



## **NILD Canada's 2023 Annual Conference**

### **Workshop Synopsis & Speaker Bios**

#### ***Session I: The Powerful Influence of Emotions on Learning***

Emotions influence learning in powerful ways - either enhancing or impairing learning. Emotions trigger the learning process and affect what students pay attention to, what they learn, and what they retain. Emotions also affect students' self-concept as a learner, their attitudes towards school and learning, their motivation and persistence, their approach to learning, and the strategies they use to learn.

All students experience a wide range of emotions when learning at any given time (whether related to the task at hand or some external event in their lives). In this workshop, participants will learn about the nature of emotions and how both positive and negative emotions can influence student learning and performance. They will also learn about key strategies to manage emotions. With this knowledge, educators can work with emotions to optimize students' learning experiences.



**Caroline Buzanko, Ph.D., R. Psych.** is a registered psychologist and director of Koru Family Psychology. She has worked with children and their families for over 20 years, with a focus on maximizing connection, confidence, learning success, and resilience. In her clinical work, she specializes in the assessment and treatment of ADHD, ASD, learning challenges, anxiety, and behavioural disorders. Dr. Buzanko is a sought-out speaker featured in various media platforms as an expert on child and teen development. She has developed training programs and

workshops for parents, medical doctors, allied mental health professionals, and school professionals on topics related to ADHD, behaviour management, anxiety, autism, and learning difficulties.

## **Session II: *The Orthographic Connection - Visual***

Vision is our dominant sense and an efficient visual process is integral to the learning, reading and writing. Vision therapy helps remove the visual barriers to learning. This lecture will highlight key concepts of visual functional and processing skills related to orthographic processing, how these skills directly impact daily life, vision therapy and development support, and current research on vision therapy and learning. A checklist of symptoms that would suggest vision-related learning difficulties will be provided. This is a practical guide to the visual processing required for learning.



**Dr. Tanya Polonenko** is a residency trained Optometrist and a board-certified Fellow in vision development, vision therapy and rehabilitation. After obtaining her Optometry Degree at the University of Waterloo, School of Optometry, she completed her Binocular Vision and Vision Therapy Residency at UC Berkeley School of Optometry where she continued serving as clinical faculty in the Binocular Vision Clinic. She returned to Canada in 2013 where she practiced in Toronto in a vision therapy focused full scope practice and in a concussion centre. She loves to teach, and has been an adjunct assistant clinical professor at the University of Waterloo, School of Optometry until 2020. There, she has had an integral role in establishing the concussion and vision therapy clinics. In December 2019, Dr. Polonenko opened her own full scope Optometry clinic in Kitchener, Visual Sense Eye Care, which has an emphasis on vision therapy, amblyopia, strabismus, learning related vision problems, concussion, pediatrics, and now sight enhancement for low vision and visually impaired. She is a member of COVD, the Director of Membership for VTC, and an instructor for VTC's PVTAP curriculum.

## **Session III: *Phonological Processing: Auditory Considerations for the Developing Reader***

How the brain processes speech sounds play a significant role in reading development. This session explores normal auditory processing and its relationship to phonology, phonemic awareness and the development of early reading skills. When an Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) is present, it can negatively impact reading development. We will also address early identification and treatment options for those with a specific sub-type of APD related to phonological processing.



**Dr. Deborah O'Sullivan, B. Sc., M. A., Au.D.** has a keen interest in human communication and its disorders. Her undergraduate degree in speech-language pathology and her doctorate in audiology has served her well for the past 35 years as an audiologist. The study of speech, language, and audiology shows remarkable overlap not only in the human brain but in how they are related to one another when it comes to identifying and diagnosing communication disorders.

For the past 15 years, Dr. O'Sullivan has held a special interest in Auditory Processing Disorders (APD), tinnitus, hyperacusis, and misophonia. She has also completed post-doctoral training with the Auditory Processing institute and is an active member of the International Guild of Auditory Processing Specialists. Dr. O'Sullivan holds memberships with the Canadian Academy of Audiology and the College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists of Ontario. *Auditory Pathways* is the name of her private practice where she offers the latest in remote diagnostic testing and therapy protocols to assist children and teens who may be struggling with APD, regardless of their location in Ontario.

## **Session IV: How Can We Support Student Learning and Memory?**

This session will cover the basic cognitive neuroscience of learning and memory. This will include how memories are formed, what affects learning, and how memories are later recalled. This will provide a foundation for exploring evidence-based strategies for supporting learning and memory. Participants will leave with specific strategies to support learning, memory, and recall.



**Gabrielle Wilcox** - In January 2013, Dr. Wilcox moved to Alberta from Pennsylvania, where she spent most of her life. She is married with two teenaged sons. She earned a BSE in English Education and an MS in School Psychology at Millersville University. She practiced as a school psychologist for eight years, primarily serving students with intellectual disabilities or severe emotional/ behavioral problems, before completing her PsyD in School Psychology at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine (PCOM) in 2009. She completed post-doctoral training in clinical neuropsychology. She practiced as a licensed psychologist in Pennsylvania, primarily working in pediatric neuropsychology, until joining the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. Dr. Wilcox is a Registered Psychologist in Alberta and

a Nationally Certified School Psychologist.

## **Session V: Executive Function: Putting the Final Building Block in Place**

The Building Block of Executive Functions is at the top of the Building Blocks model and is the most important because it integrates language, self-regulation, reasoning, and planning. Most students will be successful in school if they learn to be organized, evaluative and know how to apply strategies for learning. These executive functions can be coached with strategic instruction when a student is developmentally ready. It is not a quick solution but requires careful steps along the way. In this workshop, we will discover how to assess executive functions as well as how to use efficient strategies for strengthening these areas so that every student can be successful!



**Mary-Lou Maclean** - Executive Director, NILD Canada - Mary-Lou's passion is helping struggling learners reach their full potential. For over twenty-five years, she has worked in the field of education, teaching high school, college and working as an educational therapist. After training to become an educational therapist through NILD Canada, Mary-Lou continued to work with many students for over fourteen years in the school setting as well as a private therapist. Her second passion is training educators and parents to work with students who learn differently, and she became an instructor with NILD Canada, teaching in their summer graduate program. She is now Executive Director for NILD Canada (National Institute for Learning Development-

Canada) She continues to teach, instruct and travels to conferences across Canada.