

JUNE 2020



A NOTE FROM BETTER BEGINNINGS PROGRAM MANAGER DAWN JEFFREY



Parents and Families,

Can you believe **summer** is here?! Though 2020 hasn't been ALL fun, **time flies regardless**. Speaking of fun, we want to remind you that COVID-19 has not stolen our **summertime joy**.

The **Better Beginnings** Community remains committed to providing **quality care** for your kiddos. Things might look different, but we are ready to **play our way through learning** all summer long!

Summertime is fun and all, but remember, things like heat, yucky insects and dangerous water can quickly ruin it. **Here are a few things to be mindful of over the next few months, keeping your summer safe AND fun.**

- Don't forget sunscreen with **UVA & UVB protection and at least 15 SPF**
- A parked car will warm up 20 degrees from the outside temperature in just ten minutes. **Never leave a child alone in a car, no matter the temperature.**
- Always look for **ticks** after being outdoors. **Use an EPA-registered insect repellent.**

- Make sure your child stays hydrated by drinking **plenty of water**.
- Consider swimming lessons, and **never let your child swim without an on-duty life-guard or an adult around**.

And of course, don't forget to **wash your hands** and practice **social distancing**. Stay safe, stay healthy and have fun!

All the best,

Dawn Jeffrey

Dawn Jeffrey M.S. E.

Division of Early Child Care and Early Childhood Education
Program Manager for Better Beginnings

LEARNING AT HOME RESOURCES | LITERACY

Raising a Reader

Raising a Reader
Baby's First Year

Talk and Sing to Your Baby.
Your baby is comforted by the sound of your voice. Hold her as you sing and say rhymes. Echo her "coo" and baby sounds. Make eye contact to let her know you are talking to her.

Read to Your Baby.
To share a book with your infant, cuddle up and hold the book about a foot from your baby's face. Hold it still for her to look at while you talk about the picture. Let her reactions guide you. When she has had enough she will let you know.

Baby's First Books.
First books don't need a story. Point to pictures and ask, "What's that?" Make up a story or repeat the name of the object again and again in a sing-song voice.

Babies eyes are not fully developed at birth. They can't see details. They can't really see color until about 5 months of age. High-contrast books engage and send strong signals to babies' brains. These signals help the visual part of their brain develop.

"Touch" books provide lots of different textures for baby to touch. They give you a chance to introduce new words like "bumpy," "smooth," "soft" and "rough."

By 4 to 5 months of age, baby is able to hold objects. She will enjoy cloth and soft vinyl books. Books go straight to the mouth just like every other object. It's all its natural.

At 4 to 5 months
Newborns can't see well. High-contrast books help vision develop.

At 6 to 9 months
Baby can't see details. Give her cloth and soft vinyl books she can hold without having heard.

At 6 to 9 months
Baby may become more interested in the story than turning the book.

At 8 to 9 months
Baby can turn the pages of books. Provide colorful board books as your baby becomes more active.

At 12 months
Baby can turn the pages and name familiar objects.

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Raising a Reader
Toddlers 1-2 Years

A time and a place for books? Always, everywhere!
Your toddler can hold a book and turn the pages. Looking at pictures on her own is good stimulation for her brain.

Let her play with books. She is more likely to enjoy reading later if she thinks of books as toys. A readable attitude about books will help when she starts school.

Where can toddlers play with books? In the car or on the bus, riding along in the stroller or grocery cart, in the high chair, on the floor or in the tub. When are books covered? In the car, on the floor, in the high chair and just time before bed.

Books open minds.
Visit the library. Bring some books about your toddler's favorite things: trucks, dinosaurs, dolls, baby animals or machines. Use picture books to teach names, colors and numbers.

Toddlers enjoy books about children. They like to know there are others "just like me." Other children teach them words, take care and go to the grocery store. Stories about children help toddlers connect the written word with life.

Books are great conversation starters. They may have trouble understanding your toddler at first, but it is worth it.

What to Expect

- Soft vinyl and board books are great for toddlers. Books need to be tough for toddlers to explore and to play with.
- A toddler may appreciate a book by:
 - Putting it in his mouth, chewing and drooling on it
 - Pushing it across the floor
 - Stripping it
 - Shaking or throwing it
 - Banging two books together
 - Putting the pages together
 - Reading to himself
 - Chewing a favorite book
 - Insisting that someone read to him
- Toddlers who spend time with books will:
 - Point out objects in a book when asked
 - Make sounds to match the pictures
 - Sometimes they ask you, "What's that?"

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Raising a Reader
Preschoolers 3-4 Years

Make sure your child is ready for kindergarten.
Most of the skills your child needs for kindergarten develop naturally through play and reading with you. High quality child care also helps your child be prepared for school.

For kindergarten, your child should have these skills or knowledge:

Language

- Understands a variety of words for objects, for actions and to describe things
- Understands who, what, why and where questions
- Can follow three-step directions
- Uses four to seven sentences
- Tells detailed stories or ideas
- Speaks clearly enough to be understood by most people
- Takes turns in conversation with others
- Responds in the English language
- Speaks and expresses self in English

Developing Literacy

- Listens, tells and engages in story being read
- Participates in singing songs and saying rhymes
- Retells stories from favorite books and personal experiences
- Decodes three-sound rhyme—for example, cat and fact
- Holds books right side up, turns pages one at a time from front to back
- Recognizes print they see in their everyday life (for example, stop signs and logos for McDonald's and McDonald's)

Recognizes and names some letters of the alphabet, especially letters in their own name

- Produces the correct sounds for some of the letters of the alphabet one word at a time
- Writes some letters correctly, especially those in their own name

Click here to see the entire Raising a Reader Checklist developed by the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education. You will find lots of skills for other topics such as math, science and more.

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This **Raising a Reader** resource is best used in the first year of your child's life. Use **high-contrast books** to help your newborn see. At four-five months, transition to **cloth books** she can hold. Watch her become interested in the story and let her **turn the pages** between six and nine months. Help her **name familiar objects** at twelve months. Bring stories to life as you watch her **imagination** unfold!

Soft vinyl and board books are great for toddlers. Books need to be tough for toddlers to explore and to play with. Your toddler can hold a book and turn the pages. **Looking at pictures on his own engages his mind and opens his imagination.** Let him play with books. **When he sees books as toys, he sees them as fun, making him more likely to enjoy reading later in life.**

Now is the time to make sure your child is ready for **kindergarten.** **Most of the skills your child needs for kindergarten develop naturally through play and reading with you.** Read every day. Read signs and talk about what they mean. **Let her ask "why?" over and over!** Keep lots of books around. Let her read stories to you. Remember, talk, sing, play, read!
Learning is fun!

Find more literacy resources here.

MY TEACHER WEARS A MASK



New child care pandemic procedures from **Arkansas Department of Human Services** require teachers and staff to wear a mask at all times. This will certainly be an adjustment for your little ones. **Remind them that this is only to protect them from germs!** Check out this [booklet](#) and make a cut-out mask with your child.

COVID-19 ADVICE AND RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES



REMINDER!

As child care centers and homes adjust to our new normal, be mindful of **new plans and policies**. Many things will look very different, but these changes will be put in place **with your child's safety and well-being in mind.**

COVID-19 Advice & References for Families

Here are some changes you can expect to see:

- **Drop-off and pick-up** will take place outside the facility only
- **Temperature screenings will be required** for anyone who enters the facility
- Staff will wear **face masks**
- Groups will be limited to 10 people or less, **this includes classrooms**
- Family-style meals will not be served, **children will receive individual snacks and meals**

Learn more here.

What is *Better Beginnings*?

Visit our website to find out.

OR, check us out on **social media**.



Better Beginnings is Arkansas's quality rating improvement system for child care, early education and school-age programs that have gone above and beyond the state minimum requirements. Better Beginnings is administered by the Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.



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