

September 2021



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Early Childhood Professional:

We hope you enjoyed the summer and had some time to relax and refresh. September marks a month of transition as families get back on schedule and you welcome new children into your programs - it's a busy time and especially unpredictable with the evolving pandemic. To this end, be sure to check out our social media platforms throughout the month, where we will post all sorts of tips for helping with transitions. In this issue, we also include an article on resources to help you take care of yourself. We often lose sight of self-care when we are caring for so many others.

This issue also includes information on the Delaware Early Education and Child Care Stabilization Fund. Don't miss out on this opportunity to receive sub grants for your program to help with personnel costs such as salaries and bonuses or materials to sustain your program. It's easy to apply. And if you have questions, we have a team to help.

In our "Voices from the Field" series, we feature a program, "Just in Time Learning Academy," that managed to open through the pandemic through sheer resilience and determination - qualities we've seen demonstrated time and time again by early childhood professionals.

Finally, this summer, we mourned the passing of an early childhood education leader and advocate, Dr. Gwendolyn Sanders. Dr. Sanders worked tirelessly to make sure all children had access to quality care, specifically in the city of Wilmington. We've included a tribute to her in this issue.

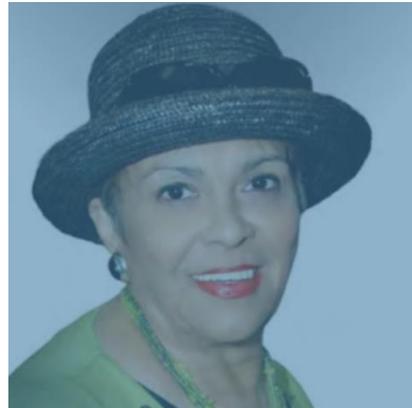
Rena Hallam
DIEEC Director



Voices from the Field: Just in Time Learning Academy

Throughout the course of the pandemic, Molly White opened up her own early childhood education center and quickly implemented strategies for cultivating staff and family appreciation. The Milford program serves as a shining example of putting passion into practice.

[Read more at the end of this publication.](#)



Early Childhood Education Leader, Mentor Remembered

Dr. Gwendolyn W. Sanders remembered as a true force within the community. A fierce mentor and advocate for education, she leaves behind an impactful legacy and important mission.

[Read more at the end of this publication.](#)

Donations to Dr. Sanders Memorial Fund at:
<https://www.delcf.org/donations/drgwsmemorialfund/>



Stabilization Fund Update Apply Today!

Don't miss out on this opportunity to receive sub grants available for all licensed early childhood education programs through the Stabilization Fund.

These funds can be used numerous ways, including supporting the workforce through funding salaries, providing recruitment and retention bonuses, and providing benefits.

[Read more at the end of this publication.](#)



Prioritizing Mental Health: Various Resources Available

As we continue on into a new school year amid an ever-evolving environment of change and transition, knowing where you can access mental health and wellbeing resources is vital.

We've put together a list of both local and national resources for you to use as a reference.

[Read more at the end of this publication.](#)



COVID-19 Testing Services Now Launched in Schools Statewide

Delaware Department of Education (DOE) and Delaware Department of Public Health (DPH) partnered with Quidel, a diagnostic healthcare company, to bring routine COVID-19 testing services to both schools early childhood education programs throughout Delaware.

This partnership allows for dependable health and safety standards for peace of mind throughout the year.

[Read more at the end of this publication.](#)



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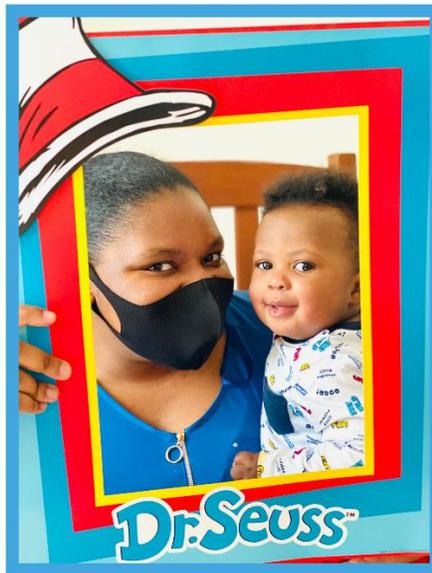
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Just in Time Learning Academy Opens Despite Pandemic



Pictured left to right: Just in Time staff member reads to children during the program day; staff and children on "Twin Day"; staff member and child celebrate Dr. Seuss Day.

While most were putting their dreams on hold during the pandemic, Molly White realized hers - owning and operating an early childhood education center. In February of 2021, Molly opened Just in Time Learning Academy (J.I.T.L.A.) in Milford, Del.

"I'm passionate about teaching young children," said Molly. "I wanted to create an experience for children that's non-traditional. I recognize that not every child learns the same way."

Her passion translated into ten years working at another center to learn as much as she could before taking the big step of investing in her own. This tenure, coupled with her business degree, led her to acquire her property at the beginning of March 2020, right as the pandemic took charge of everyone's plans.

Undaunted, Molly focused on getting the five classrooms ready to serve infants to preschoolers and recruiting staff and families. She conducted numerous virtual tours, started and maintained a Facebook page, and built her team.

"I had a clear vision on how I wanted my center to run," said Molly. "This vision included smaller class sizes, engaging families, and having a staff who felt valued."

Molly's focus on families and staff especially struck Stars Technical Assistant, Nancy Hoffman. "Molly is committed to her staff and families. She offers parents diapers, bottles, formula, wipes, sheets, and food (breakfast, lunch, and snacks). She also offers complimentary continental breakfast to parents every Monday morning."

Her approach to staff recruitment and retention starts with the hiring process. The application includes the question, "How do you like to be appreciated?" According to Molly, the responses overwhelmingly point to "notice what I'm doing." Molly more than notices. As an example, each employee's information sheet includes his or her favorite candy or snack. "My main goal is to keep my staff happy and satisfied," she adds.

To this end, Molly plans to use her grant from the Delaware Early Education and Child Care Stabilization Fund to give each employee a bonus in addition to buying materials for her classrooms.

Dreams do come true - ask Molly White of Just in Time Learning Academy.

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In Remembrance: Dr. Gwendolyn W. Sanders

Delaware's early childhood community includes advocates who work tirelessly, so every young child has access to quality care and education. Often, these mentors inspire early childhood professionals to continue with the challenging yet rewarding work of serving children. For many currently in the field, Dr. Gwendolyn Sanders was just that mentor.

Known for her passion for early childhood education, volunteerism, and commitment to professional development, Dr. Sanders set the standard in Wilmington and Delaware. During her many years overseeing the Wilmington Early Care and Education Council (WECEC), she was a fierce advocate for the importance of early childhood education. In addition to her leadership through WECEC, Dr. Sanders was also a strong supporter of skill development for professionals in the field. An active mentor, she loved helping others achieve their goals to be their best selves, both professionally and personally.

Dr. Sanders "expected excellence," said her former colleague and friend of more than fifty years, Theresa Knox. While working on Dr. Sanders's staff at Delaware Technical and Community College (DTCC) during her time as dean of students, Knox recalls that she always drove everyone to be their best selves.

Her many outstanding achievements included participating in Delaware's first-ever Birth to Eight Summit on Early Learning in 2016 and holding many academic positions such as clinical supervisor and adjunct professor at Wilmington University, student academic support and adjunct professor at Springfield College, and child development associate for The Council for Professional Recognition. Dr. Sanders also had a true passion for volunteering, tirelessly promoting quality early learning for children, especially in the City of Wilmington.

The legacy of Dr. Sanders will continue to live on through her impact on the lives of those she touched through mentorship and service.

To read the full obituary for Dr. Sanders, please [click here](#).

To donate to the Dr. Gwendolyn W. Sanders Memorial Fund through the Delaware Community Foundation (DCF), please [click here](#).

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**Delaware Early Education & Childcare Stabilization Fund:
Update**

Early childhood education professionals across the state are feeling the positive impact of the Stabilization Fund. Take it from this month's Voices from the Field ECE professional, Molly White, who plans to utilize the funds to continue to grow her program with new classroom materials and staff incentives.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to receive these subgrants available for all licensed early childhood education programs from the Delaware Early Education and Childcare Stabilization Fund. The goal of these grants is to help early childhood professionals stay in business and make childcare more affordable for families. These funds can be used numerous ways, including supporting the workforce through recruitment and retention bonuses!

Below is a breakdown of the fund's impact so far:

- **627** programs have applied (**292** center-based programs and **335** family childcare programs)
- **\$31,421,032.95** paid out to programs to date

Here are additional [examples](#) of how funds can be used.

Don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions. We are here to support you!

Call **1-877-351-2841**

Email at StabilizationFund@udel.edu

Visit the [Stabilization Fund Page](#) to apply today!
Applications open until December 23.

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Mental Health Supports for Start of New School Year

It is hard to believe that September is here – as you continue to get back into the swing of things, it's also important to remember that it is okay not to be okay.

There have been many curveballs thrown at us, especially in our field, during the last 18 months. Throughout this time, we continue to adapt to a "new reality." This "new reality" feels like it changes by the day, the hour, even the minute. Some of us may have hit a wall early on; others may just now be hitting a wall. Maybe you've hit a few walls.

The pandemic doesn't look the same for everyone; each of us has experienced it differently, with various challenges along the way. This time of year can be especially emotional. While it's an exciting time of reunion and fresh starts, it can also feel overwhelming. Just as you comfort and remind the children in your care and help them navigate these difficult emotions, it's vital to do the same for yourselves.

We've put together a list of both local and national resources for you to use as a reference point moving forward. Below you'll find local support groups and events, COVID-19 specific resources, treatment locator, as well as contact information for important hotlines, textlines, and even a chat service.

Delaware chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):

[COVID-19 resources](#)

24/7 helpline: **(888) 427-2643 (option 1)**

En español: **(302) 415-4356**

Mental Health Association of Delaware:

[Local resources, support groups, etc.](#)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):

[Treatment services locator](#)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

1-800-273-8255 (TALK)

[24/7 online chat](#)

[Guidelines for how to report social media posts with suicidal themes or warning signs](#)

Crisis Textline:

Text SIGNS to 741741 for 24/7 anonymous and free-of-charge counseling

To stay updated on additional resources for re-entry and school year transitions, be sure to follow along on DIEEC social media:

Delaware Stars:

[Instagram](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Facebook](#)

DIEEC Professional Development:

[Facebook](#)

New Directions Early Head Start:

[Facebook](#)

DPH Announces COVID-19 \$15M Testing Partnership With Quidel In Schools

Dover (July 19, 2021) The Division of Public Health (DPH) is announcing a \$15M partnership with the Department of Education (DOE) and Quidel Corporation to provide comprehensive COVID-19 testing, processing, and reporting in Delaware schools. Quidel will utilize its rapid antigen tests to provide on-the-spot results in as little as 10 minutes. Frequent testing helps immediately identify COVID-19 cases, prevent transmission, and keep schools open.

While the availability of testing in schools is not new in Delaware, this service, which is free to schools and staff, is a complete turn-key solution that includes providing Quidel staff to conduct on-site testing, analyze results and report them to families and the State, taking the burden off of schools. Results are reported back to families within 24 hours.

“When used alongside other prevention strategies, like distancing and face masks, testing creates an additional level of reassurance that it is safe to keep schools open,” said DPH Chief Physician Dr. Rick Pescatore. “This program allows schools the best of both worlds, being able to identify potential cases early while continuing to focus on the business of learning.”

Screening testing continues to be an important mitigation strategy, which was again recommended in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s recently updated Guidance for COVID-19 prevention in K-12 schools.

“Antigen testing facilitates our quick identification of cases, which in turn will help keep our classrooms open to in-person learning,” said Secretary of Education Susan Bunting. “I appreciate the ongoing support of the Division of Public Health in ensuring that our schools remain open and safe for both students and staff.”

DPH, DOE, and Quidel have already launched the initiative at five pilot schools, for their summer school students and staff. Three participating schools are in the Colonial School District, one in the Christina School District and Odyssey Charter School. Quidel can expand the program to all 350 of the State’s K-12 public, private and charter schools when classrooms fully reopen for the fall semester. Under the program, parental permission is required for students to participate.

This testing service is meant to be a routine process that is aimed at testing asymptomatic staff and students. Staff and students who have symptoms of COVID-19 are reminded to stay home and seek testing at one of Delaware’s available sites

which can be located at de.gov/gettested. Quidel and DPH will coordinate follow-up testing and results reporting for any student who receives a positive result from the rapid antigen test.

“Quidel is proud to partner with the State of Delaware in the development and launch of this comprehensive testing protocol to support the State’s safe reopening of classrooms and efforts to protect students and school staff,” said Douglas Bryant, president, and CEO of Quidel Corporation. “Vigilance in testing is the surest way to detect COVID-19 infections early and a crucial tool to help limit potential spread. Every day that we shut coronavirus down will be a day that we keep Delaware classrooms open.”

Schools and families that want to learn more about the program can visit: <https://www.dhsscovidsschooltest.com/>. Questions about testing can also be directed to DPH Richard.Pescatore@delaware.gov.

If you are sick with any of the following symptoms, stay home: fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue, chills, shaking with chills, loss of smell or taste, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or headache or congestion or runny nose without a known cause such as allergies.

Medically related questions regarding testing, symptoms, and health-related guidance can be submitted by email at DPHCall@delaware.gov.

DPH will continue to update the public as more information becomes available. For the latest on Delaware’s response, go to de.gov/coronavirus.

Press release above obtained from the [July 19, 2021 article](#) posted on Delaware.gov in announcing the Quidel partnership.