

LAURA HAWKESWORTH MRAZ

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Education

1/2009-6/2011 **University of Illinois at Chicago** **Chicago, IL**
Clinical Doctorate in Occupational Therapy

8/2008- 8/2010 **University of Illinois at Chicago** **Chicago, IL**
Master's of Science in Occupational Therapy

9/2005 – 5/2007 **Loyola University Chicago** **Chicago, IL**
Bachelor's of Science in Psychology

Honors and Awards

2025 UIC 10 Year of Service Faculty Award

2020 UIC Applied Health Colleges New Alumni Award

2017 and 2018 Expertise Best Preschool in Chicago for Blue Bird Day

2017 SPARK Autism Hero Award

2005-2007 Loyola University Chicago Cum Laude, Mulcahy Research Scholar

Credentials and Certifications

- Registered and Licensed Occupational Therapist
- Developmental Therapist Certified
- Sensory Integration and Praxis Test (SIPT) Certified
- Nonviolent Crisis Prevention Certified Instructor Certified
- Interactive Metronome Certified
- The Listening Program Certified Provider-Bone Conduction

Employment

Owns and operates three programs across the Chicagoland area known collectively as Three Birds One Mission since 2007.

1/2022- Present **Owner/CEO/Occupational Therapist** **Chicago, IL**
Merlin Day Academy, LLC

www.merlindayacademy.com

- Merlin Day Academy is a therapeutic elementary school for children 6-14 years old, established by Laura Mraz in 2022.
- Successfully obtained Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) licensing and approval for students to be placed privately by their school district.
- Oversee the operations and strategic vision with 80 full time employees, including multidisciplinary team of occupational, speech, physical, developmental, social work ABA therapists, and administration staff.
- Continually developing and growing the program to meet the needs of our students.
- Collaborate with local partners, including developmental pediatricians, early intervention stakeholders, private insurance stakeholders and local university programs.

1/2014- Present **Owner/CEO/Occupational Therapist** **Chicago, IL**
Blue Bird Day, LLC

www.bluebirddayprogram.com

- Blue Bird Day is an intensive, multi-disciplinary therapeutic preschool and kindergarten readiness program, established by Laura Mraz in 2014.
- West Loop location opened in 2014, Northcenter opened in January 2018 and Wheaton opened in 2021.
- Oversee the operations and strategic vision with 120 full time employees, including multidisciplinary team of occupational, speech, physical, developmental, social work ABA therapists, and administration staff.
- Continually develop and improve program evaluation outcome measures, program data measurements and client engagement strategies.
- Collaborate with local partners, including developmental pediatricians, early intervention stakeholders, private insurance stakeholders and local university programs.

5/2007- Present Owner/CEO/Occupational Therapist Chicago, IL

Eyas Landing Pediatric Therapy

www.eyaslanding.com

- Established by Laura Mraz in 2007, Eyas Landing is a pediatric therapy outpatient clinic located in the west loop of Chicago that specializes in Sensory Integration, Autism, Sensory-Based Feeding Disorders and Relationship-Based Practice.
- Oversee the operations and strategic vision with 50 full time employees, including occupational, physical, speech, developmental, social work, ABA therapists, and administration staff.
- Collaborate with local partners, including developmental pediatricians, early intervention stakeholders, private insurance stakeholders and local university programs.

7/2003 – 7/2005 Preschool Teacher Shanghai, China

Shanghai Tiny Tots International Kindergarten and Preschool

- Taught preschool to expatriate children between the ages of 3 to 5.
- Participated in lesson planning, special event planning, and organizing activities for summer camp.
- Implemented sensory diet and classroom accommodations for a 3 year old student with autism and sensory processing disorder under the supervision of an occupational therapist.

Teaching Experience

2013-present Guest Lecturer Chicago, IL

University of Illinois at Chicago Dr. Jenica Lee

“Introduction to the Intentional Relationship Model with Case Example”

- Provide guest lecture on implementing IRM into Eyas Landing and Blue Bird Day practice, including pediatric case studies for first year MS/C students, once per year since 2013.

2013-present Guest Lecturer Downers Grove, IL

Midwestern University Dr. Glenn Cotton

“Introduction to the Intentional Relationship Model with Case Example”

- Provide guest lecture on implementing IRM into Eyas Landing and Blue Bird Day practice, including pediatric case studies for first year MS/C students, once per year 2013.

8/2013-6/2018 **OTD Course Educator and Project Advisor** **Chicago, IL**
University of Illinois at Chicago

- Provided insight and feedback regarding doctoral project for many different OTD students over the years.

8/2015-12/2015 **Clinical Adjunct Professor** **Chicago, IL**
University of Illinois at Chicago

- Facilitated Synthesis II case study class including cases related to pediatrics, mental health and geriatrics.

9/2010-12/2010 **Teacher's Assistant** **Chicago, IL**
University of Illinois at Chicago Dr. Renee Taylor, PhD

- Assisted in lecture discussions and labs for The Intentional Relationship Model and Therapeutic Use of Self course for MS/C first year students.

9/2010-12/2010 **Synthesis I Facilitator** **Chicago, IL**
University of Illinois at Chicago Joy Hammel, PhD

- Facilitated a small group of ten students in analysis of case examples with specific focus on evidence based practice, transformational learning theory and the Intentional Relationship Model.

Professional Presentations

2024 AOTA Conversations That Matter: *Interprofessional Collaboration With Board-Certified Behavior Analysts in Pediatric Therapy*

2023 AOTA Conference Poster Presentation *Blue Bird Day Participation and Volition Data in Multidisciplinary Interventions*

2015 Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) Institute
Blue Bird Day Intensive Therapy Program

Co-presenters: Laura Mraz, OTD, OTR/L and Baily Zubeil, OTD, OTR/L

2015 Illinois Teachers of Hard of Hearing and Deaf Individuals Conference
Autism and Deafness: Sensory Implications

Co-presenters: Laura Hawkesworth, OTD, OTR/L and Erin Harvey, OTD, OTR/L

2010 AOTA Annual Conference and Expo Presentation
The Centennial Vision: From the Perspectives of Our Students, Emerging Leaders and Newest Practitioners

Co-presenters: Laura Hawkesworth, OTS and Brent Braveman, PhD

Research Experience

6/2017-2021 **University of Illinois at Chicago** **Chicago, IL**
Partnering to Pilot PEM for Family Centered Care Planning Mary Khetani, Sc.D.

- Blue Bird Day served as a recruitment and participation site for utilizing the YC-PEM and PEM plus assessment tool that assesses parent engagement and treatment planning.
- Received IRB approval from University of Illinois at Chicago's Internal Review Board.

6/2017-09/2017 **Lewis University** **Romeoville, IL**

Parents' Perspectives on Relationships with Providers

Susan Cahill, PhD, OTR/L

- Eyas Landing served as a recruitment and interview site for participant perspective research study.
- Received IRB approval from Lewis University Internal Review Board.

1/2014-2016 **Eyas Landing and UIC**

Explanatory-Outcomes Studies of Clinical Mode Use, the Therapeutic Alliance, Client Satisfaction, and Participation in Therapy Renee Taylor, PhD and co-investigators

- Assisted investigators in recruiting research subjects including practicing therapists and clients.
- Oversaw data collection and interpretation in outpatient clinic.
- Oversaw and participate in IRM training as it relates to the study.
- Received IRB approval from University of Illinois at Chicago's Internal Review Board.

12/2006-11/2007 **University of Illinois at Chicago** **Chicago, IL**

Pathways in Living: Increasing Mental Health Consumers' Community Integration Through Peer-Led Education Susan Pickett-Schenk, PhD

- Interviewed study participants at Heartland Health Outreach, Thresholds Dincin Center for Recovery and the Community Mental Health Center.
- Recruited participants to take part in a peer-led education course study that focused on pursuing goals and becoming more independent.
- Entered and coded preliminary data.
- Prepared literature reviews on the topic of integrating mental health consumers into the community.

9/2006- 5/2007 **Loyola University Chicago** **Chicago, IL**

Memories for a Visit to a Children's Museum

Catherine A. Haden, PhD

- Assisted investigators in research study that sought to analyze video and audio tape recordings of parents and their child conversations at building exhibit and two weeks later in their homes.
- Coded and transcribed memory conversations, and assisted in analyzing preliminary data.
- Prepared tape recorders and incentive materials for each participant.
- Contributed in funding with the Mulcahy Research Scholarship.

Building Understanding in Under Construction

Catherine A. Haden, PhD

- Assisted in collecting data at the Chicago Children's Museum by video tapping participants participating in a Loyola doctoral student's research study

Volunteer Experience

2018-Present Chicago Autism Network Chicago, IL

- Participate in fundraising for their annual gala benefitting Chicago families medical bills each year and providing grant access to our clients.

2016-2018 Expressions Gala Benefitting Autism Speaks Chicago, IL

- Organized, hosted and funded a private gala event, with client artwork, silent auction and raffle fundraising opportunities and helped raise over \$100,000 to support Autism Speaks.

Associations and Memberships

SPARK Advisory Team Counsel Member
American Occupational Therapy Association
Illinois Occupational Therapy Association

References

Renee Taylor, PhD UIC

OTD Advisor

Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar, PhD UIC

OTD Committee Member

Gloria Levin, OTR/L

Mentor since 2006 Gloria Levin and Associates

Sarah Hirschman, MOT, OTR/L

Regional Clinic Director at Three Birds One Mission