



KACIA'S 2023 NAEYC EXPERIENCE

During the fall semester, I had the wonderful opportunity to fly to Nashville for the 2023 NAEYC Annual Conference. I was amazed at the enormity of the conference center and by the sheer number of preschool educators who gathered from across the country and around the world to learn with and from each other.

I attended 7 extremely informative sessions on a variety of topics. A standout session was centered around strategies to help integrate STEM and STEAM into the classroom. The speaker stressed the importance of developing children's competence through activities so they could develop confidence in themselves. Educators must seek to nurture exploration, natural intuition, and curiosity in our students, by curating an environment where exploration and failure are equally important on the road to learning and discovery of new ideas.

I attended several lectures on how to encourage language development through music, story plays, and small parts. These sessions taught us how to engage children in discussions and encourage them to verbally express their plans or ideas, always asking, "What do you need?" in order to elongate their play and thought processes.

Lastly, one of the most interesting sessions was centered around executive function. The speaker informed us that many children who struggle with executive function may have gone through adverse childhood experiences which undermine their healthy executive functioning growth and development. They went on to explain case studies of children with this type of trauma and offered several practical applications on how to help strengthen their lagging skills.

I had a chance to walk around downtown Nashville and do a little exploring. There were delicious eateries around every corner and the vibrant music playing from practically every restaurant was incredible. It was super fun to be able to listen to all the talented artists. My entire trip was fantastic, and I am beyond grateful to Apple Orchard and everyone who donated to the Teacher's Fund and provided me with the funds and opportunity to extend my learning and experience a new city. Thank you so so much.