

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Dear early childhood professionals,

Spring brings new opportunities for us to reflect on and renew our commitment to supporting the growth and wellbeing of the early childhood workforce and the young children and families we serve.

As part of this month's celebration of Week of the Young Child, the annual initiative from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), we will be hosting a panel discussion with a group of early childhood experts and advocates. With the theme of "Welcoming All Children," panelists will be discussing and offering ideas to help all learners access and participate in meaningful learning opportunities. Register to join us on April 10 at 6:30!

In this issue, we highlight a few of our exciting new professional learning experiences. We have opportunities coming up to participate with the Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators, and you can register now to begin in a Physical Activity Learning Sessions (PALS) cohort in April - both virtual and in-person options are available.

We also spotlight a few additional resources for you, including the many programs and supports available through UD's Cooperative Extension. Make sure to take a look at the DIEEC news section and the additional news and opportunities from our partners in the field - there is a lot to share this month!

Happy Spring!

Kristy Sheffler
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Upcoming Opportunities with DIEEC

Welcoming All Children: A DIEEC Panel Discussion

April 10 at 6:30 pm

Join DIEEC as we recognize Week of the Young Child with our signature event: an evening with a panel of experts & advocates coming together to discuss and reflect on a critical topic in early childhood. Our expert panelists will engage in discussion and offer concrete ideas and suggestions to help all learners access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities. Attendees may receive professional development (PD) credit for their participation. Registration is required. To learn more about our panelists and to register for this exciting event, please visit our website at: www.dieec.udel.edu/week-of-the-young-child

Zero to Three Critical Competencies for Infant-Toddler Educators

New experiences to support infant and toddler educators!

Infant-toddler educators have one of the most important jobs in the world! The [Zero to Three Critical Competencies](#) focus on teacher-child interaction skills that support infants and toddlers in the areas of social-emotional, cognitive, and language and literacy development. Our new, in-depth series includes a separate professional learning experience (PLE) focused on each content area from the Zero to Three Critical Competencies. Educators are provided with opportunities to explore, understand, practice, and reflect on the critical interactions that support the infants and toddlers they care for every day. Within each area, educators will engage in a variety of opportunities, including workshop sessions, group reflective experiences, individual coaching, and classroom observations to guide the experience to meet their needs.

We are currently piloting Area 1: Supporting Social-Emotional Development with Sussex Preschools and are about to start a pilot with Area 2: Supporting Cognitive Development with a group of family child care educators. **To learn more about this opportunity or sign up to participate, please reach out to ecinstitute@udel.edu.**

Physical Activity Learning Session (PALS) PLE

Two opportunities scheduled for April

This professional learning experience (PLE) series is focused on the effective practices of physical activity in early childhood education (ECE) settings. Join your ECE colleagues to learn how to incorporate physical activity throughout your day, from playful routines to engaging activities.

This series includes self-paced Canvas modules, interactive live sessions, individualized coaching, and a group reflective experience.

Register to attend one of the two PLEs that are scheduled to begin this month.

- [Virtual option](#)
- [In-person option](#)

DIEEC News

Coach's Corner: Hands-On Activities on a Budget

Our latest Coach's Corner is dedicated to "loose parts activities." By definition, "loose parts" refer to objects and materials that you may have around your house, classroom, or outdoors and do not need to be purchased.

Check out Meghan Pallante's latest blog post here: www.dieec.udel.edu/whats-new/coachs-corner for inexpensive ways to add engaging new activities to your program.



Image: clothespin number match-up

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

New podcast episode is ready to stream!

We invite you to listen to [Season 2 Episode 6: “Find Your People.”](#) In this episode, we explore the journey of a group of early childhood administrators who formed a resilient community of practice (COP) during the pandemic and have continued to meet regularly. As they navigate the ongoing workforce crisis together, the group shares the importance of building a community within the workplace and how to make classroom educators feel valued.

Mark your calendars for our next episode, “Workforce Collaboration,” which will debut on April 24. Our guests are Dr. Rena Hallam and Dr. Chrishana Lloyd, who are both part of the [National ECE Workforce Center](#). Tune in to learn about the work being done on a national level to help support early childhood professionals.



Week of the Young Child: April 6 to 12, 2024

The [Week of the Young Child](#) is an annual nationwide initiative of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The week is dedicated to celebrating early learning, young children, their teachers, families, and communities. Watch DIEEC’s social media for opportunities to share your celebrations with us! Need some ideas? Take a look at NAEYC’s [Week of the Young Child overview page](#) for a plan to help you celebrate all week long.

DIEEC also honors Week of the Young Child through community service. This year, we will be partnering with an emergency shelter in each county to provide comfort kits stocked with supplies and activities to support young children who may be experiencing trauma and instability.

We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to these essential organizations in our Delaware communities.



Provider Appreciation Day: May 10, 2024

Provider Appreciation Day is celebrated the Friday before Mother's Day every year to recognize early childhood professionals everywhere. DIEEC looks forward to celebrating you, the community we strive to serve and support, by shining a spotlight on the essential contributions of early childhood professionals: high-quality care and education for children, support for working families, and support for the workforce.

Child Care Aware offers a great toolkit for early childhood professionals that includes profile frames and cover images for your social media accounts. [Bookmark the toolkit now](#) and don't be afraid to toot your own horn on May 10! Our community deserves recognition for its year-round hard work and dedication - you earn it every day.



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-KP2: Uses culturally responsive and identity-affirming practices to build meaningful connections and foster a sense of community in the classroom.**

- Just in Time Learning Academy partnered with DIEEC's observation and coaching opportunity, utilizing the [ACSES observation tool](#). Their engagement in this experience raised their awareness of equitable socio-cultural interactions in the classroom, which will support reduced biases and the establishment of more equitable learning environments.
- State-funded FCC educator, Shaun Mullan-Wright, is working towards enhancing her Family Partnership Agreement to assist families in creating goals and uncovering strengths more effectively.
- Stepping Stones large family child care educator, Violet Waters, is reviewing her intake process to reflect on how she might update it to gain a better understanding of newly enrolled families' preferences. Additionally, she is brainstorming ways to gather information from current families to learn more about their cultural backgrounds and preferences.

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.

Spotlight on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Anti-bias and diversity activities at the Children's House Montessori

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Image credit: Children's House Montessori

April is Autism Acceptance Month

Celebrate differences, promote awareness, foster inclusion

According to research-based estimates, 1 in 36 children is identified as having an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Early identification and intervention can significantly improve positive outcomes for children; in some cases, ASD can be diagnosed by 2 years of age. Early childhood professionals can play a key role in early identification. As part of its "Learn the Signs, Act Early" initiative, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) offers [Developmental Milestones Resources](#) for early childhood educators.

The [Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism](#) website offers a variety of supports for professionals, families, and advocates, including resource guides, training videos, and more. Many of these specifically focus on early childhood.

If you'd like to help promote inclusion among children in your own program, [this simple guide](#) from Sesame Workshop focuses on talking to young children about autism.



A Whole New DIEEC Website is on the Way

Get ready for the Resource Hub!

Big news! DIEEC is in the midst of a complete redesign of our website. Our new site will include new features designed specifically for our audience of early childhood professionals. One of these features is the Resource Hub- a place where you can find carefully selected documents, videos, and information on topics related to early childhood education. Stay tuned for updates as we get closer to the launch!

New Opportunities for the Early Childhood Education Community

New Organization: First State Family Child Care Association

Zoom meeting on April 9 for interested FCC educators

Over the past several months, FCC educators Stephanie Jackson and Latonya Bruce have been participating in the National Association of Family Child Care's Leaders Shaping Leaders program. As a result, they have formed a state-level NAFCC chapter, the First State Family Child Care Association. Their goal is for the association to "give a voice to those who may not feel valued, heard, or seen and to change the narrative of what family child care in Delaware is all about." This is an initiative by FCC educators, for FCC educators. **Stephanie and Latonya will be hosting a [Zoom meeting](#) on April 9 at 6:30 PM for FCC educators who wish to learn more about this new organization.**

UD Cooperative Extension Programs for Early Childhood Professionals

Early Childhood Education Resource Highlight

University of Delaware Cooperative Extension offers university knowledge, resources and research to the people of Delaware. While Extension has a history of serving farmers and the agriculture community, that's not all they do. The Extension Educators on their Health and Well-being Team offer programs on various topics relevant to early childhood professionals.

These topics include food safety, nutrition and physical fitness, mindfulness and mental wellness, prevention education, and personal finance. [Check out their resources online and request a speaker for your group or program.](#)



Tax Resources for Your Program

Tax season may not be anyone's favorite time of year, but it can be easier to navigate with these resources designed specifically for child care businesses. This guidance can also help with your recordkeeping throughout the year, so that when next April rolls around, you're ready!

- [A 2023 Tax Guide for Childcare Providers - Brightwheel blog](#)
- [Child Care Business Tax Resources - Civitas Strategies](#)
- [Tax Guides & Resources - Civitas Strategies](#)

New Website: National Early Care and Education Workforce Center

DIEEC partner focuses on workforce issues

Have you seen the [National Early Care and Education \(ECE\) Workforce Center's new website](#)? It will be a clearinghouse for high-quality, actionable resources to support states and communities in examining and addressing the need for fundamental changes to ECE career advancement systems, compensation, and workplace policies.

Bookmark the website, and while you're there, be sure to subscribe to their newsletters for the latest updates in your inbox!



In Case You Missed It

DIEEC Touchstones

Embedding diversity, equity and inclusion in our work

DIEEC is 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. Last month, DIEEC introduced the 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.

Sussex Resource Center

This “pop-up” space was created in response to the need to access tools and supplies that can be used to enhance the learning environment in home-based programs. The resource center includes access to laptops, a printer, a laminator, a die-cut machine, as well as a wide array of supplies to support educators. These supplies include art materials such as feathers, foam shapes, popsicle sticks, stencils, and stamps, as well as essential office supplies like tape, staplers, hole punchers, and scissors. Plus, we always have some ideas and materials on hand to create make-and-take activities to take back to use in your program.

The resource center is open to all Sussex L/FCC programs. **Mark your calendars for April 17th from 6 to 8 p.m. for the next opportunity to stop in and create!**

Microlearnings for Family Child Care Educators

New series now available

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 latest series is focused specifically on supporting family child care programs, including topics such as maintaining ratios, attendance practices, and safety practices. [The first five microlearnings are available on our website](#); the final two in this series will be released on April 8 and 15.

Montessori 101: Free Online Workshop April 17

Explore Montessori with the UD Montessori Academy

The UD Montessori Academy offers comprehensive Montessori teacher training programs, customized seminars and professional education, and support services for schools and learning centers wishing to implement Montessori programs.

To learn more, to RSVP for the Montessori 101 Free Online Workshop, or to access free virtual information sessions this spring, visit the [UD Montessori Academy webpage](#).

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:**

- [Risk Management in the Early Care Setting](#), a 3-hour introductory offering beginning on 4/1.
 - [The Business of Early Childhood: Your Influence, as a Leader, in Creating a Great Place to Work](#), an 11-hour intermediate offering starting on 4/2.
 - [A Conversation with Leadership: Program Positivity PLUS](#), a 10-hour intermediate offering starting on 4/3.
 - [5 Strategies for a Happy and Healthy Classroom](#), a 3-hour introductory offering starting on 4/8.
 - [Full STEAM Ahead: Building value and boosting confidence for supporting learning and development in Science Technology, Engineering, Art and Math](#), an 3-hour introductory offering starting on 4/9.
 - [Physical Activity Learning Sessions \(PALS\)](#), a 12-hour intermediate offering, with a self-paced portion beginning 4/22 and classes starting on 5/4.
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