

Professional Development

Professional Development is an important part of being an early childhood professional. It is important to stay up to date with current trends and changes in the field so that we provide the best possible care for Delaware's children!



Professional development can take on many different forms. PD can be formal classes, webinars, book studies, shadowing a mentor or professional learning communities. Each person's learning style is different, so it is beneficial to seek out a variety of learning opportunities to see what is the best fit.

As professionals, we are always learning and growing. The professional development process should be about more than just attending a training class. Think about setting goals prior to attending PD. Why did you choose this class? What do you hope to learn? After the PD take time to do some reflecting. How will you use this new knowledge in your program? We should always be striving to improve our practice!

Need more information on how to plan for your professional development? Check out some of the following tips.

Delaware Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals

Upon joining Delaware Stars, every program receives a copy of the Delaware Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals and, if applicable, The Delaware Competencies for School Age Professionals. In the back of these books are self-assessment checklists divided into levels 1-4. The Competencies are available on DIEECPD.org for all early childhood professionals to access. These Competencies are designed to help early childhood professionals become aware of their strengths, as well as areas of needed improvement. According to the Department of Education, these Competencies can be used for staff evaluations, career advisement, developing job descriptions, and trainings.

The self-assessment is designed for early childhood professionals to rate themselves on how comfortable they feel with a particular domain. The self assessment should be completed annually. Knowing your level of knowledge in each content area can help you to choose trainings that will be beneficial to your personal professional development. The first time filling out the self-assessment checklist can feel a bit overwhelming. Do not hesitate to ask your TA for help!



Helpful Hint



You can search the DIEEC PD calendar by competency!



Planning Ahead for Professional Development

A professional development plan can help keep you accountable to your educational goals. Delaware Stars has an Individual Professional Development Plan on the website under “Forms”. When putting together your professional development plan, it is helpful to take a look at the year ahead. This will help ensure that you get into the classes that you would most like to take. Planning ahead also makes it easier to choose classes that are most relevant to the work you do with children each day. The DIEEC PD calendar is published in June, so this is a great time to plan out your classes. Don’t forget to put reminders in your calendar for trainings that you have registered for far in advance. Individual Professional Development Plans should be completed annually and updated as needed.

Remember to allot funds for professional development when writing out your program’s annual budget. You will need to factor in the number of staff members and the number of hours each staff member will need. It’s a great idea to send several staff members to the same training so that they can help each other stay accountable with their goals and what they have learned.

Putting Your Professional Development Into Practice

While early childhood professionals should be choosing professional development that is directly related to their role in their program, it is also important to consider career goals. If a teacher would like to be more involved in curriculum planning and implementation, it would be beneficial to seek out training on this topic.

The most important part of professional development comes AFTER the training. How are you going to incorporate what you have learned into your practice? Spend some time setting goals for yourself on how you will use what you have learned. Keep your Delaware Stars TA informed of your PD goals. Your TA may be able to help by providing some follow up coaching.

Administrative Support

It is important for administration to provide individual support to their staff when planning PD. This can even be incorporated into yearly staff evaluations. Administrators can assist staff members in setting goals for the year and choosing PD that will help them achieve their goals. In addition, administrators can help staff set long term career goals. Think about using an action plan to detail the steps they will take to reach their goals. Remember to check in on staff members’ goals throughout the year to keep them accountable. Administrators can use different strategies to help staff members in evaluating how well they have met their goals. Some strategies may include targeted observations with feedback, self-assessments, and time for reflection.



Administrative Support

Staff meetings can provide a great opportunity to discuss goal setting and professional development plans. Staff members working on similar goals could attend trainings together. Staff meetings could also be used as a forum for teachers to share what they have learned in their trainings with the whole staff. This is also a good time to link the program's quality improvement goals with staff professional development goals.

Administrators can also utilize the Facility Professional Development Plan to keep track of staff trainings. The facility plan is located on the Delaware Stars website under "Forms". This form allows programs to list out the trainings for the entire staff. This makes it easy for the administrator to stay organized with upcoming trainings.

If your program has any questions about professional development, do not hesitate to reach out to your Stars TA. If you would like to see professional development offered on a specific topic, call DIEEC at 302-831-3239.