

## Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

## REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Dear Early Childhood Professionals,

Welcome to the August issue of REACH! As we embrace the final weeks of summer and prepare for the energy of a new school year, this edition is filled with valuable resources and exciting opportunities. We're delighted to share insights from our inaugural "Let's GROW Outside!" initiative, including a Provider Spotlight focusing on one program's embrace of gardening with children. Our Coach's Corner article offers practical guidance on effective room arrangement; combine these tips with the visual supports resources shared below to enhance your behavior management approach. This month also brings important updates on the Quality Improvement System, including the FY26 Quality Improvement Award process, and a reminder that registration is now open for the 1st State Family Child Care Conference. We encourage you to explore these resources as you plan for a successful fall.

With warm regards,

Kristy Sheffler  
Interim Co-Director, DIEEC

# DIEEC Action Items

## 1<sup>st</sup> State Family Child Care Conference: Registration is OPEN!

Registration for the fourth annual 1st State Family Child Care Conference is now open! This year's conference will be held on Saturday, October 11, at the Clayton Hall Conference Center in Newark, DE. Your registration includes continental breakfast, lunch, afternoon coffee break/refreshments, a conference t-shirt, five hours of quality assured professional development, swag bags, raffle tickets, access to vendors, professional headshots, and free parking! We can't wait to see our family child care community at the conference as we explore this year's theme, "Simple Steps, Big Impact."

Don't miss out! This year, participants will select their breakout sessions during registration. [Register today to get your first choice!](#)



This year's conference theme is "Simple Steps, Big Impact."

---

## Save the Date for Children's Book Week

Celebrate Children's Book Week with DIEEC this November! From November 3 through November 7, DIEEC will celebrate [the nationwide initiative sponsored by Every Child A Reader](#). This year's theme is An Ocean of Stories, "celebrating the vast, collective 'ocean' populated by the stories we read, share, and tell."

DIEEC's guest reader program will be back, and we're working on some exciting new ideas to support programs in developing children's love of books and reading! Stay in the loop- [fill out our interest form to receive updates](#) and be the first to know when registration for this popular initiative opens!



Sign up for our interest form to get updates and early registration.



## Harvesting Success: Celebrating the First Year of Let's Grow Outside

Over the past 8 months, DIEEC's "Let's GROW Outside!" initiative has been empowering early childhood professionals to cultivate edible gardens, transforming outdoor spaces into vibrant learning environments. Through a blend of hands-on sessions, expert coaching, and free materials, participants gained the skills and resources to bring their garden visions to life. [Read on to celebrate the successes of our first cohort](#) and see how these programs are learning to harvest joy and learning with their children!

Erika Carter shows off veggies grown in the garden at All Beautiful Children Learning Academy. (Image: Christian S. Ferrell/DIEEC)



## Provider Spotlight: Diana Mercado, Pirulo's Child Care and Learning Center

When Diana Mercado applied to DIEEC's Let's GROW Outside! initiative on behalf of Pirulo's Child Care and Learning Center, she saw a great educational opportunity for the children. However, she also had another motivation: self-care. [Read about her gardening journey](#) in this month's Provider Spotlight.

Diana Mercado with preschool gardeners at Pirulo's Child Care and Learning Center. (Image: Christian S. Ferrell/DIEEC)

## Coach's Corner: Room Arrangement

Ready to transform your learning space? [Our latest Coach's Corner dives into the art of room arrangement](#). Discover how intentional design can boost independence, cooperative play, and positive behaviors in any size room. Learn practical tips for optimizing your space, setting up engaging interest areas, and managing multi-age environments. Click through to unlock the secrets to a more effective and harmonious setting.



Image: iStock

## Montly Raffle for Early Childhood Educators

DIEEC has another raffle opportunity for you! Read this month's Coach's Corner article about room arrangement (above). Then, [answer our survey question](#) and tell us which tip or idea you plan to use in your own space! You'll be entered to win one of two book bundles!

---

## Meeting the Needs of All Children

As you prepare for a new group of children in the fall, or just reset for your current group, one aspect to consider is utilizing visual supports in the classroom. Visual supports can complement and support verbal instructions and requests in a way that is understandable and encourages engagement. There is a variety of printable, ready-to-use supports available on the [Visual Supports page](#) of the Head Start website. Each includes guidance for utilizing them “to increase participation, engagement, and learning” for children in your care.

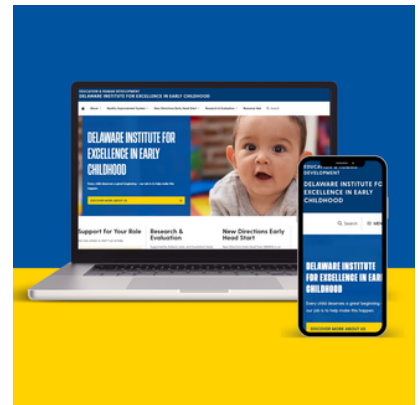
---

## This Week: A Refreshed DIEEC Website is Coming Your Way!

Our website has had a “glow-up,” designed with you in mind. With a new look, improved organization, and easier navigation, finding what you need will be easier than ever. From Quality Improvement support to professional learning and our all-new searchable Resource Hub, you'll be able to quickly access the tools and information that elevate your work.

No need to bookmark a new address- our website will continue to be [www.dieec.udel.edu](http://www.dieec.udel.edu)!

---



## Summer Hours at DIEEC ☀️

From **May 27 through August 29, DIEEC will be on summer hours.** Our main phone line, 302-831-3239, will be staffed Monday through Thursday, 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Fridays, 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. You may also email us at your convenience at [ecinstitute@udel.edu](mailto:ecinstitute@udel.edu) and you will receive a reply during business hours. You can visit our website anytime at [www.dieec.udel.edu](http://www.dieec.udel.edu).

---

## DIEEC Public Calendar

DIEEC's public calendar is a great way to keep up with what's happening in the early childhood community. Upcoming events are listed on the bottom left side of our [DIEEC homepage](#), and you can also click through to the [full calendar](#). Click on an event name to get all the details: who, what, when, where and how to join in!

---

## Updates from Our Partners

### Upcoming Conscious Discipline Training

Save the date: The Office of Early Childhood Excellence will be offering four single-day, in-person Conscious Discipline training opportunities. Trainings are scheduled for Friday, August 22; Saturday, August 23; Friday, October 10; or Saturday, October 11. [Register here!](#) To learn more about Conscious Discipline, [use the QR code in the information flyer](#).

---

### Update Your AccessCare Provider Profile

Early Childhood Support recently shared an email on behalf of Children and Families First about updating your AccessCare Provider Profile. [To view the email, click here.](#)

---

### Professional Development Opportunity: Delaware Wolf Trap Early Learning Through the Arts

This fun, hands-on professional development program is designed just for early childhood educators and their little learners, ages 3–5. The best part? You get to take part right alongside your students during the school day! Over the course of the program, you'll earn 12 professional development hours while teaming up with a talented Wolf Trap teaching artist. [Read the flyer](#) for more information.

---

# Quality Improvement Planning

## UQuality Improvement System Policies and Procedures Manual- Updates for FY26

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) and Office of Early Learning (OEL) have updated Delaware's Quality Improvement System (QIS) Policies and Procedures Manual, which includes important information for FY26's Quality Improvement Award (QIA). **The updated guide will be shared by OEL and posted to DIEEC's website this week.**

As in previous years, to be eligible for a FY26 QIA, programs must be actively engaged in quality improvement efforts. With the support of a DIEEC Quality Improvement Specialist (QISp), programs will reflect on their areas of growth and build a quality improvement plan (QIP).

If your program is interested in applying for the September 15th award date, it is strongly recommended to start the QIP process now. Developing a QIP is a multistep process, and requests to work with a QISp will be scheduled in the order they are received. Starting now will help ensure your program has time to complete all the required steps before the deadline.

## DIEEC Professional Learning Experiences (PLEs)

### Upcoming Free PLE Opportunities with DIEEC

DIEEC's professional learning experiences (PLEs) are available at no cost to you. You can browse and register for a variety of PLEs on the [DIEEC professional learning experience calendar](#). Check out these upcoming offerings.

#### Virtual-Live and Hybrid Professional Learning Experiences

Title	Hours	Level	Start Date
<a href="#">How to Read a Book to Young Children - Microlearning Deep Dive with Coaching PLUS</a>	5	Intro	8/6
<a href="#">Anti-Bias Education: Diversity PLUS</a>	8	Inter	8/16

Title	Hours	Level	Start Date
<a href="#">Using Responsive Care Techniques to Foster Social-Emotional Development PLUS</a>	8	Inter	9/2
<a href="#">Child Assessment for Teachers: The Power of Practice PLUS</a>	10	Intro	9/2
<a href="#">A Conversation with Leadership: Program Positivity PLUS</a>	10	Inter	9/8

**Looking for more professional development opportunities?** Check [DIEEC's online learning page](#) for information about additional options.