

The Loop

QUALITY CARE SOUTH DAKOTA NEWSLETTER



August 2025 | Issue 24

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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. For more information or to apply, please email sdsu.sdqris@sdsu.edu.



News to Support Your Program



Congratulations - July Level Designations

Shout-out to Our Quality Champions!

We are proud to acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding providers and programs that have recently reached new milestones in Quality Care South Dakota (QCSD). These individuals and teams have demonstrated remarkable dedication to continuous quality improvement for children and families.



Level 1 - Registered Family Child Care

- Marcella Gerritson

Level 1 - Licensed Child Care Center

- Wilmot School Daycare

Level 2 - Licensed Child Care Center

- HopeCare

Level 1 - School Age Program

- Great After-School Place - Hillcrest site
- Great After-School Place - First United Methodist Church site

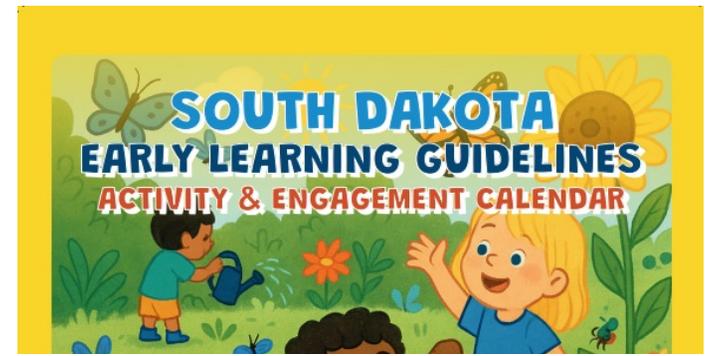
Congratulations to each of you on achieving your new QCSD levels! Your hard work, commitment, and passion for early childhood/school-age care are making a lasting difference. We're honored to support you on your quality journey and proud to have you as part of the QCSD community.

Interested in joining QCSD? Open recruitment period ends 8/31/2025.

Learn more and get started at <https://sdece.org/quality-care-south-dakota/> or email us at sdsu.sdqris@sdstate.edu!

Introducing the South Dakota Early Learning Guidelines Calendar

The South Dakota Early Childhood Enrichment System and Quality Care South Dakota are thrilled to introduce our brand-new calendars, designed especially for families and anyone caring for children from birth to age 5! Rooted in the South Dakota Early Learning Guidelines, this calendar is packed with engagement based ideas to support children's growth and spark joyful learning, one day at a



based ideas to support children's growth and spark joyful learning, one day at a time.

Children learn at their own pace, and this calendar is designed to support that journey through play, conversation, and connection. Each month highlights a different domain of learning, with simple, flexible daily activities that easily fit into your everyday routines.

The best part? It's undated, so you can start using it anytime! Just turn to the current month, add the dates, and dive in. Watch children explore, create, and grow with exciting, meaningful learning experiences every day!

Don't miss out, request your copy today! Connect with your local [South Dakota Early Childhood Enrichment office](#) or email SDSU.SDQRIS@sdstate.edu to get your calendar and to request copies to share with families in your program.



Strengthening Systems, Empowering Leaders

On July 17, 2025, SD Early Childhood Enrichment (ECE) and the Quality Childcare South Dakota (QCSD) teams gathered in Oacoma for a full day of collaboration, learning, and celebration. The meeting brought together staff from across the state to align on shared goals, strengthen our systems, and celebrate the progress we've made together. The day left participants energized and united in their shared mission: strengthening ECE systems to benefit children, families, and educators across South Dakota.

Additionally, the South Dakota Early Childhood and School Age Leadership Summit was held July 18–19, 2025. This annual event offers childcare leaders and providers a choice of three specialized tracks, creating an engaging opportunity to enhance skills and knowledge. Participants gain practical tools and resources to



navigate everyday challenges, foster meaningful connections, and promote high-quality care in early childhood and school-age settings.

"It was inspiring to see so many QCSD directors participating in the Leadership Summit and to feel the energy as we continue our journeys as lifelong learners, making meaningful impacts on early childhood and school-age programs." noted Rachel

Busmann

Young Writers Contest Turns School-Age Children into Published Artists



Are you looking to bring more creative writing to your school-age program? [Young Writers](https://www.youngwritersusa.com) is a national organization that inspires students through engaging, themed writing contests held across the United States. With high-quality educator resources, exciting prizes, and programs designed for elementary school-aged children, *Young Writers* is a perfect fit for school-age care programs.

Early this year, Kendra Holwell at the Boys & Girls Club of the Sioux Empire's Harvey Dunn location in Sioux Falls, introduced youth to *Young Writers*' Monster Madness contest. The challenge? Imagine, design, and describe a one-of-a-kind monster character. For a week, staff visited classrooms, helping students brainstorm ideas, develop their creations, and bring them to life on paper. All entries were submitted to *Young Writers*, joining submissions from across the country.

By April, the exciting news arrived, the young creators had been selected to become published artists! Among them, one talented 5th grader earned the title of *Best Artist* in the entire contest and was proudly featured on the book's cover. Every participant received a certificate of publication and joined in the fun at a Monster Madness Party. Families were also given the opportunity to order copies of the published book, creating a special keepsake to treasure for years to come. When the books arrived, the pride was undeniable.

Thanks to *Young Writers*, the children didn't just explore their creativity, they became recognized creators. This experience gave them a sense of accomplishment, something to be proud of, and a story to share with friends and family for years to come. Thank you, Kendra, for sharing this great example of elevated engagement and impact in your school age program.

If your program is ready to spark creativity, build confidence, and let kids experience the excitement of possibly seeing their work in print, visit www.youngwritersusa.com to learn how you can get involved in the next contest. Who knows? Your young authors and artists could be the next ones featured on a national stage!

Do you have a story of impact and quality improvement you would like shared? If so, please reach out to Nichole.Lanning@sdstate.edu.

SD ECE Resources

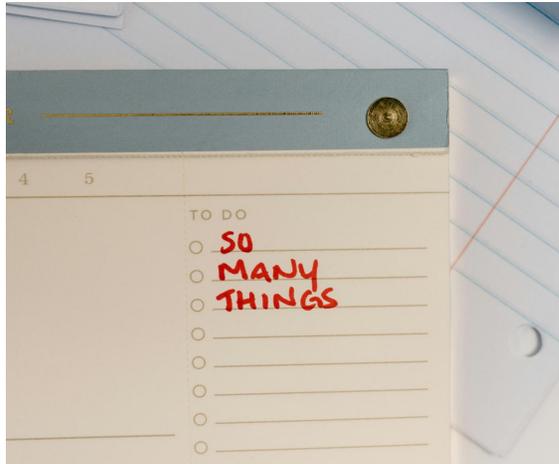


Back to School: Teacher Tools

January may mark the official new year, but for educators, children, and families, the real sense of a fresh start begins in August with the excitement of a brand-new school year.

Save valuable time and energy with [these handy tools](#) designed to help teachers quickly check off their to-do lists across a variety of topics and everyday needs. You'll find resources to support common classroom routines and challenges, including transitions, encouraging cooperative play, and promoting positive behavior through choice. Teachers also appreciate the downloadable templates for daily reports, schedules, field trip forms, and more.

If you are an educator working in a registered or licensed program, please [register here](#) for a South Dakota ECE Resources membership at no cost to you.



Books of the Month

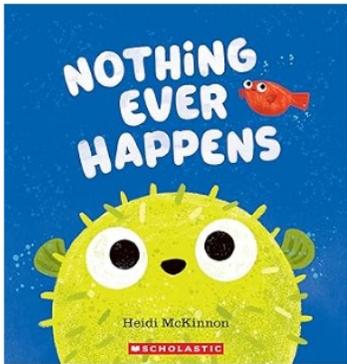
Each month, this section spotlights children's books that align with seasonal themes or offer meaningful value for child care providers. This curated selection is designed to introduce new and noteworthy titles that caregivers may not have come across before—providing fresh inspiration for story time.

As August brings warm days and the last stretch of summer, it's a wonderful moment to connect and share the magic of a new book together. Reading with children builds language skills, boosts focus, and fuels imagination, making it a joyful and enriching part of every day, right through the end of summer.



It's never too early to start healthy habits. This rhyme will inspire little ones to brush their teeth. Rookie Toddler books offer fun ways to engage with little ones during story time and play time. Each book includes story-related tips that help extend the reading experience and emphasize key learnings. Engaging photographs and illustrations will delight your toddler while encouraging a love of reading.

Reading age: 1- 3 years



Nothing ever happens to two friendly little fish. Same old ocean. Same old seaweed.

But, when adventure finds them, will these two friends rise to the occasion? Or will they flounder?

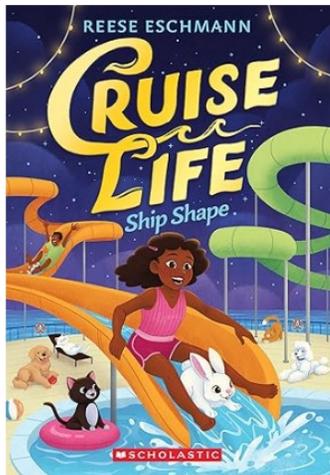
Reading age: 3-5 years

Caitlin always has the best time with her dad and big brother, Dylan, on The Wandering Princess, the fanciest, most fun, family-friendly cruise ship, where her dad has a job as the ship's doctor. And this cruise is going to be easy! The

passengers are small groups of scrapbookers, family reunion-ers, and magic enthusiasts. Plus Caitlin is now a cruise expert!

What she and Dylan aren't counting on is a staffing shortage that suddenly finds Caitlin front and center as the substitute magician's apprentice in the evening shows and Dylan racing around and attending to some increasingly demanding fellow passengers. Can Caitlin turn the tides and save this cruise?

Reading age: 7-10 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

[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

[South Dakota Early Childhood Education Conference](#)

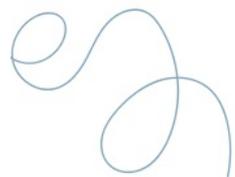
Rapid City, SD; April 9-10, 2026

[SD School-Age Care Alliance Out of School Time Leadership Retreat](#)

Keystone, SD; TBD April 2026

[South Dakota Early Childhood and School Age Leadership Summit](#)

Oacoma, SD; TBD



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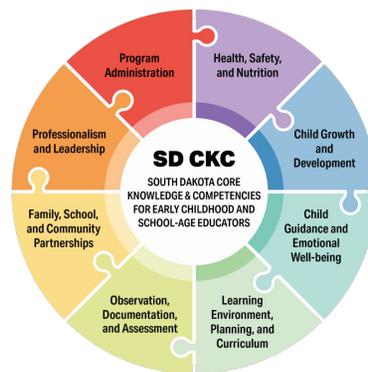
Subscribe to The Loop



Congratulations to the 500+ professionals participating on the Pathways to Professional Development Career Ladder. If you're an educator in a registered or licensed early childhood or school-age care program, we'd love to welcome you and get a welcome kit to you soon!

Apply to be a member of Pathways

Visit our new Pathways Facebook page and join us in celebrating the early childhood and school-age care educators who make up our Pathways community!



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.

Directors are using the SD CKCs to support important conversations about professional development and growing leaders in your child care and school-age program. 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
- Cheyanne Kamps, Early Childhood and School Age Program Observer
- Deb Owens, Early Childhood and School Age Quality Coach
- Cassie Stoltenburg, Early Childhood and School Age Quality Coach
- Clover Herdman, Early Childhood and School Age Quality Coach
- Tessa Stoltenberg, Education Program Support Assistant

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

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