

## Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

# REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Dear Early Childhood Professionals,

This month, we're excited to share new opportunities and resources to support you. Our new Microlearning Deep Dive professional learning experiences (PLEs) offer a chance to explore key early childhood topics with the addition of coaching and reflection. Plus, DIEEC's Excellence in Early Childhood Awards are coming soon with a new category recognizing early career educators—consider nominating yourself or a colleague!

In February's Coach's Corner, you'll discover practical ideas for building community partnerships that support children, families, and your program while strengthening connections beyond the classroom. You'll also find updates on our refreshed website and quality improvement resources. As always, we appreciate your dedication to Delaware's youngest learners.

With warm regards,

Kristy Sheffler  
Interim Co-Director, DIEEC

# DIEEC Action Items

## Shining the Light on You

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 well-being, begins in March. Get insights on topics like stress management and mindfulness, enjoy benefits like one-on-one health coaching, and earn up to 18 Quality Assured hours.

Attend our final information session on February 10 to learn more and apply. [Fill out our interest form to register](#) for the information session and to receive updates when future cohorts become available.

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## Come Take a Microlearning Deep Dive with DIEEC!

Join us for two new Professional Learning Experiences (PLEs) focused on topics from DIEEC's [original microlearning series](#). Microlearnings are intended to be brief, actionable “chunks” of information on a specific topic. Our new PLEs take two of those microlearning topics and invite you to dive in and explore further. Each PLE is designed for new early childhood educators, and begins with a one-hour session focused on the topic, followed by individual coaching and a group reflective experience (GRE). Educators can earn a total of 4 Quality Assured hours for participating. Use the links below to register!

- [How to Read a Book to Young Children- Microlearning Deep Dive with Coaching PLUS](#) is being offered in April.
- [Transitions- Microlearning Deep Dive with Coaching PLUS](#) is being offered in February and April.

*Please note: the 5-10 minute microlearnings on our website are not eligible for QA hours when completed on their own.*

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# DIEEC News

## Coming Soon: DIEEC Excellence in Early Childhood Awards

We're thrilled to announce that the former DIEEC Educator of the Year Awards are back with a new name and an exciting new addition! Going forward, the initiative will be called the DIEEC Excellence in Early Childhood Awards. We'll be recognizing excellence in three categories this year: family child care educators, center-based classroom educators, and a new early career educator category.

There are two ways for eligible outstanding educators in all 3 categories to be in the running for an award.

- **You can be nominated** by a program administrator, colleague, or parent of a child in your program.
- **You can nominate yourself** for the award.

Nominations will open in late February - think about a dedicated and deserving educator you'd like to nominate OR consider nominating yourself! **Check out our webpage** for more information and updates - nomination instructions will be available soon!



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## Be on the Lookout for a Refreshed DIEEC Website!

We're excited to share that [www.dieec.udel.edu](http://www.dieec.udel.edu) is getting a facelift! The site will have a new look, and it will be easier for you to find what you need. All information and resources related to DIEEC's role in supporting Delaware's Quality Improvement System will now be gathered in one convenient location on the site.

We're also adding a brand-new Resource Hub! This carefully curated collection features reviewed materials from trusted sources. Whether you're looking for tools to enhance your practice or new ideas to inspire your work, the Resource Hub will be there to help. Stay tuned for the launch date of our new and improved site!

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## Coach's Corner - Community Partnerships

By connecting with local organizations, programs can provide valuable resources, foster meaningful relationships, and create opportunities that benefit children, families, programs, and the community as a whole. In this month's Coach's Corner, [learn how you can take steps to build your community](#).

Thank you to everyone who responded to our Coach's Corner poll in January! We're looking forward to including your ideas in future articles. 🎉

**Congratulations** to Adrienne Meade, who was randomly selected to receive a DIEEC goodie bag.



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## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Highlight

This month, we're sharing an article that includes strategies for having conversations with children as they notice, and perhaps ask about, the differences between the people in their world: [Talking to Children about Differences and Similarities](#).

Children are keen observers of the world. Their curiosity is a useful learning strategy! When they notice how they are similar to and different from the people around them, it helps them construct their own social identities.

Here's one strategy for guiding these conversations; click the link above for more!

"If a child says that a peer's wheelchair makes him look like a robot, you can say, "Some people use wheelchairs to get around, some people use their feet. Both are able to go where they want to go! But people in wheelchairs are people just like you." Have a conversation. Be open to children's questions and curiosity about the differences they notice. You do not need to have all of the answers. It is most important to be willing to have a conversation."

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## 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!

## News from Our Partners

### Update: How to Access Former DEPNow Trainings

Three trainings can be accessed through DIEEC using an online platform called Canvas. Please note that the timing for this process has changed—you'll now need to allow up to 48 hours between registering for a course and beginning it. We appreciate your patience as we all navigate this new process together.

Steps to get started:

1. Register for a course
  - [Health & Safety Training for Child Care Professionals](#)
  - [Administration of Medication Certification](#)
  - [Maintaining Equity in Early Childhood: Suspension / Expulsion Prevention](#)

Within 24 hours, you will receive an email titled “UD Guest Account Invitation” from [ziadakir@udel.edu](mailto:ziadakir@udel.edu). Follow the instructions in the email to set up your account.

- Video tutorial: [Creating Your Canvas Account](#) Within 24 hours after setting up your account, you will receive an email titled “Course Invitation” from Instructure Canvas. Click the “Get Started” button in this email to log in to Canvas and begin your course.

Additional courses. The Office of Early Learning (OEL) has [prepared a chart](#) to guide you in accessing trainings similar to the others formerly available through DEPDNow. These can be accessed through the Office of Head Start’s [Individualized Professional Development \(iPD\) Portfolio](#).

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## Learn About the Child and Adult Care Food Program - FREE Webinar

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides financial reimbursement for nutritious meals and snacks served to over 4.5 million children and adults every day. The National CACFP Association is hosting [two Zoom webinars](#) on Wednesday, February 19 at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. to teach child care and adult providers about the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and why they should participate.



Registration is FREE if you enter promo code FOODPROGRAM25 on the final page of the [registration form](#).

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## ‘Montessori 101’ Free Online Workshop, March 6 and April 3

Explore Montessori for your classroom or program!

Hands-on learning is at the heart of Montessori education, with a child-centered environment that aims to lay the foundation for students’ future path of self-directed learning, and lifelong social and intellectual growth.

Following the motto that “Play is the work of the child,” the Montessori environment can make a positive difference in shaping children’s early learning and social experiences.

Learn more about Montessori education at the Montessori 101 Free Online Workshop, provided March 6 and April 3 by the University of Delaware’s Montessori Teacher Academy, which offers Montessori teacher training programs, customized seminars and professional education, and support services for schools and learning centers wishing to implement Montessori programs.

To learn more, to RSVP for the Montessori 101 Free Online Workshop, or to join us for free virtual information sessions this spring, visit [www.pcs.udel.edu/montessori](http://www.pcs.udel.edu/montessori).

## ECLKC has Moved!

ECLKC has moved to a new address at [www.HeadStart.gov](http://www.HeadStart.gov). Same great resources, new location. If you have a login and/or saved items on the ECLKC site, you will NOT need to create new credentials on the new site—everything will transfer over. Questions? Check the [Transition to HeadStart.gov FAQs](#) page.

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# 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.

## FY25 Quality Improvement (QI) Award Deadline

The final application deadline for the FY25 QI Award is March 15, 2025. If you are planning to apply by March 15, you should already be working with a DIEEC Quality Improvement (QI) Specialist on a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

QI Specialists work with programs on a rolling, first-come, first-served basis. If you have not yet reached out to your QI Specialist or requested support through the [Delaware Early Care and Education Portal](#), we encourage you to do so immediately. While we will do our best to accommodate new requests, we cannot guarantee support in developing a QIP in time for your program to apply by the March 15 QI Award deadline if schedules are already full.

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](#).

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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 offering resources that focus on mindfulness as a way to create responsive, positive environments for children. When educators practice mindfulness, they are better able to manage stress, stay present in the moment, and respond to children's interests and emotions with warmth and patience. This leads to stronger relationships, more engaging interactions, and a classroom environment where children feel safe, supported, and ready to learn.

- **Mindfulness in Head Start Settings**, from [headstart.gov](http://headstart.gov), provides links to a few different resources to support growth in this area. These resources include:
  - An online learning module (also called Mindfulness in Head Start Settings) through the **Individualized Professional Development (iPD) Portfolio**. The module focuses on how to include mindfulness practices into your daily routines in your early childhood setting.
  - A **mindfulness toolkit** filled with exercises for the educator as well as children. There are also additional resources, such as free apps and videos.

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 PLE Opportunities with DIEEC

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

- **Sensory Disorder PLUS**, a 6-hour introductory experience starting on **February 8**.
- **Supporting Sensory Learning: Infants, Toddlers and Beyond**, a 4-hour introductory course starting on **February 10**.

- [Transitions: Microlearning Deep Dive with Coaching PLUS](#), a 4-hour introductory experience starting on **February 11**.
- [Strengthening Business Practices: Marketing Your Program for Center-Based Administrators PLUS](#), a 7-hour introductory experience starting on **February 12**.
- [Helping School-Age Children Reboot Their Brain](#), a 3-hour intermediate experience starting on **February 12**.
- [The Business of Early Childhood: Your Influence, as a Leader, in Creating a Great Place to Work PLUS](#), a 14-hour intermediate experience starting on **February 18**.
- [Explore STEAM with Making and Tinkering](#), an 8-hour intermediate experience starting on **February 18**.
- [A Series of Conversations for Family Child Care Networks: Understanding Head Start Program Performance Standards- Administrative Requirements](#), a 2.5 hour intermediate experience starting on **February 19**.
- [Advanced Assessment for Administrators: Data Driven Decision Making PLUS](#), a 10-hour advanced experience starting on **February 24**.
- [The Parent Voice: Engaging Families PLUS](#), an 8-hour intermediate experience starting on **February 25**.
- [Addressing Challenging Behavior: The Pyramid Model](#), a 7-hour intermediate experience starting on **February 27**.
- [Flip It! Flipping the Challenging Behavior PLUS](#), a 10-hour intermediate experience starting on **March 3**.
- [Play for Development and Learning](#), a 10-hour advanced experience starting on **March 3**.

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### Self-Paced Professional Learning Experiences

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

- [Risk Management in the Early Care Setting](#)
- [Stress and Resilience: Building Core Capabilities Community of Practice](#)
- [The Role of Play in Any Setting](#)
- [Outdoor Classrooms: Wonder, Explore, Learn](#)
- [Culturally Responsive Teaching](#)
- [Attachment and Childhood Trauma: Community of Practice DIEEC Virtual Course](#)