

LET'S GO OUTSIDE

DELAWARE INSTITUTE FOR EXCELLENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD Outdoor Learning Grants Initiative

Children's and teachers' **health** and **well-being** depend on regular **playing and connecting outdoors**. **Equitable access** to outdoor spaces where children and their educators can learn, develop, play, and **connect with nature** and each other is a **priority**.

Natural outdoor spaces **enhance physical and mental health and well-being**, promoting physical activity by offering various active play options to engage children of varying fitness levels, ages, and genders.

Spending time in nature promotes child-directed play that is imaginative, constructive, sensory-rich, and cooperative, resulting in **improved social and emotional skills** and **higher satisfaction with life**.

Nature-based outdoor learning **enhances educational outcomes**, improving academic performance, focus, behavior, and love of learning.



Developed an **innovative** 15-hour intensive professional learning experience (PLE) series to **support early childhood professionals** in learning about nature-based outdoor learning, design and select materials for an outdoor learning environment for their programs, and **bring their outdoor learning spaces to life**.

PLEs include:

Self-paced, in-person, live observation, and on-site coaching components.

WHAT CHILDREN ARE SAYING:

"I've never been to a new world like this."

FAST FACTS:

Through **three cohorts**, **43 programs** have fully completed the series and are designated as **DIEEC outdoor learning sites**.

98 educators involved

2,915 children reached

Home-based and center-based programs from **rural, urban, and suburban** settings participated throughout Delaware.

25% in the City of Wilmington

90% serve families who qualify for child care subsidy

WHAT FAMILIES ARE SAYING:

"I cannot write enough about the positive impact of outdoor learning on our family. The two biggest areas of improvement were in the behavior of our child (and our child is a good and relatively easy child) and sleep habits of our child."

WHAT EDUCATORS ARE SAYING:

"An outdoor classroom allows my kids to try different things and become more comfortable with the unknown. This setting promotes hands-on learning and a deeper understanding of how things work."