

Shaping Success Through Mindset ▶ Breakout Sessions

Attendees select from among 24 breakout sessions led by experts in psychology, occupational and speech therapies, literacy, teaching and more! Conference registration is required. Attendees do not need to select sessions in advance.

An Occupational Therapist's Perspective on Supporting Graphomotor Skills in Students

Presenter: Alyson Caldwell, OTR/L
Occupational Therapist at Springer Lower School & Middle School

Summary of the Session:

Explore the role of an occupational therapist, focusing on how they support students in developing essential fine motor skills, including graphomotor skills. Participants will define graphomotor skills, which refer to the coordination of hand movements required for writing, drawing, and other fine motor tasks. The development of pre-writing and writing skills will be examined, along with the characteristics of students who exhibit graphomotor skill deficits. Additionally, students will identify DSM-V diagnoses, such as developmental coordination disorder (DCD) or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which can contribute to difficulties in graphomotor performance. Research-based strategies for enhancing graphomotor skills, as well as school-based accommodations and modifications, will be discussed to provide effective support for students with graphomotor difficulties in the classroom.

Changing the Mindset: One Sense at a Time

Presenter: Maria Harris, LPCC
The Affinity Center

Summary of the Session:

This presentation explores the concept of self-regulation through the utilization of our sensory experiences. This approach can be applied in a variety of settings, including education, individual therapy, healthcare, group therapy, as well as occupational and physical therapy. While the mind-body connection is central to self-regulation, it is often

underexplored and not consistently emphasized across these diverse contexts. The Affinity Center is an innovative Cincinnati-based center for the comprehensive evaluation and treatment of adults and children with Attention, Behavior, Learning, and Mood disorders, specializing in ADHD.

Empowered Caregiving to Optimize Youth Mental Health

Presenter: Tracy Cummings, MD
Chief of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry & Medical Director- Adolescent PHP at Lindner Center of Hope

Summary of the Session:

Youth Mental Health is finally being given its deserved spot light in our country. While much physiological and developmental change occurs as a child goes from toddlerhood to emergent adulthood, the impact a parent or caregiver can have on a youth remains robust. This presentation will be from the perspective of a child & adolescent psychiatrist who will be offering educational insights on opportunities for empowering those in caregiving roles to maximize the positive impact they can have on the mental health of young people in their lives.

Empowering Student Leaders & Teachers Through Service Learning & Philanthropy

Presenters: Carly Wise
Math & Technology Specialist at Springer Lower School & Middle School

Becca Freyhof
Program Manager at Magnified Giving

Summary of the Session:

Magnified Giving empowers students to make a meaningful impact in their communities by giving them the opportunity to direct charitable donations to causes they care about, thereby cultivating a sense of responsibility and civic engagement. The program aligns with the principles of Service Learning, a teaching method that integrates

community service with academic learning to enhance students' personal and social growth. Service Learning goes beyond extracurricular activities by embedding community involvement into the curriculum, making it a dynamic and purposeful learning experience. This model fosters deeper connections between academic content and real-world applications, making learning more relevant and impactful for students. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of how Service Learning fosters student and teacher motivation, engagement, and sense of purpose.

Every Child Ready to Read: Five Practices for Early Literacy

Presenters: Erin Naik
Youth Librarian at Cincinnati & Hamilton County Public Library

Kerry Rhoad
Branch Supervisor - Youth Services at Cincinnati & Hamilton County
Public Library

Summary of the Session:

Every Child Ready to Read's Five Practices are research-based strategies that any adult can use while reading aloud to children to promote brain development and essential early literacy skills. The benefits to the audience are ready-to-use activities that promote learning and can be used in a variety of settings including tutoring sessions, mentor meetings, or a classroom. Presenters will also share digital and physical resources from Cincinnati and Hamilton County that adults can use with the Five Practices.

Leading with Emotional Intelligence

Presenter: Coach Michael Hollins, MA
Founder & CEO at Endurance Training Academy

Summary of the Session:

Participants will focus on key leadership skills aimed at enhancing emotional intelligence, effective communication, and relationship management. Enhancing self-awareness and self-regulation will enable participants to increase their understanding of their own emotions, triggers, and reactions. Attendees will learn strategies to recognize and appropriately respond to the emotions of others, an essential skill for building trust, resolving conflicts, and creating a supportive team dynamic. Participants will be equipped with tools to communicate clearly and persuasively across all levels of an organization. This includes listening skills, non-verbal communication, and tailoring messages to suit different audiences. Participants will have a deeper understanding of how emotional intelligence impacts their leadership style and will be better prepared to lead with greater self-awareness, empathy, and influence.

Literacy & Numeracy: Development & Key Milestones

Presenter: Jared Cooney Horvath, Ph.D., M.Ed.
Neuroscientist / Educator / Author | Director at LME Global

Summary of the Session:

Far from being unknown or uselessly individual – the processes of literacy and numeracy development are quite well understood and universally applicable. During this session, we will start by exploring the development of language and literacy, then tie this process back to questions of higher-order comprehension. From there, we will undertake a similar exploration of numeracy. Through this discussion, common issues surrounding pedagogy and curriculum will be illuminated.

Mastering Your Mind: How We Identify & Experience Executive Functioning

Presenter: Molly Bernosky, Ed.S., M.Ed.
Diagnostic Center Lead Psychologist at Springer Diagnostic Center

Summary of the Session:

In this session, participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of Executive Functioning (EF), exploring its core components and how it influences daily life and decision-making. Participants will engage in experiential learning activities designed to help them identify their own relative strengths and weaknesses in EF. Participants will gain insight into the EF challenges that children, particularly those with learning disabilities and ADHD, face. We will discuss how recognizing and capitalizing on our own EF skills can enhance our effectiveness and support of others—whether in a leadership or classroom role.

Metacognition & Your Role in Teaching It

Presenter: Shanda Arthur
Head of Lower School & Middle School

Summary of the Session:

Teaching students how to notice what they are doing, how they are doing it, and analyze the effectiveness is critical to helping students change their trajectory. In this session, I would discuss what Metacognition is and the practical ways they can help their students learn to be more metacognitive. I would provide them with take aways, such as thought prompts and strategy pages. This is especially helpful for those new to the field or for those who want practical things to help their students become more self aware of their learning needs and advocate for them.

Motivation or Success: Which Must Come First For Academic Achievement

Presenter: Barbara Hunter M.Ed.
Adult EF/ADHD Coach & Owner of Integrated Learning Designs

Summary of the Session:

Education professionals often report a student's lack of motivation as the reason they are not succeeding academically. Participants in this session will gain insight into what students must have to gain intrinsic motivation to improve academically and believe in themselves as successful learners. Let's get inspired to kindle the spark that launches students toward the attainment of their goals and dreams!

Neuroscience & Social-Emotional Learning — Why Relationships Matter

Presenter: Bradley Paramore, Ed.S., NCSP
Diagnostic Psychologist at Springer Diagnostic Center

Deborah Gilbert, Ph.D.
Diagnostic Psychologist at Springer Diagnostic Center

Summary of the Session:

This presentation explores brain-based evidence supporting the critical role of social and emotional development in children's overall growth. Research highlights the profound impact that relationships and emotions have on learning. We will explore practical strategies for embedding social-emotional learning (SEL) into classroom instruction. By integrating SEL practices, educators can create an environment where students feel safe, supported, and engaged, enhancing their readiness to learn and thrive both academically and personally.

Psychological Assessment as a Means of Treatment Planning for ADHD

Presenter: Brittany Barber, Ph.D.
Clinical Director at The Affinity Center

Summary of the Session:

This presentation will focus on how results of psychological assessments are beneficial, not just for academic functioning, but overall functioning in life. In today's world, many individuals are diagnosed by providers who do not specialize, or even utilize psychological assessment as a means of diagnosing ADHD. This can include primary care physicians, therapists, and even self-diagnosis by use of internet screeners. Understanding cognitive strengths and weaknesses is essential to developing an effective treatment plan for students. Psychological evaluation also helps identify areas that may not be ADHD specific symptoms, but that may be in need of support, such as sleeping and eating habits. A psychological assessment is essential to good, useful treatment. Participants will learn how to utilize different types of assessment to create a holistic approach to treatment.

Supporting Children & Adolescents with Anxiety: Parenting Strategies & Understanding the Impact of Social Media

Presenter: Erin Fiorito, LPC
Therapist, E&L Counseling

Molly Ireton, LISW-S
Therapist at The Firefly Company

Summary of the Session:

Participants will gain an understanding of anxiety in children and adolescents, including its signs, symptoms, and potential causes. They will learn to identify the common signs of anxiety and explore the different types of anxiety disorders, such as generalized anxiety, social anxiety, and separation anxiety. The presentation will provide techniques to support children, such as effective communication, emotional validation, and strategies for emotional regulation. Participants will learn how to create a safe and structured environment that helps reduce anxiety and how to balance providing comfort with encouraging independence in children. Topics such as fostering resilience and coping skills as well as understanding the role of social media in exacerbating anxiety will be addressed. The training will emphasize the importance of collaboration between parents, educators, and mental health professionals to support children with anxiety.

Principles of Learning

Presenter: Jared Cooney Horvath, Ph.D., M.Ed.
Neuroscientist / Educator / Author | Director at LME Global

Summary of the Session:

Can students listen to music while they study? When might notetaking actually harm learning? What's the one key to forming deep, lasting memories? During this session, we will explore several principles of how human beings learn. Drawn from brain, behavioural, and educational research, these principles are learning 'nuggets' that can shine a light on more traditional classroom practices. Beyond learning about each principle, we will also consider how these principles can be adapted to tweak/improve teaching & learning practices.

Teaching Students to Self-Regulate Through a System of Supports

Presenter: Tara Willig, M.Ed.
Head of Springer High School

Summary of the Session:

Often, systems of behavior management are reactive in nature. This session will focus on understanding trauma responses in students and helping to build a proactive approach to managing student behaviors. You will learn the importance of providing students with models of appropriate self-regulation within the school setting. You will learn how to give students a voice and time for self-regulation, allowing for increased student achievement and engagement. You will leave with self-regulation strategies to utilize in your classroom and school.

The Power of Conferencing

Presenter: Cari Kelly, M.Ed., W.D.T., W.D.P.
Reading/LD Specialist & Dyslexia Therapist at Springer Lower School & Middle School

Summary of the Session:

The power of conferencing in reading and writing lies in its ability to provide personalized, responsive instruction that meets the diverse needs of students. Participants will learn how to enhance their instruction through personal, one-on-one conversations. We will discuss how to conduct purposeful reading and writing conferences, how to foster students' engagement and independence, and how to incorporate conferencing into daily instruction.

The Science of Early Language & Literacy Development

Presenter: Carolyn Turner, M.Ed.
Ohio Literacy Lead at Ohio Department of Education & Workforce

Summary of the Session:

Emergent literacy is an initial step to later reading achievement. This session will explore the body of evidence on the foundations necessary to develop and foster language and literacy skills in young learners. The presenter will discuss early literacy's essential components and key variables that predict later reading success. Participants will discuss language, vocabulary, phonological awareness, and print knowledge. Bridging research and practice, session attendees will leave with resources and actionable strategies to nurture proficient readers from an early age.

Building Vocabulary to Boost Comprehension

Presenter: Sara Cooper, MSP, CCC-SLP
Speech & Language Pathologist at Springer Lower School & Middle School
Nikki Sullivan, M.S., CCC-SLP
Speech & Language Pathologist at Springer Lower School & Middle School

Summary of the Session:

This presentation focuses on understanding how vocabulary influences comprehension at multiple levels—word, sentence, and discourse. We will explore the different tiers of vocabulary, with particular emphasis on Tier 2 words—high-utility words that appear across subjects and are crucial for academic success. You will also learn how to identify these words within texts and gain practical strategies for introducing and reinforcing vocabulary instruction in the classroom. These strategies will help students deepen their understanding of language, improve reading comprehension, and expand their ability to engage with increasingly complex material.

What is the Behavior Telling Me?

Presenter: Nicole Pfirman, M.Ed., OTR/L
Senior Vice President at MindPeace Cincinnati

Summary of the Session:

This session will focus on the foundational understanding of how mental health and trauma show up as behavior in the classroom. The session will address the ways in which adults can effectively engage during times of crisis, what strategies can be used in the classroom, and how to create an environment that supports a culture of wellness.
