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DELAWARE INSTITUTE FOR  
Excellence in  
Early Childhood



# LEADERSHIP

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This month at DIEEC we have been focusing on the topic of leadership. More than ever, it is important for us to have leaders in the field of early childhood education to advocate for the wellbeing of young children and educators. With our ever-changing work there is always room at the table for new perspectives and ideas. Luckily our field is brimming with brilliant minds and creative thinkers!



# Leadership Vs. Management

Many times, when people think of leadership, they also think of management. While the two words can go hand in hand, they are not synonymous. Managers are often leaders but someone can also be a leader without being a manager or in charge of other employees. Everyone has the opportunity to demonstrate leadership qualities regardless of their job title.

Harvard School of Business states that a manager is typically more concerned with operational tasks and leaders look toward the vision of the organization. Leaders also consider the future of the organization. In early childhood education programs, there can be multiple people working toward the vision and future of the program. Leadership in early childhood education can also extend outside of individual programs. There are many opportunities to be a leader in our field.

There are many qualities that make an effective leader. The following are a few traits that the Center for Creative Leadership lists as essential for leadership:

- Integrity
- Ability to delegate
- Communication
- Self-awareness
- Empathy
- Respect

Think about how you can exhibit these traits in your work with young children, their families, and your colleagues.



## Leadership in Early Childhood Education

Start with your program's mission statement, policies, or values. What can you do to be sure that vision is carried out in your work every day? If your program does not have a mission statement, work to create one! Even if most of your attention is focused on educating and caring for children, there are plenty of ways to display leadership. There are also opportunities to be a leader in the larger scope of the field of early childhood. Below are some ideas to get you started.

### Ideas for your program:

- Plan an activity- Consider offering to take the lead on a family event or planning a summer activity. There are so many ways to get creative with events.
- Passion project- Choose an early childhood education topic that you are passionate about and turn it into a project. For example, you could work to diversify the library area in the classroom(s) by collecting books that include different races, ages, abilities, family structures, etc.
- Staff morale- Brainstorm ways to foster teambuilding with your fellow educators. This could involve planning an activity outside of work or starting a lunch break book club. The purpose is to provide a more personal connection between staff members.
- Professional development- Offer to research training opportunities for your program. Consider exploring a new topic or choose a local conference if budget allows. This is a great way to diversify the type of professional development that your program attends.

For family and large family child care providers, encourage your assistant teachers or substitutes to take on a project if they are willing. This gives them a chance to have some ownership in the program. Another idea is to invite one of your families to plan an activity or event if they show interest.

### **Larger Scope Opportunities:**

- Advocacy- Anyone can become an advocate for young children. Look into the different local, state, and federal education policies regarding education. You can look up local representatives in your area and write to them about the issues that interest you.
- Community building- Look for opportunities to partner with organizations in your local community. This could be attending an event, philanthropic work, or getting involved with your school district. Get creative! There are lots of ways to build connections in your community.
- Family Child Care- If you are a family child care provider, consider getting to know other family child care providers in your area. There may be opportunities to form a support group or to mentor a new provider. In addition, our upcoming Family Child Care Networks can also be a place to find leadership support.

## **Leadership and Young Children**

It might seem strange, but it is never too early to instill leadership qualities. We should be encouraging all young children to develop leadership skills. This can look many different ways. Encouraging kindness and respect is a great place to start. We can also foster leadership by encouraging problem solving skills which helps to build their confidence. And one of the most important things we can do is to model leadership for children.

As you can see, there are so many ways to be a leader. Leadership can look different from person to person, and that is a beautiful thing! We can all use our unique gifts which will benefit our programs and our larger community. We'd love to hear how you plan to use or further develop your leadership skills!

## Professional Development (PD):

- [A Conversation with Leadership: Program Positivity \(Virtual Live\)- DIEEC PD](#)
- [Developing Your Mission Statement \(Self-paced\)- DIEEC PD](#)

**to register for any of these workshops visit: [www.dieecpd.org](http://www.dieecpd.org)**

## Resources:

- [6 Characteristics of an Effective Leader- Harvard Business School](#)
- [McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership](#)
- [Deconstructing Leadership- Zero to Three](#)

## References:

- [Center for Creative Leadership](#)
- [Harvard Business School](#)