

## Early Learning Challenge News

This e-news bulletin is the first edition of a new monthly bulletin about the initiatives that are part of Delaware's Early Learning Challenge Grant. This e-news bulletin is the first edition of a new monthly bulletin about the initiatives that are part of Delaware's Early Learning Challenge Grant. Awarded late in 2011, there are many exciting achievements to celebrate. Our office is in place, providing leadership as we work together with the Delaware Children's Department, the Departments of Education and Health and Social Services, families, and community and business leaders and organizations to accomplish the our ambitious and important goals. We are focusing on:

- Driving system-wide improvement through Delaware Stars, the quality-rating and improvement program for early learning, seeking to increase the numbers of programs and children participating, and moving programs to the high levels of quality;
- Aligning the early learning and the K-12 systems to better support children's school readiness;
- Addressing the health and development of the whole child; and
- Supporting a strong community of informed advocates and leaders for quality early learning, including our families and our civic and business leaders.

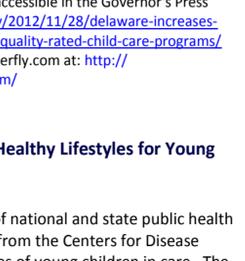
The Early Learning Challenge (ELC) is an important part of the state's effort to develop and sustain an early childhood system of the highest quality. To see the Challenge one-page implementation plan, review the rationale for a high quality early childhood system, meet our staff at OEL or see the full version of this e-bulletin (with photos, images online), please to go:

[www.http://decc.delaware.gov/2012/03/21/race-to-the-top/](http://decc.delaware.gov/2012/03/21/race-to-the-top/)

The Office of Early Learning looks forward to keeping Delaware's early learning community up to date through this new monthly e-bulletin. To subscribe, *click on:* [Earlylearning@state.de.us](mailto:Earlylearning@state.de.us), enter "Subscribe" in the subject line and hit send. To give feedback or suggest a story, please call 302-577-5300 or email to [Earlylearning@state.de.us](mailto:Earlylearning@state.de.us).

## Early Learning Partner News

### **Governor Markell Recognizes Delaware Stars For Early Success**



On November 27, Governor Jack Markell and Lt. Governor Matt Denn hosted star-studded "Stars within Stars" event to recognize and honor all early learning programs participating in Delaware Stars for Early Success. They also recognized the many community partners from the private and non-profit sectors who have been involved from the beginning. In front of an enthusiastic audience of over 400 people, the Governor and other speakers stressed the importance of early learning and development. Governor Markell said, "One of the most important investments we can make is in our state's youngest children. Our vision is to create a world-class early childhood system where quality programs prepare all of our children for success in a very competitive world."



Study after study shows: children receiving quality early care and education are more likely to be successful in school, become better citizens, earn more, contribute more and require fewer supports.

Teach V. Lee Ballinski gets a reaction from 6-month-old Emma Gibson at the Newark Day Nursery and Children's Center which participates in the Delaware Stars for Early Success Program. SUCHAK PEDERSON/THE NEWS JOURNAL

Photos of providers by county are accessible in the Governor's Press Release. <http://news.delaware.gov/2012/11/28/delaware-increases-early-childhood-providers-offering-quality-rated-child-care-programs/> More photos are available on Shutterfly.com at: <http://www.starswithinstars.shutterfly.com/>

### **Nemours to Lead National Initiative to Promote Healthy Lifestyles for Young Children in Child Care**

Congratulations to Nemours, which, with the support of national and state public health and early childhood partners, received a 5-year award from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to support health lifestyles of young children in care. The \$4.2M year one grant will be used to build on Nemours' successful Delaware programs to help early care and education providers in six states implement nutrition, breastfeeding support, physical activity and screen time policies and practices to improve the lives of young children and their families. Using a learning collaborative model, Nemours will positively impact children birth to age 5 in more than 840 early care and education across the nation and expand to other states in the following years.

### **New Stars website launched by the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood**

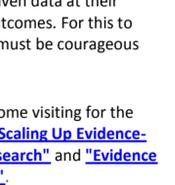
To see the new, user-friendly website, go to: <http://www.DelawareStars.Udel.edu>

## Spotlight on Local Success

The Salvation Army Early Learning Center used a creative way to combine playground improvements with fun and meaningful learning experiences for children. And, they improved their Environment Rating Scales as a result! The Salvation Army's Center Director, Kathy Gill, along with Delaware Stars technical assistants, connected science and nature in a four-year-old urban-setting classroom. Children planted a fall-harvest garden with the help of community partners. Children helped to water, weed, thin and harvest plants such as turnips, kale, spinach, beets and lettuce. Nemours provided funding and the Delaware Center for Horticulture and the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension offered guidance on plants and how to care for the garden. Long-term plans include a spring planting that will provide food for the Center's neighbors.

Research shows that giving children the experience of planting and caring for a garden helps further their physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. This project incorporated many skills from the Delaware Early Learning Foundations for this group of 4-year olds, including:

- Social emotional Self Concept (participating in meaningful responsibility and being part of a classroom community project);
- Approaches to Learning: Persistence and Engagement (following a sequence of steps to create a finished project);
- Language and Literacy: Receptive Communication (increasing vocabulary);
- Mathematics: Numbers and Operations (determine quantity; use ordinal number words);
- Science: Scientific Knowledge-Living Things (recognize people, plants and animals grow and change over time and need certain things to survive);
- My Family, My Community, My World: Places and Spaces-Geography (develop an awareness of the natural environment surrounding them outdoors)
- Creative Expression: Visual Arts (express experiences and feelings through a variety of artistic processes and creations)
- Physical Development and Health: Health Awareness and Practice (learn about and practice health and hygiene routines)



### **Books to read with children about gardens...**

Our Community Garden by Barbara Pollak; My Garden by Kevin Henkes; City Garden by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan.

## Early Learning Policy and Trends

**0-5 and K-12 Alignment:** The Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) released a new policy brief entitled "[Early Learning Instructional Leaders and Strong PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> Assessment Systems: The New Jersey Story](#)". The brief focuses on the need for school district administrators responsible for early learning programs to have a better understanding of both assessors practices and its critical link to improving student instruction.

**Common Core:** As states move to implement the Common Core standards in English/language arts and math, a number of voices in the early education field have raised about the issue of what impact the Common Core might have on classrooms that serve 3- and 4-year-olds. [A new paper](#) from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) may help early childhood educators to discuss and consider the interplay between the common standards' emphasis on raising academic rigor and early childhood research results that show that play, the arts, social skills, and integrated instruction are crucial to young children's healthy development.

**Data: A new report from the Data Quality Campaign, "Data for Action 2012: Focus on People to Change Data Culture,"** makes it clear that creating a data-driven culture starts at the top: leaders and policymakers must use the technology-driven data at their disposal to influence policy and action to improve educational outcomes. For this to happen, the data must be trusted and leaders and policymakers must be courageous enough to confront the problems illuminated from the data.

**Home Visiting:** Mathematica has produced two new articles on home visiting for the *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*: "[Replicating and Scaling Up Evidence-Based Home Visiting Programs: The Role of Implementation Research](#)" and "[Evidence for the Role of Home Visiting in Child Maltreatment Prevention](#)".

## New Research

### **Competencies for Working Effectively with Young Dual Language Learners**

The Alliance for a Better Community (AFABC) and colleagues nationwide have been working for the past several years to identify competencies needed by teachers to work effectively with young dual language learners. AFABC has recently held a webinar to announce the release of the competencies and support the importance of their use in individual, organizational, and systemic professional development efforts.

**The Dual Language Learner Teacher Competencies Report** (<http://afabc.org/getmedia/8c3e612e-7c2a-46cb-8c7e-b3f30f09c16f/DLLTcreport.a11LOW-RES.aspx>) is a three-part publication that includes the aforementioned teacher competencies, an article (*Necessary Dispositions for Teachers Working with Young Dual Language Learners*), and a policy brief outlining recommendations needed to advance workforce development that is inclusive of the needs of dual language learners. PowerPoint slides from the webinar are available to download at [http://www.afabc.org/getattachment/4d6d786e-ac6e-4736-b79c-6e2ffe72994d/DLLTC\\_webinarppt.aspx](http://www.afabc.org/getattachment/4d6d786e-ac6e-4736-b79c-6e2ffe72994d/DLLTC_webinarppt.aspx)

**The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI)** has developed a number of resources to support the use of evidence-based practices that promote the inclusion of young children of diverse abilities. Eight brand new [Landing Pads](#) have been developed to help teachers, administrators, professional development providers, and families locate resources to support inclusion through the use of these evidence-based practices. Each *Landing Pad* features resources organized into four sections: *Why Do It?* (the evidence base), *Read About It* (books, chapters, and articles), *See For Yourself* (videos and demonstrations), and *Find It Online* (websites with additional resources). This new product builds on [Research Synthesis Points on Quality Inclusive Practices](#) which provides brief descriptions and supporting references for the eight evidence-based and promising practices that support early childhood inclusion.

**QRIS:** A new study about how participation in a continuous quality improvement initiative produced higher-quality practices in Rhode Island's afterschool programs, [Understanding the "How" of Quality Improvement: Lessons from the Rhode Island Program Quality Intervention](#), found that quality improvement begins with program managers, who then lead the process of change.

**Teacher Evaluation:** The Center for American Progress released "[State of Teacher Evaluation Reform: State Education Agency Capacity and the Implementation of New Teacher Evaluation Systems](#)." This report offers an assessment of how early adopter states' Departments of Education have undertaken the preparation and implementation of new evaluation systems. It also identifies challenges and lessons that can be used to guide the reform efforts in this area.

**Early Language and Literacy:** A [new study](#) from Northwestern University shows the power of language in infants' ability to understand the intentions of others. The results, based on two experiments, show that infants were more likely to imitate behavior, however unconventional, if it had been named, than if it remained unnamed. This revealed that infants as young as 14 months of age coordinate their insights about human behavior and their intuitions about human language in the service of discovering which behaviors, observed in others, are ones to imitate.

**Social Emotional Development:** A recorded webinar from the Technical Assistance Center for the Pyramid Model into Homes, "[Using Family Coaching to Bring the Pyramid Model into Homes](#)", teaches about the major components, tools, and practices for implementing the Pyramid Model with infants, toddlers, and families receiving services at home. Hear about how one state implemented the Model across multiple home visiting programs. Related resources and supporting materials are available on the web page. For more information about the Pyramid Model, read the [fact sheet](#) or visit the [Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning website](#).

## Practice Tips

The children at the Salvation Army Early Learning Center took such pride and ownership of their garden and enjoyed tasting the vegetables they grew! You can introduce children to fall or winter vegetables by including them in their preparation. Young eaters will be much more willing to try something new when they have helped to create the snack or salad that is on the table. Here is a winter salad to try:

### **Beet-Orange Salad**

#### **Ingredients**

- 2 pounds fresh beets,
- 2-3 cans of mandarin oranges
- 2 heads of fresh lettuce or spinach
- 1 head of red cabbage (optional)  
( all from your garden or grocery store produce section )
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons cider vinegar
- Salt and pepper



Before your cooking experience with children,

- Boil two pounds of beets in salted water for about 40 minutes, until they are tender. Drain and peel the beets. Slice them into wedges. (*Save one uncooked beet to show the children the difference between raw and cooked beets*).
- Open the canned mandarin oranges and drain.
- Wash the heads of lettuce, spinach or cabbage.

With the children...into a large bowl,

- Ask children can cut the beet wedges into small pieces with pliable knives, tear the lettuce or spinach into small pieces, pull the cabbage off the head so it shreds, and count the mandarin oranges.
- Ask children to help you combine olive oil and cider vinegar and slowly pour over the lettuce and beet salad.
- Ask children to stir the salad ingredients, using a large spoon.

*Toddlers and younger preschoolers can participate in cooking experiences by tearing the lettuce or stirring the ingredients; older preschoolers may also be able to cut with plastic knives or count the ingredients that need to be added.*

### **Follow-up experiences:**

Taste the salad and record children's remarks. Graph children's responses: # of children who like beets and # of children who don't like beets. Print the recipe on a large poster-size sheet of paper, including pictures next to each step. Ask children to help you read the step by step instructions. Show children how beets look before and after they are cooked. Ask them to describe the differences. Put pots and pans in the dramatic play area so children can make their own salads or vegetable dishes.

### **Including families...**

Involve families in the cooking experience by providing them with written beet salad recipe cards. Take pictures and write a story of your group cooking experience and post it on a parent board. Put out samples of the finished recipe for families to taste as they pick up their children. Invite families to try other beet or winter vegetable recipes and share the results.

Cooking experiences help children learn skills from each of the domains in the **Delaware Early Learning Foundations**. Here are some examples:

- Social Emotional: Self Regulation (develop a sense of accomplishment; use materials purposefully, safely and respectfully);
- Approaches to Learning: Initiative and Curiosity (explore, ideas and tasks); show eagerness and curiosity to learn about and discuss a variety of topics, objects and tasks);
- Language and Literacy: Expressive Language (participate in turn-taking conversations);
- Mathematics: Patterns (develops an awareness of concepts of time as it relates to daily lives);
- Science: Sensory Awareness (use senses in purposeful ways to gather information and explore the environment);
- My Family, My Community, My World: Working Together-Government and Communities (perform simple tasks within the home, early childhood group, or community);
- Creative Expression: Dramatic Play (show imagination and creativity in play); and
- Physical: Fine Motor (use and manipulate objects purposefully; explore and experiment with a variety of tools); Health Awareness and Practice (experience and learn about healthy lifestyle practices).

**Tips and Materials that may be helpful to early educators and parents as they talk with their children about the recent school shooting in Connecticut may be found at:**

[www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org), in the What's New section. Materials there include:

- [Parents Tips for Helping Preschool-Aged Children after Disasters](#)
- [After the Shooting: Helping Young Children Heal](#)
- [Talking to Children about the Shooting](#)
- [Psychological Impact of the Recent Shooting](#)
- [Tips for Parents on Media Coverage](#)
- [Age-Related Reactions to a Traumatic Event](#)



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