

the space

for anything about early childhood

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ELECTION SPECIAL



Plan your spring festival



WIN BOOKS & CD'S



Interview with our Minister of Education, Nikki Kaye





Why do you have a continuing passion for early childhood?
Education is a hopeful profession, and I want the future teachers in my class to honour and respect each child's uniqueness. I also believe society gets the children they deserve which makes me wonder.....

What is your most recent qualification? Where and when was it gained?
I attended a Pikler Intensive Training in Orlando, Florida in March 2016.

Where did you spend your "student years"?
I began my education in a two-room country school in Wisconsin (one of 3 first graders) which went up to 6th grade. After high school, I went to junior college in Illinois. Needing to escape the winters moved to South Carolina where I earned the remaining degrees finishing at University of South Carolina with a doctorate.

Of what achievement are you most proud with regard to your own career in early childhood education?
Can I have two? The first was at the beginning of my career caring for abused and neglected infants and toddlers on the weekends. During the week, I was a junior executive secretary and so disliked it! More recently, I enjoy collaborating and mentoring colleagues who need to publish for advancement. I had two wonderful mentors during my doctoral studies who taught me the writing for publication process.

If you could only change one thing about early childhood education what would it be?
I wish people in power (i.e. legislators) would become knowledgeable about at least some of the ground-breaking research and enact legislation to improve the lives of children and families.

What is your favourite childhood memory?
Any time spent with my Nana on the farm. She always took me with her to gather eggs, look for hickory nuts in the backfield, fishing, and she was the best cook/baker ever. I was her first grandchild. Need I say more!

If you could be a superhero, who would you be?
I still need one foot in reality, so I will chose Marian Wright Edelman who founded The Children's Defense Fund in 1973. She was the first Black woman to become a lawyer in Mississippi during the 1960's,

which took an immense amount of grit. She is a tireless advocate, writer, and publisher of The Annual State of America's Children.

Who is a real hero for you?
George Keiser a local businessman and philanthropist who is passionate about early childhood. His passion and quest for knowledge included taking West-Ed training. He has helped fund three Educare's for impoverished children, provided endowed chairs in early childhood education, which kick-started early childhood undergraduate and doctoral programs in Tulsa. His latest endeavour is The Gathering Place, and when completed will be the most ambitious nature scape playground in the U.S. He is one of a handful of millionaires who has committed to giving away his wealth.

Tell us about your own children and family.
I have a stepdaughter and two step-grandchildren. My husband Charlie and I enjoy traveling. If critters count, I have two dogs and four cats.

Describe your ideal Saturday.
Going to the farmer's market then off to the dog park. After the gym, I check out the thrift store for any finds (all proceeds go to children).

Where do you currently live?
Tulsa, Oklahoma in the Cherry Street neighbourhood. The area contains lots of small, varied shops, good restaurants, and a school (pre-k to 8th grade). Consequently, I am within two blocks of playgrounds filled with children.

Have you spent much time in NZ?
I have yet to visit but this is one of two experiences on my bucket list. The first experience on my list was fulfilled when I went on a study tour to Reggio Emilia four years ago.

What sports team do you support above all others?
None. I'm an anomaly. Despite born and raised in Wisconsin I am not a Green Bay Packers fan.

Is your office space messy or tidy?
Tidy. I hate spending time looking for anything.

What's your favourite section of the newspaper?
The opinions section because I want to know what other people are thinking.

What food(s) can you absolutely not resist?
Anything with rhubarb. I actually have a half a rhubarb strawberry pie in the refrigerator. I also love barbeque potato chips!

What was the last reading you did for pleasure?
Grandma Gatewood's Walk: the Inspiring Story of the Woman Who Saved the Appalachian Trail.

Red or Black?
Red but my closet indicates otherwise - might be due to the slimming effects of black!

Is there a TV show you are secretly ashamed of being a little addicted to?
I'm newly addicted to The Doctor Blake Mysteries produced by Australian Broadcasting Service and with no shame.

Tell us one thing about you which would surprise our readers.
I enjoy wearing cowboy boots with my jeans - after all I live in Oklahoma. I recently surprised my students when I showed up wearing them at an off-campus function.

Denise Da Ros-Voseles:

A Professor's Journey

Caregivers play such an important role when caring for our young ones. They are not only giving the care, but they are also receiving a great gift from each child during every interaction together. Denise Da Ros-Voseles started out as a van driver at an orphanage and went on to care for the infants and toddlers there. She is currently a professor at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma and recognises the gift that her work at an orphanage gave her.

Growing up in the 1970s, my early experiences influenced my philosophy of care, with my first foray into caring for children in a group setting in Rockton, Illinois. At that time, the program's focus was crisis intervention for abused and neglected children, infants to thirteen years.

I was placed in the infant and toddler room to meet the physical and emotional needs of these very young children—changing diapers, dressing them, and occasionally taking them on outings off campus. Because of my experience, I was hired as the part-time van driver at Oak Grove Children's Home in North Charleston, South Carolina.

Oak Grove began as Charleston Orphan House, established in 1790, making it the oldest municipal orphanage in the United States. From van driver, I was promoted to activities director and eventually to assistant to the director. The campus had large grassy areas, cottages, an administration building with sleeping quarters, and an elementary school within walking distance.

House parents, with degrees in sociology and psychology, lived in the cottages, and there were also two relief house parents who covered during days off. Each cottage had a cook/housekeeper who, to me, were the heart and soul of the cottages, providing meals, good counsel, and both approval and disapproval. There were other support staff as well, including two social workers, and the director with a psychiatrist available for consultations.

Children who lived there were referrals from social services, court-ordered placements, or families requesting that their children temporarily lived at the city-supported facility. The typical cottage housed eight to ten similarly aged children of the same sex, with the house parents firm but nurturing, and who collaborated with the social workers.

I recall the good will within the community, including providing doctor visits at a nearby medical university. And although the director advocated tirelessly for children to be able to lead stable and healthy lives until their parents regained custody, were able to bring their children home, or would age out, I realised that this wasn't always easy.

Nevertheless, I look back on this time with fondness, and as a young adult, being able to care for children directly and indirectly led me to where I am today, which is teaching infant development at the university level.

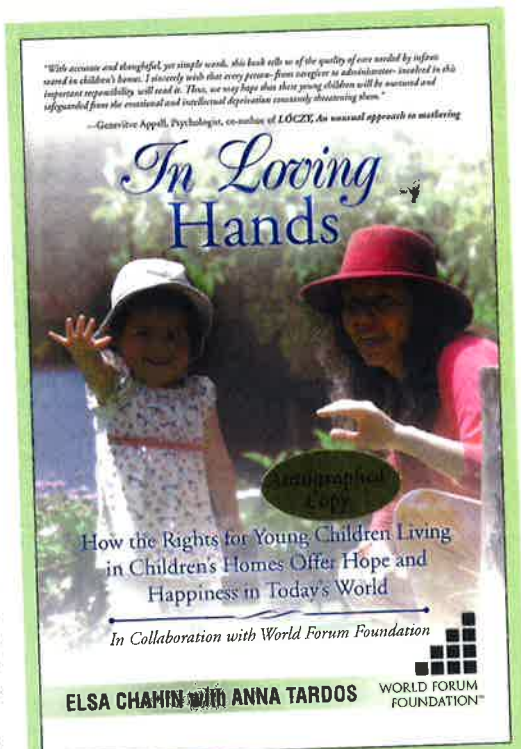
My students quickly see how important the early years are and the implications they have for older children. Dr. Emmi Pikler is acknowledged for her pioneering contributions in infant-toddler care. As the syllabus states, "Foundational to the care and education of the very young is the role of relationships built on respect."

As we unpack this statement, teacher candidates develop an appreciation of how providing careful personalise attention

during daily and necessary caregiving routines leads to trust. Since many of my students are parents and even grandparents, this is an important revelation. Teacher candidates are also invited to contemplate the role hands play as they listen to me read from an excerpt from Dr. Pikler's book, *Peaceful Babies-Contented Mothers*.

On so many levels, the trajectory for growth and development is established in the early years. Students leave the course with a deepened appreciation of the role of respectful caring of infants and toddlers, the children in their future classrooms, and their own children—present and future.

This chapter has been reprinted from *In Loving Hands: How the Rights for Young Children Living in Children's Homes Offer Hope and Happiness in Today's World*. Elsa Chahin with Anna Tardos (editors) in collaboration with World Forum Foundation (2017) Xlibri



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