



# Thursday Keynote

**8:30-9:45 am**

River's Edge Conference Center

## **Investing in the Early Years: The Science of Strong Start Executive Function Skills: Foundation for Learning and Adaptation**

Dr. Philip David Zelazo

Executive function (EF) refers to the mental skills that help us control our thoughts, actions, and emotions. These include cognitive flexibility (the ability to switch between tasks or thoughts), working memory (holding and manipulating information in mind), and inhibitory control (resisting impulses). These skills develop quickly during early childhood and are crucial for school readiness and social-emotional development. Essentially, it's not just what you know, but how well you can use these EF skills to apply your knowledge.

This presentation will cover what we know about EF and its development in children, discuss ways to measure EF accurately, and suggest effective methods for parents, teachers, and others to support healthy EF growth. The main point is that early support for developing EF skills in schools can enhance all children's learning and development, giving every child a fair chance to succeed in school and beyond.

### **About the Speaker:**

*Dr. Zelazo's research on the development and neural bases of reflection and executive function has resulted in over 150 publications that have been cited more than 10,000 times by other scholars. His research has been honored by numerous awards, including a Boyd McCandless Young Scientist Award from the American Psychological Association (APA), and a Canada's Top 40 Under 40 Award, and he has given over 85 invited talks and keynote addresses (nationally and internationally) during the past 10 years.*