



CALIFORNIA CEC'S

BRIDGE TO BELONGING:

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CONFERENCE

February 26-27, 2025

California Council for Exceptional Children (CA CEC) is thrilled to offer this transformative, two-day conference dedicated to equipping California educators and administrators with the tools and strategies to make inclusive education successful.



CSUN

Michael D. Eisner
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CALIFORNIA

Center for Teaching
& Learning



CHAMPIONING INCLUSIVE
PRACTICES AROUND THE GLOBE

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CA CEC Annual Conference

Schedule @ a Glance

Bridge to
Belonging

February 26, 2025

9:00 AM

Welcome

9:45 AM

Concurrent Sessions 1

11:00 AM

Concurrent Sessions 2

12:00 PM

Lunch

1:15 PM

Concurrent Sessions 3

2:30 PM

Concurrent Sessions 4

3:45 PM

Keynote Speaker: Lisa Dieker



CSU Northridge
2/26-27

CA CEC Annual Conference

Day 2 Workshop

Bridge to
Belonging

February 27, 2025

9:00 AM

Welcome

9:30 AM

Putting Inclusion into Perspective

10:45 AM

Break

11:00 AM

Whole Group Strategies for Inclusion

12:00 PM

Lunch on Your Own

1:00 PM

Individual Strategies for Inclusion

2:00

Break

2:10 PM

Putting it all Together

3:00

Wrapping Up/Closure



CSU Northridge
2/26-27

California CEC Conference “At A Glance”

Wednesday February 26, 2025

9:00-9:30	Introduction / Welcome in the Northridge Center Complex of the USU Dr. Wendy Murawski & Dr. Matt Love				
Rooms	Altadena	Tujunga	Van Nuys	Flintridge	Pasadena
Strands	Co-Teaching	Behavior & SEL	Language/ Literacy/ EL/Culture	Instruction/ SAI/ UDL	Higher Education
9:45- 10:45	Co-teaching Evolved <i>Dr. Belinda Karge & Dr. Matt Rhoads</i>	Self-Determination Skill Growth <i>Dr. Samantha Toews</i>	Inclusion for the Deaf: The whole elephant <i>Dr. Rachel Friedman Narr & Dr. Colleen L. Smith</i>	Leveraging AI to optimize efficiency <i>Dr. Malukah Nu'Man & Amy Gaines</i>	Let's Go Learn <i>Dr. Jennifer Sears & Jennifer Clark</i>
11:00 - 12:00	Strategies for Staying Sane when Co-teaching <i>Dr. Monica Boomgard</i>	Rightful presence <i>Dr. Amy Hanreddy</i>	Multi-language learners <i>Dr. Fatmana K. Deniz</i>	HLPs to support instruction in inclusion <i>Dr. Kyena Cornelius</i>	Helping all students learn to read (UC/ CSU Collab) <i>Dr. How Alpert & Dr. Sue Sears</i>
Lunch 12:00 - 1:15					
1:15 - 2:15	Coteaching in the Performing Arts <i>April Thomas & Dr. Tamarah Ashton</i>	Teaching porcupines: Behavior <i>Dr. Lori Andrews</i>	Fostering belonging for refugee students & families <i>Dr. Soraya Fallah & Alvaro Castellanos Rodriguez</i>	Inclusive Teaching in 21 st century <i>Dr. Bryan Thornton</i>	Literacy Performance Assessment <i>Heather Kennedy</i>
2:30 - 3:30	Putting HS Coteaching Center Stage <i>Dr. Mel Zernow & Marty Eisen</i>	Understanding the RISE framework <i>Dr. Amy Hanreddy</i>	Engaging diverse readers & writers <i>Dr. Vanessa Goodwin & Dr. Dominic Grasso</i>	Executive Functioning strategies <i>Dr. Jude Wolf</i>	Collab Networks for Ed Specialist Prep <i>Dr. Matthew Love & Dr. Lisa Simpson</i>
3:45-5:00	Education on the Edge in the Northridge Center Complex of the USU Dr. Lisa Dieker: Keynote Speaker				

California CEC Conference “At A Glance”

Thursday February 27, 2025

Dr. Wendy Murawski & Dr. Jude Wolf: “Strategies for Inclusion”

9:00-9:30	Introduction / Welcome in Flintridge Room (East Conference Center)
9:30-10:30	Putting Inclusion in Legal & Ethical Perspectives
10:30-10:45	Break
10:30-11:45	Building Mindsets/ Myth-Busting/ Strategies
11:45 – 1:00	Lunch on your own
1:00-2:00	Whole Group & Individual Strategies for the Inclusive Classroom
2:00-2:10	Break
2:10-2:50	Implementing More Strategies in the Inclusive Classroom: Pulling it together
2:50-3:00	Wrapping it up



Bridge to Belonging

Session
Overview

Bridge to Belonging: Inclusive Education Conference Schedule & Session Descriptions

9:00 - 9:30 AM

Introduction / Welcome

Location: Northridge Center Complex of the USU

Presenters: Dr. Wendy Murawski & Dr. Matt Love

9:45 - 10:45 AM

Sessions:

- **Co-teaching Evolved**

Presenters: Dr. Belinda Karge & Dr. Matt Rhoads

Session Description: Co-teaching has evolved! Join Dr. Karge and Dr. Rhoads to learn how educational technology tools (like AI) can be integrated with research-based co-teaching strategies. Discover how to use Co-Pilot to assist with lesson planning and make learning both fun and comprehensive! 🔍

- **Self-Determination Skill Growth**

Presenter: Dr. Samantha Toews

Session Description: Self-determination skills help students identify their interests, set goals, and problem solve to achieve their desired outcomes. This presentation explores how to provide explicit instruction and opportunities for students with extensive support needs to practice these skills in general education classrooms. 🏆

- **Inclusion for the Deaf: The Whole Elephant**

Presenters: Dr. Rachel Friedman Narr & Dr. Colleen L. Smith

Session Description: We envision the classroom as an all-inclusive, democratic practice—where every voice is valued. What would such a space look like for a D/deaf student in an all-hearing classroom? With full communication access as a central tenet, we explore programmatic ideas, mindsets, and practices that can be implemented to meet the unique needs of, and benefit, both D/deaf and hearing students. ✨

- **Leveraging AI to Optimize Efficiency**

Presenters: Dr. Malukah Nu'Man & Amy Gaines

Session Description: Discover how generative AI can streamline lesson planning, differentiate instruction, and enhance student engagement. Participants will learn to engineer prompts to generate tailored IEP goals, create corresponding classroom activities, and develop leveled reading materials. Leave with immediately useful AI prompts to optimize efficiency and engage your learners more effectively! 💡

- **Let's Go Learn**

Presenters: Dr. Jennifer Sears & Jennifer Clark

Session Description: Looking for a way to provide pre-service teachers with tools they will actually use in the field? Dr. Sears and her team at the University of North Georgia have partnered with Let's Go Learn to offer pre-service teachers access to the same classroom tools currently used by educators. Come learn how this collaboration works and discover how you can implement similar strategies in your own classroom to better prepare future educators for the real-world challenges of personalized learning. 📖

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Sessions:

- **Strategies for Staying Sane when Co-teaching**

Presenter: Dr. Monica Boomgard

Session Description: Stress and burnout are all too familiar to teachers, but “I need more stress” said no teacher ever! In this session, Dr. Boomgard will provide quick, easy-to-remember strategies that can be used by educators to reduce stress and boost self-efficacy, both for themselves and their collaborators. Learn how to “put on your own oxygen mask” first while fostering a balanced and effective co-teaching environment. 🌿

- **Rightful Presence**

Presenter: Dr. Amy Hanreddy

Session Description: This presentation explores rightful presence in inclusive education, shifting from managing "challenging behavior" to recognizing students with disabilities as full community members. Using disability justice and anti-racist frameworks, we'll discuss strengths-based, systemic approaches that honor student agency and belonging, moving beyond compliance-driven models toward truly inclusive practices. 🌱

- **Multi-language Learners**

Presenter: Dr. Fatmana K. Deniz

Session Description: In this session, participants will explore strategies to recognize and understand multilingual learners' Funds of Knowledge—the cultural and linguistic resources they bring to the classroom—and learn how to meaningfully embed them into teaching practices. Attendees will engage in discussions on various strategies such as community scanning and multilingual shadowing as tools to authentically understand students' cultural and linguistic capital. 🌍

- **HLPs to Support Instruction in Inclusion**

Presenter: Dr. Kyena Cornelius

Session Description: Teachers are the school factor that impacts student achievement most. But HOW do they do that? Come discover how, and learn about the actions teachers use to increase their effectiveness. Research has identified specific teacher actions that have the most impact, fittingly named the High-Leverage Practices. Use them in your inclusive classroom to leverage your impact! 🚀

- **Helping All Students Learn to Read (UC/CSU Collab)**

Presenters: Dr. How Alpert & Dr. Sue Sears

Session Description: Explore the complexities of identifying, assessing, and teaching diverse learners with dyslexia. Learn about research-based educational practices and free resources for teachers, teacher educators, and families aligned with California's Dyslexia Guidelines. 📖

12:00 - 1:15 PM

Lunch Break

1:15 - 2:15 PM

Sessions:

- **Co-teaching in the Performing Arts**

Presenters: April Thomas & Dr. Tamarah Ashton

Session Description: Ever wondered what it would be like to reimagine Charlotte's Web through the lens of co-teaching and the arts? April and Tamarah will guide you through a session blending co-teaching strategies and VAPA principles to create a rich, engaging Universal Design for Learning (UDL) experience. Be prepared to unlock your creative potential, have fun, and explore how to transform a classic story into a dynamic artistic journey! 🎭

- **Teaching Porcupines: Behavior**

Presenter: Dr. Lori Andrews

Session Description: All behavior is communication—and it's not our imagination that behaviors in schools have exploded in frequency and intensity. We will explore why students demonstrate these behaviors, what their "baseline" and "window of tolerance" have to do with it, and finish with real-time strategies you can use to support dysregulated youth. 🌱

- **Fostering Belonging for Refugee Students & Families**

Presenters: Dr. Soraya Fallah & Alvaro Castellanos Rodriguez

Session Description: This session explores strategies to create a sense of belonging for refugee students and their families. Learn how the RESP program at LAUSD found RESPite for refugees through cultural competency, in-person attention, and utilizing community partners. Discover practical, inclusive approaches that foster resilience and strengthen connections among case managers, resource navigators, students, and families. 🤝

- **Inclusive Teaching in 21st Century**

Presenter: Dr. Bryan Thornton

Session Description: This dynamic session, rooted in Ruppert et al.'s (2023) framework, will explore how to best prepare learners with extensive support needs (ESN) for success in the 21st century. Dr. Thornton will guide you through balancing evidence-based practices with values-based approaches to create inclusive, practical strategies that you can implement in your own classrooms. Let's dive deep into the intersection of heart and science in teaching! ✨

- **Literacy Performance Assessment**

Presenter: Heather Kennedy

Session Description: Join Heather for an exciting look ahead to the 2025/26 academic year as we dive into the Literacy Performance Assessment (LPA). We'll unpack key changes to this crucial assessment, explore TPE Domain 7, and discuss actionable strategies for integrating the LPA into your program coursework and clinical practice. Get ready for a forward-thinking session that will prepare you for the future of teacher preparation! 📖

2:30 - 3:30 PM

Sessions:

- **Putting HS Co-teaching Center Stage**

Presenters: Dr. Mel Zernow & Marty Eisen

Session Description: Join Dr. Zernow and Marty Eisen, co-teachers for 19 years, as they share strategies that make Physics engaging, character-building, and fun. Learn how inclusive co-teaching can help all students reach their fullest potential and build a truly inclusive learning environment. ✨

- **Understanding the RISE Framework**

Presenter: Dr. Amy Hanreddy

Session Description: This presentation introduces the RISE Framework, a structured, evidence-based process for guiding schools and districts toward inclusive practices. Participants will learn how inclusion teams use self-evaluation, goal setting, and action planning—grounded in quality indicators—to move from ideas to action. Practical strategies for sustainable, systemic change will be shared. ✅

- **Engaging Diverse Readers & Writers**

Presenters: Dr. Vanessa Goodwin & Dr. Dominic Grasso

Session Description: This session will cover best practices for engaging diverse readers and writers through inclusive practices in literacy. Different aspects of literacy, including writing, will be examined through an inclusive and engaging lens. Teachers will leave with multiple examples and ideas they can utilize in their literacy classrooms! ✨

- **Executive Functioning Strategies**

Presenter: Dr. Jude Wolf

Session Description: Discover how to transform student learning and independence through powerful metacognitive strategies that strengthen executive function skills. This dynamic session bridges theory and practice, equipping educators and parents with a comprehensive toolkit for developing essential executive function abilities across all academic disciplines. Participants will leave with ready-to-implement strategies for skills like planning, organization, time management, emotional regulation, and cognitive flexibility. ✨

- **Collaboration Networks for Ed Specialist Prep**

Presenters: Dr. Matt Love & Dr. Lisa Simpson

Session Description: This presentation explores efforts to establish a Higher Ed Community of Practice for California CEC members focused on education specialist preparation programs. Attendees will learn how collaboration can streamline efforts, enhance resource sharing, and improve teacher preparation. Join us to shape a sustainable network that strengthens special education programs across the state! 💬



DAY 2 WORKSHOP



OVERVIEW

Strategies for Inclusion", will highlight Dr. Wendy Murawski and Dr. Jude Wolf modeling best practices in Co-teaching and UDL. Participants will briefly reflect on the legal and ethical implications of inclusive practices, while emphasizing the need for inclusive mindsets.

Drs. Murawski and Wolf will guide attendees as they untangle terminology and concepts, bust some pervasive myths, and identify strengths and barriers in their own situations. Numerous whole group and individual strategies will be shared as participants engage in various co-instructional models themselves. Be prepared to move, learn, network, and laugh in this 9am-3pm interactive workshop.





Bridge to Belonging

*Meet our
Speakers*

❁ Meet Our Presenters: Bridge to Belonging: Inclusive Education Conference ❁

Get ready to be inspired by a stellar lineup of experts who are dedicated to advancing inclusive practices in education! Each presenter brings a wealth of knowledge, real-world experience, and a passion for creating environments where all students can thrive. Let's meet the experts leading our sessions:

Heather Kennedy, M.Ed.

Bio: Heather Kennedy is a Consultant in Teacher Preparation at the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, specializing in Performance Assessment. Her focus has been on the Education Specialist CalTPA and the new Literacy Performance Assessment aligning with SB 488. A proud CSU Northridge alum, Heather resides in Los Angeles with her husband, two children, and two rescue dogs who keep things lively and fun. 🐶

Presentation Title: *On the Horizon: Literacy Performance Assessment*

Topic/Tags:

- 📖 Literacy Performance Assessment
- 🔄 Teacher Preparation
- 🎯 SB 488 & Performance Assessment

Presentation Blurb: Join Heather for an exciting look ahead to the 2025/26 academic year as we dive into the *Literacy Performance Assessment* (LPA). We'll unpack key changes to this crucial assessment, explore TPE Domain 7, and discuss actionable strategies for integrating the LPA into your program coursework and clinical practice. Get ready for a forward-thinking session that will prepare you for the future of teacher preparation! 📅

Bryan Thornton, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Bryan Thornton is an Assistant Professor of Special Education at California State University, Los Angeles, and an advocate for disability justice and meaningful inclusion. Passionate about supporting learners with exceptional support needs (ESN), Bryan is also a Halloween enthusiast—though you won't catch him in a costume! 🎃

Presentation Title: *Inclusive Teaching in the 21st Century: Balancing Science, Heart, and Probably a Little Bit of Productive Chaos*

Topic/Tags:

- 🧠 Inclusive Education
- 💛 Disability Justice
- 💡 Evidence-Based Practices

Presentation Blurb: This dynamic session, rooted in Ruppert et al.'s (2023) framework, will explore how to best prepare learners with extensive support needs (ESN) for success in the 21st century. Dr. Thornton will guide you through balancing evidence-based practices with values-based approaches to create inclusive, practical strategies that you

can implement in your own classrooms. Let's dive deep into the intersection of heart and science in teaching! 🌟

April Thomas, M.A.

Bio: April Thomas, Director of the Arts at ISANA Academies, is a creative force committed to helping students develop critical thinking and creativity through co-teaching and collaborative artistic projects. Her passion lies in empowering students to engage deeply with both academics and the arts. 🎨

Tamarah Ashton, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Tamarah Ashton, a professor in the Department of Special Education at CSUN, is dedicated to co-teaching, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and the color purple! 💜 Her passion for inclusive education shines through her work, especially in the realm of co-teaching and DEI practices.

Presentation Title: *How Can You Tell the Story through the Arts?*

Topic/Tags:

- 🎨 Co-teaching in the Arts
- 🌱 Creative Collaboration
- 🎨 Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA)

Presentation Blurb: Ever wondered what it would be like to *reimagine Charlotte's Web* through the lens of co-teaching and the arts? April and Tamarah will guide you through a session blending co-teaching strategies and VAPA principles to create a rich, engaging Universal Design for Learning (UDL) experience. Be prepared to unlock your creative potential, have fun, and explore how to transform a classic story into a dynamic artistic journey! 🎭

Kyena Cornelius, Ed.D.

Bio: Dr. Kyena Cornelius is a Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Florida. She is passionate about elevating the teaching profession, High-Leverage Practices, and wine—preferably red, but she will not turn down a good white! 🍷

Presentation Title: *High-Leverage Practices to Support Instruction in Inclusive Classrooms*

Topic/Tags:

- 🔑 Using HLPs
- 🧑🏫🏠 Instruction/SAI/UDL

Presentation Blurb: Teachers are the school factor that impacts student achievement most. But HOW do they do that? Come discover how, and learn about the actions teachers use to increase their effectiveness. Research has identified specific teacher actions that have the most impact, fittingly named the High-Leverage Practices. Use them in your inclusive classroom to leverage your impact! 🚀

Vanessa Goodwin, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Vanessa Goodwin has spent much of her career working with adolescent struggling readers, both as a special education teacher and teacher educator. Through the LA Intervention Project, she has co-created and trained secondary general and special education teachers on evidence-based practices that have demonstrated gains for struggling readers. Dr. Goodwin directs the Special Education Literacy Clinic in the Teaching, Learning, and Counseling Consortium (TLCC) at CSUN, providing low-cost services to community children with reading difficulties, including dyslexia. 📖

Dominic Grasso, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Dominic Grasso is the Director of the L.A. Times Literacy Center and an Assistant Professor of Elementary Literacy Education. He works with teachers earning their advanced literacy certifications and is passionate about collaborating with educators to solve the nation's literacy crisis, as well as about the seasonal Starbucks cold foam flavors! 🍌

Presentation Title: *Engaging Diverse Readers and Writers through Inclusive Practices*

Topic/Tags:

- 📖 Inclusive Literacy Practices
- 🌍 EL/Language/Culture/Literacy

Presentation Blurb: This session will cover best practices for engaging diverse readers and writers through inclusive practices in literacy. Different aspects of literacy, including writing, will be examined through an inclusive and engaging lens. Teachers will leave with multiple examples and ideas they can utilize in their literacy classrooms! ✨

Rachel Friedman Narr, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Rachel Friedman Narr is a Professor at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) in the Department of Special Education. Her research centers on reading practices with deaf students and working with families of deaf students. She is passionate about teacher education, systems change, and whale watching. 🐳

Colleen L. Smith, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Colleen L. Smith is an Assistant Professor at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) in the Department of Special Education. Her most recent research focuses on justifying the benefits of balancing between speaking and texting. Colleen is passionate about co-teaching, multiliteracy development, and enjoys sniffing around parks with her fur soulmate—where they both love chasing squirrels! 🐿

Presentation Title: *Inclusion: The Whole Elephant!*

Topic/Tags:

- 🧠 What Inclusion Means for Deaf Students
- 🌍 EL/Language/Culture/Literacy

Presentation Blurb: We envision the classroom as an all-inclusive, democratic practice—where every voice is valued. What would such a space look like for a D/deaf student in an all-hearing classroom? With full communication access as a central tenet,

we explore programmatic ideas, mindsets, and practices that can be implemented to meet the unique needs of, and benefit, both D/deaf and hearing students. ✨

Lori Andrews, Ed.D.

Bio: Lori Andrews has more than 40 years of teaching experience, spanning both general and special education, including transitioning to administration. She is an expert in trauma, emotional disabilities, and working with students that make you cry. 😞

Presentation Title: *Teaching Porcupines? A National Crisis – Students’ Behavior is Out of Control*

Topic/Tags:

- 🤝 **Collaboration/Co-Teach**
- 🧠 **Behavior/SEL**

Presentation Blurb: All behavior is communication—and it’s not our imagination that behaviors in schools have exploded in frequency and intensity. We will explore why students demonstrate these behaviors, what their “baseline” and “window of tolerance” have to do with it, and finish with real-time strategies you can use to support dysregulated youth. 🌱

Malikah Nu'Man, Ed.D.

Bio: Dr. Malikah Nu'Man is a Program Specialist at Santa Clarita Valley SELPA, dedicated to supporting restorative approaches in schools and fostering inclusive practices. She is passionate about equity for all, community building, and never misses an opportunity to play Two Truths and a Lie! 😊

Amy Gaines, M.A.

Bio: Amy Gaines is a Special Education Program Specialist with the Wm. S. Hart Union High School District. Her professional interests include leveraging technology to enhance inclusive practices and optimizing efficiency in special education, supporting educators in implementing innovative strategies to meet diverse student needs—preferably ones that don’t require 17 hours of prep work and a generous sprinkling of fairy dust to work! ✨

Presentation Title: *Leveraging Generative AI to Optimize Efficiency in Inclusive Secondary Classrooms*

Topic/Tags:

- 🤖 **AI in Inclusive Classrooms**
- 🤝 **Collaboration/Co-Teach**
- 🎯 **Instruction/SAI/UDL**

Presentation Blurb: Discover how generative AI can streamline lesson planning, differentiate instruction, and enhance student engagement. Participants will learn to engineer prompts to generate tailored IEP goals, create corresponding classroom activities, and develop leveled reading materials. Leave with immediately useful AI prompts to optimize efficiency and engage your learners more effectively! 💡

Jude Wolf, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Jude Wolf is a full-time lecturer/advisor at San Francisco State University in the Special Education MMSN Program. She is passionate about neuroscience and executive function processes and spending time with her family and 4-year-old Havanese, Huxley.



Presentation Title: *Mindful Learners, Capable Lives: Building Executive Function Through Metacognitive Strategies*

Topic/Tags:

-  **Executive Function**
-  **Instruction/SAI/UDL**

Presentation Blurb: Discover how to transform student learning and independence through powerful metacognitive strategies that strengthen executive function skills. This dynamic session bridges theory and practice, equipping educators and parents with a comprehensive toolkit for developing essential executive function abilities across all academic disciplines. Participants will leave with ready-to-implement strategies for skills like planning, organization, time management, emotional regulation, and cognitive flexibility. ✨

Matthew Love, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Matt Love is a Dodger fan trapped working in Giants territory at San Jose State University. He is also the president of CA CEC, and his work focuses on the application of UDL and AT/IT in STEM classrooms. 🚫

Lisa Simpson, Ed.D.

Bio: Dr. Lisa Simpson is the Department Chair of Special Education at San Jose State University and the Executive Director of California CEC. Dr. Simpson is passionate about co-teaching in pre-service fieldwork settings and coffee! ☕

Presentation Title: *Working Smarter, Not Harder: Creating Collaborative Networks for Ed Specialist Prep Programs*

Topic/Tags:

-  **Higher Ed Communities of Practice**
-  **EL/Language/Culture/Literacy**
-  **Higher Education/Admin**

Presentation Blurb: This presentation explores efforts to establish a Higher Ed Community of Practice for California CEC members focused on education specialist preparation programs. Attendees will learn how collaboration can streamline efforts, enhance resource sharing, and improve teacher preparation. Join us to shape a sustainable network that strengthens special education programs across the state! 💬

Soraya Fallah, Ed.D.

Bio: Dr. Soraya Fallah combines advocacy, research, and personal experience in her work with refugee and newcomer students and families. She is part of the LAUSD Refugee Educational Support Program (RESPite) team, leading initiatives that address the needs of newcomer refugees. Dr. Fallah is also a published author of journal articles, books, and book chapters. When she's not advocating for communities, she's hunting for

the perfect cup of tea—though she usually ends up with ten cups! 🍵

Alvaro Castellanos Rodriguez

Bio: Mr. Alvaro Castellanos Rodriguez is a Student & Family Resource Navigator for the Refugee Program within Los Angeles Unified School District - Region East. He is passionate, caring, and goes above and beyond for families from any country, advocating for their well-being and student success. 🌍

Presentation Title: *Fostering Belonging for Refugee Students and Families: Comprehensive Support Strategies*

Topic/Tags:

- 🌍 **Refugee Supports for Families and Students**
- 👤 **EL/Language/Culture/Literacy**

Presentation Blurb: This session explores strategies to create a sense of belonging for refugee students and their families. Learn how the RESP program at LAUSD found RESPite for refugees through cultural competency, in-person attention, and utilizing community partners. Discover practical, inclusive approaches that foster resilience and strengthen connections among case managers, resource navigators, students, and families. 💛

Belinda Dunnick Karge, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Belinda Karge is a Professor at Concordia University Irvine. She and Dr. Rhoads co-authored the upcoming book *Co-Teaching Evolved: 20 Partnership Strategies for an Equitable, Inclusive, & Tech-Powered Classroom* (2025). Dr. Karge is a “research geek,” while Dr. Rhoads is a “tech geek!” 📖

Matthew Rhoads, Ed.D.

Bio: Dr. Matthew Rhoads is an adult education and K-12 technology instructional leader. He co-authored *Co-Teaching Evolved* with Dr. Karge, bringing his expertise in tech integration to enhance the co-teaching process. 🌐

Presentation Title: *Co-Teaching Evolved: Equitable, Inclusive, Tech-Powered Strategies*


Topic/Tags:

- 💻 **Co-Teaching Evolved**
- 💛 **Collaboration/Co-Teach**


Presentation Blurb: Co-teaching has evolved! Join Dr. Karge and Dr. Rhoads to learn how educational technology tools (like AI) can be integrated with research-based co-teaching strategies. Discover how to use Co-Pilot to assist with lesson planning and make learning both fun and comprehensive! 🔍

Mel Zernow, Ed.D.

Bio: Dr. Mel Zernow is a Physics and Astronomy teacher at Granada Hills Charter High School. He and Marty Eisen have been a co-teaching duo for 19 years, bringing energy

and fun to inclusive physics learning. 


Marty Eisen, M.A.

Bio: Marty Eisen is a Physics/Biology/Special Educator at Granada Hills Charter High School. He is a co-teaching partner with Dr. Zernow and is passionate about making learning fun and accessible for all students. 


Presentation Title: *Putting Co-Teaching Center Stage*

Topic/Tags:

-  **Co-Teaching and Inclusion**
-  **Collaboration/Co-Teach**

Presentation Blurb: Join Dr. Zernow and Marty Eisen, co-teachers for 19 years, as they share strategies that make Physics engaging, character-building, and fun. Learn how inclusive co-teaching can help all students reach their fullest potential and build a truly inclusive learning environment. 

Sue Sears, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Sue Sears is Professor Emerita in the Department of Special Education at California State University, Northridge. She supports the UC/CSU Collaborative for Neuroscience, Diversity, and Learning to promote effective literacy instruction. Sue enjoys walking in preparation for the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage. 


How Alpert, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. How Alpert is an educator focused on literacy, teacher preparation, and special education. He has profound respect for his colleague, Dr. Wendy Murawski, and their collaborative efforts in improving literacy education.


Presentation Title: *Helping All Students Learn to Read: A Resource Tool for Teachers*

Topic/Tags:

-  **Literacy Standards and Teacher Preparation**
-  **EL/Language/Culture/Literacy**
-  **Higher Education/Admin**




Presentation Blurb: Explore the complexities of identifying, assessing, and teaching diverse learners with dyslexia. Learn about research-based educational practices and free resources for teachers, teacher educators, and families aligned with California's Dyslexia Guidelines. 

Samantha Toews, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Samantha Toews is an assistant professor of special education at California State University, Northridge. Her research focuses on instructional practices that support students with extensive support needs to access academic instruction in general education classrooms. She LOVES cats! 

Presentation Title: *Self-Determination Skill Growth*

Topic/Tags:

-  **Self-Determination Skill Growth**
-  **Behavior/SEL**
-  **Instruction/SAI/UDL**

Presentation Blurb: Self-determination skills help students identify their interests, set goals, and problem solve to achieve their desired outcomes. This presentation explores how to provide explicit instruction and opportunities for students with extensive support needs to practice these skills in general education classrooms. 🏆

Lisa Dieker, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Lisa Dieker is the Williamson Family Distinguished Professor of Special Education at the University of Kansas. She has a deep commitment to inclusive education and innovative uses of technology in the classroom.

Presentation Title: *Harnessing Teacher Collaboration and Technology in Inclusive Classrooms*

Topic/Tags:

-  **Technology in Special Education**
-  **Teacher Collaboration**
-  **Inclusive Practices**

Presentation Blurb: Explore innovative ways to harness the power of teachers working across disciplines in inclusive classrooms, focusing on technology's role in supporting diverse learners and enhancing collaboration among educators. 🌐

Fatmana K. Deniz, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Fatmana K. Deniz is an Assistant Professor in the Special Education Department at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). Her research focuses on creating culturally and linguistically inclusive learning environments that promote student autonomy and self-determination. With a particular emphasis on multilingual learners with disabilities, Dr. Deniz advocates for equitable and socially just education for all students. She works tirelessly to prepare teachers with the skills needed to implement autonomy-supportive teaching practices that honor diverse backgrounds. 🌐

Presentation Title: *Tapping into Funds of Knowledge: Practical Strategies for Multilingual Learners in Inclusive Classrooms*

Topic/Tags:

-  **Strategies for Supporting Multilingual Learners in Inclusive Classrooms**
-  **EL/Language/Culture/Literacy**

Session Description: In this session, participants will explore strategies to recognize and understand multilingual learners' Funds of Knowledge—the cultural and linguistic resources they bring to the classroom—and learn how to meaningfully embed them into teaching practices. Attendees will engage in discussions on various strategies such as community scanning and multilingual shadowing as tools to authentically understand students' cultural and linguistic capital.

Jennifer Sears, Ph.D.

Bio: Dr. Jennifer Sears is an Associate Professor of Education at the University of North Georgia, specializing in pre-service teacher preparation, co-teaching, and mixed reality simulation. With a passion for teaching and learning, Dr. Sears is also a fan of all things Disney and Musical Theatre. Outside of academia, she is a proud dog “theatre” mom to her English Bulldogs, Ellie and Brady. 🐶🎭

Jennifer Clark, M.Ed.

Bio: Jennifer Clark is the Partner Coordinator for Higher Learning and Tutoring at Let's Go Learn. With a strong background in teaching and a passion for empowering others, Jennifer thrives on cultivating relationships, solving creative problems, and delivering impactful solutions. When she's not making educational strides, she's on a quest for the perfect cup of coffee! ☕

Presentation Title: *From Campus to Classroom: Equipping Future Educators for Personalized Learning*

Topic/Tags:

- 📖 **Pre-service Teacher Preparation**
- 🎯 **Instruction/SAI/UDL**
- 🌐 **Higher Education/Admin**

Session Description: Looking for a way to provide pre-service teachers with tools they will actually use in the field? Dr. Sears and her team at the University of North Georgia have partnered with Let's Go Learn to offer pre-service teachers access to the same classroom tools currently used by educators. Come learn how this collaboration works and discover how you can implement similar strategies in your own classroom to better prepare future educators for the real-world challenges of personalized learning. 📄

Monica Boomgard, Ed.D.

Bio: Dr. Monica Boomgard is a full-time lecturer at CSUN, CSUEB, and CSUDH, with a deep passion for supporting educational specialist and all teacher candidates as they complete their credentials. To maintain balance in her busy life, Dr. Boomgard relies on yoga and the occasional scoop of gelato. 🧘‍♀️🍦

Presentation Title: *Strategies for “Sanity” in Co-Teaching: A Teachers’ Backpack for Reducing Stress*

Topic/Tags:

- 🌻 Collaboration/Co-Teach
- 🌱 Self-Efficacy/Stress Management

Session Description: Stress and burnout are all too familiar to teachers, but “I need more stress” said no teacher ever! In this session, Dr. Boomgard will provide quick, easy-to-remember strategies that can be used by educators to reduce stress and boost self-efficacy, both for themselves and their collaborators. Learn how to “put on your own oxygen mask” first while fostering a balanced and effective co-teaching environment. 🌿

We hope you're looking forward to these exciting sessions! Each of our presenters is committed to advancing inclusive education and ensuring all students have the support they need to succeed. See you at the conference! ✨



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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CONFERENCE

February 26-27, 2025

California Council for Exceptional Children (CA CEC) is thrilled to offer this transformative, two-day conference dedicated to equipping California educators and administrators with the tools and strategies to make inclusive education successful.



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