

## Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

# REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Dear Colleagues,

As we close another impactful year in early childhood education, I want to take a moment to reflect on all we've accomplished together. Through Quality Improvement planning, Pyramid Model and Zero to Three cohorts, and a multitude of other professional learning experiences, your dedication to nurturing Delaware's children has been unwavering, and the difference you make in their lives is profound.

As always, this month's REACH newsletter is filled with opportunities and resources designed to support you and your programs as you continue this essential work. From leadership development opportunities to tips for enhancing active play and fostering inclusive learning environments, we hope you'll find both valuable inspiration and practical support in this issue.

As the holiday season approaches, let's celebrate the collective strength of our early childhood community and look forward to a new year of growth and success. Thank you for all you do to ensure that every child in Delaware gets the great beginning they deserve.

Warmest regards,

Kristy Sheffler  
Interim Co-Director, DIEEC

# DIEEC Action Items

## Now Enrolling: Delaware ECE Excellence in Leadership Cohort!

Unlock your leadership potential! This inspiring journey is open to passionate leaders ready to build their skills, create a positive work culture, and develop strategies that retain educators. Together, we'll explore leadership practices that empower teams, enhance engagement, and transform early childhood programs into places where educators and children thrive. Open to program leaders and family child care educators. Ready to lead the way? Request an interview for this exciting opportunity- space is limited!

<https://forms.gle/6ZPXQkCGcBqjrcd7>



## Shining the Light on You: New Cohort Forming Soon

Are you a family child care educator looking to boost your wellness? Our next cohort of Shining the Light on You, a free 15-week program focused on your health and wellbeing, begins in March. Get insights on topics like stress management and mindfulness, earn up to 18 Quality Assured hours, and enjoy benefits like one-on-one health coaching. Sign up for an info session on January 27 or February 10 to learn more! <https://bit.ly/3Vxa1XY>



## Health Insurance Marketplace Open Enrollment: Now Through January 15, 2025

Now is the perfect time for early care and education staff to find out what they qualify for, compare health insurance plans, and enroll in health coverage! The flyer *What Do Early Childhood Educators Need to Know About the Marketplace?* is a great starting point- it's available in English and Español. UD Cooperative Extension also has some useful resources and videos on its Health Insurance 4 U page. Need help applying? Local support is available. Find an "assister" near you. <https://www.healthcare.gov/find-local-help/>

**English version:** <https://www.cms.gov/marketplace/outreach-and-education/special-populations/early-childhood-educators.pdf>

**Spanish version:** <https://www.cms.gov/marketplace/outreach-and-education/special-populations/early-childhood-educators-spanish.pdf>

## DIEEC News

### Provider Spotlight: A. S. Academy of Learning 2

In the world of early childhood education, staffing challenges are nothing new, but at A. S. Academy of Learning 2, leadership is addressing recruitment and retention head-on. Owner Shannon Moody brings a deep understanding of the importance of supporting staff to create a thriving program. This year, she's using the Quality Improvement process to develop her "employer brand," marketing her center's dual emphasis on quality for both child and staff development to prospective staff members and families. Read more about the ways A. S. Academy of Learning 2 is focusing on staff recruitment and retention. <https://bit.ly/3ZKReew>



Shannon Moody, owner of A. S. Academy of Learning 2, and husband Dave Moody - Image by Stephanie Thompson

### 1st State Family Child Care Conference Recap

The DIEEC team extends its heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of this year's 1st State Family Child Care Conference. We welcomed 140 dedicated family child care educators, celebrating and supporting their essential role in shaping young lives and fostering strong communities. We also appreciate our engaging presenters, whose expertise brought valuable insights and practical strategies to life, and our generous sponsors and vendors, whose support made the conference possible. From the inspiring keynote by Julia Semple to the enriching professional development sessions, the day was a resounding success. Thank you for joining us to learn, connect, and celebrate the incredible work of family child care educators!

<https://www.therapeuticmassageofnoco.com/about>

## Children's Book Week 2024 Recap

DIEEC's 2024 celebration of Children's Book Week was busy and successful! Our team of guest readers visited 62 programs across Delaware, donating 290 new children's books that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to connect with so many early childhood professionals around our shared understanding of the importance of early literacy. Of course, reading is essential all year round, so be sure to check out the great tools, tip sheets and local resources available on our website!

<https://www.dieec.udel.edu/childrens-book-week/>



Guest readers visited 62 programs across Delaware during Children's Book Week

## Coach's Corner: Active Play

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), children under 5 years should have at least 3 hours of active play per day. The good news is that you do not need any fancy equipment to make this happen! While children do enjoy playing on swings or on climbing equipment, there are plenty of ways to create active play experiences without those things. Check out our tips for encouraging active play every day- even in winter- in this month's Coach's Corner. <https://www.dieec.udel.edu/whats-new/coachs-corner/>



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## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Highlight

"Are there ways to acknowledge holidays, to have celebrations, to honor families that are respectful in a highly diverse world?" According to this article from NAEYC, the answer is yes. The article provides guidance as you thoughtfully consider if and how to celebrate holidays in your own program.

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/blog/anti-bias-and-holidays.%C2%A0>

## DIEEC Public Calendar

DIEEC's public calendar is a great way to keep up with what's happening in the early childhood community. Upcoming events are listed on the bottom left side of our homepage, and you can also click through to the full calendar. Click on an event name to get all the details: who, what, when, where and how to join in!

<https://www.dieec.udel.edu/dieec-calendar/>

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## Next REACH Publication Date: January 13, 2025

Due to the University's holiday schedule, our January 2025 issue of REACH will come out on the second Monday of the month (January 13), rather than the usual first Monday.

# Quality Improvement Planning

If you are working on a Quality Improvement Award application, be sure that you are referring to the most recent version of the QIS Program and Policy Guide. On page 2 of the guide, you will find a summary of the most recent updates made by the Delaware Department of Education. <https://www.dieec.udel.edu/home-revision-2/quality-improvement-system/>

## FY25 Quality Improvement (QI) Award Deadline: January 15, 2025

Keep the important information below in mind if you are planning to apply by January 15.

- Due to office closures for the winter holidays, **DIEEC Quality Improvement (QI) Specialists will NOT be available between 12/21/24 and 1/5/25.**
  - **Your Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) must be co-created with a Quality Improvement Specialist** to be eligible for the award.
  - **The program leader is responsible for connecting with their QI Specialist.**
    - **If you already have a QI Specialist**, you can reach out to them directly.
    - **If you do not yet have a QI Specialist**, you must request support through the Delaware Early Care and Education portal. See the **Program Portal Guide** for information about how to use the portal and request QI Specialist support.  
[https://portal.delawareece.com/Content/Documents/HelpDocuments/DE\\_ECE\\_Program\\_Portal\\_Guide.pdf](https://portal.delawareece.com/Content/Documents/HelpDocuments/DE_ECE_Program_Portal_Guide.pdf)
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- **Developing a QIP is a multi-step process.** You will need to meet with your QI Specialist several times. To ensure your plan is developed and submitted on time, we encourage you to connect with your specialist as early as possible.
- **QI Specialists are working with programs on a rolling, first-come, first-served basis.** Programs that are not able to submit by the next deadline of January 15, 2025 will have one additional opportunity to apply for the FY25 QI award (by March 15, 2025).

QI Specialists are available to support programs in their quality improvement journey regardless of their intent to apply for a QI Award. For more information on the QI process, working with a QI Specialist, or applying for an award, please refer to the Program and Policy Guide for Delaware's Quality Improvement System for Early Care and Education Programs. <https://www.dieec.udel.edu/home-revision-2/quality-improvement-system/>

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## Quality Improvement Resource Highlight

Each month, we share resources that Delaware program leaders can use to support themselves and their staff as they work towards higher levels of quality.

This month, we're focusing on resources that support Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a key component for implementing inclusive practices and providing environments that are responsive to the developmental needs of all children.

- The **November 2024 issue of Natural Resources**, published by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, offers several readily available, free resources about UDL, some of which are available in English and Spanish.
- **This checklist republished by the Center on Technology and Disability**, with permission from the Let's Participate Project, includes ideas on how you can design your learning environment and implement intentional teaching practices.

Your Quality Improvement Specialist can assist you in selecting the most suitable resources for your Quality Improvement Plan.

If you have a resource to share or something that you're doing in your program that we can highlight, we'd love to hear about it! Submit your ideas to [ecinstitute@udel.edu](mailto:ecinstitute@udel.edu) to be included in a future edition of REACH.

# DIEEC Professional Learning Experiences (PLEs)

## Upcoming Free Opportunities

DIEEC's professional learning experiences (PLEs) are available at no cost to you. You can browse and register for a variety of PLEs on the [DIEEC professional learning experience calendar](#). Check out these upcoming offerings:

### Virtual-Live and Hybrid Professional Learning Experiences

**Bridging the Connection Gap: Individualizing Relationships PLUS**, a 3-hour introductory course starting on **January 6**.

**Child Assessment for Teachers: The Power of Practice PLUS**, a 10-hour introductory course starting on **January 7**.

**Implementing Teaching Strategies Gold**, a 7-hour intermediate course starting on **January 7**.

**Full STEAM Ahead: Generar valor y aumentar la confianza para apoyar el aprendizaje y el desarrollo en ciencia**, tecnología, ingeniería, arte y matemáticas, a 3-hour introductory course starting on **January 7**.

**Promoting Social and Emotional Wellness PLUS: Teaching tools for life to maximize children's potential**, a 10-hour intermediate course starting on **January 9**.

**Giving Care to the Caregiver: Recognizing Compassion Fatigue and How to Plan for Balance**, a 5-hour introductory course starting on **January 13**.

**The Parent Voice: Engaging Families, a 5-hour intermediate course starting on January 7**.

**All In for STEM**, a 4-hour intermediate course starting on **January 13**.

**Leaders Bridging the Connection Gap: Individualizing Relationships PLUS**, a 10-hour intermediate course starting on **January 14**.

### Self-Paced Professional Learning Experiences

All of the PLEs listed below will begin on **January 1st**. Click on each PLE name to learn more.

- [Assessment 101: Assessment for Positive Effect](#)
- [Stress and Resilience: Building Core Capabilities Community of Practice](#)
- [5 Strategies for a Happy and Healthy Classroom](#)
- [Community Resources in Early Care](#)
- [School Age: Building Community with Partner Schools](#)
- [6 Pillars of Character Building for School Age Children: Community of Practice](#)



## Important Update from the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE)

The following trainings will soon be available through DIEEC on an online platform called Canvas. The Early Childhood Provider Call on Thursday, December 12 at 1:30 p.m. will include a demonstration of how to register for courses on the Canvas platform. The courses will be available in Canvas as of December 16.

- Health & Safety Training for Child Care Professionals
- Administration of Medication Certification
- Maintaining Equity in Early Childhood: Suspension / Expulsion Prevention

**Final reminder:** DEPNow trainings will be discontinued as of January 1, 2025. The last day to register on the DEPNow platform is December 15. If you are currently enrolled in any DEPNow training, please ensure you complete it by December 31, 2024, to receive credit on your Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) transcript. This change **ONLY** pertains to trainings offered on the DEPNow site. DIEEC and iPD trainings will continue to be offered.

## Additional Professional Development Options for Delaware Early Childhood Professionals

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) has created a list of organizations that provide online training hours to meet the educational requirement for the CDA. The Office of Child Care Licensing will also accept training hours from these companies to meet annual licensing clock-hour requirements. This list can be found on their webpage: Educator Requirements: Birth through Second Grade - Delaware Department of Education.

<https://bit.ly/3Yz8zaa>. Scroll all the way to the bottom of the page to view the list.

### FREE option

Listed on the DDOE site above as “Head Start ECLKC,” the Office of Head Start’s Individualized Professional Development (iPD) Portfolio **offers free online courses** on child development and practical teaching strategies for infant/toddler educators and preschool educators. <https://bit.ly/3WxJ8TI>.



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