

DELAWARE INSTITUTE FOR  
*Excellence in*  
Early Childhood

**GiggleBugs Early Learning Center:  
Defining Essential in Early Childhood Education**

Jennifer Spinks, executive director of GiggleBugs Early Learning Center, knows that keeping staff motivated during normal times is essential in providing quality early care and education. And now, during the pandemic, it is even more critical.

Located in Millsboro, Del., GiggleBugs serves children from two months through fifth grade. During the early pandemic months, GiggleBugs served close to 50 children and now they are up to more than 130.

"My staff and I always have to stay on the same page," said Jennifer. "I checked in with them about opening as an emergency child care site, and it was unanimous. There was no question. We are dedicated to serving our kids and their families."

The children and their families help fuel GiggleBugs staff's passion. The families have been especially supportive during the pandemic by bringing in meals, gift cards, and other treats.

Additionally, Jennifer offers her teachers and staff perks, all types, to make sure they know their value. "From special t-shirts to bonuses and extra vacation days, Jennifer continues to invest in her staff," said Alyssa Stein, Delaware Stars technical assistant."

Jennifer also cites participating in Delaware Stars Communities of Practice (CoP) as great support and motivation for operating during the pandemic. She notes the value of connecting with other providers, especially when understanding the safety and health requirements.

Like every early childhood professional knows, managing through this crisis is challenging and fatiguing. "Every day is different, but it's our job to bring a dose of normalcy into our students' lives," said Jennifer.

And now, with schools utilizing remote learning, the GiggleBugs team is once again stepping up to support school-age children.

"We have a class of twenty from five different schools and varying grade levels, kindergarten through fifth grade," said Jennifer. "This is no easy task!"

Despite the challenges and the tireless work, the team at GiggleBugs keeps its focus on meeting their students' needs while making sure they stay safe and healthy. "For us working with young children is a calling," adds Jennifer.

"We are passionate and that keeps us going."