

# PROVIDER SPOTLIGHT

## BY THE FIELD, FOR THE FIELD: INSIDE THE DIEEC ECE LEADERSHIP BOARD

Written by Stephanie Thompson/ Photo by Christian S. Ferrell

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In late February, a dedicated group of early childhood educators met at the Dover Free Library: [DIEEC's Early Childhood Educator Leadership Board](#). While most of the state was easing into the weekend, these educators gathered on a Saturday morning, giving up a few hours of well-earned downtime to prioritize engagement in collective advocacy and professional growth. As they entered the meeting room, some greeted friends, and others introduced themselves to new colleagues. The buzz grew until the 10:00 start time, and then this group of educators turned their attention to the task at hand: ensuring the educator's voice remains centered in DIEEC's work in support of Delaware's early care and education programs.



(left to right) DIEEC ECE leadership board members Latoya Boseman, Dannae Orisamolade, and Sarah Reyes share a moment of connection.

*Typically, DIEEC's monthly Provider Spotlight focuses on a single educator or program. This month, we're shining the light on a whole room full of them- a group of 23 leaders from across the state, representing Delaware's classroom educators, program administrators, and family child care educators.*

The Early Childhood Educator Leadership Board reflects DIEEC's core belief that the best way to improve our support for the field is to listen to those who currently work in programs across the state. In that way, the board serves as a functional bridge between DIEEC's initiatives and the everyday experiences of the workforce. Feedback and recommendations from the board can drive meaningful improvement in the supports offered, how and when they are delivered, how information is framed and shared through DIEEC's communication channels, and the practical barriers that can stand between a good idea and successful implementation. Insights from the board help ensure that DIEEC's work is not just well-intentioned but also aligned with and effective in Delaware's unique early childhood landscape.

New board members are recruited through an annual application process. DIEEC strives to assemble a board that is representative in multiple ways. The challenges facing programs in rural parts of the state may differ significantly from those in more urban areas. Both new-to-the-field educators and those with decades of experience have valuable perspectives to share. The needs and priorities of early childhood educators working in school districts or private schools are likely different from those of educators working in programs serving only the birth to 5 age group. From the solo family childcare educator in Sussex County to a program administrator in Wilmington, the goal is to ensure that a wide variety of "on-the-ground" realities are represented.

"I approach leadership as service. I am not interested in representation for its own sake, but in using my seat to listen, advocate, and help shape solutions that are responsive to the real needs of early educators across Delaware."

-Voices from DIEEC's  
ECE leadership board

Each educator serves a three-year term, with start and end dates staggered across members. Having new and returning members each year allows for an infusion of fresh ideas while maintaining a degree of institutional memory that prevents the board from "starting over" with each term. While the first meeting is in person, the remaining quarterly events are virtual and held on weeknights to accommodate busy schedules and participation from across the state. In recognition of the expertise they bring to the table, board members receive a small stipend for each meeting. This is a simple yet important way for DIEEC to show that we value their voices and their time as experts in the field: an educator's insight is a professional asset that deserves compensation.

## **Recent discussion topics for the board have included:**

- Identifying topics for future DIEEC professional learning experiences (PLEs)
- Feedback on the features of DIEEC's website that provide educator support
- Shaping our surveys for the early childhood audience to ensure we are asking the right questions in a way that solicits actionable feedback
- Discussion of the most effective communication channels and strategies for reaching the early childhood professional audience
- Suggestions for improving the collaborative Quality Improvement Planning process

*"I bring a fresh perspective, a collaborative spirit, and a true desire to advocate for positive change. I'm dedicated to helping create environments where all children can thrive and where early educators feel valued, heard, and empowered." -Voices from DIEEC's ECE leadership board*

By elevating these voices, DIEEC is ultimately improving its support for all early childhood educators in the state. When educators are supported and heard, the quality of care for children rises. Ultimately, the Leadership Board's work ripples outward. Refining the supports offered to educators strengthens the foundations of the programs that Delaware's families rely on every day. We're grateful for the opportunity to partner with an outstanding group of early childhood professionals.

### **Meet this year's board:**

**Jamise Bailey**, Family Child Care Educator, City of Wilmington  
**Tauheedah Barnes**, Early Childhood Educator, New Castle County  
**Latoya Boseman**, Early Childhood Administrator, Kent County  
**Tara Chetty**, Early Childhood Educator, City of Wilmington  
**Araliz Cuthbertson**, Early Childhood Educator, City of Wilmington  
**Lori Hansen**, Early Childhood Educator, Sussex County  
**Aerin Hastings**, Early Childhood Administrator, Sussex County  
**Madison Hogsten**, Early Childhood Educator, Sussex County  
**Stephanie Jackson**, Family Child Care Educator, City of Wilmington  
**Stacy Morgan**, Family Child Care Educator, New Castle County  
**Carleen Morris-Drayton**, Family Child Care Educator, Sussex County  
**Dannae Orisamolade**, Early Childhood Administrator, Kent County  
**Denise Orsini**, Early Childhood Administrator, New Castle County  
**Sarah Reyes**, Early Childhood Administrator, City of Wilmington  
**Kizzy Saunders**, Early Childhood Administrator, New Castle County  
**Elizabeth Schaff**, School-Age Administrator, New Castle County  
**Dorzet Short**, Family Child Care Educator, Sussex County  
**Susan Smith**, Early Childhood Administrator, City of Wilmington  
**Jean Snyder**, Early Childhood Educator, City of Wilmington  
**Shakira Waples**, Family Child Care Educator, New Castle County  
**Mary Waters**, Family Child Care Educator, Kent County  
**Raeleah Watts**, Early Childhood Administrator, New Castle County  
**Molly (Tirana) White**, Early Childhood Administrator, Sussex County