



October 2026 | Issue 38

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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 - September 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 - Licensed Child Care Center

- Kinder Academy
- School of Early Education - Brandon

Level 2 - Licensed Child Care Center

- EmBe South

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

Supporting Children's Health Through Everyday Routines

October's National Children's Health Month is a reminder that everyday routines play an important role in keeping children healthy and safe.

Handwashing, safe diapering and toileting, clean food preparation, and well-maintained environments help prevent illness, build healthy habits, and create safe, supportive spaces for children.

Everyday Practices Through the ERS Lens

The Environment Rating Scales (ERS) help educators reflect on daily practices and identify opportunities to strengthen children's experiences.

The Personal Care Routines subscales of the ITERS-3 and ECERS-3 and the Health and Safety subscale of the SACERS-U focus on practices that support children's health and safety. In the Quality Care South Dakota Frameworks, Level 2 of the Health & Safety category focuses on these subscales.

While practices vary by age and setting, the goal remains the same: consistent routines that protect children's health and support their growing independence. From infant diapering and preschool self-help skills to school-age health and safety routines, everyday moments offer meaningful opportunities to promote children's well-being.

Take a Moment to Reflect

Consider your program's daily routines and environment and ask yourself:

- **Handwashing & Hygiene:** Are handwashing and other hygiene practices followed consistently throughout the day, and how do educators engage and guide children through these routines using modeling, songs, visual reminders, and gentle prompts?
- **Diapering & Toileting:** Are diapering and toileting routines handled safely and hygienically while respecting children's comfort, developmental needs, and dignity through supportive, non-shaming interactions?
- **Meals & Snacks:** How do educators model safe food handling, maintain clean eating areas, and engage with children to encourage healthy habits, safe eating practices, and positive mealtime experiences?
- **Cleanliness & Sanitation:** How do educators maintain clean and sanitary classrooms, materials, and frequently touched surfaces throughout the day?
- **Safety Practices:** Are routines and procedures in place to help prevent injuries and protect children throughout the day?
- **Independence:** Do daily care routines provide age-appropriate opportunities for children to practice healthy habits and self-help skills? Consider how educators encourage children to wash and dry their hands, manage personal belongings, use utensils, clean up after meals and activities, follow toileting routines, and take responsibility for their personal care with supportive guidance, modeling, and positive encouragement.



This month, consider taking a closer look at one of your program's health or safety practices. Is there an opportunity to improve a daily routine, reinforce a healthy habit, or make a small adjustment to your environment?

Healthy environments are built through the care and attention given to everyday details. When health and safety practices become a consistent part of the day, they help create a foundation for children to feel secure, develop healthy habits, and thrive.

SD ECE Resources

Preparing for Cold and Flu Season

As we head into cold and flu season, it's a good time to review the everyday practices that help protect children's health and well-being. From reinforcing handwashing and covering coughs to reviewing health policies and communicating with families, a little preparation can go a long way in helping programs respond to health concerns.

SD ECE Resources offers a variety of printable posters, family communication templates, and other resources to help educators and programs prepare for the season ahead.

Colds & Flu

- Guidance on the Common Cold
- What Parents Need to Know About the Flu
- Preventing the Flu: Resources for Parents
- The Flu: A Guide for Parents

Prevention & Mitigation

- How to Protect Yourself and Others
- How to Clean and Disinfect Early Care and Education Settings
- Cover Your Cough (Poster)
- Germs Missed (Poster)
- Gloving Procedure (Poster)
- Handwashing (Poster)
- Handwashing Songs for Children
- RSV in Infants and Young Children Overview
- RSV in Infants and Young Children Fact Sheet
- When to Wash Your Hands (Poster)

Health Policies & Communications

- Health Policy
- Health Policy Reminder Letter
- Family Handouts to Attach to Reminder Letter
- Exposure Notification Template

RSV

- RSV: When It's More Than Just a Cold
- RSV in Infants and Young Children
- RSV Handout for Families

SD Department of Health Resources

- Communicable & Infectious Disease
- Disease Listing
- Recommendations for Temporary Exclusion from a Child Care Setting (printable)
- Reportable Communicable Diseases
- Reportable Diseases - South Dakota (printable list)
- Reporting Diseases in South Dakota

More Health Forms, Policies, & Templates

Taking time to review these resources now can help keep health and safety practices top of mind throughout the season. Visit [South Dakota ECE Resources](https://sdeceresources.org) to explore these materials and find additional resources to support children's health and safety in your program.

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: sdeceresources.org.



Pathways Pathfinders: Anna Bruemmer

This month, we're highlighting Anna Bruemmer, a Pathways member who is discovering the joys of early childhood education and celebrating the little victories that make this work so meaningful. Although Anna just started out in her career in education in January 2025, teaching has always been something she wanted to pursue. Today, she enjoys watching children's curiosity lead them to explore, learn, and grow, finding joy in the everyday milestones that make a lasting impact.

Tell us a little about the child care program where you work.

I work in a private school that has child care and preschool. We have two early learning center preschool rooms this year: one for 3- and 4-year-olds and the other for 4- and 5-year-olds.

What is your role in the program?

This year I will be working in the 3- and 4-year-old class as an aide.

How long have you been in early childhood education, and what inspired you to start?

So funny thing, I have only been in education since January of 2025. However, I always wanted to be a teacher. Previously, I worked with adults with disabilities, and when I moved to Watertown, the position at St. Martin's was posted. I inquired about it, and I was hired.

What do you love most about working in child care?



I love watching how children's curiosity leads them to study and explore the simplest of things. I also love watching them grow, whether it's doing something like getting on a swing or actually writing a letter in their name. Those little victories are such a blessing to witness.

Which Pathways Level are you on, and how did you earn that Level?

I earned Level 6 on Pathways by completing my CDA credential.

How has being part of Pathways influenced your goals as an educator?

It's nice to be able to look at peers in perspective fields and see where they are lining up, Level wise. (I'm a little competitive).

What advice would you give to other educators considering Pathways?

Honestly, it will help you with all the different insights into career pathways.

How did it feel to be recognized on Pathways?

It was pretty cool! I know my mom was proud of me, even though I'm a grown adult. I hope my kids look back and remember that no matter your age, you can still try something new and accomplish something you're proud of!

Thank you for being part of Pathways and sharing your story, Anna! Your experience is a reminder that it's never too late to pursue something you've always wanted to do and that the little victories along the way are worth celebrating.

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/



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.



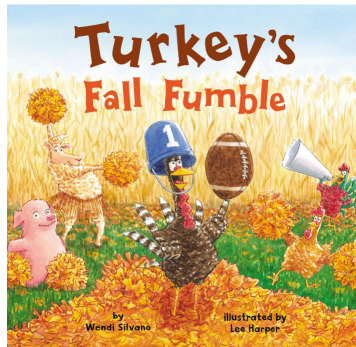
Which One Can You Eat?

A deliciously funny guessing game for curious kids - can you tell which one you can eat?

Compare, think, and point! Which one can you eat: A yellow glove or a bunch of bananas? A grandma or a cabbage? A cookie or the moon?

In this wacky, visually witty board book, little ones are invited to *look*, *laugh*, and *learn* as they play the ultimate guessing game. Each spread presents two bold, eye-catching images—one edible, one definitely not—encouraging babies and toddlers to compare, decide, and point with pride.

Reading age: 0-3 years



Turkey's Fall Fumble

Turkey and his friends are so excited for the Harvest Moon celebration. There will be apple picking, a corn maze, a pie-eating contest, a hayride, and of course, the annual football match. This year, Farmer Jake is in charge of the corn maze, and he's been working hard on it—the farm animals can't wait to see what it looks like! In fact, Turkey doesn't want to wait another minute. So when Turkey gets a hold of Max's legen-dairy football, his excitement sends that ball right into the corn maze. Can Turkey and his friends find a way to get the ball back before Max finds out? With a few clever disguises, Turkey hopes to save this fumble...

Reading age: 3-7 years



Spy School Goes East

In the fourteenth book in Stuart Gibbs's *New York Times* bestselling Spy School series, superspy middle schooler Ben Ripley journeys to China to save the Hale family!

When the seasoned adult spies of the Hale family mysteriously disappear on a mission to China, Ben Ripley and his fellow spies-in-training head east to discover what happened to them—and find themselves up against a villainous plot that will take them from the skyscrapers of Shanghai to the ancient ruins of the Great Wall to the remote regions of the Gobi desert.

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

[Sioux Falls WOW](#)

January 23, 2027, Orpheum Theatre, Sioux Falls

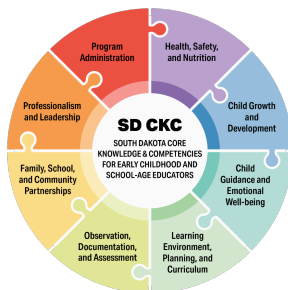
[South Dakota Early Childhood Education Conference](#)

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



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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](#)

Child and Family Resource Network, SDSU | Pugsley Center 201 Box 2218, SDSU | Brookings, SD 57007 US

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