



**SHERMAN
CENTER**

for Early Learning
in Urban Communities

**2022
ANNUAL
REPORT**



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



The year 2022, continued to be riddled with change and uncertainty for the Sherman Center. Even as we resumed all our activities in person, the reluctance to in-person gatherings was still very much present, as the COVID-19 pandemic had not yet been overcome. In February, a [new gift](#) by the Sherman Family Foundation was announced and thrilled with excitement for what the future might hold for us, we continued our programming through spring and summer. We began to redefine the Sherman Center's reach in the fall, redirecting our efforts to have a stronger focus on research and evaluation, requiring us to pause some of our programs.

We saw much turnover in 2022. During the summer, our Program Coordinator, Melissa Bailey, and MECLP Program Director, Liran Laor, transitioned out of UMBC, and in the fall, Dr. Shana Rochester, our Assistant Director and Research Associate, moved on to a research scientist role at a nationwide research organization. As well, one of our Campus Advisory Committee members, Dr. Patricia Young, stepped down to focus on her new role as Chair of the Education Department. In the fall, we welcomed new graduate students to the Sherman Center, to support our research initiatives and MECLP.

In this year's Annual Report, we continue to use our recently revised [Theory of Change](#) to present the impact we had in bringing the Sherman Center's mission to fruition. Our mission focuses on building a strong foundation for lifelong learning among young children in Baltimore City, as well as developing best early childhood education practices in urban schools. We carry out this mission through three main pillars, which will be used as guidelines for the sections of this report, to organize and present our accomplishments. In the Partnerships section, we share the achievements we reached through collaborations with the Shriver Center, the Enoch Pratt Free Library, the Judy Centers, and our five Baltimore City partner schools through our [Literacy Fellows Program](#); [Families, Libraries, and Early Literacy Program](#); and [Diverse Books Project](#). In the Professional and Leadership Development section, we share the encouraging outcomes of the [Teacher Summer Institute](#) and the [Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program](#). In the Multidisciplinary Research and Scholarship section, we share the 2022 [Faculty Research Award](#) recipient, updates on the research studies advanced by our Research Faculty, and our research [publications](#), as well as the success of the inaugural [Sherman Center Research Conference](#). Lastly, we recognize the invaluable contribution of our funders and campus advisory committee members, as well as showcase this year's [Childhood Literacy Scholarship](#) recipient. It is my pleasure to share with you the many accomplishments we achieved this year, setting the stage for the important work we continue carrying forward to advance our mission in 2023.

Dr. Jennifer Mata-McMahon, Director

SHERMAN CENTER THEORY OF CHANGE

Sherman Center Theory of Change

The Sherman Center for Early Learning in Urban Communities seeks to build a strong foundation for lifelong learning and academic success by connecting theory, evidence, and practice.

PARTNERSHIPS.

Collaborating to expand resources and opportunities for young learners, birth to eight.

Activities: Diverse Books Project; Families, Libraries, and Early Literacy Project; Literacy Fellows Program; Breathe2Think

MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP.

Producing and disseminating new knowledge on early childhood education policies and practices.

Activities: Faculty Recruitment, Faculty Research Award, Doctoral Student Research Award, Sherman Center Research Conference, Childhood Literacy Scholarship



PROFESSIONAL AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.

Building professional knowledge and leadership in early childhood to promote transformational change.

Activities: Teacher Summer Institute, Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program



**SHERMAN
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NEW SHERMAN CENTER PERSONNEL

EXPANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERTISE AT UMBC

In 2022, the Sherman Center welcomed three talented graduate assistants from the UMBC community to support existing Sherman Center initiatives. Shahin Hossain serves as a research assistant and supports the research study focused on the Sherman Center programs' evaluation and Dr. Mata-McMahon's research on children's spirituality. Eliza Triolo and Priyal Shah, support administrative, programmatic, and technological tasks for MECLP. The Sherman Center has greatly benefitted from adding these new members to our team.



"I have learned how to execute tasks efficiently and effectively at the Sherman Center. A group of dedicated faculty taught me how to conduct multidisciplinary research to develop the best early childhood education practices for urban schools. I look forward to continuing to work with this dynamic team."

Shahin Hossain is a doctoral student in Language, Literacy, and Culture at UMBC. He received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in English from the University of Dhaka. He received his second Master's degree in Textual Studies & TESOL from Bowling Green State University. Shahin's research interests include children's spirituality, school safety and school-based violence, computational thinking, and conflict management in network governance. Shahin is a Fulbright scholar. He worked as a Fulbright foreign language teaching assistant at Fayetteville State University. At UMBC, Shahin served as the Vice President of the Graduate Student Association. At the Sherman Center, Shahin is a graduate research assistant with Dr. Mata-McMahon on projects focused on children's spirituality and program evaluation.



"As someone just entering the early childhood field, it's wonderful to work with experienced leaders and practitioners in the field! Working with MECLP has shown me the possibilities for leadership roles in my chosen field, both working within classrooms and in communities."

Eliza Triolo is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Teaching at UMBC, concentrating in Early Childhood Education, where she is a Sherman Scholar. Prior to coming to MECLP, Eliza served with Americorps as a Pre-K literacy tutor with The Literacy Lab, working with students at an elementary school in Baltimore City. She holds a bachelor's degree from UMBC where she studied music composition and Spanish, and frequently collaborated with the dance department on new works. Born and raised in Baltimore, Eliza is passionate about ensuring equitable access to quality education across Baltimore City.



"Working at the Sherman Center has been a pleasure. Contributing to the Center's early childhood learning programs and initiatives that raise awareness excites me. The Center's staff and faculty exemplify true commitment to community partnership and collaboration. I look forward to continuing my work here and learning more. Working with MECLP has allowed me to explore the intricacies of early childhood education policy and its possibilities. It is inspiring to see early childhood leaders stepping forward to improve educational opportunities for young learners and to enhance their leadership potential."

Priyal Shah is a Master's student in Human-Centered Computing at UMBC. She earned her Bachelor of Engineering degree in Information Technology from India and has one year of experience. Her passion is understanding human-computer interaction, and she completed a summer internship at GoDaddy, where she contributed to making their internal site more seamless and accessible. In her free time, Priyal enjoys reading, doodling, and creating comics. She writes on Medium primarily about user experience, with occasional book reviews.

PARTNERSHIPS

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES BY THE NUMBERS

The Sherman Center executes its mission by implementing initiatives through research-practice partnerships with our five Baltimore City partner schools. These initiatives provide professional learning opportunities for early childhood education stakeholders that work closely with young students, such as pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and families. The following pages provide an overview of three Sherman Center partnership initiatives—the Literacy Fellows Program; the Families, Libraries, and Early Literacy Program; and the Diverse Books Project—presenting the impact they had in 2022.



Literacy Fellows and volunteers at Bay Brook Elementary/Middle School, spring 2022

LITERACY FELLOWS PROGRAM

The Sherman Center and [The Shriver Center](#)—UMBC’s service-learning and community engagement center—developed the Literacy Fellows Program (LFP) to provide English Language Arts (ELA) support to prekindergarten through Grade 2 classrooms. Through this program, UMBC undergraduate volunteers engage in weekly service at two schools: Bay Brook Elementary/Middle School and Curtis Bay Elementary School. In addition to engaging in weekly service, LFP Fellows take on leadership roles in the program by (1) recruiting and managing classroom volunteers at their host school, (2) enrolling in a practicum course taught by The Shriver Center to deepen their understanding of community assets and needs, and (3) critically reflecting on their experience through end-of-semester reports. The Sherman Center also facilitates professional development sessions each semester to enhance students’ literacy-specific knowledge.

The spring 2022 cohort included four Fellows and five volunteers who supported elementary-aged students during in-person learning in eight classrooms. Their involvement during ELA instruction included support during the development of vocabulary, reading, and writing skills. Fellows’ participation included both leading small group instructions as well as whole-class instruction, using creative strategies to ensure that all students could participate meaningfully in classroom activities, such as using picture clues when working with English language learners.



A total of 4 fellows and 5 volunteers served 204 total hours during 2022, working in 8 classrooms, with approximately 200 students. Given the shift in focus to research, the LFP was paused and was not delivered in the fall 2022 semester.

FAMILIES, LIBRARIES, AND EARLY LITERACY PROGRAM

In 2022, the Families, Libraries, and Early Literacy Program (ELP) provided in-person family meetings for caregivers of young children (birth to age 3) at Curtis Bay and Lakeland Judy Centers. The program—which includes a collaboration between the Sherman Center, the [Enoch Pratt Free Library](#), and the [Judy Centers](#)—hosts meetings with families in community-based settings to share books, information, and materials to support children’s kindergarten readiness and family literacy engagement at home.



We held four bilingual ELP events at Curtis Bay and Lakeland in May and June of 2022. In May, families from both Judy Centers attended sessions focused on storytelling through art. We emphasized the promotion of children’s oral language development, vocabulary, and fine motor skills through artistic activities. Parents were given books and materials (e.g., art smocks, paint and paint palettes, paint brushes, and rollers) to use and were encouraged in their activities to facilitate storytelling with their children about their paintings. In collaboration with MiniMix Studio,

a Baltimore-based company for children’s events and soft play parties, we also provided an indoor playground and soft inflatable foam toys for children to engage with at both sites.



In June, families from each site had a session that promoted literacy through learning about animals. Learning about animals exposes children and makes them aware of their environment, increases their vocabulary, teaches empathy, and strengthens children’s skills with comparing, contrasting, and categorizing. We worked with Wildlife Adventures, an organization dedicated to spreading animal conservation and awareness, and held this session outdoors for both Curtis Bay and Lakeland Judy Centers. In addition to animal-related books, families received animal

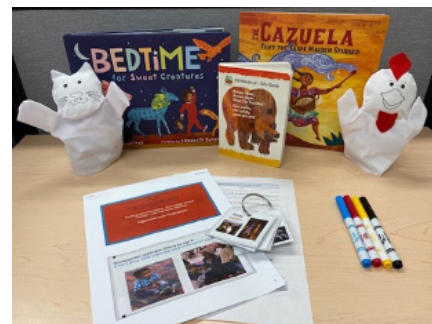
puppets to decorate, name, and use during reading and playtime, as well as animal vocabulary cards, and fabric markers.

All our sessions and materials for both sites were fully bilingual to respond to the linguistic needs of the families we serve.

Family Participation and Engagement

We distributed **96 books** and sets of kindergarten readiness materials to families throughout the year. In addition, **31 families** participated in ELP events in 2022, and an average of eleven families (per site) attended each session. Of the 31 families, 19 were new participants.

When asked whether ELP events helped in their understanding of kindergarten readiness, families who attended one or more meetings had an average rating of 4.33 on a five-point scale (1 = The ELP did not help me at all; 5 = The ELP helped me a lot). Returning families also reported using ELP materials and activities with their children several times a week. ELP was the second program paused and not delivered in the fall 2022 semester, due to the shift of the Sherman Center to focus on research initiatives.



Materials distributed to families for the June 2022 ELP event on learning about animals

DIVERSE BOOKS PROJECT

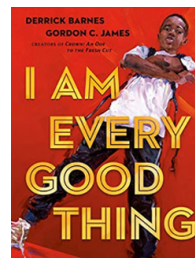
Research suggests that being exposed to diverse cultural backgrounds from an early age can have a positive impact on children’s understanding of the social complexities found in their environment, offering both mirrors and windows into worlds that are both similar and very different from what they experience daily. The Diverse Books Project aims to ensure that early childhood educators at Sherman Center partner schools have access to multicultural children’s books for their classroom libraries to enrich their curricula. Each quarter educators review an updated list of 15 books from the Sherman Center’s Diverse Books Collection and request up to two titles for their classroom. In addition, the project encourages educators to reflect on their use of books from the Diverse Books Collection both before and after using them during instruction. On our YouTube channel, we have [a growing library of short videos](#) with educators describing how they used these multicultural books in their classrooms and how their students engaged with these texts.

Educators representing all five Sherman Center partner schools participated in the Diverse Books Project in 2022 for the third consecutive year. Educators could request up to six copies of one or two books for use with their students. The Sherman Center distributed **644 books** from the Diverse Books Collection to **45 early childhood educators** at our partner schools. Regarding special educators and teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in Prekindergarten to Grade 2 classrooms, **14 requests** were received for **119 books** addressing topics in these fields. Below are the books distributed per school per quarter or grading period.

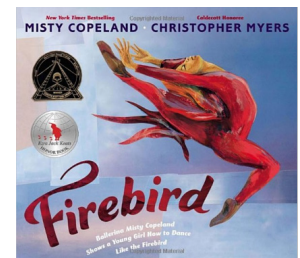
| School | AY 21-22 (Q2) Teachers (books) | AY 21-22 (Q3) Teachers (books) | AY 21-22 (Q4) Teachers (books) | AY 22-23 (Q1) Teachers (books) |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Arundel | 4 (38) | 8 (58) | 7 (57) | 5 (40) |
| Bay Brook | 4 (21) | 3 (15) | 1 (8) | 8 (64) |
| Curtis Bay | 2 (24) | 3 (9) | 1 (6) | 8 (34) |
| Lakeland | 3 (28) | 5 (50) | 6 (52) | 3 (34) |
| Maree G. Farring | 1 (2) | 2 (14) | 2 (20) | 1 (12) |
| Total | 14 (113 books) | 21 (204 books) | 17 (143 books) | 25 (184 books) |

Educator Feedback

Educators who selected diverse books for their classrooms did so to support their students as they related to themselves, each other, and the books’ characters. They mentioned the following when asked to describe their reason for selecting particular books for their students:



(9 Requests)



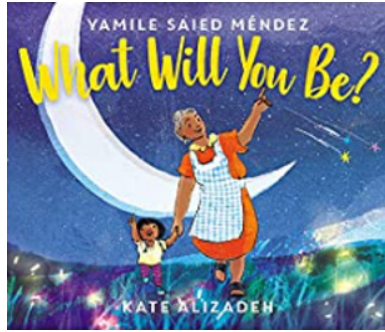
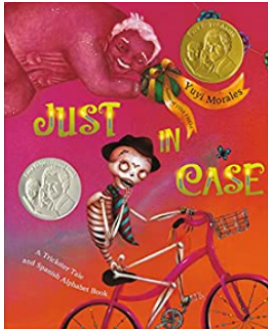
(7 requests)

Most Requested Books of 2022



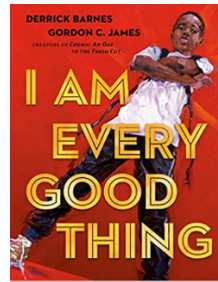
“I selected [After the Fall: How Humpty Dumpty Got Back Up Again by Dan Santat (2017)] because I have students who recognize their struggle with academics and often need a lot of encouragement. I am hoping After the Fall will help students persevere.”

- Maia Blaise, Special Education Teacher, Bay Brook Elementary



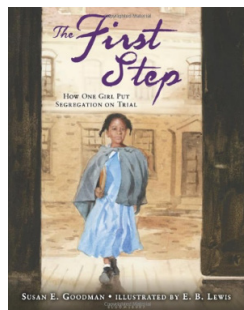
"These books [Just in Case: A Trickster Tale and Spanish Alphabet Book by Yuyi Morales (2008) and What Will You Be? by Yamile Saied Méndez and Kate Alizadeh (2021)] are reflective of my student backgrounds. I will use these stories to learn more about my students and help them set goals for themselves and advocate for their needs."

- Megan Cester, Special Education Teacher, Lakeland EMS



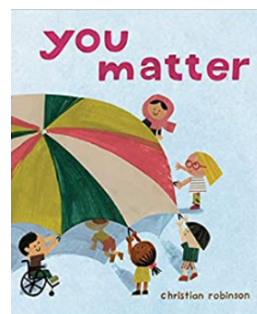
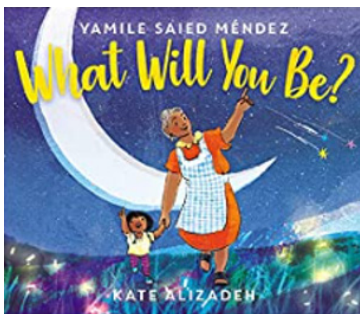
"The first one [René has Two Last Names by René Colato Laínez and Fabiola Graullera Ramírez (2009)] features Latino characters and cultural issues that my students could relate to; the second one [I Am Every Good Thing by Derrick Barnes (2020)] speaks to students' being proud of who they are."

- Mechele Bandler, ESOL Teacher, Bay Brook Elementary



"The first book, [The First Step: How One Girl Put Segregation on Trial by Susan E. Goodman and E. B. Lewis (2013)], would be a great tie-in to our Module 3 on the Civil Rights unit. I would have us read the book as a class and discuss how the main character responded to injustice. The 2nd book, [(They All Saw a Cat by Brendan Wenzel (2016)], is a simpler read and would be great for some SEL lessons on different perspectives and it would be awesome to be able to use the book in a small group setting as well."

- Julia Dighe, 2nd Grade Teacher, Maree G. Farring



"I love the books I chose as they are about giving young children the confidence they need [What Will You Be? by Yamile Saied Méndez and Kate Alizadeh (2021); You Matter by Christian Robinson (2020)]"

- Katie Corsaut, Pre-K Teacher, Arundel Elementary



PROFESSIONAL AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

A cornerstone of expanding educators' knowledge and skills to implement effective work with young learners is professional and leadership development. In 2022, the Sherman Center continued offering two programs that offer such opportunities—The Teacher Summer Institute and the Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program—that build the capacity of early childhood stakeholders to effect change. Below are shared highlights from these initiatives.

TEACHER SUMMER INSTITUTE



On August 8-11, the Sherman Center resumed offering the Teacher Summer Institute in person, gathering 12 educators from our five partner schools, UMBC faculty and staff, and guests at the UMBC Albin O. Kuhn Library. The kick-off event included a keynote presentation by René Colato Laínez titled *Reading and Teaching using Picture Books that Reflect the Identity and Culture of our Schools*, sharing the tribulations of his experience as a Hispanic immigrant and becoming an early childhood teacher and children's

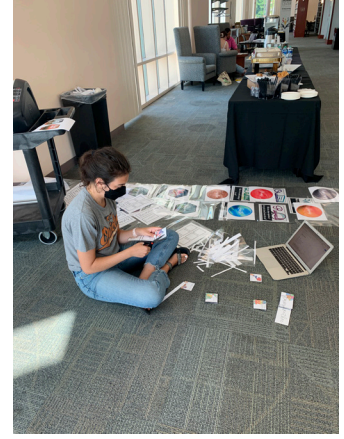
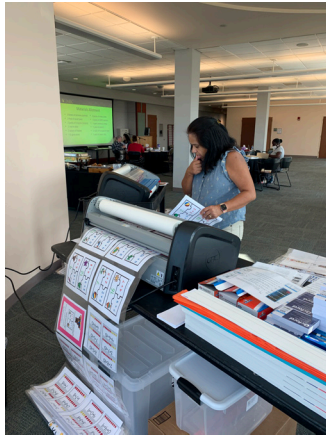
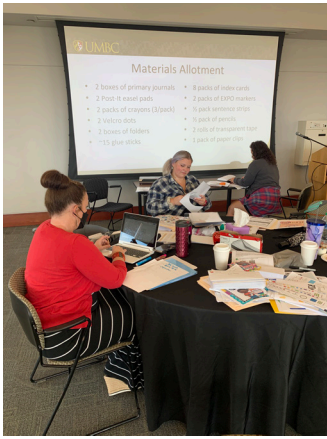
book author. René read aloud from one of his children's books, *René has Two Last Names*. This book highlights the importance of preserving the mother's family name for Latinx children's preservation of heritage and identity. Teachers received a signed copy of this book to read with their students.



The two-day professional development workshop was led by Dr. Angelique Jessup, the Program Director for Equity and Engagement at the Fund for Educational Excellence, at the time. Dr. Jessup engaged teachers in conversations focused on promoting collaborations with families of diverse children to support learning. Her workshop titled, *Family Engagement in Your Classroom: Building Trust, Activating Equity, and Fostering Collaborative Relationships*, prompted reflection and discussions among teachers about barriers and challenges to overcome when building family engagement in the classroom. On the final day, educators created action plans in school-based groups to support their students during the 2022-23 academic year. Teachers also received materials for instruction and developed classroom resources and lesson plans in preparation for the launch of the fast-approaching school year.



Dr. Jessup delivering the professional development workshop



Early Childhood Educators developing instructional materials

Teacher Feedback

All teachers rated the quality of the 2022 Teacher Summer Institute as “very good” (9%) or “excellent” (91%). When asked what they like most about the session, teachers shared the following:

- “I loved the topic of family engagement and the presenter. Would love to hear from her again.”
- “Everything was awesome. I enjoyed Monday and meeting and listening to Rene. The guest speaker on Tuesday and Wednesday was amazing. She really opened my eyes and mind about connecting with families.”
- “The ample time and resources for preparing lessons and classrooms, Angelique’s workshop on family engagement, Mr. Colato-Laínez’s presentation.”

Reported Growth

Before and after the TSI, participants rated their knowledge about topics covered in the professional development sessions, including building strong relationships with families, magnifying family voice and elevating their needs, and connectivity between equity and family engagement, on a scale from 1 (novice) to 4 (expert). More educators rated their knowledge about all three content areas at the “advanced” or “expert” levels compared to the “novice” or “intermediate” levels at the end of the four-day event (see Figure 1).

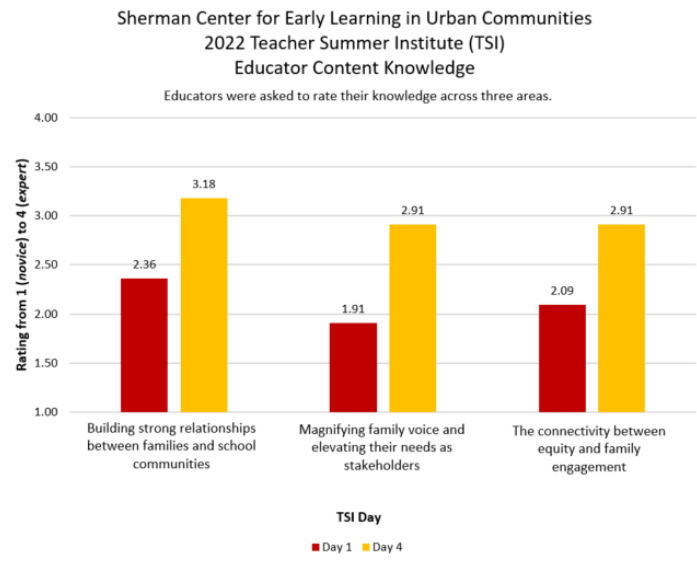


Figure 1

MARYLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (MECLP)

The Maryland Early Childhood Leadership Program (MECLP) is accelerating cross-sector leadership in early childhood. Guided by its Theory of Action, in 2022, MECLP continued to develop highly qualified, experienced, and diverse early childhood leaders ready to support the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and improve the outcomes for young children, families, and communities. The strategic goal of creating a Leadership Hub is to enhance Maryland's early childhood workforce goals by developing a pathway for MECLP Fellows to obtain a 12-credit Graduate Certificate in Early Childhood Leadership at UMBC. Tier I of the proposed pathway includes completion of two, 3-credit graduate courses: SHER 601 Leading for Change in Early Childhood Education and the newly developed SHER 602 Policy and Advocacy in Early Childhood, access to coaching/mentoring support, a robust Community of Practice, webinars, and field experiences. Completion of Tier 1 earns Fellows an Endorsement in Early Childhood Leadership from UMBC. After completing Tier 1, Fellows will be able to enroll in two additional 3-credit courses in order to earn a Certificate in Early Childhood Leadership from UMBC. The rationale for a tiered approach is the state's interest in creating leadership cadres in early childhood with different levels of complexity to support the variety of environments in Maryland's early childhood system.

MECLP Fellows

By the end of 2022, twelve Fellows from Cohort III presented their capstone projects focused on three areas, in addition to sharing lessons learned during their year-long leadership journey. Dr. Anne Douglass, SHER 601 Faculty, enthusiastically stated, "the MECLP graduates are a powerful force, individually and collectively, for positive change in early childhood in Maryland." The audience included course graduates from Cohorts I and II, new Cohort IV Fellows, MECLP Advisory Committee Members, and guests. The thoughtful and innovative solutions to the urgent challenges in early childhood are illuminated to the right.

"We need to change the way people look at ECE, we need to advocate for change and that's why I was excited about MECLP."

– Bernadine Occhiuzzo, Cohort III Fellow



Innovative Workforce Supports

Formation of a Collaborative Community to Increase the Number of Early Childhood Professional

Margaret A. Jarboe, Community Action Agency
(Washington, DC)

Where can a Teacher Turn?

Robin Mellen, Community Action Council (Howard County)

Reducing the Revolving Door in ECE

Ameka A. Smith, The Y of Central Maryland
(Central Maryland)

Early Childhood Teachers identifying themselves as Leaders

Tamika Staton, Dayspring Head Start (Baltimore City)

ECE Policy Innovations

Teacher Pay and Its Correlation to Academic Outcomes: What That Means for Our Children and Society

Raviv Brooks, Ohr Kodesh Early Childhood Center
(Montgomery County)

Where is the Subsidy? Increasing Awareness and Accessibility of Child Care Subsidy in Maryland

Roshon Casey-Lee, Archdiocese of Washington
Catholic Schools

Developing a Plan for Financial Stability in Early Care and Education

Bernadine Occhiuzzo, Cedar Lane Nursery School
(Montgomery County)

Data "The Game Changer"

Imani-Angela Rose, Joshua's Place Early Learning and
Enrichment Center (Baltimore City)

Ideas & Innovations in Professional Learning, Classroom Practices, and Interactions with Families

Teacher Preparation Programs: How Can We Improve Them

Amanda Beacham, Littlest Learners Child Development
Center (Carroll County)

Increasing social skill development in preschool children in Harford County Public Schools

Robyn Graham, Harford County Public Schools
(Harford County)

Building Responsive and Inclusive Parent-Teacher Relationships in Head Start Programs

Deanna Morton, Y of Central Maryland Head Start
Programs (Central Maryland)

Creating Expanded Resources to Support Neurodivergent Students

Lainie Santos Torres, The Barrie School
(Montgomery County)

MECLP Welcomes its Cohort IV Fellows

Nineteen Fellows, the largest cohort of Fellows to date, representing diversity, a variety of early childhood settings, and Maryland's geography, brought their enthusiasm, commitment, and different perspectives to their colleagues as the cohort convened for orientation at the end of fall 2022.



Valerie Branch: Regional Director of MD Wolf Trap Early Learning Program, Arts for Learning MD (Statewide)

Jamie Brown: Executive Director, Rockville Day Care Association (Montgomery County)

Sara Coffey: Judy Center Coordinator at Calvert Elementary School, Calvert County Public Schools (Calvert County)

Karen Eisenhuth: Early Childhood Business Coordinator, Maryland Family Network (Baltimore City)

Susan Finger: District Director, The Celebree School (Central Maryland)

Kelly Hutter: Executive Director, The Promise Resource Center (Southern Maryland)

Kristen Johnson: Early Childhood Special Education Teacher Specialist, Calvert County Public Schools (Calvert County)

Emily Kenyon: Lead Pre-K Teacher, The Learning Bee (Frederick County)

Katie Klein: Infants & Toddlers Liaison, Somerset County Public Schools (Somerset County)

Bridgette Lawrence: Owner & Director, Little Scooters Childcare and Preschool (St. Mary's County)

Melisha Martin: Elementary School Assistant Principal, Howard County Public Schools (Howard County)

Dawn Martinec: Pre-K Teacher, Howard County Public Schools (Howard County)

Samantha Martinez: Co-Founder & Founding Assistant Principal, Polaris Village Academy (Talbot County)

Angela McRae: Early Childhood Family Peer Support Specialist, Maryland Coalition of Families (Southern Maryland)

Iyanna Nelson: Facilitator in the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Howard County Public Schools (Howard County)

Saru Nithyanandam: Program Specialist, Montgomery County Child Support Services (Montgomery County)

Jessica Rigney: Pre-K Teacher, Kennedy Krieger Institute (Baltimore County)

Christine Sarigianis: Curriculum Specialist, UMD Center for Early Childhood Education and Intervention (Multiple counties)

Katie Vasselkiv: Judy Center Coordinator at John Ruhrah Elementary Middle School, Baltimore City Public Schools (Baltimore City)

MECLP Fellows Leadership in Action in 2022



Alicia Cross presented a workshop, *Leadership with an Equity Lens*, at the Washington County Early Childhood Conference. Her presentation discussed what equity in early childhood education should look like, emphasizing the importance of creating an equitable early childhood setting and providing strategies to create equitable settings. The three foci of the workshop were equity in the classroom, equity in programs, and implicit bias and the importance of understanding individual biases. Alicia is the Executive Director of Parents of Preschoolers, Inc (POPI) at NIH; Montgomery County Regional Officer of MDAEYC; a MECLP Cohort II Fellow, and a MECLP Advisory Committee member.

Crystal Harris and **Vanessa Jones** presented *Why Leadership? Empowering Leaders in Early Childhood Settings* at the November Maryland Judy Center Early Learning Hub and Head Start/Early Head Start Conference We Are Better Together. Crystal and Vanessa's workshop provided insight into leadership, the theory of change, and how to enact change within early childhood through participation in MECLP. Crystal is the Coordinator of the DRU Judy Center at Dorothy I. Height Elementary School in Baltimore City, a MECLP Cohort II Fellow, and a graduate of MECLP's Training of Trainers (ToT). Vanessa is the Head Start State Collaboration Specialist at the MDSE Division of Early Childhood, and a Cohort II Fellow.



Carolina Reyes' thoughts and quotes are reflected in her interview published in the October 13th New York Times article [Why You Can't Find Child Care: 100,000 Workers Are Missing](#). Carolina is the Owner/Director of the Arco Iris Bilingual Children's Center (AIBCC) in Prince George's County, and a MECLP Cohort I Fellow.

MECLP's 2022 Webinar Series

Aligned with its focus on equity and leadership, in 2022, MECLP presented its [spring and fall webinar series](#). The well-attended webinars, pertinent topics, and compelling speakers for each of the webinars are illustrated below. Each webinar was facilitated by MECLP Fellows.

- Expanding Professional Learning Models in Early Childhood Education - Brigid Cook, Nancy Goldberg, and John Sessler
- Adopting an Equity Lens in Early Childhood Education - Meredith Callanan, Lynn Hall, and Jacky Howell
- Becoming a Leader in Early Childhood Education at the Time of Equity - Dr. Bryan Boyd, Angielena Williams, and Margo Ford
- From Idea to Realization: The Story of How the Children's Equity Center was Built - Shantel Meek
- Equity Lens on Early Education - Iheoma Iruka

"We are in a field that is pressing for the betterment of children, families, and ultimately society. We must work together. MECLP was founded on the idea that networking and bringing people to the table is how we will make Maryland a continued leader in Early Childhood Education."

– Heather Hutson, Cohort II Fellow

Additional MECLP 2022 Updates

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee, composed of strong, seasoned early childhood leaders, met quarterly and at a Summer Retreat in 2022. Committee members play a pivotal role in guiding MECLP to its goal of creating and supporting current and future early childhood leaders in Maryland. Their insights and experiences make MECLP an impactful vehicle to nurture a cadre of early childhood leaders ready to meet the challenges of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.



Serving on the MECLP Advisory Committee gives Dr. Lisa Buchy an opportunity to collaborate with a group of committed leaders who share the goal of growing a more equitable ECE system that includes access to high-quality early education and care for all children in Maryland.

"MECLP is ready to have a burgeoning impact on the development of ECE leaders with the vision, flexibility, creativity, and competency to provide the impactful leadership that is needed to successfully implement Maryland ECE programs. Every child deserves the long-term benefits of participating in high-quality early education and care regardless of where they live, how much money their family earns, or the language they speak at home."

– Lisa Buchy, Ed.D., Director of Early Childhood Policy and Systems, and Assistant Research Scientist at Johns Hopkins University School of Education

Training of Trainers

MECLP partnered with the Institute for Early Education, Leadership, and Innovation (IEELI) at UMass Boston to design and implement a yearlong Training of Trainers (ToT). The ToT prepares new instructors to teach and co-teach the *Leading for Change in Early Childhood Education* course. In 2022, the training course established protocols for certifying participants to instruct, support, and assess with fidelity to the core components of the curriculum. Three early childhood participants are now instructors poised to teach or co-teach future MECLP cohorts along with the current instructors, Drs. Anne Douglass and Amanda Lopes of UMass Boston.

Evaluation

To improve the MECLP experience for future cohorts and articulate the impact of program participation, MECLP contracted with the Policy Equity Group to conduct an evaluation of the program. The evaluation, which began in 2022 and will be completed in 2023, will document and analyze inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes for the first three MECLP cohorts.

Five key evaluation questions were developed:

- Who becomes a MECLP Fellow?
- What do Fellows experience while participating in MECLP?
- What competencies and social capital do Fellows leave with?
- What actions do Fellows take as a result of their participation in MECLP?
- How does MECLP spark change for young children, their families, the community, and the early childhood system?

Generous Public and Private Investments in MECLP

In order to support the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, in 2022, MECLP was awarded its fourth grant from the Division of Early Childhood Development, MSDE. The grant allows MECLP to continue to mitigate the state's current leadership gap by, 1) improving the leadership capacity of early childhood educators, 2) increasing the diversity of ECE leaders across Maryland, 3) positioning Maryland as a leader in developing a strong ECE leadership system, and 4) enhancing Maryland's overall workforce development strategies by creating an Early Childhood Leadership Hub. As an offshoot of the MECLP grant and with the goal to support the ambitious expansion of pre-kindergarten throughout Maryland, a Lead Teacher



Trust for Learning

Certification Planning Grant led by UMBC's Department of Education in partnership with Teachstone will be exploring the feasibility of developing a competency-based education model that can become a lead teacher certification program for Pre-k in community-based settings.

Funding from the Trust for Learning strengthened the knowledge among early childhood leaders about the Trust's Ideal Learning Environments and practices delivered through a two-part spring and three-part fall 2022 webinar series that featured Trust for Learning's experts facilitated by MECLP Fellows. A summer 2022 gathering featured Dr. Fabienne Doucet, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools. Her presentation elevated the importance of equity and continued learning opportunities for adults working with young children, two components of Ideal Learning Environments. Through field experiences and mentoring, Fellows continued to be exposed to ideal learning experts as guest lecturers, mentors, and advisors.

MECLP on the Move

The second MECLP course, developed in 2022, SHER 602 Policy and Advocacy in Early Childhood, will be offered as a one-semester, three-credit graduate course in 2023. Eligible students are SHER 601 course graduates. Fellows who complete both courses will receive an Endorsement in Early Childhood Leadership from UMBC.

Transforming MECLP's current mentoring program into a robust Coaching Program that will include developing or adapting coaching competencies that align with the goals of the MECLP culture; providing a credentialing program for coaching candidates through an existing program; and establishing a data management platform and a registry of credentialed coaches that support course completers along with current and future MECLP fellows. A working group will lead this ambitious task in 2023.

MECLP, a program of the Sherman Center for Early Learning in Urban Communities for the past three years, will be moving to The Shriver Center/Division of Professional Studies at UMBC in spring 2023. MECLP's momentum and energy will continue to flourish to support committed, diverse, and enthusiastic Maryland early childhood leaders.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

With a stronger focus on research, in 2022, the Sherman Center continued to advance the production of new knowledge on early childhood education policies and practices, by supporting the scholarship of members of the UMBC community. As part of these research-focused support initiatives, the Sherman Center granted a Faculty Research Award and continued supporting former Research Fellows in disseminating their work. The Sherman Center Research Faculty's work was also supported and updates on those projects are shared, as well as publications stemming from these funded projects. Lastly, in this section we report on the success of the inaugural Sherman Center Research Conference and highlight the 2022 Childhood Literacy Scholarship recipient.

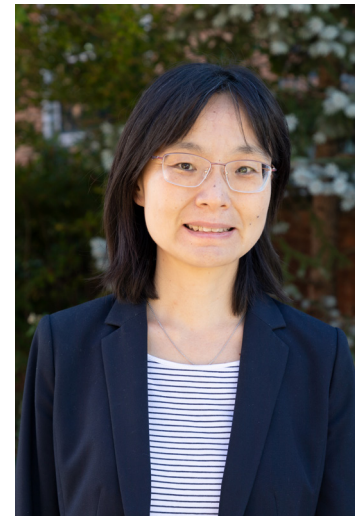
2022 SHERMAN CENTER FACULTY RESEARCH AWARD

In its fifth-year iteration, the Faculty Research Award continues to provide grant funding to UMBC faculty and their colleagues to improve the learning experiences of young children in Baltimore City. The competition is open to all faculty who hold academic appointments at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) including adjunct faculty, faculty of practice, and lecturers. Dr. Karen (Lujie) Chen, assistant professor in UMBC's Department of Information Systems, and her colleague Dr. Chien-Ming Huang, John C. Malone Assistant Professor in the Department of Computer Science at Johns Hopkins University, received the Sherman Center Faculty Research Award in 2022.

Dr. Chen became interested in social robots in graduate school at Carnegie Mellon University while working on her dissertation on young children's emotional experience during math problem-solving. Her dream is for every child to have access to a personal robot that can observe and react to their affects while learning. Through AI technology, the ABii robot is making strides in assisting her in making her dreams comes true.

Though many studies have demonstrated the potential benefit of physically present robots in improving engagement and learning outcomes for young children, there continues to be a need for more understanding of the feasibility and effectiveness of the long-term deployment of educational robots in the real world, particularly with diverse student populations. This project will fill this knowledge gap while at the same time exploring the limitations, barriers, and risks presented with adoption, which we hope will stimulate future research in robot-assisted teaching and learning suitable for large-scale adoption in urban communities such as those in Baltimore City.

The Sherman Center Faculty Research Award will allow Drs. Chen and Huang to expand on this important knowledge in collaboration with teachers from our Baltimore City partner schools. For more information about the study, please contact Dr. Karen Chen (lujiec@umbc.edu).



Dr. Karen Chen, 2022 Faculty Research Award Recipient

"We are grateful for the funding opportunity to bring ABii robots to K-2 students in the Baltimore City Public Schools system. Working directly with early childhood educators, it is exciting to see how teachers can be empowered in integrating educational technology into their classrooms and how advanced AI technology may support teachers in improving student engagement and learning outcomes. Through field studies in multiple early childhood classrooms in Baltimore City, we are gaining knowledge of the effect of long-term deployment of educational robots in real-world settings with a diverse student population."

Dr. Karen (Lujie) Chen is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Information Systems at UMBC. With an academic background in applied AI/machine learning, statistics, data mining, and analytics, she is an interdisciplinary educational researcher interested in personalized and adaptive educational technology and the design and implementation of learning analytics for multiple stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents. She was a fellow of PIER (Program of Interdisciplinary Educational Research), funded by the Institute of Education Science of the Department of Education in 2016-2020. She received her Ph.D. in Information Systems (2020) and master's degrees in Information Systems (2004) and Statistics (2012), from Carnegie Mellon University.

2022 SHERMAN CENTER FACULTY RESEARCH

Sherman Center Research Faculty, Karrie Godwin (with Psychology), and Shana E. Rochester led projects in 2022 focused on advancing research in the field of early childhood education. Accompanied by Sherman Center graduate research assistants and faculty, Dr. Godwin leads a program evaluation study investigating the impact Sherman Center's programming has had in its five-year implementation. Dr. Rochester's work directly with early childhood educators at Sherman Center partner schools investigates teachers' use of multicultural picture books within their literacy instruction. These projects address important aspects of early education practices and assist the Sherman Center in advancing its mission of improving instructional practices for young students in diverse urban educational settings. These projects are described below.

Sherman Center for Early Learning in Urban Communities Program Evaluation By Dr. Karrie Godwin

This year we launched a research project evaluating three of the Sherman Center's programs: *Diverse Books Project*, *Teacher Summer Institute*, and *Families, Libraries and Early Literacy Program* (learn more about the programs [here](#)). The goal of this study is to provide an initial assessment of the impact of the programs on teachers' professional development and pedagogical practices, caregiver practices, as well as the perceived benefit for children. Program participants will be invited to share their perceptions and feedback by completing an online survey. The results from this study are important as they will inform the Sherman Center's future programming and community offerings and help guide other institutions that aim to emulate the Sherman Center's model.

The program evaluation is a collaborative research project led by Dr. Karrie Godwin, Assistant Professor in Psychology and Sherman Center Research Faculty, two dedicated graduate research assistants, Anika Aquino (Psychology) and Shahin Hossain (Language, Literacy, and Culture), and it is conducted in collaboration with co-investigators Dr. Linda Baker, Sherman Center Advisory Committee Member, and Dr. Jennifer Mata-McMahon, Sherman Center Director. To date, the team has reviewed the components and goals of each program. This fall, the team concentrated their efforts on survey development, programming the online survey, as well as creating participant recruitment materials. In addition, the team created Spanish translations of the materials to facilitate families' access and participation in their preferred language. The study is currently under-review with the UMBC Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Baltimore City Public Schools IRB. Upon IRB approval, the team will field the survey to program participants. The team will then prepare to analyze the data and begin dissemination efforts in spring 2023. For more information about the study, please contact Dr. Karrie Godwin (kgodwin@umbc.edu).



"The goal of this research study centers around evaluating the impact the design and implementation of our programs has had in teacher practices and pedagogical decisions, as well as family understanding and involvement in kindergarten readiness. This evaluation study will allow us to revise our programming and leverage further funding to sustain these programs in future iterations. As well as provide guidelines for them to be replicated by our partners and other interested institutions."

– Dr. Jennifer Mata-McMahon, Sherman Center Director and Associate Professor of Education

The Diverse Books Project 2.0: Supporting Early Care and Education Teachers' Use of Multicultural Books

By Dr. Shana E. Rochester

The Diverse Books Project 2.0 is designed to support Baltimore City Public Schools' (BCPS) educators use of multicultural books to promote children's critical literacy skills (e.g., understanding how book's imagery disrupts inequities). The project team is led by Dr. Shana E. Rochester with assistance from Ms. Anika Aquino, Sherman Center graduate research assistant. During 2022, we successfully completed the first two project phases.

Phase I: Content Analysis

The project team reviewed books from the BCPS English Language Arts curriculum and the Sherman Center Diverse Books Collection to determine if they depict marginalized social dimensions of identity (e.g., disability). We also examined whether the main character in books experienced discrimination based on their social identities. We found that racial/ethnic and gender identity were most often depicted in multicultural picture books. Of books with characters who experienced discrimination, we found that characters faced a limited view of how things are (e.g., women cannot play drums) and found themselves building agency to act against injustice. We presented findings from the content analysis phase at the Children's Literature Association Conference in June.

Phase II: Pilot Study

Based on findings from the content analysis phase, we developed a series of critical literacy professional development (PD) sessions and created a five-step process to help educators evaluate and use multicultural picture books during critical read alouds. The PD pilot study included 11 pre-K to Grade 2 educators from all five partner schools during the 2021-2022 school year. Educators submitted select videos of their critical read alouds that were analyzed by the project team with assistance from Ms. Paulina Méndez, a Sherman Center volunteer. Results indicated that educators used questioning as the primary strategy to talk about historically marginalized dimensions of social identity with their students. The project team presented findings from Phase II at the Sherman Center Research Conference in August. We also co-presented the five-step process for evaluating and using multicultural picture books with two PD-participating educators at the National Association for the Education of Young Children conference in November.

Phase III will commence during the 2023-2024 school year.

Note. This project is supported in part by the [Foundation for Child Development's Young Scholars Program](#).



"One of the most important parts of the DBP 2.0 is the iterative feedback we receive from BCPS stakeholders. Their insights inform how we ensure that the professional development content is aligned with school- and district-level activities."

– Dr. Shana E. Rochester, Sherman Center Assistant Director and Research Associate

2022 RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

One of the final steps in the research process is developing a written report, published, and disseminated among researchers and scholars within the field. Sherman Center faculty disseminated their findings through various outlets in 2022.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ACTION

INTERNATIONAL
LITERACY
ASSOCIATION

Singing the Same Song: Engaging Families in Read Two Impress Plus

Kindel Turner Nash, Joshua Michael, Jennifer Mata-McMahon, Jiyoung Lee, Kristina Ackerman

This article shares learnings about implementing Read Two Impress Plus as a partnership-centered approach to creating culturally and linguistically affirming family literacy programming aimed at improving the literacy proficiency of young people in two urban schools.

From the 2018 Faculty Research Award study “Read Two Impress Plus (R2I+)”, a journal article titled, [Singing the Same Song: Engaging Families in Read Two Impress Plus](#) was published in 2022 in the Teaching and Learning in Action Journal, summarizing the scholarship led by Dr. Kindel Nash (Associate Professor of Education at UMBC) and Mr. Joshua Michael (Director Baltimore School Partnerships in the Sherman STEM Teacher Scholars Program). Their mixed-method study

examined the influence of an echo reading intervention for elementary and middle school students and their families, on students’ reading skills. Dr. Nash noted the following about the publication:

“How can schools engage and empower families as partners in problem-solving low literacy proficiency? What does it look like to train families in Read Two Impress Plus, a one-to-one echo reading fluency intervention? This paper shares learnings about implementing Read Two Impress Plus in partnership-centered approach to family trainings aimed at improving the literacy proficiency and attitudes of elementary students.”

From the 2020 Faculty Research Award study “Infusing a Culture-based Computational Thinking Curriculum in Urban Preschools”, a Parent Guide was published titled, [Kids Computing: A Guide for Parents & Caregivers](#) by Dr. Patricia Young and Ms. Deborah Kariuki. Dr. Young shared this regarding the usefulness and impact of the publication:

“Kids Computing: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers is a guide about computational thinking for parents and guardians of preschoolers. The guide contains 4 unplugged activities that can be used to begin educating preschoolers with basic computational thinking concepts such as: social and emotional learning, patterns, problem-solving, and algorithms. These unplugged activities help parents to introduce their children to computational thinking concepts.”

Kids Computing: A Guide For Parents & Caregivers



Created by
Patricia A. Young and Deborah Kariuki

Chapter 7 Promoting Kindergarten Readiness During Remote Learning Through Community- Based Family Literacy Sessions

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University of Maryland, Baltimore County, USA

Jennifer Mata-McMahon
University of Maryland, Baltimore County, USA

In 2022, Drs. Shana E. Rochester (Sherman Center Assistant Director and Research Associate) and Jennifer Mata-McMahon (Sherman Center Director and Associate Professor of Education) published a book chapter titled [Promoting Kindergarten Readiness During Remote Learning Through Community-Based Family Literacy Sessions](#) in the Handbook of Research on Family Literacy Practices and Home-School Connections. The chapter highlights the findings of the Sherman Center Families, Libraries, and Early Literacy Program and

its adaptation to online implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Rochester shared the following regarding the importance of this publication:

“How was ELP responsive to families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic? This chapter highlights how we modified sessions to address the immediate, virtual engagement, and place-based engagement needs of families at two partner schools. It also provides recommendations for other family literacy facilitators partnering with families of young children.”

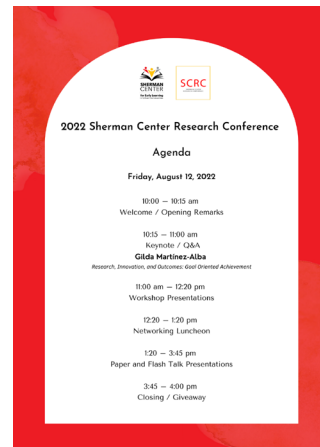
SHERMAN CENTER RESEARCH CONFERENCE



In 2022, the Sherman Center proudly inaugurated the Sherman Center Research Conference with a focus on promoting innovative early childhood education research conducted in Maryland. The goals of the conference were to: (a) disseminate findings to a diverse audience of early childhood professionals, (b) encourage educators to participate in action research, and (c) promote collaborations among members of the Sherman Center community. In order to accomplish these goals resources were created and shared with educators, leaders, and practitioners to encourage a refocus of practice into research. These were shared on our [website](#) and through online workshops.

The daylong conference commenced with welcoming remarks from Dr. Antonio Moreira, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and an engaging keynote presentation by Dr. Gilda Martínez-Alba, Assistant Dean and Professor of Education in the College of Education at Towson University, titled "Research Innovation, and Outcomes: Goal Oriented Achievement."

Baltimore City Public School educators, MECLP Fellows, Sherman Center Graduate Research Assistants, and Sherman Center Research Fellows and Faculty presented 12 engaging and thought-provoking projects as workshops, papers, and flash talks, our three available modalities of presentation, to 25 attendees. They also engaged in the networking luncheon which facilitated conversations to induce future collaborations and partnerships across researchers, leaders, and practitioners. A [video](#) highlighting the event was compiled and posted on both our website and YouTube channel.



Dr. Martínez-Alba, Keynote Speaker

At the closing of the event, we raffled off children's books and collected feedback in the form of surveys. When asked what they liked most about the SCRC, participants shared: "I liked being able to listen to the different perspectives and research from both university researchers and teachers who were actively involved with students." And, "Well-structured and participatory. It felt like home."



Presentations from Educators, MECLP Fellows, and Sherman Center Faculty

CHILDHOOD LITERACY SCHOLARSHIP

Donna Helm '70 and Louise Goodrich Izat '70 endowed the Childhood Literacy Scholarship in 2020 in honor of their late professor, Dr. May Roswell. Dr. Roswell, a professor of French and German, was a founding UMBC faculty member, the architect of its modern languages program, and beloved by her students and peers. The scholarship provides financial support for an undergraduate student at UMBC who is committed to supporting the literacy development of young children.

The Sherman Center selected the third recipient of the Childhood Literacy Scholarship, Manal Ibrahim, in the fall of 2022. Ms. Ibrahim is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in biology as a pre-medical student with the goal of becoming a pediatrician and working closely to improve children's health. She volunteered in the Sherman Center Literacy Fellows Program in partnership with the Shriver Center, working with first-grade students at one of our partner schools. The Sherman Center is grateful that this outstanding literacy advocate is committed to supporting the education of future generations.



Manal Ibrahim, 2022 Childhood Literacy Scholarship Recipient

"I believe in the quote, "children of today are the leaders of tomorrow" and educating them as well as working with them on literacy skills improves the necessary skills needed for the nation as a whole. Volunteering at the Sherman/Shriver Center Literacy Fellows Program was an excellent opportunity for me as it broadened my horizons and was self-fulfilling. It was also a great experience to have outside the pre-medical track. Thank you for the recognition. I hope to continue to help the children to the best of my ability in subsequent semesters. I am incredibly grateful and honored to be the 2022-23 recipient of the Sherman Center Childhood Literacy Scholarship. This award will go a long way in helping me achieve my dream of working with children."



Donna Helm ('70) and Louise Goodrich Izat ('70)

SHERMAN CENTER FUNDERS

The Sherman Center is grateful for the sustained generosity of individuals who are deeply committed to building a strong foundation for learning among young children in Baltimore City.



George and Betsy Sherman

George and Betsy Sherman have a profound belief in the power of education to propel multifaceted opportunities, empower communities, and strengthen families. Through their foundation, they make long-term, strategic investments in programs that are scalable and have compelling evidence of supporting vulnerable, economically disadvantaged children and their families to improve outcomes in all aspects of their lives. George Sherman says about his wife, "Betsy's lifelong commitment to child advocacy drives our family's focus to improve the lives of children." George and Betsy Sherman have been recognized for their philanthropy through several awards. Most recently, they were named honorees of the Baltimore Sun's Business and Civic Hall of Fame and 2018 Maryland Outstanding Philanthropists by the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

The UMBC community celebrated the life of George Sherman, who passed away in August 2021. Rehana Shafi, director of the Sherman STEM Teacher Scholars Program and Sherman Center Advisory Committee member, paid tribute to George Sherman's legacy in the feature article of the [Fall 2021 Sherman Center Newsletter](#).

We are forever grateful for the generosity of the Sherman Family Foundation, without which we could not continue to advance the significant service we provide to young learners in urban communities.

Sherman Center Personnel

Dr. Jennifer Mata-McMahon
Director and Associate Professor of Education

Dr. Shana E. Rochester
Assistant Director and Research Associate (former)

Dr. Karrie Godwin
Research Faculty and Assistant Professor of
Psychology

Ms. Melissa Bailey
Program Coordinator (former)

Ms. Liran Laor
MECLP Program Director (former)

Ms. Louise Corwin
MECLP Advisory Committee Co-Chair

Ms. Anika Aquino
Graduate Research Assistant, Applied
Developmental Psychology

Mr. Shahin Hossain
Graduate Research Assistant, Language, Literacy
and Culture

Ms. Eliza Triolo
MECLP Student Worker, Early Childhood Education

Ms. Priyal Shah
MECLP Student Worker, Information Systems

Campus Advisory Committee

Dr. Linda Baker
Professor Emerita of Psychology

Dr. Jeff Leips
Professor of Biology

Ms. Marie Lilly
Director, Community Engagement

Ms. Rehana Shafi
Director, Sherman STEM Teacher Scholars Program

Dr. Patricia A. Young
Professor of Education and Elementary Program
Director (former)

Steering Committee

Dr. Philip Rous
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic
Affairs

Dr. Kimberly Moffitt
Dean, College of Arts, Humanities and Social
Sciences

Mr. Gregory Simmons
Vice President for Institutional Advancement



**SHERMAN
CENTER**

for Early Learning
in Urban Communities



Marie Lilly, Sherman Center Campus Advisory Committee Member

Marie Lilly is the [Director of Community Engagement](#) in the Division of Institutional Advancement at UMBC. In her role she oversees a variety of tasks related to building community - both on and off campus. In partnership with others across campus, Marie works on government and community relations, university events, and internal communications. Marie joined the UMBC community in 2014. Prior to her time at UMBC, she directed Towson University's Women's Center and worked in local non-profits. She has a master's in Women's Studies from Towson University.

As a member of the advisory board of the Sherman Center, Marie helps the team coordinate partnerships in the community. She has been a member since the Center was founded and has worked on securing funding for a variety of partnerships between UMBC faculty, staff, and students and local PreK-12 schools.



