

Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood

REACH

A newsletter for early childhood education professionals

Dear Early Childhood Professionals,

Welcome to the October issue of REACH! We're thrilled to announce brand-new opportunities to connect and share inspiration, including the launch of **Leader Link-Up** for administrators and two focused **Professional Learning Cohorts** for family child care educators. For a quick and fun way to refresh your library, don't miss our **Children's Book Week** initiative—share your favorite read-aloud with us and receive a new book for your program! Finally, family child care educators can focus on health and well-being in our upcoming cohort of **Shining the Light on You**.

We also have an important request for you: the Delaware Early Childhood Council (DECC) needs your input in its **Strategic Planning Survey**. Complete the survey by October 17th to ensure that your valued perspective is included as DECC plans for the future.

Warmly,

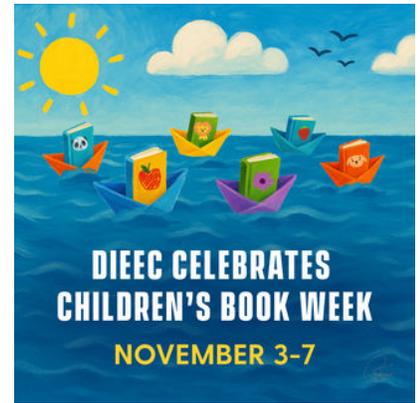
Kristy Sheffler
Interim Co-Director, DIEEC

DIEEC Action Items

Children's Book Week: A New Way to Celebrate with DIEEC

Share the title of YOUR favorite read-aloud with us, and we'll send your program a new book to share with your children!

Reading aloud with children supports the development of early literacy skills. Books that feature vivid illustrations, engaging language, and topics that interest children are just a few of the factors that can make for a great read-aloud experience. Which titles are favorites in your program, and why? Which books do your children ask for again and again? Which ones do you enjoy reading with them? We'll compile all of your suggestions into a shared resource for the early childhood community, making it even easier to find ideas for YOUR next great read-aloud. [Share your favorite read-aloud here.](#)



Shining the Light on You: Register for an Information Session

The 10th cohort of DIEEC's award-winning Shining the Light On You initiative will be forming soon! Interested family child care educators should sign up to receive information about a required information session on October 28 or November 4. The application will open on October 29, and the new cohort will kick off in December. This is a wonderful opportunity to focus on your own health and well-being while earning up to 18 Quality Assured hours. [Register for an info session here.](#)



Delaware Health Hero Award! DIEEC was recognized by the Lt. Governor's Challenge for our Shining the Light on You program's focus on early childhood educator well-being.

New Opportunity for Early Childhood Administrators: Leader Link-Up

We're excited to share a new monthly opportunity for early childhood program leaders to connect, share inspiration, and gain practical strategies. Monthly meetings will be held virtually, for one hour, typically during lunchtime.

The first meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 22 at 12:30 p.m. Fill out our interest form, and we'll send you a reminder and Zoom link the day before the meeting. See you there! [If you're interested in receiving details click here.](#)



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Now Forming: Professional Learning Cohorts for Family Child Care Educators

The [DIEEC Family Child Care Network](#) will be offering two Professional Learning Cohorts for Family Child Care Educators. Each will be focused on a specific topic:

- Cohort 1 will focus on **challenging behavior**, and
- Cohort 2 will focus on **interactions in mixed-age environments**.

If you are interested in learning more about these opportunities, please complete this brief form to be invited to an information session on **Wednesday, October 22**. There will be two sessions to choose from: **1:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.**

If you're interested in [attending an info session click here.](#)



Deadline Extended! Apply for Let's GROW Outside to Jumpstart Outdoor Learning

DIEEC's Let's GROW Outside! initiative teaches professionals about the possibilities provided through outdoor gardening with young children and provides a grant-funded opportunity to make your own edible garden come to life. [Check out our webpage for more information and the application link!](#)



Focus on Wellness: PANO Funding Foster Health for Children and Educators

DIEEC recently concluded a series of activities focused on Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity prevention (PANO), funded by a FY24 Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant. Activities included listening sessions, additional cohorts of our Physical Activity Learning Sessions (PALS) professional learning experience, and internal professional development for DIEEC staff. This initiative underscores a key DIEEC-wide priority: promoting the health and well-being of not only the children in early care and education settings, but also the early childhood professionals who serve them. [Read the PANO initiative Summary here.](#)



Movement in action! Dr. Diana Craft, nationally renowned trainer, demonstrates movement and physical activity techniques for children to DIEEC staff, focusing on easy, low-equipment activities for classrooms and homes. (Photo by Christian S. Ferrell/DIEEC)

Heidi Beck Honored at the Hilltop Heroes Gala

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From left, Martha Buell, Jason Hustedt, Heidi Beck, Rena Hallam and Laura Lessard at the Hilltop Lutheran Neighborhood Center's inaugural Hilltop Heroes Gala. (Photo by Stephanie Thompson/DIEEC)

Provider Spotlight: Viviana Oyola

Twenty years ago, when Viviana Oyola left her job at Citibank and opened her family child care (FCC) program, she had one main goal: to raise her youngest daughter and be present for the milestones and moments of her childhood. What she created was even broader and more enduring: a program that is deeply woven into the lives of the families she serves.

Read more about how Viviana builds community and creates lifelong connections in her program.



Viviana Oyola, Vivi's Day Care & Pre-School (Photo by Stephanie Thompson/DIEEC)

Coach's Corner: Six Reasons You Should Network...And Seven Ways DIEEC Can Help You Do It

Networking can lead to camaraderie, a deeper knowledge of the field, and career advancement. In this month's Coach's Corner, [Meghan Pallante shares about the value of networking in the early childhood field](#), and offers actionable ideas for connecting with a network of your colleagues.



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Monthly Raffle for Early Childhood Educators

We have another exciting raffle for you! [Read this month's Coach's Corner article](#), then tell us which networking idea you want to try. [Enter by October 22 here](#).

Congrats to our September raffle winners! 🎉

- Family Child Care: Kenna Chanoux
- Center-based Educator: Lindsey Smith

We'll reach out soon to get your prizes to you.



Meeting the Needs of All Children: Supporting Dual Language Learners

Head Start has developed three guides to support the “full and effective participation of children who are dual language learners and their families.” **The first guide is designed to support program leaders and help program staff reflect on their own understanding and beliefs about learning and speaking more than one language.**

These reflections, in turn, can help us be more intentional in our work to support children who are dual language learners.

One strategy highlighted in the guide is talking with children about the differences they notice, instead of quickly shutting down the conversation. This approach helps children learn that everyone is different and that’s okay! One way you can become more comfortable talking about differences and similarities is through discussion at staff meetings. Encourage staff to talk about experiences they had during the week: When children had questions about differences, how did they choose to answer the questions? Family child care educators are encouraged to have these discussions with other educators or with the families in your program. They likely have experiences like this with their child, and you could help them with this teachable moment, by encouraging these discussions.

DIEEC at Community Day in Newark

Our team was excited to have a table at Community Day for the second year in a row. The event was a great opportunity to connect with the community and raise awareness about the importance of early childhood education.

From left: Meg McClary, outreach program manager, Irene Ashe, home based professional development coordinator, and Dan Reagan, DIEEC technical assistant coach. (Photo by DIEEC staff)



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 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

Delaware Early Childhood Council (DECC) Strategic Planning Survey- Your Input Needed!

The Delaware Early Childhood Council (DECC) is seeking community input on the next five-year strategic plan for Early Care and Education (ECE). People who experience the system have the best perspective of what has been achieved and what needs to improve. Sharing your perspective helps ensure that the outcomes of these strategies benefit you. DECC welcomes your ongoing engagement. If you have questions about DECC's strategic planning process, please contact early.childhood@doe.k12.de.us. **Please respond to the survey by Oct 17, 2025.**

[Take the Survey Here - Your Voice Matters!](#)

October Provider Call Rescheduled for October 23

Please note that the Provider Call originally scheduled for Thursday, October 16th, has been changed to **Thursday, October 23rd**, from **1:30 to 2:30 p.m.** Information for joining this Zoom call is shared by email closer to the meeting date.

To receive information about Provider Calls and other updates relevant to Delaware early childhood professionals, be sure to [subscribe to the Early Childhood email list](#).

Special Olympics Delaware: Young Athletes Program for Ages 2-7

The Special Olympics Young Athletes program is an innovative sports play program for children ages 2 through 7, designed to introduce young children with intellectual disabilities (ID), their peers, and their families to the world of Special Olympics. The program provides introductory fitness and sports exposure and gives children/families an introduction to Special Olympics. For individuals with an ID diagnosis, they can become athletes, and for those without an ID diagnosis, they can become Unified Partners—ANYONE can participate in Special Olympics! **Participation is FREE.** Contact Lisa.Miller@sode.org to learn about options for bringing the Young Athletes Program to your site.



Quality Improvement System

Quality Improvement Planning

The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) and the Early Childhood Excellence Team have updated Delaware's Quality Improvement System (QIS) Guide, which includes important information for FY26's Quality Improvement Award (QIA). [You can review the updated guide HERE.](#)

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).

Developing a QIP is a multistep process, and requests to work with a QISp will be scheduled in the order they are received. Contact your DIEEC quality improvement specialist about scheduling.

Applying for a Quality Improvement Award?

As programs prepare to apply for Quality Improvement Awards (QIA), they should note new requirements for this year. The Office of Early Learning is requiring programs to have an Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) Account in the DE DOE Enterprise system and engage in training for the formative assessment tool their program is using (e.g., TS GOLD, Funshine, etc.).

If you need to register or do not have access to your ASQ Portal, please use the [ASQ Support Request Form](#). Once your request has been processed, you will be contacted via email with your login information for you to access your portal. You can find step-by-step guidance in the [ASQ Provider Manual for Early Childhood Programs](#), and you can learn more about Developmental Screening by visiting [Delaware's Developmental Screening Resources webpage](#).

Program staff must engage in the training for the formative assessment tool used. Documentation of training will be accepted in multiple formats based on the training available for that particular assessment tool. Training must be completed and documentation must be uploaded to the [Delaware ECE Portal](#) when applying for a QIA. QIA funds may be used to support training on formative assessments that are research-based.

Key dates for Quality Improvement Awards:

- There are three remaining application deadlines: 11/15/25, 1/15/26, and 3/15/26.
- School districts, SFECEPs, and EHS-CCPs must apply on or before November 15, 2025.
- To be eligible for an FY26 award, programs must hold a certificate or be licensed by the Delaware Office of Child Care Licensing by January 15, 2026, AND have a visit scheduled with their Quality Improvement Specialist by February 1, 2026.

Professional Learning Experiences

Opportunities with DIEEC and Our Partners

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](#).

To view the current list of OEL-approved training opportunities, click here:

[Professional Development, Coaching, and other Professional Learning Experiences for the Early Care and Education Workforce.](#)