

## Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

## REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Dear early childhood professionals,

Welcome to March, spring is almost here! In this edition of REACH, we're sharing a number of announcements, updates, and reminders.

We're excited to announce that the Sussex Resource Center has launched and will now be open monthly as a support for family child care educators - take a look below for more information and plan to join us in March.

We'd also like to draw your attention to the latest edition of our DIEEC podcast. This month features Dr. Laura Lessard and Stephen McLaren discussing educator wellbeing and is a great listen! It's available now wherever you stream your podcasts.

As always, we've included a reminder of the upcoming PLEs that are still open for educators to participate in at no-cost. We're also pleased to highlight the Delaware Small Business Development Center as a partner organization with several great resources available for Delaware early childhood education programs.

Finally, please make sure to read the messages from partner organizations - there are some great opportunities available for early childhood professionals.

With warm regards,

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# DIEEC News and Opportunities

## Save the Date: Week of the Young Child®

### ***Welcoming All Children: A DIEEC Panel Discussion, April 10 at 6:30 p.m.***

The [Week of the Young Child](#), an annual nationwide initiative of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is dedicated to celebrating early learning, young children, their teachers, families, and communities. This year's Week of the Young Child takes place from April 6 to 12.

One key way in which DIEEC recognizes the Week of the Young Child is a signature event: a panel of experts & advocates come together to discuss and reflect on a chosen critical topic in early childhood. The theme for this year is Welcoming All Children. Our panelists will engage in discussion and offer concrete ideas and suggestions to help all learners access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities. Mark your calendars to join us on April 10 at 6:30 p.m. Registration information coming soon!

## Sussex Resource Center for Family Child Care (FCC) Educators

### ***Now open monthly!***

We are pleased to announce the opening of the Sussex Resource Center! This “pop-up” space was created in response to the need for access to tools and supplies that can be used to enhance the learning environment in home-based programs. The space includes access to laptops, a printer, a laminator, a die-cut machine, supplies, and make-and-take activities for use in educators' FCC programs.

DIEEC celebrated the soft opening of the new resource center in February with members of the Sussex FCC Network, whose input was critical in bringing this concept to reality.

A heartfelt thank you to our hosts at Little Einstein's Preschool & School Age Center in Georgetown for sharing their space with DIEEC and the local FCC community.



*Image: Members of the Sussex FCC Network celebrate the opening of the resource center.*

The Sussex Resource Center will be open to all Sussex County FCC/LFCC educators on a monthly basis. Mark your calendars for March 20 from 6 to 8 p.m. for the next opportunity to stop in and create!

## **DIEEC Early Childhood Educator Leadership Board**

### ***First meeting sets the stage for collaboration and communication***

The DIEEC Early Childhood Educator Leadership Board serves as an advisory board for DIEEC, providing invaluable insights and recommendations, integrating educator voice throughout DIEEC's strategies, supports, and initiatives. Board members will participate in quarterly meetings that promote lively discussions, idea exchange, and actionable strategies. The initial board is comprised of a small group of Delaware early childhood education (ECE) professionals selected to provide perspectives across role, program type, and geographic location.

Moving forward, new board members will be selected to join each year, with members rotating off after 3-year terms.



*Image: Board members share ideas at the inaugural board meeting on February 24.*

The inaugural meeting was held on February 24 at the University of Delaware's Paradee Center.

Members had the first opportunity to meet in person; each shared their “why” for joining the board, and the group discussed what topics they might address, along with what success will look like. We look forward to sharing more information about the board in upcoming issues of REACH!

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## **Introducing DIEEC Touchstones**

### ***Embedding diversity, equity and inclusion in our work***

The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) is driven by our mission to improve the lives of young children and their families within the state of Delaware. We at DIEEC are committed to embedding the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in our service to you as early childhood professionals and the children and families you serve.

That's why we have developed five core [Touchstones](#) that guide our work together as an organization and with our shared community of early childhood professionals such as yourself.

These touchstones serve as standards of mindset, content, and behavior that orient our work and keep us centered in our mission, which we extend to you. They allow us to be mindful of psychologically and emotionally brave spaces for all to learn and contribute. Our touchstones are interwoven into the foundation and framework of our interactions within DIEEC and with all of our participants, in all that we produce, and in all that we do.

## 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. We are highlighting one key practice each month, sharing examples of how Delaware programs are choosing to work towards higher levels of quality in the highlighted practice.

This month we are highlighting **PCHQ-KP1: Incorporates a whole child approach, intentionally supporting children through positive interactions**. According to Teaching Strategies, publisher of Teaching Strategies GOLD and the Creative Curriculum, the whole child approach “supports and nurtures all areas of children’s development and learning—from social-emotional and cognitive skills to literacy, math, and science understanding...It encourages children’s learning and thinking by being responsive to children’s understandings, interests, and abilities, allowing them to deepen their natural curiosity and their eagerness to want to discover and learn more.”

- M.H. Rollins Child Development Center @ Children’s Beach House is offering yoga for children to promote physical and mental well-being in children. They are also hosting Literacy Nights to foster early literacy through family involvement.
- A family child care educator in New Castle County has decided to implement Creative Curriculum for Family Child Care, including ReadyRosie to strengthen family engagement, along with integrating Conscious Discipline as a supplemental curriculum to fully promote the whole child approach.

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](mailto:ecinstitute@udel.edu) to be included in a future edition of REACH.

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## Microlearnings: Quick, high-impact information for educators

### ***New content coming soon!***

Microlearning is a great way to learn new skills and information in bite-sized chunks! It is digestible, actionable content delivered in 5-10 minutes. Our next series is designed specifically for Delaware family child care educators. Be on the lookout for this series to launch on Monday, March 11th. [Check out past microlearnings and sign up to receive new ones directly in your inbox.](#)

## X, Why, Z: Reflections from Early Childhood Education Professionals

***New podcast episode ready to stream!***

We invite you to listen to [Season 2 Episode 5: “The Wellbeing of Educators.”](#) Hosts Irene and Meghan chat with Dr. Laura Lessard, Associate Professor at the University of Delaware, and Stephen McLaren, a Board Certified Health & Wellness Coach, about the unique challenges facing, and strategies for supporting, educator wellbeing.

Mark your calendars for our next episode, which will debut on March 27: “Build Your Tribe,” a conversation with (and about) a community of practice (CoP) in early childhood education.



## DIEEC News and Opportunities

### Information Session: University of Delaware's Associate of Arts in Early Childhood Education

***Registration now open for the March 19 meeting***

This session is open to family child care (FCC) and center-based educators, as well as program administrators who would like to receive information to share with their staff. Dr. Jessica Slade, assistant professor in the University of Delaware's Department of Human Development and Family Sciences, will provide an overview of the program. Participants will have the opportunity to speak with representatives from the Early Childhood Innovation Center (ECIC) about career planning and scholarships. A UD admissions representative will also be available.

**The webinar begins at 6:30 p.m. Registration is required. Please [use this link to register](#).**

## Share Your Voice to Inform Future Care Subsidy Rates

***Each program whose administration attends one input session will receive a \$100 bonus payment from the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS)***

Prenatal to Five Fiscal Strategies (P5FS) is seeking input on the cost of child care from early care and education providers, including child care centers and family child care homes, to help inform Delaware's child care subsidy payment rates.

P5FS needs to hear from you! Make your voice heard by participating in a Virtual Input Session! This is your opportunity to share what it truly costs to provide quality child care – not just what families can afford. These input sessions provide an opportunity to share your experience delivering early care and education services.

Input sessions are scheduled in English and Spanish for multiple dates between March 5 and March 28. You only need to attend one session, but you must register in advance. [Please see the P5FS website for more information and to register.](#)

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## Applications open for the Integrated Research & Policy Fellowship Program

***Paid opportunity for early childhood educators to gain expertise in workforce policy and practice***

The National Early Care and Education (ECE) Workforce Center is currently accepting applications for its Integrated Research & Policy Fellowship Program!

This new 10-month fellowship program, with a stipend of \$12,500, aims to cultivate expertise in early care and education workforce policy and practices and support emerging leaders in applying research to real-world solutions. Early childhood educators and others who are active in the ECE sector may apply for the policy track fellowship. The program, which includes 10-15 hours per month of activities, is designed to allow employed individuals to continue their employment and students to maintain full-time status. [Learn more and apply here.](#) **Applications are due March 20, 2024.**

## Teaching Strategies GOLD

### Winter checkpoint - March 15, 2024

March is here! That means that it's time for programs using Teaching Strategies GOLD to be wrapping up the March checkpoint. As a reminder, March 15 is the date by which educators need to compile child observations from the past few months and finalize into the winter checkpoint. March 16th marks the beginning of the spring observation and assessment period.

As a reminder, the Office of Early Learning is providing access to Teaching Strategies GOLD for all licensed programs, at no cost to the program. If you are interested in using Teaching Strategies GOLD as a formative assessment tool, [visit our page to learn more and get started.](#)

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## Early Childhood Education Resource and Partner Highlight: Delaware Small Business Development Center (SBDC)

### *Tools and support for child care and early education businesses*

The Delaware SBDC offers [training programs](#) and FREE professional [consulting services](#) to help new and existing small businesses grow and succeed. The SBDC is a statewide, nationally accredited program that provides high quality one-on-one consulting, training, and information resources. Services can include advising on business planning, developing marketing strategies, and budgeting and financial recordkeeping. [Visit their website](#) to request free advising, view the training calendar, and sign up for their newsletter.

DIEEC will be partnering with the Delaware SBDC for an exciting new opportunity: a comprehensive professional learning experience (PLE) designed to help you obtain funding that turns your vision for quality improvement into reality. Topics will include budgeting, taxes, and diving in-depth into getting ready for grants. The first round is starting in March with state-funded programs in the “getting ready” group, and additional rounds will be rolled out this spring – keep an eye out!



# DIEEC Professional Learning Experiences (PLEs)

## Upcoming Free Opportunities

As a reminder, DIEEC's professional learning experiences (PLEs) are available at no cost to you. **Check out these upcoming offerings:**

- [Caring for the Caregiver: Walking the Talk PLUS](#), a 5-hour intermediate offering beginning 3/18.
- [Flip It! Flipping the Challenging Behavior PLUS](#), a 10-hour intermediate course beginning 3/26
- [The Business of Early Childhood: Your Influence, as a Leader, in Creating a Great Place to Work](#), an 11-hour intermediate course beginning 4/2
- [A Conversation with Leadership: Program Positivity PLUS](#), a 10-hour intermediate course beginning 4/3
- [Full STEAM Ahead: Building value and boosting confidence for supporting learning and development in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math](#), a 3-hour introductory course beginning 4/9

Did you know? DIEEC also offers a variety of self-paced PLEs. These tend to fill up quickly- check our calendar and plan ahead if you would like to enroll!

You can find these and register for a variety of PLEs on the [DIEEC professional learning experience calendar](#).



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