

Colloquium with
Dr. Mari Fernandez

VISITING ASSISTANT/ASSOCIATE RESEARCH PROFESSOR

January 5 • Westside E • 10:00 a.m.

Dr. Mari T. Fernandez has been on the faculty at the University of South Florida (USF) since 1985 where her research, teaching, and service have focused on connecting families and educators and supporting them to enhance the developmental and academic outcomes for children. She is now the Director of the Florida Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC) at USF, a federally funded statewide project that focuses on family engagement in education. Under her directorship, the Florida PIRC became the State Office for Parents as Teachers, an evidence-based home visiting program. A school psychologist by training, Dr. Fernandez has extensive experience working with families from diverse backgrounds, with a special focus on families of preschool children who may be disadvantaged in meaningfully engaging in their children's education due to economic, educational, language, or cultural factors. Dr. Fernandez' professional work and personal/family experiences have prepared her well to model and support culturally competent practices in working with families. As a child, she immigrated to the US and she has had opportunities to experience acculturation challenges and joys throughout her life, having lived and taught in several different countries and cultures. She speaks Spanish and French, languages which have been very useful in her work with families of Hispanic and Haitian Creole extraction.



Dr. Fernandez is the recipient in 2003 of one of 11 Albert J. Solnit Leadership Fellowships awarded nationally by ZERO TO THREE. She has presented her research nationally and internationally. Dr. Fernandez is the lead author of the Early Care Adjustment Rating by Educators (E-CARE), a tool designed to assess young children's adjustment during transitions in care, developed in partnership with and in response to community needs. The E-CARE gained national and international attention and is an example of community action research. It also exemplifies one of Dr. Fernandez' strongest beliefs --- that supporting and respecting families as leaders in their own children's development and learning must be an essential component of any efforts to enhance child outcomes and student achievement.