



**2023 Annual ACT Conference**  
*Advocating for learning journeys: Constructivism as the language of learning*  
**October 21-22**  
**Appalachian State University**  
**Boone, North Carolina**

*All sessions will take place in the Reich College of Education Building and will appear on the schedule using Eastern Time (ET).*


*Zoom links will be provided for virtual participants to attend the **keynote presentation**, **virtual sessions**, and **featured sessions**. Each virtual session will have an assigned moderator on site (rooms 306 & 308).*

**Blue highlight indicates Virtual Session.**

- [Link to Zoom Room 124 ABC \(Saturday's keynote presentation\)](#)
- [Link to Zoom Room 1 – 306 \(Saturday's virtual sessions\)](#)
- [Link to Zoom Room 2 – 308 \(Saturday's virtual sessions\)](#)
- [Link to Zoom Room 124 ABC \(Sunday's featured sessions\)](#)

Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup> – Conference will begin at 8:00 a.m. ET in room 124 ABC of the RCOE building.

*Registration and check-in available beginning at 7:30 a.m.; breakfast items available in Room 124 ABC.*

| Time                                   | Room       | Speaker  | Keynote Presentation   |  |
|--|------------|--|--|--|
| Welcome –<br>8 a.m.                    | 124<br>ABC | <b>Dr. Kelly Russell,</b><br><i>ACT President</i>                |         |  |
| Introduction of<br>Keynote<br>Speaker  |            | <b>Dr. Randa Dunlap,</b><br><i>2023 ACT Conference<br/>Chair</i> |  |  |
| Keynote<br>Presentation<br>8:15 – 9:15 |            | <b>Dr. Amy J. Malkus,</b><br><i>Keynote Speaker</i>              |  |  |
|  |            |  | <i>From Algorithms to Imagination: Crafting a<br/>Constructivist Learning Voyage with AI</i> |  |

| Breakout Sessions                                    | Room | Presenter(s)                          | Session Title  | Session Description  |
|--|------|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Breakout Session 1</b><br><br><b>9:30 – 10:45</b> | 306  | Maria Vittoria Cifone,<br>David Kritt | <i>Knowing in a grounded way</i>   | <p>The session will juxtapose theory and descriptive accounts of children working through problems. Two presentations will be interspersed with opportunities (and encouragement) of discussion by those attending.</p>  |
|  | 308  | Donald Mesibov                        | <i>Constructivist practices for teaching people with autism are best practices for all learners</i>            | <p>Students with autism often have difficulty with verbal communication. Therefore, they require visual and kinesthetic practices to learn effectively. We will explore the counter-intuitive behaviors that characterize many people with autism that are critical for teachers to be aware of.</p>   |
|  | 013  | Charles Fischer                       | <i>The learning journey of constructivist dialogue</i>   | <p>This interactive workshop focuses on how to use Socratic Seminar to create collaborative dialogue in K-12 classrooms. The purpose of this session is to present the constructivist approach of Socratic Seminar and to share specific and practical classroom strategies that allow teachers to shift to the role of facilitator. This shift, from “Sage on the Stage” to “Guide on the Side,” helps to create a collaborative environment where students can safely take risks, find their voices, and truly express themselves.</p>                               |
|  | 127  | James Foss                            | <i>Turning Theory into Action: Preservice teachers’ epistemic reflexivity about elementary science methods</i> | <p>The purpose of the session is to present and demonstrate how beliefs about knowledge and knowing can support understanding PSTs interpretation of practice. Documentation of pre-service teachers (PSTs) epistemic thinking can serve to clarify and guide how aims for knowledge influence teaching of science. Theories presented by Clark Chinn and Jo Brownlee are useful for considering why constructivist visions of learning may not have developed in the past 30 years when the call was first made to transform practice through innovative methods.</p> |
|  | 227  | Beth VanMeeteren                      | <i>The Potential Synergy Between the NGSS and Constructivist Pedagogy in PK-2 Classrooms</i>                   | <p>Barriers to early STEM education include finding instructional time in PK-2 classrooms, and the need to develop dispositions that allow PK-2 children to construct an understanding of how the world works and their role within the world.</p>   |

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|   |     |                                    |   | <p>This session will examine the NGSS science and engineering practices and how they align with constructivist pedagogy.</p> <p>The session will include discussion on valuing children's approximations of science and engineering practices with the goal of developing conventional use of science and engineering practices.</p>   |
|   | 321 | Jane Broderick,<br>Seong Bock Hong | <i>Undergraduates' Use of Materials Explorations and Documentation to Study Re-Representation and Multi-Symbolic Representation in Learning Processes</i> | <p>Exploring play through the lens of re-representation, multi-symbolic representation, and documentation prepare undergraduate preservice teachers to use these processes to facilitate creative and critical thinking among children relevant to their unique play, inquiry, and learning. Participants will be able to learn and discuss the details of the re-representation and multi-symbolic representation assignments that will help early childhood preservice and in-service teachers construct deeper meaning and understanding of concepts.</p> |
|   | 329 | James Pelech                       | <i>A Constructivist Approach to Review Sessions (It's Not for Dummies!)</i>   | <p>This interactive session will examine of how to make the traditional review session more Constructivist. Participants will analyze examples of student work and discuss the relationship of these examples to Constructivist theory. Additional activities include asking participants to identify advantages and disadvantages of these types of assignments.</p>  |
| <b>Breakout<br/>Session 2</b><br><br><b>11:00 – 12:15</b> | 306 | Haruka Konishi                     | <i>Learning and Applying Constructivist Approaches to Elementary Classrooms with Pre-Service Teachers</i>   | <p>The present study investigated whether the opportunity to learn and apply constructivist teaching approaches in an elementary school setting would affect education students' understanding of constructivism.</p>  |
|   | 308 | Karla Loya                         | <i>Curricular resistance: Creating a social justice-centered program</i>  | <p>The purpose of this presentation is to share insights on the steps and process involved creating a full curricular revision of a graduate program from a constructivist stance. The curricular revisions were specifically made to create an inclusive program that places diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging (DEIJB) at its core. Two frameworks, constructivism and a social justice education,</p>   |

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|     |  |   |  | guided all content, pedagogical, and assessment decisions for the revisions. Examples of course materials and assignments will illustrate how the planned changes were implemented.  |
| 013 | Andrea Anderson,<br>Denise Brewer                  | <i>Pushing back against the "push down":<br/>Constructive pedagogies and pre-service teachers<br/>as agents of resistance to the accountability<br/>movement</i>          |  | Join us for a presentation on dissertation research that seeks to understand how the current educational climate impacts higher education programming. We ask, "How can we support students as they act as agents of change and stay true to a constructivist pedagogy?" This session shares ethnographic research and the implementation of a college class dedicated to constructivist pedagogies.   |
| 127 | Kara Pranicoff                                     | <i>Raising Student Voices: Provoking Student Thought<br/>and Action in the Classroom</i>  |  | This session prioritizes civic engagement for our youngest learners. We'll share resources and illustrate ways to construct understanding of social studies in the broadest sense: the ways we engage with each other in our community, develop a critical eye to the facts that we learn, and understand the influence of historical events on current times. The goal of this instruction is to raise active citizens in the creation of a more inclusive future.                            |
| 227 | Melody Hobbs,<br>Sarah Neesen,<br>Kathy Fitzgerald | <i>Storywork and Pretend Play: A Constructivist<br/>Approach to Building Children's Cognitive<br/>Competencies</i>  |  | What is story work and how does it support children's mature play and literacy development? This session is designed to provide practitioners with a look into the work of Ashton-Warner and V. Paley and practical strategies translated from their work that engage children in active learning while constructing cognitive competencies through storywork and pretend play. Real life classroom scenarios and outcomes will be shared as a framework for constructivist literacy learning. |
| 321 | Kelsey Winocour,<br>Jessica Hammond                | <i>Facilitating conceptual understandings through a<br/>constructivist approach can lead to deeper<br/>appreciation for the human experience and a kinder<br/>society</i> |  | <b>Central Idea:</b><br>To uncover the fine balance in constructivism as the language of learning while educators plan for learning while providing space for learner autonomy. To determine the goal and purpose of learning for the individual and for society.<br><br><b>Lines of Inquiry:</b><br>What is the role of the teacher and how does the  |

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|  |     |   |   | <p>educator and the learner partnership unfold?<br/>How do we establish a conceptual curriculum?<br/>Where do we leave space for learner agency and autonomy?<br/>How does the curriculum framework facilitate shared human experiences and understandings?</p>  |
|  | 329 | Justin Johnson,<br>Randa Dunlap   | <i>Implementing constructivist teaching practices within multidisciplinary professions to enhance the learning journeys of children</i> | <p>The purpose of this session is to increase awareness and explore ways in which multidisciplinary professions share the responsibility to advocate for best practices for children and to encourage educators to be activists of constructivism as we support them on their learning journeys.</p>   |
| <p>Lunch<br/>12:15 – 1:30<br/>RCOE 124 ABC</p>                   |     |   |   |  |
| <p><b>Breakout<br/>Session 3</b><br/><br/><b>1:30 – 2:45</b></p> | 306 | Anne Lowry,<br>Peggy Ashbrook   | <i>Intersection of Art and Science: creating opportunities for constructing knowledge through exploration</i>                           | <p>In this session participants will view and discuss a variety of interplays between art and science as children—and early childhood educator participants—begin to construct their understandings as they explore media and common science topics and scientific concepts. Journey with this session through a progression towards understanding the properties of matter (part of the Next Generation Science Standards) using developmentally appropriate sensory experiences.</p> |
|  | 013 | Rhonda Russell  | <i>Fred Rogers: A Champion of Constructivism in Early Childhood Education</i>   | <p>Discover the profound connection between Fred Rogers, learning journeys, and constructivism as the language of learning. Fred Rogers, best known as Mister Rogers, was a pioneer in children's television, and his work continues to inspire educators worldwide. Join us as we explore how Mister Rogers advocated for learning journeys and embraced constructivism to empower young minds.</p>   |
|  | 127 | George Tripp Ake,<br>Ilana Berman,<br>Mary Olvera,<br>Stephanie Lackey,<br>Cyndie Osborne | <i>Trauma-Informed Practices in Early Childhood Higher Education Programs</i>   | <p>This presentation will discuss a multi-phase project designed to embed trauma-informed content in community college courses implemented through collaboration between the NC Community Colleges and the Center for Child and Family</p>   |

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|   |            |  |   | Health at Duke University. The team will provide a description of the project, data collected, lessons learned and future plans. The team will also discuss the development of course content, best practices for including trauma information into course work, strategies for providing resources to students, and the importance of self-care for faculty and learners.  |
|   | 227        | Melody Hobbs,<br>Sarah Neesen,<br>Kathy Fitzgerald   | <i>Teaching vs LEARNING: The important role of a rigorous environment</i>   | Rigor has become a buzzword in education today. But what does this really mean in the learning lives of young children? This session will challenge participants to consider the classroom environment as a learning laboratory, and will equip attendees with the knowledge, voice, and skill for articulating and designing ‘rigorous’ environments that allow young children to grapple, experiment, and play with ideas.                        |
|   | 321        | Casey Black,<br>Jules Philips  | <i>A lens for learning: Supporting pre-service teachers in their understanding of and their creation of pedagogical documentation</i> | Join two master teachers as they share their mentorship work with pre-service teachers. We discuss our method of creating pedagogical documentation and how we support students to use the creation of documentation as a lens for learning about children and their own development.   |
|   | 329        | Oshen Wallin,<br>Erin Long,<br>Leslie Schoof,<br>Julie Young,<br>Meghan Arnold                           | <i>The Value of Place: Student-Led Community Based Learning</i>   | This session is designed to apply project/ challenge-based learning through a constructivist approach. Participants will leave the session with an understanding of how to make learning more relevant through students’ voice and choice and to understand the importance of place-based learning.   |
| <b>Breakout<br/>Session 4</b><br><br><b>3:00 – 4:15</b> | <b>306</b> | Ehichoya<br>Edokhamhen,<br>Narges Sareh,<br>Tsitsi Nyabando,<br>Qiuju Tian,<br>Patience Mensah-<br>Bonsu | <i>Embracing Constructivism in a digital age: Empowering Learning Journeys with Gen Z</i>   | The purpose of this session is to share experiences using constructivism in higher education classrooms to spark conversations and learning among participants and presenters. The presenters will provide an overview of research and their own experiences on effectively integrating constructivist principles into the higher education landscape, specifically focusing on engaging and empowering Generation Z learners in this 21st century. |
|   | <b>308</b> | Brian Stone,<br>Jessica Beekman  | <i>Authentic Autonomy in Practice: Constructivism and Choice in a Center-Based Environment</i>  | The purpose of the session is to demonstrate the role of constructivism and authentic autonomy in a choice-based center environment. Participants will  |

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|     |   |  |  | receive real world examples of center environments and how students build meaning through relevant, integrated, active experiences that foster inquiry, intrinsic motivation, and student choice.   |
| 013 | Ruth Facun-Granadozo, Hope Castle, Kwame Asare, Comfort Asare | <i>Building Blocks and Barriers to Becoming a Constructivist Early Childhood Educator</i>            |  | Coming from different backgrounds and having varied educational experiences, three early childhood education graduate students and their professor will recount their journeys toward becoming constructivist educators, including the building blocks they acquired throughout their lives and the barriers they encountered.  |
| 127 | Amy Miklos  | <i>Linking Our Learning Through Community Choice Times</i>   |  | As an institution that is founded on constructivist principles, we are always looking for ways to learn together in community, explore common themes through varying academic lenses and allow children choice and agency in their learning. This workshop will outline a school-wide initiative called Links Friday, where our community of learners, ages 3-11, engage in a variety of activities centered on a common theme. |
| 227 | Alex Morgan, Faith Hanning                                    | <i>The Way Nature Moves Us: Finding Pathways of Learning through Shared Research</i>                 |  | In this session we will offer a glimpse into the shared research conducted in partnership between a class of 2- turning 3-year-olds and their three teachers. Through a lens on the natural world, the joy present in every day moments came alive for teachers and children both. We will explore strategies for slowing down and deepening our listening to the world around us.  |
| 321 | Alex Levinson   | <i>Is Asking Your Black Students to "Sit Down" Racist? - A Deeper Look into Classroom Management</i> |  | Educators are trained to "maintain control" of a classroom. However, is what we are taught any different from the systems of control used throughout history to have power over others? This interactive session will explore the subconscious ties from our past with chattel slavery and classroom management styles. Sometimes, simple directions can have serious consequences. Get ready to "sit down!"                    |
| 329 | James Pelech  | <i>The Bridging Question Strategy: A Constructivist Approach to Activating Prior Knowledge</i>       |  | The purpose of the session is to present an instructional strategy (The Bridging Question Strategy-BQS) which is based on the Constructivist philosophy and is designed to  |

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|   |     |                                  |  | activate previous knowledge. A Bridging Question is a question or thought process which may not be contextually related to the upcoming topic but is conceptually related.  |
| <b>Breakout Session 5</b><br><br><b>4:30 – 5:45</b> | 306 | Dan Drmacich                     | <i>Democratic, Constructivist-Based Curriculum Development</i>   | Participants will experience and gain the skills to develop and use a constructivist-based curriculum development process that can involve student and community input, for the purpose of increasing student ownership, autonomy, meeting of student needs and interests, and learning.  |
|   | 308 | Anne Lowry                       | <i>What is Line? Investigations by ECE students</i>  | Our presentation offers both an overview of a collaborative project of a Reggio Inspired Professional Learning Community and how the social-constructivist work influenced each teacher and the children in multiple early childhood settings.  |
|   | 013 | Cassandra Nabalta                | <i>Rhythm and Learning: Foundations and Benefits of Incorporating Rhythm in Today's Classrooms and Other Learning Environments</i> | Rhythm and timing are foundationally important in our everyday lives. Since the 1920s, research has been available regarding its benefits to learning across multiple developmental domains. Let's use simple strategies, today!  |
|   | 227 | Clara Puni Nyamesem              | <i>Reevaluating Learning Journeys: The Impact of Excessive Screen Time on Constructivist Learning</i>                              | This session aims to examine the influence of excessive screen time on the constructivist approach to learning, exploring its potential hindrance to active knowledge construction and social interactions.   |
|   | 321 | Jessica Hammond, Kelsey Winocour | <i>Learning Unleashed: Igniting the Spark of Self-Directed Discovery</i>   | Unleash the true potential of learning and dive into the world of constructivist teaching! Explore how 'learning to learn' shapes lifelong learners and discover how to transform American classrooms with insights from successful European educational models.  |
|   | 329 | Julia Sisbarro, Teressa Sumrall  | <i>I'm an Author! Using Project Work as a Vehicle for Constructivist Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood Classrooms</i>       | This session is an exciting opportunity for early childhood teachers, administrators, and teacher educators to learn about the bookmaking project facilitated with preschoolers at the Lucy Brock Child Development Lab Program at Parkway Elementary School. Come and learn about ways to support children's development and learning through in-depth project work that embraces constructivist pedagogy. |



***Sunday, October 22<sup>nd</sup> – Conference will begin at 8:00 a.m. ET, and all sessions will take place in RCOE Room 124 ABC.***

| <b>Time Slot</b> | <b>Session</b>   |
|------------------|--|
| 8:00 a.m.        | <i>Breakfast available in RCOE Room 124 ABC</i>  |
| 8:15 – 9:30      | <b><i>Featured Session –<br/>Tribute to Constance Kamii</i></b><br>Facilitated by Dr. Kelly Russell, ACT President           |
| 9:45 – 11:00     | <b><i>Experiential learning opportunity –</i></b><br>Facilitated by Dr. Kindel Turner Nash in the<br>Anderson Reading Clinic |
| 11:15 – 12:30    | <b><i>Featured Session –<br/>Constructivist Panel Discussion</i></b><br>Led by Dr. James Pelech, ACT Past President          |
| 12:30 p.m.       | Closing Remarks<br>Announcement of 2024 ACT Conference   |