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Quality Care South Dakota is designed to support child care and school-age programs in meeting benchmarks of quality and identifying their strengths as well as areas for growth. The Quality Care Team is housed at the Child & Family Resource Network at South Dakota State University and works in collaboration with the South Dakota Early Childhood Enrichment System with support and direction from the South Dakota Department of Social Services.

**Interested In Learning More?**

Registered family day care homes and licensed child care centers and school-age programs can voluntarily participate in this opportunity. Please check out [www.sdece.org/quality-care-south-dakota](http://www.sdece.org/quality-care-south-dakota). For more information or to apply, please email [sdsu.sdqris@sdsu.edu](mailto:sdsu.sdqris@sdsu.edu).

News to Support Your Program

**Environment Rating Scales**

How can child care or school-age care programs create goals towards quality improvements? In South Dakota the Quality Care South Dakota we use the Environment Rating Scales to provide data and information on care settings. The Environment Rating Scales (ERS) are the nationally used and research-based tools to measure the comprehensive quality of early childhood and school-age programs.

The ERS scales provide an in-depth look at the daily experiences children encounter, from the space they play in to the interactions they have with caregivers. Tailored to specific age groups and early learning settings, each ERS scale is designed to evaluate what children directly experience in their programs, which has a direct effect on their development.

There are four ERS scales:

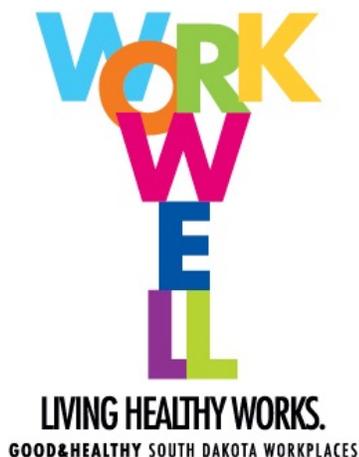
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale® (ECERS-3) which is designed for preschool and kindergarten classroom observations,
- Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale® (ITERS-3) which is for center-based infant and toddler program observations,
- Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale® (FCCERS-3) which is for home-based family child care program observations, and
- School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale® Updated (SACERS) which is created for programs caring for school-age children.



Programs participating in Quality Care South Dakota receive an observation by an observer who is trained and reliable in the ERS tools. After the observation, the program's Quality Coach will go over the data and information with the leadership to support continuous quality improvement goals in their quality improvement journey.

Over the next several months, we will highlight each of the scales and the valuable feedback they provide in unlocking opportunities for continuous quality improvement in child care and school age settings.

## 2025-2026 WorkWell Funding Opportunity



The South Dakota Department of Health is excited to release the **2025-2026 WorkWell Funding Opportunity**. All South Dakota businesses are eligible to apply! This is an opportunity for your worksite to send a positive, supportive message and promote healthy lifestyles by preventing, reducing, and managing chronic disease through worksite environment and policy change. Consider applying for a program wide healthy eating or steps challenge, purchasing an AED or creating a friendly breast feeding environment. These are just a few options to consider with the short WorkWell grant application.

**Grant Funds Awarded:** Up to \$2,000 per worksite

**Grant Release:** February 3, 2025

**Grant Submission Deadline:** February 28, 2025, by 5:00 pm CT

**Grant Selection:** April 2025

**Year Period:** June 1, 2025 – May 31, 2026

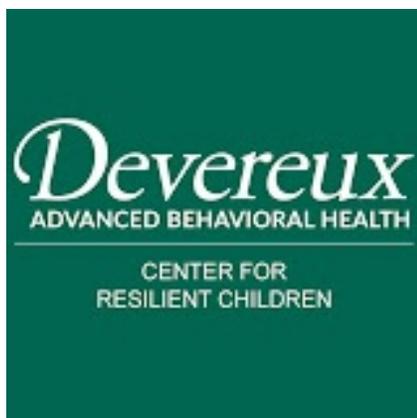
Apply Here: [Funding Opportunities | HealthySD.gov](#)

## Building Resilience and Emotional Wellness in Children and Their Caregivers

As a child care provider, you play a vital role in shaping the emotional wellness and social wellness of the children in your care. Fostering resilience, supporting emotional wellness, and promoting social skills are foundational to helping children grow into confident, capable individuals. And, while you want what is best for the children in your care, remember it is equally as important to take care of your own wellness.

Expert advice, helpful tips, and resources to promote resilience, social wellness, and emotional well-being for both children and caregivers can be found through the [Devereux Center for Resilient Children's \(DCRC\) YouTube channel](#). Here you will find a wealth of short videos with titles such as [YOU are a Protective Factor](#) and [Promoting Self-Regulation in Preschoolers](#).

By utilizing the Devereux Center for Resilient Children's YouTube channel, you're equipping yourself with the tools to make a lasting impact on the children in your care. Keep learning, growing, and empowering the next generation to thrive with resilience and emotional well-being!

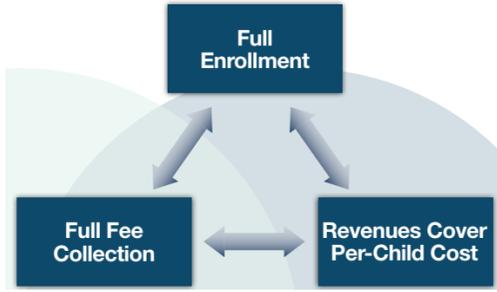


SD ECE Resources



## The Iron Triangle

Early childhood and school-age program budgets, like any other budget,



have two key components: income and expenses. Achieving a balance between these two is crucial. While program directors often focus on their rate when working to balance budgets, it's important to remember that income is also significantly affected by two other factors: enrollment and fee collection. These three factors—rate, enrollment, and fee collection—make up the "iron triangle" of ECE finance. Paying attention to all three sides of the iron triangle is essential for effective fiscal management.

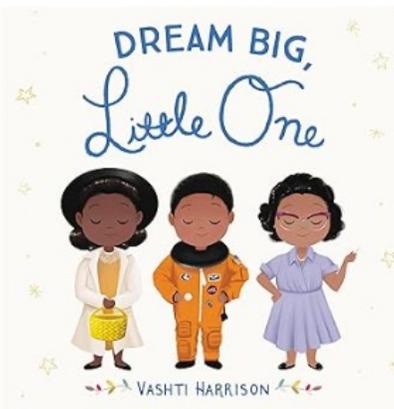
Interested in applying the iron triangle to your program? Visit the [Principles of the Iron Triangle](#) page on *South Dakota ECE Resources*, where you can download the Iron Triangle Worksheet. The worksheet is set up with the necessary formulas; just input your numbers to explore different scenarios.

If you are a provider working in a registered or licensed program and do not have an account, please [register here](#) for membership at no cost to you.

## Books of the Month

Each month, this section highlights children's books that are linked to monthly themes and/or valuable reads for child care providers. This curated selection aims to be a helpful resource of introducing titles to care givers they may not have seen before.

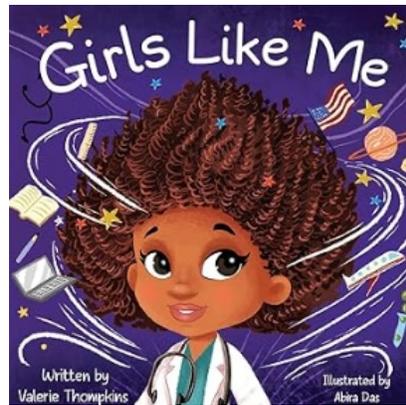
As winter's chill returns to remind us it is still wintertime, it's the perfect time to cozy up with a good book. These moments of storytelling not only ignite a love for reading but also support cognitive development, enhance language skills, boost concentration, and nurture imagination and creativity.



*Dream Big, Little One* features eighteen trailblazing Black women in American history, including heroes, role models, and everyday women who did extraordinary things—bold women whose actions and beliefs contributed to making the world better for generations to come. Whether they were putting pen to paper, soaring through the air, or speaking up for the rights of others, the women profiled in these pages took a stand against a world that didn't always accept them.

The leaders in this book may be little, but they all did something *big* and amazing.

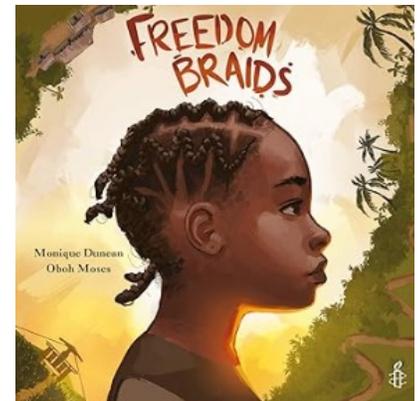
Reading age: Infant-3 years



*Girls Like Me* is a vibrant and empowering picture book that opens doors to the world of STEM for young girls. This book showcases diverse female role models in science, technology, engineering, and math and and inspires girls to dream big. Each page introduces a new character—from the President of the United States, to a pilot who flies airplanes, to an adventurous astronaut who travels to outer space.

Featuring a range of characters, this book encourages readers to embrace their interests and understand that endless possibilities await for those who are passionate and determined.

Reading age: 2-7 years



Day after day, Nemy sows seeds, pulls weeds, and strips leaves in the sugarcane plantation where she is enslaved. But one night, she follows a woman called Big Mother to a hidden shack. There, she finds a group of women braiding each other's hair. But these are no ordinary braids. Hidden in each elaborate pattern is a secret—a message signaling their intent to flee and a map to guide them in their escape. Will the paths these courageous women weave bring Nemy to a new home where she can be free?

A picture book of love, liberation, and legacy inspired by the true story of enslaved African women in Colombia braiding maps to freedom.

Reading age: 5-9 years

\*\*Please note, all book descriptions and suggested reading ages are provided by Amazon. While suggested reading levels can provide guidance, they should be seen as flexible recommendations rather than strict rules. By using suggested reading levels as guidelines, you can choose books that not only match children's developmental stages but also ignite their curiosity and enthusiasm for reading. This personalized approach fosters a more meaningful and enjoyable learning experience.

## Mark Your Calendar

### Upcoming Statewide Conference Dates

#### South Dakota Early Childhood Education Conference

Ramkota Hotel & Watertown Event Center, Watertown, SD; April 10-11, 2025

#### SD School-Age Care Alliance Out of School Time Leadership Retreat

Keystone, SD; April 10-12, 2025

#### South Dakota Early Childhood and School Age Leadership Summit

Oacoma, SD; July 18-19, 2025

#### Family Child Care Professionals of SD (FCCPSD)

Huron; September 26-27, 2025

#### SD School-Age Care Alliance (SoDakSACA) Conference

Spearfish, SD; October 23-25, 2025

### Quality Child Care in South Dakota

Whether you're interested in applying or just seeking more information, please view our video to learn how QCSD supports licensed child care centers and school-age programs, and registered family day care homes.



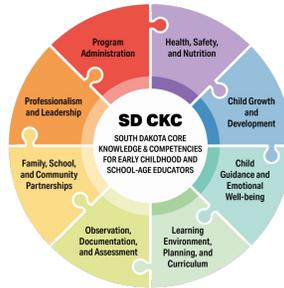
Subscribe to The  
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We're thrilled to have welcomed so many new members to Pathways since its relaunch!

If you are an early childhood or school-age care educator, we would love to celebrate YOU next!

Apply to be a member of  
Pathways



The South Dakota Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKCs) guide self-reflection and professional growth by describing what early childhood and school-age care educators need to **know**, **understand**, and **be able to do** at all levels of professional practice in eight areas of knowledge.

Click the button below to learn more, to view the document, and to order free copies of the SD CKCs for yourself or your team.

View SD Core Knowledge & Competencies

#### Quality Care South Dakota Team

- Rachel Busmann, Outreach Coordinator and QCSD Lead
- Amelia Gullickson, Early Childhood Quality Assistant
- Nichole Lanning, Early Childhood Quality Assistant
- Maria Picek, Lead Coach and Observer
- Deb Owens, Early Childhood and School Age Quality Coach
- Cheyanne Kamps, Early Childhood and School Age Program Observer
- Cassie Stoltenburg, Early Childhood and School Age Quality Coach

South Dakota State University  
Quality Care South Dakota  
South Dakota Quality Recognition and Information System | [Website](#)

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