

## • In This Month's Newsletter •

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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).

## News to Support Your Program



## Congratulations - October Level Designations

- Shout-out to Our Quality Champions!

We are proud to acknowledge and celebrate the following outstanding programs that have 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 - Registered Family Child Care

- Patricia Berven

### Level 1 - Licensed Child Care Center

- Little Eagles Nest
- Little Owls Daycare and Preschool
- Rural America Initiatives

### Level 1 - Licensed School Age Program

- Coyote Club
- Great After School Place - Camelot

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/>

# Purchasing with Intention to Support Quality Improvements

When budgets are tight, every purchase counts, especially when working to improve quality using the Environment Rating Scales (ERS), like ECERS-3, ITERS-3, SACERS-U, or FCCERS-3. Even small, thoughtful purchases can support multiple quality indicators and create richer learning environments.

For example, choosing blocks with pictures, numbers, or textures instead of just plain blocks adds language, math, and literacy value by encouraging labeling, storytelling, and expanded learning. Using the block area to meet your classroom's cognitive and social development goals while also encouraging cooperative play.

Adding realistic props to your dramatic play area, such as child-sized kitchen tools, multicultural dolls, or dress-up clothes, enhances imaginative play and cultural representation (Dramatic Play, Diversity indicators).

Consider purchasing simple nature materials, like magnifying glasses, bug viewers, or small planting kits. These inexpensive items support the Nature/Science item and encourage curiosity about the natural world.

Investing in labeled storage bins with pictures or words helps meet ERS expectations for accessible materials, supports child independence, and improves organization.

Books are another powerful, low-cost investment. Diverse picture books that reflect different cultures, family types, and abilities enrich the literacy environment and promote inclusion.

Remember, it's not about having more, it's about being intentional. Choosing materials that are engaging, diverse, and accessible can stretch your dollars while boosting ERS scores and, more importantly, children's experiences.



## 2026 Marketplace Health Insurance

Open Enrollment for health coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace is here! The Marketplace helps individuals and families find quality, affordable health coverage that fits their budget. These plans include things such as doctor visits, hospital care, prescriptions, mental health services, and more.

Open Enrollment runs from November 1, 2025, through January 15, 2026. During this time, you can:

- Apply for a new plan if you don't already have health insurance.
- Renew your current plan or make changes to your coverage.
- See if you qualify for financial help to lower your monthly costs or reduce what you pay

when you get care.

Even if you already have Marketplace insurance, it's smart to review your options each year; plans and prices can change, and you may find one that better fits your needs.

**To start coverage on January 1, 2026, you must enroll by December 15, 2025. The final deadline to enroll for 2026 coverage is January 15, 2026 (coverage begins February 1, 2026).**

Get started at [HealthCare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) or call 1-800-318-2596 for free assistance in English or Spanish.

Don't wait, enroll by January 15, 2026, to make sure you and your family are covered for the year!



SD ECE Resources



Executive function is a set of thinking skills that help children plan, pay attention, remember instructions, and handle more than one task at a time. These skills are very important for children’s future success and start developing in early childhood. Early childhood and school-age educators can help children practice these skills every day through simple activities, play, and classroom routines.

Harvard University research identifies seven important life skills that are part of executive function:

1. Communicating
2. Critical Thinking
3. Focus and Self-Control
4. Making Connections
5. Perspective Taking
6. Self-Directed Learning
7. Taking on Challenges

One way to help children practice these skills is through books. The [Executive Function Resources](#) page within [South Dakota ECE Resources](#) has a list of books to support the seven essential life skills that comprise Executive Function. The books are listed by age range from 0-8 and are organized by skill set. Each book has a tip sheet to help educators expand the children’s understanding and practice of the skill while reading and discussing the story.

By supporting executive function early, educators give children tools they will use to succeed in school and in life.

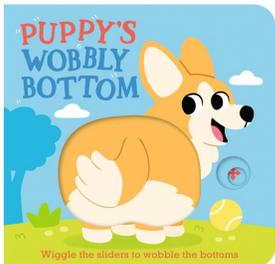
*If you are an educator working in a registered or licensed program, please [register here](#) for a South Dakota ECE Resources membership at no cost to you.*



## Books of the Month

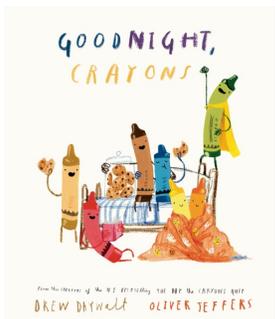
Each month, this section spotlights children’s books that align with seasonal themes or offer meaningful value for child care providers. This curated selection is designed to introduce new and noteworthy titles that caregivers may not have come across before—providing fresh inspiration for story time.

As November ushers in cooler days and the cozy feeling of the season, it’s the perfect time to share the joy of books with the children in your care. Reading together not only strengthens language skills and builds focus, but also sparks imagination, making story time a warm and meaningful part of your daily routine this month.



Can you join in with Puppy and friends as they do the Wobbly Bottom dance? The bouncy text and bright art will draw toddlers to this funny novelty book that features a different element to move on every page. But the most fun of all is wiggling the bottoms around in this silly and unique board book series!

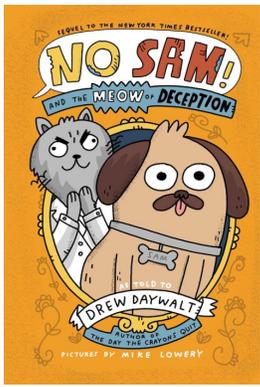
Reading age: Birth- 3 years



*The hilarious crayons from the #1 New York Times bestselling *The Day The Crayons Quit* are ready to say good night . . . or are they?*

The Crayons are getting ready to go to bed, but each crayon has something special they need to fall asleep. Blue Crayon needs a drink of water, Orange Crayon needs a blankie, Red Crayon needs a story or two or three. What do you need to fall asleep? A humorous, small hardcover good night story from everyone’s favorite school supplies.

Reading age: 4-8 years



Sam the pug, the Peterson family's self-proclaimed "Human Being" and "chief security officer," faces his biggest challenge yet: his sidekick Meow can talk (thanks to Sam's "language lessons"), but now a mysterious mad bomber is after him. As Sam works to protect Meow, he must also uncover the truth about Justin's new friend Dean—who might just be a vampire—and save the neighborhood from a host of villains, including goblins, robots, and a chainsaw-wielding maniac (or so Sam thinks).

Reading age: 9-12 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

#### [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; April 9-11, 2026

#### [SD School-Age Care Alliance \(SoDakSACA\) Conference](#)

Sioux Falls, SD; October 8-10, 2026



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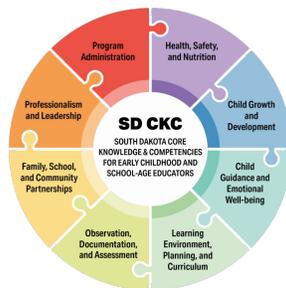
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Congratulations to the 550+ professionals participating on the Pathways to Professional Development Career Ladder. If you're an educator in a registered or licensed early childhood or school-age care program, we'd love to welcome you and get a welcome 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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