UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

JULY 2025

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Dear Early Childhood Professionals,

Welcome to the heart of summer and the July issue of REACH! As warmer days invite more outdoor adventures and programs settle into their summer schedules, we are excited to bring you a newsletter brimming with valuable insights and celebration. This month's Coach's Corner offers practical inspiration, with several inexpensive ideas on taking art outdoors. This issue also includes thought-provoking information on fostering belonging by correctly pronouncing children's names, and crucial updates from our partners regarding the developmental screening policy and an upcoming Provider Call. And, as always, you'll find a variety of upcoming professional learning opportunities designed to support your continuous growth.

We also spotlight the winners of DIEEC's **Excellence in Early Childhood Awards**, an initiative designed to honor the dedication and impact of Delaware's early childhood professionals. Congratulations to our winners: your expertise, your passion, and your tireless efforts create the "great beginnings" that DIEEC's motto speaks of. We are incredibly proud to celebrate you, and we are grateful for the immeasurable contributions you make to Delaware's children and families every single day.

With warm regards,

Kristy Sheffler
Interim Co-Director, DIEEC

DIEEC News

Excellence in Early Childhood Awards

On June 13, DIEEC announced the winners of the 2025 Excellence in Early Childhood Awards. These awards shine a much-deserved spotlight on Delaware professionals who exemplify the highest standards in early care and education and go above and beyond to support young children's learning and development.

Congratulations to our winners! You can read more about each of them in this month's Provider Spotlight articles in this month's REACH.

On the evening of June 25, DIEEC hosted the first-ever Excellence in Early Childhood Awards recognition event. The award winners and runners-up, their families and colleagues, DIEEC staff, members of DIEEC's Early Childhood Educator Leadership Board, the awards review panelists, and key stakeholders gathered to shine the spotlight on a group of outstanding early childhood educators!

Image by Courtney Foster/DIEEC. From left to right: Shakira Waples, Tara Chetty, Madison Hogsten, Stacy Morgan, and Ashley Avelleyra.

Provider Spotlight: Excellence in Early Childhood Awards Winners

In this special edition of Provider Spotlight, we're featuring the winners of our DIEEC Excellence in Early Childhood Awards. Click on each one to learn more about them.

Ashley Avelleyra

Meet Ashley Avelleyra, our **2025 Center-Based Educator award winner**! With a decade of experience, her natural gift for connecting with young children shines brightly at Kids Cottage. **Click to learn more**!

Tara Chetty

Discover the wealth of knowledge and deep passion Tara Chetty brings to her classroom. Learn why this dedicated educator at St. David's Episcopal Day School is our **2025 Center-Based Educator runner-up**! **Read her feature here**.

Stacy Morgan

Meet Stacy Morgan, our **2025 Family Child Care Educator Award winner**. **Learn how a "higher calling" led her to create a Little Bit of Sunshine Learning Academy**.

Shakira Waples

Discover how Shakira Waples of Next Generation Childcare, our **2025 Family Child Care Educator runner-up**, blends her love for teaching with family life. **Learn more about her journey here**.

Madison Hogsten

Discover why Madison Hogsten, from a family of teachers, is our **2025 Early Career Educator award winner**. Her dedication is genuinely making a difference! **Learn more here**.

June Raffle Winners 🎉

Congratulations to our June raffle winners! DIEEC will contact you to arrange delivery.

Family child care: Norma L.
Center-based educator: Erika C.

Coach's Corner: Taking Art Outside

Don't just play outside – create outside! This summer, discover how simple, inexpensive outdoor art activities can spark creativity and offer the freedom to be messy! Coach Meghan Pallante shares easy ideas for making bubble art, nature painting, and even water gun masterpieces.

***Quick Tip**: Hands-on, nature-inspired fun! Gather your outdoor finds and let the kids experiment to create beautiful, one-of-a-kind artwork. (Image by Christian Ferrell/DIEEC)*

Meeting the Needs of All Children

Pronouncing a child's name correctly makes them feel respected and valued. This is a simple action you can take to help make children and their families feel welcomed in your program. Here's a 3-minute listen about the **importance of getting names right**.

For more information and lists of children's books on this topic:

- **Pronouncing Kids' Names Correctly Matters. Here's How to Get it Right**
- **21 Books About Children and Their Names**
- **25 Books to Teach Children About the Importance of Names**

Ready to Launch: A Refreshed DIEEC Website 🌐

By the time August REACH comes out next month, the new DIEEC website will be live! Look for an upcoming email and social media posts in July to learn about when the update will go live, and opportunities to explore the new site with us.

Summer Hours at DIEEC ☀️

From **May 27 through August 29, 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**.

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 **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

Next Provider Call: Thursday, July 10 at 1:30 pm

The FY26 state operating budget will be finalized by July 1. Shifting the meeting to July 10 allows for the inclusion of updates based on the FY26 state operating budget that will be finalized by July 1.

Zoom Link:

https://education-delaware-gov.zoom.us/j/85117823106?pwd=Qg3UGwgj0OL1k4es3i8Y4lQ7tKtTAd.1

Meeting ID: 851 1782 3106
Passcode: 711238

Join by phone:

+1 646 558 8656 US

Meeting ID: 851 1782 3106
Passcode: 711238

Developmental Screening Policy Update

At the May 20, 2025, Delaware Early Childhood Council (DECC) meeting, the Delaware Department of Education, Early Childhood Support team shared that they would be extending the "Hold Harmless" timeline and would not cite for non-compliance for developmental screening requirements through June 30, 2026. Beginning July 1, 2026, programs that are applying for childcare license renewals will need to comply with the developmental screening requirements, which will be set forth in the coming months.

The linked **Developmental Screening memo** provides more details about this extension as well as information about the **required trainings** needed to access the DDOE Online screening system.

Please contact the DDOE Developmental Screening Help Desk at **de.screens@doe.k12.de.us** with any questions.

Quality Improvement Planning

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) and Office of Early Learning (OEL) will soon share important information about the FY26 Quality Improvement Awards process. In the meantime, DIEEC encourages programs to continue their quality improvement efforts. We strongly recommend connecting with a Quality Improvement Specialist early; support requests for quality improvement planning are scheduled in the order they are received. Starting now will help you start the new school year with a solid quality improvement plan and ensure your program is ready to move forward once updated award information is available.

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

Title	Hours	Level	Start Date
Explore STEAM with Making and Tinkering PLUS	8	Inter.	July 12
Play for Development and Learning PLUS	11	Adv.	July 14
Math 1, 2, 3: Understanding Children's Math Development PLUS	6	Intro.	July 17
Supporting Sensory Learning: Infants, Toddlers and Beyond PLUS	7	Intro.	July 21
Transitions: Microlearning Deep Dive with Coaching PLUS	6	Intro.	July 22
How to Read a Book to Young Children: Microlearning Deep Dive with Coaching PLUS	5	Intro.	July 23

Title	Hours	Level	Start Date
Full STEAM Ahead: Building Value and Boosting Confidence for Supporting Learning and Development in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math, PLUS	6	Intro.	July 24
Every Day Math PLUS	10	Inter.	July 29
Inspiring Peak Performance: Competence, Commitment, and Collaboration PLUS	8	Inter.	July 29

Looking for more professional development opportunities? Check **DIEEC's online learning page** for information about additional options.