

PROVIDER SPOTLIGHT

ASHLEY AVELLEYRA

Kids Cottage



**Winner, 2025 DIEEC Excellence in
Early Childhood Awards
(Center-Based Educator Category)**

Written by Stephanie Thompson/DIEEC
July 2025

"While academics are important, I fundamentally think it's important to build social and emotional connections... It's important to me that I build that bridge to make it a comfortable environment for that child."

The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) is honored to celebrate Ashley Avelleyra, a dedicated educator at [Kids Cottage](#), as the winner of the 2025 [Excellence in Early Childhood Awards](#) in the center-based educator category. With 10 years of experience in the early childhood field, Ashley's journey into early childhood education was affirmed during her time at Towson University, where an advisor recognized her natural aptitude for connecting with young children.

For Ashley, the children are the heart of her work; their smiles, energy, and the unique connections she builds with each group are what keep her motivated and excited every day. "I come in every morning and as soon as you see those kids, you're weightless, everything else disappears," she says, emphasizing that their kindness, positivity, and enthusiasm for learning create an uplifting classroom environment.

Ashley believes that while "play" might seem simple to outsiders, it is a foundation for critical skill development. She plans activities that align with developmental domains, recognizing that every moment of play, from squishing playdough to sorting sensory bins, helps children gain new skills.

Another aspect of Ashley's practice is making connections between the classroom and home. She effectively uses ClassDojo to provide families with real-time glimpses into their children's learning experiences. This approach empowers parents to see what their children are learning and doing.

When children in Ashley's classroom proudly share their work and creations, they often ask for photos to be sent to their families. This proactive engagement strengthens the essential partnership between educators and families.

Ashley's professional growth has been shaped by the invaluable mentorship she has received. She is currently transitioning into a lead teacher role after six years as an assistant. Ashley credits her former lead teacher with teaching her the essentials of classroom management, the art of collaboration, and the importance of setting boundaries while still fostering a fun environment.

Ashley's dedication, innovative spirit, and nurturing approach truly exemplify excellence in early childhood education.

Content for this article was compiled from the Excellence in Early Childhood Award application, letters of recommendation, and a phone interview.