

PROVIDER SPOTLIGHT

SHAKIRA WAPLES

Next Generation Childcare



Runner-Up, 2025 DIEEC Excellence in Early Childhood Awards (Family Child Care Educator Category)

Written by Stephanie Thompson/DIEEC
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"Feeling celebrated gives children the urge to want to stay on track which continues to build their confidence and self-esteem."

The Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) is pleased to recognize Shakira Waples, of [Next Generation Childcare](#), as the runner-up for the 2025 [Excellence in Early Childhood Awards](#) in the family child care educator category. With 15 years of experience in the early childhood field, Shakira's path to becoming a family child care educator allowed her to pursue her passion for teaching while also being present for her own children.

Shakira's dedication to early childhood education stems from a lifelong desire to teach, rooted in playing "teachers" with her cousins as a child. What keeps her passionate today are the children themselves – their innocent faces, their honesty, and the joy of witnessing them "catch on" to new concepts. A particularly proud moment for Shakira is seeing children who enter her care with limited verbal skills begin to express themselves and engage in back-and-forth conversations, a testament to the rich language environment she cultivates.

When asked what her "secret superpower" is as an educator, Shakira states that her creativity is a significant strength. It enables her to "figure things out on the spot" and maintain flexibility, allowing her to adjust on the fly and meet children precisely where they are developmentally. This adaptability is key to her teaching approach, ensuring that learning is always accessible and engaging for every child in her care. Her ability to transform her center into imaginative worlds, like camping grounds or an underwater wonderland, illustrates her commitment to making learning a unique and innovative experience every day.

Shakira's commitment to continuous growth is evident in her pursuit of professional development. She actively researches and learns more about early childhood education by attending professional development, webinars, and conferences. "I'm joining everything," she says. Last fall, she was selected to be a member of DIEEC's Early Childhood Educator Leadership Board, a role that allows her to share her insights in ways that shape the supports available to her colleagues in the field.

Beyond the classroom, Shakira is known for her consistent engagement with families. She shares daily updates and allows parents to see their children's activities through Brightwheel. This transparent and regular communication builds strong partnerships. Her interactions extend beyond academics, as she hosts regular events that encourage parents to connect and converse, fostering a strong sense of community. "The parents come and really enjoy themselves. We sit and talk- not just about school."

Shakira's overarching belief is that early education is crucial for children to develop social skills and problem-solving abilities, seeing them as the bright future. This belief and dedication makes her an asset to Delaware's early childhood education community.

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