

November 2021



## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Early Childhood Professional:

With November upon us, so are the cooler temperatures with the changing seasons. We encourage you to continue to get outside with your children. It not only helps with managing safety and health issues because of COVID, but it also supports learning through exploration and play.

In this issue's "Voices from the Field" segment, we showcase the little school at Kid's Cottage that created an outdoor classroom. Their staff worked with our professional development team to design the space and develop activities to utilize this space.

November is also Kindergarten Registration month in Delaware. Be sure to check out the article in this issue that includes resources to support your families in getting their children signed up for kindergarten.

If you haven't already, apply for the Stabilization Fund. Programs are using these grants in various ways to sustain their work, such as providing salaries and bonuses for their staff. We've heard that some are investing in their outdoor space to create classrooms like the little school.

We have included the early care and education update from the Office of Early Learning, Department of Education on the news front. We are also excited to share information on a new supplemental curriculum from The Food Bank of Delaware.

Finally, we are offering in-person professional development and have loved seeing you face-to-face. Thank you for complying with our COVID protocols. Our instructors have reported how fun it has been to catch up with you.

And, we wanted to provide you with another opportunity for fun by hosting our second Jeopardy event. There's still time to sign up for this Thursday's game.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Rena Hallam  
DIEEC Director

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### Voices from the Field

#### Learning Outside is "Life Changing" at the little school

The little school at Kids Cottage worked with DIEEC to transform a corner of their play area into an outdoor classroom. The reception to this new space has been "mind-blowing," according to Lisa Ratliff, co-owner and co-director.

Read more [here](#), and attached to this publication.



### Fall Jeopardy Event Thursday, November 4, 2021 7 p.m. (via Zoom)

#### There's still time to sign up!

Calling all early childhood professionals! We are hosting our second Jeopardy event. You can play alone or with a team - it doesn't matter, fun is all that counts.

And you can win great prizes!

Sign up [here!](#) You will need to have access to Google Drives. For assistance to go <https://support.google.com/drive/answer/6283888> Instructions are also attached to this publication.



### Early Child Care Education Update

In October, Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, associate secretary of The Early Childhood Support Team, communicated important early childhood education community updates.

Among them is that the Delaware Stars redesign is paused for the remainder of 2021 and program verifications will continue to be



### COVID's Impact On Early Childhood Education Programs

During this past summer, DIEEC's Research and Evaluation Team surveyed hundreds of early childhood professionals to learn more about the impact of COVID on their programs.

suspended. Programs currently receiving tiered reimbursement support will continue to receive funds at their current rate through June 30, 2023.

The entire announcement is included [here](#) and at the end of this publication.

We encourage you to reach out to us for technical assistance, professional development, and coaching supports. These offerings align with the proposed new system and with recommended practices for quality services to support children and families.

To learn more about these services visit the DIEEC website, <https://www.dieec.udel.edu/> or email [ecinstitute@udel.edu](mailto:ecinstitute@udel.edu).

We created short research snapshots of what we learned, specifically the effects on the early childhood education workforce and how family child care programs fared. Be sure to check them out.

### [How Have Delaware's Family Child Care Programs Fared During the COVID-19 Pandemic?](#)

### [How the COVID-19 Pandemic is Impacting the Child Care Workforce in Delaware?](#)

Both are attached to the end of this publication.



### **Stabilization Fund Deadline Approaching End-of-Year Apply Now!**

*"I have never dreamed someone would just give me money to use in my business. The application experience was easy and quick. My plan for the grant is to update flooring parts of my kitchen, upgrade the HVAC system and upgrade the playground and some of the furnishings."*

**Family Child Care Provider**

There is still time to apply for sub-grants through the Early Care and Education Stabilization Fund. Don't miss out on this opportunity to receive sub-grants for COVID-related expenses, including staff salaries and bonuses.

Interested? Click [here](#) to learn more.  
<https://www.delawarestars.udel.edu/delaware-early-education-and-child-care-stabilization-fund/>



### **Professional Development**

**Early childhood professionals return to in-person workshops. A big thanks for complying with COVID protocols.**

In October, we offered several in-person trainings in addition to our virtual options. Our DIEEC professional development coordinators were impressed with everyone's efforts to comply with COVID protocols while putting forth an effort to learn and reconnect with their colleagues.

"The experience of interacting with providers in person was so rewarding," said Melissa Schulte, DIEEC professional development coordinator. "The conversations flowed, and interactions were extremely positive. The support shown during conversations was a much-needed personal experience for all."

We are offering "Flip It! Flipping the Challenging Behavior Plus" and "Understanding Children's Behavior as Communication" in person at our

new Dover Location - The Dover Residence Inn.

Sign up [here](https://dieecpd.org/registry/calendar) <https://dieecpd.org/registry/calendar>



### **New Supplemental Curriculum Healthy Childhood Project**

The Food Bank of Delaware is offering a new supplemental curriculum, "The Healthy Childhood Project." This curriculum is designed to help children ages three-five and their families improve nutrition and increase physical activity through 13 lesson plans. Each lesson plan includes activities such as a read-aloud book and cooking, planting, or crafting.

For more information click [here](#), and at the end of this publication



### **November is Kindergarten Registration Month**

The Delaware Readiness Teams, in partnership with the Department of Education's Office of Early Learning, have launched the 2021-2022 Kindergarten Registration Campaign. The campaign includes access to kindergarten registration information packets available upon request [here](#) <https://support.google.com/drive/answer/6283888> and registration information events.

Calendar of events is included [here](#)

For more details click [here](#).

All Information is attached to the publication.

Questions should be directed to [Diane Frentzel](mailto:Diane.Frentzel@delaware.gov).  
[dcfrentzel@gmail.com](mailto:dcfrentzel@gmail.com).



Delaware Stars | University of Delaware, 501 South College Avenue, Newark, DE 19716

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NOVEMBER 2021

# VOICES FROM THE FIELD

little school at Kids Cottage



## Learning outside is "Life Changing" at the little school



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**“The new use of this space is life-changing for our staff and children.”**

*Lisa Ratliff, program co-owner and co-director*

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*Interview by Lin Nordmeyer*

The little school at Kids Cottage website banner reads: “Discovery. We value an environment that promotes hands-on exploration and design our spaces to promote discovery.”

With the support of the “Let’s Go Outside” grant from the DIEEC, this early childhood education program in Dover, Del. put that value into practice by creating an outdoor classroom for its students, ages twelve months through pre-kindergarten.



Stump stools at the little school's outdoor classroom space where children can learn and collaborate.

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**“I’m especially passionate about the value of learning outdoors.”**

*Miss Heather  
Three-year-old  
teacher*

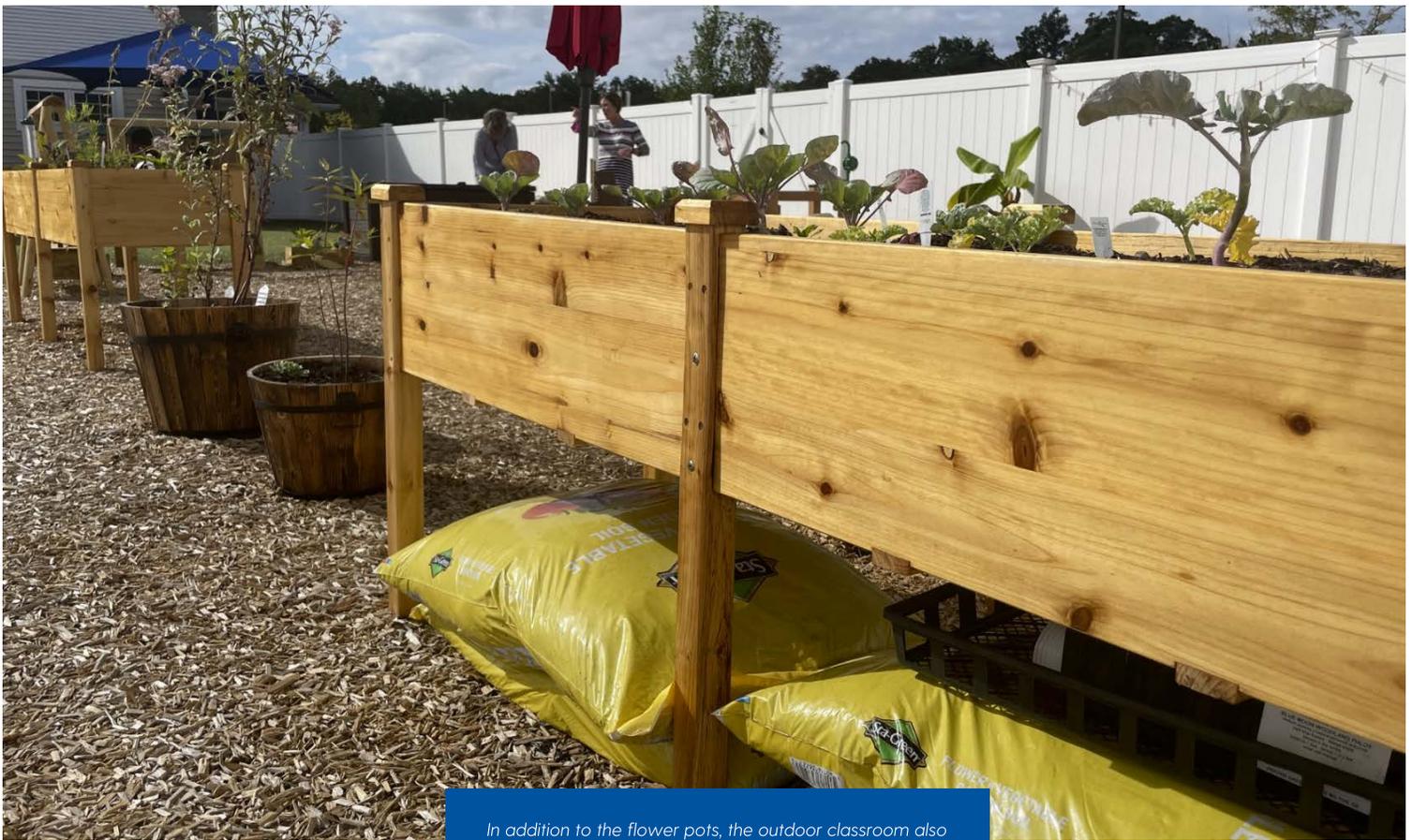
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“The new use of this space is life-changing for our staff and children,” said Lisa Ratliff, program co-owner and co-director. “It’s a mindset shift for our staff, but we are learning and supporting each other in what can be accomplished outside. The hands-on learning also fits nicely with our curriculum.”

To help with the new teaching strategy, Lisa and Heather Barrows, a three-year-old teacher, attended the professional development “Outdoor Classrooms: Wonder, Explore, Learn.” They also worked with the DIEEC’s Christine Skrobot and University of Delaware’s Lab School master teacher, Katie Pollock, to design the outdoor space.



Greenery and plant life, such as the stacked flower pots above, line the outdoor classroom.



*In addition to the flower pots, the outdoor classroom also features garden boxes, pictured above.*

And what resulted is “mind-blowing,” according to Lisa. The little school converted one corner of their play area into an outdoor classroom equipped with a mud station, multiple planters, a garden bed, and all sorts of gadgets.

“For our three-year and four-year-old children, we hold regular classes in the space,” said Lisa. “For our younger children, we give them plenty of opportunities to explore and play in the classroom.”

“To differentiate the playground from this space we bring the kids in through a separate entrance. We want to be sure that this unique learning opportunity is utilized differently than our playground.”

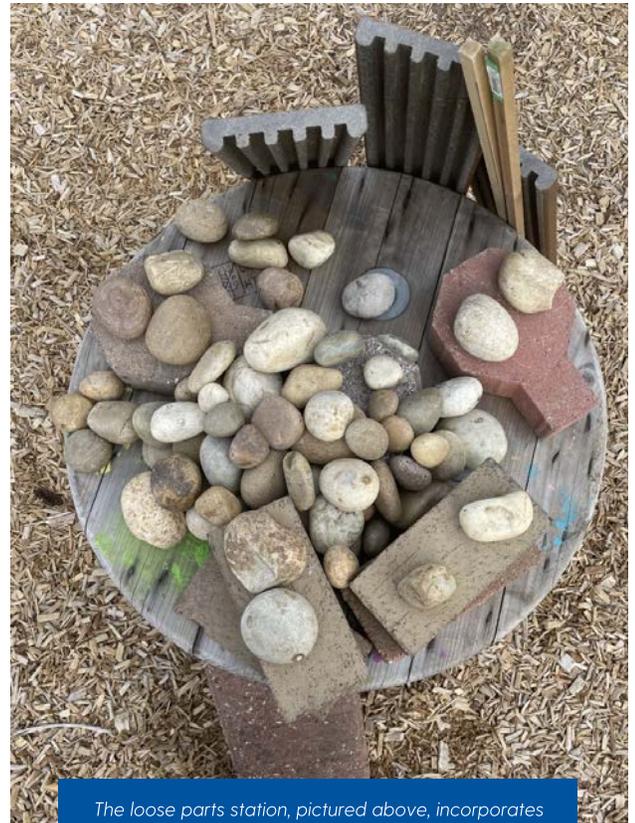
Lisa credits Miss Heather with spearheading the mindset shift for the little school’s staff. She is helping teachers develop their lesson plans and be intentional about limiting indoor time. “I’m especially passionate about the value of learning outdoors,” said Miss Heather. “I grew up in Vermont where being outdoors is a part of your upbringing and I have seen firsthand the health benefits and its appeal for all kinds of learners.”

So far, the response from the families and the children is positive.

“At a recent open house, the families were intrigued,” said Lisa. “Now, they are contributing loose parts for the classroom.”

“Children are natural explorers,” said Miss Heather. She and Lisa recounted how a group of three-year-old students recently discovered bees' pollen pouches and spent fifteen minutes learning about their function.

The vision for the center is to create additional outdoor classrooms in the playground area. However, both Lisa and Miss Heather encourage all early childhood education programs to go outdoors. “It doesn't have to be a big project,” said Miss Heather. “You can start small with plants and greenery and go from there.”



*The loose parts station, pictured above, incorporates natural elements like rocks and stones to enhance imagination and problem-solving.*



*The garden box from another angle. This particular box features some newly-planted vegetables.*

# Update your browser to use Google Drive, Docs, Sheets, Sites, Slides, and Forms

To use Google Drive, Docs, Sheets, Sites, Slides, and Forms, you need to use a supported web browser.

[Learn what a browser is, which browser you use, and how to update to the latest version.](#)

## Option 1: Find the update for your browser

### [Update your browser](#)

If you can't update your browser, you can [use a different browser](#). Browsers are free and easy to install.

[Learn about system requirements for Google Drive, Docs, Sheets, Sites, Slides, and Forms.](#)

## Option 2: Update your operating system

If you can't update your browser, update your operating system.

### Windows

[Learn how to keep your Windows computer up to date.](#)

### Mac

- If you use Mac OS X 10.6.8 or later, [learn how to keep your Mac computer up to date.](#)
- If you use Mac OS X 10.6.7 or earlier, [learn how to keep your Mac computer up to date.](#)

## Option 3: Use a different computer or mobile device

If you can't update your browser, install a new browser, or update your operating system, try to use a different computer or use a mobile device.

If you have an Android phone, Android tablet, an iPhone, or an iPad, you can install Google Drive, Docs, Sheets, and Slides on your mobile device.

- Android: [Learn about system requirements for Google Drive, Docs, Sheets, and Slides on Android.](#)
- iPhone and iPad: [Learn about system requirements for Google Drive, Docs, Sheets, and Slides on iPhone and iPad.](#)

## Still need help?

If this didn't help you, try looking at [other suggestions in the Google Drive forum.](#)

# DELAWARE INSTITUTE FOR Excellence *in* Early Childhood

The purpose of this message is to provide an update regarding ongoing work related to early care and education.

For the remainder of 2021, the Delaware Stars redesign will be paused, and program verifications will remain suspended. Due to staffing shortages, the Early Childhood Support Team is prioritizing tasks that are focused on supporting the workforce and stabilizing programs.

Specifically, the Office of Early Learning is focused on

- distributing federal stabilization funds to stabilize programs,
- implementing federal quality funds to support the workforce,
- developing a seamless system that will align standards and monitoring,
- building out supports to implement the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential process,
- creating a framework for a compensation scale to demonstrate the need for additional resources, and
- planning the transition of Part C in preparation for potential Universal PreK.

The Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL) has also experienced staffing shortages in both our Dover and Wilmington offices. OCCL has prioritized conducting on site visits to providers. As a result, specialists spend most days in the field and may be slower in responding to your phone calls and emails. Please know that we are doing our best to meet the needs of all providers as quickly as we can.

Programs currently receiving tiered reimbursement support will continue to receive funds at their current rate, through June 30, 2023. The Early Childhood Support Team is working to redesign the current Tiered Reimbursement process to distribute funds to more programs through quality contracts starting in the fall of 2023. Stars ratings will be removed from public websites until further notice.

I encourage programs to continue to access the technical assistance, training, and coaching supports that are available through the DIEEC. The current offerings are aligned with the proposed new system and with recommended practices for quality services to support children and families. Please visit <https://www.dieec.udel.edu/> to learn more or sign up.

I also encourage programs to request a stabilization fund sub-grant to help with expenses and ensure that programs are able to stay in business. Information can be found at <https://www.delawarestars.udel.edu/delaware-early-education-and-child-care-stabilization-fund/>.

In addition, programs can apply for non-profit grants at [DE Relief Grants - Division of Small Business - State of Delaware](#).

I recognize that for some, this process is taking much longer than anticipated. Please know that the Early Childhood Support team continues to work to support programs now as well as to prepare Delaware for the future to ensure that all children succeed in school and life.

Please reach out to me directly with any questions at [yvette.sanchezfuentes@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:yvette.sanchezfuentes@doe.k12.de.us)

Thank you for all you do. Yvette



# Research Snapshots:

## How Have Delaware's Family Child Care Programs Fared During the COVID-19 Pandemic?

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the essential role of family child care for children and families. To better understand the impacts of COVID-19 as they relate to staffing, finances, and families, DIEEC gathered survey data from family and large family child care programs between June 15th and July 23rd of 2021. A total of 132 of Delaware's 549 programs completed surveys.

Large family (LFCC) and family child care (FCC) programs in the state of Delaware endured some major changes since the pandemic began. For many programs, average enrollments dropped, age groups of children shifted, hours changed, and over half of providers began offering school-age care. Providers took advantage of a number of financial supports, but rarely had substitute care when they needed it.



### Substitutes

34% of L/FCC providers reported a need for substitutes.

Only 22% of L/FCC programs were able to access substitutes when in need.

### Program Flexibility

**54%**  
Began offering school age remote learning

**7%**  
Lengthened program hours

**22%**  
Changed age groups of children served

### Program Disruptions

% of L/FCC who:

**18%**

Closed for at least **one week** after reopening

**11%**

Reduced program hours

### Supports Received

Additional Purchase of Care

Enhanced Reimbursement

Paycheck Protection Program

Materials & Supplies

Unemployment Benefits

Grants

### Most Helpful Supports Reported:

**4%** School Age Grant

**5%** Materials & Supplies

**13%** Paycheck Protection Program

**31%** Additional Purchase of Care

**56%** Enhanced Reimbursement

### Vaccination Status



Approximately **8 out of 10** L/FCC providers are already vaccinated or plan to take the vaccine.

**0.62** = average number

of per-program COVID cases reported among children

\*calculated based on program report

# The Healthy Childhood Project

(for preschool age children)



(13 modules )

Each module introduces children ages 3-5 to a target fruit or vegetables through lesson plans and activities to be presented in their classroom. All of these materials and ingredients that are part of each lesson will be delivered to sites by Nutrition Educators to assist site staff that will be responsible for teaching each lesson. **Centers can choose to have the lesson taught in-person.**

Contact:

Alicia Vogel at: [avogel@fbd.org](mailto:avogel@fbd.org) or  
(302) 424-3301 ext. 119

Jaime Sherman at: [jsherman@fbd.org](mailto:jsherman@fbd.org) or  
(302) 292-1305 ext. 273

# DELAWARE INSTITUTE FOR Excellence *in* Early Childhood

November is Kindergarten Registration Month in Delaware.

The Delaware Readiness Teams, in partnership with the Department of Education's Office of Early Learning, have launched the 2021-2022 Kindergarten Registration Campaign. As part of this campaign we have free **Kindergarten Registration Information Packets** available upon request. These materials are for families who have children that will be age 5 by August 31, 2022. [Sign Up Now](#). Folders will also be available at all of Delaware's public libraries.

**Registration Information Events** will be held throughout the months of November and December. Events are free and open to the public. View the full calendar below for an event near you.

## [Kindergarten Registration Month Events](#)

The Delaware Readiness Teams will host a **Virtual Kindergarten Academy Series – November 2021 to May 2022**. This program is geared towards children who will be five years old on or before August 31, 2022. The virtual sessions are child centered, interactive, and available in English and Spanish.

[Register for English session](#), second Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m.

[Register for Spanish session](#), the following Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m.

## Join a Readiness Team

The Delaware Readiness Teams are a statewide initiative of volunteer-based teams that bring together early learning professionals, school representatives, families and community members to help support children from birth to age 8 get ready for school and life.

We are in the **process of reorganizing** the Del Teams. As part of that process we are sending out a team membership sign up for those that are interested in joining. (Even existing members can complete this new form) Everyone is welcome!

**Free Team Membership:** Please complete the form below if you're interested in joining a team.

[Take Survey](#)

### Benefits of joining a team include:

1. Gain valuable community contacts
2. Be able to share community events and updates
3. Receive up to date information and or resources that are available
4. Opportunity to have your voice heard through community meetings or surveys
5. Opportunity to share your own resources or programming with the community
6. Opportunity to identify needs that could be addressed through funding, partnerships, or advocacy

## Graphics to share

If you'd like to share our flyers, please visit our Hightail folder [here](#).

**KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION MONTH -  
OCTOBER 2021**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9
11	12	13	14	15	16
18	19	20	21	22	23
				<b>Transitions Workshop 1:00-2:30</b>	
25	26	27	28	29	30
	<b>Readiness Teams Presentation SECC 10:00.</b>		<b>Little Sprouts Trunk or Treat 5:30-7:30</b>		<b>DAFB Firehouse Truck or Treat 10:00-1:00</b>

**KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION MONTH -  
NOVEMBER 2021**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6
		<b>Brookes ASQ Presentation 2:00-3:00</b>	<b>Cape Henlopen Readiness Team Meeting 4:30</b>		<b>Conscious Discipline Training 9:00-11:00</b>
8	9	10	11	12	13
	<b>Kindergarten Academy (English) 6:00-6:30</b>	<b>Kindergarten Academy (Spanish) 6:00-6:30</b>		<b>Kindergarten Registration Newark Library 10:15</b>	
15	16	17	18	19	20
<b>Kindergarten Registration Appoquinimink Library 10:15 Newark Library 10:30 Virtual</b>	<b>Kindergarten Registration North Wilmington Library 10:30</b>	<b>Kindergarten Registration Laurel Library 10:30 Brandywine Hundred Library 10:15</b>	<b>New Castle County Readiness Team Meeting 1:00</b>	<b>Kindergarten Registration Dover Library 10:30</b>	
22	23	24	25	26	27
			<b>Thanksgiving</b>		

**KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION MONTH -  
DECEMBER 2021**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
29	30 Kindergarten Registration Selbyville Library 10:00 Hockessin Library 10:15 Virtual Kindergarten Registration Presentation (English) 6:00 p.m.	1 Kindergarten Registration Milton Library 10:30 Virtual Kindergarten Registration (Spanish) 6:00 p.m.	2	3	4
6	7	8	9	10	11
13	14 Kindergarten Academy (English) 6:00	15 Kindergarten Academy (Spanish) 6:00	16	17	18
20	21	22	23	24	25 <b>Christmas</b>
27	28	29	30	31	