

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Dear early childhood professionals,

Welcome to February!

In this edition of REACH, we have a number of announcements and updates to share, including information about several in-depth professional learning experiences (PLEs) that are beginning this month, and announcing the application period for the DIEEC Early Childhood Educator of the Year Award (be sure to read about the changes to the this year's process.)

We also have information about Delaware's new Office of Early Childhood Intervention and a Provider Spotlight where you can read about how one program is taking steps to embrace and support a diverse audience of children and families.

This month's resource highlight is the Pyramid Model; if you're unfamiliar with it, we'll be offering a PLE soon, and in the meantime we have a few resources for you to explore! We also introduce a new highlight this month, focusing on how Delaware programs are moving toward higher levels of quality through the Office of Early Learning's five priority key practices. This month, we share examples of what programs are doing to recruit, retain, and orient high-quality educators and staff.

Finally, we encourage you to read through our latest Coach's Corner, which breaks down the process of goal-setting. What will your S.M.A.R.T. goals look like?

With warm regards,

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

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 are open through Feb. 15.** Check out the **Let's Go Outside page** for the application and more information:
<https://www.dieec.udel.edu/lets-go-outside-outdoor-classroom-grants/>

Shining the Light on You. Presented in partnership with the University of Delaware College of Health Sciences, this 15-week program for family child care professionals aims to improve participants' health and well-being through weekly group discussion. The spring cohort begins on February 21; an information session for interested educators will be held on February 7. [Join our email list](#) to receive an invitation to the info session. **Applications for the spring cohort are due on February 9th.** For more information and to submit your application, [visit the Shining the Light on You page](#):
<https://www.dieec.udel.edu/family-child-care/shining-the-light-on-you/>

Physical Activity Learning Sessions (PALS) is a professional learning experience (PLE) series focused on physical activity. This series includes self-paced modules, live sessions, individual coaching, and a group reflective experience. Throughout this PLE, you will learn effective practices of physical activity in early childhood settings. PALS is open to all early childhood professionals. **Self-paced component opens February 5; participants may register through February 8.** [Read more about PALS](#) or register to participate in the next offering:
<https://www.dieec.udel.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/PALS-PLE-Interest-Flyer-2.24.pdf>

Key Practice Highlight

As part of Delaware's revised **Quality Improvement System** for early care and education programs in Delaware, the Office of Early Learning (OEL) has prioritized five key practices for fiscal year 2024. Over the course of the next five months, we will highlight one key practice each month and share examples of how Delaware programs are choosing to work towards higher levels of quality in the highlighted practice. This month we are highlighting **CQ-KP4 (classroom-based programs)/CQ-KP6 (FCC): Implements practices to recruit, maintain, and orient high-quality educators, consultants, and contractors (as needed).**

Read more about the Quality Improvement System:

<https://www.dieec.udel.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Guide-to-Quality-Improvement-for-ECE-Programs-in-DE-updated-10.26.23.pdf>

- Next Generation Learning Academy has developed a framework for increased compensation based on work performance, as well as a system that allows staff to provide feedback and take part in self-evaluation and goals for career development.
- Little Einstein's programs in Millsboro and Georgetown have developed their own model to support recruitment and retention.
- New Castle County Head Start has added an incentive to recruit qualified staff. Each month, staff receive a \$350 bonus, providing they are in good standing with attendance and are not on probation.

We'd love to hear how your program is working toward quality in the five key practice areas! Submit your ideas to ecinstitute@udel.edu to be included in a future edition of REACH.

DIEEC Early Childhood Educator of the Year

The **DIEEC Early Childhood Educator of the Year Award** acknowledges and honors the critical role of early childhood teaching professionals in Delaware. Each year, we honor one center-based and one home-based teacher who exemplify the best in quality early care and education.

The 2024 award process is outlined below; **please note that the process has changed from previous years.**

- Applications are open from **February 1 through March 1.**
- Each applicant must nominate themselves by filling out an application form and submitting a letter of support from a parent of a current or former child in the program/classroom, the director of the program/center, or a colleague.
- Winners will be selected by a review panel consisting of members of the early childhood community. Applications will be reviewed anonymously.
- Winners and runners-up will be announced during Provider Appreciation Week in May.
- For eligibility requirements, the application link, and more information, please visit the DIEEC Early Childhood Educator of the Year page:

<https://www.dieec.udel.edu/delaware-institute-for-excellence-in-early-childhood-early-childhood-educator-of-the-year/>

Provider Spotlight

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. DIEEC staff recently had the opportunity to learn about how one program is approaching this important topic.

Read about how the little school at Kids Cottage in Dover is building connections with children and families, and how your program can take steps to do the same:



<https://www.dieec.udel.edu/provider-spotlight/planning-for-diversity-equity-inclusion-at-the-little-school-at-kids-cottage/>

You can also sign up for our upcoming Professional Learning Experience **Anti-Bias Education: Diversity**, a 5-hour intermediate offering beginning 2/8. The course focuses on supporting the concepts of diversity and acceptance in early childhood programs.

Sign up here:

<https://dieecpd.org/registry/calendar/training/7791>

Early Childhood Education Resource Highlight: The Pyramid Model

Professional learning experience coming soon!

The Pyramid Model is a framework of evidence-based practices for promoting young children's healthy social and emotional development. In January, DIEEC leadership, professional development coordinators, quality improvement specialists, and observers were joined by Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) consultants to receive engaging and applicable professional development on The Pyramid Model.

Learn more here: <https://challengingbehavior.org/pyramid-model/overview/basics/>

DIEEC will be piloting a hybrid professional learning experience on this content this spring. Look out for opportunities to participate in this PLE later this year! In the meantime, here are a few one-page resources and printables from the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI):

- **What is Socio-Emotional Development?:**

https://challengingbehavior.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/definition_soc-emotional_dev.pdf

- **Greeting Board:**

https://challengingbehavior.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/greeting-board_en-sp.pdf

- **Things that will help me stay calm - Toddlers:**

https://challengingbehavior.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Stay-Calm-Toddler_Infographic.pdf

- **Cosas que may ayudarán a mantener la calma - Niños pequeños:**

https://challengingbehavior.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/calm_toddler_infographic_sp.pdf

Early Childhood Education Partner Highlight

Office of Early Childhood Intervention

The **Office of Early Childhood Intervention (OECI)** is a new workgroup within Delaware's Department of Education (DDOE). OECI joins Delaware's Early Childhood Support team alongside the Office of Early Learning (OEL) and the Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL). Below we share OECI's vision and mission statements, as well as a list of the projects that OECI is currently working on.

Vision: At the Office of Early Childhood Intervention, we envision a community where all families have the resources and supports needed to help their children thrive. We, at the OECI, are committed to providing all eligible children birth to five and their families with high-quality, evidence-based early intervention and early childhood special education with integrity and accountability.

Mission: To ensure full implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) through comprehensive policies and procedures, which drive access to early childhood intervention for all eligible children and their families by leveraging equitable supports, services, and community resources.

OECI's current projects include:

- Assuring the successful transfer of the IDEA Part C Early Intervention program for infants, toddlers and their families to DDOE from Delaware Health and Social Services (DHSS.)
- Assuring all components of the IDEA Part B Section 619, early childhood special education programs are implemented at local school districts under the General Supervision of the DDOE as required by the IDEA.
- Assuring the fulfillment of the statewide birth through age 5 Child Find project using developmental screening.

DIEEC Receives CCAMPIS Grant

Funding will provide access to high-quality, affordable child care for parents pursuing an education at University of Delaware

More than 20% of all college students are parents. However, research shows that lack of access to affordable child care often poses a significant barrier for parents attempting to complete a degree. CCAMPIS ("see-campus") stands for Child Care Access Means Parents In School. At UD, this grant will provide child care scholarships and family support for Pell Grant-eligible parents pursuing their education at the university. DIEEC will partner in this effort with UD's Early Learning Center, which provides research-informed care for infants and young children.

Read the full article, **Supporting UD Student Parents**, to learn more:

<https://www.cehd.udel.edu/supporting-ud-student-parents/>

REACH Raffle Winner

We have a winner! Congratulations to family child care educator Mary Waters, whose name was drawn from all entries in our January raffle. She will be receiving a DIEEC goodie bag and gift cards. As part of her entry, Mary shared the following reflection on her professional practice in 2023.

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Through my DIEEC network, I was fortunate to be able to incorporate Brightwheel into my program and streamline a lot of the business aspects such as keeping a daily log of check-in & out, logging meals, logging observations, and invoicing and accepting payments through the billing feature. Parents are loving the simplicity of the app with checking in and out at the kiosk and getting the daily updates. I am loving that the app enhances family engagement! — **Mary Waters**

Thanks for being a REACH subscriber, Mary!

Coach's Corner

Set yourself up for success with S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Coach's Corner is a periodic DIEEC blog dedicated to providing fresh ideas for your practice. This month, featured blogger Meghan Pallante takes a closer look at how to set meaningful, achievable goals for your program and your practice. If you or your program has developed a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) or worked with the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC), you have likely spent some time focused on goal-setting. Setting a goal for yourself or your program is an important part of the quality improvement process. But the process involves more than just choosing something to work on. **Continue reading** and be sure to check out past topics as well here:

<https://www.dieec.udel.edu/whats-new/coachs-corner/>



Meghan Pallante is a quality improvement specialist and ECE blogger at DIEEC.

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:

- **Physical Activity Learning Session (PALS)**, 12-hour intermediate offering. Self-paced component opens 2/5; participants may register through February 8.
- **Anti-Bias Education: Diversity**, 5-hour intermediate offering beginning February 8.
- **Multi-Age Nature-Based Learning for FCC Educators**, 3-hour intermediate offering beginning February 12.
- **The Business of Early Childhood: Mission and Vision: PLUS**, 7-hour intermediate offering beginning February 13.
- **Understanding Children's Behavior as Communication for FCC Professionals PLUS**, 4-hour introductory offering beginning February 13.
- **Fun with Financial Wellness: Basic Budgeting for Beginners**, 3-hour intermediate offering beginning February 19.
- **The Importance of "I" in IEP: Individualizing in Early Childhood**, 4-hour introductory offering beginning February 20.
- **The Leader's Role in Giving Care to the Caregiver PLUS**, 8-hour intermediate offering beginning February 27.
- **Child Assessment for Teachers: The Power of Practice PLUS**, 10-hour introductory offering beginning March 5.



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