

# Dr. Donna Johnson-Thompson

Emerging Leaders in Early Childhood Institute



*Empowering the Next Generation of Early Childhood Leaders*



*Are you an emerging Leader in early care and education?*

The **Dr. Donna Johnson-Thompson Emerging Leaders in Early Childhood Institute** is a transformative initiative designed for **women of color**, equipping them with essential skills to lead and enhance educational environments for young children.



## WHY JOIN?

- 42 hours of professional development training.
- Eligible for **NJCCIS annual professional development hours**.
- **4 core modules with 12 sessions** covering:
  - o Leadership Foundations
  - o Foundations for Early Education & Care
  - o Crafting Excellence: Program Organization & Management
  - o Family & Community Relations
- Sessions on **Social-Emotional & Physical Wellbeing**
- **One-on-One Mentorship** from established early education leaders
- **\$1,500** stipend awarded upon completion

**APPLY TODAY** <http://bit.ly/pfp2025newapp>

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- √ 3–5 years of experience in early care and education
- √ New director or emerging leader in early care and education
- √ Submission of an **essay** outlining your vision for leadership
- √ **One professional reference**

About Dr. Donna Johnson-Thompson  
A Newark native and career educator, Dr. Donna Johnson-Thompson dedicated over 45 years of service to the Newark Day Center, one of New Jersey's oldest nonprofits. She was a leader in advocacy, serving as Commissioner of the NJ Commission on the Status of Women, President of the Essex & Hudson NAEYC Chapter, and a Board Member of NJAEYC. Dr. Johnson-Thompson was also a dedicated advocate for teacher development, serving as a member of the Teacher Qualification and Professional Development Committee of Newark Public Schools.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

[www.programsforparents.org](http://www.programsforparents.org)

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## Class Schedule

MONTH	SESSION	HOURS
<b>March 2025</b> 3/25/25 6-8 pm	<b>ORIENTATION</b>	2 hrs
<b>April 2025</b> 4/19/25 10am-2pm or 4/49 & 4/26 10am-12pm	<b>M1 – Empowered &amp; Effective Communication</b> (Facilitator: La’Keisha Ciprian)	4 hrs
<b>May 2025</b> 5/17/25 10am- 2pm or 5/17 & 05/24 10am - 12pm	<b>M1 - Professional Boundaries for Peace &amp; Prosperity + Self Awareness for Success</b> (Facilitator: Zakiyyah Sally)	4 hrs
<b>June 25</b> 6/21/25 10am- 2pm or 6/21 & 6/28 10am-12pm	<b>M1 &amp; M2 – Mindful Leadership + Nurturing Spaces: Optimizing Environments for Child Development</b> (Facilitator: Natasha Dyer & Kimberly Ramsay)	4 hrs
<b>July 25</b> 7/12/25 10am- 2pm or 7/12 & 7/19 10am-12pm	<b>M2 - Curriculum Development &amp; Implementation in Early Care &amp; Education + Navigating Compliance in Early Care &amp; Education</b> (Facilitator: Kimberly Ramsay, Samantha Lott-Velez, & Kalisha Dorlean)	4 hrs
<b>August 25</b> 8/9/25 10m-2pm or 8-9 & 8/16 10am-12pm	<b>M3 - Building a Sound Business Strategy Aim4Excellence™</b> Module 5 (Self guided online)	8 hrs
<b>September 25</b> 9/13/25 10am-2pm or 9-13 & 9/20 10am-12pm	<b>M3 - Building a Sound Business Strategy Aim4Excellence™</b> Module 5 (Self guided online)	4 hrs
<b>October 25</b> 10/11/25 10am-2pm or 10/11 & 10/18 10am-12pm	<b>M3 &amp; M4 - Attracting Talent: Recruiting and Retaining Exceptional Staff + Succession Planning</b> (Facilitator: La’Keisha Ciprian & Winifred Smith-Jenkins)	4 hrs
<b>November 25</b> 11/8/25 10am-2pm or 11/8 & 11/15 10am-12pm	<b>MM4 - Family Matters + Advocacy &amp; Public Perception</b> (Kimberly Ramsay) & (Zakiyyah Sally)	4 hrs
<b>December 25</b> 12/13/25 10am-2pm or 12/13 & 12/20 10am-12pm	<b>Mentor Meet Up &amp; IDP Development</b>	4 hrs
<b>January 26</b> 11/10/26 10am-2pm & 1/17/ 26 10am-12pm	<b>RENEWAL RETREAT &amp; GRADUATION</b>	4 hrs 2 hrs
	Orientation	2 hrs
	Training Sessions + IDP Development	42 hrs
	Mentorship	2 hrs

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## Course Descriptions

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### Curriculum Overview

The **Dr. Donna Johnson-Thompson Emerging Leaders in Early Childhood Institute** is more than a training program—it is a movement dedicated to carrying forward the legacy of a **trailblazing educator, advocate, and mentor**. Rooted in the principles of **justice and belonging**, this institute was designed to **empower, uplift, and equip** early childhood leaders with the tools to **drive meaningful change** in their communities.

Each session honors **Dr. Johnson-Thompson's enduring contributions** by preparing the next generation of **fearless and compassionate** leaders who will **advocate for children, families, and educators** while strengthening the early childhood education sector.

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### MODULE 1: Leadership Foundations

#### SESSION #1: Empowered & Effective Communication – 4hrs

(Facilitated by La'Keisha Ciprian)

Leadership begins with **strong, intentional communication**. This **interactive, high-impact session** will empower participants to **strengthen their voice as leaders**, refine their **professional presence**, and navigate **complex communication challenges** in early childhood education.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Master **effective and adaptive communication** to engage families, staff, and the broader community.
  - Explore the role of **active listening, public speaking, and business correspondence** in leadership success.
  - Utilize **AI-powered tools** to **enhance communication** and **increase efficiency** in school operations.
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## MODULE 1: Leadership Foundations

### SESSION #2: Professional Boundaries for Peace & Prosperity – 2hrs

(Facilitated by Zakiyyah Sally)

True leadership thrives in environments where **respect, trust, and balance** are prioritized. This session equips participants with the tools to **set and uphold professional boundaries**, ensuring a **healthy and supportive workplace culture**.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Learn how **professional boundaries** protect leaders, staff, and children.
- Identify **policy-driven solutions** to reinforce workplace expectations and prevent burnout.
- Strengthen the ability to **clearly communicate expectations** while fostering a culture of **mutual respect**.

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### SESSION #3: Self-Awareness for Success – 2hrs (Facilitated by Zakiyyah Sally)

**Leadership starts from within.** This session will guide participants in **harnessing their personal brand** and leveraging their **unique strengths, values, and leadership style** to inspire and uplift others.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Identify your **leadership identity** and how others perceive your role.
- Strengthen **core leadership skills** such as **authenticity, empathy, and trust building**.
- Cultivate a **personal brand that reflects purpose, vision, and impact**.

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### SESSION #4: Mindful Leadership – 2hrs (Facilitated by Natasha S. Dyer, MPA, SHRM-CP)

Sustaining **strong leadership** requires intentional self-care. This session introduces **mindfulness as a leadership strategy**, helping participants cultivate **resilience, emotional intelligence, and work-life balance**.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Understand **mindfulness as a tool for personal and professional growth**.
- Develop a **self-care** plan tailored to **key dimensions of wellness**.
- Explore mindfulness techniques to **reduce stress and enhance decision-making**.





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## MODULE 2: Foundations for Early Education & Care

### SESSION #5: Nurturing Spaces: Optimizing Environments for Child Development – 2hrs (Facilitated by Kimberly Ramsay)

A child's environment is **their first teacher**. This session provides early childhood leaders with **the knowledge and tools** to create spaces that **inspire learning, growth, and social emotional well-being**

#### Key Takeaways:

- Understand the role of **health, safety, and nutrition** in **child development**.
- Learn to design **developmentally appropriate learning environments** that support **physical, cognitive, and social-emotional** growth.
- Recognize **CDC developmental milestones** and how to integrate **best practices** into your program.

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### SESSION #6: Curriculum Development & Implementation in Early Care & Education – 2hrs (Facilitated by Kimberly Ramsay)

A well-crafted curriculum **lays the foundation** for lifelong learning. This session will guide participants in designing and implementing **engaging, play-based, and developmentally appropriate** learning experiences.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Explore the **impact of play-based learning** on early childhood development.
- Gain a working knowledge of the **NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards**.
- Develop strategies to implement **engaging and inclusive curriculum** in diverse learning settings.

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### SESSION #7: Navigating Compliance in Early Care & Education – 2hrs (Facilitated by Dr. Samantha Lott-Velez, Kalisha Dorlean & More)

Compliance is **the foundation of quality early childhood programs**. This session equips participants with **critical knowledge of licensing requirements** and regulatory standards.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Navigate licensing for **Family Child Care (FCC), Early Head Start/Head Start, and Pre-K programs**.
- Understand **federal and state compliance laws** that impact program quality.
- Learn to **proactively prepare for licensing requirements and inspections**.



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## MODULE 3: Crafting Excellence: Program Organization & Management

### SESSION #8: Building a Sound Business Strategy | Aim4Excellence™ Module 5 – 16hrs

(Self-guided online module facilitated by McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership)

Sustainable early childhood programs require sound business practices. This **comprehensive, self-guided module** empowers participants with **essential tools** for financial and organizational success.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Identify **key business structures** and **financial planning strategies**.
- Learn **budgeting, cash flow management, and grant writing** techniques.
- Explore best practices in **marketing, branding, and program administration**.

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### SESSION #9: Attracting Talent: Recruiting & Retaining Exceptional Staff – 2hrs

(Facilitated by La'Keisha Ciprian)

A great program begins with **great people**. This session focuses on **staff recruitment, retention, and creating a positive workplace culture**.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Learn **best practices** for recruiting and **retaining high-quality educators**.
- Explore **workplace culture strategies** rooted in **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)**.
- Understand the importance of **brand identity and employee engagement**.

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## MODULE 4: Family & Community Relations

### SESSION #10: Succession Planning – 2hrs (Facilitated by Winifred Smith-Jenkins)

Legacy building is about **sustainability**. This session provides **actionable steps** for creating **succession plans** that **ensure continuity and long-term impact**.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Understand the importance of **succession planning** in **early childhood leadership**.
- Learn to **identify key roles and assess future talent needs**.
- Develop a **succession roadmap** for organizational sustainability.



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## MODULE 4: Family & Community Relations

### SESSION #11: Family Matters – 2hrs (Facilitated by Kimberly Ramsay)

Families are children’s first teachers. This session equips leaders with the skills to build meaningful relationships with families and communities

#### Key Takeaways:

- Learn the impact of family and community engagement on child development
- Develop strategies to create reciprocal, trust-based partnerships with families.
- Strengthen community ties through culturally responsive engagement.

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### SESSION #12: Advocacy & Public Perception – 2hrs (Facilitated by Zakiyyah Sally)

Leadership is advocacy. This session empowers participants to **amplify their voice**, engage in **public discourse**, and champion **policy change** in early childhood education.

#### Key Takeaways:

- Develop strategies to advocate for children, families, and educators.
- Learn how to mobilize community partnerships for impactful change.
- Master effective communication and media engagement strategies.

