

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Dear Early Childhood Professionals,

Welcome to the August issue of REACH! Late summer is a vibrant season in early childhood education, and this month is filled with meaningful opportunities to gather, reflect, and celebrate. We are thrilled to invite you to our upcoming DIEEC Block Party on August 18 to tour our brand-new home on the University of Delaware's Children's Campus. You will also find registration details for the 1st State Family Child Care Conference, a save-the-date for this fall's Children's Book Week, and actionable strategies in Coach's Corner for making the most of morning check-ins.

As we mark the completion of all FY26 intensive cohorts, we offer our deepest gratitude to the programs and classrooms that partnered with us this past year. Your dedication to continuous growth directly elevates the quality of early experiences for Delaware's young children. In this issue, you'll also find important updates on FY27 Quality Improvement Planning and practical insights from Harvard's Center on the Developing Child on fostering a deep sense of mattering in young learners. Thank you for your continued partnership and for the heart you bring to your work every day.

Warmly,

The DIEEC Team

DIEEC ACTION ITEMS

DIEEC Block Party- RSVP by August 12

Join us for a casual summer event to tour our new space, catch up with friends, and celebrate the good work happening in Delaware's early childhood education community!

- **Who:** Program administrators, educators, and friends of the early childhood field.
- **When:** 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- **Where:** DIEEC's new office at 461 Wyoming Rd., Newark, Del. 19716

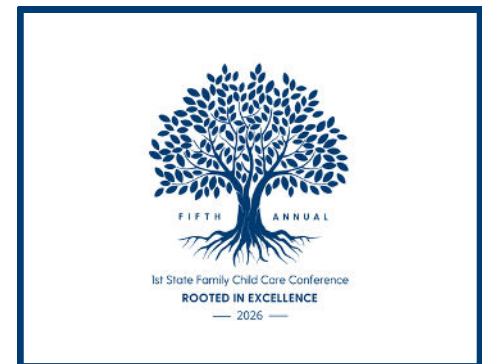


What's on the block? Elevated summer snacks and a custom "build-your-own" lemonade and iced tea bar, playful activities, helpful resources, and plenty of raffle drawings throughout the evening. Get ready for good food, great music, and even better company! [RSVP here by August 12.](#)

1st State Family Child Care Conference- Registration Closes August 28

Whether it's your first year attending the conference or your fifth, you'll discover fresh ideas, gather new resources, and connect with local FCC educators to grow your support network. Your registration includes breakfast, lunch, refreshments, and full access to our vendor marketplace!

Ready to join us? [Head over to our conference webpage](#) to register, check out hotel and transportation details, and learn about this year's keynote panel.



Psst! Are you a business looking to support our community? Sponsor and vendor registration is also open on the [webpage](#)!

Save the Date for Children's Book Week

Celebrate Children's Book Week with DIEEC this November! From November 9th through November 13th, DIEEC will celebrate the nationwide initiative sponsored by Every Child A Reader. [This year's theme is Books: Get Curious](#), "celebrating all the ways that the stories we read, share, and tell encourage and quench the curiosity inherent in every child." DIEEC's guest reader program will be back, and we're working on some exciting new ideas to support programs in developing children's love of books and reading!

Stay in the loop, [fill out our interest form](#), and be the first to know when registration for this popular initiative opens!



DIEEC NEWS

From Seeds to Success: Celebrating Year Two of Let's GROW Outside!

Read our recap of the second Let's GROW Outside! cohort's in-person celebration event to discover the practical garden hacks and lessons learned, as shared by the local early childhood educators who participated in this 8-month professional learning experience with DIEEC. [Read the celebration recap here.](#)



Members of the second Let's GROW Outside! cohort gather to celebrate the completion of their eight-month program. (Photo credit: Christian S. Ferrell/DIEEC)

Coach's Corner: Making the Most of Morning Greetings

A warm, intentional morning greeting builds connection, safety, and a deep sense of belonging for every child. [Read this month's Coach's Corner](#) to discover creative, educator-tested strategies to make your daily drop-off routines meaningful and engaging!



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Monthly Raffle for Early Childhood Educators

This month, we're raffling off two \$10 Wawa gift cards. [Read this month's Coach's Corner about making the most of morning check-in](#), then answer our survey question, and you'll be entered to win.

Here are our lucky July raffle winners:

- **Family child care educator:** Bobbi Stubbs
- **Center-based classroom educator:** Christine Allen, Holy Cross School Early Learning Center

Congratulations! 🎉 Check your email- we'll reach out soon to get your prizes to you.

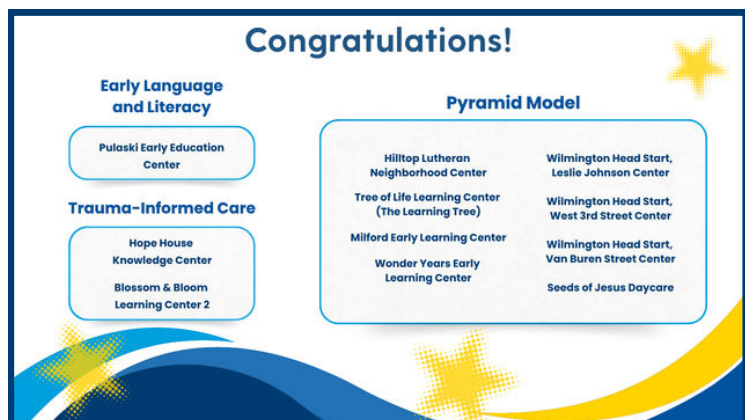


[Enter to win here!](#)
[Deadline is August 26.](#)

A Commitment to Continuous Growth: Celebrating DIEEC's 2026 Cohort Participants

We are thrilled to celebrate all of the programs that have recently reached a major milestone! A DIEEC cohort is a multi-month journey of reflection, collaborative learning, and hands-on practice. Over the last several months, these dedicated educators have worked hard to bridge the gap between theory and real-world application.

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We extend a heartfelt **thank you** to these programs for their partnership. We can't wait to see how they carry the momentum into the months and years ahead.

Meeting the Needs of All Children: Mattering

What does it mean for a child to feel they matter to others?

[According to researchers at the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University](#), “from the earliest years, children’s sense of mattering is shaped both by feeling valued and by adding value to others. Feeling valued fulfills a deep psychological need for both significance and security and fosters self-worth, confidence, and emotional well-being. Young children who feel valued are more resilient, motivated, and better able to deal with stress.”

Now, researchers are exploring how caregivers can contribute to the development of a strong sense of mattering in children. [Check out these 11 tips for letting children know they matter.](#)



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Office Hours to Support Programs and Educators

DIEEC offers regular drop-in office hours for FCC educators and center-based administrators, with DIEEC staff ready to provide technical assistance and help get your questions answered. No appointment needed- just stop by!

Upcoming office hours

Center-based programs [use this Zoom link to join all center-based office hours.](#)

- Tuesday, 8/11 from 10:30-11:30 a.m.
- Wednesday, 8/26 from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

Family child care educators [use this Zoom link to join all FCC office hours.](#)

- Tuesday, 8/4 from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.
- Monday, 8/17 from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m.

DIEEC Summer Hours

From May 25 through September 4, DIEEC will be on summer hours. Our main phone line, 302-831-3239, will be staffed **Monday through Thursday, 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**, and **Fridays, 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.** You may also email us at your convenience at ecinstitute@udel.edu and you will receive a reply during business hours. You can visit our website anytime at www.dieec.udel.edu.

Update Your Address Book: DIEEC Has Moved!

Our new location is in the heart of the University of Delaware's Children's Campus. We're excited to have new neighbors: the [UD Lab School](#), the [Center for Disability Studies](#), the [Early Learning Center](#), and [The College School](#)!

Our email address and phone number remain the same: you can still reach us at ecinstitute@udel.edu or by phone at [302-831-3239](tel:302-831-3239).

DIEEC's new street and mailing address is:

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

[461 Wyoming Rd., Newark, DE 19716](#)



DIEEC Public Calendar: Stay Informed, Stay Connected

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!

NEWS FROM OUR PARTNERS

Provider Call: Thursday, August 13

The next Early Childhood Provider Call is scheduled for Thursday, August 13, from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. To receive the Zoom link for the call and receive other early childhood updates and newsletters, [sign up here](#).

Delaware Early Childhood Council (DECC) Strategic Plan Release- In-person Event on August 27

Join DECC for the release of its new strategic plan and a celebration of the people, partnerships, and progress driving early childhood forward across our state.

This in-person event will bring together child care providers, educators, advocates, community partners, state leaders, and supporters to reflect on how far Delaware has come and look ahead to what's next.

The event will take place on Thursday, August 27 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Delaware Technical Community College in Dover. [Register here](#).

Delaware Wolf Trap Early Learning Through the Arts

Delaware Wolf Trap Early Learning Through the Arts is a fun, hands-on professional development program designed just for early childhood educators and their little learners, ages 3–5. The best part? You get to take part right alongside your students during the school day! Over the course of the program, you'll earn 12 professional development hours while teaming up with a talented Wolf Trap teaching artist. Together, you'll co-create playful, arts-based lessons that weave right into your literacy or math goals—while also boosting your students' creativity, thinking skills, and social-emotional growth. Kids will love the 5.5 hours of exciting, movement-filled learning during the residency, and you'll come away with new ideas and inspiration for your classroom! [Learn more through their interest flyer](#).

WECEC Resource Center Summer Location and Hours

The WECEC Resource Center is officially open at its temporary summer location inside the Police Athletic League Wilmington (PALW), located at 3707 N. Market Street!

Summer hours for the WECEC Resource Center at PALW are:

- **Monday to Thursday:** 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
- **Tuesday & Thursday evenings:** 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Please note that WECEC is only able to make about 25% of their materials available at their summer location- they kindly ask that you email them before stopping by to make sure we have the specific items or resources you are looking for.



Free Access to Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSG)/SmartTeach

Did you know that licensed early care and education programs in Delaware have free access to Teaching Strategies GOLD® (TSG)/SmartTeach assessment tools through the Early Childhood Excellence Team at the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE)? TSG/SmartTeach tools support educators in observing, documenting, assessing, and planning for children's learning and development in meaningful, research-based ways.

Monitoring for adherence to [DDOE's TSG/SmartTeach policies](#) began on July 1, 2026. Programs should review the updated guidance and expectations for the use of TSG/SmartTeach to ensure they are making the most of these valuable supports to strengthen classroom practice, continuous quality improvement, and every child's growth and learning.

Free Book for TSG/SmartTeach Users!

Programs already using TSG/SmartTeach can request a free copy of Teaching Strategies GOLD: Objectives for Development & Learning for each classroom*. This book is an essential resource that outlines developmental progressions, helps educators understand widely held expectations, and supports intentional teaching aligned with child development. [To request copies for your program, simply complete this Google form](#), and your Quality Improvement Specialist will deliver the book directly to you!

***Books are available on a first-come, first-served basis.**

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM

Quality Improvement Planning for FY27 is Underway

Quality improvement planning for Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) has officially begun. The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE), in partnership with the Early Childhood Excellence Team, has identified strengthening the workforce as Delaware's priority focus area for FY27. This year, quality improvement planning connected to Delaware's Quality Improvement System (QIS) will focus on upskilling staff, with an emphasis on increasing Child Development Associate (CDA) attainment. Investing in staff professional growth supports stronger teaching practices, more positive interactions, and better experiences for children and families.

As always, DIEEC is here to support your program through the process. With guidance from a DIEEC Quality Improvement Specialist (QISp), programs will reflect on program strengths, consider opportunities for upskilling, and develop a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) focused on workforce goals. As in prior years, programs must be actively engaged in quality improvement to be eligible for a FY27 Quality Improvement Award.

To get started, programs are encouraged to reach out to their assigned QISp, or [click here to learn how to request QISp support](#) (see p. 9). Connecting early will help ensure you have the time and support needed to complete your QIP and stay on track.

Quality Improvement Award Application Deadlines for FY27

- September 15, 2026
- November 15, 2026
- January 15, 2027
- March 15, 2027

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Professional Learning Experiences (PLEs) with DIEEC

DIEEC's 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](#).

Individualized Professional Development (iPD) Portfolio Update

Head Start's iPD Portfolio has transitioned to Early Education Pathways (EEP). If you previously had an iPD account, you will be able to log in to EEP with the same credentials. [Visit the EEP webpage and learn more.](#)

Accessing Core Trainings on PDMS and Schoology

As of May 1, 2026, all new registrations for the following courses are available only on the Delaware Department of Education's PDMS/Schoology platform. PDMS is where you register for professional development, and Schoology is where you complete the course.

If you do not already have one, you will need to create an EdAccess account to use PDMS and Schoology. Click [HERE](#) to learn how to get started. Once you have an account, you can use the links below to register for and access the trainings.

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

An additional course, [Mandatory Reporting and Recognition of Child Abuse and Neglect](#), has also been added to PDMS and Schoology. This is a new version of the course previously available through the Office of the Child Advocate.

If you do not already have one, you will need to **create an EdAccess account to use PDMS and Schoology**. [Click HERE to learn how to get started](#). Need additional information? This [brief overview and toolkit](#) can be used to guide you through EdAccess account creation and requesting help.

Verifying training completion for PDMS/Schoology courses. When you complete one of the above courses in PDMS/Schoology, please **upload your transcript to OCCL**, rather than the PDMS certificate, to verify training completion.