

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Dear early childhood professionals,

Participants in DIEEC's professional learning experiences (PLEs) know that we often encourage you to take time to reflect as part of the experience. Why do we ask you to do this? Reflection offers the opportunity to pause, consider, and make connections - to process new information, and think about how it applies to our professional practices. In a self-paced PLE, we ask you questions meant to help you think about your current practices, and how you might want to change them going forward. If you choose to engage in the Quality Improvement Process with DIEEC, you'll spend some time reflecting on your program's strengths and opportunities as you make intentional choices about areas for growth and improvement.

As we turn the calendar page to a brand new year, we encourage our friends and colleagues in the early childhood education community: Take a moment to stop, breathe deep, and review what you learned and experienced in the past year. Then, think about how those experiences might shape your plans for the coming year. DIEEC will be here to support you as we renew our commitment to quality early childhood education in 2024!

With warm regards,

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REVIEW, REFLECT, RENEW

Strengthening our commitment to quality early childhood education in 2024

In this issue of REACH, we're taking a look back at 2023 and offering a preview of the good things to come in 2024. In the spirit of that theme, this month's REACH is divided into 3 sections:

REVIEW - The first part of this month's issue provides a recap of 2023 at DIEEC. We've included links in case you missed anything the first time around.

REFLECT - We encourage you to think about your 2023 accomplishments and challenges, and then consider how DIEEC can support your continued growth and success in 2024. To help seed your thinking, we're offering a raffle for REACH subscribers- staying in the know about what's happening in Delaware's early childhood education community is a key part of generating ideas and turning your plans into action.

RENEW - The final section of the newsletter includes upcoming events and opportunities that can help kickstart your 2024 journey, including registration for two of our popular targeted PLEs, "Let's Go Outside" and "Shining the Light on You"; news about the Early Childhood Educator of the Year award; and a list of other upcoming PLEs. DIEEC looks forward to supporting your commitment to quality in 2024.

REVIEW

Highlights from 2023

Initiatives and events

- **Week of the Young Child** - In April, DIEEC and deaeyc partnered to spotlight early learning, young children, and their teachers, families and communities. Delaware early childhood experts and early childhood education leaders presented a panel on Challenging Behaviors: Partnering for Positive Outcomes. Missed it? Find the video by visiting our page: <https://www.dieec.udel.edu/week-of-the-young-child/>
- **Provider Appreciation and Early Childhood Educator of the Year** - In May, we celebrated all of our wonderful early childhood educators with ice cream socials in all three Delaware counties. We also recognized our 2023 Educator of the Year winners, Kirsten Swift (home-based setting) and Lindsey Mulvena (center-based setting).
- **First State Family Child Care Conference** - With over 170 attendees, keynote speaker Jerletha McDonald, and 14 professional learning sessions, our October event was a great success! Read the recap here: <https://www.dieec.udel.edu/whats-new/1st-state-fcc-conference/>
- **Children's Book Week** - In November, DIEEC staff and partners visited 56 programs across the state to read with children and deliver free books around the theme Connecting Children with Nature. Learn more: <https://www.dieec.udel.edu/childrens-book-week/>

Targeted PLEs

Let's Go Outside - We facilitated 2 cohorts of this 15-hour PLE series that supports early childhood professionals in learning about nature-based outdoor learning, and enhancing their program's outdoor learning environment. A total of 112 educators from 39 programs participated, reaching 2,200 children! Learn more here: <https://www.dieec.udel.edu/lets-go-outside-outdoor-classroom-grants/>

Shining the Light on You - This 15-week program for family child care educators focuses on improving participants' health and well-being through weekly group sessions and health coaching; in 2023, we facilitated 3 cohorts, including 2 for Spanish-speaking educators. Learn more here: <https://www.dieec.udel.edu/family-child-care/shining-the-light-on-you/>

Leadership Cohort - A group of 9 program leaders engaged together through a series of 4 PLEs focused on strengthening leadership skills, including workshops, group reflective experiences, and individual coaching. Keep an eye out for new cohorts forming this year. Want to participate? See below for upcoming opportunities to register for these two targeted PLEs!

Learning Opportunities

- **Microlearnings** are a great way to learn new skills and information in 5-10 minute "chunks." In 2023, we launched 12 new microlearnings designed for new early childhood educators (and seasoned educators who want to brush-up on their skills). **Check out all of the topics, and sign up to receive future microlearnings in your inbox here:** <https://www.dieec.udel.edu/microlearning/>
- We completed Season 1 and kicked off Season 2 of **DIEEC's podcast, X Why Z: Reflections from Early Childhood Education Professionals**. **Catch up on past episodes here:** <https://www.dieec.udel.edu/whats-new/x-why-z-podcast/>

Overall support for programs

Over the course of 2023, DIEEC provided the following supports to Delaware early childhood education programs:

- Conducted **classroom observations** paired with follow-up coaching, supporting 11 programs. A classroom observation is an opportunity to receive feedback in areas such as teacher-child interactions, peer-to-peer interactions, the physical program environment and more. Learn more here: <https://www.dieec.udel.edu/observation-and-coaching/>
- Provided **universal supports** and resources for over 900 programs, and targeted supports for 435 programs.
- Delivered 234 **Professional Learning Experiences**; 2,167 participants.

Partners and Resources Highlighted in 2023

DIEEC is a proud partner to many other organizations in the field of early childhood education. One of our goals in REACH is to draw attention to all of the great work taking place in our field.

Here are the organizations and resources featured in our 2023 issues of REACH. Learn more about any item in the list below by visiting [the REACH page](#) on our website. All of our back issues are posted for easy access.

Partners

- National Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Center **(March)**
- Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (ECMHC) **(April)**
- North Carolina Institute for Child Development Professionals **(October)**
- DSU's Early Childhood Innovation Center (ECIC) **(November)**
- Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children (deaeyc) **(December)**

Resources

- Early Childhood Assistance Program (ECAP) **(January)**
- Executive Functioning **(June)**
- Head Start Early Childhood Education Resource (ECLKC) **(August)**
- Resources and tools from Tom Copeland, FCC business expert **(September)**
- Salary Scale Toolkit **(October)**
- Learning from Assessment Toolkit **(November)**
- iPD portfolio **(December)**

REVIEW

Highlights from 2023

Reflection provides an opportunity to pause and consider our professional practices. As you think back on your own practice in 2023, don't forget to celebrate your strengths and successes. What worked well? What practices led to those successes or built up those strengths? Then, give some thought to what information or skills might help you meet your challenges. Visit DIEEC's website at www.dieec.udel.edu to explore the options we offer to support educators and programs. Read on for just a few ideas and opportunities!

Raffle alert for REACH subscribers!

To enter, share a reflection and subscriber to REACH

REACH connects you to resources, information and events that support quality early childhood education. It's just one example of the universal supports DIEEC offers- REACH is available to all early childhood educators in Delaware. This month, we're offering a drawing for our subscribers only! Share a reflection on your professional practice from the past year and you'll be entered to win a DIEEC goodie bag!



Here's how - Submit this form: <https://bit.ly/3RNxLVg> and be sure you're subscribed to REACH.

A winner will be announced in the February issue.

RENEW

As we all renew our commitment to providing Delaware's children with high quality care and education, here are just a few of the things you can look forward to with DIEEC in 2024.

- **A new and improved DIEEC website**, including a Resource Hub that will make it faster and easier to find the information you need.
- **Professional Preparation:** Early Childhood Education Cohort is an update to TECE I & II coursework, kicking off in January. Stay tuned for updates on this pilot program.
- A **PLE series based on the Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators** will be piloted starting in February.
- **Physical Activity Learning Sessions (PALS)** is a hybrid PLE focused on incorporating more physical activity into your classroom. The pilot started last week; look for more opportunities in the future!
- **Season Two of the DIEEC Podcast:** X Why Z, Reflections from Early Childhood Education Professionals- Strengthening the ECE Workforce during a Crisis.
- **Annual initiatives:** Provider Appreciation, Early Childhood Educator of the Year, and Week of the Young Child. Theme for Week of the Young Child: Creating Universal Learning Environments.
- **A self-paced option for quality improvement planning** will be introduced to interested **family child care programs in early 2024**.
- **Ongoing support for Delaware's early childhood education programs.** We provide technical assistance to all programs, and we are ready to partner with any programs that wish to engage in the quality improvement planning process as a required step toward applying for a Quality Improvement Award.

**Interested in an in-depth professional learning experience in 2024?
Spring cohorts of popular DIEEC initiatives are forming soon!**

Let's Go Outside teaches professionals about the possibilities provided through outdoor learning, and provides a grant-funded opportunity for them to make their own outdoor classroom visions come to life. The program is open to center-based and home-based programs. **Applications for the spring 2024 cohort will be open from Feb 1-15.** Check the Let's Go Outside web page for more information!

<https://www.dieec.udel.edu/lets-go-outside-outdoor-classroom-grants/>

Shining the Light on You for FCC programs. Presented in partnership with the University of Delaware College of Health Sciences, this 15-week program focuses on improving participants' health and well-being through weekly group discussion. **The spring cohort begins on February 21; information sessions for interested educators will be held on January 31 and February 7.** Read more about the program here:

<https://www.dieec.udel.edu/family-child-care/shining-the-light-on-you/>

Sign up to receive communication about info sessions and registration here:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdn11WJNTdpv8oaMGBZ14YtFpicsJqBjhqGESye-8rQRCObnw/viewform>

**Delaware Early Childhood Educator of the Year
Changes coming in 2024**

This spring, we'll once again strive to bring public awareness to the importance of early childhood educators by announcing our annual Educator of the Year awards during the Week of the Young Child. We wanted to give you a heads up about three key changes for this year's nomination and award process. Keep an eye on DIEEC's social media and the February issue of REACH for application information.

- 1) This year, applications will be open from **February 1 through March 1**. This is earlier than in previous years.
- 2) Educators must **self-nominate** for the award. This ensures that only educators who are interested in being considered for the award are nominated.
- 3) **Winners will be selected by a review panel** made up of early childhood experts and educators.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Accessing Health Coverage Through the Marketplace *Open enrollment closes January 15 - act now!*

The early care and education (ECE) workforce deserves affordable and accessible health care. On January 3rd, DIEEC hosted an informational webinar about accessing health insurance through the Marketplace. The webinar included information about open enrollment and insurance options for 2024.

View the recording here: <https://bit.ly/3H7BwA3>

Navigating Supports Available through Delaware's Quality Improvement System

Universal supports are available to ALL licensed programs Delaware Stars, the state's quality improvement system, has undergone a revision over the past several years. A system that was once known for star-level ratings has been replaced with a system that offers a variety of supports and resources for ALL licensed early childhood education programs to encourage their continuous quality improvement. Depending on the desired level of participation, programs can engage with universal supports and targeted supports through DIEEC.

Read more about universal and targeted supports here:

<https://www.dieec.udel.edu/2023/12/01/navigating-supports-available-through-delawares-quality-improvement-system/>

DIEEC Professional Learning Experiences (PLEs) *Upcoming Free Opportunities*

As a reminder, DIEEC's professional learning experiences (PLEs) are available at no cost to you. As an early childhood professional, you can find and register for a variety of PLEs on the DIEEC training calendar:

<https://dieecpd.org/registry/calendar>

Check out these upcoming offerings:

- [The Parent Voice: Engaging Families](#), 5-hour intermediate offering beginning 1/16
- [Strengthening Business Practices: Staff Recruitment and Retention for Center-Based Administrators and Large Family Child Care Providers PLUS](#), 7-hour introductory offering beginning 1/16
- [Transitions: Emotions in Motion](#), 3-hour intermediate offering beginning 1/24
- [Developing Relationships, Developing Brains: Infants and Toddlers](#), 5-hour intermediate offering beginning 2/6
- [Anti-Bias Education: Diversity](#), 5-hour intermediate offering beginning 2/8

DIEEC Professional Learning Experiences (PLEs) CONT

- Multi-Age Nature-Based Learning for FCC Educators, 3-hour intermediate offering beginning 2/12
- The Business of Early Childhood: Mission and Vision PLUS, 7-hour intermediate offering beginning 2/13
- Understanding Children's Behavior as Communication for Family Child Care Professionals PLUS, 4-hour introductory offering beginning 2/13

You can also find a number of upcoming self-paced options:

- Leadership: Promoting Safety, Trust, and Cooperation, 3-hour introductory self-paced offering available 2/1 - 2/29
- Mindfulness: A Resilience Practice, 2-hour introductory self-paced offering available 2/1 - 2/29



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