

## Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

## REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Dear Early Childhood Professionals,

This time of year often brings a focus on **connection, community, and kindness**, which perfectly mirrors the foundational work you do every day in nurturing young children. The December issue of REACH is full of resources and opportunities to support your professional growth and help you finish the year strong. We're excited to announce that applications are now open for the **DIEEC Early Childhood Educator Leadership Board**—a fantastic chance to let your on-the-ground experience inform our work! You'll also find details on our upcoming **Conscious Discipline Book Study** and the final spots in our ECE Excellence in Leadership Cohort. Check out the numerous upcoming opportunities to engage in training and conversation through our partners, and don't miss the **special DECC call on December 11**. Finally, we invite you to review our **2025 Provider Spotlights** for a dose of inspiration and to check out an essential guide on selecting **diverse and inclusive children's books** to encourage early literacy.

We wish you a peaceful and restorative close to the year!

Warmly,

Kristy Sheffler, DIEEC Interim Co-Director

# DIEEC Action Items

## Applications Now Open: DIEEC Early Childhood Educator Leadership Board

Are you a classroom educator, program administrator, or family child care educator who wants to help inform DIEEC's work in the field? Leverage your on-the-ground experience to offer insights into the needs of Delaware's early childhood community and provide recommendations on DIEEC's programs and initiatives! Apply to join the DIEEC Early Childhood Educator Leadership Board, a diverse group of educators dedicated to strengthening the supports provided for Delaware's early childhood community.

[Visit our Leadership Board webpage.](#) Applications are open through **January 15, 2026.**



*The Leadership Board brings educator voices together to strengthen Delaware's early childhood supports. (Photo credit: DIEEC)*

## Conscious Discipline Book Study: Winter 2026

Curious about Conscious Discipline? Join our upcoming book study to explore practical strategies for building stronger connections and creating a positive classroom environment. Don't miss this chance to learn, share, and grow together! [Sign up for the book study here.](#)

*Build deep, positive connections! Join our Conscious Discipline Book Study to learn practical strategies for connection and a positive classroom. (Photo credit: iStock)*



## Delaware ECE Excellence in Leadership Cohort: Last Chance!

It's not too late- we have a few more spots available for DIEEC's 5th leadership cohort. This journey will enhance your skills, inspire your team, and create programs that foster the growth and well-being of both educators and children. The cohort is open to program leaders and family child care educators—are you ready to make a difference? [Request an interview here.](#)

## Coach's Corner: Create Your Vision, Set Your Intention

Start the new year with purpose by shifting from rigid resolutions to meaningful intentions that support your growth. [This month's Coach's Corner explores simple ways to create your vision, set supportive routines, and enter January with clarity and confidence.](#)

*Turn your goals into a tangible vision. Start the year by mapping out your intentions for personal growth, career, and health! (Photo credit: iStock)*



## Children's Book Week: Thank You for Reading with DIEEC

We'd like to take a moment to thank all of the programs that welcomed DIEEC guest readers during Children's Book Week in November. Every year, it's a true pleasure to visit the programs we serve; we appreciate the opportunity to connect with you!

We also offer our thanks to everyone who contributed book titles for our "favorite read-alouds" resource. [You'll find this new resource and many more on our Children's Book Week page.](#) We hope you'll use these ideas to celebrate the joy of reading all year round!



*Deborah Fuller, Assistant Director of Research and Evaluation reads to children at The Wright Choice Child Care and Rose's Child Care during the recent Children's Book Week. (Photo credit: Christian S. Ferrell/DIEEC)*

## Monthly Raffle for Early Childhood Educators

This month, we're raffling off two bundles of children's books. [Read this month's Coach's Corner about setting intentions](#), then tell us which method for creating your vision you'd like to try. **Raffle entries close on January 2, 2026. [To enter the raffle click here.](#)**

### Our November raffle winners were:

- Family Child Care: Argueta-Chavez Acelero
- Center-based Educator: Angela Trump

**Congratulations!** 🎉 We'll reach out soon to get your prizes to you.

*Enter to win! One family child care and one center-based educator will win a bundle of books and extra goodies for their program.*



## Provider Spotlight: Year in Review

Provider Spotlight will be back in January! In the meantime, [we invite you to explore the Provider Spotlights published by DIEEC in 2025](#). These spotlights showcase the richness of experiences and leadership styles across Delaware's programs: there's the devoted educator creating a welcoming "second-home" for families, the rising professional balancing her own education and running an early childhood education program, and programs that weave creativity, community engagement, and nature-based learning into everyday care. Each story offers a different perspective on nurturing children, supporting families, and strengthening early learning – and together they highlight the diverse ways Delaware's early childhood community goes above and beyond.



*Meet the devoted educators, rising stars, and innovative programs featured in our 2025 Provider Spotlights.*

## Meeting the Needs of All Children

Reading with young children and giving them access to a variety of books is essential for early literacy and helps spark a lifelong love of reading. As we choose books, it's also important to consider the messages they send. The images and words children see strongly shape how they view themselves and others.

[This helpful guide from Teaching for Change outlines what to look for when selecting books to share](#). For example, check for harmful **stereotypes**—oversimplified and often inaccurate generalizations about identity groups. Watch for **tokenism**, such as only one child of a particular background appearing in a group, and for **invisibility**, where certain identities or experiences are missing altogether. As stated by the authors of the guide, "What children do not see in their books also teaches them about who matters and who doesn't in our society."

## Office Hours

Did you know that DIEEC offers regular drop-in office hours for FCC educators and center-based administrators? DIEEC staff is on hand and ready to provide technical assistance and help get your questions answered. See our upcoming office hours below. No appointment needed- just stop by!

Center-Based Programs	Family Child Care Educators
<a href="#">Zoom link for ALL center-based office hours</a>	<a href="#">Zoom link for ALL FCC office hours</a>
Tuesday 12/9 from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.	Monday 12/15 from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.
Tuesday 1/13/26 from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.	Tuesday 1/6/26 from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

## 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 of our [DIEEC 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!

# Updates from Our Partners

## Special DECC Call on December 11 at 1:30: Dialogue with National Leaders on Modernizing Child Care Licensing

In place of the December Provider Call, the Delaware Early Childhood Council (DECC) is hosting a special one-hour DECC meeting with a moderated panel of national experts. All ECE professionals are encouraged to listen and join the Q&A. [Access the agenda and Zoom link here](#).

## Professional Preparation for Early Childhood Educators (PP-ECE) Offered at Delaware Technical Community College (DTCC)

Enrollment is now open for January 2026 courses! PP-ECE is aligned with the Child Development Associate (CDA) Council's 120 hours of required CDA coursework, and participants will create the CDA-required portfolio while taking the course. PP-ECE is accepted by DEEDs to meet OCCL requirements for teacher certification. For more information about enrollment and available scholarships, [please see the flyer from the Office of Early Learning](#).

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## Delaware EARNs: Helping Delaware Workers Save for the Future

Delaware EARNs is a state-sponsored retirement savings program for workers whose employers don't offer a retirement plan. It provides a convenient way for small-business employees and owners to save money for retirement in a tax-advantaged Roth IRA. [Learn more and enroll here](#).

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## Early Childhood Collaborative Conversations: Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

Do you work with young children? Are you frustrated and overwhelmed responding to challenging behavior? Do you wish you had some support? Join these free upcoming conversations, and receive training hours. Training is hosted in conjunction with the Delaware Department of Education, Early Childhood Excellence, and the Sprout Center for Emotional Growth and Development, LLC. No prior registration is required. The Zoom link below is for both events.

- Child Welfare Concerns - Tuesday, December 16th 5:00pm-6:00pm
- Challenging our Assumptions - Monday, December 22nd 1:00-2:00pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/780480121?pwd=K3pHUm1MemlJSXRGUWZRMzAxYlJlUT09>

Meeting ID: 780 480 121

Passcode: 013561

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## Together for Tomorrow: Strengthening Early Childhood in Delaware

On **Thursday, January 8, 2026**, join the Wilmington Early Care and Education Council (WECEC) and First State Pre-K for an engaging evening of conversation and advocacy at the Stubbs Early Learning Center. Connect with parents, educators and community members, and explore advocacy tools and action steps to strengthen early childhood education in Delaware. [See the flyer for more information and registration information](#).

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# Quality Improvement System

## Quality Improvement Planning

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) and the Early Childhood Excellence Team have updated Delaware's Quality Improvement System (QIS) Guide. As explained in the email sent by DIEEC on Wednesday, 10/28, programs applying for Quality Improvement Awards should review these changes before submitting a Quality Improvement Award (QIA) application. [View the guide HERE](#); the update history on page 3 offers a concise summary of the changes.

As in previous years, to be eligible for a FY26 QIA, programs must be actively engaged in quality improvement efforts. With the support of a DIEEC Quality Improvement Specialist (QISp), programs will reflect on their areas of growth and build a quality improvement plan (QIP).

Developing a QIP is a multistep process, and requests to work with a QISp will be scheduled in the order they are received. New requests from family child care programs are currently being scheduled for January/February. Contact your DIEEC quality improvement specialist about scheduling.

## Applying for a Quality Improvement Award?

**Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) account requirement.** As programs prepare to apply for Quality Improvement Awards (QIAs), they should note new requirements for this year. The Office of Early Learning is requiring programs to have an ASQ account and engage in training for the formative assessment tool their program is using (e.g., TS GOLD, Funshine, etc.).

**Accessing your ASQ portal.** If you need to register or do not have access to your ASQ portal, please use the [ASQ Support Request Form](#). Once your request has been processed, you will be contacted via email with your login information for you to access your portal. You can find step-by-step guidance in the [ASQ Provider Manual for Early Childhood Programs](#), and you can learn more about Developmental Screening by visiting [Delaware's Developmental Screening Resources webpage](#).

**Training for formative assessment tools.** Program staff must engage in the training for the formative assessment tool used. Documentation of training will be accepted in multiple formats based on the training available for that particular assessment tool. Training must be completed, and documentation must be uploaded to the [Delaware ECE Portal](#) when applying for a QIA. QIA funds may be used to support training on formative assessments that are research-based.

### **Key dates for Quality Improvement Awards:**

- There are two remaining application deadlines: 1/15/26 and 3/15/26.
- To be eligible for an FY26 award, programs must:
  - Hold a certificate or be licensed by the Delaware Office of Child Care Licensing by January 15, 2026, AND
  - Be open and serving two or more children AND
  - Have a visit scheduled with their Quality Improvement Specialist by February 1, 2026.

## **Professional Learning Experiences**

### **Opportunities with DIEEC and Our Partners**

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](#).

To view the current list of OEL-approved training opportunities, click here:

[Professional Development, Coaching, and other Professional Learning Experiences for the Early Care and Education Workforce.](#)