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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.

News to Support Your Program



Congratulations - September Level Designations

Shout-out to Our Quality Champion!

We are proud to acknowledge and celebrate the following outstanding program that has recently reached a new milestone in Quality Care South Dakota (QCSD). This team has demonstrated remarkable dedication to continuous quality improvement for children and families.

Level 1 - Licensed Child Care Center

- Blue Dragon Academy

Congratulations on achieving your new QCSD level! Your hard work, commitment, and passion for early childhood and 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.

Learn more QCSD at <https://sdece.org/quality-care-south-dakota/>



Inside Quality Infant Care

What does quality look like in an infant classroom? [Exchange](#) recently featured an [article](#) from the [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#) that offers a clear and inspiring look at how caring environments and attentive educators help infants feel safe, supported, and ready to explore their world.



While every infant room has its own unique look and feel, NAEYC highlights several key features that define all quality environments. Let's take a look at what educators can include in their classrooms to create safe, engaging, and developmentally supportive spaces for the infants in their care.

A soothing environment. Babies can get overwhelmed easily, so caregivers make sure the lights aren't too bright, the room isn't too cluttered, and recorded music is played only once in a while.

Defined areas. The room is divided into separate areas for sleeping, playing, eating, and changing diapers. That way, everything and everyone stays clean and safe, and playing infants don't bother sleeping ones.

Secure open spaces (both indoors and outdoors). Babies need to move on firm surfaces without being in a device or carrier—that's how they strengthen their muscles. Plus, they can explore the toys and objects that interest them.

Personal touches. The room contains objects that are familiar to each child, like family photographs.

Simple, interesting materials. The toys and objects can be used in a variety of ways, like baskets and pails that babies use to dump and fill. There are different types of the same toy, like blocks or balls, in various sizes and made out of different materials. When they're a little older, babies compare objects and learn to understand words like big, soft, smooth, and shiny.

Child-size furniture. Chairs, tables, and shelves are sturdy, safe, and the right size for babies so they can be more independent as they start crawling or walking.

Small physical challenges. Caregivers might put an interesting object just out of reach so that babies learn to coordinate their movements to stretch and grasp the object. Or they might add a short riser or a single step to give older infants some climbing practice.

Diverse books. Caregivers read simple stories to children and provide them with sturdy board books. The books reflect the children's cultures and families.

Quality infant care is about more than just toys and furniture, it's about responsive caregiving in environments where infants are safe, supported, and encouraged to explore, learn, and grow. When educators provide these carefully designed spaces and nurturing relationships, infants thrive and families can feel confident that their little ones are in caring, enriching hands.

SD ECE Resources



Reduce Illness Risks This Fall

As cooler weather settles in, [cold, flu, and RSV](#) season is just around the corner. This is the perfect time to review your [health policies](#) to keep children, families, and staff healthy throughout the fall and winter.

Handwashing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of viruses. Take a moment to review proper handwashing

procedures with staff and children, and post reminders near sinks to help keep these healthy habits top of mind. The [Germ Fighting](#) section offers helpful resources, including a video and a printable guide to support children as they learn and practice each step. You can also visit the [Hand Washing](#) section for printable hygiene posters and fun song ideas to sing with children while they practice washing for 20 seconds.

Taking a few minutes now to refresh your knowledge and resources can make a big difference in keeping your program healthy and running smoothly in the months ahead.

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 storytimes.

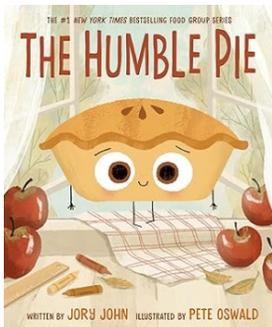
Fresh inspiration for story time.

As October brings crisp mornings and colorful fall days, it's a wonderful time to share the joy of books with the children in your care. Reading together during the day strengthens language skills, builds focus, and sparks imagination, turning story time into a fun and meaningful part of your daily routine this season.



Jump into autumn (leaves) with this cozy fall book that's indestructible! Beloved by babies and their parents, Indestructibles are built for the way babies "read" (i.e., with their hands and mouths)

Reading age: Birth- 3 years



Jory John and Pete Oswald serve up another heaping plate of laughs and lessons with this empowering, witty, and charming addition to their #1 New York Times bestselling series! Release Date: November 4, 2025

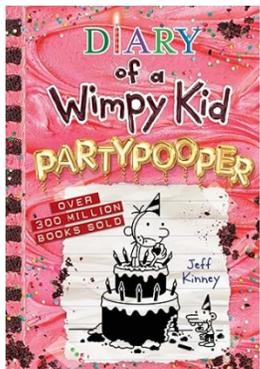
The Humble Pie likes to give others the spotlight. Aw, *shucks!*—they deserve it! But when he's paired with his best friend, Jake the Cake, for a school project, he soon realizes that staying in the shadows isn't always as sweet as pie. Readers of all ages will laugh along as their new pie pal discovers that letting your voice be heard always takes the cake!

Reading age: 4-8 years

It's Greg's birthday—and you're invited to the chaos. In *Partypooper*, the 20th book in Jeff Kinney's global smash-hit *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series, Greg Heffley is planning the ultimate party—for himself.

But when the guest list grows, the decorations flop, and the surprises backfire, this birthday bash turns into a total blowout—just not the kind Greg had in mind.

Reading age: 8-12 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

[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



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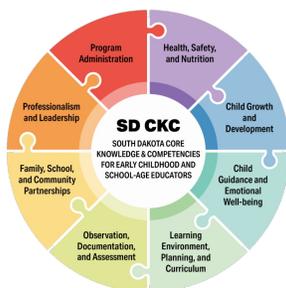
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Congratulations to the 500+ professionals participating on the Pathways to Professional Development Career Ladder. If you're an educator in a registered or licensed early childhood or school-age care program, we'd love to welcome you and get a welcome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

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- Rachel Busmann, Outreach Coordinator and QCSD Lead
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- 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
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