On the first Tuesday in March, I sat in the office of the Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children training to hear newly elected Governor Tom Wolf lay out his proposal for the 2015-16 state budget. A glitch in the technology meant the volume from the live streaming website was exceptionally low—but it was a fitting picture of the anticipation we all felt as we waited to hear his remarks on early childhood education.

Frustrated by several years of stagnation, DVAEYC leaders proposed in early 2013 that the early childhood advocacy effort needed to “go big”. Looking toward the gubernatorial election and noting a growing public interest, we suggested that a commitment to fully fund high quality preschool services for all children in Pennsylvania would result in significant progress toward our vision of high quality in every early childhood setting. A group of ten children’s advocacy organizations came together to form the PreK for PA campaign and we were off and running.

So when we leaned in and heard Governor Tom Wolf propose an historic $120 million boost to early learning programs in next year’s budget, an exuberant cheer went out from the room. Specifically, the proposal calls for an infusion of $100 million in PreK Counts and an additional $20 million in Pennsylvania’s supplement to the Head Start program. If fully funded, this would DOUBLE the number of preschoolers across the state who receive high quality preschool services.

It is important for DVAEYC members to understand what a game changer this proposal represents. By bringing PreK resources to community based programs struggling to meet and maintain high quality standards, we will make it possible to really move the needle on program quality—and with more resources coming into programs, all the children would benefit. Of course, a significant factor in quality is teacher credentials, which go hand in hand with compensation. When programs have the resources to pay qualified teachers, the likelihood that teachers will choose to work in preschool programs—and stay for their career—are greatly increased.

As excited as we are about this development, it’s not time to celebrate—yet! We have some big hurdles ahead. The first is to convince the Pennsylvania legislature that this investment is worth the price tag, and to approve funding at this level. Then, we have to work fast and furiously to build capacity in the field to serve thousands of new children.

I know these are big challenges—but I believe that both are possible. I also know we can’t do it without the ardent support of early childhood professionals and the families they serve. I invite you to join in this important work. I urge you to be more visible and outspoken advocates than you have ever been before, to talk to everyone in your networks, to make your voice heard with your elected officials—so that we realize the promise and potential of this very special moment in history.

Together we can transform the lives and life trajectories of the children of Pennsylvania!
When it comes to early childhood advocacy, we tend to focus most of our attention on the state, since that’s where the big decisions about shaping and funding the system get made. If we have extra attention, it usually goes to Washington, since the Child Care Development Block Grant provides the backbone of child care funding. But there’s a new player in town—Philadelphia!

Over the last several months, there has been an unprecedented flurry of activity at the local level:

- Through the Mayor’s Shared Prosperity plan, the Mayor’s Early Learning Advisory Council (MELAC) is getting ready to release a Philadelphia Citywide Early Learning Plan, with a strong focus on access and quality.
- On February 26, Philadelphia City Council voted unanimously for a question to be added to the May 19th mayoral primary ballot that will allow voters to decide whether the city should form an independent and ongoing commission to determine how to fund and sustain universal pre-K.
- Several Council members are working on legislative proposals: to increase access to quality programs for low income families; to encourage more programs to move up in quality through stricter licensing regulations; and to ease zoning hurdles for family and group providers.
- There is widespread interest among the mayoral candidates about early education, with several of them offering specific pre-K proposals.

DVAEYC’s hand can be seen in all of these developments. We have been active in MELAC and the development of the Citywide Early Plan. Our staff and Philadelphia members were the main source of the petitions that encouraged Council to add the universal pre-K question to the primary ballot. We have met with Council members who are working on legislative proposals to help ensure that our position on quality is foundational. Currently, we are developing briefing materials and setting up meetings with all the mayoral candidates to help shape their early childhood platforms.

The moral of this story? Potential early childhood advocates are everywhere, and we should never underestimate the power of local government to play a positive role in the lives of our youngest children.

Sharon Easterling, DVAEYC Executive Director

When I visualize the ideal setting for a high-quality program, I think of Louis Armstrong singing of hearing babies cry and watching them grow and then thinking, “What a wonderful world”… Well, a wonderful early childhood world to me must have high quality in six areas—leadership, staffing, environment, curriculum, interactions, and parent and community engagement… Research has shown that early childhood education is part of the continuum of a child’s development because a child’s early learning experiences build a foundation for all future learning… So, thank you for allowing me to share my vision of a wonderful early childhood world.

Jennifer Plumer-Davis, DVAEYC Board
Toward the end of our winter leadership and advocacy retreat (LEAP), a small group had gathered to develop action plans around the issues of wages and director/staff relations. The teachers in the group pressed the directors to address low wages more pro-actively, and had a hard time believing the directors’ response that their hands were tied. As they went back and forth, trying out different scenarios, the directors got a clearer picture of what the classroom teachers needed to understand about early childhood financing, and the teachers began to see that, if they wanted better wages, they had to advocate not just with the leadership at their program, but with the system as a whole.

As the movement for raising the minimum wage gains momentum, this tension will come increasingly to the fore. Democrats from both chambers of the PA General Assembly introduced minimum wage bills in February, and Governor Wolf endorsed the proposal to raise the state’s minimum wage to $10.10 in his March budget address. Although current data is sorely lacking, a 2008 PACCA survey found that, while assistant directors and group supervisors earned more than that proposed $10.10, wages for assistant group supervisors and aides fell well below that level. The more visionary $15 increase that is being supported by a variety of unions and community organizations ($15 for ‘15) would impact most of our workforce.

Capitol Caravan

The Pre-K for PA Capitol Caravan consists of a series of journeys from all corners of Pennsylvania to help establish Pre-K for PA as a persistent presence in Harrisburg during legislative session days. DVAEYC is playing a central role in arranging caravans from Southeastern PA.

Of course our teachers deserve $10.10 an hour. Of course they deserve $15. A recent study by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, “Worthy Work, Still Unlivable Wages: The Early Childhood Workforce 25 Years after the National Child Care Staffing Study,” found that almost half of early childhood workers in the U.S., compared with just a quarter of the overall workforce, were from families enrolled in at least one of four government support programs: the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit; Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program; federal food stamps; or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

Our families deserve a living wage as well. And they deserve high quality child care that they can afford. It makes sense for the early childhood field to stand squarely behind efforts to raise the minimum wage. We just have to be clear that such a stand must be accompanied by vigorous advocacy for early childhood funding at a level that allows our programs to keep their doors open.
FIRE & ICE

Community, Mindfulness, and Inquiry are the three pillars that guide our program at the Children’s Community School, a democratic preschool in West Philadelphia. Through children’s play, we seek to deepen connections, broaden awareness of self, and facilitate critical thinking and exploration.

We recognize the power and importance of engaging not just children but also their families in educational experiences. Each child, while a unique individual, is intricately threaded into the life of their family. Our impact on each child’s learning and development is exponentially increased when we engage families in interactive experiences with their children. Here are a few recent opportunities we’ve created for children and families to learn together.

THE CAMPFIRE

On a Saturday night in October we held our semi-annual sing-along campfire. Families and teachers gathered around a fire-pit in Clark Park. The children roasted bannock dough over the fire (bannock bread is a bread cooked on sticks over an open fire!); several people brought guitars and led songs; the adults chatted as children chased and laughed in the cool evening air.

A campfire is an opportunity to connect to each other, to our surroundings, and to ourselves -- in other words, to build community. Everyone loves sharing food and music and warmth while surrounded by trees and friends. Our campfire is also a way for families to connect to our educational program, even though we’re not at school. In October, families heard some great songs that their children love, and we had a chance to mention how rhythm and rhyme support early literacy.

Children told their parents about how they made the dough and searched for roasting sticks the previous day, and their parents saw how projects and thinking can be extended over time. As teachers crouched over the fire alongside children and families, we modeled how we communicate trust and allow children opportunities for independence and self-regulation, even around a campfire!

ICE-MAKING

One morning in December the children went out to the yard and discovered that the previous day’s rain had collected in buckets and containers and then frozen solid overnight! Of course, this led to a day of fascinated investigation (touching the ice, trying to break it, standing on it, bringing it inside and watching it melt, etc.) and curiosity (where did the ice come from? how could we make more? what will happen to it?).

We wanted to extend this learning experience, so at the end of the day we suggested to families that they leave a bowl of water outside overnight and let their children investigate what happened. We offered them examples of open-ended questions they might ask their children, such as “What do you think will happen next?” One of the families did us one better: they came to school the next day with the ice they made overnight at home! The whole class’ interest was rekindled, and the children explored the ice with new vigor and asked questions of the child who brought it.

By giving families an easy way to participate in this spontaneous project, we weren’t just telling them about how children investigate ideas over time, we were showing them and inviting them to join us in the inquiry.

ALL-AGES WORKSHOPS

We consistently hear from our families that they learn more about parenting and good educational practices when they have hands-on support in learning and playing with their kids. This spring we’ve created several workshops for families and children together. Teacher Martha is the founder of StoryUp [https://storyupphilly.wordpress.com], an organization that creates interactive storytelling workshops for all ages of children and their parents. On a Saturday morning in January she invited children and their families to come to school and work together on storytelling projects. Martha led everyone through the process of creating and sharing stories around children’s ideas, guiding parents and children in active play and story-building. While the children played, she also shared tips with families on ways to create similar experiences at home, and described how this kind of play supports not only literacy but also critical thinking, cooperation, and self-regulation.

In March Teacher Jarrod will offer a similar whole-family workshop on rough-housing. All-ages workshops create pathways for families to connect in new ways with both the school and their children, as they participate actively in their children’s learning experiences and receive support in trying out new approaches.

The campfire, the ice-making, and the workshops are just a few ways that we invite families to interactively connect with their children, the classroom curriculum, and our school. Families aren’t just seeing what their children learn at school, they’re participating in it; they’re not just getting tips from us, they’re seeing us practice what we preach. We know that it’s not just kids who learn best by playing and doing -- grown-ups do too!

Join us For A New Study Group on PLAY!

Expand your investigation of the critical importance of play in the daily lives of children by becoming a member of DVAEYC’s new study group:

**Play = Learning: Supporting Children’s Right to Play Daily.** Educators and advocates will gather monthly throughout the region to discuss issues and ideas related to ensuring young children have varied play experiences in early childhood program settings. Generally, meetings are held in the early evening and light refreshments are served. Typical gatherings have between 20 and 40 professionals who want to network, share ideas and strategies, collaborate, and visit one another’s programs. First gathering will be in April. Many thanks to PNC Grow Up Great for sponsoring the DVAEYC study group on play!

To sign up or for more information email Peg Szczurek, peg@dvaeya.org
Play’s the Thing

Sharon Easterling, DVAEYC Executive Director

According to child development expert/psychologist Peter Gray, play isn’t something that’s nice for kids to have—it is essential for children’s growth and learning. Here are a few reasons why it’s a big deal:

• The frequency of play in children’s lives is at the lowest point in 60 years.
• There is an alarming rise of anxiety and depression among our youngest children linked to the diminished access to play.
• Creative thinking ability is declining at all age levels.
• Play is the primary way children develop emotional regulation—negotiating differences, making friends, seeing others’ point of view, etc.
• Childhood health threats such as obesity and diabetes are an unfortunate by-product of reduced physical play.

We live in exciting and challenging times. Exciting because there are many people—business professionals, elected officials, education leaders—paying attention to early childhood education. Challenging because there are many who believe that young children need to be “taught academic lessons”.

We know better! As early childhood education professionals, we understand that the primary way young children learn is through first hand experiences and relationships. Our role is to create an environment that supports and facilitates these experiences.

There are signs that people are starting to pay attention. In January the Community Design Collaborative kicked off an inquiry into the design of play space for Philadelphia with a presentation by Susan G. Solomon on her new book, The Science of Play: How to Build Playgrounds That Enhance Children’s Development. More than 100 people from all walks of life came out in bad weather and the excitement in the room was electric. Then in mid-February I witnessed the breadth of this movement at a national conference on play, sponsored by the U.S. Play Coalition. Locally, a group of community-based leaders convened by Smith Playground—active in arts, parent support, environment, healthy food, sports groups, and more—are working together to get everybody to come out and play. Let’s join them!

The frequency of play in children’s lives is at the lowest point in 60 years.

I want this EGG!”

How could our children make connections between the food they ate and where it came from? Along with Gwendolyn Kelly, the Director of Something To Grow On Educational Center, Inc., I decided the best way to do this was to create a children’s garden. We started by having parents clear the area and create raised beds. With the help of children we planted seeds and watched them grow.

The children made weekly trips to the garden to check on the progress of the plants. Preschoolers were able to chart the progress. Children were given the opportunity to pick some vegetables when it was time to harvest. Each vegetable we harvested was accompanied by remarks like “Wow! Look at the big cucumber!” and “I want this egg, it’s heavy!” with egg, of course, meaning eggplant.

The benefits of the garden have proven endless, as children tasted foods they previously didn’t believe they would like, and as parents became involved in the process and began to develop more of an awareness of healthy food options for their children. We have already started to develop more raised beds and received a lot of input from the children on what vegetables they would like to grow in the garden. We can’t wait until May when we can begin to plant vegetables again!

We can’t wait until May when we can begin to plant vegetables again!
My eyes were opened to the needs of children who were living in low-income neighborhoods by my daughter, who was working in a public school afterschool program. Where I was coming from was no longer fulfilling, and everything in my life came together around this idea. Though neither of us had any experience, we took a leap of faith and opened our center in 2009.

I liked the idea of starting something from nothing, with everything coming out of my blood, sweat and tears. Starting a business is not easy but I’m a very determined person, and it’s ingrained in my life now; it is my life. I love being able to empower not only my own family but the families I serve.

There were so many times I wanted to give up on moving to STAR 3 because of the cost of quality. I couldn’t not afford to pay quality staff and pay me too, so I had to find other ways to support myself while we waited for this to happen. But Khadijah Sabir wouldn’t give up on me. She kept saying there will be light at the end of the tunnel, and you can’t do this unless you are high quality. She believed enough in my vision to invest her time in me and my business, and that was enough to carry me through the hardest times.

As a struggling single parent, I never wanted my family to stop seeing me try. When I just felt I couldn’t find the time or money to keep going, something or someone came along, gave me hope and helped me get through the day. Because of my willingness to make sacrifices, my staff extended themselves more. When times got rough and we couldn’t make payroll and had to find creative ways to get through, they stuck with us.

The parents in my neighborhood lack education on child development. The poverty and issues that they face make it hard for them to appreciate quality, so they can’t be my motivation. A few, seeing my commitment to the center and to them, now trust me. That has put a lot of new things into their lives, and I’m able to talk to them in ways that with others they might take offense.

One child, who was with us then went on to school and public afterschool, was struggling with reading. His mom thought it was the school, but he had always struggled, so it had to be something internal. When I asked about what she did with him at home, and she talked about being overwhelmed and tired, I said I could relate to being a single parent, but we still need to find time to spend with our children, we can’t look to someone else for all that. We discussed what she could do, then I offered to sit in on a meeting with the school. I was willing to help as far as she helped herself. I’d love to do that with all my parents. We’re not just caring for the children, we’re caring for the whole family.

My staff have needs too. I wish I could pay them more, and give them better benefits. I wish I could change their lives the way they change the lives of their students. I wish I could help them all find the time to go back to school. My teachers do a lot for a little, and they all got on board with going for STAR 3. Once they did not see me as money hungry, they started seeing the passion and they wanted to grow. They would say, “I never worked in a center like this before. I never worked for a director who was involved before.” That validated where I was going. You have to get into their lives. My staff are very loyal and I’m very loyal to them.

One four-year staff member, Angelique, loved kids and had worked with them forever, but came to us with little knowledge of child development. As we grew and professionalized our work, she was always open to it. But she wanted her children, who were going here, to be able to spell their names. She questioned why they played all the time—and we would have conversations about play. Last year, her sister was going to pull her kids out, to a place that was “more challenging”, where they weren’t playing all day. Angelique told me that she just had to explain that children learn through play, that we have to set up the environment so they are learning without knowing it, that each child is an individual who grows at a different pace. She said that, by explaining to her sister, she finally understood. Angelique has gotten her CDA and is in the process of applying to Community College. She stays because she believes in what we’re doing here. I don’t think a lot of schools are preparing people for this work. I would love to get a PhD and teach people who are coming into the field.

My staff is my greatest investment. If I don’t invest in them, I don’t have a business. When I couldn’t afford to pay them the full salary, I offer paid leave to make it work. Then, with CCIS changes, I lost security in my budget but I couldn’t take those days away. It’s still a right, still something people should have, regardless of whether I think I can afford it or not. We’re still doing it. I’m hoping that getting STAR 3 will open up the budget for me, with access to Head Start, Pre-K Counts and other strands of funding.

When I was on the advocacy committee of the Providers Committee, one time Janet Filante said, “You know, Dewetta, you would be wonderful for working with this organization PA Pathways on paid leave.” Whenever anything was needed in that group I was there, and our center had just started providing paid leave, so I was gung-ho. I went to DC and advocated at other venues. It was a wonderful feeling, having an opportunity to stand for something, and it took me to another level, out of my comfort zone. It made me accountable, because I was now in the spotlight.

Through Pathways, a group called StoryCorps asked to write a story about me and it is going to be published and archived at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. I always thought if I left a legacy, it would only be for my family, but I’m honored to leave this story for future generations. Of all the things I’ve done, I’m most proud of that.
The Provider Committee of the Southeastern PA Early Childhood Coalition (SEPECC) was staffed for many years by Childspace CDI. They helped local ECE providers build their capacity to engage parents, and staff and opinion leaders by offering opportunities for training, leadership, and networking. The closing of Childspace CDI last summer was a great loss to the early childhood community as a whole, and to the Provider Committee in particular. DVAEYC is hoping to help fill that void by releasing Khadijah Sabir to organize events for this community. If you have suggestions or would like to be involved, contact Khadijah at 215-214-9697.

Membership Matters

As of March 1, DVAEYC membership now stands at 1932! Thanks to all those who have renewed since December 1, and welcome to the 203 new members:

David Alexander  
Lucy Aponte  
Tracy Arena  
Renee Bachman  
Erin Bailey  
Debra Bara  
Dana Barsong  
Kellie Barnes  
Dianne Barton  
Jill Bean  
Felicitia Beideman  
Patricia Berner  
Minerva Betances  
Barbara Blake  
Maia Bonfiglio  
Shane Bradley  
Kristin Brewer  
Shannon Brooks  
Cecilia Cannon  
Patrick Carlin  
Maxine Causidy  
LeeAnn Ceccoli  
Florence Churchill  
Wanda Clark  
Tracey Clossin  
Sandria Cobb  
Latifah Coleman  
Charisse Coller  
Theresa Collins  
Tamiya Connor  
Ben Cooper  
Kristin Conson  
Cynthia Cotto  
Michele Coulombe  
Jessica Courtrey  
Herschel Crosswell  
Bridget Cunningham  
Sheil Cutler  
Laurie Daniel  
Marlyn Daniels  
Crystal Dascher  
Faith Davis  
Eboni DeBrow  
Jane Delaney  
Kate DiGiacomo  
Susann DiPeters  
Amy Marie Driscoll  
Shuba Dumpla  
Jennifer Dunlapa  
Morgan Ewart  
Jalisia Exil  
Michelle Faison  
Maryann Filan  
Kaitlin Fisher  
Bridget Foley  
Alice Freeman  
Alire French  
Paul Frison  
Yvette Fuller  
Rita Function  
Julie Gilbert  
Esie Goldsmith  
Kristen Gonzalez  
Annie Graham  
Rebecca Greene  
Chanae Guinyard  
Natasha Guishaud  
Nayana Guzani  
Jayne Hadden  
Lisa Hall  
Carol Schefner Hammer  
Cathy Hammelstein  
Jessica Hanson  
Mychal Harris  
Ahlan Hasan  
Bridget Henry  
Valeria Henderson  
Venzia Hicks  
Nicole Hicks  
Heather Hillas  
Karliyam Hittle  
Missy Horrow  
LaToya Hunter  
Yovone Hyman  
Clarita Iglesias  
Denae Jackson  
Connie Jarrett  
Cian Jeffries-Kennel  
Rhonda Jennings  
Deyaniris Jimenez  
Elizabeth Moses Johnson  
Hadasah Johnson  
Lois Sheena Johnson  
Shekana Johnson  
Joel Jones  
Jonie Jones  
Kathryn Katcher  
Kayla Kirschkeimann  
Kimberly Kneen  
Katie Knight  
Maureen Koch  
Reeta Lamback-Jones  
Meredith Lawler  
Sara Lazrow  
Sara Lennon  
Linda Levine  
Jaclyn Lewis  
Kristin Lewis  
Lisa Lindquist  
Dustin Logue  
Marlenea Love  
Rowan Machalow  
Sarah Marks  
Shawn Manson  
Evelyn Martes  
Betty Matthews-Philson  
Patrica McBride  
Rainesha McClyed  
Kathy McCarry  
Allessa McIntyre  
Renee Means  
Lauren Merrell  
Malvina Mersini  
Carynna Miles  
Keli Lynn Miller  
Jennifer Miller  
Sandra Moore  
Deidre Morris  
Natalie Murphy  
Cheyenne Myhack  
Megan Nellett  
Kristin Neverosky  
Jane Norquist  
Mazinta Nyanumka  
Nakeisha Orrell  
Tamera Pany  
Tose Pate  
Mary Pawlus  
Tara Payne Jones  
Michelle Peay  
Minerva Perez  
Barbara Pettinati  
Betty Pinkney  
Lea Piselli  
Patria Pizarro  
Aileen Pol  
Veronica Pollard  
Chevonne Porter  
Theresa Marie Profit  
Namenta Raja  
Regina Riedler  
Cynthia Richards  
Matthew Roane  
Brittany Roberto  
Jessica Roberts  
Jennifer Russo  
Kate Saboe  
Lynne Sayles  
Bridget Scanlan  
Jenelle Scott  
Carolyn Scott  
Shannon Scott  
Wilma Sandra Scoury  
Melissa Shanaman  
Karen Shaub  
Alicia Shovlin  
Aristea Silkas  
Gina Small  
Nicole Snyder  
Theresa Spellman  
Sarah Stippich  
Shawna Storg  
Elizabeth Sutton  
Shalaina Tarr  
Chelsea Taylor  
Adam Thomas  
Janine Timcho  
Felicia Titus  
Jame Tomosky  
Vernica Tucker  
Judith Ullsh  
Maria Urena  
Tenisha Vance  
Tiffany Villanuva  
Angela Vinson  
Gretchen Walker  
Shirley Walker  
Chris-Tina Washington  
Heidi Weinstein  
Tranea White  
Leticia White  
Carolyln White  
Katelynn White  
Cassandra Williams  
Gwendolyn Williams  
Musheera Williams  
Lauren Willis  
Sylia Winstead  
Leatone Woods  
Amy Woodward  
Heather Wyatt  
Debra Yoder  
Michelle Zubyk  

The Power of Professional Development

Caroline Campana DVAEYC Professional Development Manager

“Educators best serve students if they have the ability to self-assess.” I believe that there is always opportunity for personal growth through self-assessment, reflection, knowledge, goal setting and continuing education. If we can assess ourselves honestly, we will grow tremendously.

A quality professional development session includes three elements. Practitioners should hear familiar information, which provides self-validation and a reassurance that one is on the right path. We need a reminder of what we should be doing, to get beyond “talking the talk” to “walking the walk.” Finally, the session should inspire one to learn and be excited to try new strategies and activities, or implement new ideas in the classroom.

Research has shown that intentional teaching, supportive environments and nurturing relationships are the most important factors in aiding young children to reach their developmental milestones. To do this as effectively as possible, we must continually expand our knowledge and skills. Educators keep learning, to help children learn, grow and be successful in their future. Here at DVAEYC we are also learning, to provide the best possible partnership for professional growth.

The term “professional development” usually brings to mind a formal process such as a conference, seminar, workshop, or a course at a college or university. However, professional development can also occur in informal contexts such as discussions among work colleagues, independent reading and research, observations of a colleague’s work, or other learning from a peer.

With this reality in mind, DVAEYC is trying new things. This past year, we launched a Nature Study Group which has allowed practitioners to work together collaboratively and visit many different nature-based programs in the Delaware Valley. Once a month, a group of emerging leaders meet for Book Club; this year the group has been reading a book on positive discipline and learning different collaborative and visit many different nature-based programs in the Delaware Valley. Once a month, a group of emerging leaders meet for Book Club; this year the group has been reading a book on positive discipline and learning different nature-based programs in the Delaware Valley. Once a month, a group of emerging leaders meet for Book Club; this year the group has been reading a book on positive discipline and learning different nature-based programs in the Delaware Valley. Once a month, a group of emerging leaders meet for Book Club; this year the group has been reading a book on positive discipline and learning different nature-based programs in the Delaware Valley. Once a month, a group of emerging leaders meet for Book Club; this year the group has been reading a book on positive discipline and learning different nature-based programs in the Delaware Valley.

I had the opportunity to present a training series at a wonderful program in Northeast Philadelphia on Connecting Children to Nature. There were three separate classes, and participants completed assignments and implemented them with the children between each class. The teachers were working with new concepts with their children, and they were excited to return to class and share what they had learned. Excitement over the children’s success was palpable. I see this model of professional development as the future of best practice.

This past year the Professional Development Department at DVAEYC participated in its own self-assessment through a very formal strategic planning process. We are very excited about our new plans, and hope they will allow for even more meaningful learning experiences. Practitioners will have more opportunities to collaborate, be members of a cohort, participate in Learning Institutes, obtain professional development with follow-up technical assistance, attend webinars, and much more. The future of professional development is very exciting! Stay tuned and log onto the DVAEYC website to view all of the new opportunities we will be delivering. If you have other ideas for great PD, please let us know. Get involved and be a part of the change that you wish to be!

New Strategic Directions!

DVAEYC has recently completed a strategic plan. To read a copy of the plan, go to the DVAEYC website, www.dvaeyc.org. 
April is tax month—let’s help contribute to the public coffers. We know it will cost money to give every child a great start, and we can all play a role. Have children decorate a collection container for your room, gather pennies, and participate in counting activities. Talk about what all children need. Take pictures. Get parents involved. We will arrange for a delivery of all our pennies to Harrisburg in the spring.

May 12 is Action Day. Save the date to go to Harrisburg to advocate for our children and our profession—or participate in Action Day at Home.

Questions?
Contact Pamela Haines at pamela@dvaeyc.org, or 215-893-0130.