



August 2026 | Issue 36

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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 child care homes, licensed child care centers, and school-age programs can voluntarily participate in this opportunity. Please check out sdece.org/quality-care-south-dakota/ for more information.

Congratulations - August Level Designations

Shout-out to Our Quality Champions! 🎉

We are proud to recognize and celebrate the following outstanding programs that have recently achieved a new milestone in Quality Care South Dakota (QCSD). These teams exemplify dedication to continuous quality improvement for children and families.



Level 1 - Registered Family Child Care

• Christina Stirling

Level 1 - Licensed School-Age Program

• Canton Latchkey

Congratulations on achieving your new QCSD level! This accomplishment reflects your dedication, perseverance, and passion for early childhood/school-age care. Your work is creating meaningful, lasting impacts in your communities, and that is truly worth celebrating. We are honored to support you along your quality journeys and grateful to have you as part of the QCSD community.

Learn more QCSD at sdece.org/quality-care-south-dakota/

News to Support Your Program

Reducing the Use of Restrictive Devices

Are you working on a quality improvement goal related to restrictive devices in your program? Understanding when and how these devices should be used is an important part of creating quality learning environments for young children.

Examples of restrictive devices include bouncers, infant swings, and high chairs (used outside of mealtimes). While these devices have appropriate uses, overuse can limit children's opportunities for movement, exploration, social interaction, and learning.

According to the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) tools, best practice is to use restrictive devices only when necessary and for no more than 10 minutes at a time. Limiting their use allows children more opportunities to move freely, explore their environment, interact with others, and build important developmental skills.

To download a printable Restrictive Devices flyer, visit the Printables section of the [Quality Care South Dakota*](https://QualityCareSouthDakota.org) area on SDECEResources.org. The flyer explains what is considered a restrictive device, why limiting their use is important, and offers practical strategies for supporting children's development through active, engaging experiences.

Need a simple reminder? Quality Care South Dakota offers timers to help programs stay within the recommended 10-minute limit. Contact your Quality Care South Dakota coach or SDSU.QCSD@sdstate.edu to request a timer.

**If you work for a program that partners with Quality Care South Dakota and cannot access this section of SD ECE Resources, please email Nichole.Lanning@sdstate.edu to request permission to gain access.*

Understanding Restrictive Devices in Early Childhood Programs

WHAT IS A RESTRICTIVE DEVICE?
Restrictive devices are items that limit an infant's and a child's ability to move and explore.
Examples:
• Car seats & strollers (when not in transport)
• Exersaucers, jumpers, bouncers, swings
• High chairs (outside of mealtimes)

WHY IT MATTERS
Too much time in restrictive devices can:
• Delay motor skills (crawling, walking, climbing)
• Limit problem-solving and exploration
• Reduce social interaction
• Cause stress or frustration
Children thrive when they have:
• Ample floor time
• Safe space to crawl, climb, & explore
• Opportunities for choice & interaction

ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE (ERS)
The Environment Rating Scale (ERS) tools stress the importance of free movement and exploration. Devices should be used only when necessary for feeding, transport, or short periods of soothing.
Overuse can reduce quality by restricting children's learning, social interaction, & physical development.

Quality Care SOUTH DAKOTA

SD ECE Resources

Health & Safety Checklists

When was the last time you reviewed your program's health and safety checklists? Regularly updating these tools helps ensure your policies, procedures, and daily practices continue to support a safe environment for children, families, and staff.

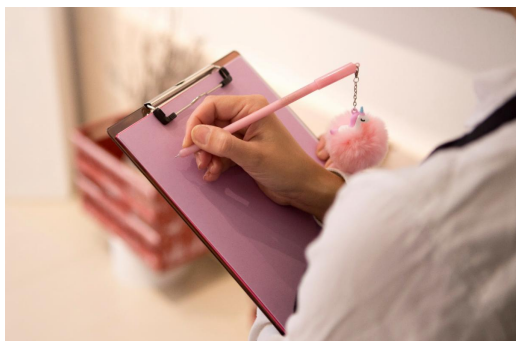
If your program is working toward a Level 1 designation in the Quality Care South Dakota Framework, remember that health and safety checklists will need to be submitted with your designation documents. Taking time now to review and update your checklists can help you prepare for the designation process while also strengthening your program's health and safety practices.

[South Dakota ECE Resources](#) offers a variety of customizable health and safety checklist examples that can help guide your review and revisions, including:

- [Safety Checklists](#)
 - Daily Safety Checklist - Center Indoor
 - Daily Safety Checklist - Center Outdoor
 - Daily Safety Checklist - Family Childcare Home Indoor
 - Daily Safety Checklist - Family Childcare Home Outdoor
 - Health and Safety Checklist for Early Care and Education Programs

Take a few minutes to review your current checklists. Are they up to date? Do they reflect your program's current practices and environment? You may discover simple updates that can make a big difference, not only in preparing for Quality Care South Dakota Level 1 designation, but in maintaining a safe and healthy environment every day.

If you are an educator working in a registered or licensed program, please register for a South Dakota ECE Resources membership at no cost to you: sdecresources.org.



Pathways in Action

Pathways Pathfinders: Jane Pillatzke

This month, we're highlighting Jane Pillatzke, a Pathways member whose passion for early childhood education began at the young age of 17 and continues today through a commitment to professional growth. That early experience grew into a lasting commitment to working with children and their families.

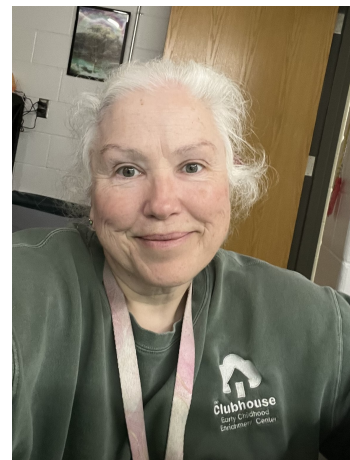
What Jane loves most about child care is the opportunity to build relationships. "Meeting and working with children and their families, they are all so enthusiastic, and in my current job all the staff are incredible to work with and so hard-working."

Jane has been climbing the Pathways Career Ladder and is currently on Level 4. Her journey through the levels has been one of steady progress and continued learning. "I'm currently on Level 4. I started from the beginning, as I had an Irish degree, not an American degree, so I have been working on my training to get to this level. Working in the Early Childhood Enrichment Center at the Boys & Girls Club is a great asset, as they love to assist you in your training at your own pace and time." Jane is also working to obtain her educational records from Ireland so they can be reviewed for possible recognition toward a higher Pathways level. Her continued efforts to have her previous education and experience evaluated demonstrate her commitment to professional growth and advancement in the early childhood field.

For her, Pathways has provided both direction and motivation as she continues to hone her skills and work toward her professional goals. "It helps me stay focused and work to achieve excellence and to strive to be my best working with families and other educators." That ability to learn and grow at her own pace has been an important part of her experience. Her story demonstrates that professional development doesn't have an end point. Each level represents another step forward, another opportunity to learn, and another investment in the children and families she serves.

Jane's advice to other educators considering Pathways is simple and enthusiastic: "Go for it! It truly helps you every single step of the way. I totally recommend it and have felt so accomplished and know I'm doing the best I can for all the families I work with, all thanks to Pathways and the Boys & Girls Club."

Recognition through Pathways has also provided a meaningful moment of encouragement along the way. "While it's not necessary, it of course feels great to be recognized. Who doesn't appreciate a nod in your direction for what you do? Every little bit helps, and this certainly helped me and many others on the road to our career successes."



Jane's journey is a wonderful example of the dedication and commitment that early childhood educators bring to their work every day.

As she so aptly reminds us:

"Children are not things to be molded, but are people to be unfolded."-Jess Lair

Jane, thank you for sharing your story and for your dedication to continued professional growth, as well as your commitment to supporting South Dakota's children and families. We are grateful for all that you do and look forward to seeing where your Pathways journey takes you next!

If you are an early childhood or school-age care educator and would like to become a member of Pathways, please connect with [Nichole Lanning@sdstate.edu](mailto:Nichole.Lanning@sdstate.edu). You can find more information at sdece.org/pathways/



Pathways Members, Get Ready!

Keep an eye on your inbox - our **next Pathways Challenge** is coming your way on **August 31!**

This time, we're putting the spotlight on **TEAMWORK!** Get ready to connect, collaborate, and show us what you can accomplish together.

Will you take on the challenge? We can't wait to hear how you put teamwork into action!



[Apply to be a member of Pathways](#)

Congratulations to the 800+ educators participating on the South Dakota 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 celebrate and get a welcome kit to you soon!

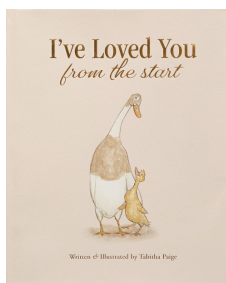
Visit our Pathways Facebook page and join us in celebrating the early childhood and school-age care educators who make up our Pathways community! 🎉



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.

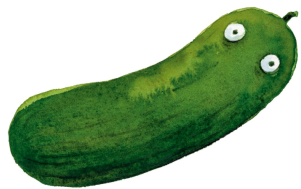
Sharing books and stories with the children in your care supports early literacy by building language skills, strengthening comprehension, and encouraging curiosity. Making reading part of your daily routine helps foster a lifelong love of learning.



I've Loved You from the Start

Through gentle rhymes and soft, realistic illustrations, little readers follow Mama Duck as she patiently waits for her egg to hatch, expressing love for her baby long before they meet. When the egg finally cracks, her words come to life in a sweet reminder that real love isn't earned—it's simply felt.

Reading age: 0-3 years



The Wise Pickle

written by Sarah Howden illustrated by Sabina Hahn

The Wise Pickle

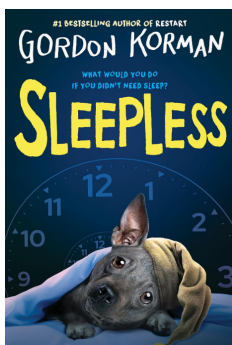
A pickle arrives out of nowhere. "I have lived a lot of life," it says.

As the pickle slowly withers in the hot sun, the local animals ask it questions. Questions like "Do you ever get bored?" and "Are you hungry?" and "Why are we here?"

The pickle has all the answers. Except one: what happens next?

A truly weird and wonderful book, *The Wise Pickle* will charm readers big and small with its combination of subtle humor, pathos, and ridiculousness, all perfectly captured in Sabina Hahn's delightful illustrations.

Reading age: 4-8 years



Sleepless

There's not enough time in the day. How often have Mickey, Skye, Levi, Cyrus, and Thea thought that?

Well, now they have plenty of extra time... because they no longer need to sleep. None of them knows why this is happening to them. All they know is that they have to keep it a secret from their families and their friends. And while they keep it a secret, they can use their extra hours to become better than everyone else.

Each of them thinks they're alone in their sleeplessness. But once they find each other, they know it can't be just an accident. Suddenly they're forced to ask: What's keeping them awake at night?

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

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

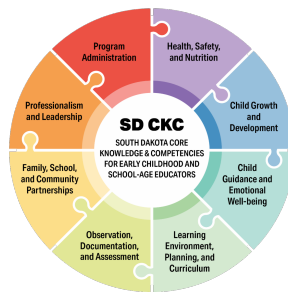
Sioux Falls, SD; October 8-10, 2026

[South Dakota Early Childhood Education Conference](#)

April 1-2, 2027, Denny Sanford Premier Center, Sioux Falls



Stay in the loop with the latest news from Quality Care South Dakota!
Subscribe to our newsletter and never miss a beat.



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 their child care and school-age programs. 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
- Jen Johnson, SDSU Early Childhood Education Lecturer

[Quality Care South Dakota 2025 Annual Impact Report](#)

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

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