

# VOICES FROM THE FIELD

A monthly DIEEC spotlight feature that highlights the variety of programs delivering quality care to children in Delaware.

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## Planning for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at the little school at Kids Cottage

Incorporating diversity in early childhood educators' planning and interactions allows for deeper, caring relationships with children and families. Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) staff recently had the opportunity to learn about how one program is approaching this important topic.

Lisa E. Ratliff, co-owner/co-director of the little school at Kids Cottage in Dover, has utilized a consultant so they could embed diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) throughout the culture of their program, truly living what is in their mission & vision statements. Lisa shared, "We are committed to having courageous conversations with each other and we want parents/families to be able to have courageous conversations with us." At this program, DEI is a part of onboarding staff and welcoming families right from the start.



The children in Cat Powell's Little Lions (Young Fours) classroom, at the little school at Kids Cottage, represent a diverse population in a variety of ways. As part of the Assessing the Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES) observation and coaching with Linda Farmer, (DIEEC Professional Development Coordinator), Cat developed a goal of getting to know her families better. In December, she sent a snowman activity home for the family to create together and asked families to share something their child and his/her family do together as a tradition. Cat shared, "It builds a better connection with families and children...I can incorporate it into plans and build better relationships with the family and child year-round."



Linda shared that it was noticeable during the second observation that Cat was having more conversations with the children, incorporating information about the children's backgrounds and holidays when she was talking with them. Lisa humbly shared, "We are by no means perfect, but we are trying to make it sustainable and just a part of who we are."

If your early childhood education program is considering a more intentional approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion, perhaps start with a focus on how you'd like to incorporate holidays and celebrations. Take a first step by reading this [NAEYC article](#). Want to learn more about ACSES? ACSES examines teacher-student interactions with a focus on racial equity, providing an overall view of what the learning environment is like for racially and ethnically diverse children. Learn more and request a classroom observation on [DIEEC's website](#).