, *Raised Up By Mrs. Manly and Her L's*, which was added to the Sherman Center [Diverse Books Collection](#) in 2019 and featured at the virtual 2020 Teacher Summer Institute (TSI) Kickoff. In this video excerpt from her inspirational presentation at the TSI Kickoff, Ms. Evers-Manly describes her favorite letter and what it means to lead, love, and lift up others during challenging times. To learn more about the [Diverse Books Project](#), and view [teacher videos](#) featuring books from the Collection, please visit our [website](#).

