better beginnings
EVERY CHILD DESERVES OUR BEST
CELEBRATING OUR 10TH ANNIVERSARY

PEEKABOO
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We're *Growing* Up!

Celebrating 10 years of Better Beginnings.

A special note from Program Manager Dawn Jeffrey.

Ten years! A DECADE of Better Beginnings. A decade of improved early learning and brain development. The start of more children prepared to begin kindergarten. Now that, is a reason to celebrate!

This didn't happen overnight. It took the passionate hearts and talented minds of many Arkansas educators. It took hard work and collaboration. It took a constant willingness to learn and a never-ending ability to adapt.

You see, Better Beginnings isn't just one thing. Our program is made up of many moving parts, all of which work together to **educate families** on what quality child care is and connect licensed centers with the resources needed to provide quality child care.

Alright, hear me out guys. It's kind of…like a *garden*. There are many ideas and experiences working together to fulfill the mission of Better Beginnings, which is to provide Arkansas children an early child education which will carry them through life. An experience which truly feeds their minds.

Ten years, **2,200** licensed providers, **1,300** Better Beginnings facilities, **over 40** hands-on learning resources and **countless futures brightened**.

So, humor me. Let's take a walk through this *garden* of Better Beginnings.

Pull out your best pair of *gardening gloves* and pay attention, because we won't give you just one reason to celebrate, we'll give you TEN. Oh, and don't forget your hat and shades, because the future of Better Beginnings is *BRIGHT.*

#1: Resources

Arkansas Better Beginnings has *planted* over FORTY hands-on learning resources, available in our Family Resource Library at arbetterbeginnings.com.

Resource activities can be done at home with simple things you have in the house. They are wallet-friendly and safe.

Parents, if you don't know what I'm talking about, you have permission to pause your reading and check them out here. You have to see these.

#2: Education

Did you know that before Better Beginnings, a lot of parents in Arkansas didn't know what quality child care meant? In fact, many thought child care was just expensive babysitting. Additionally, some didn't even see the importance of providing their young child with early education.

That's where we come in. We are passionate about reminding families that early education experiences are the *roots* of your child's learning. It is our mission to teach parents that quality child care isn't worksheets, it's interactive learning through play. We are dedicated to connecting Arkansas providers with the tools they need to provide our kids with the best early education experience possible.

Before we know it, these kiddos will be our leaders. So, we're here to tell you, this early child care stuff, it matters.

#3: Professional Training and Development

Educators are forever-learners. They're like the *Evergreen Perennials* of the garden. (Oh yea, I went there.)

They constantly *prune* their skills so your child can *thrive.*

Through our multilevel star-rating system, providers and facilities have access to training and new resources. We share curriculum and other tools in our monthly Provider newsletter, *The Buzz.* Providing quality child care takes planning, consistency and hard work. But we do it. Because our kids deserve it.

Pssst… if you don't already receive The Buzz, sign up here!. We have one for families and providers, and it's GOOD.

#4: Science

One of our three academic focuses is science. Believe it or not, it's an important part of prepping your child for kinder*GARDEN*.

Don't worry. You don't need to hang the Periodic Table of Elements above your fireplace and no lab coat is needed. Science is all around us, and your backyard is the best classroom. Talk about the trees and how they start as a seed, just like how she started as a baby and will grow into a grown-up like you!

Here's a great resource to get you started.

#5: Math

Another one of our academic focuses, and another critical skill your child will use in kinder*GARDEN.*

I can hear the groans from here. I know, a lot of us don't get along with numbers. That doesn't make it any less important, though. You can find plenty of resources online that will help you refresh your memory on things like **the quadratic equation, exponents, long-form division and multiplying *KIDDING*!** It's not that serious. How about counting the trees outside as you talk to your little one about living and growing things in the backyard?

We have seven math resources on our website. Check them out. You'll see how simple it can be.

#6: Literacy

Our last, but **absolutely-positively not least**, academic focus is literacy. Our literacy resources offer more than book suggestions. *(Though, if you haven't seen one of our latest literacy resources, Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you See?, let me go ahead and suggest you check that one out. It's a classic and our resource will guide you through fun activities to pair with the book!)*

You see, literacy skills will *season* your child's learning—in every subject! It will help him learn words so he can hold engaging conversations. It will teach her to listen.

We have 12 literacy resources online, and they cover all of that.

#7: Play

Sometimes, you just need to *soak up the sun* and *feel the wind* on your face. Sometimes you just need to play.

Did you know learning through play is the best way your child learns? This is where her creativity *sprouts* and her imagination *blooms.* It *cultivates* her mind because it gets her involved. Even better, it instills in her a *thirst* for learning.

Make it fun, and keep it simple. Bake cookies and practice math. Act out your favorite story. Go to the zoo for science lessons.

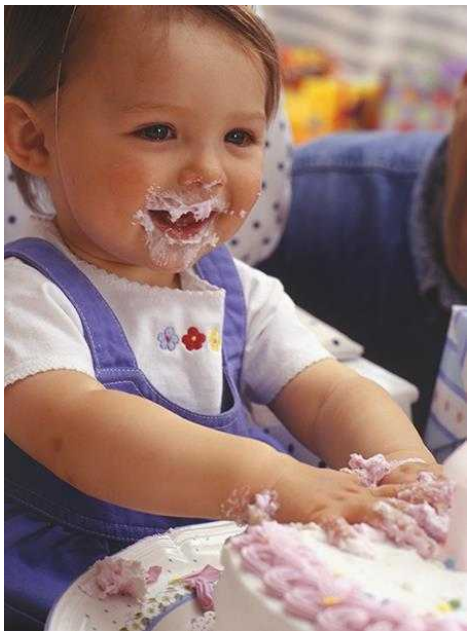
#8: Spanish Resources

YEP. Over 40 learning resources are available in Spanish. You can find them under the Español tab on our website. How cool is that?

#9: Help Choosing Child Care

Okay so you know what quality child care is, and you know it's important. Your next step? Choosing child care. There is a special *environment* for every child. Some need more *shade*, while others need *direct sunlight*. The options can be overwhelming.

No worries, though. Under our Parents and Families tab, you'll find an entire section dedicated to help you get through the *wildflowers*. We focus on three types of child care, and you'll want to know about each of them. We have checklists and classroom ratio information too, assuring you choose appropriate care for your child. There are also resources that will connect you with child care payment assistance.



#10: Behavior and Development Resources

Because that stuff is important too. Also under the Parents and Families tab, you will find two important sections: Preparing My Child for Life and Keeping My Child Healthy. We know you already do a fabulous job at both! But it wouldn't hurt to check them out.

On the Preparing my Child for Life page, resources are organized by age, from *seed* to *sprout*. They cover sleep, potty training, eating habits, etc., highlighting important milestones for each. These resources are available in Spanish as well.

The Keeping my Child Healthy page has useful information on ARKids First, the Arkansas Department of Health children's health coverage for children that might otherwise be without insurance.

Time to Plant your own Garden

The most beautiful part about the Better Beginnings garden? It's still *growing*. No, it's *thriving*, so much that we need help *tending to our garden*. We need to share. Our *roots* are only getting stronger, and we need to make room for *new-bloomers*!

So, *pick up a flower* here and some *soil* there. Take them home, *repot* and watch his mind *flourish*.

PS: ***Literally*** plant your own garden at home with our latest science resource, Woodland Mini Garden.

Be sure to follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to stay caught up with the Better Beginnings community.

All the best,

Dawn Jeffrey

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